

Foreword

My great-great-grandmother, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was a leader of the first major woman's rights movement in the United States. She was a woman ahead of her time, often comparing the demeaning status of women to that of slaves. After initiating the first woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, where she demanded voting rights for women, she went on—along with Susan B. Anthony and many others—to fight for women's suffrage and all other rights of citizenship. At the time, a woman's world was in the house, raising children and tending to the home.

Outside the home it was a man's world. For instance, it was considered promiscuous for a woman to speak in public, thus stifling her "public voice." Her limited role in public debate prevented her from shaping society and its laws. Once married, a woman was civilly dead in the eyes of the court. Thus women were forced to obey laws they had no voice in forming. Women, who represented over half the population of America, were denied the right to vote and to hold office. At marriage, a woman vowed to obey her husband, making him her master. In marriage, only her husband could sign contracts. If a married woman worked, her husband controlled her wages and could do as he pleased with them, including buying alcohol rather than food for his family. In the case of divorce, the husband owned the children.

In all cases during the early 19th century, all colleges were closed to women. It was not an option for women to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, or to hold other professions. If a single woman owned property in her own name, she was taxed on that property, even though it was "taxation without representation." Everywhere you looked, women held a second class status, clearly subordinated to men.

Perceptions of women were reflected in the remarks of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote that “all men are created equal.” But he also said in 1816 that “women, who, to prevent depravation of morals and ambiguity of issue, could not mix promiscuously in the public meetings of men.” In addition, he wrote that “the appointment of a woman to office is an innovation for which the public is not prepared, nor I.”

The same misguided perception existed throughout much of the 19th century. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the women and men who convened the first women’s rights convention in 1848, rewrote Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence, by stating that “all men *and women* are created equal.” They went on to list the grievances against the autocratic rule of men over women, just as our forefathers listed their grievances against the autocratic rule of King George III over the colonialists. The women were aggrieved about the unjust status they held in society. They wanted to shake the pillars of civilization - of church, state, capital and society. During subsequent decades a mass movement evolved, which used every tool known to democracy to change the status quo. They used petitions, newspaper articles, conventions, campaigns of state-by-state ratification of voting rights, and banners and sashes with “Votes for Women.” They organized suffrage marches, addressed legislative bodies, picketed the White House and pressed for a constitutional amendment granting women’s voting rights. When the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870, giving freed Negro male slaves—but not women of any color—the right to vote, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a growing number of others were outraged. Yet they continued to struggle for women’s rights, not only for the right to vote, but for all rights of citizenship. After the early suffragists died, a new generation of women, among them Alice Paul, who took up the cause of suffrage—even at the cost of being jailed for dubious charges like

obstructing traffic or disturbing the peace when they picketed the White House. At the same time that America went to war to make the world safe for democracy, the suffragists asked President Wilson how long must THEY wait for democracy?

This movement is a remarkable story of America's greatest bloodless revolution, a revolution that resulted in the greatest bestowal of democratic freedoms in the history of the United States. I constantly feel the need for more public awareness of the hardships and tenacity exhibited by women and men in their quest for these rights and privileges. In today's world, many people enjoy entering this fascinating history in an entertaining manner, such as by reading historical fiction. Tom Mach, the author of *Angels at Sunset*, has succeeded in entertaining readers while providing them with the much-needed awareness of women's plight and fight during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, his main character, Jessica Radford, is immensely proud of the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, but she is also amazed it took 144 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence for women to finally gain federally protected voting rights. Jessica recalls incidents such as a Seattle newspaper editor's rant, claiming Susan B. Anthony was nothing but a revolutionist wanting to overthrow the foundations of society...Victoria Woodhull's unsuccessful run to be the first female U.S. President...Jessica's horror at being brutally imprisoned, along with suffragists such as Lucy Burns, for the "crime" of obstructing traffic while picketing the White House for women's rights.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote that "Truth is the only safe ground to stand upon." Her guiding truth is best stated in her own words: "Men, their rights and nothing more; Women, their rights and nothing less." Never forget, that you stand on the shoulders of those who came before you. And never forget, fu-

ture generations will stand on your shoulders. In your lifetime,
what will you do for them?

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Coline Jenkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C".

Coline Jenkins

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's great-great-granddaughter