

The Start of a New Movement!

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Ever since the beginning of the United States, there have been numerous movements done by people, because of their race, sex, sexual preference, or any other issue that they felt strongly about. Although the Nineteenth Amendment was passed in 1920 allowing many new rights to females, these rights were not gained over night. It took a little over seventy years for an Amendment to be passed allowing women the same right that males have had since the beginning of the United States. Seventy two years earlier in 1848 the first women's convention was called, which was the real start of the movement that called for women to be given the same rights that men have had.

The Seneca Falls meeting of 1848 did not just come about over night. It was the result of two women meeting after trying to attend “the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London” (The Seneca Falls). At this event the “conference refused to seat Mott and other women delegates from America because of their sex” (The Seneca Falls). Not only were the women not allowed to “speak, they had to sit behind curtains and could not even watch the proceedings” (Ash, Maureen 13). As a result of being refused a seat both Elizabeth Stanton and Lucretia Mott “talked of calling a convention to address the condition of women” (The Seneca Falls).

The event that both Elizabeth Stanton and Lucretia Mott called for came about “eight years later in 1848” in Seneca Falls, New York (Ash, Maureen 14). Before the convention took place Elizabeth Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and a few other women had met “for tea on July 13, 1848” (Anderson, Dale 23). On this day, the women decided to act on Stanton's and Mott's idea of many years before (25). The next day “on July 14, 1848, the Seneca County Courier ran an article announcing the convention on July 19 and 20” (Salisbury, Cynthia 9). In the news paper article it stated that the conventions “purpose would be to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of Women” (9).

The women got together again on July 16 at Mary M'Clintock's house and planned the meeting that was scheduled in a few days (Crew, Sabrina 15). While together the women came up with an idea “to draft a declaration to offer at the meeting” (15). The women tried to decide what they could draft,

but finally “found a model for their resolution, the Declaration of Independence” (Salisbury, Cynthia 10). In the declaration the women came up with many ideas that they wanted to demand at the meeting. The center point of this convention was that they were going to demand “equality for all men and women” (10). The very beginning of “their declaration said it all: We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal” (10).

With the declaration set and ready to go the ladies were ready for the convention. At first “Lucretia Mott expressed some concern that, because it was harvest season, turnout might be low” (10). However, when July 19 came upon them, because “more than a hundred men and women quickly filled the pews” (10). Even though “men were not supposed to attend the first day, about forty showed up, which included the antislavery crusader Frederick Douglass,” the women agreed to let the men attend (Anderson, Dale 26). During the 1800's it was thought that women were not supposed to lead a meeting, so “James Mott was chosen to chair the [Seneca Falls] convention, and Mary Ann M'Clintock served as secretary” (28).

The very first speech was given by Lucretia Mott who was a very experienced speaker. Lucretia Mott “laid out the objectives of the meeting, and other speeches followed” (28). At the convention “Samuel Tillman, a law student, gave examples of laws unjust to women” (28). Another speaker “Martha Coffin Wright read some articles she had written that satirized society's treatment of women” (28). A little while later it was Stanton's turn to speak. “Stanton began by reading the Declaration of Sentiments, a document that cleverly echoed the Declaration of Independence” (28).

“The new declaration listed grievances against men” just like the writers of the Declaration of Independence had done stating the grievances against the British. The list of “grievances included denying women the right to vote, making husbands the masters of their wives' property, preventing divorce, withholding education, and blocking women from entering various careers” (29). Once Stanton had finished reading the Declaration of Sentiments, she “spoke in support of it, as did others”

(29). Once everyone was done speaking about the declaration, “the meeting was adjourned until evening, when Mott gave another speech” (29).

On July 20, 1848, the meeting assembled again, when “the Declaration of Sentiments was read once more and approved overwhelmingly” (30). In all one hundred people signed the declaration. Of those one hundred, “sixty-eight were women, while thirty-two men signed the declaration, stating that they were in favor of the movement” (30).

Some of the resolutions that Staton had read included the following:

Women and men should have equal rights.

Laws that limit women's rights are invalid.

Women should be given an education.

Women should have the right to speak and teach
in churches.

Men should have the same punishments as women
for moral offenses.

Women should have the right to vote. (30)

Every single one of these “resolutions were agreed to unanimously, all but one” (30). The one resolution that was the most controversial was that women's right to vote (30). Eventually everyone agreed to the last resolution, so “the convention agreed to demand suffrage for women” (30).

Later that evening, the convention came to order one last time. At this last meeting “Mott introduced a new resolution calling for women to have the chance to enter whatever careers they wanted, and it was approved” (30). After the last resolution was approved “Mary M'Clintock and Douglass then gave short speeches urging the women to act” (30). Once the two ladies were done

talking, “Mott spoke a last time, for an hour, and the meeting was closed” (30).

Overall the meeting was a success, mainly because the message was spread fairly quickly (Crewe, Sabrina 20). However, “most [of the] newspapers were hostile to the women's call for change and harshly attacked the convention” (20). The newspapers “belittled women's need for legal rights and scorned their ideas for equality” (20). The criticism got so bad, that some of the women that signed the Declaration of Sentiments had asked to have their names removed from it (21). All of this “outcry had a benefit, however, because it gave the convention huge publicity” (21).

The Seneca Falls convention was a very huge success in my opinion. It helped set off the women's rights movement. Although, the movement did not take off overnight, it did indeed show other women that if they wanted change then they should not wait for someone else to do it for them. If it was not for Elizabeth Stanton and the other ladies that helped organize this event then I feel that the women rights movement might not have actually taken off for another thirty to fifty years down the road. In other words, one can assume that if it was not for the Seneca Fall convention of 1848 then the women's rights movement would have been put off and the Nineteenth Amendment would have never been passed in 1920.

Works Cited

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