

# A MORE PERFECT UNION: WOMEN AND THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT

AUTHOR: Erik M. Peterson / Santiago Elementary School, Santa Ana, California

## GUIDING QUESTION:

How was women’s involvement in the Abolitionist Movement an important step toward their political agency?

## OVERVIEW

By analyzing primary and secondary sources from the Era of Reform (1820–1865) and Reconstruction (1863–1877), students will determine how women created a more perfect union by participating in the Abolitionist Movement, which pushed for the end of slavery. Also, students will examine the changing role and development of agency for women during this time period.

## OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- > Understand the intersection of various movements during the Era of Reform;
- > Evaluate the roles and significance of women’s participation in the Abolitionist Movement; and
- > Determine the extent to which women empowered themselves and others through social and political reform.

## STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

### CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6–8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.B Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

## CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- > D2.Civ.2.9–12 Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans’ participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.
- > D2.Civ.12.9–12 Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.

## DOCUMENTS USED

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Amendment XIV, U.S. Constitution, July 9, 1868 (excerpt)  
National Archives and Records Administration  
<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=43>

Catharine E. Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, 1837 (excerpt)  
Department of English, University of Virginia  
<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abesceba2t.html>

Letter, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, “To The Women of the Republic,” January 25, 1864 (excerpt)  
National Archives and Records Administration (306400)  
<https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/stanton/>

Newspaper Article, “The Slave-Women of America,” October 6, 1870 (excerpt)  
*The Revolution*  
[https://archive.org/stream/revolution-1870-10-06/1870-10-06\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/revolution-1870-10-06/1870-10-06_djvu.txt)

Petition for Universal Suffrage, January 29, 1866  
National Archives and Records Administration  
<https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/suffrage>

Speech, Frederick Douglass, *We Welcome the Fifteenth Amendment*, May 12–13, 1869 (excerpt)  
*The Speeches of Frederick Douglass: A Critical Edition*, 2018

Speech, Lucretia Mott, *Discourse on Women*, December 17, 1849 (excerpt)  
Archives of Women's Political Communication, Iowa State University  
<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/21/discourse-on-women-dec-17-1849/>

Speech, Sojourner Truth, *Address to the First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association*, May 9, 1867 (excerpt)  
Archives of Women's Political Communication, Iowa State University  
<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/21/address-to-the-first-annual-meeting-of-the-american-equal-rights-association-may-9-1867/>

## SECONDARY SOURCES

"Abolition, Women's Rights, and Temperance Movements,"  
September 20, 2016  
National Park Service  
<https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm>

"Landmark Legislation: Thirteenth, Fourteenth, & Fifteenth Amendments"  
United States Senate  
[www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAmendments.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAmendments.htm)

"Timeline of the Abolitionist Movement," 2012  
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

## TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- > Nineteenth-Century Reform Movement Timelines
- > Abolitionist Starter Research Packet
- > Student Performance Task Options

## ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- > Write or project the guiding question for students to view and discuss to ensure students understand what they will be working to address.
- > Organize students into groups of three or four students each.
- > Make one set of Nineteenth-Century Reform Movement Timelines for each group of three or four students.
- > Make one copy of the Abolitionist Starter Research Packet and Student Performance Task Options for each student.

## CONNECTIONS

Women have been active participants in American democracy long before they could vote. A legacy of a more perfect union is the concept of participatory democracy. This book features lessons about women's roles in Abolition and Temperance Movements, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Rights Movement, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

## PROCEDURE

### ACTIVITY ONE: INTRODUCTION (15 MINUTES)

- > Display the guiding question for students: How was women's involvement in the Abolitionist Movement an important step toward their political agency?
  - » Address key academic vocabulary, such as coverture, abolition, and reform.
  - » Ask students:
    - » *What role did women have in nineteenth-century society?*
    - » *In what ways were they given agency over their own lives?*
    - » *In what ways did women participate in the public forum? Have they always participated in these ways throughout history?*
    - » *How did women resist or challenge the status quo to engage in political and public discussion? Who opposed the agency women exercised against the status quo?*
- > Explain that women were not allowed to control their own property, did not have the same custody rights as men, and did not possess rights to their earnings and inheritance. Also, explain that husbands could be physically abusive, and women had no legal redress.
  - » Explain to students that women were some of the most involved people in the Abolitionist Movement. Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Forten Purvis, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Elizabeth Freeman, and many other women actively worked to end slavery and obtain suffrage for formerly enslaved people. However, some of these women and other abolitionists did not agree on whether or not women should obtain the right to vote at the same time as formerly enslaved African American men.

### ACTIVITY TWO: BUILDING CONTEXT AND DEVELOPING COMPELLING QUESTIONS (30 MINUTES)

- > Organize students into groups of three or four students each.
- > Display the names of three nineteenth-century reform movements: the Temperance Movement, the Abolitionist Movement, and the Woman's Suffrage Movement. Ask students, *What do you already know or think about these three movements? What do you want to learn?*
- > Distribute one set of Nineteenth-Century Reform Movement Timelines to each group.
  - » Set the expectation that each group will share a response through a spokesperson.
  - » Ask students to identify the similarities and differences that they see between the three movements. Solicit responses from each group.
  - » Summarize the main points the groups have shared.
  - » Ask students, *Is anyone's perspective missing from these timelines? If so, why do you think their voice is missing?*

- > Ask each group, *What do you want to know about the role of women in these movements?*
- » Students will develop compelling questions in response to this prompt.
- » Remind students that their questions should relate to the role and position of women, their participation in the various movements, and their successes and failures in empowering themselves and others.
- > Solicit responses from students.

### ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- > Distribute the Student Performance Task Options and review with students. Allow students to select one of the formats to present their conclusions.
- » Distribute the Abolitionist Starter Research Packet for students to use to begin their research, but provide additional resources (books, laptops, etc.) to assist students in gaining additional information.
- » **Teacher Tip:** Recommend Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, or Susan B. Anthony for students who need more support. Encourage students who need to be challenged to choose the Grimké sisters, Mary G. Harris (Mother Jones), Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Sarah Parker Remond, or Ellen Craft, who are not included in the Abolitionist Starter Research Packet.
- > Ask students to write a paragraph or textbook feature that discusses the role of women in the Abolitionist Movement.

## STUDENTS INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN RESEARCHING THE FOLLOWING FOR AN NHD PROJECT

- > National Association of Colored Women's Clubs
- > Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony on the Fifteenth Amendment (1869)
- > National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA)
- > National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)
- > The debate over the Fifteenth Amendment
- > The 1964 Civil Rights Act
- > The 1965 Voting Rights Act

**To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to:**

**[WWW.NHD.ORG/250](http://WWW.NHD.ORG/250)**

## EDSITEment!

### RELATED RESOURCES

BackStory: How Reconstruction Transformed the Constitution

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/backstory-how-reconstruction-transformed-constitution>

Chronicling and Mapping the Women's Suffrage Movement

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/chronicling-and-mapping-womens-suffrage-movement>

The Forgotten Suffragists

<https://www.neh.gov/article/forgotten-suffragists>

Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad

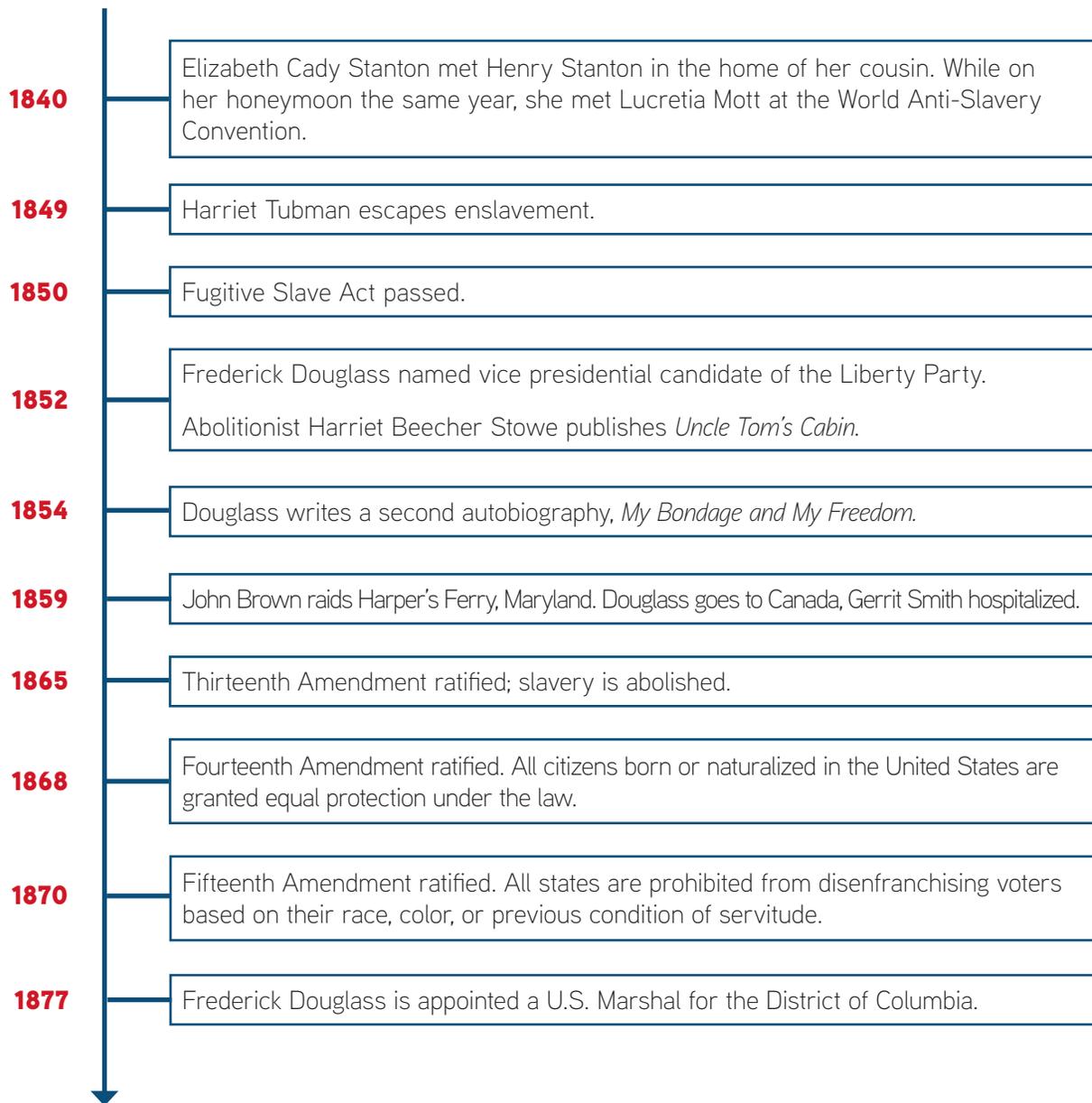
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/harriet-tubman-and-underground-railroad>

BackStory: Legislation Impossible - The Civil Rights Act of 1964

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/backstory-legislation-impossible-civil-rights-act-1964>

# THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT (1840–1877)

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**Adapted from:**

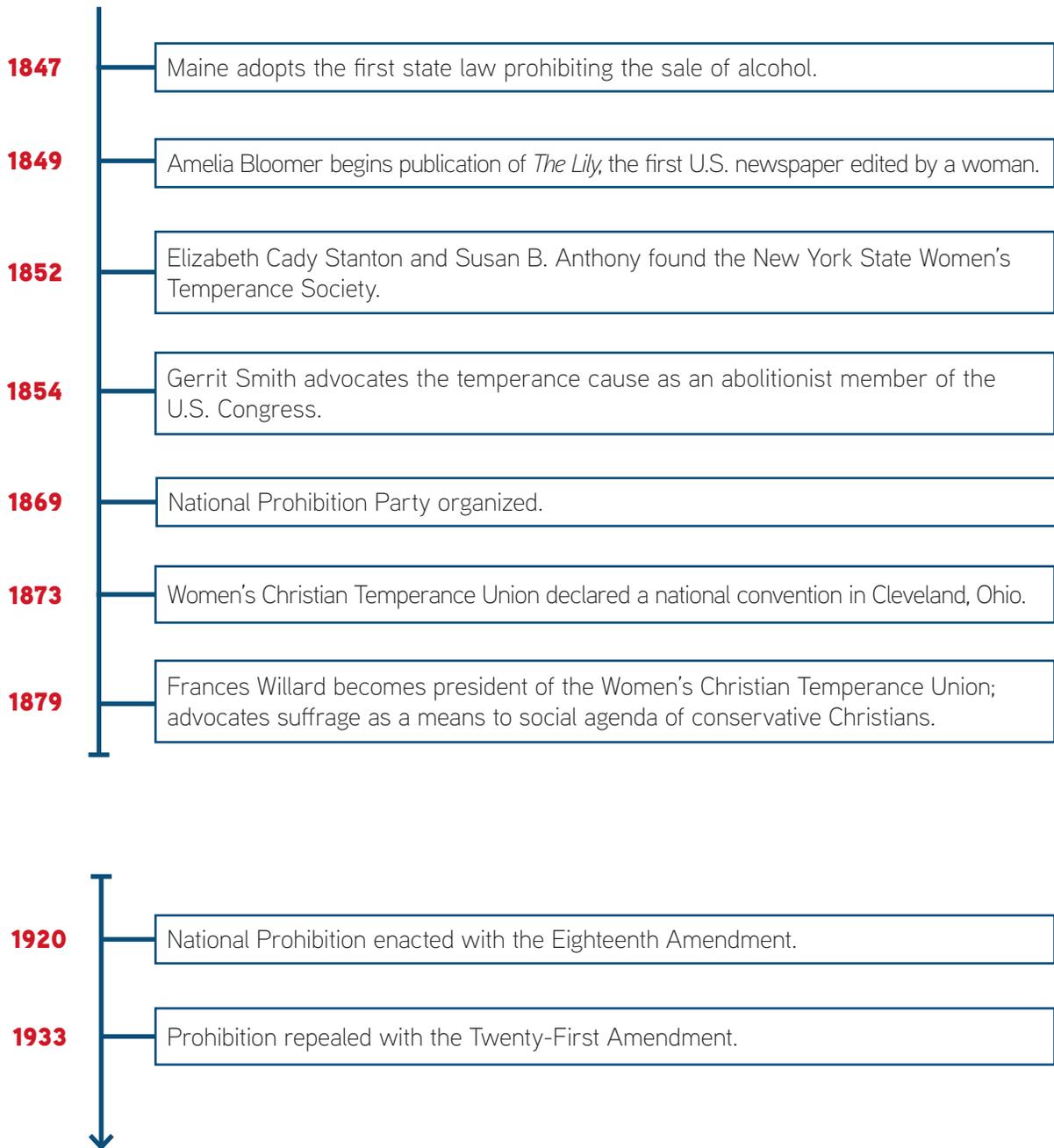
"Abolition, Women's Rights, and Temperance Movements." National Park Service. September 20, 2016.  
[www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm).

"Landmark Legislation: Thirteenth, Fourteenth, & Fifteenth Amendments." United States Senate.  
[www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAmendments.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/CivilWarAmendments.htm).

"Timeline of the Abolitionist Movement." 2012. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.  
<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/Timeline%20of%20the%20Abolitionist%20Movement.pdf>.

# THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT (1847–1933)

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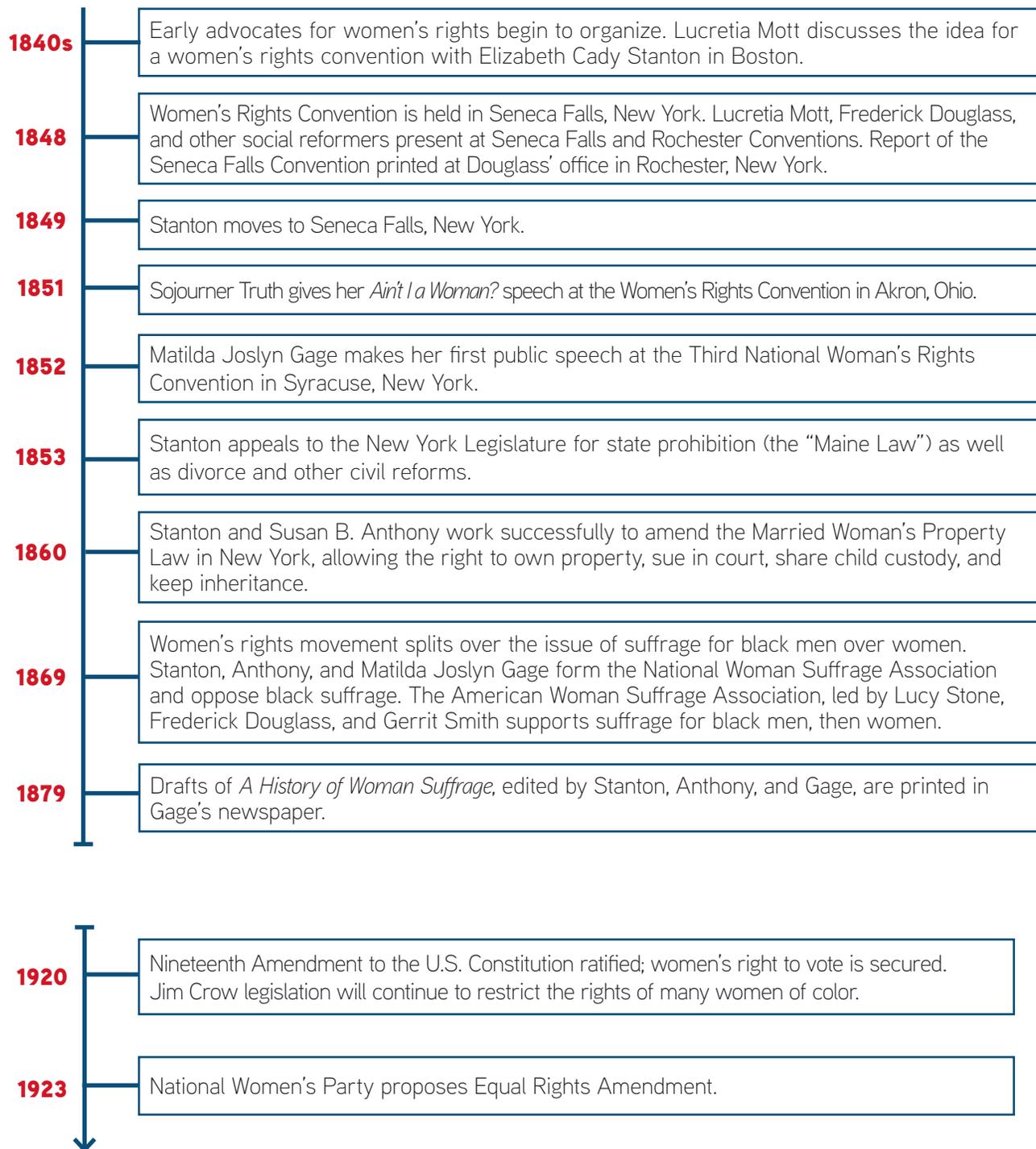


**Adapted from:**

"Abolition, Women's Rights, and Temperance Movements." National Park Service. September 20, 2016.  
[www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm).

# THE WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT (1840–1923)

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Adapted from:

"Abolition, Women's Rights, and Temperance Movements." National Park Service. September 20, 2016. [www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/abolition-womens-rights-and-temperance-movements.htm).

# ABOLITIONIST STARTER RESEARCH PACKET

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Catharine E. Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism*, 1837 (excerpt)  
Department of English, University of Virginia  
<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abesceba2t.html>

“Woman is to win every thing by peace and love; by making herself so much respected, esteemed and loved, that to yield to her opinions and to gratify her wishes, will be the free-will offering of the heart. But this is to be all accomplished in the domestic and social circle...But the moment woman [sic] begins to feel the promptings of ambition, or the thirst for power, her aegis of defence is gone. All the sacred protection of religion, all the generous promptings of chivalry, all the poetry of romantic gallantry, depend upon woman’s retaining her place as dependent and defenceless, and making no claims, and maintaining no right but what are the gifts of honour, rectitude and love.

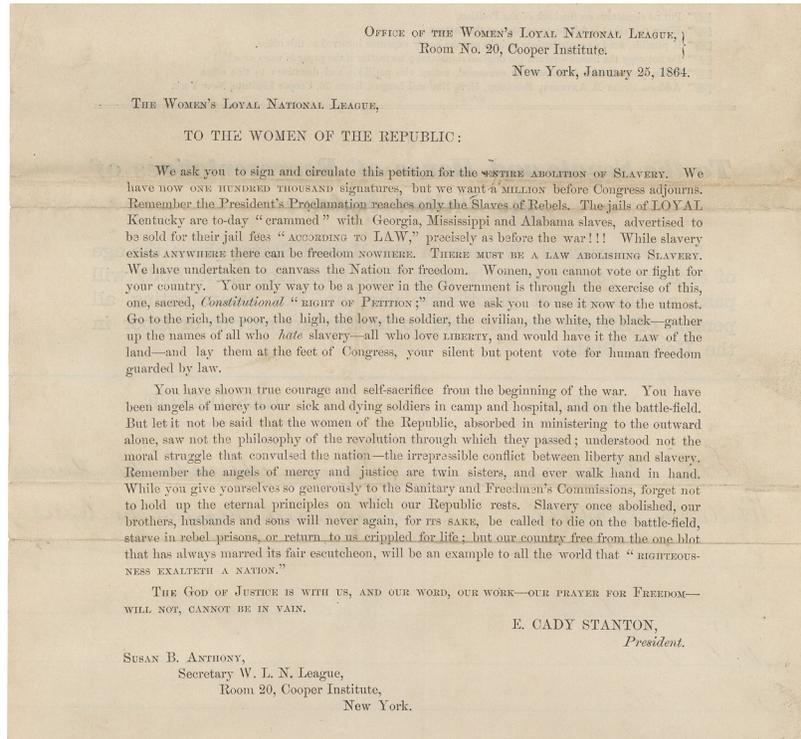
“A woman may seek the aid of co-operation and combination among her own sex, to assist her in her appropriate offices of piety, charity, maternal and domestic duty; but whatever, in any measure, throws a woman into the attitude of a combatant, either for herself or others—whatever binds her in a party conflict—whatever obliges her in any way to exert coercive influences, throws her out of her appropriate sphere. If these general principles are correct, they are entirely opposed to the plan of arraying females in any Abolition movement...because it leads them into the arena of political collision, not as peaceful mediators to hush the opposing elements, but as combatants to cheer up and carry forward the measures of strife.”

Speech, Lucretia Mott, *Discourse on Women*, December 17, 1849 (excerpt)  
Archives of Women’s Political Communication, Iowa State University  
<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/21/discourse-on-women-dec-17-1849/>

“Why should not woman seek to be a reformer? If she is to shrink from being such an iconoclast as shall ‘break the image of man’s lower worship,’ as so long held up to view; if she is to fear to exercise her reason, and her noblest powers, lest she should be thought to ‘attempt to act the man,’ and not ‘acknowledge his supremacy;’ if she is to be satisfied with the narrow sphere assigned her by man, nor aspire to a higher, lest she should transcend the bounds of female delicacy; truly it is a mournful prospect for woman. We would admit all the difference, that our great and beneficent Creator has made, in the relation of man and woman, nor would we seek to disturb this relation; but we deny that the present position of woman, is her true sphere of usefulness: nor will she attain to this sphere, until the disabilities and disadvantages, religious, civil, and social, which impede her progress, are removed out of her way. These restrictions have enervated her mind and paralysed her powers. While man assumes, that the present is the original state designed for woman, that the existing ‘differences are not arbitrary nor the result of accident,’ but grounded in nature; she will not make the necessary effort to obtain her just rights, lest it should subject her to the kind of scorn and contemptuous manner in which she has been spoken of.”

# ABOLITIONIST STARTER RESEARCH PACKET (CON'T)

Letter, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, "To the Women of the Republic," January 25, 1864 (excerpt)  
National Archives and Records Administration (306400)  
<https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/stanton/>



"We ask you to sign and circulate this petition for the ENTIRE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY. We have now ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND signatures, but we want a MILLION before Congress adjourns. Remember the President's Proclamation reaches only the Slaves of Rebels. The jails of LOYAL Kentucky are to-day 'crammed' with Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama slaves, advertised to be sold for their jail fees 'According to LAW,' precisely as before the war!!! While slavery exists ANYWHERE there can be freedom NOWHERE. THERE MUST BE A LAW ABOLISHING SLAVERY. We have undertaken to canvass [sic] the Nation for freedom. Women, you cannot vote or fight for your country. Your only way to be a power in the Government is through the exercise of this one, sacred, Constitutional 'RIGHT OF PETITION;' and we ask you to use it now to the utmost. Go to the rich, the poor, the high, the low, the soldier, the civilian, the white, the black gather up the names of all who hate slavery all who love LIBERTY, and would have it the LAW of the land and lay them at the feet of Congress, your silent but potent vote for human freedom guarded by the law."

# ABOLITIONIST STARTER RESEARCH PACKET (CON'T)

Petition for Universal Suffrage, January 29, 1866  
 National Archives and Records Administration  
<https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/suffrage>

## A PETITION FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.

**To the Senate and House of Representatives:**

The undersigned, Women of the United States, respectfully ask an amendment of the Constitution that shall prohibit the several States from disfranchising any of their citizens on the ground of sex.

In making our demand for Suffrage, we would call your attention to the fact that we represent fifteen million people—one half the entire population of the country—intelligent, virtuous, native-born American citizens; and yet stand outside the pale of political recognition.

The Constitution classes us as "free people," and counts us *whole* persons in the basis of representation; and yet are we governed without our consent, compelled to pay taxes without appeal, and punished for violations of law without choice of judge or juror.

The experience of all ages, the Declarations of the Fathers, the Statute Laws of our own day, and the fearful revolution through which we have just passed, all prove the uncertain tenure of life, liberty and property so long as the ballot—the only weapon of self-protection—is not in the hand of every citizen.

Therefore, as you are now amending the Constitution, and, in harmony with advancing civilization, placing new safeguards round the individual rights of four millions of emancipated slaves, we ask that you extend the right of Suffrage to Woman—the only remaining class of disfranchised citizens—and thus fulfil your Constitutional obligation "to Guarantee to every State in the Union a Republican form of Government."

As all partial application of Republican principles must ever breed a complicated legislation as well as a discontented people, we would pray your Honorable Body, in order to simplify the machinery of government and ensure domestic tranquillity, that you legislate hereafter for persons, citizens, tax-payers, and not for class or caste.

For justice and equality your petitioners will ever pray.

NAMES.	RESIDENCE.
<i>Eludy Stanton</i>	<i>New York</i>
<i>Susan B. Anthony</i>	<i>Rochester - N. Y.</i>
<i>Antoinette Brown Blackwell</i>	<i>New York</i>
<i>Luz Stone</i>	<i>Newark N. Jersey</i>
<i>Joanna S. Morse</i>	<i>48 Livingston. Brooklyn</i>
<i>Emeline S. Rose</i>	<i>New York</i>
<i>Harriet E. Eaton</i>	<i>6, West 14<sup>th</sup> Street N.Y.</i>
<i>Catherine C. Wilkeson</i>	<i>83 Clinton Place New York</i>
<i>Elizabeth C. Titton</i>	<i>48 Livingston St. Brooklyn</i>
<i>Mary Fowler Gilbert</i>	<i>293 W. 19<sup>th</sup> St New York</i>
<i>Mary E. Gibbs</i>	<i>New York</i>
<i>Mr. Griffith</i>	<i>New York.</i>

# ABOLITIONIST STARTER RESEARCH PACKET (CON'T)

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Speech, Sojourner Truth, *Address to the First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association*, May 9, 1867 (excerpt)  
Archives of Women's Political Communication, Iowa State University  
<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/21/address-to-the-first-annual-meeting-of-the-american-equal-rights-association-may-9-1867/>

"My friends, I am rejoiced that you are glad, but I don't know how you will feel when I get through. I come from another field – the country of the slave. They have got their liberty – so much good luck to have slavery partly destroyed; not entirely. I want it root and branch destroyed. Then we will all be free indeed. I feel that if I have to answer for the deeds done in my body just as much as man, I have a right to have as much as a man. There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before. So I am for keeping the thing going while things are stirring; because if we wait till it is still, it will take a great while to get it going again."

Amendment XIV, U.S. Constitution, July 9, 1868 (excerpt)  
National Archives and Records Administration  
<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=43>

## AMENDMENT XIV Section 1.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Speech, Frederick Douglass, *We Welcome the Fifteenth Amendment*, May 12–13, 1869 (excerpt)  
*The Speeches of Frederick Douglass: A Critical Edition*, 2018

"I must say that I do not see how any one can pretend that there is the same urgency in giving the ballot to women as to the negro. With us, the matter is a question of life and death. It is a matter of existence, at least, in fifteen states of the Union. When women, because they are women, are hunted down through the cities of New York and New Orleans; when they are dragged from their houses and hung upon lamp-posts; when their children are torn from their arms, and their brains dashed out upon the pavement; when they are objects of insult and outrage at every turn; when they are in danger of having their homes burnt down over their heads; when their children are not allowed to enter schools; then they will have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal to our own."

# ABOLITIONIST STARTER RESEARCH PACKET (CON'T)

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Newspaper Article, "The Slave-Women of America," October 6, 1870 (excerpt)

*The Revolution*

[https://archive.org/stream/revolution-1870-10-06/1870-10-06\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/revolution-1870-10-06/1870-10-06_djvu.txt)

"The recognition of the rights of man is the grandest feature of this nineteenth century; the recognition of the rights of woman is next in the natural order of evolution — a truth equally grand, equally vital, and which will, in its turn, revolutionize the social and political status of the world.

"Of these rights that of the franchise is but one. Mrs. Stanton has well said on this subject, 'The negro was first emancipated, and then suffrage was given him; and I am not sure that this is not the natural order for woman. She must demand first her deliverance from slavery, claim her right to herself, soul and body, and then ask for the suffrage.'

"It was a glorious day for this republic when she shook herself free from the disgrace of negro slavery, and declaring that she would have no subject race within her boundaries, broke the chains of four-million bondmen. It will be a still more glorious day in her annals when the republic shall declare the injustice of a slavery of sex, and shall set free her millions of bond women!"

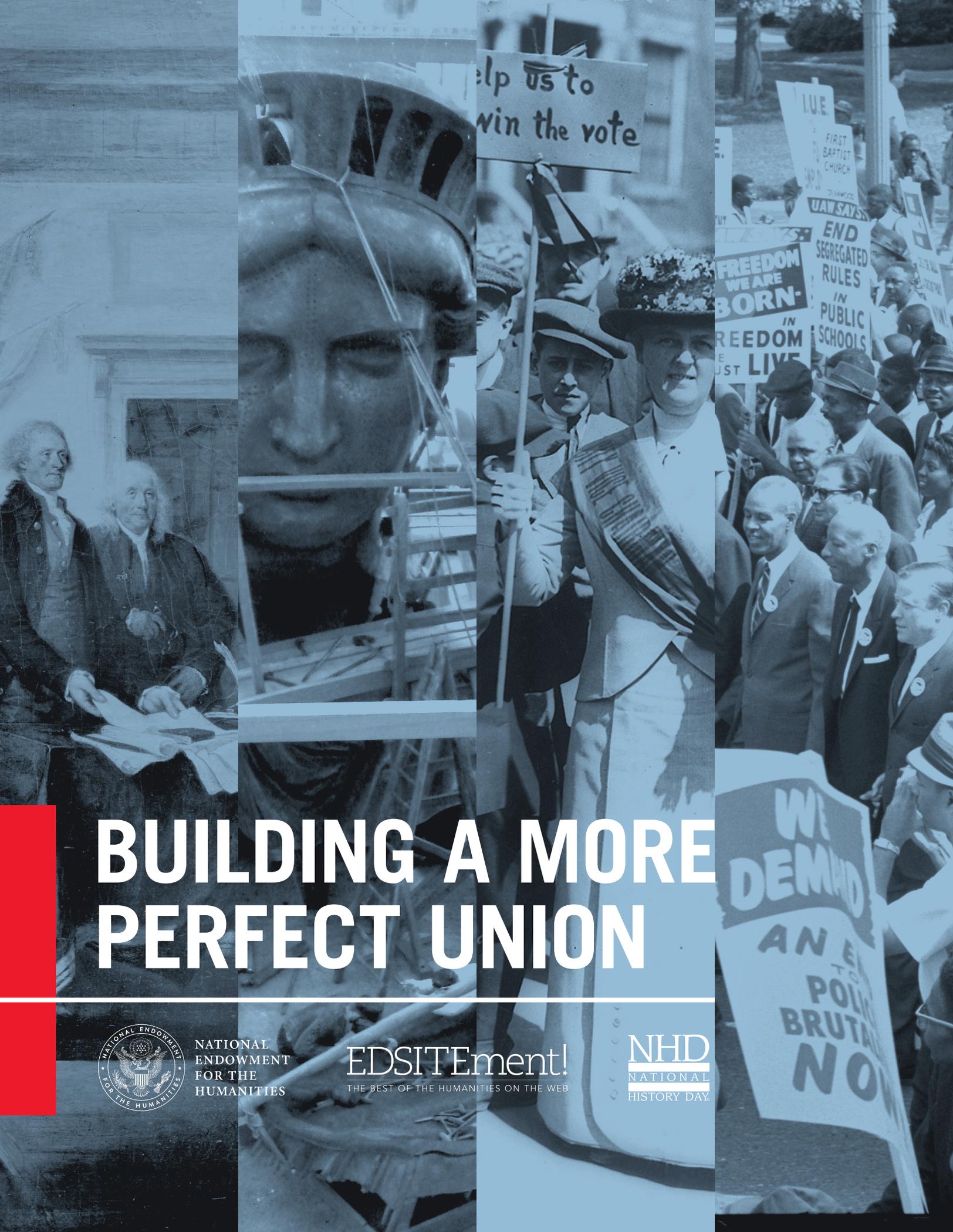
# STUDENT PERFORMANCE TASK OPTIONS

**Guiding Question:** How was women’s involvement in the Abolitionist Movement an important step toward securing their political agency?

	INTERVIEW CHALLENGE	CIVIC CHALLENGE	ARTISTIC CHALLENGE
Type of Project	Oral History	Letter to a Government Official	Poster
Description	Create a mock interview with a woman involved in the Abolitionist Movement. Write seven or eight questions that a historian would ask one of these women. Ask general questions using phrases like, “Tell me about your experience...,” “How did you feel about...?” and “What do you recall about...?” Ask specific questions that reflect your research. Relate your questions to the guiding question. Then, answer your questions as the historical figure that you select.	Select one of the women in the Abolitionist Movement who you have researched and write a letter from that individual’s perspective to a government official, such as the president or a senator. Be sure to research who was serving in the appropriate political office at the time of your letter. In the letter, discuss the accomplishments of the Abolitionist Movement and the author’s role. Explain how women helped to empower African American men and developed agency themselves. Relate your letter to the guiding question.	Create a poster demonstrating how women gained agency and empowered themselves and others from their early participation in the Abolitionist Movement to their demand for woman’s suffrage. Include specific visual references to events or symbols of the movement supported by your research. Relate your images to the guiding question.
Must Haves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Title (Interview with...)</li> <li>› Introduce the interviewee and provide background information that addresses her role in the Abolitionist Movement.</li> <li>› Develop seven or eight questions asking the interviewee about the condition of women in the nineteenth century, her role in the Abolitionist Movement, and the demand for rights for African Americans and women.</li> <li>› Edit all writing to avoid spelling and grammar errors.</li> <li>› Make a connection to the theme “a more perfect union.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Title (Letter to...)</li> <li>› Write the addressee(s) and their address/location as the first lines on the left. Use proper letter format.</li> <li>› A salutation (Dear Mr. President,...)</li> <li>› Include an introduction of your woman and the purpose of your letter. Address one of the main points of your purpose. Include facts, statistics, and examples that support your point. Also, explain what you want your reader to do to address this issue.</li> <li>› Summarize the main points and state a call to action for the official.</li> <li>› Edit all writing to avoid spelling and grammar errors.</li> <li>› Make a connection to the theme “a more perfect union.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› State your argument in a concise format</li> <li>› Provide at least three pieces of visual evidence to support the thesis.</li> <li>› Visually interpret your notes in an illustration that uses words, symbols, and pictures about women in the Abolitionist Movement.</li> <li>› Edit all writing to avoid spelling and grammar errors.</li> <li>› Make a connection to the theme “a more perfect union.”</li> </ul>
Options	The interview may be written or recorded.	The letter may be handwritten or typed.	The poster may be created in hard copy format or digitally.

**Do not forget:** In your project, you should consider how the oppression and exploitation of women led them to demand equality and justice for themselves and others. Evaluate the changes in women’s roles over time and determine how their participation in the Abolitionist Movement led to a more perfect union.

Whatever challenge you select, please remember that these are the stories of real people, and their experiences should be described and analyzed in a respectful manner.



# BUILDING A MORE PERFECT UNION



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

EDSITEment!

THE BEST OF THE HUMANITIES ON THE WEB

NHD  
NATIONAL  
HISTORY DAY