

Name _____ Date _____



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Complaints in the Declaration of Sentiments

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote a Declaration of Sentiments for the first Woman's Rights Convention, held in Seneca, New York, in 1848. She based the document on Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Like Jefferson, Stanton included a list of complaints.

I. Match these summary versions of Stanton's complaints, written in contemporary language, with her original complaints on the next page.

1. Women had to obey laws created without their input.
2. Women could not attend college.
3. Married women were, for all intents and purposes, legally dead.
4. Women were not allowed to vote.
5. Women's self-esteem was ruined due to their treatment at the hands of men.
6. Women had fewer rights than men with low morals and men who were not citizens.
7. Unmarried women were taxed with no say in how the money was to be spent.
8. Women could not be ministers, doctors, or lawyers. Women's work was low-paying.
9. Women in divorce cases had no say over matters such as who would raise the children.
10. A married woman had no rights to property or the money she earned.
11. Men were given complete control over and responsibility for their wives.
12. Men were unrightfully "playing God" by deciding what was appropriate for women.
13. Because women could not vote, they could be more easily exploited.
14. Women were not allowed to hold important positions in the church or the state.
15. There was a different standard of behavior for men and women.

Stanton's Original Complaints:

- _____ He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.
- _____ He has compelled her to submit to law in the formation of which she had no voice.
- _____ He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men, both natives and foreigners.
- _____ Having deprived her of this first right as a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.
- _____ He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.
- _____ He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.
- _____ He has made her morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master – the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty and to administer chastisement.
- _____ He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes and, in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of the women – the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man and giving all power into his hands.
- _____ After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.
- _____ He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.
- _____ He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.
- _____ He allows her in church, as well as state, but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church.
- _____ He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.
- _____ He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.
- _____ He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

II. Questions (Use the numbers above to identify complaints.):

1. Which complaint(s) would you consider the most serious?

2. Which complaint(s) most resemble complaints of colonists prior to the Revolutionary War?

3. Which complaint(s) relate more to entrenched attitudes about women than they do to legal obstacles to equality?

4. Which—if any—of the problems referred to in the complaints do you regard as still problematic today?

5. Which problem(s) referred to in the complaints, once solved, likely led to an improvement in society for everyone?

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Complaints in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Original Order

(NOTES: A contemporary translation of each complaint appears in bold-face type. The numbering, provided here as an aid in identifying complaints for discussion, is not in the original document.)

1. He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

1. Women were not allowed to vote.

2. He has compelled her to submit to law in the formation of which she had no voice.

2. Women had to obey laws created without their input.

3. He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men, both natives and foreigners.

3. Women had fewer rights than men with low morals and men who were not citizens.

4. Having deprived her of this first right as a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

4. Because women could not vote, they could be more easily exploited.

5. He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

5. Married women were, for all intents and purposes, legally dead.

6. He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

6. A married woman had no rights to property or the money she earned.

7. He has made her morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master – the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty and to administer chastisement.

7. Men were given complete control over and responsibility for their wives.

8. He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes and, in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of the women—the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man and giving all power into his hands.

8. Women in divorce cases had no say over matters such as who would raise the children.

9. After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

9. Unmarried women were taxed with no say in how the money was to be spent.

10. He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

10. Women could not be ministers, doctors, or lawyers. Women's work was low-paying.

11. He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.

11. Women could not attend college.

12. He allows her in church, as well as state, but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church.

12. Women were not allowed to hold important positions in the church or the state.

13. He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

13. There was a different standard of behavior for men and women.

14. He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

14. Men were unrightfully "playing God" by deciding what was appropriate for women.

15. He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

15. Women's self-esteem was ruined due to their treatment at the hands of men.

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Choosing the Foremothers

Directions: Use this form for summarizing the most important information about potential “Foremothers.” Fill in the names of candidates in the left-hand column. Then complete the boxes according to the column headings.

Your Name: _____			Ranking Among Your Candidates
Names of Candidates:	Significant Achievements	Reason(s) for Inclusion	