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U.S. Women's Rights Pioneers:

The Epistemological and Political Asymmetry of Social Movement Framing

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Sociology

by

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by

Lauren Ann Bickell

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With gratitude, onward.

ABSTRACT

U.S. Women's Rights Pioneers:

The Epistemological and Political Asymmetry of Social Movement Framing

by

Lauren Ann Bickell

Contemporaneous 19th century U.S. social activists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth are publicly memorialized as women's rights pioneers. In my thesis, I situate these historical figures in conversation by qualitatively analyzing three textual documents: (1) "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848) by Elizabeth Cady Stanton; (2) "Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States" (1876) by Susan B. Anthony; and (3) "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851) by Sojourner Truth. My thesis deduces "woman" as a salient, contested, and asymmetrical epistemological and political category, outlining its travels across the three documents. To begin, I pair the existing historiography of 19th century U.S. women's rights with a theoretical framework encompassing intersectionality, feminist and social epistemology, and social movement framing. I conduct qualitative content analysis and identify key sites of congruence and difference between Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth.

My analysis finds that all three figures construct "woman" by developing "rights" frames and diagnoses of grievance. I propose that white feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony frame "woman" *vertically* by deferring to the seeming preeminence of the U.S. nation. In contrast, I propose that Black feminist Sojourner Truth frames "woman"

horizontally by synthesizing her feminist consciousness, lived experience of enslavement, and personal religiosity. These findings illustrate how historical trajectories of U.S. women's rights are contoured by power, race, class, gender, and citizenship status. My thesis makes scholarly contributions by recontextualizing U.S. women's rights memorialization and interlacing feminist and social epistemology with social movement theory.

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INTRODUCTION

On August 26, 2020, the centennial day and year of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument* became publicly viewable in Central Park of New York City. The *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument*, the first commemoration of historical women to be placed in Central Park, features bronze figures of 19th century U.S. social activists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth depicted in fervent conversation at a round table.¹ The *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument* was originally intended only to depict Stanton and Anthony, a choice spurring public criticism and the subsequent redesign to include Truth. Its premise does not identify Stanton and Anthony as white feminists nor Truth as a Black feminist; the historical delimitations of race that characterize U.S. women’s rights movements are unacknowledged. Public criticism by scholars and media writers alike highlights the monument’s ahistoricism and insensitivity to the racism perpetrated by U.S. white feminisms.²

I introduce the *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument* to emphasize the curatorial choice to depict Stanton, Anthony, and Truth together and in receptive dialogue. To this end, I situate three historical documents in conversation and conduct a qualitative content analysis: (1) “Declaration of Sentiments” (1848) by Elizabeth Cady Stanton; (2) “Declaration

1. Statues in Central Park of New York City previously only depicted fictional women, such as literary characters. The *Portrait Monument* (1920) located in the U.S. Capitol rotunda building in Washington, D.C. was unveiled shortly after the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and features marble busts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and long-standing Quaker reformer and social activist Lucretia Mott. In 2009, a bronze bust of Sojourner Truth was installed in Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol. Commemorative monuments of women are scarce in the U.S. and “fewer than 4 percent of the seventy thousand sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places are associated with women” (Doss 2010, 232).

2. For examples of criticism prior to the redesign, see op-eds by historian Martha S. Jones (2019) and writer Brent Staples (2019). For examples of criticism in response to the redesign and reveal, see an open letter signed by over twenty scholars (Small 2019) and an op-ed by art historian Erin Thompson (2020).

of Rights of the Women of the United States” (1876) by Susan B. Anthony; and (3) “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851) by Sojourner Truth. Taken at face value, 19th century U.S. women’s rights included natural categories of gender and symmetrical social movement actors. In reality, the epistemological and social movement stakes of claiming category membership are contentious and contingent. Furthermore, social movement actors do not equivalently hold power to mobilize grievances and cement their remembrances for subsequent generations.

I present textual evidence from these documents to dispute the historical fiction that Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth were equally stationed and shared compatible categories of “woman.” My thesis explores the research question:

How is “woman” employed as an aggrieved category in each of the three documents?

This research question positions the figures in conversation and pinpoints the crux of my interest: “woman” as a category of aggrievement and site of epistemological and political variation. During analysis, I denote “woman” and its inflected or related forms using quotation marks. References to gendered language are taken directly from the speakers and highlight how foundational gendered categories are to each document.

My thesis develops a theoretical framework that conceptualizes Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth as *both* epistemic agents *and* social movement actors. Stanton, Anthony, and Truth are epistemic agents because their women’s rights politics reflect *knowledges*—perceptions, justifications, and beliefs. Each perceives conditions of aggrievement and justifies her claims-making using particular beliefs. In addition, Stanton, Anthony, and Truth *frame*—mobilize, platform, and orient—their knowledges in the context of a larger U.S. women’s rights movement.

I find that all three figures construct “woman” by developing “rights” frames and diagnoses of aggrievement. Their epistemic agency and framing choices are contoured by social location, primarily categories of race, class, gender, and citizenship status, and further augmented or stifled by power. For example, I propose that white feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony frame “woman” *vertically* by deferring to the seeming preeminence of the U.S. nation. In contrast, I propose that Black feminist Sojourner Truth frames “woman” *horizontally* by synthesizing her feminist consciousness, lived experience of enslavement, and personal religiosity. These findings illustrate how each speaker orients to both feminist knowledge and social movement mobilization.

My thesis makes scholarly contributions by reimagining U.S. women’s rights memorialization and bridging historiographical, epistemological, and social movement literatures. While previous historiographical literature identifies Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth as contemporaries with largely divergent race and gender politics (Jones 2020; Painter 1996; Tetrault 2014; Ware 2019), they are rarely reimagined and analyzed in direct conversation. I not only situate these figures in conversation but also shift Stanton and Anthony away from the point of center that they would often narrate from (Tetrault 2014). In tandem, I imbue these figures and their respective documents with epistemic agency and locate their dialogue in a social movement context. Thus, I posit a theoretical framework that consolidates the epistemological *and* political components of social movement framing. By making these methodological and theoretical choices, I endeavor to recontextualize U.S. women’s rights memorialization.

First, I provide historiographical background, including secondary and biographical sources, to investigate the significance of the figures and documents at hand. Subsequently, I

introduce my literature review, which features a synthesis of intersectionality, feminist and social epistemology, and social movement framing. Then, I briefly describe my textual data and qualitative content analysis methods. I proceed to highlight textual evidence taken from the documents and propose salient sites of congruence and difference between Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth. Finally, I provide a summation of key findings and propositions, discuss the scholarly contributions of this thesis, and suggest pathways for future research.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

In this section, I develop historiographical context for 19th century U.S. women's rights and outline the historical relationships between Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, and their respective documents. My thesis interrogates the semantics of "women's rights," especially categorizations of "woman" emergent in the 19th century U.S. According to historian Joan Scott, articulations of gendered categories involve urgent epistemological and political stakes:

We can write the history of that process [contingency of classification] only if we recognize that 'man' and 'woman' are at once empty and overflowing categories. Empty because they have no ultimate, transcendental meaning. Overflowing because even when they appear to be fixed, they still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions. (1986, 1074)

These epistemological and political stakes characterize the struggle for classification. To classify is to demarcate membership; a seemingly master category of "woman" produces absence or elision. My thesis is not an interrogation of gender binarism at large but rather pinpoints sites of epistemological and political difference provoked by categories of "woman" in the 19th century U.S. Scott (1986) suggests an epistemological problem, namely that gendered categories are informed by power asymmetry and obscure alternative

frameworks of understanding. How Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth claim “woman” in their respective milieu(s) highlights such epistemological and political consequences.

Dominant paradigms often center Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as canonical figures of U.S. feminist origins. Stanton—and Anthony as an ahistorical companion—are associated with the Seneca Falls Convention, the oft cited time and place of U.S. women’s rights origins.³ In addition, dominant paradigms frequently posit a periodization of U.S. feminisms that begins in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention and culminates in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.⁴ Such periodization not only flattens 19th century U.S. feminisms but also discounts longer histories of voting rights and ultimately conflates women’s rights and the single-issue demand of suffrage. This periodization can be attributed to the chronology first outlined in the *History of Woman Suffrage* series, a purportedly exhaustive historical narration and documentarian undertaking on the parts of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and their white suffragist contemporary Matilda Joslyn Gage (Ware 2019, 37). The first volume of *History of Woman Suffrage* periodizes movement origins in 1848—the year of the Seneca Falls Convention—while designating any prior mobilization as “prehistory” (Tetrault 2014, 121). The sixth and final volume, edited by Susan B. Anthony’s biographer Ida Husted Harper, dates the culmination of the U.S. women’s rights movement to 1920.

3. Susan B. Anthony was not in attendance at the Seneca Falls Convention, yet her presence is often popularly assumed (Tetrault 2014; Ware 2019). Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton would not meet until 1851, three years after the Seneca Falls Convention.

4. See Hewitt (2010, 2012), Laughlin et al. (2010), Tetrault (2014), and Ware (2019).

Historians have complicated the Seneca Falls Convention's relationship to feminist origins and thus challenged its explanatory value for catalyzing broader women's rights endeavors in the U.S. (Isenberg 1998; Tetrault 2014). Ginzberg argues that chronological emphasis on the Seneca Falls Convention is reductive and the event's "distinctiveness" and influence may be overemphasized, especially considering prior years of women's public engagement and fomentation of grievance (2009, 53). According to Hewitt, multiple contemporaneous counternarratives existed, including the coalitional politics of Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, Frederick Douglass, and others (2012, 669-670). More recent and revisionist waves of the historiography have both extended the periodization of U.S. women's rights and broadened who is considered an active participant within its scope. For example, Martha S. Jones posits her recent project on U.S. Black women's voting rights activism as a correction of the historical record first documented by Stanton and Anthony et al. in *History of Woman Suffrage* and reproduced by later historians (2020, 10).

Historian Louise Michele Newman describes how "elite white women's analysis of the woman question did not go unchallenged" as Black women "successfully articulated alternative discourses of womanhood" concurrent with and following the Seneca Falls Convention (1999, 35). What Newman (1999) refers to as "the woman question" captures the contested boundaries of gendered categories and the participation of women in U.S. public life. In the context of 19th century U.S. Black feminisms, women's rights endeavors were often inextricably linked to abolitionist organizing (Jones 2020).⁵ In the 1830s, Black women

5. I note that the descriptors "Black feminisms" and "Black feminist" are anachronistic. For the sake of clarity, this language is used to highlight U.S. Black women whose politics engaged an interplay of race and gender.

mobilized in institutions such as churches and abolitionist societies, engaging race and gender simultaneously and complicating clean demarcations of public and private (Jones 2007). For example, 19th century U.S. Black feminist lecturer and activist Maria Stewart began public speaking over a decade prior to the Seneca Falls Convention (Davis 1983, 58).

Early volumes of *History of Woman Suffrage* were critiqued by their editors' contemporaries for whitewashing suffragist contribution and centering gender as a primary or isolated site of aggrivement (Jones 2020; Ware 2019). To preempt critique of the *History of Woman Suffrage* series, Elizabeth Cady Stanton declared: "[W]e who have made the history are best fitted to write it" (quoted in Hogan 2006, 6-7). Stanton's judgment of "history-making" is a statement of power. The historiographical arc evidences how *History of Woman Suffrage* has been absorbed into the canon (Isenberg 1998, 2). The scarcity of a robust archival record positions *History of Woman Suffrage* as one of the few available and long-standing sources for historians to consult. For example, in her biographical account of Sojourner Truth, historian Nell Irvin Painter simultaneously critiques the narrative of *History of Woman Suffrage* while relying on its documentation, in part due to the lack of alternative archival sources (1996, 289).

In the scope of my thesis, I utilize *History of Woman Suffrage* primarily as an historiographical source rather than subjecting its contents to a systematic qualitative analysis. The *History of Woman Suffrage* is an implication rather than a unit of analysis; it is a by-product of epistemic and political power asymmetries. My review of the existing historiography includes the *History of Woman Suffrage* series to highlight the ascendancy of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as canonical figures. The *History of Woman*

Suffrage demonstrates how actors can manipulate their memorialization, an epistemological and political problem implied by this thesis's analysis.

Significance of the "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was instrumental in drafting the "Declaration of Sentiments," the rhetorical centerpiece of the Seneca Falls Convention. The "Declaration of Sentiments" is a compilation of grievances and appropriates the rhetorical model of the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776).⁶ While the original source introduces a list of grievances against the British crown, Stanton's reformulation compiles a list of grievances against patriarchal subjugation. Early and formative historical accounts by Eleanor Flexner (1959) and Ellen Carol DuBois ([1978] 1999) deem the "Declaration of Sentiments" prescient for ultimately inspiring an operational U.S. women's rights agenda (Isenberg 1998, 4). In conjunction with the Seneca Falls Convention, the "Declaration of Sentiments" was later memorialized in the first *History of Woman Suffrage* volume, published in 1881. Stanton's involvement in the *History of Woman Suffrage* enterprise is seen as the pinnacle of her "rhetorical history" and foray into canonization (Hogan 2006, 7).

Prior historiographical and biographical sources often describe Elizabeth Cady Stanton as a philosophical giant (Davis 2008; Ginzberg 2009; Griffith 1984; Tetrault 2014). These interpretations have emphasized her political philosophy but not its epistemological underpinnings. I nuance these interpretations by considering how Stanton orients to knowledge and meaning-making in her political grievances. In addition, I consider what the descriptor of Stanton as a philosophical giant suggests about her agency and proximity to

6. Contemporaneous abolitionist organizations adopted their own "Declarations" and partly inspired Stanton's choice of title (Davis 2008, 50).

power. Stanton's philosophical prowess is assumed as a conclusion or near truism rather than treated as an epistemological and political problem. By taking seriously these historiographical claims about Stanton, my thesis posits a novel descriptive and critical framework in which to situate her philosophy.

Significance of the "Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States" (1876)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton is revered by some as the philosophical matriarch of 19th century U.S. feminisms, yet her long-time collaborator Susan B. Anthony garners more popular remembrance in comparison (Tetrault 2014).⁷ While Stanton adopted the role of philosopher, Anthony was a complementary and pragmatic organizer in their political partnership (Tetrault 2014). In 1869, Stanton and Anthony founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), catalyzed by Reconstruction-era politics and divergent strategizing for suffrage legislation among U.S. women's rights activists. In the endeavor to organize for a federal amendment, the U.S. women's rights campaign and suffrage as a single-issue demand began to resemble a conflation.

Intended as an act of protest against ongoing suffrage disenfranchisement, Susan B. Anthony presented "Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States" on behalf of the NWSA during centennial celebrations of the U.S. republic on July 4, 1876 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. According to Tetrault, Stanton and Anthony recognized the U.S. centennial year as an opportunity for "disrupting historical narratives" and cementing their legacies as social movement leaders (2014, 99). The "Declaration of Rights of the Women of

7. The popular travels of Susan B. Anthony include her historic feature as the first woman to appear on a "circulating coin" and her frequently mandated inclusion in U.S. social studies curriculums (Lange 2020). For historical context, the prominent National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)—the eventual merger of two suffrage organizations—viewed Anthony favorably while "censuring" Stanton in her later years (Tetrault 2014).

the United States” is recalled in the opening of the third volume of *History of Woman Suffrage*, published in 1886.

The “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States” remains in conversation with the “Declaration of Sentiments” and attributes U.S. women’s rights origins to the Seneca Falls Convention. While there is a chronological gap between the two documents, their close relationship prompts a worthwhile comparison. Both the “Declaration of Sentiments” and the “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States” similarly rely upon the U.S. Declaration of Independence for its rhetorical and philosophical architecture. Akin to the “Declaration of Sentiments,” the “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States” outlines a compilation of grievances against patriarchal subjugation.

Significance of “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851)

As I explore throughout this thesis, U.S. Black feminist and abolitionist Sojourner Truth posited a contemporaneous epistemological alternative to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. While Truth participated in U.S. women’s rights forums proximate to Stanton and Anthony, their positions were not unanimously aligned. The *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument* website summarizes Truth’s biography as follows:

Sojourner Truth, was born into slavery in Ulster County, New York in 1797. She went on to become one of the most powerful advocates for human rights in the nation. She escaped from slavery in 1827 and later joined the abolitionist movement. She lived in and around New York City from 1828 to 1843. By the 1850s Sojourner Truth joined the fight for women’s rights as well. At the 1851 Women’s Rights Convention held in Akron, Ohio, Truth delivered what is now recognized as one of the most famous abolitionist and women’s rights speeches in American history, ‘Ain’t I a Woman?’⁸

8. Monumental Women, “About,” Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Statue Fund Inc., 2021, <https://monumentalwomen.org/about/>.

The claim that Truth's participations in abolitionism and women's rights were discrete or mutually exclusive events is ahistorical. Truth's coupling of abolitionism and women's rights prompts important questions about the genealogies of intersectionality and U.S. Black feminisms.

The name *Sojourner Truth* and words "*Ain't I a Woman?*" spark a close and nearly synonymous relationship in public memory. Truth was more prolific than is popularly known and "*Ain't I a Woman?*" comprises one of a number of addresses she delivered to public audiences. My choice to include "*Ain't I a Woman?*" in the forthcoming analysis is not intended to assume this mythology of Truth or reinforce the naturalization of her story; rather, its assimilation in public memory warrants thorough interrogation of the conditions under which Truth lived and intervened in abolitionism and women's rights.

Truth challenged the analogy of U.S. white feminist grievance to conditions of slavery (Jones 2020). The first *History of Woman Suffrage* volume opens with such an analogy, contending that "the prolonged *slavery of woman* [emphasis added] is the darkest page in human history" (13, 1889). According to Jones, Truth's conception of women's rights concerned materiality, highlighted the lived experience of enslavement, and was "no mere metaphor" (82, 2020). There are competing transcriptions of "*Ain't I a Woman?*" and "everything we know of" Truth "comes through other people, mostly educated white women" (Painter 1996, 174). "*Ain't I a Woman?*" is archived in the first *History of Woman Suffrage* volume. The version included in the first *History of Woman Suffrage* volume is attributed to U.S. white feminist Frances Dana Gage, whose transcription fictionalizes and dramatizes Truth's statements. Gage's transcription was published in 1863, over a decade after Truth's reported delivery of the speech.

In my thesis, I utilize the transcription of Marius Robinson, a contemporaneous abolitionist and editor of the newspaper *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. Robinson attended the Akron Convention, documented the proceedings, and published his transcription in June 1851, one month after Sojourner Truth's reported delivery of the speech.⁹ Contemporary historians including Jones (2020) and Ware (2019) favor his transcription. According to Robinson's transcription, Truth does not once pose the question, "Ain't I a woman?"¹⁰ However, Gage's transcription is the most popularly recognized version, despite being a mythological story (Painter 1996). For example, Painter (1996) observes that the white audience presiding at the Akron Convention was not outwardly hostile to Truth as Gage depicted.

Sojourner Truth is one of few Black feminists mentioned in the first *History of Woman Suffrage* volume. Throughout the first *History of Woman Suffrage* volume, Truth is mentioned in a handful of pages, including a reiteration of "Ain't I a Woman?" transcribed by Gage:

Sojourner combined in herself, as an individual, the two most hated elements of humanity. She was black, and she was a woman and all the insults that could be cast upon color and sex were together hurled at her; but there she stood, calm and dignified, a grand, wise woman, who could neither read nor write, and yet with deep insight could penetrate the very soul of the universe about her. (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage [1881] 1889, 567)

The aforementioned excerpt contains a rather tokenizing image of Truth and suggests that she was admirable to overcome the burdens of her embodied social locations. These descriptions are evidence of Painter's (1996) argument that Truth became a source of

9. According to the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics (2021) and Painter (1996), Sojourner Truth and Marius Robinson were friends.

10. Marius Robinson does not include a title in his transcription of Truth's address and broadly introduces her as a compelling figure in attendance at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. For the sake of legibility, I use "Ain't I a Woman?" as a loose title when referring to Truth's address.

symbolism for U.S. white feminists to conveniently employ. Painter describes how Stanton and Anthony included Truth in their *History of Woman Suffrage* series because she was seemingly inoffensive in comparison to her Black feminist contemporaries (1996, 233). In this reading, Truth is simultaneously a selective inclusion—still insidious and marginal—and elision, similarly replicated by the contemporary *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I introduce my theoretical motivations and identify literatures that supplement the historiography of 19th century U.S. women’s rights. My thesis is situated at interdisciplinary junctions of the historical, philosophical, and sociological and in conversation with intersectionality scholarship. I engage with three theoretical bodies of literature: (1) intersectionality; (2) feminist and social epistemology; and (3) social movement framing. My thesis makes scholarly contributions by reimagining U.S. women’s rights memorialization and positing a novel theoretical synthesis.

Intersectionality: Historical Genealogy and Epistemological Intervention

The concept of intersectionality exists in the interplay of experiential and structural, coheres the personal and political, and centers race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, citizenship status, and numerous other social locations as mutually constitutive forces of inequality (May 2015). By identifying the simultaneity of social locations, intersectionality envisions a multi rather than single-axis framework for inequality. In her now canonical overview of intersectionality, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) utilizes employment discrimination cases to illustrate how the experiences of Black women—their joint social locations of race and gender—are rendered illegible. While the original theorization of intersectionality is commonly attributed to Crenshaw, extended and nuanced intellectual

histories of its genesis have since been written (Collins and Bilge 2016; Hancock 2016). Importantly, intersectionality emerges as a necessary analytic and liberatory intervention to counter ahistorical and monolithic conceptions of feminisms and explore alternative modes of memory (Hemmings 2011; May 2015).

In intersectionality scholarship, Sojourner Truth and “Ain’t I a Woman?” are frequently cited as historical precursors. For example, Crenshaw (1989) references Truth and later Black feminist Anna Julia Cooper to contextualize a larger epistemological and social justice genealogy that finds roots in the 19th century U.S. The lifetime of Truth and her delivery of “Ain’t I a Woman?” predate the attribution of the term “intersectionality” to Crenshaw by nearly 150 years. I repurpose the descriptor “intersectionality-like thought” from Ange-Marie Hancock (2016) when considering the genealogical placement of Truth. “Intersectionality-like thought” (Hancock 2016) encompasses historical articulations of multi-axis oppressions which predate the formal crystallization of “intersectionality” as a term. To characterize Sojourner Truth’s 19th century case as “intersectionality” would be an anachronism.

Of chief pertinence to this thesis, intersectionality encourages epistemological (re)configuration of social categories. Intersectionality engages a paradigmatic shift in epistemology, politics of representation, and memory (May 2014, 2015). Patricia Hill Collins observes that intersectionality makes epistemological and methodological interventions which remain under-explored (2019, 122). Similarly, May contends that intersectionality reflects a fundamentally disruptive epistemological intervention: “Intersectionality is an *epistemological practice* that contests dominant imaginaries: drawing on different foundational premises, it is useful for interrogating conventional knowledge practices and for

unpacking gaps and silences therein” (2015, 34). For example, Black feminist thought profoundly validates the epistemological insights of experience, a formative principle for frameworks of intersectionality (Collins 2019; May 2015).

Feminist and Social Epistemology: Knowledge of “Woman’s” Aggrievement

How Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth claim “woman” as an aggrieved category reflects an epistemological orientation to experience—how does she *know* herself to be aggrieved? Drawing on feminist and social epistemology, I consider how each speaker and document is imbued with epistemic agency. Black feminist philosopher Kristie Dotson defines *epistemic agency* as “the ability” to mobilize and potentially “revise” shared knowledge resources (2014, 115-116). *Epistemic* or knowledge resources include “language, concepts, and criteria” which facilitate “making sense of and evaluating our experiences” (Pohlhaus Jr. 2012, 718). Stanton, Anthony, and Truth communicate an aggrieved subjectivity, crystallized in the form of publicly delivered grievances, using particular concepts and allegories. Ultimately, their perceptions, justifications, and beliefs rely upon epistemic resources.

Echoing feminist epistemology, Pohlhaus Jr. describes how epistemic agents are both “situated”—embedded in a social fabric—and “interdependent”—reliant upon collectively shared epistemic resources (2012, 716-717). Thus, epistemic agency is not a wholly individual phenomenon; it is mediated by social context. Dotson contends that epistemic agency can be channeled for rhetorical purpose and discernment of one’s social experiences (2014, 115-116). Epistemic agency and epistemic resources cannot be divorced from the realm of the experiential (Pohlhaus Jr. 2012, 718). I endeavor to interrogate rather than assume the epistemic agency granted to Stanton and Anthony in the extant historiography of

19th century U.S. feminisms, a theoretical choice thus far under-explored. In addition, I highlight Truth as an epistemic agent by analyzing her configuration of social categories. My application of epistemic agency to the historical figures and documents at hand is a novel contribution. In addition, I ponder the question of if, how, and when epistemic agency transitions to epistemic power.

Pohlhaus Jr. (2020) furthers the directional metaphor employed by feminist philosopher María Lugones to contend that the use of epistemic resources can be either vertical or horizontal in its orientation. Adapted from Lugones (2003), Pohlhaus Jr. suggests that a vertical use of epistemic resources “fixes attention on those privileged by systems of oppression” whereas horizontality is coalitional and enables movement from one marginalized mode of meaning-making to another (2020, 245). When an actor utilizes epistemic resources under conditions of oppression, their stance can be deferential or solidaristic (Pohlhaus Jr. 2020). Even if politically expedient, an actor’s use of dominant epistemic resources prompts questions about their proximity to power.

Previous literature highlights how intersectionality and “intersectionality-like thought” (Hancock 2016) have long confronted and anticipated epistemic injustice, early evidenced by the work of 19th century U.S. Black feminists including Maria Stewart, Anna Julia Cooper, Frances Watkins Harper, Sojourner Truth, and countless others (Collins and Bilge 2016; Hancock 2016; May 2015). In her 2007 book project *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, white feminist philosopher Miranda Fricker formalized a theory of epistemic injustice, broadly defined as asymmetry in contribution and access to credible and legitimate frameworks for social experience. Fricker’s (2007) original account of

epistemic injustice does not invoke intersectionality yet nonetheless affiliates itself with feminist epistemology.

An intersectional framework for epistemic injustice is both urgent and astute as Fricker's theorizing chiefly concerns stratifications of power, lived experience, and politics of location. In feminist epistemological projects, it remains increasingly exigent to renounce gender primacy and conceive of inequalities as compounding and multiple (Alcoff and Potter 1993). I argue that a coupling of epistemic injustice and intersectionality bolsters the former's intellectual purchase and further incorporation in liberatory epistemologies. In accord with May (2015), I posit a revision of epistemic injustice that explicitly aligns with intersectionality and recognizes genealogies of Black feminisms and women of color feminisms that have historically highlighted incidence of erasure throughout their theorizing. Relatedly, my thesis engages the larger historical scope of intersectionality as a paradigm by further pinpointing white feminist orientations to its Black feminist cultivators in the 19th century U.S.

Social Movement Framing: Meaning(s) of "Woman's" Aggrievement

I theorize Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth as both epistemic agents *and* social movement actors. The latter descriptor locates their agency in a sociological context of social movements. The three speakers utilize epistemic resources to not only make sense of their experiences but also to imagine a mobilizing impetus for U.S. women's rights at large. While Susan B. Anthony punctuates my periodization nearly 30 years after the Seneca Falls Convention, her particular emphasis on federal suffrage remained unrealized and Reconstruction-era politics escalated the contentiousness of U.S. women's rights. Given the nascence of U.S. women's rights at these historical junctures, the speakers'

diagnosis of their aggrievement is significant—*what are the communicable grievances of “woman” and to whom are they attributable to?* The speakers’ presences in public forums further amplify significance. These stakes are not solely epistemological; rather, I propose that they bridge epistemology and the meaning-generation of social movements.

Previous literature explores how social movement actors interpret and attach meaning(s) to “experiences and events” (Gamson et al. 1992, 384). Of chief pertinence to this thesis, the concept of *framing* includes the “signifying” or meaning-making work performed by both social movement actors and their opponents (Snow 2013, 1). A seemingly all-encompassing definition, framing influences how social movement actors craft messaging to make their cause legible. Early theorization of framing takes inspiration from the symbolic interactionist tradition of sociologist Erving Goffman, namely his interest in how individuals utilize “schemata” (*frames*) to interpret and evaluate the day-to-day (Benford and Snow 2000, 614; Gamson et al. 1992). Sociologists and frequent collaborators David Snow and Robert Benford, both pivotal to the theorization of framing, call for increased attention to the “interpretive” dynamics of social movements (1986). According to Snow et al. (1986), framing is an “interpretive” and agentic component of social movements. In addition, framing is characterized by discursive or communicative actions, appearing in textual documents produced by movement members (Benford and Snow 2000; Ferree 2003). Framing begins with the “articulation” of a coherent message and, secondly, the “amplification” of particular values, events, or experiences that are deemed more “salient” than others (Benford and Snow 2000).

Benford and Snow (2000, 615) contend that framing occurs in three key tasks, each of which may facilitate or hinder social movement outcomes depending on its efficacy: 1.

Diagnostic (*what is the problem and to whom or what is it attributable?*); 2. Prognostic (*what are potential solutions to the problem?*); and 3. Motivational (*what is the impetus for mobilization?; how can it best garner adherents?*). Social movement actors' endeavor to actualize these tasks is contentious and can fracture the transition from "consensus" to "mobilization" around an identified problem (Snow et al. 1986, 616). There is now a robust body of descriptive literature that examines how various social movements have executed diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational tasks of framing (Benford and Snow 2000). My analysis largely evaluates diagnostic frames employed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth. In addition, I briefly address motivational framing, including the justifications each speaker provides for her assertion of women's rights. Across the three documents, prognosis is mostly absent, although Susan B. Anthony implicitly advocates for the institution of a U.S. federal amendment for women's suffrage.

Previous literature identifies how particular variables or characteristic features of frames may produce advantageous social movement outcomes. For example, an important feature of framing is *resonance*, referring to the degree of perceived "credibility," "salience," and alignment a social movement achieves through its message and actions (Benford and Snow 1986, 619). The concept of resonance situates acts of framing in their cultural context and identifies sources of constraint or political expediency for social movement actors. Framing cannot be disentangled from power asymmetries, which ultimately inform social movement actors' relationship to "dominant discourses" (Ferree 2003; Luna 2020). In a comparative study of abortion debates, Ferree elaborates that the choice to conform a frame to "dominant discourses" is not "inevitable" and any assumption thereof underestimates agency (2003, 310). The epistemological metaphor of direction is applicable to framing—

does resonance necessitate a *vertical* appeal to the dominant? In addition, framing is of intersectional pertinence, contingent upon the social locations of its interlocutors, and may provoke epistemic injustice as some actors are deemed more credible or legitimate than others.

In their quantitative analysis of state-level U.S. woman suffrage movements, Hewitt and McCammon observe how some early suffragists cultivated a “justice frame” that both borrowed language from and subverted “the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and other sources of democratic ideals” (2006, 151). According to Hewitt and McCammon, this “justice frame” achieved resonance with “American values” while simultaneously arguing against women’s relegation to the private (2006, 151). Hewitt and McCammon propose that frames with the strongest mobilizing potential and recruitment outcomes are those which are “simultaneously resonant” (*congruous with existing cultural values*) and “oppositional” (*subvert existing cultural values*) (2006, 162). Here, I interject the epistemological correlate to frame resonance; in order to achieve cultural purchase, social movement actors might recycle dominant and extant epistemic resources for political grievance.

Relevantly, framing includes the identification and communication of “mobilizing grievances” (Snow 2013, 1). Grievance is an important and contested concept within social movements literature. Snow et al. contend that grievance is a “framing issue” and has been under-explored as a site of interpretation on the part of social movement actors (1986, 465). According to Simmons, the more contemporary “cultural turn in social movement theory” has revitalized the exploration of grievances and their significance to mobilization (2014, 520). Simmons defines grievance as “the central claims a social movement is making—the

practices, policies, or phenomena that movement members claim they are working to change (or preserve)” (2014, 515). Grievance is a vehicle for meaning-making and informs the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational tasks performed by social movement actors. The “transformative function” of framing occurs when grievance moves from a seemingly individual experience to a collective impetus for mobilization (Snow 2013, 1).

Connecting the Dots: The Epistemology and Intersectionality of Social Movement Framing

In my theoretical synthesis, I situate the concept of epistemic agency in conversation with intersectionality and social movement framing. The phenomenon of social movement framing is experiential and characterized by sense-making, strikingly akin to the dynamics of epistemic agency. Frames are composed of epistemic resources and mobilized by epistemic agents and social movement actors. Although mostly descriptive, my thesis alludes to potential ramifications of framing by featuring the eventual *History of Woman Suffrage* series and the contemporary *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument*. How does one *know* themselves to be aggrieved—at first, an epistemological task—and subsequently posit this aggrievement for the collective catalyst of a social movement? To reiterate, I pose the research question:

How is “woman” employed as an aggrieved category in each of the three documents?

Conducting qualitative content analysis of three historical documents, I explore how “woman” is an epistemologically and politically disparate category of aggrievement.

DATA & METHODS

Overview of Historical Documents

In this subsection, I briefly describe the historical documents at hand. The “Declaration of Sentiments” (1848) by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the “Declaration of Rights of

the Women of the United States” (1876) by Susan B. Anthony, and “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851) by Sojourner Truth are primary sources.¹¹ These documents span the near 30-year period in 19th century U.S. history from 1848 to 1876. I adopt this periodization for both its frequent placement in chronologies of 19th century U.S. historical feminisms and its encapsulation of an active political window within the lives of Stanton, Anthony, Truth, and women’s rights mobilization at large.¹² All primary sources and historiographical use of *History of Woman Suffrage* were accessed digitally. The “Declaration of Sentiments” is 2 pages and a total of 1000 words, the “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States” is 4 pages and a total of 2199 words, and “Ain’t I a Woman?” is 1 page and a total of 344 words. While I acknowledge the relative brevity of “Ain’t I a Woman?,” it is not justification for dismissal given the historical salience of the source material.

My selection of these historical documents is informed by a methodological strategy to engage comparison and a theoretical motivation to locate epistemological and political difference. Each document appears in the eventual *History of Woman Suffrage* series, a criterion for its inclusion in this thesis. Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” was relatively contemporaneous to Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s “Declaration of Sentiments,” similarly delivered in the forum of a women’s rights convention, and establishes a pertinent comparison. Susan B. Anthony’s later “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United

11. During analysis, all source quotations will contain the original spelling, punctuation, spacing, and emphases (unless otherwise noted).

12. This periodization includes the Seneca Falls Convention (1848), American Civil War (1861-1865), and Reconstruction-era Amendments (1865-1870), each of which formatively shaped the contingencies and trajectories of 19th century U.S. women’s rights mobilization (Tetrault 2014).

States” extends and memorializes the “Declaration of Sentiments,” suggesting a potential trajectory and rhetorical motif of canonical 19th century U.S. white feminisms.

Table 1. Overview of Historical Documents

Document	Description
<p>“Declaration of Sentiments” <i>Elizabeth Cady Stanton</i> July 19, 1848 Seneca Falls Convention Seneca Falls, New York</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Primary source. ➤ Accessed digitally via the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. ➤ 2 pages, 1000 words. ➤ Archived in Volume 1 of the <i>History of Woman Suffrage</i> (1881).
<p>“Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States” <i>Susan B. Anthony</i> July 4, 1876 U.S. Centennial Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Primary source. ➤ Accessed digitally via the U.S. Library of Congress. ➤ 4 pages, 2199 words. ➤ Archived in Volume 3 of the <i>History of Woman Suffrage</i> (1886).
<p>“Ain’t I a Woman?” <i>Sojourner Truth</i> May 29, 1851 Women’s Rights Convention Akron, Ohio</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Primary source. ➤ Accessed digitally via the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, Iowa State University. ➤ Transcription by Marius Robinson, printed in the <i>Anti-Slavery Bugle</i> on June 21, 1851. ➤ 1 page, 344 words. ➤ Archived in Volume 1 of the <i>History of Woman Suffrage</i> (1881).

Qualitative Content Analysis of Historical Documents

I deduced “woman” as a core category for analysis prior to conducting qualitative coding. “Woman” is empirically grounded in the documents and I designed analysis to allow for both deduction and emergence. Qualitative coding is a systematic and granular approach to textual data, often following a methodological sequence of codes to categories to overarching theory (Saldaña 2021). I conducted qualitative content analysis in order to identify how categories of “woman” are simultaneously being unified and collapsed in the text of each document. When developing my coding scheme, I was interested in how “woman” is broadly invoked as a category, anticipating the gender-exclusive imagination of Stanton and Anthony and evaluating the “intersectionality-like thought” (Hancock 2016) associated with Truth. Additionally, I was interested in “grievance” as a potential category of analysis and deduced a relationship between aggrievement and the speakers’ constructions of “woman.”

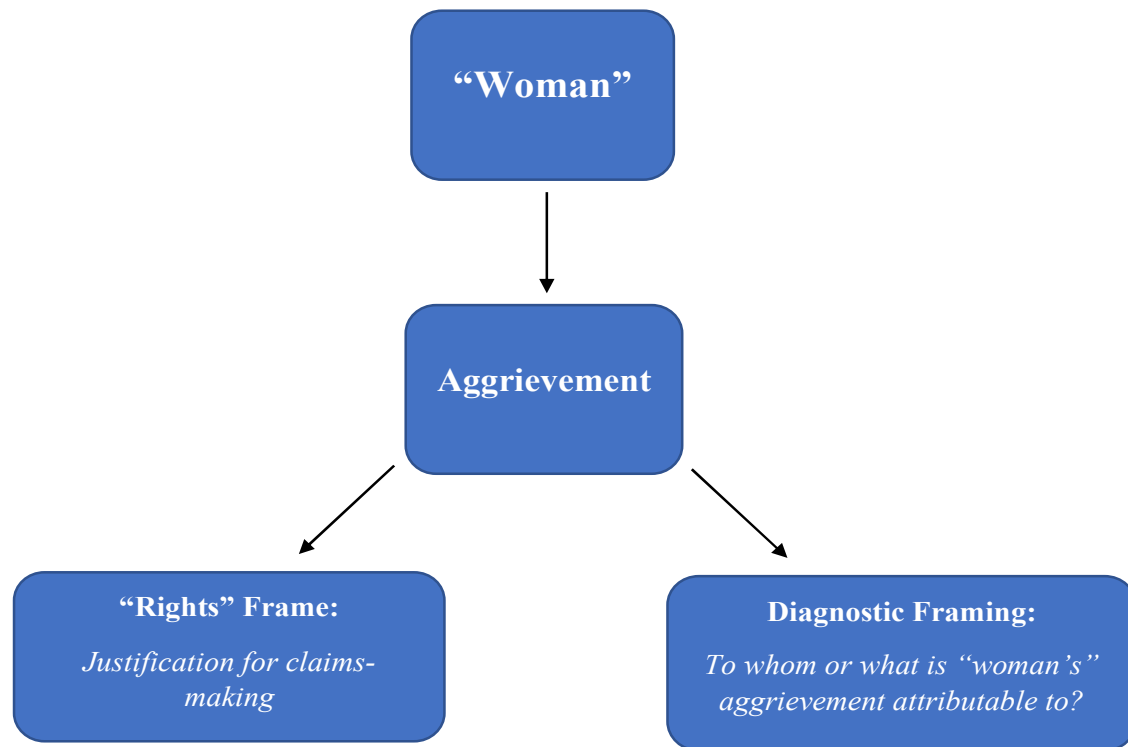
To start, I constructed a preliminary coding framework. I utilized descriptive and in vivo coding methods, the former of which identifies the basic features of a scene and the latter of which recycles the original language in the documents and centers a “participant’s voice” (Saldaña 2021, 138). I employed a values coding style in order to identify the speakers’ motivations and beliefs. In my initial reading, each of the three documents included a pattern of juxtaposition, often placing “woman” in contrast to “man” and masculine social categories. Versus coding, an analytical strategy that highlights dichotomous descriptions found in textual data, was used to tease out this pattern. My coding scheme evolved iteratively, and I performed concept and pattern coding styles to subsume related codes, construct meaningful categories, and begin theory-building (Saldaña 2021). Analysis

included initial reading of the historical documents, multiple stages of qualitative coding using qualitative research software *Atlas.ti*, and analytic memoing throughout. In the final stage, I collected and evaluated analytic memos to pinpoint key findings. To reference the coding scheme and full transcripts of each historical document, see Appendices A and B respectively.

ANALYSIS

Highlighting textual evidence from the historical documents, I map the epistemological and political attributes characterizing each speaker's framing of "woman" as a category of grievance. My analysis emphasizes two particular framing processes and their instances of congruence and difference between the speakers: 1. justification for claiming "rights" and 2. diagnosis of "woman's" grievance. I conducted multiple stages of qualitative coding to identify how the speakers' use of epistemic resources, such as concepts and allegories, informs these framing processes. While "rights" claims-making and diagnosis are the most salient categories of analysis, I briefly interpret evidence of each speaker's motivational framing for their respective address and call to action. Throughout the forthcoming analysis, I employ a directional metaphor to discuss the epistemological and political consequences of each speaker's framing choices. Finally, I revisit existing scholarly interpretations of "Ain't I a Woman?" by Sojourner Truth and reflect on its resemblance to "intersectionality-like thought" (Hancock 2016) and larger genealogical significance.

Figure 1. Mapping Framing Processes: “Rights” and Diagnosis



“Rights” Frame: Political and Legal Subjectivity Versus Physical Embodiment

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony both argue for “rights” vis-à-vis political and legal subjectivity. For example, Stanton and Anthony both utilize the concept of natural rights as an epistemic resource. Political scientist Sue Davis (2008) describes natural rights as an iteration of liberal political philosophy that inheres fundamental and inviolable rights in individuals. Arguments for natural rights were a cornerstone of Stanton’s political thought during her first years of public engagement, evidenced by the philosophical impetus of the “Declaration of Sentiments” (Davis 2008). The U.S. Declaration of Independence seemingly encapsulated natural rights and provided the model for Stanton to envision her corrective “Declaration of Sentiments” (Davis 2008). When setting the stage for her

grievances, Stanton recycles the preamble of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, her sole revision being the incorporation of “women” under the promise of natural rights:

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men *and women* [emphasis added] are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.¹³

In this opening stanza of her declaration, Stanton contends that “women” share equal stature with “men” on the basis of natural rights. Thus, her primary justification for claims-making is predicated on the concept of natural rights. Furthermore, Stanton pictures universalism vis-à-vis natural rights; the collective “all” achieve personhood by attaining rights that are preserved but not overridden by a governmental body. As further justification for her grievances, Stanton asserts that existing U.S. political authority over its populace is illegitimate, since “women” have been denied opportunity to offer or affirm “consent” to governance. Her construction of “men” and “women” is ostensibly grand, possessing a veneer of universalism, yet trends toward insularity as she continues her address.

In addition to mobilizing natural rights as an epistemic resource, Stanton engages a boundary-setting of citizenship. A category deeply tied to nation-state, citizenship is a second form of political and legal subjectivity that Stanton premises her claims-making on. To start, Stanton continues her argument for natural rights when introducing the first grievance of the “Declaration of Sentiments,” claiming that suffrage—“the elective franchise”—is fundamental: “He has never permitted her to exercise her *inalienable* [emphasis added] right

13. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments,” U.S. Department of the Interior, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/declaration-of-sentiments.htm>.

to the elective franchise.”¹⁴ A slippage occurs as Stanton first implies that suffrage is “inalienable” or natural but then deems it the “first right of a citizen.”¹⁵ Under her interpretation, the denial of suffrage equates to exclusion from incorporation under U.S. citizenship. In the 20th stanza of her address, Stanton concludes her grievances, transitioning to argue that “woman” is a citizen and consequently deserving of rights:

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, - in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as *citizens* [emphasis added] of these United States.¹⁶

Stanton asserts that “women” as an aggregate have channeled aggrievement to claim their rightful citizenship. “The rights and privileges” first attributed to natural endowment are now deemed by Stanton the jurisdiction of national citizenship. Stanton naturalizes “woman” as “citizen,” a choice that is particularly obtuse to nation and race.¹⁷ Stanton’s configuration of citizenship becomes increasingly important to her diagnostic framing of “woman’s” aggrievement.

Throughout “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States,” Susan B. Anthony echoes similar claims to natural rights and citizenship earlier evidenced by Stanton. Although not a uniform replication of Stanton, Anthony utilizes the concept of natural rights as an epistemic resource and appeals to citizenship as a form of political and legal

14. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

15. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

16. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

17. For example, the earliest iteration of U.S. naturalization law, the Naturalization Act of 1792, conferred citizenship only to those considered a “free white person” (propertied white man). In addition, see *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), a U.S. Supreme Court case concluding that neither free nor enslaved Black people could be considered citizens.

subjectivity. Anthony sets the stage for her grievances by first acknowledging the time and place of her protest—the centennial celebration of the U.S. republic, July 4, 1876 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The preamble of “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States” foregrounds nation and American exceptionalism before concluding that the subjugation of “all women” is the remaining blemish in U.S. history:

May not our hearts, in unison with all, swell with pride at our great achievements as a people; our free speech, free press, free schools, free church, and the rapid progress we have made in material wealth, trade, commerce, and the inventive arts? . . . Yet, we cannot forget, even in this glad hour, that while all men of every race, and clime, and condition, have been invested with the full rights of citizenship, under our hospitable flag, all women still suffer the degradation of disfranchisement.¹⁸

By first outlining the purported triumphs of U.S. social institutions, Anthony affirms a belief in American exceptionalism. Paralleling Stanton, Anthony concludes her preamble by claiming that a collective category of “women” is aggrieved. Anthony espouses universalism and contends that “all women” remain subjugated and seemingly equally unincorporated as citizens in comparison to “all men.”

Her observation that “all men of every race, and clime, and condition” have been conferred citizenship should be contextualized in light of the Reconstruction-era 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The 14th Amendment defined citizenship to encompass: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof”—with the qualifying language of “male” in a subsequent section.¹⁹ The 15th Amendment prohibited voting discrimination “on account of race, color, or previous

18. National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States*, Library of Congress, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.16000300/>.

19. Interactive Constitution, “14th Amendment,” National Constitution Center, 2021, <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xiv>.

condition of servitude.”²⁰ Both the 14th and 15th Amendments ostensibly enfranchised Black men.²¹ At this historical juncture in the 1870s, Anthony and her NWSA counterparts mobilized a strategy to re-interpret the 14th and 15th Amendments as evidence that women should be considered citizens. In three instances throughout her address, Anthony contends that judiciary hostility toward “woman,” including the denial of suffrage, is unconstitutional, suggesting that constitutionality is an epistemic resource for her “rights” claims-making.

After acknowledging the centennial occasion and making a collective claim to citizenship, Anthony introduces an assertion of natural rights. In the 2nd stanza of her address, she enumerates a natural rights argument as justification for her claims-making:

Our history, the past hundred years, has been a series of assumptions and usurpations of power over woman, in direct opposition to the principles of just government, acknowledged by the United States at its foundation, which are:

First. The natural rights of each individual to self-government.

Second. The exact equality of these rights.

Third. That these rights, when not delegated by the individual, are retained by the individual.

Fourth. That no person can exercise the rights of others without delegated authority.

Fifth. That the non-use of these rights does not destroy them.²²

In the aforementioned excerpt, Anthony uses the collective, first-person “our” when specifying that the aggrievement of “woman” is an historical injustice. Anthony

20. Interactive Constitution, “15th Amendment,” National Constitution Center, 2021, <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xv>.

21. Both Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were opposed to the 15th Amendment and expressed concern that such legislation took precedence over women’s rights. Their stance illuminated a key fracture among U.S. women’s rights activists during the Reconstruction-era (Tetrault 2014; Ware 2019).

22. National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States*.

chronologizes this aggrievement in a shared U.S. national “history,” a pattern of her address that I will later problematize. Akin to Stanton, Anthony suggests that “woman’s” primary aggrievement stems from the violation of her natural rights. Anthony emphasizes that “rights” are inherited in individuals and have immutable properties. By appealing to seemingly foundational principles of U.S. republicanism, Anthony recycles existing epistemic resources to represent political and legal subjectivity.

In a subtle departure from Stanton, Anthony leads first with citizenship and then collapses various categories of “rights.” In a single instance of her address, Anthony alludes to “human rights” when setting the stage for her grievances, language that might strike the contemporary reader as an anachronism: “Our faith is firm and unwavering in the broad principles of *human rights* [emphasis added], proclaimed in 1776, not only as abstract truths, but as the corner stones of a republic.”²³ This isolated instance seemingly conflates human rights and natural rights while attributing both to the U.S. Declaration of Independence. There is a series of slippages that surface as Anthony uses the language of citizenship, natural rights, suffrage, and human rights to similar effect and with similar intent. The gaps between these categories of “rights” reveal her assumptions about political and legal personhood and who or what are relegated in their wake. I interpret these slippages as a false universalism, further evidenced when Anthony moves toward her diagnosis of “woman’s” aggrievement. In addition, her claims-making to “rights” was not necessarily a coherent or consistent political philosophy; this observation corroborates more recent historiographical

23. National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States*.

interpretations that Stanton and Anthony adapted their arguments according to political expediency.

In contrast, my analysis finds that Sojourner Truth develops a “rights” frame by arguing for *her* personhood vis-à-vis the experience of physical embodiment. The first six out of ten total stanzas include first-person “I” descriptions, such as Truth’s opening statement that she wishes “to say a few words about this matter” of women’s rights.²⁴ In arguably the most profound stanza of her address, Truth asserts, “I [emphasis added] am a woman’s rights.”²⁵ By making this proclamation, Truth intervenes in categories of “woman” and “rights.” She clarifies the capaciousness of “woman” and “rights” and who and what are included in their scope. As a rhetorical statement, her assertion implies a grievance of exclusion or unintelligibility. Unlike Stanton and Anthony, Truth does not project her aggrievement to a universal “woman” and instead centers her individual personhood for the majority of her address. Stanton and Anthony never use the first-person “I” throughout their addresses and instead employ the collective, first-person pronoun “we.” While Stanton and Anthony both orate on behalf of groups, the Seneca Falls Convention organizers and the NWSA respectively, their language transcends the scope of these contexts and takes on universalism.

I propose that Truth cultivates a “rights” frame by first utilizing physical embodiment as an epistemic resource. Upon claiming “woman” and “rights,” Truth proceeds to highlight her lived experience as a formerly enslaved person. She makes a series of comparisons that

24. Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, “Ain’t I a Woman? - May 29, 1851,” Iowa State University, 2021, <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/21/aint-i-a-woman-may-291851/>.

25. Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, “Ain’t I a Woman? - May 29, 1851.”

equate her capacity for physical labor, performed in the context of enslavement, to that of “man:”

I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now.²⁶

Rather than contend that she is deserving of personhood due to the endowment of nature, Truth suggests that her physical embodiment commands rights. Her equal stature to “man” occurs on the basis of physical capacity, not natural rights. Her first-person descriptions are significant because they adopt an experiential lens and synthesize feminist consciousness and conditions of enslavement. Truth posits an experiential epistemology that is deeply tied to her material conditions. Across the documents, the speakers’ “rights” frames suggest a theme of deservingness; *what constitutes the deservingness of rights and, ultimately, personhood?*

Diagnostic Framing: Causes of “Woman’s” Aggrievement

After identifying the disparate epistemic resources that each speaker uses to develop her “rights” frame, I now transition to her diagnosis of “woman’s” aggrievement. In their respective diagnoses, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony attribute “woman’s” aggrievement to the political, legal, social, and marital domination of “man.” “Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States” is in direct conversation with the earlier “Declaration of Sentiments” and its compilation of “woman’s” multiple subjugations is lengthier and more elaborate. Stanton and Anthony construct diagnostic frames that starkly oppose gender, including numerous juxtapositions of “he” versus “her,” “woman” versus

26. Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, “Ain’t I a Woman? - May 29, 1851.”

“man,” and “women” versus the presumed masculine category “citizen.” The entirety of the “Declaration of Sentiments” diagnoses “woman’s” aggrievement in a rhetorical sequence of “he” as perpetrator versus “her” as victim, excerpted here:

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.²⁷

Stanton indicts the institution of marriage for its economic and legal subjugation of “woman.” More precisely, Stanton alludes to the practice of coverture, a legal doctrine wherein a married woman’s property ownership and status were absorbed by those of her husband. Furthermore, she contends that marriage deprives “woman” of moral agency as a consequence of legal subjugation. Throughout the “Declaration of Sentiments,” the theme of marital subjugation co-occurs with related economic and legal subjugations.

Susan B. Anthony denounces masculine social institutions in her compilation of grievances, ranging from “woman’s” lack of moral agency to her economic subjugation. Anthony juxtaposes a universal “man” to a universal “woman,” attributing the problem of “woman’s” aggrievement to an “aristocracy of sex:” **“UNIVERSAL MANHOOD SUFFRAGE**, by establishing an *aristocracy of sex* [emphasis added] imposes upon the women of this nation a more absolute and cruel despotism than monarchy; in that, woman finds a political master in her father, husband, brother, son.”²⁸ Constructing multiple

27. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

28. National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States*.

metaphors for hierarchal relations, Anthony observes that a binary configuration of “sex” disempowers “woman” in political representation and the social institution of the family. Stanton similarly invokes metaphors for hierarchal relations of governance by implicating the “supremacy of man” and analogizing the subjugation of “woman” by “man” to “absolute tyranny.”²⁹ Both Stanton and Anthony dichotomize gendered categories and suggest that “woman’s” aggrievement occurs on the singular plane of gendered subordination.

While Stanton and Anthony seemingly indict “man” as a universal singular, their statements take on a raced and classed asymmetry. For example, Anthony rejects that “woman” has been denied educational opportunity while groups such as Chinese and Japanese male migrants of the mid-19th century and formerly enslaved Black African men have been afforded access to higher education:

In some States women may enter the law schools and practice in the courts; in others they are forbidden. In some universities, girls enjoy equal educational advantages with boys, while many of the proudest institutions in the land deny them admittance, *though the sons of China, Japan and Africa are welcomed there* [emphasis added].³⁰

Although Stanton and Anthony mostly construct gender-exclusive grievances, they decry the seeming enfranchisement of non-white, non-elite, and/or migrant men on three occasions combined. While Anthony is situated in the Reconstruction-era political context, Stanton provides a precedent nearly 30 years prior: “He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men - both natives and foreigners.”³¹ In their diagnoses, a “man’s” inferior social locations of race, class, and citizenship status are simultaneously

29. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

30. National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States*.

31. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

subsumed under his gender domination *yet* cause for indignation. In these instances, the veneer of universalism dissipates, and Stanton and Anthony demonstrate that their constructions of gendered categories are insular.

Though the least frequent category of analysis, Stanton and Anthony engage in motivational framing by building on the epistemic resources I have identified. For Anthony, nationalism is a primary impetus, “. . . demanding the right of suffrage In making our just demands, a higher motive than the pride of sex inspires us; we feel that national safety and stability depend on the complete recognition of the broad principles of our government.”³² Anthony suggests that a belief in nationalism confers virtue and righteousness to her cause. According to Stanton, “woman’s” claims-making is obligatory, a necessary act of defiance to fulfill the promise of natural rights:

Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.³³

To reiterate, Stanton’s language is taken directly from the preamble of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. Although Anthony includes a more blatant vocabulary of nationalism and American exceptionalism, it is difficult to disentangle Stanton from similar justifications and beliefs.

While her diagnostic framing acknowledges that “man” has withheld rights from “woman,” Sojourner Truth does not center her argument on stark gendered oppositionality.

32. National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States*.

33. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

Truth transitions from comparing her physical embodiment to “man” to a single stanza on intellect, described by Painter as a humorous metaphor that “knowledge and rights are not a zero-sum game” (1996, 27): “As for intellect, all I can say is, if women have a pint and man a quart - why can’t she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we cant take more than our pint’ll hold.”³⁴ Truth then observes that “the poor men seem to be all in confusion” and “women’s rights” should be a relief rather than an imposition.³⁵ The two instances in which Truth diagnoses a more overt gendered conflict between “woman” and “man” occur when she references the Biblical character Eve and observes the contemporaneous mobilizations of U.S. abolitionism and women’s rights. Prior to these examples, her claims to “woman” as an aggrieved category juxtapose the first-person pronoun “I” and “man.”

Truth proposes “women’s rights” as a fulfillment of Biblical allegory, a second epistemic resource for her framing, and diverges from how Stanton and Anthony engage religion in their speeches. While Anthony briefly alludes to the “free church” as an example of American exceptionalism, Stanton makes five total references to creationism and religious institutions. For example, Stanton attributes natural rights to a “Creator,” identifies religion as a social institution in which “woman” is disempowered, and argues that “woman’s” autonomy should be unfettered, the terrain of solely “her conscience and her God.”³⁶ However, I would not argue that Stanton is relying on religion or religious scripture as an epistemic resource; indeed, in her later years, Stanton became a vocal critic of Christianity

34. Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, “Ain’t I a Woman? - May 29, 1851.”

35. Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, “Ain’t I a Woman? - May 29, 1851.”

36. National Park Service, “Declaration of Sentiments.”

and organized religion. By contrast, Truth was an itinerant preacher throughout her lifetime and her religiosity was a transformative component of her eventual emancipation from enslavement (Painter 1996).³⁷

When Truth transitions to discuss Biblical allegory as a justification for women's rights, she makes her final first-person claim. Truth contends that the Biblical allegory of Eve and her betrayal of "man" is valuable because *she* herself as heard it: "I cant read, but I can hear. I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again."³⁸ Citing "Ain't I a Woman?" as an example, Painter notes that Truth often infused her orations with "shrewd humor," both emboldening and diluting her messages (1996, 128-129). Truth concludes that "women's rights" are an opportunity for redemption and enable correction of the Biblical flaw of "woman." In addition, she later notes that "woman" gave birth to Jesus and "man" had no part in this origin story. Truth implies a rhetorical question—*if "man" made no contribution to the birth of Jesus, would he also be invisible in the growing cause of women's rights?*

Through her diagnosis and potential prognosis of "women's rights" as redemptive, Truth continues to mobilize epistemic resources that are congruous with her personal experiences. Truth solidifies a connection between U.S. abolitionism and women's rights. She concludes that "man" is threatened by two causes, the dissolution of slavery *and* the mobilization of "woman," and will meet an ill fate if absent from participation: "But man is

37. The final date of emancipation for enslaved peoples in the state of New York was July 4, 1827 (Painter 1996).

38. Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, "Ain't I a Woman? - May 29, 1851."

in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, and he is surely between-a hawk and a buzzard.”³⁹ Truth is idiomatic in her speech, claiming that “man” will succumb to two analogous birds of prey. Her epistemology encourages an experiential framing of “woman” and juxtaposes the political and legal abstractions made by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Vertical Epistemic Frame

Both Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony utilize natural rights and citizenship as epistemic resources and to undergird a universal “woman” writ large. Stanton and Anthony frame “woman” vis-à-vis political and legal subjectivity that is inextricably linked to nation. I propose that their “rights” framing is *vertical* in its orientation. Here, *verticality* refers to appeals that privilege the epistemic resources of perpetrators of aggrievement. By attributing their political and legal frameworks to U.S. origins, Stanton and Anthony defer to the primacy of nation, laden with contradiction. Paradoxically, Stanton and Anthony are both deferential to and revisionist of the scope of these resources.

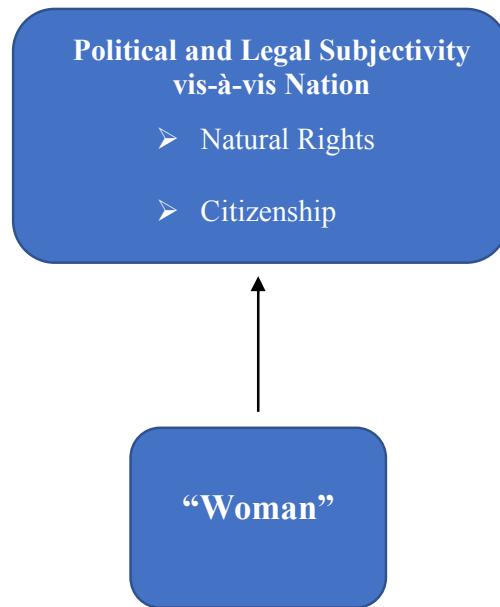
For example, Stanton demonstrates vertical framing by appropriating the U.S. Declaration of Independence for her address the “Declaration of Sentiments.” Anthony reproduces Stanton’s orientation by venerating the Seneca Falls Convention as the first public articulation of U.S. women’s rights: “... until now, woman’s discontent has been steadily increasing, *culminating nearly thirty years ago* [emphasis added] in a simultaneous movement among the women of the nation, demanding the right of suffrage.”⁴⁰ Throughout

39. Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, “Ain’t I a Woman? - May 29, 1851.”

40. National Woman Suffrage Association, *Declaration and Protest of the Women of the United States*.

her address, Anthony defers to the U.S. Declaration of Independence as an exemplary infrastructure for “rights.” Previous historiographical sources have suggested that Stanton recycled the U.S. Declaration of Independence for political expediency and legibility (Davis 2008; Kerber 1977). To use the language of framing, Stanton amplified existing political and legal understandings already deemed resonant. Interpretations that center political expediency minimize, if not ignore, the epistemological consequences of her choice. Whether their motivations were political expediency or deference, Stanton and Anthony make a vertical appeal that assumes the primacy of nation (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Vertical Epistemic Frame



Given their social locations as white women of class mobility, it is pertinent to consider how proximate Stanton and Anthony are to the dominant epistemic infrastructure they favor. I propose that their vertical appeals engender an epistemological and political

insularity that is deeply tied to whiteness and U.S. national origins. For example, U.S. white women's rights activists often appealed to national citizenship to demonstrate their deservingness and similarity in social position to propertied white men (Cohen 1996; Newman 1999). U.S. national "citizenship" was a presumed masculine category and associated with whiteness and property (Isenberg 1998; Newman 1999). While Stanton and Anthony purport to argue for a universal or collective personhood of "woman," their justifications are not detached from self-interest or social location. Stanton and Anthony devote their rhetorical—and, ultimately, epistemological—space to achieving leverage within an existing epistemic framework. By setting the stage using epistemic resources tied to the inception of nation, Stanton and Anthony reproduce a dominant hermeneutical or interpretive infrastructure. The by-product is insularity under the guise of universalism.

Sojourner Truth: "Intersectionality-like Thought" (Hancock 2016) and Horizontal Epistemic Frame

Sojourner Truth and "Ain't I a Woman?" find contemporary resonance within theorization of intersectionality, Black feminisms, and their related genealogies (Collins and Bilge 2016; Combahee River Collective [1977] 1982; Crenshaw 1989; Hancock 2016). Evaluating previous literature, I consider what characteristics of "Ain't I a Woman?" most reflect "intersectionality-like thought" (Hancock 2016). Does its resonance stem from how Truth seemed to anticipate epistemic injustice, as proposed by Crenshaw (1989) and social epistemologists? In this case, Truth's grievance of exclusion or unintelligibility is significant and the context of her delivery is key—she recited "Ain't I a Woman?" primarily to an audience of white women. Accordingly, Truth was situated in an unjust hermeneutical or

interpretive context that obscured the simultaneity of race and gender (Collins and Bilge 2016; Crenshaw 1989; Medina 2013, 2017).

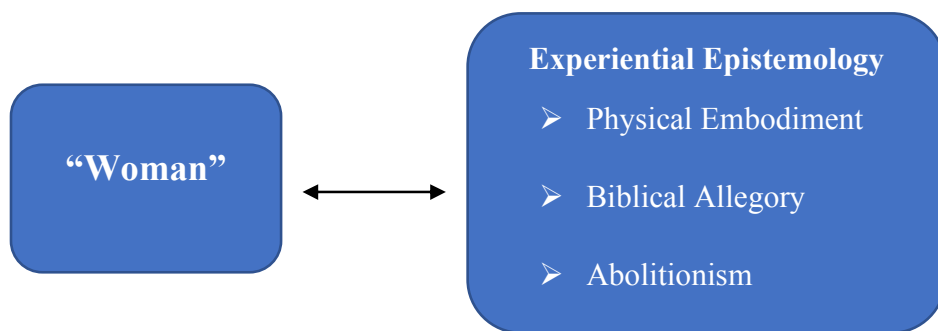
As Painter (1996) contends, is Truth's sheer embodiment of social position—her interlocking locations of race, gender, and citizenship status—complicating a unitary picture of U.S. women's rights? In this case, how might one recognize the salience of Truth's physical embodiment without essentializing her social locations? As historians such as Jones (2020), Tetrault (2014), and Ware (2019) propose, does Truth resemble “intersectionality-like thought” (Hancock 2016) because her politics coupled race, gender, abolitionism, and women's rights? My thesis does not resolve these debates nor intend to provide a definitive answer. Rather, I reiterate the textual evidence found during analysis and encourage further exploration.

I find that textual evidence supports all three interpretations, especially those which emphasize Truth's coupling of abolitionism and women's rights. Given the relative brevity of Truth's speech and its delivery a decade prior to the American Civil War, her inclusion of abolitionism is notable. On two occasions throughout her address, Truth situates U.S. abolitionism and women's rights as parallel projects. First, Truth's opening statements highlight her lived experience of enslavement, arguing for her equal stature to “man” on the basis of physical capacity. Second, Truth concludes that U.S. abolitionism and women's rights are contemporaneous mobilizations which threaten the status quo of “man.” Thus, Truth makes an inextricable link between her feminist consciousness and her lived experience of enslavement.

I propose that Sojourner Truth frames “woman” *horizontally* and juxtaposes the verticality of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In contrast to verticality,

horizontal orientations to conditions of oppression engender coalition (Pohlhaus Jr. 2020). By highlighting U.S. abolitionism and women’s rights as proximate and contemporaneous causes, Truth suggests that their relationship is horizontal. Subsequently, Truth synthesizes 19th century U.S. abolitionist and women’s rights social movement contexts. I propose that her use of epistemic resources constitutes a *horizontal* frame and enhances coalitional potential. In tandem, Truth mobilizes an experiential epistemology (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Sojourner Truth: Horizontal Epistemic Frame



According to Collins (2019), relationality, the notion that social phenomena reinforce and interplay among another, is indispensable to intersectional frameworks. Collins observes that “there would be no intersectionality without relationality” (2019, 15). As a visual metaphor, intersectionality connotes a horizontal and relational map of overlapping phenomena. I propose that Truth’s coupling of abolitionism and women’s rights is both horizontal *and* relational, bolstering its resemblance to intersectionality. “Ain’t I a Woman?” suggests that U.S. abolitionist and women’s rights causes are not in competition but rather parallel and proximate, a horizontal descriptor. In addition, U.S. abolitionist and women’s rights consciousnesses are relational because of their symbiotic geneses.

Revisiting the Relationship between “Woman” and Aggrievement

Across the three documents, the speakers utilize grievance as a vehicle to frame categories of “woman” and “rights.” The speakers’ attempts to introduce categories of “woman” are often predicated on experiences of aggrievement. When located in their larger textual context, the speakers’ grievances are almost always surrounded by gendered language. The only exception to this pattern occurs in the preamble of the “Declaration of Sentiments” by Elizabeth Cady Stanton prior to her catalog of grievances. This exception is notable because it reinforces Stanton’s decision to recycle a dominant epistemic resource; while her grievances are revisionist, her tone remains more deferential to nation than critical of its gendered exclusion.

Since grievance is ubiquitous across the documents, its analytical utility becomes less clear. While grievance is a through-line across the documents, it is not the most helpful or meaningful as a core category of analysis, a finding that countered my original expectations. I find that a more compelling analysis emerges from the divergent epistemic resources each speaker uses to frame her grievances and, subsequently, the larger plight of “woman.” I ask an epistemological question: how does one *know* themselves to be aggrieved? This site of difference—the *what* and *how* of grievance—is informed by the social locations and epistemological orientation(s) of the speakers.

CONCLUSION

I began my thesis by introducing the contemporary *Women’s Rights Pioneers Monument*—a memorialized scene of 19th century U.S. social activists Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth situated in receptive dialogue. I establish this entry-point to problematize the assumption that 19th century U.S. “women’s rights” was

a unitary epistemological and political project. Mobilizing historical context(s) of 19th century U.S. women's rights, my thesis explores the epistemological and political stakes of claiming "woman" as a category of aggrievement. I implement a qualitative content analysis to evaluate three historical documents: (1) "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848) by Elizabeth Cady Stanton; (2) "Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States" (1876) by Susan B. Anthony; and (3) "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851) by Sojourner Truth. Throughout my thesis, I consider the research question:

How is "woman" employed as an aggrieved category in each of the three documents?

My thesis deduces "woman" as a salient epistemological and political category, outlining its travels across the three documents.

My analysis finds that Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth each propose a "rights" frame and diagnose the root causes of "woman's" aggrievement. Stanton and Anthony use political and legal epistemic resources and project aggrievement to a universal "woman" writ large. For example, both Stanton and Anthony utilize frameworks of natural rights and citizenship as epistemic resources. According to Stanton and Anthony, "woman's" aggrievement firstly stems from the violation of her natural rights and the invalidation of her citizenship status. I propose that their use of epistemic resources constitutes a *vertical* frame and privileges nation—and, correspondingly, whiteness and nativism. In the purview of their documents, "woman" operates as a false universal.

In contrast, Sojourner Truth utilizes experiential epistemic resources to bridge her individual personhood and the larger cause of U.S. "women's rights." For example, Truth

frames “woman” as an aggrieved category by synthesizing her feminist consciousness, lived experience of enslavement, and personal religiosity. Unlike Stanton and Anthony, Truth does not project her grievement to a universal condition of “woman.” For the majority of her address, Truth claims “rights” using first-person “I” descriptions. I posit that Truth offers a *horizontal* epistemic frame and can be situated in conversation with “intersectionality-like thought” (Hancock 2016).

My thesis makes two key scholarly contributions. First, I interrogate a contemporary site of memorialization, illustrating that the past and the present are not discrete, temporal periods. This exploration continues to reimagine 19th century U.S. feminisms, namely their power dynamics and orientations to categories of race, class, gender, and citizenship status. Second, my thesis consolidates theoretical literatures across philosophy and sociology, including an under-explored link between social epistemology and social movement framing. For example, I contribute to theorization of social movement framing by conceptualizing it as both a political *and* an epistemological phenomenon. Relatedly, I make a novel contribution by theorizing Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth as epistemic agents and their documents as capsules of epistemic agency.

In future research, I aim to further explore how white feminisms construct an epistemological infrastructure that is antithetical to the proliferation of “intersectionality-like thought” (Hancock 2016) and continued into the 20th century U.S. and beyond. I intend to implicate not only Stanton and Anthony in this insular construction but also a broader trajectory of the canonical 19th century U.S. white feminisms they were said to anchor. Future research might include an exhaustive and systematic analysis of the *History of Woman Suffrage* series. In order to directly examine the topic of memory, future research might

include a larger and longer corpus of historical and contemporary documents about public reception to the *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument*.

Memory, Epistemic Power, and Selective Inclusion

Broadly, my analysis implies an asymmetrical interaction between memory and power. The 19th century *History of Woman Suffrage* series and the 21st century *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument* contain similar curatorial choices despite their significant chronological gap. The *History of Woman Suffrage* series arguably establishes a precedent for the depiction later seen in the *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument*. In both instances, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony have dominant presences while the inclusion of alternative figures is either marginal or corrective. I suggest that both the *History of Woman Suffrage* series and the *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument* evidence an asymmetry wherein particular narratives are centered while alternatives are relegated. Stanton and Anthony demonstrate epistemic power by ultimately compiling the *History of Woman Suffrage*, the title alone a statement of history-writing.

Reflecting upon the textual evidence presented throughout this thesis, I consider the consequences of Sojourner Truth's inclusion in the *History of Woman Suffrage* series and the contemporary *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument*. Pohlhaus Jr. contends that "epistemic inclusions may be just as pernicious as epistemic exclusions" (2020, 233). I have noted that Truth was one of few Black feminists included in the first *History of Woman Suffrage* volume and a late addition to the *Women's Rights Pioneers Monument*. Historical documentation of Truth was not transcribed or archived by her. I propose that these inclusions of Truth are selective, an orientation to her personhood and legacy that undermines agency and, more broadly, possibilities for robust epistemological and political

alternatives. Under these selective inclusions, alternative categories of “woman” are rendered symbolic and their testimonies obscured. To revisit Scott (1986), a master category of gender corresponds with absence or elision. “Woman” is laden with strictures. *Then, how capacious is “woman” as a category?*

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APPENDIX A: CODING SCHEME

Category	Subcategory	Codes (In vivo appear in quotes)
<p>CLAIMS TO PERSONHOOD</p>	<p>a) “Rights” Frame</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Woman’s rights” are not an imposition ➤ A: “Woman’s rights” a rectification ➤ B: Assertion of Citizenship ➤ B: Assertion of Right to Autonomy ➤ Claim suffrage as fundamental right ➤ “her inalienable right to the elective franchise” ➤ “human rights, proclaimed in 1776” ➤ “I am a woman’s rights” ➤ Precarity of Rights ➤ “sexes being equal” ➤ “The right of suffrage” ➤ V: Assertion of Natural Rights ➤ V: Intergenerational protection of rights ➤ “woman’s right of self-government”
	<p>b) Embodiment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “I” versus “man” ➤ CONCEPT: EMBODIMENT ➤ CONCEPT: EXPERIENCE OF ENSLAVEMENT ➤ Her Hunger Comparable to “Man” ➤ Her Musculature Comparable to “Man” ➤ Her Physical Labor Comparable to “Man” ➤ Her Strength Comparable to “Man”

<p>DIAGNOSTIC FRAMING</p>	<p>a) Nature of Aggrievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Denied” educational opportunity ➤ A: Grievance is Palpable ➤ Aggrievement is Historical ➤ B: Unconstitutional ➤ CONCEPT: UNIVERSALLY DISEMPOWERED SOCIAL “LOCATION” ➤ Denied autonomy ➤ Denied economic and cultural status ➤ Denied moral agency ➤ Denied the right of “suffrage” ➤ Economic subjugation ➤ Erosion of social institutions ➤ Legal subjugation ➤ Marital subjugation ➤ Power Determined by Sex Hierarchy ➤ Religious subjugation ➤ “woman is denied equality of rights”
	<p>b) Biblical Allegory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Eve” versus “man” ➤ “Woman” deserves redemption ➤ “Woman” gave birth to Jesus ➤ B: “Jesus” a companion to “woman” ➤ CONCEPT: BIBLICAL ALLEGORY OF RIGHTS AS REDEMPTION
	<p>c) Appeal to “Man” and Masculine Categories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “The poor slave” versus “man” ➤ “woman” versus “man” ➤ “women” versus “government” ➤ “women” versus “men” ➤ B: Ill Fate for Absent “Man” ➤ Men are threatened by two causes

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ women versus “citizen”
MOTIVATIONAL FRAMING	a) Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Woman” as actor in U.S. history ➤ B: American Exceptionalism ➤ CONCEPT: NATIONALISM ➤ “national safety and stability”
	b) Mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A: “hope” for mobilization ➤ A: Compelled to speak ➤ A: Mobilize against Opposition ➤ Obligation to Defy ➤ Public mobilization for cause

Note: “A:” labels attitudes, “B:” labels beliefs, and “V:” labels values.

APPENDIX B: FULL TRANSCRIPTS OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Declaration of Sentiments (1848)

Transcript accessed digitally via the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves, by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

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

He has compelled her to submit to laws, 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 of 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 of divorce; in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women - the law, in all cases, going upon the 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 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.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, - in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national

Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.

Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.

Lucretia Mott
Harriet Cady Eaton
Margaret Pryor
Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Eunice Newton Foote
Mary Ann M'Clintock
Margaret Schooley
Martha C. Wright
Jane C. Hunt
Amy Post
Catharine F. Stebbins
Mary Ann Frink
Lydia Mount
Delia Mathews
Catharine C. Paine
Elizabeth W. M'Clintock
Malvina Seymour
Phebe Mosher
Catharine Shaw
Deborah Scott
Sarah Hallowell
Mary M'Clintock
Mary Gilbert
Sophrone Taylor
Cynthia Davis
Hannah Plant
Lucy Jones
Sarah Whitney
Mary H. Hallowell
Elizabeth Conklin
Sally Pitcher
Mary Conklin
Susan Quinn
Mary S. Mirror
Phebe King
Julia Ann Drake
Charlotte Woodward
Martha Underhill
Dorothy Mathews
Eunice Barker

Sarah R. Woods
Lydia Gild
Sarah Hoffman
Elizabeth Leslie
Martha Ridley
Rachel D. Bonnel
Betsey Tewksbury
Rhoda Palmer
Margaret Jenkins
Cynthia Fuller
Mary Martin
P. A. Culvert
Susan R. Doty
Rebecca Race
Sarah A. Mosher
Mary E. Vail
Lucy Spalding
Lavinia Latham
Sarah Smith
Eliza Martin
Maria E. Wilbur
Elizabeth D. Smith
Caroline Barker
Ann Porter
Experience Gibbs
Antoinette E. Segur
Hannah J. Latham
Sarah Sisson

The following are the names of the gentlemen present in favor of the movement:

Richard P. Hunt
Samuel D. Tillman
Justin Williams
Elisha Foote
Frederick Douglass
Henry Seymour
Henry W. Seymour
David Spalding
William G. Barker
Elias J. Doty
John Jones
William S. Dell
James Mott
William Burroughs
Robert Smallbridge

Jacob Mathews
Charles L. Hoskins
Thomas M'Clintock
Saron Phillips
Jacob P. Chamberlain
Jonathan Metcalf
Nathan J. Milliken
S.E. Woodworth
Edward F. Underhill
George W. Pryor
Joel D. Bunker
Isaac Van Tassel
Thomas Dell
E. W. Capron
Stephen Shear
Henry Hatley
Azaliah Schooley

Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States (1876)

Transcript accessed digitally via the U.S. Library of Congress

While the Nation is buoyant with patriotism, and all hearts are attuned to praise, it is with sorrow we come to strike the one discordant note, on this hundredth anniversary of our country's birth. When subjects of Kings, Emperors, and Czars, from the Old World, join in our National Jubilee, shall the women of the Republic refuse to lay their hands with benedictions on the nation's head? Surveying America's Exposition, surpassing in magnificence those of London, Paris, and Vienna, shall we not rejoice at the success of the youngest rival among the nations of the earth? May not our hearts, in unison with all, swell with pride at our great achievements as a people; our free speech, free press, free schools, free church, and the rapid progress we have made in material wealth, trade, commerce, and the inventive arts? And we do rejoice, in the success thus far, of our experiment of self-government. Our faith is firm and unwavering in the broad principles of human rights, proclaimed in 1776, not only as abstract truths, but as the corner stones of a republic. Yet, we cannot forget, even in this glad hour, that while all men of every race, and clime, and condition, have been invested with the full rights of citizenship, under our hospitable flag, all women still suffer the degradation of disfranchisement.

Our history, the past hundred years, has been a series of assumptions and usurpations of power over woman, in direct opposition to the principles of just government, acknowledged by the United States at its foundation, which are:

First. The natural rights of each individual to self-government.

Second. The exact equality of these rights.

Third. That these rights, when not delegated by the individual, are retained by the individual.

Fourth. That no person can exercise the rights of others without delegated authority.

Fifth. That the non-use of these rights does not destroy them.

And for the violation of these fundamental principles of our Government, we arraign our rulers on this 4th day of July, 1876,—and these are our

ARTICLES OF IMPEACHMENT.

BILLS OF ATTAINDER have been passed by the introduction of the word “male” into all the State constitutions, denying to woman the right of suffrage, and thereby making sex a crime—an exercise of power clearly forbidden in Article 1st, Sections 9th and 10th of the United States Constitution.

THE WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS, the only protection against lettres de cachet, and all forms of unjust imprisonment, which the Constitution declares “shall not be suspended,

except when in cases of rebellion or invasion, the public safety demands it,” is held inoperative in every State in the Union, in case of a married woman against her husband,—the marital rights of the husband being in all cases primary, and the rights of the wife secondary.

THE RIGHT OF TRIAL BY A JURY OF ONE’S PEERS was so jealously guarded that States refused to ratify the original Constitution, until it was guaranteed by the 6th Amendment. And yet the women of this nation have never been allowed a jury of their peers—being tried in all cases by men, native and foreign, educated and ignorant, virtuous and vicious. Young girls have been arraigned in our courts for the crime of infanticide; tried, convicted, hung—victims, perchance, of judge, jurors, advocates—while no woman’s voice could be heard in their defence. And not only are women denied a jury of their peers, but in some cases, jury trial altogether. During the war, a woman was tried and hung by military law, in defiance of the 5th Amendment, which specifically declares: “no person shall be held to answer for a capital or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases * * * * * of persons in actual service in time of war.” During the last Presidential campaign, a woman, arrested for voting, was denied the protection of a jury, tried, convicted and sentenced to a fine and costs of prosecution, by the absolute power of a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States.

TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION, the immediate cause of the rebellion of the Colonies against Great Britain, is one of the grievous wrongs the women of this country have suffered during the century. Deploring war, with all the demoralization that follows in its train, we have been taxed to support standing armies, with their waste of life and wealth. Believing in temperance, we have been taxed to support the vice, crime, and pauperism of the Liquor Traffic. While we suffer its wrongs and abuses infinitely more than man, we have no power to protect our sons against this giant evil. During the Temperance Crusade, mothers were arrested, fined, imprisoned, for even praying and singing in the streets, while men blockade the sidewalks with impunity, even on Sunday, with their military parades and political processions. Believing in honesty, we are taxed to support a dangerous army of civilians, buying and selling the offices of government and sacrificing the best interests of the people. And, moreover, we are taxed to support the very legislators, and judges, who make laws, and render decisions adverse to woman. And for refusing to pay such unjust taxation, the houses, lands, bonds, and stock of women, have been seized and sold within the the present year, thus proving Lord Coke’s assertion, “that the very act of taxing a man’s property without his consent, is, in effect, disfranchising him of every civil right.”

UNEQUAL CODES FOR MEN AND WOMEN. Held by law a perpetual minor, deemed incapable of self-protection, even in the industries of the world, woman is denied equality of rights. The fact of sex, not the quantity or quality of work, in most cases, decides the pay and position; and because of this injustice thousands of fatherless girls are compelled to choose between a life of shame or starvation. Laws catering to man’s vices have created two codes of morals in which penalties are graded according to the political status of the offender. Under such laws, women are fined and imprisoned if found alone in the streets, or in public places of resort, at certain hours. Under the pretence of regulating public morals, police

officers seizing the occupants of disreputable houses, march the women in platoons to prison, while the men, partners in their guilt, having a voice in all municipal regulations, go free. While making a show of virtue in forbidding the importation of Chinese women on the Pacific coast for immoral purposes, our rulers, in many states, and even under the shadow of the National Capitol, are now proposing to legalize the sale of American womanhood for the same vile purposes.

THE ADVANCE LEGISLATION FOR WOMAN has placed us in a most anomalous position. Women invested with the rights of citizens in one section—voters, jurors, office-holders—crossing an imaginary line, are subjects in the next. In some states, a married woman may hold property and transact business in her own name; in others, her earnings belong to her husband. In some states, a woman may testify against her husband, sue and be sued in the courts; in others, she has no redress in case of damage to person, property, or character. In divorce, on account of adultery in the husband, the innocent wife is held to possess no right to children, or property, unless by special decree of the court. But in no state of the Union has the wife the right to her own person, or to any part of the joint earnings of the co-partnership, during the life of her husband. In some States women may enter the law schools and practice in the courts; in others they are forbidden. In some universities, girls enjoy equal educational advantages with boys, while many of the proudest institutions in the land deny them admittance, though the sons of China, Japan and Africa are welcomed there.

But the privileges already granted in the several states are by no means secure. The right of suffrage once exercised by women in certain States and Territories, has been denied by subsequent legislation. A bill is now pending in Congress to disfranchise the women of Utah, thus interfering to deprive United States citizens of the same rights, which the Supreme Court has declared the National Government powerless to protect anywhere. Laws passed after years of untiring effort, guaranteeing married women certain rights of property, and mothers the custody of their children, have been repealed in States where we supposed all was safe. Thus have our most sacred rights been made the football of legislative caprice, proving that a power which grants, as a privilege, what by nature and law is a right, may withhold the same as a penalty, when deeming it necessary for its own protection.

REPRESENTATION FOR WOMAN has had no place in the nation's thought. Since the incorporation of the thirteen original states, twenty four have been admitted to the Union, not one of which has recognized woman's right of self-government. On this birthday of our national liberties, July 4th, 1876, Colorado, like all her elder sisters, comes into the Union, with the invidious word "male" in her Constitution.

UNIVERSAL MANHOOD SUFFRAGE, by establishing an aristocracy of sex, imposes upon the women of this nation a more absolute and cruel despotism than monarchy; in that, woman finds a political master in her father, husband, brother, son. The aristocracies of the old world are based upon birth, wealth, refinement, education, nobility, brave deeds of chivalry; in this nation, on sex alone; exalting brute force above moral power, vice above virtue, ignorance above education, and the son above the mother who bore him.

THE JUDICIARY OF THE NATION has proved itself but the echo of the party in power, by upholding and enforcing laws that are opposed to the spirit and letter of the Constitution. When the slave power was dominant, the Supreme Court decided that a black man was not a citizen, because he had not the right to vote; and when the Constitution was so amended as to make all persons citizens, the same high tribunal decided that a woman, though a citizen, had not the right to vote. Such vascillating interpretations of constitutional law unsettle our faith in judicial authority, and undermine the liberties of the whole people.

THESE ARTICLES OF IMPEACHMENT AGAINST OUR RULERS we now submit to the impartial judgment of the people. And to all these wrongs and oppressions woman has not submitted in silence and resignation. From the beginning of the century, when Abigail Adams, the wife of one President and the mother of another, said, “we will not hold ourselves bound to obey laws in which we have no voice or representation,” until now, woman’s discontent has been steadily increasing, culminating nearly thirty years ago in a simultaneous movement among the women of the nation, demanding the right of suffrage. In making our just demands, a higher motive than the pride of sex inspires us; we feel that national safety and stability depend on the complete recognition of the broad principles of our government. Woman’s degraded, helpless position is the weak point in our institutions to-day; a disturbing force everywhere, severing family ties, filling our asylums with the deaf, the dumb, the blind, our prisons with criminals, our cities with drunkenness and prostitution, our homes with disease and death.

It was the boast of the founders of the republic, that the rights for which they contended, were the rights of human nature. If these rights are ignored in the case of one half the people, the nation is surely preparing for its own downfall. Governments try themselves. The recognition of a governing and a governed class is incompatible with the first principles of freedom. Woman has not been a heedless spectator of the events of this century, nor a dull listener to the grand arguments for the equal rights of humanity. From the earliest history of our country, woman has shown equal devotion with man to the cause of freedom, and has stood firmly by his side in its defence. Together, they have made this country what it is. Woman’s wealth, thought and labor have cemented the stones of every monument man has reared to liberty.

And now, at the close of a hundred years, as the hour hand of the great clock that marks the centuries points to 1876, we declare our faith in the principles of self-government; our full equality with man in natural rights; that woman was made first for her own happiness, with the absolute right to herself—to all the opportunities and advantages life affords, for her complete development; and we deny that dogma of the centuries, incorporated in the codes of all nations—that woman was made for man—her best interests, in all cases, to be sacrificed to his will.

We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation. We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States, be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever.

LUCRETIA MOTT,
ELIZABETH CADY STANTON,
PAULINA WRIGHT DAVIS,
ERNESTINE L. ROSE,
CLARINDA I. H. NICHOLS,
MARY ANN McCLINTOCK,
AMY POST,
SARAH PUGH,
E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH,
SUSAN B. ANTHONY,
MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE,
CLEMENCE S. LOZIER,
OLYMPIA BROWN,
MATHILDE FRANCESKE ANNEKE,
MATHILDE F. WENDT,
ADELAIDE THOMSON,
LAURA DE FORCE GORDON,
MARY A. S. CAREY,
FRANCES WATKINS HARPER,
ELLEN C. SARGENT,
VIRGINIA L. MINOR,
BELVA A. LOCKWOOD,
SARA ANDREWS SPENCER,
LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE,
PHEBE W. COUZINS,
JANE GRAHAM JONES,
A. JANE DUNNIWAY,
HARRIET PURVIS.

Ain't I a Woman? (1851)

Transcript accessed digitally via the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics, Iowa State University

1851 version by Marius Robinson

May I say a few words? I want to say a few words about this matter.

I am a woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?

I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now.

As for intellect, all I can say is, if women have a pint and man a quart - why can't she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we cant take more than our pint'll hold.

The poor men seem to be all in confusion, and dont know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they wont be so much trouble.

I cant read, but I can hear. I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again.

The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned woman from him, and she was right. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother. And Jesus wept - and Lazarus came forth.

And how came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and woman who bore him. Man, where is your part?

But the women are coming up blessed be God and a few of the men are coming up with them.

But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, and he is surely between-a hawk and a buzzard.