



THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY

VOICES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
AND EQUAL RIGHTS IN AMERICA



Core Knowledge®



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AND EQUAL RIGHTS IN AMERICA



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Teacher Guide for *The Blessings of Liberty*
(for Core Knowledge Language Arts®)

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Cover Images: TOP, left to right: Jovita Idár, W. E. B. Du Bois, Zitkala-Ša. BOTTOM, left to right: Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, Ida B. Wells.

Title Page Image: In front of the White House in January 1917, women protest for the right to vote.

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Introduction

The Constitution of the United States begins by stating its purposes and goals, one of which is to “secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.” The “blessings of liberty”—what are they?

You might think of the right to vote. Or the freedom to express your thoughts and opinions without fear of being punished for them. Or the opportunity to work hard and get ahead and make a good life. Or the basic security of knowing that the foods you buy are safe to eat. Or the assurance that the laws apply equally to all, that there is not one law for the rich and another for the poor, or one law for white people and another for people of color, or one law for men and another for women.

While those and similar blessings of liberty have been enjoyed by many Americans, for too long in our nation’s history they have been denied to too many. In this book, you will meet some courageous people who dedicated themselves to securing the blessings of liberty for those to whom they were denied.

Our focus here is on the United States from about 1840 to 1920. The civil rights struggles of the later twentieth century are examined in a companion volume titled *A More Perfect Union*.

In this book, you will meet reformers who battled corrupt corporations or tried to help factory workers and people living in city slums. You will meet men and women who struggled to achieve equal rights and freedom for Black Americans after the Civil War. And you will meet many remarkable women who fought for the right to vote.

You will meet these people through their own words, written or spoken. Their words can be painful, especially when they describe the wrongs that brought suffering to many Americans. But their words are often inspiring, as they remind us that America’s promise to “secure the blessings of liberty” must be extended not just to some but to all.

The Language of Race

In referring to racial identity, the speakers and writers in this book used terms that were accepted in their times, but in many cases are no longer accepted today. In the primary sources collected in this book, for the sake of historical accuracy, we have not changed the terms each speaker or writer used when referring to race. In the introductory texts that provide background information, we have aimed to use terms for race and ethnicity that are generally accepted now. What is accepted, however, is a matter of ongoing discussion.

At the time of this writing, in reference to African Americans, there is an ongoing discussion about whether to use the lowercase “black” or uppercase “Black” to refer to persons of African ancestry. In keeping with the practice of an increasing number of major publications, in the introductions written for this book, we use the uppercase “Black,” which acknowledges, as an editor for the *New York Times* explains, “the difference between a color and a culture.”

While we have chosen to capitalize “Black” (except when “black” is used in historical texts), we have chosen not to capitalize “white.” The historical texts gathered in this book do not capitalize “white.” Some publications have begun to capitalize “white”—see, for example, the guidelines of National Association of Black Journalists or the American Psychological Association. There are arguments for capitalizing “white” on the grounds that lowercase “white” might be taken to imply “whiteness” as a commonly accepted norm apart from race, while uppercase “White” acknowledges “Whiteness” as a racial identity in the context of American history. On the other hand, the *New York Times*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and others make the point that “white” should remain lowercase because hate groups and white supremacists have long insisted on capitalizing

“white.” Given the lack of consensus on this matter at the time of the publication of this book, we maintain our practice of not capitalizing “white,” while affirming that “whiteness” is not to be understood as a norm but as a racial identity.

To sum up, in this book, when we refer to race or ethnicity, our goal has been to remain historically accurate in the primary source materials, and culturally sensitive to generally accepted current usage in the introductions that provide historical background. If you think that in specific instances we have not met this goal, please let us know by contacting the Core Knowledge Foundation.

THE PROGRESSIVE ERA: REFORM IN A CHANGING AMERICA



Some progressive reformers tried to solve problems in big cities, such as crime and overcrowding, as in this back alley of a New York City slum, captured in a photo by Jacob Riis.

The period of American history from about the 1890s to the 1920s is known as the Progressive Era. People with “progressive” views are eager to change, improve, and reform things, rather than keep them as they are. In the Progressive Era there was much about American society that needed changing and improving, and many reformers ready to do the work.

Many of the problems facing American society were the result of how much and how quickly the country had changed. Since the Civil War, the United States had been changing from a mainly agricultural country—a country of farmers and small shopkeepers—to an industrial country with huge factories in big cities. The factories and cities brought hard conditions for workers and the poor, many of whom were recent immigrants to the United States. Some reformers focused on helping the urban poor—*urban* means, having to do with cities and the people who live in cities.

While many workers lived in poverty, a small number of factory owners and businessmen became fabulously wealthy and as powerful as kings. There were few laws governing the way they conducted business.

Some journalists started writing articles to open people’s eyes to the suffering of the urban poor, the mistreatment of workers, and the secret inner workings of big business. These writers became known as “muckrakers.” A muckrake was originally the name for a tool, like a pitchfork, used to clean out barns and stables. The muckrakers worked to raise awareness of social injustice, political corruption, and abuses of power. (The spirit of the muckrakers lives on today in writers called investigative journalists.)

JACOB RIIS IN THE TENEMENTS OF NEW YORK

Background Knowledge



The muckraking journalist Jacob Riis (1849-1914) is best known for his writings about poor people living in New York City's tenements—the run-down, overcrowded, crime-ridden slums.

His career had an unlikely beginning. When Riis arrived in the United States in 1870, the young immigrant from Denmark could find no steady work. He spent years traveling from one

odd job to another, sometimes having to rely on restaurant handouts for meals. In New York City, he applied for a job as a trainee with the New York News Association. He was sent to write about an event being held at a fancy luxury hotel. The employers liked what he wrote and gave Riis the job. His later writings took him far from wealth and luxury into the hard lives of the poor.

In 1890, Riis published a book, *How the Other Half Lives*, subtitled "Studies Among the Tenements of New York." Riis used his words to help his readers see the misery of daily life for the urban poor. He also used something that was just beginning to appear in newspapers and magazines at the time—photographs. Riis took vivid photographs, and he used these, as well as drawings based on the photos, to make the reality visible, and to give human faces to his written descriptions of life in the tenements.

How the Other Half Lives by Jacob Riis (1890)

Primary Source

Here, Jacob Riis invites us to look inside a New York City tenement. His detailed descriptions and dramatic photographs helped bring about reform in housing for the urban poor.



An Italian mother and her baby—photograph by Jacob Riis

Suppose we look into one? . . . Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there. Not that it would hurt them; cuffs and cuffs are their daily diet. They have little else. Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way, if you cannot see it. Close? Yes! What would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes from the hall-door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of dark bedrooms that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of the elements

cuffs: slaps; hits

close: stuffy; lacking fresh air

sole: only

God meant to be free, but man deals out with such niggardly hand. That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against. The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access—and all be poisoned alike by their summer stanches. Hear the pump squeak! It is the lullaby of tenement-house babes. In summer, when a thousand thirsty throats pant for a cooling drink in this block, it is worked in vain. . . . Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail—what do they mean? . . . Oh! a sadly familiar story—before the day is at an end. The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. That dark bedroom killed it. . . .



Homeless boys sleeping on the streets of New York—photograph by Jacob Riis

niggardly: stingy; ungenerous

pail: bucket

hydrant: a water faucet

stanches: bad odors

in vain: uselessly

. . . We grope our way up the stairs and down from floor to floor, listening to the sounds behind the closed doors—some of quarrelling, some of coarse songs, more of profanity. They are true. When the summer heats come with their suffering they have meaning more terrible than words can tell. Come over here. Step carefully over this baby—it is a baby, spite of its rags and dirt—under these iron bridges called fire-escapes, but loaded down, despite the incessant watchfulness of the firemen, with broken household goods, with wash-tubs and barrels, over which no man could climb from a fire. This gap between dingy brick walls is the yard. That strip of smoke-colored sky up there is the heaven of these people. Do you wonder the name does not attract them to the churches? That baby’s parents live in the rear tenement here. She is at least as clean as the steps we are now climbing. There are plenty of houses with half a hundred such in [them]. . . .

What sort of an answer, think you, would come from these tenements to the question “Is life worth living?” . . . It may be that this [from a report of the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor] . . . , has a suggestion of it: “In the depth of winter the attention of the Association was called to a Protestant family living in a garret in a miserable tenement in Cherry Street. . . . The man, his wife, and three small children shivering in one room through the roof of which the pitiless winds of winter whistled. The room was almost barren of furniture; the parents slept on the floor, the elder children in boxes, and the baby was swung in an old shawl attached to the

grope: to feel your way with your hands when it is difficult to see

spite of: regardless of

incessant: continuing without pause

dingy: dark and dirty

garret: a small attic space

rafters by cords by way of a hammock. The father, a seaman, had been obliged to give up that calling because he was in consumption, and was unable to provide either bread or fire for his little ones.”

Perhaps this may be put down as an exceptional case, but one that came to my notice some months ago in a Seventh Ward tenement was typical enough to escape that reproach. There were nine in the family: husband, wife, an aged grandmother, and six children; honest, hard-working Germans, scrupulously neat, but poor. All nine lived in two rooms, one about ten feet square that served as parlor, bedroom, and eating-room, the other a small hall-room made into a kitchen. The rent was seven dollars and a half a month, more than a week’s wages for the husband and father, who was the only bread-winner in the family. That day the mother had thrown herself out of the window, and was carried up from the street dead. She was “discouraged,” said some of the other women from the tenement, who had come in to look after the children while a messenger carried the news to the father at the shop. They went stolidly about their task, although they were evidently not without feeling for the dead woman. . . .

rafters: long pieces of wood supporting a roof

in consumption: suffering from tuberculosis, an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs

ward: a division of a city or town

reproach: expression of disapproval, disappointment, or disbelief

scrupulously: in an extremely careful manner

parlor: living room

stolidly: unemotionally

UPTON SINCLAIR, MUCKRAKING NOVELIST

Background Knowledge



Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) is best known for a muckraking work of fiction, the novel titled *The Jungle*, published in 1906.

The Jungle tells the story of immigrants employed in Chicago's meatpacking plants. Sinclair hoped to draw attention to how the wealthy owners of these plants made their workers, who were mostly immigrants, endure unsafe and unsanitary conditions for low pay.

In writing about the suffering of workers at meatpacking plants, Sinclair wanted to raise awareness about the plight of all workers. Sinclair was a socialist—a person who believes in an economic system in which major industries are owned or regulated by the government, rather than by private businesses.

While Sinclair hoped *The Jungle* would move his readers to see what he believed were the evils of capitalism, it was the book's vivid descriptions of the unsanitary conditions in meatpacking plants that most alarmed the public. According to Sinclair, "I aimed at the public's heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach."

meatpacking: related to the business of processing, packing, and distributing meat

plight: a very difficult and unfavorable situation

capitalism: an economic system in which resources and businesses are privately owned and prices are not controlled by the government

After the publication of *The Jungle*, sales of meat dropped sharply, and reformers pushed for new food safety laws. These laws later led to the Pure Food and Drug Act, which allowed the government to set standards in areas such as safety and cleanliness in food processing, as well as in the advertising of food and drugs.

The Jungle by Upton Sinclair (1906)

Primary Source

The Jungle introduces us to Jurgis (YER-giss), an immigrant from Lithuania who works in a “packer”—a large meatpacking plant—on the “killing beds,” the floors of the factory where animals were butchered. At the time, business is bad—the economy is in a “slump,” a time of reduced buying and selling. Because of this slump in business, the canning factories have closed. While the big meatpacking plants have not closed, there is less work, which means even less pay.

Chapter 8

The men upon the killing beds felt also the effects of the slump . . . but they felt it in a different way. . . . The big packers did not turn their hands off and close down, like the canning factories; but they began to run for shorter and shorter hours. They had always required the men to be on the killing beds and ready for work at seven o'clock, although there was almost never any work to be done till the buyers out in the yards had gotten to work, and some cattle had come over the chutes. That would often be ten or

turn their hands off: put their employees (“hands”) out of work

eleven o'clock . . . [but now] they would perhaps not have a thing for their men to do till late in the afternoon. And so they would have to loaf around, in a place where the thermometer might be twenty degrees below zero! . . . Before the day was over they would become quite chilled through and exhausted, and, when the cattle finally came, so near frozen that to move was an agony. . . .

There were weeks at a time when Jurgis went home after such a day as this with not more than two hours' work to his credit—which meant about thirty-five cents. There were many days when the total was less than half an hour, and others when there was none at all. . . .

All this was bad; and yet it was not the worst. For after all the hard work a man did, he was paid for only part of it. Jurgis had once been among those who scoffed at the idea of these huge concerns cheating; and so now he could appreciate the bitter irony of the fact that it was precisely their size which enabled them to do it with impunity. One of the rules on the killing beds was that a man who was one minute late was docked an hour. . . . And on the other hand if he came ahead of time he got no pay for that—though often the bosses would start up the gang ten or fifteen minutes before the whistle. And this same custom they carried over to the end of the day; they did not pay for any fraction of an hour—for “broken time.” A man might work full fifty minutes, but if there was no work to fill out the hour, there was no pay for him. . . .

scoffed at: mocked; dismissed with a laugh

concerns: businesses; companies

irony: a situation in which things have turned out opposite to what you expected

impunity: without any consequences; free from any punishment

docked: had his pay reduced as a punishment

the whistle: a signal that it is time for work to begin

One of the consequences of all these things was that Jurgis was no longer perplexed when he heard men talk of fighting for their rights. He felt like fighting now himself. . . .

Jurgis begins to attend union meetings. A union is an organization of workers to protect their rights and achieve goals such as higher wages and better working conditions.

He had picked up a few words of English by this time, and friends would help him to understand. They were often very turbulent meetings, with half a dozen men declaiming at once, in as many dialects of English; but the speakers were all desperately in earnest, and Jurgis was in earnest too, for he understood that a fight was on, and that it was his fight. . . . He discovered that he had brothers in affliction, and allies. Their one chance for life was in union, and so the struggle became a kind of crusade.

Chapter 14

In this chapter, we meet Elzbieta, the stepmother to Jurgis's wife, Ona. Elzbieta works in a sausage factory. Upton Sinclair takes us into the factory to show us how the sausage is made, and how the work takes its toll on Elzbieta.

perplexed: confused; puzzled

turbulent: stirred up; disturbed; wild

declaiming: making loud speeches

dialects: local forms of a language, with their own pronunciations and word usages

in earnest: sincere and serious

affliction: a state of hardship, suffering, and misery

allies: persons who share a cause or purpose

crusade: struggle for a cause (often a religious struggle)

It was the custom . . . whenever meat was so spoiled that it could not be used for anything else, either to can it or else to chop it up into sausage. . . .

There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white—it would be dosed with borax and glycerine, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit. There was no place for the men to wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage. There were the butt-ends of smoked

borax: a white powdery substance used in cleaning and manufacturing

glycerine: a chemical compound used in foods and medicines

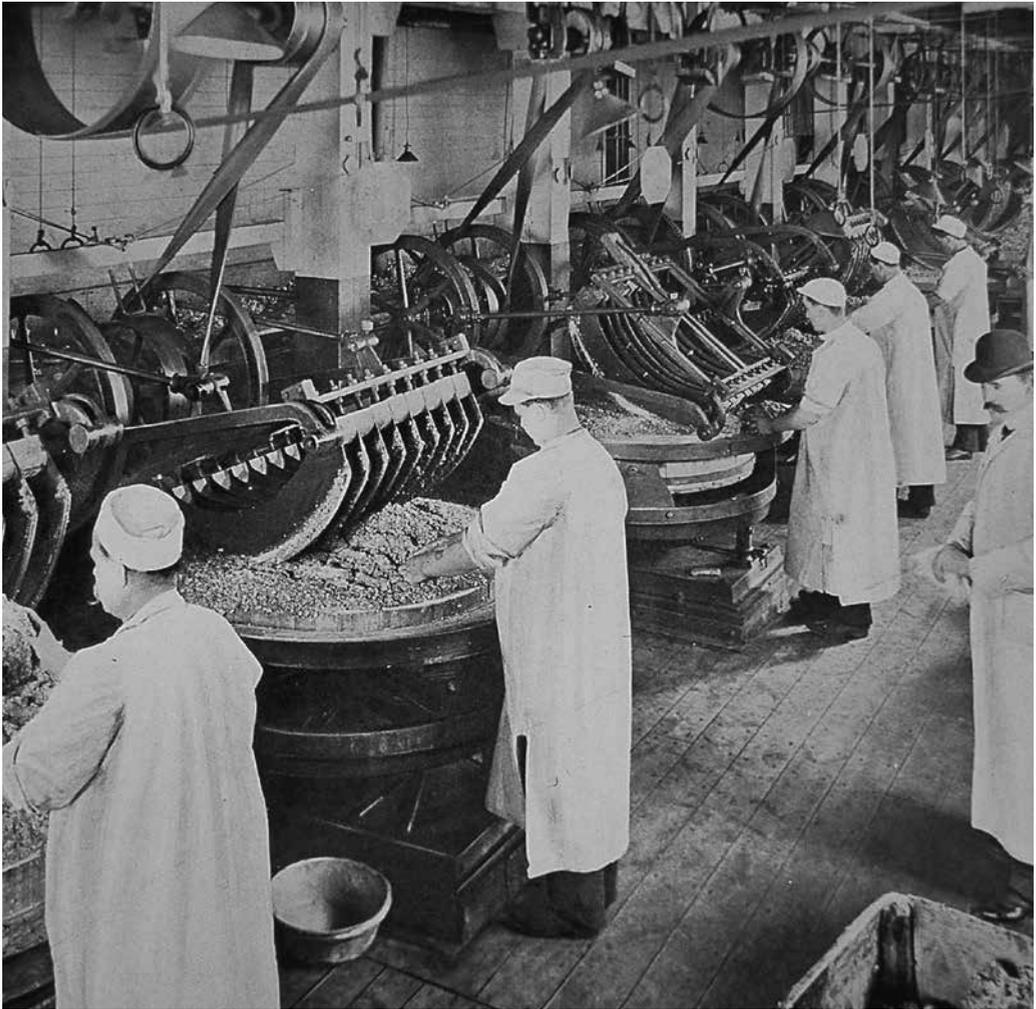
hoppers: containers for mixing

consumption: an older name for tuberculosis, an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs

nuisances: annoying and troublesome things

tidbit: a small and tasty piece of food

meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of the plants, that would be dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it only paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels. Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale water—and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast. . . .



Large machines chop meat for sausage in this Chicago processing plant in 1910 (after the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act).

Such were the new surroundings in which Elzbieta was placed, and such was the work she was compelled to do. It was stupefying, brutalizing work; it left her no time to think, no strength for anything. She was part of the machine she tended, and every faculty that was not needed for the machine was doomed to be crushed out of existence. There was only one mercy about the cruel grind—that it gave her the gift of insensibility. Little by little she sank into a torpor—she fell silent. She would meet Jurgis and Ona in the evening, and the three would walk home together, often without saying a word. Ona, too, was falling into a habit of silence—Ona, who had once gone about singing like a bird. She was sick and miserable, and often she would barely have strength enough to drag herself home. And there they would eat what they had to eat, and afterward, because there was only their misery to talk of, they would crawl into bed and fall into a stupor and never stir until it was time to get up again, and dress by candlelight, and go back to the machines. They were so numbed that they did not even suffer much from hunger, now; only the children continued to fret when the food ran short.

compelled: forced; required

stupefying: numbing

faculty: ability

insensibility: a state in which you can feel nothing

torpor: a state of sluggish inactivity

stupor: a state of exhaustion near unconsciousness

IDA TARBELL TAKES ON BIG OIL

Background Knowledge



One of the best-known muckrakers was Ida Tarbell (1857-1944), who took on the powerful Standard Oil Company. In 1869, when Ida was twelve, her family moved to Titusville, Pennsylvania. Her father made barrels used in the oil business. He joined other oilmen who tried—unsuccessfully—to fight John D. Rockefeller’s takeover of oil production in Pennsylvania.

At the time, Rockefeller’s company, Standard Oil, was on its way to becoming the largest oil company in the country. Rockefeller pressured small oil producers in Pennsylvania and Ohio to sell their businesses to him, or Standard Oil would crush them. Rockefeller wanted to control all parts of the oil business—from the wells that pumped crude oil out of the ground to the refineries that turned crude oil into useful products. Soon many of his competitors found themselves unable to compete and out of business.

Ida Tarbell wrote that Standard Oil’s business practices hurt her hometown like “a blow between the eyes.” From this experience, she said, “There was born in me a hatred of privilege, privilege of any sort,” and she dedicated herself to “social and economic justice.”

Her reports on Standard Oil came out first in a popular magazine called *McClure's*, and later in a book published in 1904 as *The History of the Standard Oil Company*. As a result of Tarbell's writings about Standard Oil, the government decided to investigate. This led to a Supreme Court ruling in 1911 breaking apart the oil trust. In its ruling, the Supreme Court said, "A society in which a few men are the employers and a great body of men are merely employed or servants is not the most desirable in a republic."

The History of the Standard Oil Company by Ida M. Tarbell (1904)

Primary Source

In her chapter on "The Rise of the Standard Oil Company," Tarbell describes how John D. Rockefeller joined forces with some partners, bringing Standard Oil together with other businesses to form a trust called the South Improvement Company. Standard Oil was the largest oil-refining business in Cleveland, Ohio, which at the time was the center of the oil business in the United States.

The first excerpt below refers to the use of "rebates"—not money you get back for buying a product, but more like what we now call a "kickback," or bribe. Standard Oil worked out a secret deal with the railroad companies. Standard Oil agreed to pay the same amount as other oil companies to ship its product by rail, while the railroads agreed to give Standard Oil some of the money back. Because of these "rebates," Standard Oil's shipping costs ended up being lower, and so it could sell oil for less than its competitors.

trust: a combination of corporations created to reduce competition and control prices

[1]

In the fall of 1871, . . . certain Pennsylvania refiners brought to [Rockefeller and his partners] a remarkable scheme, the gist of which was to bring together secretly a large enough body of refiners and shippers to persuade all the railroads handling oil to give to the company formed [the new trust] special rebates on its oil. . . . If they could get such rates, it was evident that [other companies] could not compete with them long and that they would become eventually the only refiners. They could then limit their output to actual demand, and so keep up prices. . . . [They] began at once to work up a company—secretly. It was evident that a scheme which aimed at concentrating in the hands of one company the business now operated by scores . . . must be worked with fine discretion if it ever were to be effective.

. . . In order that their great scheme might not be injured by premature public discussion they asked of each [potential partner] whom they approached a pledge of secrecy.

[2]

Here Ida Tarbell describes the high-pressure tactics that John D. Rockefeller used to buy up smaller oil companies.

There were at that time some twenty-six refineries in the town [of Cleveland]—some of them very large plants. All of them were feeling more or less the discouraging effects of the last three or four years of railroad discriminations in favor of the

gist: the main point; the central meaning

scores: multiples of twenty [a “score” is twenty]

discretion: the quality of acting in a careful, watchful way

discriminations: actions that single out a person or group for special treatment (either for or against)



This 1906 cartoon depicts John D. Rockefeller as an octopus pulling the “competition” (smaller oil companies) down to doom.

Standard Oil Company. To the owners of these refineries Mr. Rockefeller now went one by one, and explained the South Improvement Company [the new trust]. “You see,” he told them, “this scheme is bound to work. It means an absolute control by us of the oil business. There is no chance for anyone outside. But we are going to give everybody a chance to come in. You are to turn over your refinery to my appraisers, and I will give you Standard Oil Company stock or cash, as you prefer, for the value we put upon it. I advise you to take the stock. It will be for your good.” Certain refiners objected. They did not want to sell. They did want to keep and manage their business. Mr. Rockefeller was regretful, but firm. It was useless to resist, he told [them]; they would certainly be crushed if they did not accept his offer. . . .

. . . Mr. Rockefeller’s own brother, Frank Rockefeller, gave most definite evidence on this point in 1876 when he and others were trying to interest Congress in a law regulating interstate commerce. [Frank Rockefeller said:]

We had in Cleveland at one time about thirty establishments, but the South Improvement Company was formed, and the Cleveland companies were told that if they didn’t sell their property to them it would be valueless, that there was a combination of railroad and oil men, that they would buy all they could, and that all they didn’t buy would be totally valueless, because they would be unable to compete with the South Improvement Company, and the result was that out of thirty there were only four or five that didn’t sell.

appraisers: experts who estimate the value of something (such as a business)

regulating: controlling [A *regulation* is a law or rule controlling how something must be done.]

interstate commerce: in the U.S., the buying, selling, or moving of products or services across state borders [The U.S. Constitution gives the federal government power to regulate interstate commerce.]

[3]

Here Ida Tarbell summarizes what happened to one oil refiner that tried to hold out against Rockefeller's pressure. And she notes how quickly Standard Oil succeeded in eliminating much of its competition.

A few of the refiners contested before surrendering. Among these was . . . the firm of Hanna, Baslington and Company [who went to discuss the issue with the railroad company]. They were told that the Standard had special rates; that it was useless to try to compete with them. [The railroad] explained to the gentlemen that the privileges granted the Standard were the legitimate and necessary advantage of the larger shipper over the smaller, and that if Hanna, Baslington and Company could give the [railroad] as large a quantity of oil as the Standard did, with the same regularity, they could have the same rate. . . . [They] “reluctantly” sold out. It must have been reluctantly, for they had paid \$75,000 for their works, and had made thirty per cent a year on an average on their investment. . . . Standard [paid] them \$45,000. . . .

. . . Under the combined threat and persuasion of the Standard, armed with the South Improvement Company scheme, almost the entire independent oil interest of Cleveland collapsed in three months' time. Of the twenty-six refineries, at least twenty-one sold out. From a capacity of probably not over 1,500 barrels of crude a day, the Standard Oil Company rose in three months' time to one of 10,000 barrels. By this maneuver it became master of over one-fifth of the refining capacity of the United States.

contested: argued against; fought back

legitimate: lawful

maneuver: a skillful movement or action (usually to gain an advantage over an opponent)

JANE ADDAMS, URBAN REFORMER

Background Knowledge



When Jane Addams (1860-1935) looked back on her life, she recalled that as early as six years old, she felt a “curious sense of responsibility for carrying on the world’s affairs.” As an adult, she took on the responsibility of helping the poor and improving the harsh conditions faced by immigrants in American cities.

In 1889, Jane Addams rented Hull-House, a large rundown house in a poor neighborhood of Chicago mostly inhabited by immigrants from Italy, Germany, Poland, Russia, and Czechoslovakia. Hull-House was a key part of what Addams called her “experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems” of modern city life, such as poverty, poor health, and feelings of isolation even in overcrowded conditions. Over time, and with much hard work, Hull-House became the hub of a settlement—a social, cultural, and educational center dedicated to helping immigrant families adapt to life in the United States.

Jane Addams employed educated young women to work at Hull-House. Addams believed that through their work these young women would not only be helping others but would also be helping themselves. She saw the settlement as a place “in which young women who had been given over too exclusively to study might restore a balance of activity . . . and learn of life from life itself.”

Word spread about the successes at Hull-House. By the end of the 1890s, settlement houses modeled after Hull-House had been built in several large cities.

Twenty Years at Hull-House by Jane Addams (1910)

Primary Source

*The following excerpts are from Jane Addams's memoir, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, published in 1910. In the first selection, Addams shares some of her early memories about the settlement.*

Chapter V: First Days at Hull-House

In those early days we were often asked why we had come to live on Halsted Street when we could afford to live somewhere else. I remember one man who used to shake his head and say it was “the strangest thing he had met in his experience,” but who was finally convinced that it was “not strange but natural.” In time it came to seem natural to all of us that the Settlement should be there. If it is natural to feed the hungry and care for the sick, it is certainly natural to give pleasure to the young, comfort to the aged, and to minister to the deep-seated craving for social intercourse that all men feel. . . .

memoir: an account of one's own life and experiences

social intercourse: interactions and communications between people

. . . From the first it seemed understood that we were ready to perform the humblest neighborhood services. We were asked to wash the new-born babies, and to prepare the dead for burial, to nurse the sick, and to “mind the children.”

. . . We were also early impressed with the curious isolation of many of the immigrants; an Italian woman once expressed her pleasure in the red roses that she saw at one of our receptions in surprise that they had been “brought so fresh all the way from Italy.” She would not believe for an instant that they had been grown in America. She said that she had lived in Chicago for six years and had never seen any roses, whereas in Italy she had seen them every summer in great profusion. During all



An Italian family in their home near Hull-House, Chicago, 1910

isolation: the state of being separated and cut off from others

profusion: abundance; a large amount of

that time, of course, the woman had lived within ten blocks of a florist's window; she had not been more than a five-cent car ride away from the public parks; but she had never dreamed of faring forth for herself, and no one had taken her. Her conception of America had been the untidy street in which she lived and had made her long struggle to adapt herself to American ways.

. . . We were constantly impressed with the uniform kindness and courtesy we received. Perhaps these first days laid the simple human foundations which are certainly essential for continuous living among the poor; first, genuine preference for residence in an industrial quarter to any other part of the city, because it is interesting and makes the human appeal; and second, the conviction . . . that the things that make men alike are finer and better than the things that keep them apart, and that these basic likenesses, if they are properly accentuated, easily transcend the less essential differences of race, language, creed, and tradition. Perhaps even in those first days we made a beginning toward that object which was afterwards stated in our charter: "To provide a center for higher civic and social life; to institute and maintain educational and philanthropic enterprises, and to investigate and improve the conditions in the industrial districts of Chicago."

faring: going; traveling

conception: idea; concept

uniform: unchanging; consistent; staying the same

quarter: a part of a city or town

conviction: strong belief

accentuated: emphasized

transcend: rise above; go beyond

creed: religious belief

charter: a document that states the basic rules and principles of a group or organization

civic: relating to being part of a city or town; relating to citizenship

institute: set up; establish

philanthropic: related to helping other people

enterprises: activities; projects

Chapter VI: Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements

In 1892, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Jane Addams delivered a lecture on “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements.” Here in her memoir from 1910, she includes parts of that earlier lecture. Addams begins by discussing the motivations behind the settlement movement. She notes that while settlement houses focus on helping the urban poor, they also help fill the emotional and spiritual needs of many educated young people who want to put their knowledge and skills to good use in a way that connects them to the larger community.

This paper is an attempt to analyze the motives which underlie a movement based, not only upon conviction, but upon genuine emotion, wherever educated young people are seeking an outlet for that sentiment for universal brotherhood I think it is hard for us to realize how seriously many of them are taking to the notion of human brotherhood, how eagerly they long to give tangible expression to the democratic ideal. These young men and women, longing to socialize their democracy, are animated by certain hopes. . . . [They feel that] the blessings which we associate with a life of refinement and cultivation can be made universal and must be made universal if they are to be

subjective: relating to one's own thoughts and feelings rather than external facts

motives: reasons for doing something

conviction: firm belief

brotherhood: fellowship; friendship

tangible: capable of being touched; real and definite

socialize: to make social, that is, to bring alive through active engagement with other people

animated: motivated; filled with a sense of action and purpose

refinement: the quality of a person with good manners, thoughtful speech, and highly civilized behavior

cultivation: development of the self through study and training

endeavored: tried very hard

universal: applying to and available for everyone

permanent; that the good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life. . . .

We have in America a fast-growing number of cultivated young people who have no recognized outlet for their active faculties. They hear constantly of the great social maladjustment, but no way is provided for them to change it, and their uselessness hangs about them heavily. . . . We are fast feeling the pressure of the need and meeting the necessity for Settlements in America. Our young people feel nervously the need of putting theory into action, and respond quickly to the Settlement form of activity.

Other motives which I believe make toward the Settlement are the result of a certain renaissance going forward in Christianity. The impulse to share the lives of the poor, the desire to make social service . . . express the spirit of Christ, is as old as Christianity itself. . . . Man's action is found in his social relationships in the way in which he connects with his fellows. . . .

. . . The Settlement then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city. It insists that these problems are not confined to any one portion of a city. It is an attempt to relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other; but it assumes that this overaccumulation and

precarious: uncertain; unstable

faculties: abilities

maladjustment: unhealthy and disordered condition

make toward: contribute to

renaissance: rebirth

engendered: produced; caused; brought forth

overaccumulation: having too much

destitution: extreme poverty

destitution is most sorely felt in the things that pertain to social and educational privileges. . . . The only thing to be dreaded in the Settlement is that it lose its flexibility, its power of quick adaptation, its readiness to change its methods as its environment may demand. It must be open to conviction and must have a deep and abiding sense of tolerance. It must be hospitable and ready for experiment. It should demand from its residents a scientific patience in the accumulation of facts and the steady holding of their sympathies as one of the best instruments for that accumulation. It must be grounded in a philosophy whose foundation is on the solidarity of the human race, a philosophy which will not waver when the race happens to be represented by a drunken woman or an idiot boy. Its residents must be emptied of all conceit of opinion and all self-assertion, and ready to arouse and interpret the public opinion of their neighborhood. They must be content to live quietly side by side with their neighbors, until they grow into a sense of relationship and mutual interests. Their neighbors are held apart by differences of race and language which the residents can more easily overcome. . . . In short, residents are pledged to devote themselves to the duties of good citizenship and to the arousing of the social energies which too largely lie dormant in every neighborhood given over to industrialism. . . .

dreaded: feared

abiding: continuing without change

hospitable: kind and generous to guests or strangers

accumulation: gathering and collecting

grounded: based; firmly established

solidarity: united fellowship and cooperation

waver: shake or tremble; become unsteady; hesitate or show doubt

arouse: to stir to action

interpret: explain the meaning of

mutual: shared

dormant: asleep; inactive

Chapter XVI: Arts at Hull-House

In the excerpt from Chapter VI above, Jane Addams spoke of “the blessings which we associate with a life of refinement and cultivation”—a life filled with friendly conversation, with time to read and study, and with opportunities for creative expression. Addams wanted to make such opportunities readily available to the workers and families who lived at Hull-House and in the neighborhood. One way she did this was by providing an art gallery at Hull-House, as well as art classes and craft workshops.

The first building erected for Hull-House contained an art gallery well lighted for day and evening use, and our first exhibit of loaned pictures was opened in June, 1891. . . .

We had five of these exhibits during two years, after the gallery was completed: two of oil paintings, one of old engravings and etchings, one of water colors, and one of pictures especially selected for use in the public schools. These exhibits were surprisingly well attended and thousands of votes were cast for the most popular pictures. Their value to the neighborhood of course had to be determined by each one of us according to the value he attached to beauty and the escape it offers from dreary reality into the realm of the imagination. . . .

The exhibits afforded pathetic evidence that the older immigrants do not expect the solace of art in this country; an

engravings and etchings: two different kinds of prints, made from designs or images made on metal or wood

dreary: gloomy; sorrowful; bleak and dull

pathetic: causing pity or sadness; touching the emotions

solace: comfort for sadness or troubles

Italian expressed great surprise when he found that we, although Americans, still liked pictures, and said quite naïvely that he didn't know that Americans cared for anything but dollars—that looking at pictures was something people only did in Italy.

. . . From the first a studio was maintained at Hull-House which has developed through the changing years. . . . Buildings on the Hull-House quadrangle furnish studios for artists. . . . They find their classes filled not only by young people possessing facility and sometimes talent, but also by older people to whom the studio affords the one opportunity of escape from dreariness; a widow with four children who supplemented a very inadequate income by teaching the piano, for six years never missed her weekly painting lesson because it was “her one pleasure”; another woman, whose youth and strength had gone into the care of an invalid father, poured into her afternoon in the studio once a week, all of the longing for self-expression which she habitually suppressed.

. . . A shop was opened at Hull-House under the direction of several residents who were also members of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society. This shop is not merely a school where people are taught and then sent forth to use their teaching . . . , but where those who have already been carefully trained, may express the best they can in wood or metal. The Settlement soon discovers how difficult it is to put a fringe of art on the end of a day spent in a factory. We constantly see young people doing overhurried work. Wrapping bars of soap in pieces of paper

naïvely: simply and innocently

quadrangle: a four-sided space or courtyard surrounded by buildings

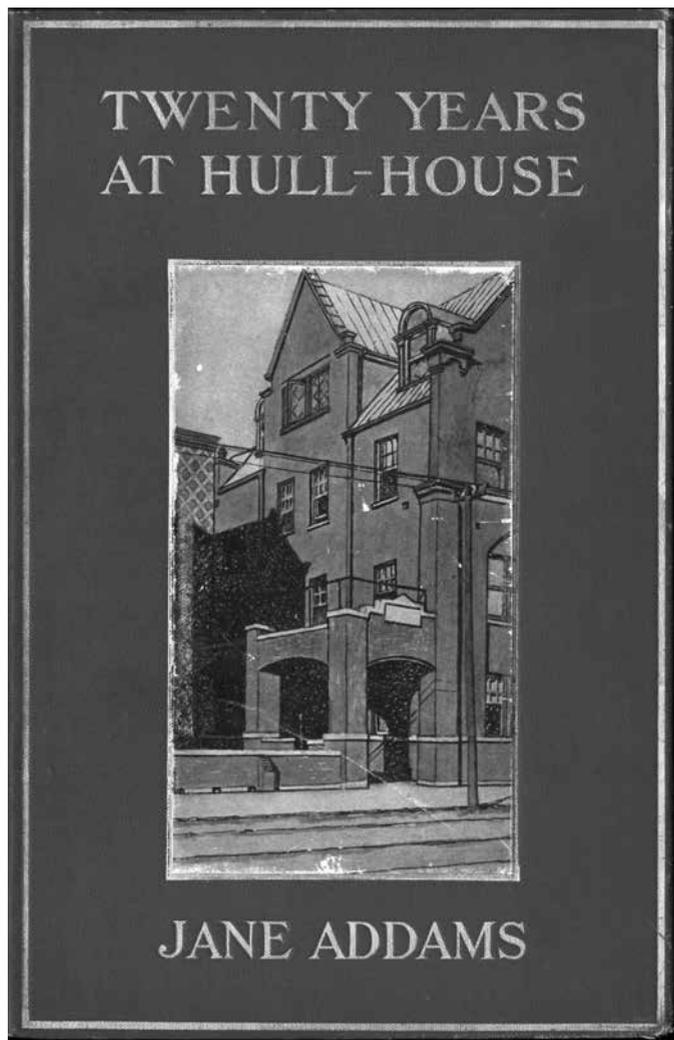
facility: skill; ability

supplemented: added to

invalid: too sick to care for oneself

suppressed: kept in

might at least give the pleasure of accuracy and repetition if it could be done at a normal pace, but when paid for by the piece, speed becomes the sole requirement and the last suggestion of human interest is taken away. In contrast to this the Hull-House shop affords many examples of the restorative power in the exercise of a genuine craft. . . .



Jane Addams published her memoir in 1910.

paid for by the piece: paid for each piece of work completed

sole: one and only

affords: provides

restorative: healing

ZITKALA-ŠA: ON NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Background Knowledge



Far from the big cities where many reformers focused their efforts, a child grew up on the Yankton Sioux reservation in South Dakota. Zitkala-Ša (pronounced *zit-ka-la-shaw*) was born Gertrude Simmons (1876-1938), the daughter of a white father and Yankton Sioux mother.

When Zitkala-Ša—whose name means “Red Bird”—was still a child growing up on the reservation in

South Dakota, little did she know that most Americans saw her as part of a problem—the “Indian Problem,” as it was called in the title of an article published in 1877. The writer of this article, a high-ranking U.S. Army officer, asked, “What shall be done with the Indians?”

The more accurate question might have been, “What shall be done with the remaining Indians?” For by this time, millions of Native American lives had been lost to disease, famine, and brutal warfare waged by white Americans. By the late 1800s, most Native Americans had been forced from their homelands onto reservations, where they lived lives of hardship and poverty. Some well-intentioned people thought that the best way to help these Native Americans was to help them assimilate—which means, to merge fully into a different society, to adopt its culture and conform to its customs and traditions. In other words, in

reply to the question, "What shall be done with the Indians?" the response was, "Help them become more like white Americans."

For many young Native Americans, the process of assimilation began in boarding schools run by missionaries or the government. When Native American children left their reservations to attend these schools, often far from their homes, they were forced to change their dress and language. They took off their homemade blankets or animal-skin clothes and put on wool suits and cotton dresses. They were forbidden to speak their native languages and learned to speak English. They were converted to Christianity, and taught how to work in factories and on farms. In short, their teachers prepared them for life in white America by erasing their native cultural identity.

Cultural identity is something people feel and know deep down inside, regardless of what they wear or where they live. After attending these schools, many students were not fully assimilated. Instead, they felt conflicted, pulled between the culture of their birth and the white American culture for which the schools had prepared them.

This was true of Zitkala-Ša. When she was eight years old, she left her reservation home to attend White's Manual Labor Institute, a Quaker boarding school hundreds of miles away in Indiana, with a program designed to assimilate the Native American students. When she returned to the reservation, she was, as she later recalled, "neither a wild Indian nor a tame one."

She no longer felt at home on the reservation, so she left to continue her education. In 1897 she became a teacher at the

Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, whose philosophy was summed up in its founder's words: "Kill the Indian and save the man." Not literally kill, of course, but the school used harsh methods to wipe out the students' tribal languages and customs. The head of the Carlisle School sent Zitkala-Ša back west to recruit new students—to bring Indian children to a school that would divide them from their heritage, their language, and their identity, as had happened to Zitkala-Ša herself.



These photographs from the late 1800s show three Pueblo Indian children before and after their education at the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania.

It soon became clear that this was not the life she wanted. In 1899, Zitkala-Ša left the Carlisle School to study music for two years at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. While there, she published articles in well-known national magazines. In these articles, she described her personal experiences in order to explore the themes of cultural identity and cultural assimilation that she would continue to examine in her later writings.

After Zitkala-Ša left the world of the Carlisle School, her life took many different paths. She became a writer. She published collections of Native American legends and folktales. She co-authored a book that showed how the Indians of Oklahoma were being cheated of their land and wealth. She wrote articles that criticized government agencies that failed to do their job in providing educational and economic opportunities to Indians. She became a talented violinist. She wrote the libretto (the words) for an opera, *The Sun Dance*, the first opera by a Native American. She worked as an activist for Native American rights, especially their cultural rights—their rights to their own traditions, religions, and identities.

The School Days of an Indian Girl by Zitkala-Ša (1900)

Primary Source

In the second of three autobiographical articles she published in The Atlantic Monthly in 1900, Zitkala-Ša recalls her time as a student at White's Manual Labor Institute in Indiana. Zitkala-Ša's mother did not want her to go to this school, but the child's friends were going, and they had told her of "a more beautiful country than ours" where "little girls may have all the red apples they want." So, with seven other children from the reservation, eight-year-old Zitkala-Ša, wrapped in a heavy blanket, wearing new beaded moccasins, and knowing "but one language, . . . my mother's native tongue," boarded the "iron horse" bound for the faraway school. She had been excited by the idea of riding a train for the first time, but in the railroad car she was met by the stares of white passengers—and here, we pick up her story.

I. The Land of Red Apples

. . . I sank deep into the corner of my seat, for I resented being watched. Directly in front of me, children who were no larger than I hung themselves upon the backs of their seats, with their bold white faces toward me. Sometimes they took their forefingers out of their mouths and pointed at my moccasined feet. Their mothers, instead of reproving such rude curiosity, looked closely at me, and attracted their children's further notice to my blanket. This embarrassed me, and kept me constantly on the verge of tears.

. . . It was night when we reached the school grounds. The lights from the windows of the large buildings fell upon some of the iced trees that stood beneath them. We were led toward an open door, where the brightness of the lights within flooded out over the heads of the excited palefaces who blocked our way. My body trembled more from fear than from the snow I trod upon.

Entering the house, I stood close against the wall. The strong glaring light in the large whitewashed room dazzled my eyes. The noisy hurrying of hard shoes upon a bare wooden floor increased the whirring in my ears. My only safety seemed to be in keeping next to the wall. As I was wondering in which direction to escape from all this confusion, two warm hands grasped me firmly, and in the same moment I was tossed high in midair. A rosy-cheeked paleface woman caught me in her arms. I was both frightened and insulted by such trifling. I stared into her eyes, wishing her to let me stand on my own feet, but she jumped me up and down with increasing enthusiasm.

resented: felt bitter and angry about

reproving: correcting or criticizing someone's behavior

My mother had never made a plaything of her wee daughter. Remembering this I began to cry aloud.

They misunderstood the cause of my tears, and placed me at a white table loaded with food. There our party were united again. As I did not hush my crying, one of the older ones whispered to me, “Wait until you are alone in the night.”

It was very little I could swallow besides my sobs, that evening. “Oh, I want my mother and my brother Dawée! I want to go to my aunt!” I pleaded; but the ears of the palefaces could not hear me.

From the table we were taken along an upward incline of wooden boxes, which I learned afterward to call a stairway. At the top was a quiet hall, dimly lighted. Many narrow beds were in one straight line down the entire length of the wall. In them lay sleeping brown faces, which peeped just out of the coverings. I was tucked into bed with one of the tall girls, because she talked to me in my mother tongue and seemed to soothe me.

I had arrived in the wonderful land of rosy skies, but I was not happy, as I had thought I should be. My long travel and the bewildering sights had exhausted me. I fell asleep, heaving deep, tired sobs. My tears were left to dry themselves in streaks, because neither my aunt nor my mother was near to wipe them away.

II. The Cutting of My Long Hair

The first day in the land of apples was a bitter-cold one; for the snow still covered the ground, and the trees were bare. A large bell rang for breakfast, its loud metallic voice crashing through the belfry overhead and into our sensitive ears. The annoying

our party: her fellow students who had also just arrived at the school

belfry: the part of a tower or church steeple where a bell hangs

clatter of shoes on bare floors gave us no peace. The constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless.

A paleface woman, with white hair, came up after us. We were placed in a line of girls who were marching into the dining room. These were Indian girls, in stiff shoes and closely clinging dresses. The small girls wore sleeved aprons and shingled hair. As I walked noiselessly in my soft moccasins, I felt like sinking to the floor, for my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders. I looked hard at the Indian girls, who seemed not to care that they were even more immodestly dressed than I, in their tightly fitting clothes. While we marched in, the boys entered at an opposite door. I watched for the three young braves who came in our party. I spied them in the rear ranks looking as uncomfortable as I felt.

A small bell was tapped, and each of the pupils drew a chair from under the table. Supposing this act meant they were to be seated, I pulled out mine and at once slipped into it from one side. But when I turned my head, I saw that I was the only one seated, and all the rest at our table remained standing. Just as I began to rise, looking shyly around to see how chairs were to be used, a second bell was sounded. All were seated at last, and I had to crawl back into my chair again. I heard a man's voice at one end of the hall, and I looked around to see him. But all the others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at

bedlam: noisy confusion

shingled hair: hair that has been cut very short and close to the neck in the back

the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a paleface woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman. The man ceased his mutterings, and then a third bell was tapped. Every one picked up his knife and fork and began eating. I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more.

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judéwin gave me a terrible warning. Judéwin knew a few words of English; and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!

We discussed our fate some moments, and when Judéwin said, “We have to submit, because they are strong,” I rebelled.

“No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!” I answered.

I watched for my chance, and when no one noticed I disappeared. I crept up the stairs as quietly as I could in my squeaking shoes,—my moccasins had been exchanged for shoes. Along the hall I passed, without knowing whither I was going. Turning aside to an open door, I found a large room with three white beds in it. The windows were covered with dark green curtains, which made the room very dim. Thankful that no one was there, I directed my steps toward the corner farthest from the door. On my hands and knees I crawled under the bed, and cuddled myself in the dark corner.

keenly: sharply; intensely

venture: try; risk; take a chance on

whither: to what place

From my hiding place I peered out, shuddering with fear whenever I heard footsteps nearby. Though in the hall loud voices were calling my name, and I knew that even Judéwin was searching for me, I did not open my mouth to answer. Then the steps were quickened and the voices became excited. The sounds came nearer and nearer. Women and girls entered the room. I held my breath and watched them open closet doors and peep behind large trunks. Some one threw up the curtains, and the room was filled with sudden light. What caused them to stoop and look under the bed I do not know. I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair.

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder. . . .

V. Iron Routine

A loud-clamoring bell awakened us at half-past six in the cold winter mornings. From happy dreams of Western rolling lands and unlassoed freedom we tumbled out upon chilly bare floors back again into a paleface day. We had short time to jump into

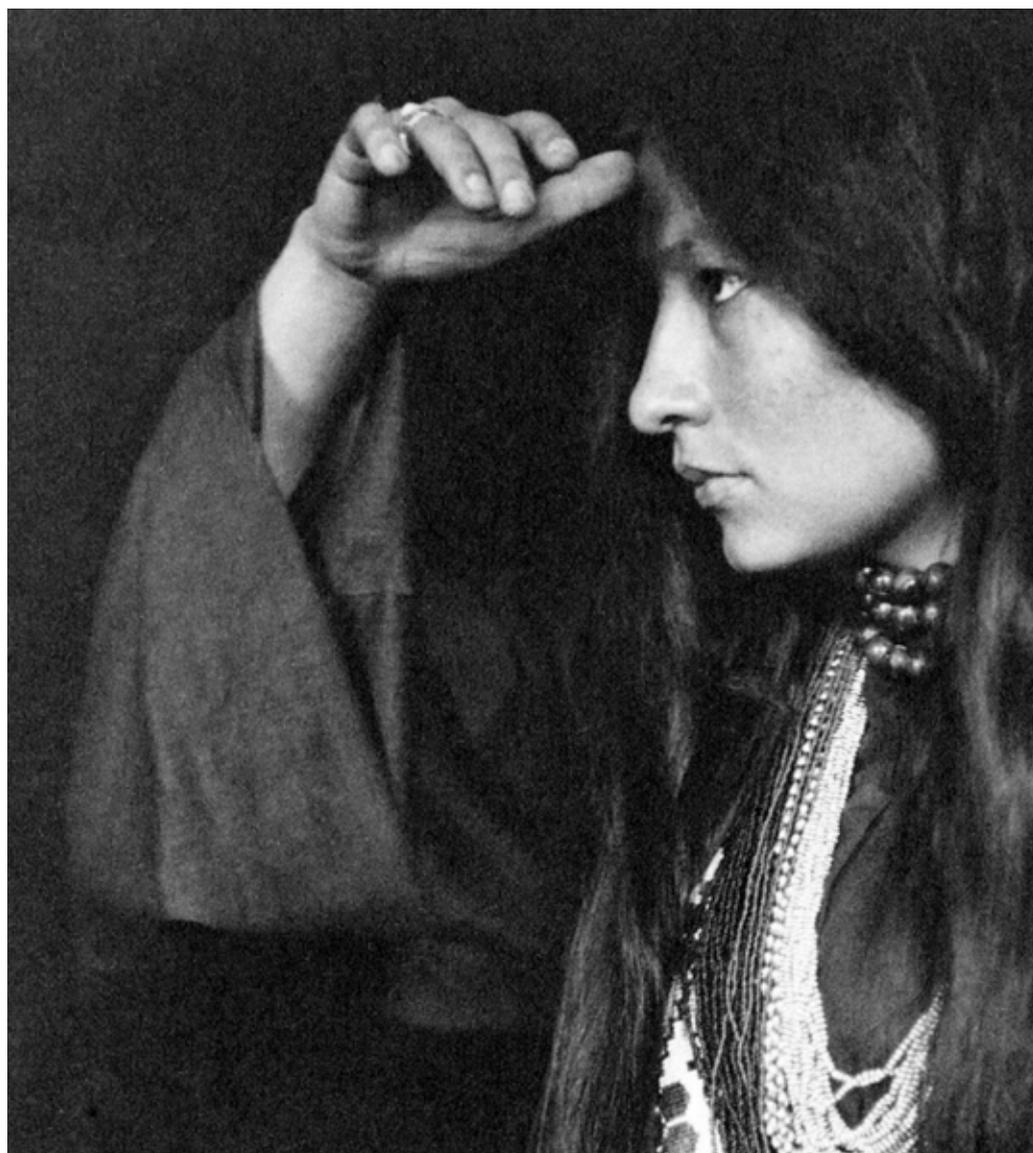
indignities: actions that shame, embarrass, or insult you

anguish: extreme grief and pain

unlassoed: A lasso is a rope with a circle at one end used for catching horses or cattle; to be "unlassoed" is to be free, not tied down.

our shoes and clothes, and wet our eyes with icy water, before a small hand bell was vigorously rung for roll call.

There were too many drowsy children and too numerous orders for the day to waste a moment in any apology to nature for giving her children such a shock in the early morning. We rushed downstairs, bounding over two high steps at a time, to land in the assembly room.



Zitkala-Ša was an author, a musician, and an activist for Native American rights.

A paleface woman, with a yellow-covered roll book open on her arm and a gnawed pencil in her hand, appeared at the door. Her small, tired face was coldly lighted with a pair of large gray eyes. She stood still in a halo of authority, while over the rim of her spectacles her eyes pried nervously about the room. Having glanced at her long list of names and called out the first one, she tossed up her chin and peered through the crystals of her spectacles to make sure of the answer “Here.”

Relentlessly her pencil black-marked our daily records if we were not present to respond to our names, and no chum of ours had done it successfully for us. No matter if a dull headache or the painful cough of slow consumption had delayed the absentee, there was only time enough to mark the tardiness. It was next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its day’s buzzing; and as it was inbred in me to suffer in silence rather than to appeal to the ears of one whose open eyes could not see my pain, I have many times trudged in the day’s harness heavy-footed, like a dumb sick brute.

Once I lost a dear classmate. I remember well how she used to mope along at my side, until one morning she could not raise her head from her pillow. At her deathbed I stood weeping, as the paleface woman sat near her moistening the dry lips. Among the folds of the bedclothes I saw the open pages of the white man’s Bible. The dying Indian girl talked disconnectedly of Jesus the Christ and the paleface who was cooling her swollen hands and feet.

I grew bitter, and censured the woman for cruel neglect of our physical ills. I despised the pencils that moved automatically, and the one teaspoon which dealt out, from a large bottle,

relentlessly: without stopping or growing less intense

consumption: an older name for tuberculosis, an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs

inbred: existing as a basic part of your character from the beginning

censured: strongly criticized

healing to a row of variously ailing Indian children. I blamed the hard-working, well-meaning, ignorant woman who was inculcating in our hearts her superstitious ideas. Though I was sullen in all my little troubles, as soon as I felt better I was ready again to smile upon the cruel woman. Within a week I was again actively testing the chains which tightly bound my individuality like a mummy for burial.

The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by. These sad memories rise above those of smoothly grinding school days. Perhaps my Indian nature is the moaning wind which stirs them now for their present record. But, however tempestuous this is within me, it comes out as the low voice of a curiously colored seashell, which is only for those ears that are bent with compassion to hear it.

VI. Four Strange Summers

After my first three years of school, I roamed again in the Western country through four strange summers.

During this time I seemed to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid. My brother, being almost ten years my senior, did not quite understand my feelings. My mother had never gone inside of a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write. Even nature seemed to have no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one. . . .

inculcating: using persistent and repeated instruction to make someone learn something

sullen: gloomy and withdrawn

melancholy: deep sadness

tempestuous: full of strong and conflicting emotions (literally, stormy)

compassion: pity for another's suffering, and a desire to help

chaos: a state of complete disorder and confusion

REFORM FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS:

STANDING UP TO “JIM CROW”



Some states, especially in the South, passed laws to keep the races separate, as at this bus station in North Carolina.

For millions of African Americans, the end of the Civil War meant the promise of equal rights and freedom. But it was a promise quickly broken. In many states, though especially in the South, white people took steps—sometimes through laws, sometimes through violence—to deny Black Americans their rights.

After the Civil War, three new amendments to the U.S. Constitution directly affected lives of African Americans. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments changed the rules in a society in which one race had long dominated another.

- The Thirteenth Amendment officially ended slavery in America.
- The Fourteenth Amendment made all former enslaved people citizens of the United States. It also guaranteed them “the equal protection of the laws” and certain voting rights.
- The Fifteenth Amendment stated that the right to vote “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

In many parts of the country, though mostly in the South, states passed laws designed to deny African Americans the rights granted by the recent Constitutional amendments, and to enforce separation of the races under what came to be known as the Jim Crow system.

The term “Jim Crow” came from the name of a character from minstrel shows, a form of entertainment that began in the early nineteenth century. These shows featured songs and silly skits with white actors in “blackface,” using make-up to make them look like insulting stereotypes of Black people. By the 1890s, “Jim Crow” referred to the many customs and laws intended to enforce racial

abridged: limited
servitude: slavery



In 1899, this kindergarten classroom in Georgia was part of a school for African American students only.

segregation—keeping the races apart and separate—while taking away the rights and opportunities of African Americans.

Jim Crow laws kept African Americans and white people segregated in many ways. Because of Jim Crow, Black children could not attend the same schools as white children. Black people could not ride in the train cars reserved for white people. Public bathrooms were marked with signs saying “Whites Only” or “Colored.” Jim Crow denied Black people their rights, limited their economic opportunities, and kept them socially inferior to white people.

Black people were not only the victims of humiliation and injustice but also of violence. Thousands of African Americans were unjustly accused of crimes and then lynched—attacked and murdered by white mobs.

Several reformers devoted themselves to fighting for justice, equal rights, and greater opportunities for Black Americans. Ida B. Wells led a brave campaign against the horrors of lynching. Booker T. Washington encouraged Black people to be patient, seek education, and learn to do some useful job. W. E. B. Du Bois thoughtfully examined “the problem of the color line” and urged Black people to demand “every single right that belongs to a freeborn American.” Maggie L. Walker, the first female bank president in the United States, promoted economic empowerment, especially for Black women.

They did not always agree about which were the most critical challenges facing African Americans, or how to meet those challenges. Indeed, Du Bois and Wells often criticized Washington for his approach. But they all worked to advance their visions for progress on the long journey toward equal opportunities and civil rights.

See “The Language of Race” (page 2).



In Jim Crow Mississippi, African Americans were required to use a back entrance to this theater.

THREE IMPORTANT AMENDMENTS TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Background Knowledge

The Constitution of the United States is “the supreme law of the land”—those very words are in the Constitution itself. If a state law says one thing, and the U.S. Constitution says another, then the U.S. Constitution takes priority. Even as the highest law of our land, the Constitution is not carved in stone—in other words, it can be changed. Changes to the Constitution are called amendments. These changes cannot be made lightly—a great majority must first agree. It requires two-thirds of each house of Congress and three-fourths of all the states to ratify an amendment before it becomes part of the Constitution.

The fact that our Constitution can be amended proved especially critical during the years after the Civil War, known as Reconstruction. During Reconstruction, one especially challenging question was how to bring millions of formerly enslaved people into the political life of the nation. In part this question was answered by three amendments to the Constitution—the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth.

The Reconstruction Amendments, as they are called, had far-reaching effects long after Reconstruction ended around 1877, not only for Black people but for all people facing unfair and unequal treatment. The struggle for civil rights, even to this day, has often built on the words and ideas in these amendments, especially the Fourteenth.

ratify: officially approve

The Reconstruction Amendments

Primary Source

Each of the three Reconstruction Amendments has a number of sections. Here we introduce only the sections most relevant to issues of civil rights. Because the legal language in the Constitution is sometimes technical and complicated, we present both the original language and a paraphrased version.

The Thirteenth Amendment

The Thirteenth Amendment (ratified in December 1865) outlawed slavery.

Thirteenth Amendment, Section 1	Paraphrase
Neither slavery nor <u>involuntary servitude</u> , except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been <u>duly</u> convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their <u>jurisdiction</u> .	Neither slavery nor forced labor shall be allowed in the United States, or any place controlled by the United States, except to punish a person who has been justly convicted of a crime.

The Fourteenth Amendment

The Fourteenth Amendment (ratified in July 1868) made formerly enslaved people into citizens. It also provided guarantees of equal treatment that continue to influence decisions about civil rights to this day. The first section of the amendment makes three main points:

involuntary servitude: forced labor; work that you are forced to do against your will
duly: properly; justly (that is, in agreement with proper legal procedures)
jurisdiction: government power and authority

- *Citizenship: All persons born in this country are automatically citizens of the United States and citizens of the states where they live.*
- *Due Process: No state can take away your life, freedom, or belongings without giving you fair treatment according to accepted legal procedures and principles.*
- *Equal Protection: States cannot give rights and protections to some people but deny them to other people; all persons must be treated equally by the law.*

Fourteenth Amendment, Section 1	Paraphrase
<p>All persons born or <u>naturalized</u> in the United States, and <u>subject to the jurisdiction thereof</u>, are citizens of the United States and of the State <u>wherein</u> they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall <u>abridge</u> the privileges or <u>immunities</u> of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without <u>due process of law</u>; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.</p>	<p>All persons born in the United States, or who go through the process required for citizenship, and who are under the authority of the laws of the United States, are citizens of the United States and of the state in which they live. No state may make any laws that limit the rights and protections of citizens; and, no state can take any person’s life, liberty, or property without going through the necessary steps required by law, nor can a state refuse to give any person within the state the equal protection of the laws.</p>

naturalized: having gained citizenship in a new country

subject to the jurisdiction thereof: under the authority of the laws of the United States—in other words, not under the authority of some foreign government or owing allegiance to some other country [An 1898 Supreme Court ruling found that the words “subject to the jurisdiction thereof” were mainly meant to exclude certain people from automatically being U.S. citizens by birth, such as a child born to the ambassador of a foreign country who is living in the U.S., but people disagree about the Supreme Court’s interpretation in that case.]

wherein: in which

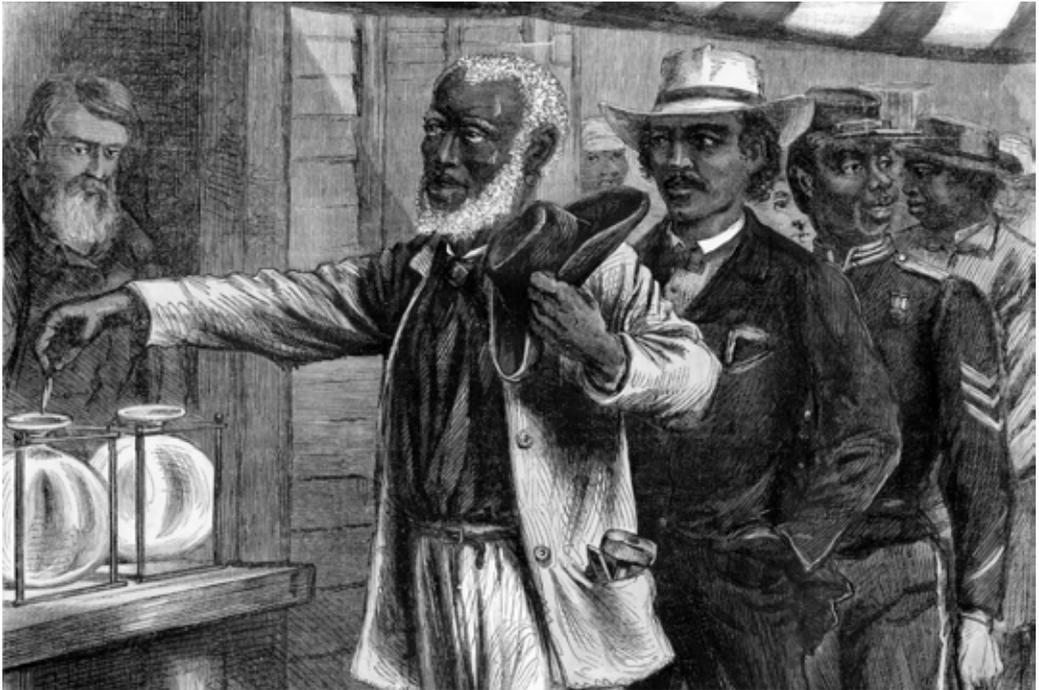
abridge: limit

immunities: protections

due process of law: fair treatment according to accepted legal procedures and principles

The Fifteenth Amendment

The Fifteenth Amendment (ratified in February 1870) made it unlawful to deny or limit the right to vote based on a person’s race, color, or the fact that the person was once enslaved. (At the time it was ratified, the Fifteenth Amendment applied only to men, not to women.)



African American men line up to vote. The Fifteenth Amendment made it unlawful to deny the right to vote based on a person’s race or color.

Fifteenth Amendment, Section 1	Paraphrase
The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of <u>servitude</u> .	No citizen’s right to vote can be taken away or limited because of the person’s race or color, or because the person might have been enslaved in the past.

servitude: the condition of being completely under the power of others; the condition of being enslaved

IDA B. WELLS CAMPAIGNS AGAINST LYNCHING

Background Knowledge



Ida Bell Wells was born into slavery in 1862. Her parents understood the value of education and hard work. She attended Rust College in Mississippi and was able to find work as a teacher in Memphis, Tennessee.

Wells was angered by Jim Crow laws that required her to sit in a different train car from that of white passengers. Trains in the South in the late 1800s had “ladies’ cars” where smoking and swearing were not permitted,

but African American women were not permitted to sit in these cars. One weekend, Wells purchased a first-class ticket entitling her to sit in the ladies’ car on the train home from Memphis. The conductor told her to move. Wells refused, and later sued the railroad. She had mixed success in the courts, but she found a way to express her outrage by writing articles about her experience for a local newspaper. Thus began her career as a journalist, challenging the wrongs of Jim Crow.

Wells is remembered most for her active campaign against lynching—the lawless killing of a person by a mob, often by hanging. Wells was spurred to action when competition in

the grocery business led to the lynching of three Black men in Memphis in 1892.

One night, a white mob attacked the People's Grocery, owned and operated by three African American men—Calvin McDowell, Will Stewart, and Thomas Moss. The three were put in jail after some members of the white mob were injured. A few nights later, a mob of some 75 masked men arrived at the jail. Ida B. Wells (in a speech she gave in 1893) described what happened next:

The mob, in obedience to a plan known to every prominent white man in the city, went to the jail between two and three o'clock in the morning, dragged out these young men, hatless and shoeless, put them on the yard engine of the railroad which was in waiting just behind the jail, carried them a mile north of city limits and horribly shot them to death while the locomotive at a given signal let off steam and blew the whistle to deaden the sound of the firing.

One of the murdered men, Thomas Moss, was a friend of Wells. About Moss and the lynching, she later wrote:

A finer, cleaner man than he never walked the streets of Memphis. . . . This is what opened my eyes to what lynching really was. An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and keep them down.

Wells wrote many newspaper editorials condemning lynching and revealing the lies behind the reasons offered by white people to justify their actions. Her writing prompted violence against the newspaper and threats against her life.

Lynching continued throughout the country for many years, most notably in the South. In the 1890s, hundreds of African American men and women were killed. Wells wrote many articles and traveled widely to make people aware of the horrors of lynching. She published a book called *A Red Record* that cataloged lynchings in the United States. In it, she wrote: "We demand a fair trial by law for those accused of crime, and punishment by law after honest conviction. . . . Surely the humanitarian spirit of this country . . . will no longer refuse to lift its voice on this subject."

Lynch Law in America by Ida B. Wells (1900)

Primary Source

The following excerpts are from an essay by Ida B. Wells in The Arena, a monthly magazine published in Boston. She makes the chilling argument that lynching is not the spontaneous expression of mindless mob violence but instead the result of "the cool, calculating deliberation of intelligent people" who see themselves as enforcers of "unwritten law."

Our country's national crime is lynching. It is not the creature of an hour, the sudden outburst of uncontrolled fury, or the unspeakable brutality of an insane mob. It represents the cool, calculating deliberation of intelligent people who openly avow that there is an "unwritten law" that justifies them in

humanitarian: caring about the well-being of all people

deliberation: careful thought and discussion before deciding or acting

avow: to assert; to state a belief or opinion openly



A white mob lynching black men—Ida B. Wells bravely campaigned against what she called “our country’s national crime.”

putting human beings to death . . . without trial by jury, without opportunity to make defense, and without right of appeal. The “unwritten law” first found excuse with the rough, rugged, and determined man who left the civilized centers of eastern states to seek for quick returns in the goldfields of the far West. . . . The thief who stole a horse, the bully who “jumped” a claim, was a common enemy. If caught he was promptly tried, and if found guilty was hanged to the tree under which the court convened. It next appeared in the South. . . . There it has flourished ever since. . . . So potent is the force of example that the lynching mania has spread throughout the North and Middle West. It is now no uncommon thing to read of lynchings north of Mason and Dixon’s line. . . .

. . . Under the authority of a national law that gave every citizen the right to vote, the newly-made citizens chose to exercise their suffrage. But the reign of the national law was short-lived and illusionary. Hardly had the sentences dried upon the statute-books before one Southern state after another raised the cry against “Negro domination” and proclaimed there was an “unwritten law” that justified any means to resist it. . . .

appeal: In the American legal system, if you lose your case in court, then you can appeal your case—which means, asking a higher court to review and reverse the lower court’s decision.

convened: came together for some purpose

flourished: thrived

potent: powerful

mania: wild enthusiasm for something

Mason and Dixon’s line: the Mason-Dixon line, surveyed from 1763 to 1767 by two Englishmen, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, to resolve a border dispute between states, and later informally known as the dividing line between the free Northern states and the slaveholding Southern states

national law: the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (see page 53.)

reign: the period of time during which someone or something holds power

illusionary: misleading; deceptive; based on something unreal

statute: written law created by a government

These advocates of the “unwritten law” boldly avowed their purpose to intimidate, suppress, and nullify the Negro’s right to vote. . . . The Ku Klux Klans . . . and similar organizations proceeded to beat, exile, and kill Negroes until the purpose of their organization was accomplished and the supremacy of the “unwritten law” was effected. Thus lynchings began in the South, rapidly spreading into the various states until the national law was nullified and the reign of the “unwritten law” was supreme. . . .

. . . It is considered a sufficient excuse and reasonable justification to put a prisoner to death under this “unwritten law” for the frequently repeated charge that these lynching horrors are necessary to prevent crimes against women. . . . No matter that our laws presume every man innocent until he is proved guilty. . .—if a white woman declares herself insulted or assaulted, some life must pay the penalty. . . . The world looks on and says it is well.

Not only are two hundred men and women put to death annually, on the average, in this country by mobs, but these lives are taken with the greatest publicity. In many instances the leading citizens aid and abet by their presence when they do not participate, and the leading journals inflame the public mind to the lynching point with scare-head articles and offers of rewards. Whenever a burning is advertised to take place,

intimidate: to fill someone with fear

suppress: to stop by force

nullify: to cause something to have no value or effect

The Ku Klux Klans: secret societies dedicated to achieving white supremacy, often by violent means, especially against Black people

sufficient: enough for the purpose

abet: support; help

scare-head: a headline intended to scare and alarm readers

the railroads run excursions, photographs are taken, and the same jubilee is indulged in that characterized the public hangings of one hundred years ago. . . .

. . . This question affects the entire American nation. . . . Our watchword has been “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” Brave men do not gather by thousands to torture and murder a single individual, so gagged and bound he cannot make even feeble resistance or defense. Neither do brave men or women stand by and see such things done without compunction of conscience, nor read of them without protest. . . .

. . . No excuse can be offered for exchanging the orderly administration of justice for barbarous lynchings and “unwritten laws.” Our country should be placed speedily above the plane of confessing herself a failure at self-government. This cannot be until Americans of every section, of broadest patriotism and best and wisest citizenship, not only see the defect in our country’s armor but take the necessary steps to remedy it. . . .

excursions: outings; short trips

jubilee: celebration; rejoicing

indulged in: given way to; enjoyed unhealthily

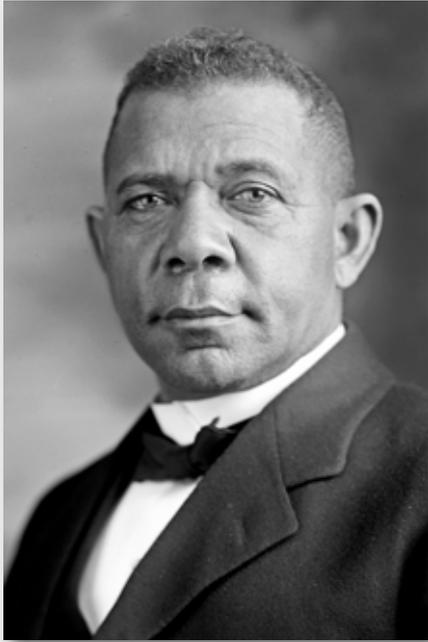
watchword: a word or phrase that expresses a principle you follow

compunction: feelings of guilt

administration: putting into effect

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON: “CAST DOWN YOUR BUCKET WHERE YOU ARE”

Background Knowledge



Booker Taliaferro Washington (1856–1915) was born into slavery on a farm in western Virginia. He grew up to become a celebrated educator, a famous author, and an advisor to two U.S. presidents. Recalling the childhood days when he carried the schoolbooks of the plantation owner’s daughter to and from the schoolhouse, Washington wrote, “I had the feeling that to get into a schoolhouse and study would be about the same as getting

into paradise.” Education was the driving force in his life.

After the Civil War, Washington’s family moved to West Virginia, where he worked in the coal mines. When he was sixteen, he journeyed 500 miles to enroll at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (now Hampton University), a school established, in the words of one of its first leaders, “to train selected Negro youth who should go out and teach and lead their people.” The institute’s unofficial motto was “Learning by Doing.” The school emphasized training young African Americans in practical job skills. To pay for his room and board, Washington took a job as a janitor at the school. He went on to continue his education and then returned to teach at Hampton Institute.

Washington believed that political power flowed from economic power. As he saw it, for African Americans, the first step in building economic power was learning how to do a job or practice a trade. In 1881, he put these beliefs into practice as a founder and first principal of a school for African American adults, the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee University) in Alabama. Washington decided that in addition to their academic schoolwork, all Tuskegee students would learn a trade. He thought the key to success for formerly enslaved people was to learn skills that would allow them to help build and profit from a new South.

As Tuskegee Institute grew, so did Washington's fame. He was invited to give speeches about the institute's success. In his speeches, he called for patience—African Americans, he said, should put off their demands for equality and instead improve themselves and their economic condition through honorable manual labor. Washington's message of patience was warmly received by many white leaders in business and government. Some Black leaders agreed with his approach, while others (especially W. E. B. Du Bois) opposed it. Washington went on to work as an advisor to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft.

In 1895, Washington published his autobiography, *Up from Slavery*. In the selection below, you can clearly see the value he placed upon education, and his willingness to work extremely hard to attain it.

trade: a job that requires manual skill and training (such as a carpenter or seamstress)

autobiography: the story of a person's life as written by that person

Up from Slavery by Booker T. Washington (1895)

Primary Source

As a young boy working in the coal mines, Booker T. Washington overheard two miners talking about “a great school for colored people somewhere in Virginia.” The more he heard about this school—the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute—the more excited he became, until he decided that one day he would go to that school, no matter what. He left the coal mine to work in the house of Mrs. Viola Ruffner. She had a reputation for strictness—as Washington recalled, “she wanted everything kept clean about her,” and she demanded “absolute honesty and frankness.” Washington’s fear of Mrs. Ruffner soon turned to respect and even feelings of friendship. While working for her, he made time to read and study, and kept dreaming of Hampton Institute.

In the fall of 1872, he decided to set out for Hampton—even though, as he recalls, “I had no definite idea of the direction in which Hampton was, or of what it would cost to go there.” With a little money from his brother, and a few nickels and quarters from some older Black people who wished him well, young Booker T. Washington began his journey.

Chapter 3: The Struggle for an Education

Finally the great day came, and I started for Hampton. I had only a small, cheap satchel that contained a few articles of clothing I could get. My mother at the time was rather weak

frankness: honest directness in speech

satchel: a small bag for carrying things

and broken in health. I hardly expected to see her again, and thus our parting was all the more sad. She, however, was very brave through it all. At that time there were no through trains connecting that part of West Virginia with eastern Virginia. Trains ran only a portion of the way, and the remainder of the distance was travelled by stage-coaches.

The distance from Malden to Hampton is about five hundred miles. I had not been away from home many hours before it began to grow painfully evident that I did not have enough money to pay my fare to Hampton. One experience I shall long remember. I had been travelling over the mountains most of the afternoon in an old-fashion stage-coach, when, late in the evening, the coach stopped for the night at a common, unpainted house called a hotel. All the other passengers except myself were whites. In my ignorance I supposed that the little hotel existed for the purpose of accommodating the passengers who travelled on the stage-coach. The difference that the color of one's skin would make I had not thought anything about. After all the other passengers had been shown rooms and were getting ready for supper, I shyly presented myself before the man at the desk. It is true I had practically no money in my pocket with which to pay for bed or food, but I had hoped in some way to beg my way into the good graces of the landlord, for at that season in the mountains of Virginia the weather was cold, and I wanted to get indoors for the night. Without asking as to whether I had any money, the man at the desk firmly refused to even consider the matter of providing me with food or lodging. This was my first experience in finding out what the color of my

accommodating: providing something needed, in this case, lodging

skin meant. In some way I managed to keep warm by walking about, and so got through the night. My whole soul was so bent upon reaching Hampton that I did not have time to cherish any bitterness toward the hotel-keeper.

By walking, begging rides both in wagons and in the cars, in some way, after a number of days, I reached the city of Richmond, Virginia, about eighty-two miles from Hampton. When I reached there, tired, hungry, and dirty, it was late in the night. I had never been in a large city, and this rather added to my misery. When I reached Richmond, I was completely out of money. I had not a single acquaintance in the place, and, being unused to city ways, I did not know where to go. I applied at several places for lodging, but they all wanted money, and that was what I did not have. Knowing nothing else better to do, I walked the streets. In doing this I passed by many food-stands where fried chicken and half-moon apple pies were piled high and made to present a most tempting appearance. At that time it seemed to me that I would have promised all that I expected to possess in the future to have gotten hold of one of those chicken legs or one of those pies. But I could not get either of these, nor anything else to eat.

I must have walked the streets till after midnight. At last I became so exhausted that I could walk no longer. I was tired, I was hungry, I was everything but discouraged. Just about the time when I reached extreme physical exhaustion, I came upon a portion of a street where the board sidewalk was considerably elevated. I waited for a few minutes, till I was sure that no passers-by could see me, and then crept under the sidewalk and

cherish: to cling to fondly

lay for the night upon the ground, with my satchel of clothing for a pillow. Nearly all night I could hear the tramp of feet over my head. The next morning I found myself somewhat refreshed, but I was extremely hungry, because it had been a long time since I had had sufficient food. As soon as it became light enough for me to see my surroundings I noticed that I was near a large ship, and that this ship seemed to be unloading a cargo of pig iron. I went at once to the vessel and asked the captain to permit me to help unload the vessel in order to get money for food. The captain, a white man, who seemed to be kind-hearted, consented. I worked long enough to earn money for my breakfast, and it seems to me, as I remember it now, to have been about the best breakfast that I have ever eaten.

My work pleased the captain so well that he told me if I desired I could continue working for a small amount per day. This I was very glad to do. I continued working on this vessel for a number of days. After buying food with the small wages I received there was not much left to add on the amount I must get to pay my way to Hampton. In order to economize in every way possible, so as to be sure to reach Hampton in a reasonable time, I continued to sleep under the same sidewalk that gave me shelter the first night I was in Richmond. Many years after that the colored citizens of Richmond very kindly tendered me a reception at which there must have been two thousand people present. This reception was held not far from the spot where I slept the first night I spent in the city, and I must confess that my

pig iron: chunks of iron in a crude form to be used in making iron products or steel

vessel: a boat or ship

tendered: gave

reception: a gathering to welcome and celebrate someone

mind was more upon the sidewalk that first gave me shelter than upon the recognition, agreeable and cordial as it was.

When I had saved what I considered enough money with which to reach Hampton, I thanked the captain of the vessel for his kindness, and started again. Without any unusual occurrence I reached Hampton, with a surplus of exactly fifty cents with which to begin my education. To me it had been a long, eventful journey; but the first sight of the large, three-story, brick school building seemed to have rewarded me for all that I had undergone in order to reach the place. If the people who gave the money to provide that building could appreciate the influence the sight of it had upon me, as well as upon thousands of other youths, they would feel all the more encouraged to make such gifts. It seemed to me to be the largest and most beautiful building I had ever seen. The sight of it seemed to give me new life. I felt that a new kind of existence had now begun—that life would now have a new meaning. I felt that I had reached the promised land, and I resolved to let no obstacle prevent me from putting forth the highest effort to fit myself to accomplish the most good in the world.

As soon as possible after reaching the grounds of the Hampton Institute, I presented myself before the head teacher for an assignment to a class. Having been so long without proper food, a bath, and a change of clothing, I did not, of course, make a very favorable impression upon her, and I could see at once that there were doubts in her mind about the wisdom of admitting me as a student. I felt that I could hardly blame her if she got the idea that I was a worthless loafer or tramp. For some time

surplus: an amount more than needed

she did not refuse to admit me, neither did she decide in my favor, and I continued to linger about her, and to impress her in all the ways I could with my worthiness. In the meantime I saw her admitting other students, and that added greatly to my discomfort, for I felt, deep down in my heart, that I could do as well as they, if I could only get a chance to show what was in me. After some hours had passed, the head teacher said to me: “The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it.”

It occurred to me at once that here was my chance. Never did I receive an order with more delight. I knew that I could sweep, for Mrs. Ruffner had thoroughly taught me how to do that when I lived with her.

I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth. Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room. When I was through, I reported to the head teacher. She was a “Yankee” woman who knew just where to look for dirt. She went into the room and inspected the floor and closets; then she took her handkerchief and rubbed it on the woodwork about the walls, and over the table and benches. When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she quietly remarked, “I guess you will do to enter this institution.”

adjoining: located next to; next door

I was one of the happiest souls on Earth. The sweeping of that room was my college examination, and never did any youth pass an examination for entrance into Harvard or Yale that gave him more genuine satisfaction. I have passed several examinations since then, but I have always felt that this was the best one I ever passed.

I have spoken of my own experience in entering the Hampton Institute. Perhaps few, if any, had anything like the same experience that I had, but about the same period there were hundreds who found their way to Hampton and other institutions after experiencing something of the same difficulties that I went through. The young men and women were determined to secure an education at any cost.

The sweeping of the recitation-room in the manner that I did it seems to have paved the way for me to get through Hampton. Miss Mary F. Mackie, the head teacher, offered me a position as janitor. This, of course, I gladly accepted, because it was a place where I could work out nearly all the cost of my board. The work was hard and taxing but I stuck to it. I had a large number of rooms to care for, and had to work late into the night, while at the same time I had to rise by four o'clock in the morning, in order to build the fires and have a little time in which to prepare my lessons. . . .

. . . Life at Hampton was a constant revelation to me; was constantly taking me into a new world. The matter of having meals at regular hours, of eating on a tablecloth, using a napkin, the use of the bath-tub and of the tooth-brush, as well as the use of sheets upon the bed, were all new to me.



Students at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute learned useful trades. These young men in 1896 are learning to repair telephones.

. . . I was among the youngest of the students who were in Hampton at the time. Most of the students were men and women—some as old as forty years of age. As I now recall the scene of my first year, I do not believe that one often has the opportunity of coming into contact with three or four hundred men and women who were so tremendously in earnest as these men and women were. Every hour was occupied in study or work. Nearly all had had enough actual contact with the world to teach them the need of education. Many of the older ones were, of course, too old to master the textbooks very thoroughly, and it was often sad to watch their struggles; but they made up in earnestness much of what they lacked in books. Many of them were as poor as I was, and, besides having to wrestle with their books, they had to struggle with a poverty which

in earnest: sincere and serious

earnestness: sincere purpose and effort

prevented their having the necessities of life. Many of them had aged parents who were dependent upon them, and some of them were men who had wives whose support in some way they had to provide for.

The great and prevailing idea that seemed to take possession of every one was to prepare himself to lift up the people at his home. No one seemed to think of himself. . . .

The Atlanta Exposition Address (1895)

Primary Source

The following excerpts are from a speech that Booker T. Washington delivered on September 18, 1895, to a large audience at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. This speech has come to be known as the Atlanta Exposition Address, or the Atlanta Compromise. Why “compromise”? Partly because in the speech Washington advised African Americans in the South to give up, at least for a while, their demands for social and political equality and instead devote themselves to self-improvement through hard work and service. He used a vivid image to suggest that Black people should accept social segregation while still cooperating with white people in other ways: “In all things that are purely social,” he said, “we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.” The speech was met with widespread approval, and reprinted in many newspapers around the nation. But Washington’s message of patience and compromise was not as well received by some Black leaders, including Ida B. Wells and W. E. B. Du Bois.

compromise: when each side in a dispute gives up some of their demands to reach an agreement

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, “Water, water; we die of thirst!” The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” A second time the signal, “Water, water; send us water!” ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” And a third and fourth signal for water was answered, “Cast down your bucket where you are.” The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River. To those of my race . . . who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are”— cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded.

Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. . . . Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life. . . . No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

heeding: noticing; paying attention to

injunction: command; order

domestic service: work (usually in a private household) such as housecleaning, cooking, or child care

grievances: complaints about some unfair act or treatment

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, "Cast down your bucket where you are." Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested. . . . Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labor wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth. . . . While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one. In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.

those of foreign birth: immigrants to the U.S.

strange tongue: speaking a foreign language (not English)

fidelity: loyalty; faithfulness

bowels: inner parts

unresentful: bearing no grudge against; feeling no anger or displeasure toward someone for some insult or injury

interlacing: weaving together

commercial: relating to commerce (buying and selling)

There is no defense or security for any of us except in the highest intelligence and development of all. If anywhere there are efforts tending to curtail the fullest growth of the Negro, let these efforts be turned into stimulating, encouraging, and making him the most useful and intelligent citizen. . . . These efforts will be twice blessed—blessing him that gives and him that takes. . . .

. . . The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. . . . It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

In conclusion, . . . I pledge that in your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which God has laid at the doors of the South, you shall have at all times the patient, sympathetic help of my race; only let this be constantly in mind, that . . . far above and beyond material benefits will be that higher good, that, let us pray God, will come, in a blotting out of sectional differences and racial animosities and suspicions, in a determination to administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience among all classes to the mandates of law. This, coupled with our material prosperity, will bring into our beloved South a new heaven and a new earth.

curtail: reduce; limit; cut short

agitation: stirring up

folly: foolishness

intricate: complicated

sectional: regional; concerned with only a specific place or group

animosities: feelings of hatred or strong dislike

mandates: official orders

W. E. B. Du Bois AND THE COLOR LINE

Background Knowledge



W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was a writer, a scholar, a civil rights activist, and an important African American leader of the early twentieth century. Born William Edward Burghardt Du Bois in the western part of Massachusetts, he was raised by his mother, who encouraged him to study. After graduating as valedictorian of his high school, he attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1896 he became the first African

American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

After Harvard, Du Bois traveled and taught widely. He conducted research into the lives of African Americans. He concluded that the freeing of those who had been enslaved made Southern white people even more prejudiced than before.

In the 1890s, important court decisions limited the rights of African Americans, while lynching and violence increased, even beyond the South. In response to these setbacks, Du Bois and other Black leaders, activists, and educators gathered in 1905 in Niagara Falls, Canada, and formed a group called the Niagara Movement.

Du Bois: Pronounced doo-BOYSS—the second syllable rhymes with “voice.” In response to an invitation to give a speech, Du Bois in 1939 explained how to pronounce his last name: “Du, with u as in Sue; Bois, as oi in voice. The accent is on the second syllable.”

Ph.D.: Doctor of Philosophy, one of the highest educational degrees you can earn, requiring years of study and research after you graduate from college

Led by Du Bois, the Niagara Movement called for an end to racial discrimination and for full civil rights for African Americans. At a later meeting of the Niagara Movement, Du Bois, in a defiant spirit very much in contrast to that of Booker T. Washington, spoke these words:

We claim for ourselves every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America. The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone but for all true Americans. It is a fight for ideals, lest this, our common fatherland, false to its founding, become in truth the land of the thief and the home of the Slave—a by-word and a hissing among the nations for its sounding pretensions and pitiful accomplishment.

In 1909, members of the Niagara Movement joined other reformers to create the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which remains a leading civil rights organization to this day. Du Bois served as the NAACP's director of publications and as editor of its influential journal, *The Crisis*. Du Bois made *The Crisis* a leading voice against racial discrimination and for civil rights, including women's rights.

discrimination: unfair treatment of a person or group

Booker T. Washington: See page 61.

assail: to attack with strong arguments and criticism

lest: for fear that [used in speaking of something that you do not want to happen]

by-word: a word or phrase closely associated with some person or thing

hissing: an object of scorn and disapproval [Du Bois is using an older meaning of the word.]

sounding: resounding; loud and echoing

pretensions: unjustified claims

He also championed African American arts and literature in the journal's pages. Du Bois was also a co-founder and editor of *The Brownies' Book*, the first magazine for Black children.

Among Du Bois's many writings, the best known and most influential is *The Souls of Black Folk*, a collection of essays published in 1903. In this book he examines the development of African-American culture, the meaning of emancipation, and the roles and responsibilities of African-American leaders. In a preface, he says,

Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.

Later, Du Bois expands on this idea, saying,

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.

Du Bois speaks of the “color line” as an invisible barrier separating African Americans—indeed, all people of color—from white people in all areas of life. Du Bois called it “problem of the twentieth century”—and here in the twenty-first, the problem remains to be solved.

The Souls of Black Folk by W. E. B. Du Bois (1903)

Primary Source

*Du Bois repeatedly refers to “the color line,” an invisible barrier between white people and people of color. He also speaks of another barrier, which he calls “the Veil,” or sometimes “the Veil of Race.” White Americans, says Du Bois, live in one world, while African Americans are “shut out from their world by a vast veil.” In this selection from the opening chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois recalls how he learned about this veil when he was a young schoolchild.*



W. E. B. Du Bois is in the middle row (the third man from the left) in this 1905 photo of the founding members of the Niagara Movement, which called for immediate civil rights for African Americans, and later led to the formation of the NAACP.

Chapter I: Of Our Spiritual Strivings

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question. . . . They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience. . . . It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one. . . . I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England. . . . In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it

the other world: the white world, the world on the other side of what Du Bois calls the “veil” of race

compassionately: in a way that shows care and concern for someone in need of help

Mechanicsville: site of a Civil War battle in Virginia in 1862

reduce the boiling to a simmer: calm things down

rollicking: boisterous; full of energy and joy

revelation: something revealed, especially something you didn't know before

peremptorily: in an abrupt manner that allows for no argument or refusal

mayhap: perhaps

contempt: scorn; an attitude of looking down on something as unworthy

in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. That sky was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination-time, or beat them at a foot-race, or even beat their stringy heads. Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head,—some way. With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white. . . .

. . . The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

wrest: to pull something away

strife: struggle; conflict

sycophancy: submissive and self-humiliating attempts to win favor by flattering influential people

seventh son: According to folklore, anyone born as the seventh son (usually “seventh son of a seventh son”) has special powers. To be a seventh son was considered both a blessing and a curse, because seventh sons were often viewed with suspicion and distrust.

second-sight: the power to see things that cannot be detected by the five senses

yields: provides

unreconciled: still in conflict

dogged: stubborn; determined in effort

asunder: apart

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

. . . Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain—Liberty; in his tears and curses the God he implored had Freedom in his right hand. At last it came,—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. . . .

Years have passed away since then,—ten, twenty, forty; forty years of national life, forty years of renewal and development, and yet the swarthy spectre sits in its accustomed seat at the Nation's feast. . . .

bondage: slavery

villainies: evils

Israelites: In the Bible, the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob, wander in search of the “promised land,” described as “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8).

exhortation: a communication that energetically urges someone to do something

refrain: a repeated line in a song or poem

implored: begged urgently; asked with great emotion

swarthy: dark-skinned

spectre (also spelled *specter*): a ghost or phantom

The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people. . . .

Chapter III: Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others

In his Atlanta Exposition Address of 1895, Booker T. Washington said that Black people should put off their demands for equality and instead improve themselves and their economic condition through honorable manual labor. W. E. B. Du Bois rejected calls for patience and compromise. Du Bois believed that Washington's ideas would cause African Americans to lose their civil rights for the sake of economic opportunity. Here are excerpts from Du Bois's detailed analysis of Washington's program.

Easily the most striking thing in the history of the American Negro since 1876 is the ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington. Mr. Washington came, with a simple definite programme . . . of industrial education, conciliation of the South, and submission and silence as to civil and political rights. . . . He put enthusiasm, unlimited energy, and perfect faith into his programme, and changed it from a by-path into a veritable Way of Life. . . .

. . . To gain the sympathy and cooperation of the various elements comprising the white South was Mr. Washington's

freedman: person freed from slavery

Atlanta Exposition Address: See page 71.

ascendancy: rise to a position of influence

programme: an older spelling of *program*, a plan of action

conciliation: the act of calming someone and trying to gain their good will

veritable: true and real

comprising: forming; making up

first task; and this, at the time Tuskegee was founded, seemed, for a black man, well-nigh impossible. And yet ten years later it was done in the word spoken at Atlanta: “In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.” This “Atlanta Compromise” is by all odds the most notable thing in Mr. Washington’s career. . . .

. . . Today he stands as the one recognized spokesman of his ten million fellows, and one of the most notable figures in a nation of seventy millions. One hesitates, therefore, to criticize a life which, beginning with so little, has done so much. And yet the time is come when one may speak in all sincerity and utter courtesy of the mistakes and shortcomings of Mr. Washington’s career, as well as of his triumphs. . . .

. . . Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission; but adjustment at such a peculiar time as to make his programme unique. This is an age of unusual economic development, and Mr. Washington’s programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life. . . .

. . . Mr. Washington distinctly asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things,—

First, political power,

Second, insistence on civil rights,

Third, higher education of Negro youth,

Tuskegee: the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama, of which Washington was as a founder and first principal (See page 62.)

well-nigh: very nearly

utter: complete; absolute

—and concentrate all their energies on industrial education, and accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South. This policy has been courageously and insistently advocated for over fifteen years, and has been triumphant for perhaps ten years. As a result of this tender of the palm-branch, what has been the return? In these years there have occurred:

1. The disfranchisement of the Negro.
2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro.
3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro.

These movements are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr. Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has, without a shadow of doubt, helped their speedier accomplishment. The question then comes: Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meager chance for developing their exceptional men? If history and reason give any distinct answer to these questions, it is an emphatic No. . . .

. . . His doctrine has tended to make the whites, North and South, shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro's shoulders . . . ; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation,

accumulation: the act of gathering or acquiring over a period of time

tender: offer

palm-branch: a symbol of peace

disfranchisement: exclusion from the right to vote

propaganda: information (often exaggerated or untrue) used to promote a cause or person

servile: submissive and obedient

caste: social class

meager: having barely enough

and the hands of none of us are clean if we bend not our energies to righting these great wrongs.

. . . The black men of America have a duty to perform, a duty stern and delicate,—a forward movement to oppose a part of the work of their greatest leader. So far as Mr. Washington preaches Thrift, Patience, and Industrial Training for the masses, we must hold up his hands and strive with him, rejoicing in his honors.

. . . But so far as Mr. Washington apologizes for injustice, North or South, does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds,—so far as he, the South, or the Nation, does this,—we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them. By every civilized and peaceful method we must strive for the rights which the world accords to men, clinging unwaveringly to those great words which the sons of the Fathers would fain forget: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

delicate: requiring great care and skill

strive: try very hard; make a great effort

belittles: puts down; makes something seem unimportant

emasculating: unmanning; having the effect of taking away a man's strength and dignity

caste distinctions: things that separate people into different social classes

accords: gives

unwaveringly: in a firm, steady, unchanging way

fain: willingly and gladly

MAGGIE WALKER AND THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Background Knowledge



Today you can visit and tour the home of Maggie Lena Walker (1864-1934) in Richmond, Virginia. This beautifully furnished twenty-eight room mansion is evidence of the success achieved by the first woman in the United States to be the president of a bank—a bank that she founded to serve the African American community.

Her success did not come easy—as she said, “I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth but a laundry basket practically on my head.” Her mother, who had been an enslaved worker before the Civil War, worked as a laundress after Maggie’s stepfather died unexpectedly. Young Maggie helped her mother by delivering the washed and ironed clothes, carrying them in a basket perched on her head.

After finishing school in 1883, she worked as a teacher. Three years later, when she married a Richmond businessman, she left teaching because female teachers were not allowed to be married. As a married woman, she stayed active in her work with the church and various community organizations, especially one called the Independent Order of St. Luke.

The Independent Order of St. Luke (IOSL) had its beginnings in 1867 in Baltimore, Maryland, as an organization to provide financial help to its members when they got sick or when there was a death in the family. As the organization spread to local chapters in other states, it became an important provider of other financial, educational, and community services to African Americans. In this time of Jim Crow, many white-owned businesses denied or limited their services to Black people, who found a way to help themselves economically and socially through the Independent Order of St. Luke and similar organizations. IOSL members were expected to support each other, serve their community, and live by certain values such as thrift, hard work, and charity.

Maggie Walker was in high school in Richmond when she first joined a youth group of the Independent Order of St. Luke. From starting out as a part-time volunteer, she steadily rose in the Order. In 1895, she created a juvenile branch of the IOSL. “Our hope for the future,” she said, “lies with the children—the youth of our race.” Within a year, a thousand children were enrolled. They met in small groups, called circles, each led by a woman called a matron. In this way, many more women assumed leadership roles in the IOSL, while the children received lessons in social skills, community service, and racial pride.

In 1899 Maggie Walker became the head of the Independent Order of St. Luke. At the time, the organization had been losing adult members for some years and was facing financial difficulties. But that changed under Walker’s leadership. As she traveled from city to city and delivered inspiring speeches, the Order gained many thousands of new dues-paying members. Maggie Walker saw business opportunities that other people missed; she was a bold entrepreneur—a person who starts new

businesses and is willing to take on the risk of doing so. In 1901, at the annual convention of the Independent Order of St. Luke, she gave a speech in which she announced her vision for the expansion of the Order into new businesses: “First we need a savings bank,” she said. “Let us put our moneys together. . . . Let us have a bank that will take the nickels and turn them into dollars.” She also announced plans to start a newspaper and open a department store.

In 1903, when Maggie Walker founded the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank in Richmond, she became the nation’s first woman bank president. Her goal, however, was not her personal advancement—rather, it was the economic empowerment of the African American community. In the Jim Crow South, Walker’s bank provided a safe place for Black people to save their money, and a welcoming place when they needed to borrow money for such purposes as buying a home or starting a business. To encourage children to learn the importance of saving, she gave out penny banks to families who belonged to the Independent Order of St. Luke. A child who saved one hundred pennies could march proudly into the bank and open an account.

Maggie Walker went on to take active roles in organizations like the National Association of Colored Women and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The first president of the National Association of Colored Women, Mary Church Terrell—who herself came from a wealthy family—said this about Maggie Walker: “When one sees Mrs. Walker sitting in a solid mahogany chair in her bank, it is hard to visualize her as the daughter of a washerwoman carrying clothes which she and her mother had laundered to the aristocracy of the capital of the Confederacy.”

Mary Church Terrell: See page 140.

mahogany: a hard, reddish-brown wood used in making furniture

aristocracy: privileged upper class

capital of the Confederacy: Richmond, Virginia, had been the capital of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War, which ended in 1865.

“Let Woman Choose Her Own Vocation”: Speech by Maggie Lena Walker (1912)

Primary Source

Much of Maggie Walker’s entrepreneurial energy was directed toward creating opportunities for Black women. Many women worked at the St. Luke businesses—not only the bank, but also a newspaper, the St. Luke Herald, and a department store that welcomed the African American community, unlike Richmond’s big stores, which required Black customers to enter through a separate entrance and would not let them try on clothes. Walker was especially eager for more Black women to enter business, even as she saw clearly the obstacles they faced—both because they were women and because they were Black. In the following selections from a speech she made in July 1912 to the Negro Young People’s Christian and Educational Congress, in Hampton, Virginia, she urges young Black women “to launch out into business.”



A mural in the courtyard of the Maggie Walker Historical Site in Richmond, Virginia, depicts Maggie Walker against the background of the modern-day city’s skyline.

I have been asked to appear before you and say a few words about the **woman in business**.

. . . There is neither justice or good common sense in the demand that every woman should confine her activities to the domestic duties of home, regardless of what her inherited gifts and inclinations are. . . . There are thousands, aye hundreds of thousands of women, who will ever find their greatest joy and happiness, in making good bread, cooking good meals, and rearing good families; and there are thousands upon thousands who are anxious to become milliners, merchants, professional women, unhampered and free to make their living, to help support aged fathers and mothers, to help clothe and educate younger sisters and brothers, and secretly to hand to some heavily burdened married sister, a few dollars to make life's way less rugged.

Let woman choose her own vocation just as man does his. Let her go into business, let her make money, let her become independent, if possible, of man: let her marry, bringing into the partnership, if not money, a trade or business—something else besides the mere clothes upon her body. . . .

. . . Business, once, was [the] occupation of man, solely. He, alone, was the bread winner, the protector, and woman looked up to him, and sought at his hands the necessary money for her many and varied wants. Business to her was a sealed book, an undiscovered country into whose depths she dared not venture.

domestic: relating to the home and family

inclinations: likings; preferences

aye [pronounced "eye"]: yes (often used as an expression of emphasis, like saying "indeed")

milliners: persons who make and sell women's hats

unhampered: able to move and act freely, without obstacles

vocation: career; occupation; profession

trade: a job that requires manual skill and training (such as a carpenter or seamstress)

solely: only

venture: to dare to go to a dangerous or unknown place

. . . When growing necessity first began to force woman from the home, into the mills, factories, office, stores, banks, commercial houses, state and national clerkships, man resented her coming as an unwarranted indecorous act, that needed rebuke and severe condemnation. But neither the thunders of the pulpit, nor the sarcasm and rebuke of the press, could stay the onward march of the army of needy, hungry, ill-clad women, looking for bread and meat. Their work gave satisfaction, it was as good, if not better, than man's. It cost less and Capital at once took advantage of woman's necessity by compelling her to do a man's work at a smaller wage. Of course the women rebelled, and are rebelling and rebellious even at this present moment, yet Capital is deaf—and will never hear their cries, until the women force Capital to hear them at the ballot box, and to do just and honest to them as to the men.

From the army of working women, laboring in every vocation in which man labors save three or four, woman by her superior work has largely conquered the prejudice against her as bread winner, working beyond the confines of her own home.

In whatever occupation you find men, you will also find woman.
. . . Size of body amounts to so little, while the size and quality of the brain amount to so much.

commercial: related to commerce (buying and selling)

unwarranted: not necessary; not justified or reasonable

indecorous: improper; not polite; not in good taste

rebuke: a harsh expression of disapproval

condemnation: extremely strong disapproval or criticism

the pulpit: the raised platform in a church from which a preacher preaches—here, representing the preacher and religious authority

stay: stop; delay

ill-clad: dressed in worn-out clothing; poorly dressed

Capital: The word *capital* means wealth. *Capital* (with the uppercase C) is Maggie Walker's shorthand way of referring to the combined power of wealthy businessmen.

compelling: forcing; requiring

ballot box: a container in which to place ballots, the sheets on which voters mark their choices

save: except

Brain is omniscient. Brain is omnipotent. Brain conquereth all things. . . .

. . . From the laboring woman to the Business Woman has simply been a transition from hands to head—from manual labor to brain labor: and since woman possesses brain, the exact kind that man has,—there is no reason on earth why a woman should not be a Business Woman as well as a laboring woman. She does not measure up to man today in the business world, not because of lack of brain, but rather because of lack of opportunity.

. . . My dear friends, women should go into business just the same as men. . . . Woman may not see as far as man sees, but what they do see, they see quicker. But, my dear friends, all of the business about which we have been talking, is white business, and all of the women about which we have been talking are White Women. So let us turn our attention to the occupations of Negro Women.

How many occupations have Negro Women? Let us count them: Negro women are domestic menials, teachers and church builders. If I have omitted any, I do not object to having you supply them. There is nothing on the earth quite so limited in employment as the Negro woman. After we have struggled and sacrificed and kept them in school until graduation day—what employment is then for them the next day? It doesn't take a high school education to drive a baby carriage, nor . . . normal training for domestic service in the homes of our white friends and neighbors.

omniscient: knowing everything

omnipotent: all-powerful

conquereth: a Biblical form of *conquers* (overcomes)

menials: servants

omitted: left out

normal training: education in a normal school, an old term referring to a school that trains high school graduates to be teachers

And as few as are the occupations in which a Negro Woman may earn a scant livelihood, have you ever deliberately stopped and thought over the alarming and awful fact that employment for Negro women grows less and less every day? Don't you know that white women are crowding Negro women out of employment all over the land? . . .

. . . With but scant opportunities for occupation, and with these opportunities growing fewer, there is but slight foundation upon which the Negro woman, however desirous she may be, can launch out in business.

Successful conduct of business must have behind it money, energy and brains. There are hundreds of Negro women today, the land over, with money, brains and energy, and yet are afraid to step out into business.

. . . The embers of race unity are smoldering, and it is in my humble judgment, the distinctive and imperative duty of this magnificent organization, composed of the very best there is in Negro womanhood, to blow these smoldering embers into a flame and to assist, encourage and help Negro women to launch out into business.

scant: barely enough to get by

deliberately: on purpose; intentionally

embers: small pieces of glowing wood or coal, as in a fireplace

smoldering: burning slowly without flame (Maggie Walker's image of "smoldering embers" suggests an energy that is about to burst forth.)

distinctive: special to a specific person or group

imperative: absolutely necessary

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE: FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO VOTE



Two American suffragettes in the 1910s hold a sign saying exactly what they want.

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed that “all men are created equal, [and] . . . endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights.” In those inspiring words, you might take “all men” to mean “all mankind” or “all people.” But for too many years in America, those words applied only to *men*.

For many years, women in the United States were denied many rights. They were excluded from attending most colleges and could not hold many jobs. In most states, married women had no property rights—all the property and money belonged to the husband. Before 1920, women in the United States were not allowed to vote. Women were expected to tend to the home and leave politics and government to men.

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, many women took an active role in the abolitionist movement—the movement to abolish slavery. Some of the women who fought against slavery went on to become early leaders in the fight for women’s rights, especially suffrage—the right to vote.

The following selections feature the voices of determined women who spoke out for the right to vote, as well as other rights for women. Their efforts over many decades led in 1920 to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which says: *The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.*

It sounds obvious, but it took decades of hard work, dedication, and persuasion to extend the right to vote to women.

See “The Language of Race” (page 2).

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON AND THE DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS

Background Knowledge



In 1840, when Elizabeth Cady married the journalist and abolitionist Henry Brewster Stanton, she changed the traditional wedding vows—instead of promising to “to love, cherish, and obey” her husband, she left out “and obey.”

That same year, the newlywed couple traveled to England. They went as representatives of the American Anti-Slavery Society to attend the World Anti-Slavery

Convention in London. But Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) was not allowed to participate in the convention. Women were required to sit apart in a balcony, and to listen while the men conducted the convention’s business.

In London, Stanton met a Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister and a fellow abolitionist, as well as an advocate for women’s rights. Some years later, back in the United States, Stanton worked with Mott and other Quaker women involved in the antislavery movement to organize a meeting on women’s rights. They announced the meeting as “A Convention to discuss the social, civic and religious condition and rights of Woman.”

Quaker: a member of a Christian religious group called the Society of Friends, which encourages people to work for justice, and which was very active in the antislavery movement

In July of 1848, about two hundred women, as well as a few dozen men, attended the Seneca Falls Convention, held over two days in Seneca Falls, New York. At the Seneca Falls Convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton read the Declaration of Sentiments, describing how men had wronged women and kept them from their rights. Stanton was the main author of this declaration. As she worked on it in the days leading up to the convention, her husband objected when she included language calling for women's right to vote—but she remained firm.

Stanton's husband was not the only one opposed to bringing up the subject of women voting. At the convention, during discussion of the Declaration of Sentiments, both women and men objected to such language as too extreme. One man at the convention, however—the great African American abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass—spoke out strongly in support of keeping women's voting rights in the Declaration of Sentiments. In the end, the Declaration included words supporting women's suffrage. As the convention closed, one hundred people—68 women and 32 men—signed the document to show their support.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton modeled the structure and language of the Declaration of Sentiments on the Declaration of Independence. For example, you know these famous words from the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . ." In the Declaration of Sentiments, Stanton wrote, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal."

In 1776, in the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson had boldly stated, “The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states.” In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton proclaimed with equal boldness, “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”—a tyranny that she was determined to resist and overturn.

The Declaration of Sentiments (1848)

Primary Source

You will find it helpful first to revisit the Declaration of Independence before you read the following selections from Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s Declaration of Sentiments, so that you can better appreciate how Stanton creatively built on one revolutionary proclamation to create another.

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.

usurpations: acts of wrongfully taking and keeping something (such as power or property)

in direct object: as their main goal

hitherto: previously; up to this time

entitle: give someone a right to

impel: move someone to action



Elizabeth Cady Stanton presents the Declaration of Sentiments to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848.

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

self-evident: clear and obvious without any proof or explanation

inalienable [also *unalienable*]: not capable of being taken away

secure: to protect; to keep safe

instituted: set up; established

deriving: receiving or obtaining (from a certain source)

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.

The Declaration of Independence lists specific acts that King George III had done to hurt the American colonists. In similar form, the Declaration of Sentiments lists the “repeated injuries and usurpations” of men against women, including the following:

effect [as a verb]: to produce; to bring about

prudence: good judgment; the quality of being careful and cautious

transient: existing only a short time

accordingly: therefore

hath: an old form of *has*

invariably: always, without change

evinces: shows clearly

despotism: tyranny; rule by an absolute dictator

sufferance: patiently putting up with something, especially some wrong or hardship

constrains: compels; forces

candid: honest and unbiased

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.

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. . . .

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. . . .

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.

elective franchise: right to vote

compelled: forced; required

deprived: taken something away from

legislation: lawmaking

oppressed: treated unfairly; kept down by those in power

civilly: in relation to one's rights as a citizen

covenant: formal agreement

chastisement: harsh criticism or blame; punishment

supposition: assumption

monopolized: kept entirely for oneself

scanty: very small in amount

remuneration: payment for work someone has done

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 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 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. . . .

distinction: excellence; importance

theology: the study of religious faith and practice

sentiment: attitude; opinion

delinquencies: morally wrong actions

deemed: judged

of little account: trivial; unimportant

endeavored: tried very hard

abject: miserable; humiliated; submissive

disfranchisement: exclusion from the right to vote

degradation: the condition of being kept down by disrespectful and humiliating treatment

aggrieved: wronged; injured

fraudulently: in a way that involves dishonesty and dirty tricks

SOJOURNER TRUTH: “I AM A WOMAN’S RIGHTS”

Background Knowledge



Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), who had once been an enslaved worker, was a frequent and powerful presence at public meetings on women’s rights in the mid-1800s. She was born Isabella Bomfree in 1797 in a Dutch-speaking part of New York. In 1843, she changed her name to Sojourner Truth, in response, she said, to a call from God to go forth and preach the truth. (A sojourner is a person who moves from place to place.) She

often spoke about the evils of slavery and the need for women’s rights.

She gave her best-known speech in May 1851 at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. There are differing accounts of what she said in that speech. The best-known account comes from Frances Gage, a women’s rights advocate and abolitionist who was one of the leaders of the 1851 conference in Ohio.

Twelve years after the conference, in 1863, Gage wrote an article titled “Reminiscences” that appeared in a magazine called the *New York Independent*. Gage vividly described the scene in the Ohio meeting hall:

... from her seat in the corner rose Sojourner Truth. . . . She moved slowly and solemnly to the front, laid her old bonnet at her feet, and turned her great speaking eyes to me. There was a hissing sound of disapprobation above and below. I rose and announced "Sojourner Truth," and begged the audience to keep silence for a few moments. The tumult subsided at once, and every eye was fixed on this almost Amazon form, which stood nearly six feet high, head erect, and eyes piercing the upper air like one in a dream. At her first word there was a profound hush. She spoke in deep tones, which, though not loud, reached every ear in the house, and away through the throng at the doors and windows.

Gage then provided, word for word, what Sojourner Truth said—or rather, what Gage remembers her saying, after a gap of twelve years. As Gage reports it, Sojourner Truth spoke in a stereotypical Southern dialect, saying things like, "Well, chillen" (Well, children) and "Dat man oberdar" (That man over there). But that is probably not an accurate representation of Sojourner Truth's way of talking, as she was raised speaking Dutch and later learned English.

In Gage's version of the speech, Sojourner Truth repeats this question four times: "ar'n't I a woman?" Thus the speech came to be known as the "Ain't I a woman" speech. This version of the speech was reinforced when Gage's "Reminiscences" were included in an important book published in 1881, *History of Woman Suffrage*. (Two of the main editors of this book were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.)

disapprobation: disapproval

tumult: a state of noisy disorder

Amazon: in mythology, the Amazons were powerful female warriors

throng: crowd

dialect: local form of a language, with its own pronunciations and word usages

Historians have recently questioned the accuracy of Gage's account and instead drawn attention to another version, published much closer to the time when the speech was actually delivered. In June 1851, a month after Sojourner Truth's speech, the Reverend Marius Robinson—who was in the audience at the Ohio meeting—published his account of the speech in a newspaper called the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. That is the speech that you can read below.

Sojourner Truth's Speech at the Women Rights Convention (1851)

Primary Source

Sojourner Truth spoke at the Women's Rights Convention held in Ohio in May of 1851. It was not a prepared speech. Instead, she rose to respond to a number of ministers who were dominating the discussion at the convention, speaking against women's rights, and insisting that a woman's rightful place was in the home. Less than a month after Sojourner Truth spoke, the Reverend Marius Robinson, who had attended the Ohio convention, published her remarks in the anti-slavery newspaper he edited. In the newspaper, he prefaced his account of her speech with these words:

"One of the most unique and interesting speeches of the convention was made by Sojourner Truth, an emancipated slave. It is impossible to transfer it to paper, or convey any adequate idea of the effect it produced upon the audience. Those only can appreciate it who saw her powerful form, her whole-souled, earnest gesture, and listened to her strong and truthful tones."

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 a woman 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 can't take more than our pint'll hold. The poor men seem to be all in confusion, and don't 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 won't be so much trouble.

I can't 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.

Eve caused man to sin: In the Bible, the book of Genesis says that Adam and Eve were the first man and first woman. Eve ate the forbidden fruit of the tree of good and evil, and then she gave the fruit to Adam to eat, thus bringing sin into the world.

spurned: rejected in a mean way

besought: past tense of *beseech*, to plead; to ask urgently

Lazarus came forth: In the Bible, the Gospel of John tells how Jesus, deeply moved by the grief of Mary and Martha after the death of their brother Lazarus, raises Lazarus from the dead.

between a hawk and a buzzard: an expression that means, caught in a difficult situation

SUSAN B. ANTHONY: “ARE WOMEN PERSONS?”

Background Knowledge



Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) was raised in a Quaker family that expected her to speak her mind and follow her conscience in social issues. Like other women who worked for women’s rights, she started as an abolitionist, seeking to end slavery, and as a supporter of the temperance movement, which sought to end the drinking of alcoholic beverages. In 1852, when she attempted to speak at a meeting of temperance workers, the chairman told her, “The sisters

were not invited to speak, but to listen and learn.” She promptly proceeded to work with other women to form their own organization, the Women’s State Temperance Society.

Susan B. Anthony came to realize that before women could be effective in bringing about change in society, they must first obtain equal political rights for themselves. And so she dedicated her life to securing women’s rights—especially the right to vote.

After the Seneca Falls Convention, Susan B. Anthony met Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a fellow reformer and advocate for women’s rights. They became friends and worked together for women’s suffrage and other causes.

Quaker: a member of a Christian religious group called the Society of Friends, which encourages people to work for justice, and which was very active in the antislavery movement

Seneca Falls Convention: See page 96.

They took the lead in starting a newspaper, called *The Revolution*, with this motto: "The True Republic—Men, their rights and nothing more; Women, their rights and nothing less." Together they helped found the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869, and Susan B. Anthony served as president of the organization from 1892 to 1900.

Along with fifteen other women in Rochester, New York, Susan B. Anthony managed to vote in the presidential election of 1872. Then they were arrested. A trial date was set for six months later, and it was decided that Susan B. Anthony alone would stand trial. Susan B. Anthony knew it was illegal for a woman to vote, but she did so with a purpose, which she explained to the judge at her trial: "to educate all women to do precisely as I have done, rebel against your man-made, unjust, unconstitutional forms of law." The judge at the trial was so opposed to women's rights that he told the jury to find her guilty. That was wrong—a judge cannot tell a jury what to decide. Susan B. Anthony was fined but she refused to pay.

Throughout the late 1800s, Susan B. Anthony gave many speeches and organized campaigns in support of a constitutional amendment to give women the vote. Although she did not live to see the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, she never gave up hope that American women would secure the right to vote. A few weeks before her death in 1906 she said, "Failure is impossible."

“Is It a Crime for a U.S. Citizen to Vote?” — Speech by Susan B. Anthony (1873)

Primary Source

After Susan B. Anthony was arrested for voting in the 1872 presidential election, in the months before her trial she spoke to many audiences in and around Rochester, New York. In her speech, she examined many state and federal laws, and carefully analyzed the language in relevant parts of the Constitution, especially the Fourteenth Amendment. She forcefully argued that for women to vote was not against the law but instead the logical outcome of correctly understanding the law. The following excerpts from her speech give a sampling of Susan B. Anthony’s powerful reasoning.



With her fellow suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (at left), Susan B. Anthony helped found the National Woman Suffrage Association.

Fourteenth Amendment: See page 51.

Friends and fellow citizens: I stand before you tonight under indictment for the alleged crime of having voted at the last presidential election, without having a lawful right to vote. It shall be my work this evening to prove to you that in thus voting, I not only committed no crime, but, instead, simply exercised my citizen's rights, guaranteed to me and all United States citizens by the National Constitution, beyond the power of any state to deny.

. . . The preamble of the Federal Constitution says: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

It was *we, the people*; not *we, white male citizens*; nor yet *we, the male citizens*; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union; and we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people—women as well as men. And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government—the ballot. . . .

indictment: a formal written accusation of a crime

alleged: accused (of some wrongdoing) but not proven guilty

domestic: relating to one's own country (as opposed to foreign)

tranquility: peace; calm

welfare: well-being; health and happiness

posterity: future generations

ordain: officially establish by law

secure: to protect; to keep safe

downright: absolute

mockery: a hurtful joke; an act full of ridicule and scorn

democratic-republican: refers not to political parties but to the nature of government in the U.S. as both a democracy (government by the people) and a republic (government by representatives elected by the people)

For any state to make sex a qualification that must ever result in the disfranchisement of an entire half of the people, is . . . a violation of the supreme law of the land. By it the blessings of liberty are forever withheld from women and their female posterity. For them, this government has no just powers derived from the consent of the governed. For them this government is not a democracy; it is not a republic. It is the most odious aristocracy ever established on the face of the globe. . . .

It is urged, the use of the masculine pronouns, *he*, *his*, and *him*, in all the constitutions and laws is proof that only men were meant to be included in their provisions. If you insist on this version of the letter of the law, we shall insist that you be consistent . . . and exempt women from taxation for the support of the government and from the penalties for the violation of laws. There is no *she* or *her* or *hers* in the tax laws, and this is equally true of all the criminal laws. . . .

Though the words *persons*, *people*, *inhabitants*, *electors*, *citizens*, are used indiscriminately in the national and state constitutions, there was always a conflict of opinion, prior to the war, as to whether they were synonymous terms, but whatever room there was for doubt, . . . the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment

disfranchisement: exclusion from the right to vote

consent of the governed: The Declaration of Independence says that “all men are created equal” and have “certain unalienable rights,” and that “to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed”—meaning that the lawful authority of government must come from the people.

odious: hateful; deserving to be hated

aristocracy: government by a privileged group of people

It is urged: Some people argue that

provisions: statements in a legal document

exempt: release; leave out

indiscriminately: in a way that does not recognize differences

the war: the Civil War (which ended in 1865)

synonymous: having the same meaning; expressing the same idea

settled the question forever in its first sentence: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside.”

The second settles the equal status of all citizens: “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Webster, Worcester, and Bouvier all define a citizen to be a person in the United States, entitled to vote and hold office.

The only question left to be settled now is: Are women persons? And I hardly believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not. Being persons, then, women are citizens; and no state has a right to make any new law, or to enforce any old law, that shall abridge their privileges or immunities. Hence every discrimination against women in constitutions and laws of the several states is today null and void, precisely as is every one against negroes. . . .

naturalized: having gained citizenship in a new country

jurisdiction: government power and authority

abridge: limit

immunities: protections

deprive: to take something away from someone

due process of law: fair treatment according to accepted legal procedures and principles

Webster, Worcester, and Bouvier: three famous dictionary makers

hardihood: boldness

hence: for this reason; therefore

discrimination: unfair treatment of a person or group

null and void: a phrase from law, meaning, having no legal force or authority

MARY ANN SHADD CARY: STRIKE OUT THE WORD *MALE*

Background Knowledge



Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893)—born to free African American parents in Wilmington, Delaware—grew up in a home that welcomed fugitive slaves and helped them on their northward journey to freedom. She became a teacher and later moved to Canada, where she became the first Black woman in North America to publish a newspaper, *The Provincial Freeman*, which took a strong stance against slavery.

As a young woman, she did not hesitate to speak her mind. In 1848, Frederick Douglass—who had escaped slavery to become a national leader of the anti-slavery movement—asked the readers of his newspaper, the *North Star*, for suggestions to improve the lives of free Black people living in the North. Mary Ann Shadd Cary responded with a letter that Douglass printed in his newspaper. In the letter, she said, “We have been holding conventions for years—we have been assembling together and whining over our difficulties and afflictions. . . . But it does really seem that we have made but little progress. . . . We should do more and talk less.”

After her husband died in 1860, Mary Ann Shadd Cary returned to the United States and worked to recruit Black men to serve in the Union Army during the Civil War. After the war ended, she returned to a career in teaching. In 1869, she enrolled in Howard University in Washington, D.C., and soon became one of the first Black women in the United States to earn a law degree.

Mary Ann Shadd Cary became active in the women's suffrage movement. In January 1874, she joined other women in speaking to the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives in Congress. In her speech, Cary refers to two recent amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

The Fourteenth Amendment was adopted in 1868, shortly after the end of the Civil War. The first part of the amendment says, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States," and that no state can make laws that take away any citizen's "life liberty, or property." These words were especially important for all formerly enslaved people—as "persons born or naturalized in the United States," they too were now included as American citizens, and deserving of "the equal protection of the laws."

Notice that the amendment refers to "all persons," which means both men and women. After all, women are "persons," and as long as they are born or naturalized in the U.S., that means they are citizens—so, they have the rights of citizens, including the right to vote—yes?

Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments: See pages 51-53.

naturalized: having gained citizenship in a new country

Well, no. Things got complicated in the second part of the amendment, which deals with how many representatives each state can send to the House of Representatives. In this part of the amendment, the language gets dense and tangled. One part in particular caused trouble for women—a passage that refers to voters as “male inhabitants . . . being twenty-one years of age”—not “persons” but “*male* inhabitants.”

For the first time, the U. S. Constitution included a specific reference to a person’s sex. Before this time, only the states, not the national government, had made laws that limited the vote to men. Now, with the Fourteenth Amendment’s reference to voters as “male inhabitants,” the U.S. Constitution indirectly but effectively excluded women from the right to vote.

Two years later, the Fifteenth Amendment declared, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Those words made it very clear that formerly enslaved African Americans had the right to vote. But there were no words specifically giving *women* the vote.

The Fifteenth Amendment caused arguments in the woman’s suffrage movement. Some women supported it, while others—including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony—objected to it because the amendment did not include women.

twenty-one years of age: In 1971, the voting age (for all citizens, women and men) was lowered to 18 by the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

abridged: limited

servitude: the condition of being completely under the power of others; the condition of being enslaved

Mary Ann Shadd Cary appreciated the extraordinary significance of the Fifteenth Amendment, but like many of her fellow suffragists, she was disappointed that it did not include women. The following excerpts from her speech to the House Judiciary Committee in 1874 show how, in her view, the Fifteenth Amendment fell short in light of the contributions and sacrifices of Black people—including Black women—during the Civil War.

Speech to the House Judiciary Committee by Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1874)

Primary Source

Less than ten years after the end of the Civil War, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, a Black woman, addressed the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives in Congress. Notice how she acknowledges what is good about the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments while also pointing out the problem of using the word male in the U.S. Constitution.

Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen of the Judiciary Committee:
In respectfully appearing before you, to solicit in concert with these ladies, your good offices, in securing to the women of the United States, and particularly, to the women of the District of Columbia, the right to vote . . . I am not vain enough to suppose . . . that words of mine could add one iota of weight

solicit: formally request

concert: agreement; combined effort

these ladies: the other women speaking to the Judiciary Committee that day

good offices: help in achieving some goal

vain: excessively proud; conceited

iota: bit; a tiny quantity

to the arguments from these learned and earnest women. . . .
But, as a colored woman, a resident of this District, a taxpayer
of the same;—as one of a class equal in point of numbers to the
male colored voters herein; claiming affiliation with two and
a half millions of the same sex, in the country at large, . . . my
presence, at this time, and on an errand so important, may not I
trust be without slight significance.

The crowning glory of American citizenship is that it may be
shared equally by people of every nationality, complexion,
and sex, should they of foreign birth so desire; . . . millions of
citizens of every complexion, and embracing both sexes, are
born upon the soil and claim the honor. I would be particularly
clear upon this point. By the provisions of the 14th and 15th
amendments to the Constitution of the United States, . . .
millions of colored women, today, share with colored men
the responsibilities of freedom from chattel slavery. From
the introduction of African slavery to its extinction, a period
of more than two hundred years, they equally with fathers,
brothers, [were] denied the right to vote. . . . The colored women
of this country, though heretofore silent, in great measure
upon this question of the right to vote . . . , have neither been
indifferent to their own just claims under the amendments, in
common with colored men, nor to the demand for political
recognition so justly made everywhere throughout the land.
. . . The strength and glory of a free nation, is not so much
in the size and equipment of its armies, as in the loyal hearts

earnest: sincere and serious

affiliation: close association; connection

at large: as a whole

chattel: property, specifically, a human being considered as property

heretofore: up to this time

and willing hands of its men and women. And this fact has been illustrated in an eminent degree by well-known events in the history of the United States. To the women of the nation conjointly with the men, is it indebted for arduous and dangerous personal service, . . . so indispensable to success in its hour of danger. The colored women though humble in sphere, and unendowed with worldly goods, yet, led as by inspiration—not only fed, and sheltered, and guided in safety the prisoner soldiers of the Union when escaping from the enemy, or the soldier who was compelled to risk life itself in the struggle to break the backbone of rebellion, but gave their sons and brothers to the armies of the nation and their prayers to high Heaven for the success of the Right.

The surges of fratricidal war have passed we hope never to return; the premonitions of the future are peace and good will; these blessings, so greatly to be desired, can only be made permanent, in responsible governments,—based as you affirm upon the consent of the governed,—by giving to both sexes

eminent: high; noteworthy

conjointly: together with

arduous: extremely difficult

indispensable: absolutely necessary

hour of danger: a reference to the years of the Civil War

humble in sphere: of low social status

unendowed with worldly goods: provided with little property or wealth

the Right: the cause of the Union

fratricidal: when brother kills brother

premonitions: feelings about what will happen

affirm: state as true

consent of the governed: The Declaration of Independence says that governments get “their just powers from the consent of the governed,” meaning that the lawful authority of government must come from the people.

practically the equal powers conferred in the provisions of the Constitution as amended. In the District of Columbia the women in common with the women of the states and territories, feel keenly the discrimination against them in the retention of the word *male* . . . [and] they sincerely hope that the word *male* may be stricken out by Congress on your recommendation without delay. Taxed, and governed in other respects, without their consent, they respectfully demand, that the principles of the founders of the government may not be disregarded in their case; but, as there are laws by which they are tried, with penalties attached thereto, that they may be invested with the right to vote as do men, that thus as in all Republics indeed, they may in future be governed by their own consent.



Mary Ann Shadd Cary was the first Black woman in North America to publish a newspaper. (This illustration is a concept drawing for a sculpture of Cary by the Canadian artist Donna Jean Mayne.)

conferred: given to someone

provisions: statements in a legal document

keenly: sharply; intensely

discrimination: unfair treatment of a person or group

retention: the act of keeping or continuing to use

stricken out: crossed out; deleted

invested with: provided

FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER: “WE ARE ALL BOUND UP TOGETHER”

Background Knowledge



Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) was born in Baltimore, Maryland. Her parents were free African Americans. After both her parents died when she was only a few years old, Frances was raised by her aunt and uncle. Her uncle, the Reverend William Watkins, was an abolitionist. She attended a school founded by her uncle, called the Watkins Academy for Negro Youth. She loved books and literature, and

wrote her first volume of poetry when she was twenty-one.

In her poem “Eliza Harris,” first published in 1853, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper makes her readers feel the pain and panic of an enslaved mother fleeing from men pursuing her and her child:

*Like a fawn from the arrow, startled and wild,
A woman swept by us, bearing a child;
In her eye was the night of a settled despair,
And her brow was o’ershaded with anguish and care.*

*She was nearing the river—in reaching the brink,
She heeded no danger, she paused not to think!
For she is a mother—her child is a slave—
And she’ll give him his freedom, or find him a grave!*

The poet steps back from this scene to ask,

*Oh! how shall I speak of my proud country's shame?
Of the stains on her glory, how give them their name?
How say that her banner in mockery waves—
Her "star-spangled banner"—o'er millions of slaves?*

She wrote not only poetry but also stories, essays, and novels. Beginning in the 1850s, she became a lecturer, and her talks against slavery soon drew large crowds.

In 1860 she married Fenton Harper. She used money she earned from writing and lecturing to help buy their farm near Columbus, Ohio. After her husband died suddenly in 1864, she returned to lecturing, and focused more on women's rights.

Speech at the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1886)

Primary Source

On May 1, 1866, about a year after the end of the Civil War, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper gave a speech at the National Woman's Rights Convention in New York. Also speaking at this conference were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott. Harper began her speech by speaking of a recent personal loss that had made her realize she needed to fight not only for the rights of African Americans but also for women's rights. Harper urged her audience—mostly white women—not to ignore the struggles of African Americans. She challenged the women to understand that the right to vote would not "cure all the ills of life." Said Harper, "You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton: See page 96.

Susan B. Anthony: See page 107.



Frances Ellen Watkins Harper—poet, author, abolitionist, and suffragist—said, “Justice is not fulfilled so long as woman is unequal before the law.”

I feel I am something of a novice upon this platform. Born of a race whose inheritance has been outrage and wrong, most of my life had been spent in battling against those wrongs. But I did not feel as keenly as others, that I had these rights, in common with other women, which are now demanded. About two years ago, I stood within the shadows of my home. A great sorrow had fallen upon my life. My husband had died suddenly, leaving me a widow, with four children, one my own, and the others stepchildren. I tried to keep my children together. But my husband died in debt; and before he had been in his grave three months, the administrator had swept the very milk-crocks and wash tubs from my hands. I was a farmer's wife and made butter for the Columbus market; but what could I do, when they had swept all away? They left me one thing—and that was a looking glass! Had I died instead of my husband, how different would have been the result! By this time he would have had another wife, it is likely; and no administrator would have gone into his house, broken up his home, and sold his bed, and taken away his means of support.

. . . I say, then, that justice is not fulfilled so long as woman is unequal before the law.

We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the Negro. You pressed him down for two

novice: newcomer; beginner

keenly: sharply; intensely

administrator: a person appointed by a court to oversee the property left behind by a person who has died

crocks: jugs; pitchers

looking glass: mirror

trample: step heavily

centuries; and in so doing you crippled the moral strength and paralyzed the spiritual energies of the white men of the country. When the hands of the black were fettered, white men were deprived of the liberty of speech and the freedom of the press. Society cannot afford to neglect the enlightenment of any class of its members. . . .

This grand and glorious revolution which has commenced, will fail to reach its climax of success, until throughout the length and breadth of the American Republic, the nation shall be so color-blind, as to know no man by the color of his skin or the curl of his hair. It will then have no privileged class, trampling upon and outraging the unprivileged classes, but will be then one great privileged nation, whose privilege will be to produce the loftiest manhood and womanhood that humanity can attain.

I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life. I do not believe that white women are dewdrops just exhaled from the skies. I think that like men they may be divided into three classes, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. The good would vote according to their convictions and principles; the bad, as dictated by prejudice or malice; and the indifferent will vote on the strongest side of the question, with the winning party.

fettered: bound by chains

enlightenment: the state of having knowledge

commenced: begun

breadth: width

loftiest: highest in character and dignity

attain: achieve; accomplish

convictions: strong beliefs

malice: desire to harm others

You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs. I, as a colored woman, have had in this country an education which has made me feel as if I were in the situation of Ishmael, my hand against every man, and every man's hand against me. Let me go tomorrow morning and take my seat in one of your street cars—I do not know that they will do it in New York, but they will in Philadelphia—and the conductor will put up his hand and stop the car rather than let me ride.

. . . In advocating the cause of the colored man, since the Dred Scott decision, I have sometimes said I thought the nation had touched bottom. But let me tell you there is a depth of infamy lower than that. It is when the nation, standing upon the threshold of a great peril, reached out its hands to a feebler race, and asked that race to help it, and when the peril was over, said, “You are good enough for soldiers, but not good enough for citizens.” . . .

. . . Talk of giving women the ballot-box? Go on. It is a normal school, and the white women of this country need it. While there exists this brutal element in society which tramples upon the feeble and treads down the weak, I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America.

Ishmael: in the Bible, the son of Abraham and Hagar; before he is born, it is predicted that “his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him” (Genesis 16:12)

Dred Scott decision: In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that Dred Scott, an enslaved man whose owner took him to live in a free territory where slavery was prohibited, was not entitled to his freedom. Not only did the court rule that Scott was his owner's property; it also declared that African Americans were not citizens of the United States and could never become citizens.

infamy: evil; wickedness

threshold: the entrance to a house or building, and so any point of starting or beginning

peril: danger; great risk of loss or destruction

ballot-box: a container in which to place ballots, the sheets on which voters mark their choices

normal school: an old term referring to a school that trains high school graduates to be teachers

JOVITA IDÁR, MEXICAN AMERICAN ACTIVIST: “READY FOR THE STRUGGLE”

Background Knowledge



“The modern woman,” said Jovita Idár (1885–1946), “does not spend her days lounging on her comfortable armchair”—which was certainly true of Jovita Idár herself. She was a teacher, a journalist, and a tireless activist for the rights of Mexican Americans and women, including the right to vote.

Born in Laredo, Texas, near the border with Mexico, Jovita Idár was the second in a family of eight

children. Her father worked for a Spanish-language newspaper, *La Crónica*. The newspaper’s motto was, “We work for the progress and the industrial, moral, and intellectual development of the Mexican inhabitants of Texas.”

After a brief career in teaching, Jovita Idár went to work for *La Crónica*, where her father was now the editor and publisher. Along with two of her brothers, Jovita Idár wrote for the paper, which featured many articles about discrimination against the Tejanos in housing, education, and working conditions.

In her writings, Jovita Idár took a bold stand for women’s rights. She called for women’s suffrage, and she encouraged women to seek education: “Educate a woman,” she said, “and you educate a family.”

Tejanos [pronounced *tay-HA-nos*]: Mexican American inhabitants of southern Texas

suffrage: the right to vote

Idár also used her writing to promote better education for Mexican American children. She urged that they be taught Spanish in school as well as English, and that they learn about Mexican heroes and history.

In September 1911, Jovita Idár's family brought together more than 400 Tejanos—including teachers, journalists, and political leaders—for El Primer Congreso Mexicanista (the First Mexican Congress). The conference sought to address a range of issues facing Mexican Americans, such as the loss of their land to white settlers, discrimination against Tejano children in schools, and anti-Mexican violence, including the recent lynching of a 14-year-old boy, Antonio Gómez, who was hanged by a mob in Texas.

Women actively participated in the Congreso Mexicanista, and some went on to create La Liga Femenil Mexicanista (the League of Mexican Women), with Jovita Idár serving as its first president. At the grassroots level, the League provided schooling, food, and clothing to the poor. Idár wrote about their activities in *La Crónica*. The women of the League also promoted political causes such as women's suffrage—in *La Crónica*, Jovita Idár published an article in which she supported a woman's right to vote, and urged women who lived in states that already allowed them to vote to be sure to exercise their power.

In 1913, during the Mexican Revolution, Jovita Idár worked as a nurse with an organization called La Cruz Blanca (The White Cross). The next year, she started writing for a newspaper called *El Progreso*. She remained involved in journalism and education for much of the rest of her active life.

grassroots: a term used to describe working with ordinary people in neighborhoods and communities (in contrast to working with political leaders)

Mexican Revolution: a long struggle that began in 1910 with the overthrow of a dictator who had ruled Mexico for thirty years, and continued with many different groups battling for power

“Debemos trabajar” (“We Must Work”) by Jovita Idár (1911)

Primary Source

When Jovita Idár wrote for La Crónica, she sometimes used various pen names, including Astrea, the Greek goddess of justice. The following article was published under the name of Astrea in La Crónica on November 23, 1911. Jovita Idár wrote it shortly after learning that California had given women the right to vote. In the article, Idár urged women to be active and economically independent. “The working woman,” she boldly declared, “by recognizing her rights, raises her head in pride and gets ready for the struggle.” (The article is presented here first in the original Spanish and then in an English translation.)



Along with two of her brothers, Jovita Idár wrote for La Crónica, a newspaper that featured many articles about discrimination against the Tejanos (Mexican Texans).

pen names: names used by an author in place of her or his real name

Debemos trabajar

La mujer moderna, enterada de y reconociendo la necesidad de aportar su contingente para ayudar al desarrollo á ilustración de los pueblos, se apresta valerosa, é invade los campos de la industria en todos sus fases sin temor y sin pereza. Abandona la holganza y la inacción, puesto que en la época actual, tan llena de oportunidades de vida; tan repleta de energía y de esperanzas, no hay lugar para los zánganos sociales.

La inacción, indolencia, se ven hoy en día como indignas, y como tal, se desechan por todos aquellos que se consideren factores en el desenvolvimiento y progreso de los pueblos.

La mujer moderna no pasa sus días arrellanada en cómoda butaca, ni la rica lo hace, puesto que también las halagadas de la fortuna se dedican á la práctica de la caridad, ú obras filantrópicas, á la organización de clubs benéficos, ó recreativos, pues lo que se desea es hacer algo útil para sí ó para sus semejantes.

La mujer obrera reconociendo sus derechos, alza la frente orgullosa y se apronta a la lucha; la época de su degradación ha pasado, ya no es la esclava vendida por unas cuantas monedas, ya no es la sierva, sino la igual del hombre, su compañera, siendo éste su protector natural y no su amo y señor.

Mucho se ha tratado y escrito contra el movimiento feminista, pero á pesar de los opositoristas ya en California las mujeres pueden dar su voto como jurados y pueden desempeñar oficinas públicas.

Yerran y mucho, esos espíritus descontentadizos, superficiales é indignos de una buena obra, críticos de aquella mujer, que

haciendo á un lado los convencionalismos sociales dedica sus energías á trabajar por algo provechoso ó benefico; los que, desconociendo la influencia moral que esto acarrea, puesto que una persona dedicada á ciertas labores ó tareas, no tiene tiempo para ocuparse de cosas fútiles ó perjudiciales. Más hace la constante obrera, tras las tablas de un mostrador sentada ante su máquina de coser, ó ya de oficinista, que lo señorita holgada de tiempo que se ocupa de ir á visitas diarias, ó de recorrer uno por uno los establecimientos comerciales, viviente embudo de chismes ó cuentos vulgares.

La mujer soltera, digna y trabajadora, no exige vida á expensas del jefe de la familia, sea éste padre, hermano, ó pariente, no; una mujer saludable, valerosa y fuerte, dedica sus energías, su talento á ayudar á su familia, ó cuando menos proveer su propia manutención.

Así como los hombres dignos y trabajadores ven con desprecio á los vagos y desocupados, así las obreras no aprecian á las inútiles y desocupadas.

We Must Work

The modern woman, aware of and recognizing the need to contribute her part to the people in the educational development of nations, prepares herself bravely and invades the fields of industry, in all its phases, without fear and without laziness. She abandons all idleness and inactivity because in current times, so full of life opportunities, so replete with energy and hope, there is no place for social loafers.

replete with: full of

Inaction, indolence are today seen as contemptible, and, as such, they are rejected by all those who may consider themselves to be factors in the development and progress of nations.

The modern woman does not spend her days lounging on her comfortable armchair; not even a rich woman does this, since also those who have been flattered by fortune dedicate themselves to the practice of charity or to philanthropic works, to the organization of charitable or recreational clubs, because what is wanted is to do something useful for themselves or for their fellow men.

The working woman, by recognizing her rights, raises her head in pride and gets ready for the struggle. The time of her degradation has passed, she is no longer the slave sold for a few coins, she is no longer the servant of, but the equal to man, his partner, by his being her natural protector, and not her lord and master.

Much has been dealt with and written against the feminist movement, but despite the oppositionists already in California, women can now cast their vote as members of a jury and can hold public office.

How wrong they are, those disdainful souls, superficial, and unworthy of a good deed, critical of that woman who, pushing aside social conventions, dedicates her energies to work for something profitable or beneficial; those who, refusing to accept

indolence: laziness

contemptible: unworthy of respect; deserving scorn

philanthropic: seeking to help others, often by devoting money or time to good causes

degradation: the condition of being kept down by disrespectful and humiliating treatment

oppositionists: people who take a stand against something

disdainful: scornful; feeling strong dislike or disapproval

superficial: of shallow character

the moral influence which this brings about, since a person dedicated to certain jobs or tasks has no time to busy herself with futile or harmful things. The constant worker does more, behind the boards of a counter, seated in front of her sewing machine, or even as an office clerk, than the lazy young lady who busies herself with going on daily visits or going through business establishments, a living funnel of gossip or vulgar stories.

A single woman, both dignified and hardworking, does not demand a life at the expense of the head of the family, whether he be a father, brother, or relative, no; a healthy woman, brave and strong, dedicates her energy, her talent to helping her family, or at the very least to provide for her own support.

Just as dignified and hardworking men look with contempt on deadbeats and unemployed men, so also working women do not esteem useless and unemployed women.

futile: useless

deadbeats: lazy people

esteem: respect and admire

MABEL PING-HUA LEE: “WE CANNOT KEEP THE WOMEN IGNORANT”

Background Knowledge



As a young girl not yet ten years old, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee (1896-1966) arrived in New York City, after a long voyage from her birthplace in the city of Canton (now Guangzhou), China. Her father was already in New York, working as a Baptist minister to the Chinese community in the part of the city called Chinatown.

At this time, the members of the Lee family were among the very few immigrants from China to the United States. Laws passed by Congress—especially the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882—kept Chinese workers out of the U.S. Only a few exceptions were allowed. The Exclusion Act (which remained in effect until 1943) also said that Chinese people who lived in America could not become naturalized—that is, they could not become American citizens. Even as a high school student, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee was an active advocate for women’s rights. In May 1912, suffragists in New York City held a parade to support the right to vote for women. About 10,000 marchers were led by a group of women on horseback, including sixteen-year-old Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, riding a white horse and wearing a sash that said “Votes for Women.” Newspapers at the time ran articles about the politically active young woman, and featured a photo with the caption, “Chinese Girl Wants Vote.”

Mabel Ping-Hua Lee's parents emphasized the importance of education. She attended Barnard College, where she studied history and philosophy, and gave speeches and wrote articles in support of women's rights. She went on to earn a doctoral degree from Columbia University, where she focused her research on the economic history of China.

While at Barnard College, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee was active in the Chinese Students' Alliance, a nationwide network for Chinese students studying in the United States. After completing their studies, many of these students returned to China and assumed positions of leadership in government and business. The course of her life, however, was changed by the unexpected death of her father in 1924.

Within months, Lee took over her father's role in the Chinatown church. She went on to establish a community center with a health clinic, a kindergarten, and classes in English and job skills, all designed to serve and empower her neighbors in the Chinese community.



Mabel Ping-Hua Lee gave speeches and wrote articles in support of women's rights, including the right to vote.

“The Meaning of Woman Suffrage” by Mabel Ping-Hua Lee (1914)

Primary Source

In 1914, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee published an essay in The Chinese Students' Monthly, the journal of the Chinese Students' Alliance. The essay was published at a time of great change for China, where a revolution in 1911 had led to the establishment of a republic after long years of being ruled by emperors. In her essay, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee argued that the new republic must be built on “a solid structure” that included women’s rights .

She saw women’s rights as a necessary part of the historical development of democracy. While her focus was on China, her wide-ranging thoughts on women’s suffrage, economic independence, and intellectual partnership in marriage are of interest across borders.

Mabel Ping-Hua Lee begins her essay by noting that for a long time people have made fun of the idea of women voting—she says that a person stuck in an awkward conversation only has to mention “woman suffrage” to make everyone laugh. But “if we sit down and really think it over,” she says, then we will see women’s rights as part of the ideals of “justice and equality” that the Chinese people fought for in the revolution of 1911. She then proceeds to discuss what “the application of democracy to women” means for the education of women and for women’s “economic freedom.”

It is a fact that no matter where we go we cannot escape hearing about woman suffrage. Yet there is hardly a question more misunderstood or that has more misapplications. So manifold

misapplications: instances of being used incorrectly or in a way that was not intended

manifold: many and various

are its misconceptions that it has come to be a by-word suitable for every occasion. For instance, if when in company one should wish to scramble out of an embarrassing situation, or his more fortunate brother should wish to be considered witty, all that either would have to do would be to mention woman suffrage, and they may be sure of laughter and merriment in response.

The reason for this is that the idea of woman suffrage at first stood for something abnormal, strange and extraordinary, and so has finally become the word for anything ridiculous. The idea that women should ever wish to have or be anything more than their primitive mothers appears at first thought to be indeed tragic enough to be comic; but if we sit down and really think it over, . . . we find that it is nothing more than a wider application of our ideas of justice and equality. We all believe in the idea of democracy; woman suffrage or the feminist movement . . . is the application of democracy to women. . . .

. . . The feminists want nothing more than the equality of opportunity for women to prove their merits and what they are best suited to do. This is a purely scientific attitude, for we can never determine anything until it has been tried. For instance, it was not so long ago that even Western people thought that woman was not capable of being taught even the three R's.

The very thought of a woman knowing how to read or write made them hold up their hands in "holy horror." . . . But when woman proved that she could go through elementary school, then these same persons said that she could not go through a

by-word: a word or phrase closely associated with some person or thing

primitive: belonging to times long ago

Western: a general and approximate way of referring to Europe and the Americas (in contrast to China and other Asian lands sometimes referred to as "Eastern")

three R's: an expression referring to the basics of education at an elementary level: reading, writing, and arithmetic

secondary school—“it was too much for women and they could never be taught such difficult subjects.” Again woman proved herself capable, and these people then said that she could not go through college. It is only a short time since she gained the victory of admission to college, and there are still many schools too conservative to open their doors for her instruction. At present there is still the cry that though woman has gone so far, she can go no further, that she cannot succeed in the professions. But this again is being refuted by the success of pioneers of today.

The idea of feminism is to give unto woman what man has successively gained. . . . There is the old conception that woman, single or married, should remain at home. . . . A second conception . . . [says] that woman must choose from . . . either getting married or going out to business, and that as soon as a woman gets married she must leave her profession and stay at home. The second conception is the one we are living under, but there is a third conception on its way which says that woman whether married or not should have economic freedom. Therefore, the following shall be arguments in favor of economic independence for woman. . . .

For the Interest of Woman Herself: In the present condition of things, woman is distinctly inferior to man intellectually. This is caused by the lack of having their minds trained in some profession. If man had no systematized work and went

conservative: holding on to traditional and established ways

professions: highly skilled jobs requiring special training (such as in law, medicine, engineering, teaching, and more)

successively: in a continuous sequence, one step following another

conception: idea; concept

systematized: organized

idly about the house, except for petty chores, he, too, would be intellectually inferior. Therefore, it is to the interest of woman intellectually to have a profession.

For the Interest of the Husband: The ideal marriage state is a life of comradeship; but there can be no real comradeship unless the two parties are intellectually congenial, and this can only result from giving professions to woman. Under the old system, after marriage the man continues to develop mentally, while the woman stands still, and the result is that after two or three years the husband feels the lack of companionship at home and rushes to his club or other congenial society at every opportunity. His wife has lost her interest and knowledge of his outside world and has ceased to be his intellectual comrade. Moreover, life would be more ideal if woman should not be made to marry for mercenary purposes; and there would be more courtesy between men and women if they both can be self-supporting.

For the Interest of the Child: Although it must be admitted that a child loses something in not having the mother beside it to supply all its physical needs, nevertheless this is overbalanced by having mothers who are intellectual companions. After all, the real need and beauty of maternal affection consists in being always at hand for sympathy and confidence, and not in the performance of petty chores. Besides, if a mother has some intellectual interest to occupy her for a part of the day, she is much fresher to take care of her children than if she stays in the house and is nagged by them the whole day long.

petty: not serious or meaningful; of little importance

congenial: suitable to each other

mercenary: strictly for the purpose of getting money

overbalanced: more than made up for

There have been several solutions presented for bringing about this condition of economic independence for woman, as, for instance, the one for an extension of the school to the most primary work, even to include crèches, and the other for new regulations and hours in the industries for woman; but I shall not take the time and space of going into them, as conditions in China are different from those of Western countries and will require different solutions. The writer wishes merely to present true feminism as it is, . . . and to show that it is nothing more than the extension of democracy or social justice and equality of opportunities to women. As students and patriots of China . . . , this problem is worthy of our interest and consideration. With the introduction of machinery and Western methods in our country, we cannot keep the women ignorant. . . . I cannot too strongly impress upon the reader the importance of this consideration, for the feministic movement is not one for privileges to women, but one for the requirement of women to be worthy citizens and contribute their share to the steady progress of our country towards prosperity and national greatness.

primary work: what we would now consider preschool

crèches: daycare centers for very young children

The writer: the writer of this essay, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee

MARY CHURCH TERRELL: “USE IT WISELY”

Background Knowledge



Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954) lived a productive and influential life, spanning decades of extraordinary change, especially for the people of color whose causes she worked to advance. A daughter of formerly enslaved parents who had grown wealthy in business, she was born in the year of the Emancipation Proclamation. She died in the year of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court decision that declared racial

segregation in schools unconstitutional.

As a young woman, after graduating from Oberlin College in Ohio (one of the first colleges to admit African American students), she entered a career in teaching. On the faculty of the school where she taught in Washington, D.C., she met Robert Terrell, and they married in 1891.

The next year, she learned that a childhood friend from her hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, had been lynched—shot dead by a white mob. In response, Mary Church Terrell, along with the courageous journalist Ida B. Wells, gave speeches and wrote essays against lynching.

Ida B. Wells: See page 54.

In 1896 Terrell played a central role in the founding of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), which merged smaller organizations of African American women into a unified national network. Terrell served as the Association's first president. In a speech to the NACW in 1897, Terrell said,

We have become National, because from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Maine to the Gulf, we wish to set in motion influences that shall stop the ravages made by practices that sap our strength, and preclude the possibility of advancement. . . . We proclaim to the world that the women of our race have become partners in the great firm of progress and reform. . . . We refer to the fact that this is an association of colored women, because our peculiar status in this country . . . seems to demand that we stand by ourselves.

The NACW's motto, "Lifting as we climb," placed it in line with Booker T. Washington's philosophy of patiently working to "uplift the race." Indeed, Mary Church Terrell was a friend of Booker T. Washington, whose wife served as an officer of the NACW.

Her friendship with Booker T. Washington did not stop Mary Church Terrell from being part of the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), whose leaders included Washington's most thoughtful critic, W. E. B. Du Bois. In her autobiography, Terrell wrote that she knew she would be "severely criticized" for joining an organization that was

ravages: actions that seriously harm or damage

sap our strength: weaken us; cause us to lose our strength

preclude: make impossible

firm: partnership or association (such as a law firm)

peculiar: specifically characteristic of (this particular group)

Booker T. Washington: See page 61.

W. E. B. Du Bois: See page 75.

autobiography: the story of a person's life as written by that person

“supposed to have been founded to counteract the influence of Booker T. Washington.” But, she said, “such an organization was sorely needed at that time and it was my duty, as it certainly was my pleasure, to render any assistance in my power.”

In many speeches and articles, Mary Church Terrell promoted not only equal opportunity for African Americans but also women’s right to vote. The September 1912 issue of the NAACP’s magazine, *The Crisis*, featured an article by Terrell titled “The Justice of Woman Suffrage,” in which she wrote:

The founders of this republic called heaven and earth to witness that it should be called a government of the people, for the people and by the people; and yet the elective franchise is withheld from one-half of its citizens, many of whom are intelligent, virtuous and cultured, and unstintingly bestowed upon the other half, many of whom are illiterate, degraded and vicious, because . . . the word “people” has been turned and twisted to mean all who were shrewd and wise enough to have themselves born boys instead of girls, and white instead of black.

In her support of women’s suffrage, Terrell collaborated with national organizations like the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Terrell tried to help their mostly white members understand the double challenge faced by African American women, who had to overcome obstacles related not only to their sex but also to their race.

by the people: Terrell is recalling the words of Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address (1863), in which he spoke of “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

elective franchise: the right to vote

unstintingly: freely and generously

“An Appeal to Colored Women to Vote and Do Their Duty in Politics”— Speech by Mary Church Terrell (1921)



Mary Church Terrell helped found the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), which brought into a national network groups of African American women like this one, the Phyllis Wheatley Club of Buffalo, New York, which established a settlement house in 1905, developed programs to feed the hungry, donated books by Black authors to school libraries, established kindergartens, and organized mothers' clubs to teach parenting skills.

Primary Source

The following selections are from a speech that Mary Church Terrell delivered in 1921, a year after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Women finally had the right to vote. Now that they had that right, said Terrell, they must “use it wisely.” And women of color, said Terrell, must become knowledgeable about politics and learn “to play the political game.”

All women should be interested in the political affairs of the country in which they live. So far as in them lies, all women should inform themselves, not only about conditions in their own country, but about those which obtain all over the civilized world. But the duty of studying carefully the measures proposed and the questions discussed in the National Congress, in their respective State legislatures and in their respective city or town Councils devolves upon no group of women more than upon the colored women of the United States. One does not have to possess more of her share of gray matter than rightfully belongs to her to understand why this is so. Everybody who thinks at all sees clearly why colored women should not only study the political situation in which they live and move and have their being, but should actively engage in politics wherever, whenever and however they can without actually breaking the law.

Colored women have a double burden to carry—the burden of race as well as that of sex. . . . White women had only one handicap to overcome. What would they not have done, if they had been obliged to surmount TWO, as we colored women have to do?

There is no doubt that some of the disadvantages under which colored women labor may be removed by their votes. By casting their ballots properly, by putting good men into office and keeping bad men out, colored women can do much to remove some of the disabilities under which we live. . . .

. . . The methods which can be successfully pursued in one State might not work well in another. . . . But there is one thing which colored women can and should do in every State. They should do everything in their power to get the right men in the primaries.

as in them lies: as they are able

obtain: exist widely

devolves upon: falls to

gray matter: brain cells; intellect

primaries: elections held before a main election, in which candidates from the same political party compete for votes to become the party's candidate in the main election

There is where they should use diplomacy and tact. If they believe a certain man will deal justly by their race, they might go to him and urge him to become a candidate for governor, or senator (or any other office) for nomination in the primaries of the party to which they belong, assuring him of their support and promising to do everything in their power to secure his selection and election. Colored women must learn to play the political game as they would any other game in which they wished to become proficient and win. Colored women should certainly watch carefully what the legislatures of their respective States are doing and keep posted on the bills which vitaly affect us as a race. The State chairmen on legislation should keep the women of the various states well informed on the measures which are introduced in their respective Legislatures which will help or hinder our race. A letter is a powerful weapon of defense, when rightly used. Colored women should send letters to their State or National representatives, urging them to take a stand for or against measures in which they are especially interested.

Now that colored women possess the ballot, it will be a terrible reflection upon them, if they do not use it wisely. If colored women fail to study the political situation of their nation, their state, their city or their towns and cast their ballots for men who will try to improve the conditions under which their group lived, they will certainly be recreant to their trust and perpetrate an irreparable injustice upon their race.

diplomacy: skill in dealing with people in a sensitive way that avoids conflict and maintains a positive relationship

tact: skill in saying or doing things in a way that avoids offending anyone

proficient: skillful

vitaly: most importantly

hinder: hold back

recreant: disloyal; unfaithful

trust: responsibility

perpetrate: to do (something bad or wrong)

irreparable: beyond repair; too damaged to be fixed or corrected

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