

Women's Suffrage and Slavery

In the 1700s and 1800s, slavery was legal in America. During that era, neither slaves nor women had the right to vote. In fact, slaves and women were restricted from many things under the law. Though white women did not suffer the physical hardships that slaves did, slaves and women were both regarded as “second class citizens.”

In the 1820s, a woman writer named Fanny Wright started a movement to abolish slavery and give women the right to vote. For nearly 20 years, Wright found little support for her ideas. It wasn't until 1840 that two other women joined her cause. By 1848, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had organized the Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York. The convention's resolution said it was “the duty of all women of this country to secure to themselves the sacred right to the elective franchise [the right to vote].”



Fanny Wright (above left), Lucretia Mott (above center), and Susan B. Anthony (above right).



Women protested peacefully for nearly a hundred years before winning the right to vote.

The Civil War ended in 1865, and one year later Stanton and Mott were joined by Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone. Together, the four women established the American Equal Rights Association. Their main mission was to secure voting rights for women and African-Americans. They staged protests in cities—primarily along the East Coast—and published literature that promoted their cause.

In 1869, Stanton and Anthony formed a new organization called The National Woman Suffrage Association. This organization criticized the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, which gave African-Americans greater rights, but still prohibited women from voting.

In 1913, a woman's rights activist named Alice Paul joined with Lucy Burns and Olympia Brown to create the Women's Social and Political Union. These women used more dramatic methods to get their voices heard. They organized huge demonstrations all over the