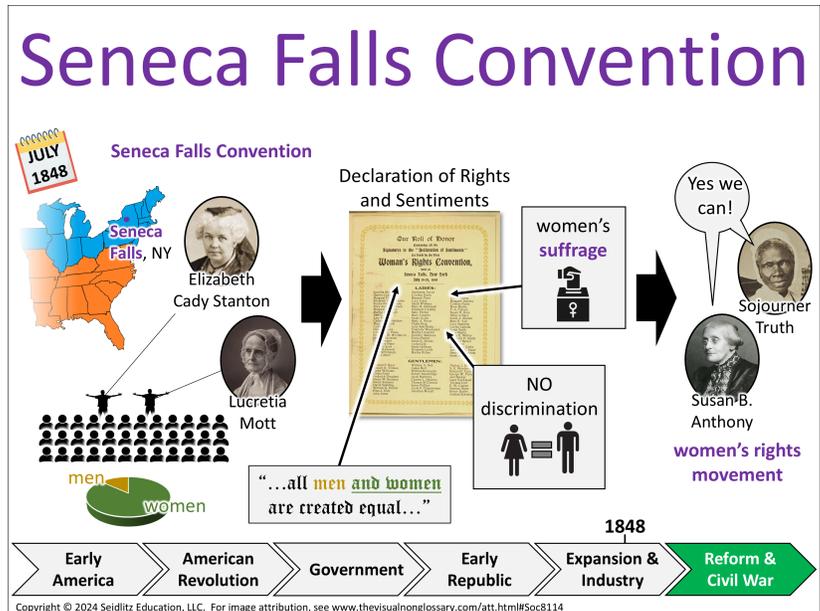


## A Bold Meeting for Change

*The purpose for reading is to learn how the Seneca Falls Convention and its supporters helped begin the fight for equality in the women's rights movement.*

### Pay Attention To:

- Who helped organize the Seneca Falls Convention
- What the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments was based on
- What demands were made at the convention
- How suffrage was addressed
- Who supported the movement and why their support mattered



In the early 1800s, women in the United States had few rights. They could not vote or work in government. After marriage, they lost any property they owned. Most girls could not go to college, and women were often told not to speak in public. Even though they helped their families and communities, women had no say in the laws.

This began to change in 1848, when people met in Seneca Falls, New York, to ask for fair treatment. This meeting was called the **Seneca Falls Convention**. It was the first big meeting in the country for women's rights. The people at the convention said the laws were unfair to women.

Leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott helped plan the event. They wrote the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, a paper that sounded like the **Declaration of Independence**. It started with the idea that "All men and women are created equal."

The Declaration of Rights and Sentiments asked for **suffrage**, which means the right to vote. It also asked for fair treatment at school, at work, and under the law. It

listed 18 unfair things the government had done. The paper said that women should be allowed to protest bad laws, just like the colonists did long ago. Many people didn't agree, but 100 people signed it, including 32 men.

The **Seneca Falls Convention** started the women's rights movement. Most of the leaders were women, but some men came and helped. This showed that fairness and justice matter to everyone.

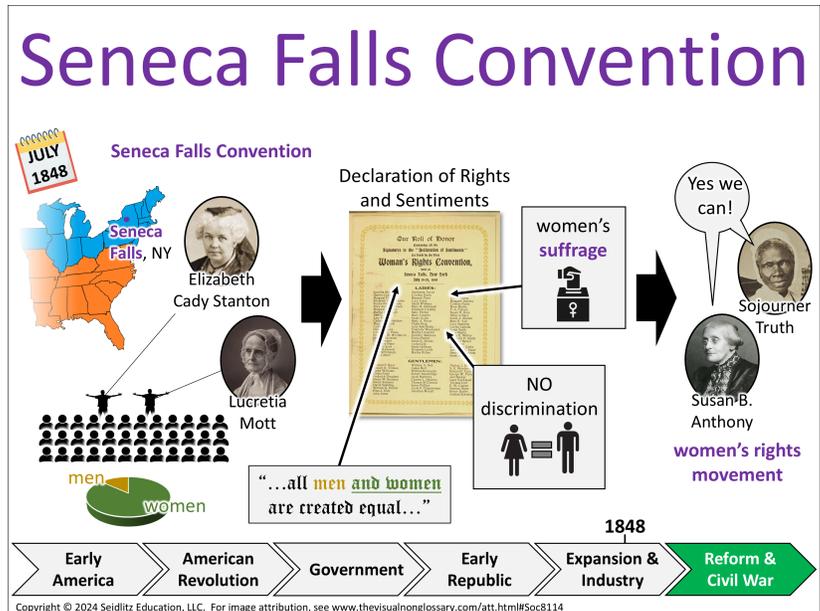


## The Power of Words at the Seneca Falls Convention

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In the early 1800s, women in the United States lived under laws that gave them few rights. They could not vote or serve in government. Once married, they lost ownership of any property they had and were expected to stay home to care for their families. Few women had access to higher education, and they were often discouraged from speaking in public. Despite their many contributions to society, women were denied a voice in shaping the world around them.

That began to change in 1848, when a group of determined women and men gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, to demand equal treatment. The event became known as the Seneca Falls Convention, the first organized meeting in the United States focused on women's rights. The organizers believed that the laws of the time unfairly limited women's opportunities, and they wanted to bring attention to these issues.

Leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott helped plan the event. One of the most powerful parts of the convention was the reading of the Declaration

of Rights and Sentiments. This document was modeled after the Declaration of Independence and began with a familiar phrase: “All men and women are created equal.” Just like the original document declared freedom from British rule, this new version called for freedom from unfair treatment based on gender.

The Declaration of Rights and Sentiments demanded the right to **suffrage**, or the right to vote, along with equal treatment in education, employment, and under the law. It listed 18 grievances—mirroring the 18 complaints in the **Declaration of Independence**—to show how women were systematically denied rights by their government. The document argued that just as colonists had protested British tyranny, women had the right to protest laws made without their consent. It was a bold statement, and many people disagreed with its ideas. Still, 100 people, including 32 men, signed the document in support.

The **Seneca Falls Convention** also marked the beginning of the organized women’s rights movement in the United States. Although many women led the effort, some men attended and supported the cause. Their presence showed that the fight for equality was not only a women’s issue—it was a call for justice that everyone could support.

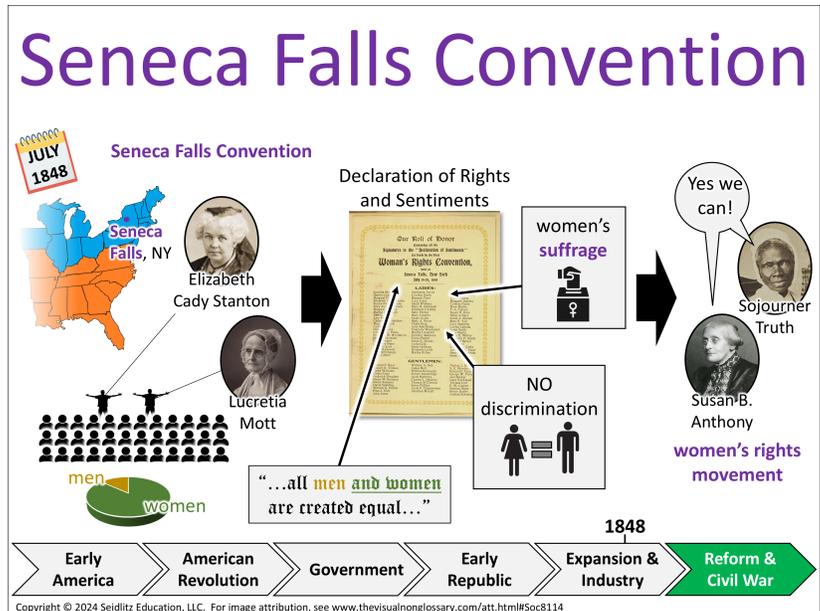


## Demanding Justice at Seneca Falls

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During the early 19th century, women in the United States lived under deeply restrictive laws. They were denied the right to vote, excluded from political life, and often lost control of their property upon marriage. Higher education was limited, and social norms discouraged women from speaking publicly or pursuing leadership roles. Although they contributed to society in countless ways, women were excluded from making decisions that affected their lives.

In 1848, reformers gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, to challenge this inequality. Known as the Seneca Falls Convention, this event marked the first organized effort in the United States to demand equal rights for women. Its participants argued that the nation's laws and customs had denied women full citizenship.

Two leading voices, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, played key roles in organizing the event. Stanton authored the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, a powerful document modeled after the **Declaration of Independence**. It began with a call for equality: "All men and women are created equal." Like the original

declaration, this new version demanded freedom from unjust control—this time, based on gender.

The Declaration of Rights and Sentiments went further. It called for **suffrage**, educational equality, fair labor practices, and legal recognition of women’s rights. It listed 18 specific grievances to parallel those of the colonists and argued that women had the same right to challenge unjust government authority. Although controversial, the document was signed by 100 attendees, including 32 men who recognized the urgency of the cause.

The **Seneca Falls Convention** sparked the formal women’s rights movement in America. The presence of male supporters reflected a broader belief in justice that crossed gender lines. Though legal change would take decades, this convention gave a lasting voice to a long-ignored demand for equality.

