
Women Are Force For Change - Why Rural Women Are a Powerful Force For Change

Around the 1820s and 1830s, decades before the American Civil War, a new way of thinking began to proliferate in the United States. Scientists, artists, writers, people questioning themselves about their behavior, beliefs and emotions, led to the emergence of several reform groups (such as anti-slavery organizations, religious movements and temperance leagues), many in which women participated in a prominent way. From the antebellum reform and particularly by the abolitionist movement, women's suffrage began in the 1840s - Modern Period. Suffragists leaders got together and fought for conquering a society in which man and woman are treated equally (in politics, education, employment opportunities, child custody issues), between them were Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Ida Bell Wells, and Alice Paul, important leaders who inspired people all around the United States, forming the basis for modern feminism.

With the emergence of industrial societies, it became easier for the new way of thinking to spread in the entire country and people's own truth started being taken into consideration. Even before that time, many women were aware of how sexist society was, but they had never had the change nor the space to express their own opinions before Modernity. Women used to be submissive and had zero autonomy, their life depended 100% on their husbands. When a small group of people began to question the way they were living, radios, newspapers and posters became essential for the communication with a larger number of people and the ads about conventions/protests (which were an indispensable vehicle to unite and join forces of the people who were looking for a change in the sexist society). The first convention devoted particularly to women's rights was in 1848, in Seneca Falls. Elizabeth Stanton and Lucretia Mott invited not only women, but also men, to discuss about the issue of women's rights, they understood "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." Over time, more people started having knowledge and agreeing with the cause, the movement gained much more power, leading to the formation of the first association focused on fighting for women's rights, the International Council of Women, in 1888.

Certainly, between these two big marks in the history of the women's suffrage movement, other protest, debates, alliances were made. In 1850 feminist leaders focused in providing more economical freedom and power to women. In 1869, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton got together to establish the National Woman Suffrage Association, an organization that invited suffragist societies from all of the United States to fight together for women's right to vote, it is mainly known for opposing the 15th Amendment of the Constitution, which represented the government's sexist principles, by excluding women from politics.

When studying about the leaders of feminist movements in the Modern Period, we can say that they all shared interesting characteristics. Besides their disagreement with women's submission to their husbands and how limited women's rights were, most of the leaders studied in this project, except for Ida B. Wells, came from a Quaker family, which means that they believed in God's presence inside of each human being and also the importance of spiritual equality between men and women.

We can say that Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) was one of the most influential leader in the women's suffrage movement. Even though she firstly started her activist life in the temperance movement and as an abolitionist, she is mainly known nowadays for fighting for a society with equal rights among the gender. Being against the government, she tried to vote in the year of 1872 in the presidential election, one of her most popular actions, which costed her a fine of 100 dollars that she refused to pay, taking into consideration the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, she argued that regardless of gender, all of the citizens should have the same right to participate in politics.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) was like a right arm for Susan B. Anthony during women's suffrage movement. In 1848, she was a prominent women in the organization of the world's first convention devoted to women right's, which happened in Seneca Falls. Later in 1851 she and Susan B. Anthony met and joined forces to create the National Women's Loyal League. Besides fighting for woman's rights, Elizabeth also had interests in conquering freedom for woman, wanting to help woman in unhappy marriages, she fought for changing divorce laws.

Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) is mainly known for participating in reform groups against female slavery. In 1840, during the World Anti-Slavery Convention, she was unfairly treated when denied her a seat because of her gender. In 1850 she made the important "Discourse on Women", in which she summarized her view and philosophy about women's rights, her major points were equal economic opportunities and equal rights on the politics.

Lucy Stone (1818–1893), an influential activist, was one of the pioneers in the abolitionist and feminist movements during Modern Period. Having different opinions from her parents, did not stop Stone of fighting for what she believed. She was the first women to earn a bachelor's degree in Massachusetts. In 1850, Worcester, Massachusetts, during a convention, Stone gave an important speech about woman's rights, which were reprinted in several American newspapers.

Ida Bell Wells (1862–1931) built a meaningful career as an activist journalist who participated in feminist and African-American movements aspiring to find justice. One interesting case in Ida B. Wells life is the one in May 1884 when she bit a man's hand after being forced to leave the first-class of a train from Memphis to Nashville and move to the African Americans area, even though she paid for the first-class ticket. After that, she wrote several articles about African American rights which earned her honors and made her a well known civil right's activist journalist. In 1913 she embraced feminist movements and participated in a parade event organized by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. By her journalist influence, she helped women's suffrage movement reach even more success and also encouraged women to fight for this cause helping the register in elections.

Alice Paul (1885-1977) was a radical suffragist in the United States who worked in the National American Woman Suffrage Association for two years and formed the National Women's party in 1916. She is known for conquering a Ph.D. in sociology which inspired her to participate in women's suffrage movements, besides the several arrests, imprisonments and unfair events she experienced and disagreed with. For my final Project, I will gather main events that built the history of women's suffrage movement and each of the feminist leader's philosophy into posters representing the shift to modernity.