

8. How does Truth's argument about women's suffrage compare to that of Stanton (earlier in this chapter)? Which is more effective and why?

Thinking Beyond the Text

9. Do you believe that the struggle for equal rights links all marginalized groups, as Truth does? Or is every struggle for equality a separate struggle by separate groups for their own gain?
10. Research the legal rights of women in the late 1860s. Is Truth's description of the powerlessness of women in court an accurate one for the time?

For Writing & Discussion

11. Truth refers to unequal pay several times. Research this issue in modern America: For every dollar a man makes, how much does a modern woman earn? How does this unequal earning compare to earnings 25 years ago? Fifty years ago? Describe the results of your research in a short essay.



S U S A N B . A N T H O N Y

At the age of 17, when she worked as a teacher, Susan Brownell Anthony (1820–1906) fought for equal pay for women teachers, co-education, and college training for girls. She met Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1851, and thereafter the two were known as the leaders of the women's rights movement, working integrally to organize the National Women Suffrage Association and later the National American Woman Suffrage Association. She lectured about women's rights throughout the United States and Europe, and, with Stanton and Matilda Joselyn Gage, she compiled volumes one through three of the *History of Women Suffrage*. Anthony acknowledged Stanton as founder of the women's rights movement; Anthony's legacy lies in her singular goal of fighting for women's suffrage, as well as her perseverance in rallying people of both sexes to her cause. The U.S. Mint issued the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin in 1979 to honor her.

Anthony gave the speech "On Women's Right to Vote" after being arrested in 1872 for voting. She led a group of women to the polls in Rochester, New York and was consequently tried, convicted, and fined \$100. The women's rights movement rallied behind her cause, and the case ultimately made it to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled against her. She refused to pay.

On Women's Right to Vote

Prereading Question

The United States is defined as a republican democracy—a system in which the people elect the leaders who then speak for them in the halls of power. But can the United States legitimately be described as an aristocracy? An oligarchy? A meritocracy?

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 tranquillity, 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, the 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.

For any state to make sex a qualification that must ever result in the disfranchisement of one entire half of the people, is to pass a bill of attainder, or, an ex post facto law, and is therefore a violation of the supreme law of the land. By it the blessings of liberty are forever withheld from women and their female posterity.

To them this government has no just powers derived from the consent of the governed. To them this government is not a democracy. It is not a republic. It is an odious aristocracy; a hateful oligarchy of sex; the most hateful aristocracy ever established on the face of the globe; an oligarchy of wealth, where the rich govern the poor. An oligarchy of learning, where the educated govern the ignorant, or even an oligarchy of race, where the Saxon rules the African, might be endured; but this oligarchy

of sex, which makes father, brothers, husband, sons, the oligarchs over the mother and sisters, the wife and daughters, of every household—which ordains all men sovereigns, all women subjects, carries dissension, discord, and rebellion into every home of the nation. 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 law, or to enforce any old law, that shall abridge their privileges or immunities. Hence, every discrimination against women in the constitutions and laws of the several states is today null and void, precisely as is every one against Negroes.

Textual Questions

1. Why does Anthony begin her address by referring to "fellow citizens" and explaining that she stands accused of a crime?
2. How does Anthony use the preamble to the U.S. Constitution to argue that, in voting, she committed no crime?
3. What terms are important to the argument Anthony makes in her final paragraph? How do these terms build upon one another to advance a specific line of argument about women and the right to vote?

Rhetorical Questions

4. How does Anthony take a legal issue—a woman's right to vote—and make it personal, not only for her and for women in general but for all people in the American nation?
5. What image of herself does Anthony construct in her argument? How does she construct this image, and how effective or ineffective is it?
6. How does Anthony use the opposition between state power and federal power to advance her argument?

Intertextual Questions

7. How does Anthony's definition of the term *citizen* argue against the definition of this term used by Chief Justice Taney in the Dred Scott decision (in this chapter)?
8. How does Anthony's concluding paragraph echo the arguments made by Chief Justice Taney in the Dred Scott decision (in this chapter)?