

## **“WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS”**

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**CHORUS** (stand): **We hold these truths to be self-evident  
that all men are created equal.....  
all men ---- created equal  
men --- equal**

**STANTON**: **I am Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In 1815, I was born into a privileged, educated upper class family. My father was willing that I obtain what education was available for girls and I excelled. But when it came to putting my education to practical use, I encountered barriers on every front. This was the case with other women who had access to any education. I had begun to read law with my father and gradually became aware of the complex problems that women were confronting —regardless of class. When married, a woman gave up to her husband all her personal rights including access to her body, loss of her own wages, loss of inherited property, loss of the custody of children in the rare event of separation or divorce, and could legally be whipped with a switch no thicker than the circumference of his thumb. It seemed to me that only through legislation, could women’s lives be improved. I married Henry Stanton, who was an abolitionist leader and later a lawyer. But even he put freeing the slaves ahead of granting additional rights for women.**

**In England, in 1840, I met Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister and abolitionist leader. We were attending the first International Abolitionist Conference with our husbands. We were appalled and hurt when women were forbidden to speak and were consigned to the balcony. This was just another indication of the place that women held even among more educated men. Lucretia and I agreed that we would take steps in the future to bring the overall status of women to public attention.**

**Eight years later during the summer of 1848, I met with four other women for tea near Seneca Falls, New York — one of whom was Lucretia Mott, who was visiting in the area. We all shared a deepening concern about the problems confronting women and our inability to take any corrective action. So, we decided to call a public meeting at a local church to give our ideas a public hearing. This was a daunting task since women at that time did not speak in public. Needing some sort of platform to present, we edited and used portions of the Declaration of Independence, stating that “all men AND WOMEN were created equal.” And even more revolutionary, in our suffrage**

resolution we said “that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to elective franchise.” Only through having the vote, could corrective action be taken. These were my ideas and they stirred great controversy.

**NARRATOR:** This first Woman’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls was attended by 300 people. Sixty-eight women and 32 men signed the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions that included the first formal demand made in the United States for woman’s right to vote. The suffrage resolution was saved from defeat at the convention by the eloquent speech of ex-slave Frederick Douglas. .... Historically, the 1848 meeting at Seneca Falls signaled the formal beginning of the campaign for women’s suffrage. In fact the meeting at Seneca Falls was the first time such an event was ever held. This meeting occurred 72 years before the passage in 1920 of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the US Constitution that gained women the right to vote.

**CHORUS** (stand): “We hold these truths to be self evident— that all men AND WOMEN are created equal.”

**ANTHONY:** I’m Susan B. Anthony. I was born in 1820 into a Quaker family of abolitionist supporters. Stanton and I did not meet until 1851, three years after the Seneca Falls meeting. Until that time, I had little exposure to what was to become the suffrage movement. I was a teacher. Not until I met Stanton, did I develop a keen interest in the suffrage movement. I saw how our combined talents could be used effectively. I could organize but lacked Stanton’s rhetorical skills. Together we became a team. I would come to Seneca Falls to help with household tasks — enabling Stanton to write the speeches, the news articles — whatever was needed. She kept having baby after baby ....and was not free to travel. So, I went back and forth across the country for the next 50 years. The suffrage message needed to reach the public with special attention to male voters — yes, male voters. Remember, only men could vote. The campaigns proved to be arduous. Between the difficulties of finding transportation and lodging—together with weather uncertainties — we, suffrage workers, encountered many hardships traveling during the last half of the 19th Century — not to mention being the subject of ridicule.

**STANTON**: I was a free spirit and less guarded in my approach than Anthony. Finally after my seven children were reared, I went on the lecture circuit myself —primarily to encourage the self-development of women and also, to gain support for suffrage.

**ANTHONY**: The suffrage campaigns were financed by small sums primarily from women. As leaders, we took only the barest minimum for survival. Finally in 1878, 25 years after I became involved in the movement, the suffrage amendment that I had written, was introduced in Congress. It states: “The right of the citizen to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.” It became known as the Anthony amendment. Between its introduction in 1878 and ratification in 1920, three other constitutional amendments were ratified.

**CHORUS** (stand): “The right of the citizen to vote — shall not be denied or abridged — by the United States or any state — on account of sex.”

**NARRATOR**: During the next 65 years, several generations of women worked on suffrage campaigns. Neither Stanton nor Anthony lived to see passage of the suffrage Amendment. The entire effort added up to 56 campaigns of referenda to male voters;

(Narrator may read all items below, or each character may read one.)

- \_\_\_\_\_480 campaigns to get state legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters;
- \_\_\_\_\_47 campaigns to get state constitutional conventions to write women suffrage into state constitutions;
- \_\_\_\_\_277 campaigns to get state party conventions to include women suffrage planks;
- \_\_\_\_\_30 campaigns to get presidential party conventions to adopt women suffrage planks in party platforms;
- \_\_\_\_\_19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses that totaled 909 different campaign efforts.

**NARRATOR**: You may wonder why people were so against letting women vote. Well, it related to a woman’s place in society. From the early days of U. S. history, women periodically spoke out against injustices they endured — but with scant public support. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all women were expected from birth to become full-time wives and mothers. Any

suggestions to the contrary, challenged the established order. Prevailing opinion gave a low estimate of women's capabilities. And, women were thought to be far too fragile and delicate to undertake the rigors of voting. This was the same 19<sup>th</sup> century argument used against educating women beyond the elementary grades. Initially, church leaders frowned on women speaking in public. Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, theological controversies developed over literal interpretations of the Bible. This opened the way to speaking publicly with differing attitudes about the Bible.

**STANTON:** I long believed that the clergy were deliberately subjugating women to an inferior status using biblical texts as their authority. This stance by church leaders, had gained public acceptance. Finally, I convened a committee of 20 women from the United States along with five foreign members. In 1895, this group published a collection of essays and commentaries on selected scriptures where women were either excluded or denied their equality. The committee revised selected passages of the Bible to be more inclusive of women — calling our efforts, “The Woman’s Bible.” I, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, wrote the introduction in 1895 including the following, quote: “The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world. — Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, — maternity a period of suffering, — and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man’s bounty for all her material wants — and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, — she was commanded to ask her husband at home.” End quote.

**NARRATOR:** Women must have found this discussion liberating.

**STANTON:** On the contrary, the publication of “The Woman’s Bible” did not sit well with the members of the National American Woman’s Suffrage Association — an organization which Anthony and I had both led for 10 years. In 1896, the Association passed a resolution that said it had “no official connection with the so-called Woman’s Bible.....” Nonetheless, the Woman’s Bible sold very well. Since I no longer held office in the Association, I withdrew from further active participation in the movement. As a consequence I was effectively written out of its history. As the originator of the Declaration of Sentiments in 1848, I, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had articulated the philosophical groundings of the first 40 years of

the suffrage movement and had worked in partnership with Susan B. Anthony. Few people know anything about this collaboration today.

**NARRATOR:** There were other problems, too. What about the Abolitionists?

**ANTHONY:** Women in the northeastern part of the country were actively working to rid the country of slavery. During the Civil War, 1861-65, we had put suffrage efforts on hold. In retrospect, we believed this loss of momentum had worked to our disadvantage. Admittedly, we were angered by male abolitionist support of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1868. Section 2. placed the word “male” relating to the right to vote in the Constitution. Then in 1870, the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment took away color as a barrier but left women out entirely.

**CHORUS** (stand): “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.”

**STANTON:** By leaving “sex” out of the amendment, we became truly disaffected with the Abolitionists and made some unfortunate comments in print. This led to harsh words by the abolitionists directed toward us, singling out me, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and that cast our cause in a very poor light.

**NARRATOR:** What about the Temperance movement?

**FRANCES WILLARD:** The Women’s Christian Temperance Union, known as the WCTU, was formed in 1874. As its second president, I, Frances Willard, pushed the WCTU to support the suffrage movement as a way to ultimately regulate alcoholic consumption — through use of the ballot. The Temperance Movement was gaining momentum. Many men had left farming and were working in factories. They were confined indoors in poor conditions and working at repetitive tasks. As a result, many were literally driven to drink with consequent loss of paycheck. All of this set the stage for abusing wives and children at home. Thus, temperance became a woman’s issue..... In later years, I no longer believed that men became poor because they drank — it seemed to me that they drank, because they were poor. .....Our movement’s adherence to suffrage ruled out suffrage support by the alcohol industries. But the handwriting was on the wall for passage of the 18th Amendment that would ban the sale of alcoholic beverages in 1919. The

alcohol industry was one of the most active lobbies against suffrage for women.

**NARRATOR:** Women throughout the country had different attitudes about suffrage. Middle class women with some education separated themselves from lower class working and immigrant women until the 1900s. At the turn of the century, a generation of women 40-50 years younger than Stanton and Anthony became active in the movement. Jane Addams (who lived from 1860 to 1935), served as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association from 1911 to 1914.

**ADDAMS:** I, Jane Addams, believed women needed the vote in order to enact legislation that would allow them to control their own affairs and working conditions. The Triangle Shirt Factory fire that killed 146 women garment workers in 1911 in New York City spurred action to correct working conditions for women.

**SOUTHERN WHITE WOMAN:** We, southern white women, had concerns about supporting a movement that would give Negro women the vote. We tried, but failed, to force interpretations by political parties that suffrage, if gained, would only apply to white women.

**WELLS-BARNETT:** I am Ida B. Wells-Barnett — born in 1862 during the Civil War in Mississippi to enslaved parents and I died in 1931. When slavery was made illegal in 1865 with the 13th Amendment, I was able to attend high school and later Fisk University in Nashville. My parents provided a stable home life but died of yellow fever which left me at the age of 16 in charge of the family. I taught school and then, became a journalist and was the first black woman to co-own a newspaper. As my anger grew at the injustices that blacks suffered, I knew I had to convert that anger into constructive action. When the epidemic of lynchings grew in the 1880's-1890's, I put my anti-lynching campaign into high gear when three of my friends were lynched on trumped up charges. Anti-lynching investigative reporting was my passion for the rest of my life. I believed that white men resented the fact that with freedom, Negroes were owning property and beginning to make new lives for themselves; consequently, any reason to keep them down, any misdemeanor gave cause for lynching without due process. Any hint of attention to white women was used as an excuse for lynching, notwithstanding the fact that white men raped colored women with impunity. People outside of the South did not understand what was happening in the South, so I worked single handedly to bring the truth to public attention.

I had always been considered a radical because I was not afraid to criticize leaders in public, both white and black. I finally settled in Chicago where I

worked for the newspaper owned by Ferdinand Barnett, a lawyer. Our partnership led to marriage and the birth of four children. Believing that in joining together, Negroes could provide mutual support and become stronger, more vocal advocates, I helped found a number of organizations including the NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the first black women's suffrage association in Chicago, the Alpha Suffrage Club.

I cherished my long standing friendship with Susan B. Anthony. I resented the treatment I received when asked to go to the end of the line by the white suffrage organizers during the protest parade in 1913, the day before President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration; however, I joined the Illinois delegation when it passed. Although I actively supported suffrage, I did not believe that the exercise of the vote was going to change women's nature nor the political situation. But I knew that legislation was a necessary path to equality and justice.

**FRONTIER WOMAN:** It was a different story in the frontier. Women in the developing west lived in isolated areas and worked equally with men in mutual dependency. We were pioneers and confronted the same arduous tasks as we built our homes and livelihoods together. When proximities permitted, we, women, helped each other — in childbirth, illness and in other areas where collective action was needed and could succeed. Later when towns developed, we joined with men to build schools and churches and social groups; however, with men often taking the credit.

**WYOMING WOMAN:** Suffrage in Wyoming, came about in large part because of me, Esther Morris, a Wyoming pioneer and midwife. I had successfully managed a difficult birth for the wife of a state legislator. In gratitude, he asked whether there was "any measure I wished put through for the women of the territory and he would introduce it." Without hesitation, I asked for a bill enfranchising women. When the bill was prepared, the Democratic legislature thought giving women the right to vote was a good joke. They passed the bill — anticipating a veto by the young Republican governor of the territory, newly appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant. But the governor had come from Salem, Ohio where as a boy, he had heard Susan B. Anthony speak. He never forgot her message and signed the bill. ....

.....

But there is more.....Later, when the territory applied for statehood, we women sent a message to the Wyoming negotiators in Washington. We were aware that the suffrage clause in the territorial constitution might ruin chances for admission. We believed we could count on our legislators to

grant women the right to vote after the territory became a state. Instead — the negotiators in Washington, D.C. responded, and I quote, “We may stay out of the Union for 100 years, but we will come in with our women” end quote. .... Thus, Wyoming became the first state to grant full suffrage to its female citizens in 1869. To make frontier life possible required collaboration by men and women. Before the year 1900, three other western states — Utah, Colorado and Idaho— had passed full suffrage laws.

**NARRATOR:** In the 19th century, farmers’ organizations like the Grange and the Farmer’s Alliance, were the first male-dominated organizations to allow women to join and become officers and convention delegates. It was the farmers and miners who supported woman suffrage, .....less support came from upper class men. In 1910, the following speech by U. S. Senator Robert Owen from Oklahoma, outlines Western reaction in states that had already granted suffrage to women:

**SENATOR OWEN:** “Every evil prophecy against granting suffrage has failed. The public men of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho give it a cordial support. The testimony is universal:....It has made women more broad minded and greatly increased the understanding of the community at large of the problems of good government, of proper sanitation, of pure food, of clean water, and all such matters in which intelligent women would naturally take an interest. It has not absolutely regenerated society, but it has improved it.”

(Beginning of section about suffrage leaders in Texas. Leagues in other states may want to omit this section, or replace it with narratives about leaders in their own states.)

**NARRATOR:** Regarding suffrage in Texas, the first recorded interest came in 1869 when the Texas Constitutional Convention rejected suffrage, declaring it “unwomanly.” Later in early 20th century, three women stand out in the history of suffrage efforts in Texas. They were all born within six years of each other – between 1877 and 1883. All were married – two, unhappily; all were upper middle class, attended college, had children and all went on to celebrated careers following the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment.

**CUNNINGHAM:** I am Minnie Fisher Cunningham, suffragist and leading liberal Democrat. I was one of the first women to receive a pharmacy degree in Texas. But I was not paid a salary equal to my male counterparts. I could see that correcting pay and other inequities women face, could only happen through the ballot. So, I joined the suffrage movement. Beginning in 1915, I served four years as president of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association. During the final years of the suffrage effort, I worked with Carrie Chapman Catt, long serving president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. With Catt, I helped found the National League of Women Voters in 1920 and served as its national executive director...for 20 years. Following an unsuccessful run for the US Senate, I returned to Washington D.C. and worked for the federal government during the New Deal era. Ultimately, I retired to Texas.

**AMES:** I'm Jessie Daniel Ames, a graduate of Southwestern University — suffragist and later, an anti-lynching reformer. I was the organizing president of the Georgetown Equal Suffrage League and was also elected treasurer of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association. In 1919, I helped advance women through serving as the founding president of the League of Women Voters of Texas and later, president of the American Association of University Women of Texas. After passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, I moved to Georgia and established the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. In retirement, I returned to Texas.

**McCULLUM:** My name is Jane Yelvington McCullum. I studied at the University of Texas and married Arthur McCullum, who served nearly 40 years as Austin's public school superintendent. I led the Austin Woman's Suffrage Association and was state press manager for the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment. I held leadership positions in both the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women in Texas. I was appointed Texas secretary of state from 1927 until 1933, spanning two administrations. I had a well-documented exchange during the suffrage effort with a Texas state senator as follows: He said, "You ought to be home and married." "But I am married," I said. Then he suggested that I ought to be having children, to which I responded, "I have five. How many do you want me to have?" His response, "Then, you should be home darning stockings." Such was the dismissive way many legislators treated the suffrage movement. (End of Texas section.)

**NARRATOR:** We've heard mention of Carrie Chapman Catt, who is she and how does she fit in?

**CATT:** I'm Carrie Chapman Catt. I was born in 1859 just before the outbreak of the Civil War and died in 1947. I graduated at the top of my class in 1880 from what was to become Iowa State University.... After graduation, careers followed in journalism, education, writing and lecturing. My first involvement with women's affairs was in 1887 when I joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union, in Charles City, Iowa. Then in 1889, I was elected state lecturer of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association and was paid a small salary to revitalize the suffrage movement in Iowa. I was twice widowed. My second marriage in 1890 to George Catt, a talented engineer whom I had met at Iowa State, gave me agreed-upon time to continue my suffrage activities — which he whole-heartedly supported. People said I had a presence, that I spoke with a well-modulated voice, dressed fashionably and knew how to organize. As my career moved forward, I gained a political sense that served me well. Susan B. Anthony felt I had potential and selected me to succeed her as president at the National American Woman's Suffrage Association meeting in Washington, D.C. in 1900. With the exception of four years tending to family health concerns, I continued as Woman's Suffrage Association president through 1920. When it became clear that women soon were going to gain the vote, I believed that we needed to help educate women about politics and stimulate their interest in active participation in government. That led to the creation of the League of Women Voters in 1920 as a successor organization to the National American Woman's Suffrage Association.

**NARRATOR:** What about Alice Paul?

**PAUL:** I'm Alice Paul, I lived from 1885 until 1977. I dedicated my life to correcting the wrongs done to women. My family were Hicksite Quakers who practiced strict equality between men and women. After graduation from Swarthmore, I went to London in 1907 to study social work. There I met the Pankhursts, leaders of the militant faction of the British suffrage movement. I joined their efforts, which did include acts of violence resulting in jail time and brutal forced feeding. Upon my return to the United States, I joined the National American Woman Suffrage Association under Catt's leadership. I discovered that the association's efforts were focused on

moving the states to pass suffrage laws while neglecting efforts to move Congress to a federal suffrage amendment. They feared they could only move Congress to action after they gained the support of the states. I believed that the effort should be targeted toward Congress to urge passage of a federal suffrage amendment. So, I got myself appointed head of the National Woman Suffrage Association's Congressional committee. I moved to Washington D.C. in 1912 with a few loyal friends and virtually no money. We gained enough support to maintain an office and among other efforts, organized a massive parade during President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration in 1913. Friction between the Woman Suffrage Association leaders and me led to my separation from it. I then formed the National Woman's Party in 1916. Our Woman's Party representatives regularly picketed the White House during U.S. participation in World War I. We were arrested, jailed and force-fed when we attempted hunger strikes. All of this raised press awareness and alarm throughout the country. Then after outside pressures including the urging of Carrie Chapman Catt, President Wilson relented at the end of World War One and announced his support of the amendment.

**NARRATOR:** In 1919, both the House and the Senate passed the amendment. Then the battle to gain approval by a majority of the states swung into high gear. In the summer of 1920, Tennessee, the remaining 36<sup>th</sup> state needed to complete the majority, was about to vote. The vote was tied when the youngest member of the legislature, responding to a note from his mother, dramatically, changed his vote from negative to affirmative. As the news spread, supporters nationwide were ecstatic. .... Then, without ceremony, the U.S. Secretary of State certified the ratification of the amendment on August 26 – now acknowledged since 1971 as Women's Equality Day.

(EPILOGUE) **STANTON:** Now you have heard about the events leading to the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment. But we must remember that the 72 year effort to gain women the vote was only the beginning.

**NARRATOR:** During 2016 (correct year if needed), as we celebrate the 96<sup>th</sup> (correct number if needed) anniversary of the 19th Amendment, we become increasingly aware of what more needs to be accomplished. We need advocacy and legislation to ensure the achievement of equality between men and women — that women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and that different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and

**men are equally valued and favored.”** (Each speaker stands, reads one item below, and remains standing to the end.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Women should have full access to voting rights — this means that in the United States voter ID laws that disproportionately impede women’s access to voting in public elections should be changed.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Violence against women should be fully prosecuted.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Laws that restrict a woman’s determination of her own reproductive choices should be changed.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Laws should be enacted to ensure that women and men earn equal pay for work of equal value**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Women should actively promote civic engagement, especially among our girls and young women, in order to increase the representation of women in public office.**

**NARRATOR: We need to be loyal to the women who worked tirelessly for suffrage — the many who did not live to see its passage. We owe our continuing support to them, to ourselves, to our children and grandchildren— female and male, so we can truly.....:**

**CHORUS (stand): Hold these truths to be self-evident; —that all men AND WOMEN — are created equal!**

(Close book and sit.)

**The End.**

**September 2015**

**PNJantho**

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**WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS.....by Patty Jantho**

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