

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906)

Susan B. Anthony spent most of her adult life as a prominent voice in the struggle to win the vote for women. Raised as a Quaker, she inherited her parents' dislike of slavery and inequality.

Early Activist At her first job as a teacher, Anthony found out that she was making one-fifth the salary of the school's male teachers. She complained and was fired. Anthony found a new job as the principal of a girls' school. After ten years, though, she became so caught up in the struggle to win the vote for women that she decided to devote her life to the cause.

Fast Facts

- ▶ With Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anthony founded the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869.
- ▶ At age 84, Anthony organized an international alliance for women's suffrage.
- ▶ Women finally won the right to vote in 1920—too late for Anthony. She had died fourteen years earlier.

1873—Friends and fellow citizens:

I stand before you to-night under indictment for the alleged crime¹ 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.

1. **indictment** (in dit' mēnt) for the alleged (ə lej'd) crime in law, a written statement charging a person with supposedly committing a crime.

◀ What does this photo of suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as well as this illustration tell you about suffragist leaders? [Analyze]



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,² and is therefore a violation of the supreme law of the land. By it the blessings of liberty are for ever 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;³ 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;⁴ 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 to-day null and void, precisely as in every one against negroes.

Vocabulary Builder

oligarchy (äl' i gār kē) *n.* rule by a small, elite group

dissension (di sen' shən) *n.* difference of opinion

Reading Skill

Fact and Opinion

On what fact does Anthony base her opinion that discrimination against women is illegal?

2. **bill of attainder . . . ex post facto law** two practices specifically outlawed by the U.S. Constitution. A bill of attainder declares someone guilty without a trial. An *ex post facto* law applies to acts committed before the law was passed.

3. **odious** (ō' dē əs) **aristocracy** (ar' i stā' kre sē) hateful system based on inherited wealth and power.

4. **oligarchy of race . . . endured** Anthony refers to a racist nineteenth-century belief, held even by some abolitionists; that whites ("the Saxon") were the natural rulers of African Americans.