

Celebrating 100 Years of the Women's Vote

Ken Burns' *Not for Ourselves Alone*:

The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony

Webinar hosted by Center for Contemporary Arts, featuring Paul Barnes and Ali MacGraw

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GVWxu0bfQ>

● Clip #1 16:35 - 24:25

As stated in Ken Burns' documentary *Not for Ourselves Alone*, it took 140 years for women to win the right to vote. When the 19th amendment, also called the Susan B. Anthony amendment, passed in the House of Representatives in 1919 it declared that the states could not deny a citizen the right to vote based on sex. This meant that half the population of the United States that were once silent could now participate in elections and policymaking. That year, 8 million men *and women* turned out to vote and it all began with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Neither women would live long enough to cast a ballot themselves.

1. What were some opinions other women had about suffragettes, members of the activist women's organisation? Why do you think they had these opinions?
2. How were Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony different? How were they similar?
3. Do you share similar traits with Stanton (witty, hospitable, full of ideas) or Anthony (plain-spoken, single-minded, strategist)? If so, how do these traits serve you in your life? If you don't share these traits, what traits would you like to embody and why?

● Clip #2 24:25 - 28:26

The year 1848 marked revolution around the world, but one of the most lasting revolutionary actions was the proposed resolution on women's rights in New York. The goal of the women's rights convention that year was to extend equality, under law, to all US female citizens, including married women.

1. What were some things women were not allowed to do before the 19th amendment was passed?
2. Influenced by the activism in her family as well as her experiences as a wife and mother, why do you think Stanton began her efforts first with the anti-slavery movements?

● **Clip #3 30:30 - 1:48:35**

During the anti-slavery convention attended by Stanton and her husband, women were made to sit in a separate screened section so they could not participate.

1. For what reason did social reformer William Lloyd Garrison sit with the women?
2. During the convention, the Bible was offered up as evidence for the silence of women. In your opinion, why might this evidence not be valid for a convention discussing slave emancipation?
3. At the conclusion of the anti-slavery convention, what were the newly acquainted Elizabeth Stanton and Minister Lucretia Mott determined to do upon returning to the states?

● **Clip #4 34:00- 39:00**

After 10 years of teaching, Susan B. Anthony felt like she had very few options in her future. As an unmarried woman, she worried about becoming an “old maid,” but she did not desire marriage nor more years as an underpaid teacher. When Anthony returned home to her father’s house, she met with many activists and reformers who worked on the anti-slavery movement. Inspired by her father’s visitors, Anthony was then determined to work full time as a reformer.

1. Have you ever felt like your future held few options for you? If so, what obstacles do you feel were standing in your way? Were these obstacles based on societal influences or your own inner struggles?

● **Clip #5 40:35 - 48:20**

For the first Women’s Rights Convention, The Declaration of Independence was used as a template to present their cause. The most notable change of text was that all men *and women* are created equal.

1. When the 11th point of the declaration was presented as a right for women to vote it was immediately met with reluctance. What did Fredrick Douglas say in order to change everyone's mind?
2. What was the response from the legislature when these same points of equality were presented?

● **Clip #6 54:20 - 1:19:20**

When the 13th amendment passed, abolishing slavery, the women's movement felt like universal suffrage would be next. The American Equal Rights Association (voting for all) was formed soon after and Stanton declared that "no country ever has had or ever will have peace until every citizen has a voice in the government."

The 14th amendment presented to congress, however, was a right for all *male* citizens to vote. The effort to allow black citizens to vote would not include women. When Stanton and Anthony sought support to amend the text from their emancipated partners, they were told that women should "defer their dreams" because right now was the "the negro hour." It was made clear that if women were to be granted a vote, it would come from an all women's movement.

The first action Anthony took was to register as a voter. She expected to be turned down so they could bring their case to the courts. Unexpectedly, Anthony was allowed to register, but was later arrested for breaking the law.

1. What was notable about Anthony's arrest and trial? How did Anthony use the experience to benefit their cause?
2. What was one of the biggest disadvantages the women's cause had when taken to court?
3. When the courts proved immovable, Anthony and Stanton targeted their efforts at the legislature. Rather than participate in more conventions, however, Elizabeth Stanton took to the streets, lecturing the beliefs of the movement. How did Stanton's lectures help the women's cause?

● **Clip #7 1:19:20 - 1:21:20**

In 1878, three years after Stanton and Anthony began searching for a representative, their amendment was introduced in the House of Representatives. However, it did not make it out of committee. It turns out that the amendment would have to be reintroduced in every session of congress for the next 45 years.

1. Before Anthony died, her words “failure is impossible” became an inspiration for those who took on Anthony’s and Stanton’s efforts. What do you think Anthony meant by this?

● **Clip #8 1:31:53 - 1:48:36**

It would take many more years to pass the 19th amendment through each state. In 1920, the deciding factor came down to a young representative from Tennessee. Harry T. Burn knew his constituents were against the ratification, but thanks to a letter from his mother, Burns would vote to pass the amendment saying “a mother’s advice is always safest for a boy to follow.”

1. Your descendant is to be the deciding factor of the 19th amendment. Write a short letter to them with your stance and your advice.

● **Clip #9 1:38:03 - 1:48:36**

Interviewee Ruth Dyk says she is grateful for the fight of first suffragettes, and while she recognizes that the women’s vote changed lives, “I’m afraid,” she says, “they haven’t been changed as much as we hoped for.”

In a letter Anthony wrote to Stanton, Anthony reiterates her hopes for women in the future.

These strong young women will take our place and complete our work. There is an army of them where we were but a handful. And we, dear old friend, shall move on to the next sphere of existence, higher and larger we cannot fail to believe, and one where women will not be placed in an inferior position but will be welcomed on a plane of intellectual and spiritual equality.

- Susan B. Anthony

1. Considering Ruth Dyk’s sentiments and Susan B. Anthony’s words, do you believe there is still progress to be made for women’s suffrage? Explain your answer.