

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Letter to Lucretia Mott, 1876



ABOUT THE READING In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott launched the women's suffrage movement at the Seneca Falls Convention. As the delegates there drafted a declaration of rights for women, they looked to the country's Declaration of Independence for inspiration.

In 1876, 100 years after the declaration that began the American Revolution was signed, Stanton wrote Mott this letter about the progress of their own fight for political equality.

VOCABULARY

protracted lengthy

redress relief, correction

prophesy predict

ere before



As you read think about the opposition the women's rights movement encountered in the 1800s.

Esteemed Friend: It is twenty-eight years ago to-day since the first woman's rights convention ever held assembled in the Wesleyan chapel at Seneca Falls, N.Y. Could we have foreseen, when we called that convention, the ridicule, persecution, and misrepresentation that the demand for woman's political, religious and social equality would involve: the long, weary years of waiting and hoping without success; I fear we should not have had the courage and conscience to begin such a **protracted** struggle, nor the faith and hope to continue the work. Fortunately for all reforms, the leaders, not seeing the obstacles which block the way, start with the hope of a speedy success.

Our demands at the first seemed so rational that I thought the mere statement of woman's wrongs would bring immediate **redress**. I thought an

Source: History of Woman Suffrage, vol. 3: 1876–1885 (Privately published, Rochester, NY, 1886).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Letter to Lucretia Mott, 1876, *continued* Primary Source

appeal to the reason and conscience of men against the unjust and unequal laws for women that disgraced our statute books, must settle the question. But I soon found, while no attempt was made to answer our arguments, that an opposition, bitter, malignant, and persevering, rooted in custom and prejudice, grew stronger with every new demand made, with every new privilege granted.

. . . I do not feel like rejoicing over any privileges already granted to my sex, until all our rights are conceded and secured and the principle of equality recognized and proclaimed, for every step that brings us to a more equal plane with man but makes us more keenly feel the loss of those rights we are still denied.

. . . May we now safely **prophesy** justice, liberty, equality for our daughters **ere** another centennial birthday shall dawn upon us.

According to Stanton, many people opposed the women's rights movement without even bothering to consider the reasons behind it.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Why did Stanton at first think that the requests made at Seneca Falls would quickly bring about change for women?

2. Why did Stanton not feel like celebrating the gains that women had made?

3. Stanton says that if she had known the fight for women's rights would have been so long and difficult, she might never have begun it. Do you believe her? Explain your answer.
