

REPORT OF THE
CONGRESS

TO ADDRESS

THE FIRST
WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION
AT SENECA FALLS

HELD ON-LINE AND IN SEVERAL KEY LOCALES
IN THE UNITED STATES
THROUGHOUT THE 165 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

CHICAGO

Submitted by Anne Elizabeth Moore,
July 19th and 20th, 2014.

An update to the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, the founding text of the women's rights movement in the United States of America. After Jane Hunt, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Ann McClintock, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, et. al, *REPORT OF THE WOMAN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION, HELD AT SENECA FALLS*, Rochester, NY, 1848.

Printed by John Dick, at Frederick Douglass' North Star Office.

REPORT.

A Convention to discuss the Social, Civil, and Religious Condition of Woman, was called by the Women of Seneca County, NY, and held at the village of Seneca Falls, in the Wesleyan Chapel, on the 19th and 20th of July, 1848. One hundred and sixty-five years following, owing to a wide-scale concern that the Social, Civil, and Religious Condition of Woman had changed little in that time, a Series of Discussions, an On-line Convention, and a Special Congress were called by Women in Cook County, IL, throughout the anniversary year. The question was discussed over a series of meetings by Women, and Men, and Non-binary People. Anne Elizabeth Moore, of Chicago, was the moving spirit of the occasion.

On the evening of June 27th, 2014, the Web-site was launched. The object of the Web-site was stated in text by Anne Elizabeth Moore. The original Declaration of Sentiments was offered for discussion on this Web-site. In an effort to mirror the original Convention's two-part format, the Sentiments were separated from the Resolutions, and divided into 18 separate statements, upon which On-line Respondents were invited to vote. The propriety of obtaining the opinions of Men in the course of the procedure was considered, and the necessity of fostering a Trans- and Non-binary inclusive field of respondents was universally agreed upon, as well as the decision to actively engage People of Color in a manner alluded to by the makeup of the original Convention.

On the 29th of March, a Congress was convened at the Newberry Library in Chicago, IL, whereupon the determinations of the On-Line Convention were addressed, further linguistic considerations brought forth, and new Resolutions proposed. This meeting was broadcast on Chicago Access Network Television and YouTube.

REVISED DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all Men, Women, and Non-binary people are created equal; that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of Women and Non-binary people under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled. The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of Man toward people who do not identify as Men, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over others. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

Through often deliberate means, our confidence in our own powers has been destroyed, our self-respect has been lessened, and we have been compelled to lead dependent and abject lives.

A different code of morals has been outlined for Men and Women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude Women and Non-binary people from society are not only tolerated, but are deemed of little account in Man.

We have been assigned a sphere of action, by capitalism, family, religion, and law, when such belongs to our conscience and ourselves.

We have been compelled to submit to laws, in the formation of which we have had no or little voice.

Our right to exercise our inalienable right to the elective franchise remains contingent on issues related to race and class status and gender identity.

Deprived for decades of this first right of a resident, the elective franchise, we remain underrepresented in the halls of legislation even a century on, and have therefore been oppressed on all sides.

We are granted in religious institutions, as well as state, but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for our exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church or spiritual organizations.

We have been disallowed entry to most profitable employments, and from those we are permitted to follow, we receive lesser remuneration.

Many of the avenues to wealth and distinction which are considered most honorable have been closed to us. As a teacher of theology, medicine, law, or business we are rarely known.

Granted more rights when married than when single, we have been taxed to support a government which revokes our rights in favor of corporate interests.

In the covenant of marriage, we are often induced to promise obedience to a husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, a master—the law giving him power to deprive us of our liberty, and to administer chastisement.

The laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of children shall be given, have been framed as to be wholly regardless of the happiness

of Women—the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of Man, and giving all power into his hands.

Our rights in property, even to the wages we earn, remain unassured.

We have been denied access to a full range of health care.

The sexual oppression of Women, whether by the shaming of overt sexuality or through the pressure to engage in sexual activity, has created a culture conducive to sexual violence and assault and destroyed our rights to sexual autonomy.

Women and Non-binary people feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights. Due to the continued disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, and their social, cultural, and religious degradation, we insist that we have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to us as residents of the United States.

SATURDAY MORNING.

On the morning of March 29th, the Congress assembled at 9 o'clock. The Revised Declaration of Sentiments, offered for the acceptance of the gathered Congress and the television-viewing public of CAN-TV, was presented by A. E. Moore. After much consideration, some changes to wording and pronouns, as reflected in the above, were suggested and unanimously adopted.

The following resolutions were then read:

WHEREAS, in the generations since the Declaration of Sentiments was first set to paper and the United States Women's Movement thereby founded, the vast majority of its Declarations have gone unaddressed. We therefore reject previous Resolutions as ineffective while acknowledging the continued relevance of many original Sentiments. We also note that our conception of gender and its impact on Social, Civil, and Religious Rights has changed over the last 165 years, and a commitment to promoting gender diversity is no longer exclusively a Women's Issue. Therefore,

RESOLVED, That our language reflects a constantly deepening understanding of oppression and aims to encompass an array of sexual, gender, racial, and legal identities with the specific intention to include Trans and Non-binary Folk, Gay and Queer People, Individuals of Color, Non-legal Residents, and Incarcerated People. Proposing Sentiments that correspond to a wide array of concerns in language is the overriding intent of this document, and will form the core of gender-based organizing in the coming 165 years.

RESOLVED, That at present, our bodies, and presumably, we, are perceived to have value only to the extent that we are attractive to Men. But in fact, our bodies belong to us and we may use them to love, pleasure, and nourish ourselves and others as we see fit.

RESOLVED, That Girls' education be promoted but not on the cause of traditionally feminine traits such as caring for the family, rather for her own intellectual pursuit and economic future. Whereas the issue of Girls' education is an important topic of the day and clearly is a benefit for the girl and her community, the urgency and import of her education is sold merely on her supposed innate ability to care for her family better than her brother, husband, or father. This emphasis on Women's moral superiority, a form of republican motherhood, has not changed in 165 years. Whereas there are gendered reasons for increasing Women's access to education and the institutions which require higher education — such as the fact that Women were excluded from medical research studies until the mid-1990s, resulting in biased views of breast cancer, heart disease, and other illnesses — we must not rest the demand for education on her capacity for caregiving. We cannot change gender norms and expectations if we marry traditional gender roles to the empowerment of Girls.

RESOLVED, That a characteristic of contemporary life in the United States is the caging and confinement of human beings. Millions of our lovers, friends, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and children

are sent to jails, prisons, and detainment centers to live for years—often decades—in small places. Cages and confinement in today’s Society are seen as inevitable; necessary facts of life for our Civil Society. Yet, cages do not produce safety and confinement does not confront the conditions that leave us vulnerable, such as poverty, lack of access to vital services, or exposure to violence, whether interpersonal or state sponsored. To justify confinement, bodies are segregated and pathologized, and otherness is fabricated based on ever-changing orders of value. These crude valuations are offered as proof that cages and confinement are necessary, yet we can see with our own eyes that they are unsafe and inefficient. Cages and confinement postpone our safety, our autonomy, and our commitment to a community of each other. We work toward their abolishment.

RESOLVED, That embracing a truly liberated approach to maternity and pregnancy will move beyond the punitive framework. The original Declaration of Sentiments, noting the way that Men’s dominion over Women has affected their relationship to the justice system, states, “He has made her morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband,” yet now Women have gained the ability to commit crimes *without* impunity—to be imprisoned just as long as (and often, longer than) Men: If a Woman is in the mere presence of a husband or partner when he commits a crime, she, too, is swept up in the punishment. This “right to punishment” has also been extended to punished Women’s children, who are often placed in foster care. Women are incarcerated, on average, 160 miles from their children. Often, children are unable to visit mothers in prison, due to time, money, distance, or circumstances; Women are meanwhile often pressured to take parenting classes while incarcerated. Women of Color, especially Black Women, are incarcerated in extremely disproportionate numbers, thus the control and manipulation of maternal bodies and children’s bodies is heavily bound up in race. Departments of family services are more likely to terminate the parental rights of Black Women. We must not confuse “equali-

ty” with the ability to be confined, manipulated, and incapacitated by the criminal justice system.

RESOLVED, That while the right to safe and legal abortion was granted in 1973, that the right to reproductive autonomy without access is moot. Poor and working poor Women seeking comprehensive reproductive services encounter roadblocks preventing them from enacting the decisions they want to make about their families. The restrictions on Women who barely make a living wage are great. In these calculations the reality of a poor Woman’s life is ignored: if she is already a mother and another child represents a significant financial strain on her household; if she could not afford effective contraception; or if she had no effective comprehensive sex education. Women of Color more likely to live in areas cut off economically, educationally, and medically from the privileges that Women in other geographies enjoy. The economic barriers inherent in reproductive access are not to be underestimated; to create the kind of family you want is a fundamental human right. Color, class, or gender should not be factors in such basic human needs. For Women of Color, with our history littered with the remnants of slavery, current practices of institutional racism and class oppression, color, class, and misogyny remain barriers to our achievement of full reproductive justice. There is no right without access; there is no access without justice; and there is no justice without change. We demand reproductive justice now.

RESOLVED, That Women of the United States are advised to meet in Councils for 13 moons to formulate amendments to the US Constitution that would articulate: The inalienable standing of each human organism in a natural habitat, including the right to Food, Farms (including free access to land, space, education, and living skills), and Democracy (self-representation); The inalienable powers and responsibilities of Women to promote and defend those rights—for every meal, every person, every season, every generation, every species; And the mechanisms by which Women will implement such powers and responsibilities.

RESOLVED, That we strive toward 50/50 representation in congress by 2020, to be achieved in the following manner:

1. Establish quotas for 50% non-male representation by 2020. Many European political parties prioritize the recruitment of female candidates, some even requiring “positive quotas” where half the candidates are Women.
2. Establish proportional representation in elections, to more accurately reflect a diverse electorate. Multi-seat districts, rather than one-seat districts, enable political parties (or, in a nonpartisan election, groupings of like-minded voters, i.e. liberals, conservatives, or progressives) to win seats in proportion to their vote share. If like-minded voters have 20% of the vote in a 10-seat district, its candidates win two of ten seats, instead of none; 40% wins four seats, and 60% wins six seats.
3. Implement gender-relevant budgeting to make the impact of budgetary decisions on gender-related issues visible, so it is possible to respond and re-evaluate policies, expenditures, and sources of revenue in accordance with objectives for equality.
4. Tax individual income, not combined family income. This will encourage Women to work outside the home and not adversely penalize the additional income in a family.

RESOLVED, That intellectual property rights laws are rooted in traditional notions of gender and outmoded concepts of the public and private spheres. We therefore intend to work toward policies that equally value the cultural products, scientific inventions, and business innovations of all contributing creators equally, regardless of medium of construction, intended use, or gender identity of creator, in an effort to uproot and eradicate a deeply entrenched system that values masculine labor over feminine labor.

RESOLVED, therefore, That, being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities, and the same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of Women and Non-binary people, equally with Men, to promote every righteous cause, by every righteous means. Especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and spirituality, it is self-evidently our right to participate with our brothers in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, by any instrumentalities proper to be used, and in any assemblies proper to be held. This being a self-evident truth, growing out of the principles of human nature, any custom or authority adverse to it, whether modern or wearing the hoary sanction of antiquity, is to be regarded as self-evident falsehood, and at war with the interests of humankind.

RESOLVED, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of Men and Women and Non-binary people, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing for all an equal participation in the various trades, professions, and commerce.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Report will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.

Firmly relying upon the triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our electronic signatures to this declaration, the result of the collective labor of hundreds of correspondents around the United States:

- Gaylon Alcaraz
- Veronica Arreola
- Sarah Bradley

- Cinnamon Cooper
- Morgan Facemire
- Nadia Garofalo
- Debbie Hillman
- Barbara Koenen
- Sarah Ross
- Carrie Ruckel
- Maya Schenwar (in absentia)
- Lindsey Smith
- Cheryl Wegner