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Disrupting the Lean: Performing a 2016 Declaration of Sentiments

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Disrupting the Lean: Performing a 2016 Declaration of Sentiments

Cover Page Footnote

We are grateful for all of the feminist warriors who came before us to pioneer the path we walk today in solidarity.

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DISRUPTING THE LEAN: PERFORMING A 2016 DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Nearly 170 years ago, sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed the 1848 *Declaration of Sentiments* at the Seneca Falls Convention in affirmation “that all men and women are created equal.” Reflecting on women’s gender equality advances, we revisit the words of the *Declaration of Sentiments* as a reminder of where women’s fight for rights in the United States coalesced. On the 150th anniversary of its signing, Hillary Rodham Clinton perceptively cautioned, “if all we do is honor the past, then we will miss the central point of the *Declaration of Sentiments*, which was, above all, a document about the future” (211). Heeding that future, women have earned many freedoms called for in the Declaration, but we are still fighting against an array of lingering and new questions. Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s 1848 words, “few can nerve themselves to meet the storm,” hold contemporary importance in marshaling forward today’s struggle for gender parity (“In Defense of Women’s Rights” 27). Stanton’s legacy and that of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention remind us that a few powerful voices can shake foundations. Inspired by the spirit of disruption, this article narrates the making of a “2016 Declaration of Sentiments,” invented in a roundtable, “Disrupting the Lean: Performing a 2016 Declaration of Sentiments,” at the fifth Biennial Seneca Falls Dialogues (SFD).

As a map for the essay, we open with a brief theoretical overview on literature that informs student-authored manifestos written in feminist theory or senior seminar courses at The College at Brockport. The manifesto assignment asks students to select a contemporary issue that they find interesting and/or disconcerting, and in a concise position paper, expose and analyze it using a feminist frame of reference. Informed by the schools of feminist thought summarized below, these writings probe cross-cutting questions of labor and gender equity in education, reproduction, breast-feeding, identities, politics, and global feminisms. Each manifesto closes with strategic questions that authors posed in our SFD session to elicit dialogue among roundtable participants. The questions hone in on gender and labor as inspired by the “Lean Out: Gender, Economics, and Enterprise” conference theme. Using these manifesto readings and guiding questions, we engaged SFD audience members in a poetic word-making exercise, which we compiled into a “2016 Declaration of Sentiments,” collaboratively authored and recited by our roundtable participants. We conclude the essay with this 2016 Declaration. The original 1848 Declaration follows in an appendix. Looking back but thinking forward, we give you our words and our voice as we seek to bring activism and agency back to Seneca Falls.

OUR VOICES: FROM THEORY TO PRAXIS

At the time of the 1848 Convention, much of society viewed women as emotional beings with little rational capacity. The gender separation of public as a male domain and private as a female domain further confined women to spheres of domesticity. In the eighteenth century, numerous social theorists defended this separation. For example, Jean Jacques Rousseau maintained that man’s most natural form resides in nature where power and competition define relations. As Susan Okin notes, Rousseau conceptualized women’s natural form as subordinate to man, serving his desires, and fulfilling her reproductive function through childbirth (106-139). In his book, *Emile: or, On Education* (1762), Rousseau argued that “the development of rationality [was] the most important educational goal for boys, but not for girls” (Qtd in Tong 14).

British philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft was an avid critic of Rousseau's work and countered much of what he wrote in *Emile* in her 1792 *Vindications of the Rights of Women*. She asserted, "To render women truly useful members of society...they should be led...to acquire a rational affection for the country, founded on knowledge" (292). Wollstonecraft argued that the only means to reconcile women's inequality and supposed lack of rationality was to grant them access to the same educational rights that society offered to men.

Liberal feminism was, in essence, born as a response to women's lack of civic entitlements. This liberal feminist rubric, a reform-based approach to equality measured against standards of man, both informed and served as a driving force behind the 1848 *Declaration of Sentiments*. As the nineteenth century unfolded, liberal feminist thought expanded to include calls for equal liberty. Akin to Wollstonecraft, philosophers John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill did not regard women as intellectually deficient; rather, they argued that women had been denied certain rights and opportunities that would allow them to demonstrate their rational capacity. In line with liberal reform as wed to public policy, Mill and Taylor focused on structures of marriage, family, divorce, and property to assert that "society must provide women with the same political rights and economic opportunities" as it did men (Qtd in Tong 16). Along with other feminists of the time, both Mill and Taylor championed women's suffrage as necessary for combatting oppression. Since the penning of the 1848 *Declaration*, liberal feminism has evolved into multiple branches of thought and action, each informed by unique bodies of theoretical knowledge. As an example, Melissa Brown's "The Myth of Purity" problematizes abstinence-only sex education and questions the impact of liberal feminist thinking on sex education in the United States.

In contrast to liberal feminism's reform-based approach to equality, radical feminism seeks to disrupt patriarchal dominance and establish new parameters for achieving gender parity. Radical thinkers consider sexism the most widely practiced form of oppression in society. Framed as the "sex wars," radical thinkers theorized opposing ways of reading bodies. For example, Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, viewing the body as a site of oppression, argued against sexual harassment and

prostitution, while Kate Millett and Gayle Rubin, viewing the body as a site of liberation, argued for fluidity in gender and sexual expression. In line with radical thinkers, the authors of “Body Autonomy” and “Free the Nipple,” Brook Ophardt and Maggie Rosen, respectively, consider how the female body is politicized, sexualized, and exploited for economic gain.

Building on the concept of gender fluidity, postmodern feminists assert that there isn’t any one way to be a feminist but rather multiple and plural ways to realize and express feminist ideals. Judith Butler, a prominent postmodern and queer thinker, theorizes gender and sex as social constructs, and related, gender performativity as a series of repetitive masculine and feminine acts that society expects in binary male and female behaviors (31-34). Leveraging Butler’s thinking, queer theorists, such as J. Jack Halberstam, propose disrupting binary perceptions and structures that perpetuate gender rigidity (xi-xv). Increasingly, queer and postmodern feminist thought inform lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, and transgender knowledge. “Female Masculinities,” by Brooke Love, and “GaGa Politics,” by Tambria Schroeder, challenge readers to queer their notions of labor and politics and recognize the limitations of binary thinking.

Unquestionably, we can attribute many of the rights that we appreciate today to the strong foundation that liberal feminism provided through voices raised at the Seneca Falls Convention and into the early twentieth century. Alternatively, western liberal feminism’s largely white, privileged lens has reproduced many racist, classist, and heteronormative practices that oppress, as opposed to liberate, the already marginal. It has, at times, banished lesbian, transgender, and women of color from key feminist undertakings. Countering these exclusions, Black feminist thought considers ways that race, sex, gender, and class, as social categories of identity, comprise multiple and overlapping sites of oppression. Kimberlé Crenshaw theorizes this phenomenon as “intersectionality” (1241-1299). Patricia Hill Collins’ *Matrix of Domination* examines intersectionality and analyzes ways that societal configurations in education, politics, and law systematically reproduce structures of inequality rooted in identity (273-290). bell hooks expands the concept of multiple intersecting oppressions by arguing for feminist

ways of knowing that are accessible to wide ranges of identities across geographies of person and place (1-17). Audre Lorde helps us see ways that white dominance silences and erases many Black women's voices in a movement that ironically reached for female equality (110-113). Similarly, Angela Davis, a tireless advocate for gender and racial parity, theorizes on private and public spheres of Black female labor and reproduction (442-457). In opposition to Betty Freidan's, *The Feminine Mystique*, which characterized 1960s white suburban women as unfulfilled housewives, many Black women longed for the privilege to work inside their own homes rather than as domestic laborers for white families. Ida B. Wells Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, and Fannie Barrier Williams are just a few of many salient Black female champions who we know too little about because their contributions in the late 1800s to early 1900s have been obscured by white female dominance. Closely related, transnational and postcolonial feminisms consider the issues of oppressed women around the world as a consequence of Western colonization. Chandra Mohanty, one of many important thinkers within this space, has helped reframe feminist knowledge to include the varied, rich contributions of women across the globe. In "Global Feminism," Audrey Lai confronts the limitations and exclusionary nature of Western feminisms.

Over time, the subjugation of alternative voices has led many individuals to disengage from feminism and the feminist label. However, the intent of feminist theory and praxis evolves in meaning and saliency as it acknowledges its critiques and progresses in its purpose. We recognize the voids that must be addressed as we try to reconcile growing tensions around social and gender inequalities. Today, younger activists tend to be drawn to feminist thinking that is more radical, inclusive, and intersectional, and to a movement that seeks to revolutionize rather than reform.

Since the turn of the century, Cobble et al note, "the most defining feature of this generation of feminists is its inability to be defined" (185). Women are using their lived experiences to understand and address different forms of oppression. Some say this approach has weakened the feminist movement while others argue that this situated-knowing viewpoint is precisely what makes the current generation so strong.

Despite diversity in voice, Cobble et al affirm that the one unifying element for feminists today is a desire to finish the unfinished work of the women's movement (171). We often use language and imagery to do this work, to express women's unique experiences and build upon the momentum of our predecessors. This was true in 1848 and it remains true today.

"The Myth of Purity" by Melissa Brown

The Purity Myth (2009), by Jessica Valenti, inspired me to speak on how purity is taught as a form of sex education in parts of the United States, even though it is a mythical, outdated concept. During my high school health class in 2011, I was introduced to the "tape-trick." The nurse handed out pieces of tape and asked us to stick them on our hands. Then she told us to rip the tape off and look at the sticky part of the tape that had touched our skin. As we examined the tape, the nurse instructed us to compare ourselves to the tape. She said that if we didn't want to be dirty like used tape, we should save ourselves for marriage and our future husbands, which also presumed that we were all heterosexual. The nurse told us to look at the leftover skin and dirt that was stuck on that tape and said that the same thing would happen to us with our sexual partners—that with each successive partner, we became like the piece of tape that would never bond to us the way that it had the first time. In short, she informed us that if we had sex before marriage, we would be like used-up tape. Dirty. Unwanted.

Many are shocked by this educational approach, but the fact is that many schools teach flawed thinking about sex. I was given an abstinence-only education and scared into not having sex before marriage. Instructors compared me to objects rather than someone who, if given a proper education, could think and make smart sexual decisions. Each year, my coach gave the female student athletes a document to sign. We had to commit to not do drugs, drink, or have sex. As if this kind of disciplining wasn't intrusive enough, it made me feel like I was always being watched.

Abstinence-only sex education denies reality. Educating youth about sex and the options they have for birth control is crucial. Schools need to teach consent and the differences between consensual sex, sexual

assault, and rape. Using liberal feminist thinking, I ask, should all schools be required to teach comprehensive sex education, and have progressions in liberal feminist thought reshaped what we know and teach about sex education in schools?

“Body Autonomy” by Brooke Ophardt

When we examine different representations of work, the commodification of reproduction is often overlooked. Since before the Civil War, personal gain in America has exploited women’s ability to reproduce. This was done most explicitly with slave women. Angela Davis, theorizing race, class, and intersectionality, reminds us of women who were forced to bear as many children as possible so their masters could have more slaves to use or sell at their disposal (452-458). Davis also looks at reproductive commodification through emerging technologies, like surrogacy, and considers how it will continue to divide women (452). She states, “the availability of the technology further mythologizes motherhood as the true vocation of women. In fact, the new reproductive medicine sends out a message to those who are capable of receiving it: motherhood lies just beyond the next technology” (Davis 455). It’s important to note the last sentence of this quote: “to those who are capable of receiving it.” Like Davis, Rickie Solinger, reproduction historian and author of *Reproductive Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*, is quick to remind us that not every woman can access reproductive technology (106-111). The cost of new technologies adds additional layers of capitalist opportunities to exploit at the expense of women’s bodies.

Surrogacy is presented as employment for many impoverished women in the world. In *Our Bodies, Whose Property*, Anne Phillips discusses this labor, writing about the class divisions between women who participate in surrogacy as labor providers and women who employ surrogates as service consumers. In the United States, we see these classist divides emerge between women who can access reproductive technology and healthcare and women who cannot. When we consider reproduction as a form of work, we see the removal of women’s bodily autonomy and rights over the product being created: the fetus. With today’s political climate, the possibility of women’s rights being eroded in

favor of the commodification of reproduction is more profound than ever. We must be mindful of the effects such a decision could have on society. Using radical and Marxist feminist thinking, I ask, who benefits economically when women's bodies are stripped of their autonomy during pregnancy? Outside of reproduction, how else does women's bodily autonomy get manipulated for economic purposes?

“Free the Nipple” by Maggie Rosen

Male, female, and intersex bodies are created from the same cells. Everyone begins with the same anatomy in utero. After time, and depending on chromosomes, the body changes. However, due to our shared origins, and for unknown evolutionary reasons, male bodies have nipples. These nipples serve a different function than most female nipples, which have the biological purpose of giving sustenance to babies and young children. Unlike male nipples, the exposure of female/women's nipples is heavily regulated in the U.S. One of the most prominent reasons for this is the privileging of the male gaze, which ties into male consumption, rape culture, and the traditional placement of women in private and men in public spheres. Liberal feminists fought for women to be able to exist in traditionally male spaces and have the same liberties that, for years, men have taken for granted. While liberal thinking undoubtedly helped women, it also let women down by trapping them in male dominated spaces without any wiggle room. Radical feminists have a different way of thinking. They do not want permission to do everything men can do. Liberal feminists work within heteronormative patriarchal systems; radical feminists work to tear those systems down and create a new society designed to include women from the onset. Radical feminists argue that, in order to normalize breastfeeding and female nipple exposure, we must first tear down the heteropatriarchal structure that has over-sexualized and capitalized off of female bodies. Using liberal and radical thought as frames of reference, I ask, how does the labor market politicize nipples? And why does breastfeeding, as a form of labor, pull women out of public labor?

“Female Masculinities” by Brooke Love

As lesbian communities and identities developed from the early twentieth century, feminist scholars have increasingly examined the formation and understanding of butch identity. The butch ability to queer gender—to acquire, embody, and utilize masculinity as a means through which to understand and express themselves as people as well as homosexual—has fueled decades of discussion on what it means to be masculine, feminine, man, woman, heterosexual, or homosexual. It is at these intersections that we can begin to understand a butch identity, considering not only her identity as a woman, but her construction through masculinity and her visible identity as a lesbian. There are still feminists today who disparage butch identity as a means by which some lesbian women attempt to participate in patriarchy as the patriarch rather than the oppressed. These accusations make butch-identified women appear like the enemy, favoring femme lesbians as real women while displaying contempt for masculine lesbians who, supposedly, appropriate masculinity in search of privilege. The inherent flaw in this argument, however, is the assumption that all masculinities are identical, that masculinity performed by a lesbian woman is a simple replica of masculinity performed by heterosexual men. There are also a number of flaws in the understanding of butch women as oppressor rather than oppressed.

My experience with masculinity and lesbian identities has led me to see that masculinity is more appropriately understood as the plural – masculinities – which can be experienced differently by different people and different bodies. The notion that all masculinities play the same role in gender relations and are granted access to the same privilege is presumptuous and, ultimately, incorrect. Rather than considering masculinity as a characteristic of people with male anatomy, masculinity and femininity alike should be reconfigured more appropriately to encompass their flexibility and permeability. Butch lesbian masculinity, specifically, should be reimagined so it is not seen as an appropriation of the male identity, but as the means through which masculine lesbians produce their visibility, gender identity, and sexuality. Using a queer theory lens, I ask, how do lesbians experience labor differently? How does female masculinity impact a woman's experience in the labor force, and do

onlookers interpret work done by butch women differently than work done by femme women?

“GaGa Politics” by Tambria Schroeder

Did you know that, because women have the ability to bear children, we lack capacity to think rationally and are too heavily influenced by emotions? Did you know that, because of this ability, we are only fit to exist in the private sphere as mothers? Did you know that we have temporary “periods of inactivity during pregnancy,” and consequently, should grant “sole authority to men” (Okin 146)? According to ancient political philosophers like Aristotle and Rousseau, these are indisputable facts about women’s nature. We could choose to simply ignore these archaic conclusions and move on with our lives, but that would be naïve. Despite critiques that dispute such teachings, we cannot deny the repercussions they have had over time. Political theories that base exclusion and unequal treatment of women in the public sphere on her supposed functionality are widespread and have permeated into how society envisions the proper role of women and their rights. Liberal feminists disagreed with these repressive views and catalyzed the reformation of woman’s role in the public sphere. They helped open education and the sociopolitical sphere to women. Beyond the right to vote, though, we begin to lose touch with how liberal feminism facilitated women’s political liberation. For example, in patriarchal American politics, women’s biological function of bearing children is still being used to exploit women and deny them access to rights and certain leadership roles. Regardless of ways American politics continue to restrict and exclude women, we have never been better placed to start a revolution unlike any we’ve seen before. It’s time to push back at oppressive forces and to challenge socially constructed gender norms. Using queer theory and keeping in mind that we had a female candidate for president, I ask, how have we succeeded in disrupting the lean and challenging gender norms in American politics? How are we failing?

“Global Feminism” by Audrey Lai

The following is transcribed from a manifesto in video format as linked [here](https://goo.gl/mLyDTr) (<https://goo.gl/mLyDTr>) and screened at our SFD roundtable. The lyrics of “Who I Am,” by Ruby Ibarra, plays in the background of the video to enhance its manifesto message.

Western feminism overshadows Asian feminism. We read stories. We watch TV and movies. We go to school. How many Western actors, writers, and scholars can you name? How many Asian actors, writers, and scholars can you name? Typically, we watch, read, and learn many things from the Western perspective. This includes feminist theory and this is done on a global scale. Chandra Mohanty, a transnational theorist, argues that the colonizing history of the West created a singular concept of feminist liberation and empowerment. Non-Western women are referred to as “third world women.” These women are often defined and portrayed as poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, and victimized prisoners. The construction of women as third world women can be used to create the contrasting imagery of the liberated Western feminist woman taking on the role of savior. Do these “third world women” actually need a savior? If Western feminisms were not so pervasive, perhaps people wouldn’t default to thinking that women in the developing world need a savior. Brave women from different countries must be given the space to share their own struggles with gender-based violence and how they overcame it in order to change how the world perceives them as South Asian women. I am a bi-racial woman who struggles with a feminist identity. I continue to examine the way feminism incessantly leaves Asian women in the margins. Leveraging global and Black feminist thinking, I ask, what are the problems with only understanding feminism through a Western lens, and, similarly, what problems aren’t presented through this lens?

CINQUAINS: WORD-MAKING AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE

Following these manifesto readings, we invited session participants to engage with one another in a word-making exercise designed to create short manifestos that identify issues of labor across geographies of person and place that could be married into a larger, collective declaration. As a prompt for the exercise, we organized roundtable participants into pairs

or small groups of three-five people. Drawing from the questions posed after each manifesto reading, we asked groups to organize their thoughts into cinquains, a poetic form consisting of five lines, in which each line follows a specific pattern in syllables or parts of speech. The cinquain, as a contemporary poetic device, is attributed to poet Adelaide Crapsey,¹ who was raised in Rochester NY only a few short steps away from Susan B. Anthony's home and the 1848 Convention in Seneca Falls. Crapsey's origins, both to geography and the cinquain form, hold symbolic ground to the power of place that is upstate NY and the fight for women's rights. The cinquain patterns that we employed in our roundtable used word groupings or parts of speech and were structured to rest on a closing statement extracted from of the 1848 *Declaration of Sentiments*, which we use as a textual bridge from one cinquain to the next. The two Cinquain patterns that we suggested to our participants follow:

Pattern One

- Line One: One Word
- Line Two: Two words
- Line Three: Three Words
- Line Four: Four Words
- Line Five: One Word

Pattern Two

- Line One: A noun as subject
- Line Two: Two adjectives describing subject
- Line Three: Three "ing" words related to subject
- Line Four: Phrase describing feelings about subject
- Line Five: Single word synonym for the noun in line one

Choosing one of these two patterns, groups composed cinquains that considered their experiences with and/or reactions to circumstances of sex education, motherhood, gender identity, bodies and reproduction, political solidarity, and/or tensions between East and West relations as topics

¹ For additional information on Adelaide Crapsey, see University of Rochester Library Bulletin: Adelaide Crapsey, "An Unconscious Imagist" at <http://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/4039>

couched in feminist theory prompted in our manifesto readings. The dialogue roundtable closed with a recitation of cinquains, performed and recorded by session participants.

Orchestrated into a “2016 Declaration of Sentiments,” this collective enactment of poetic manifestos translates into ways imagery and word-making can serve as acts of resistance to dominant “lean-in” ideologies that reproduce gender inequality practices. We leverage the phrase “lean in” from the SFD conference theme and in critique of Sheryl Sandberg’s lean in business model for gender equality, which asks women to negotiate boardroom and bedroom with men as means to get ahead. As critics argue,² Sandberg’s *Lean In* overlooks the many systematic barriers that prevent women’s career advancement. Echoing many liberal-minded feminists before her, Sandberg’s gender equality lens privileges middle to upper class couples as opposed to queer or single mothers going it alone. Despite women entering the workforce en-masse, societal expectations still demand that women shoulder the lion’s share of domestic responsibilities while navigating a tensioned duality of home and work. We resist this *do-less-but-negotiate-more* pitch for feminist agency, which is deployed in a heteropatriarchal context. Moreover, we write in opposition to liberal feminist paradigms that merely redistribute the patriarchal pie as means for gender parity. In words and lines, from gender fluidity to liberated nipples to GaGa politics, we seek formation of an entirely new pie that might not be a pie at all.

Our “2016 Declaration,” in its parts and the composite of voices as a whole, inspires dialogue on ways to lean out of Sandberg’s market platform for gender equality. In our “2016 Declaration,” words act to disrupt comfort while tone acts to invigorate unrest. Indeed, if the 1848 *Declaration* functioned to unsettle, and if it is, as Clinton (1998) asserted, a document about the future, our “2016 Declaration” makes clear that the

² For *Lean In* critique examples see <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/sheryl-sandbergs-divisive-pitch-to-leanintogether> or https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2014/02/25/recline-dont-lean-in-why-i-hate-sheryl-sandberg/?utm_term=.4783fe0cc077

More recently, Sandberg critiques her own *Lean In* argument: <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/05/sheryl-sandberg-admits-its-hard-for-a-single-mom-to-lean-in>

struggle for women’s rights lives on, and that diversity in person, place, and experience across this struggle resonates in its message. Elizabeth Cady Stanton said of women’s movements, “we are sowing winter wheat, which the coming spring will see sprout and which others hands than ours will reap (“Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed” 302), conveying a sense of how changing seasons renew opportunities for response. The history of women’s movements illustrates “centuries-old patterns of call and response.” The original 1848 *Declaration of Sentiments* closes our piece, a reminder of the words that brought us to meet in Seneca Falls then, now, and, as inspired by our “2016 Disrupting the Lean,” for years to follow.

“2016 DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS”

“Down with the D”

Disruption

Dismantle Norms

Destroy the Patriarchy

Damn your oppressive views

Declare.

*We hold these truths to be self-evident;*³

“Flipping the Script”

Masculinity

Butch, femme

Disrupting. Constraining. Changing.

Different people multiple meanings

Femininity

*He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life;*⁴

“Humanity at work”

Equality

³ Authored by Melissa Brown, Audrey Lai, Brooke Love, Brooke Ophardt, Maggie Rosen, Tambria Schroeder

⁴ Authored by Veronica Price, Susan Iverson

Fair, humane
Representing, evolving, being
We, as one, deserve justice, for all
Unity

*Such has been the sufferance of the women under this government,
and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand
the equal station to which they are entitled;*⁵

“Agitate, Educate, Organize”

Exploitation
Beaten, Over-Worked
Stealing, Organizing, Fighting
Global solidarity or global devastation
Parasite

*He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she
earns;*⁶

“In Praise of Titties” or “Let My Nipples Go”

Breast
Western Breast
Bra-Caged Udders
Uttering to be Free
Open

*He has taken from her all right to property;*⁷

“Us”

What
Does it
Mean to say
Western women are saviors
How?

⁵ Authored by Fanny

⁶ Authored by Ritchie

⁷ Authored by Rachel Campbell, Sidnee McDonald, Mona Polacca, Elizabeth Ursic

*We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights;*⁸

“From Russia with Love”

West

Eastern, Western.

Opening, Accepting, Interacting

East-West, Home is Best

Tolerance

*That all men and women were created equal.*⁹

⁸ Authored by Brittany Sheldon, Marilyn Tedeschi

⁹ Authored by Svetlana, Tanya, Elena, Sasha visiting from Veliky Novgorod Russia

APPENDIX

DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS (1848)

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 and of nature's God 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 and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator 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 were 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 the women 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 woman, having in direct

object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men † both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

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. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master - the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, 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.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and

distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known. He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies, which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disenfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, - in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

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 Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.¹⁰

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¹⁰ See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *A History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (Rochester, N.Y.: Fowler and Wells, 1889), pp 70-71.

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