

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (seated) and Susan B. Anthony.



“The prejudice against color, of which we hear so much, is no stronger than that against sex. It is produced by the same cause, and manifested very much in the same way.”

—Elizabeth Cady Stanton

HEY, LIZZIE

This vote's for you

I would like to have been aboard the ship that carried Elizabeth to London. I imagine the sea spray misting her face as she opened the door to the cabin that she shared with her husband, Henry. It was 1840 and the newlyweds were sailing toward the World's Anti-Slavery Convention. It would take roughly 62 days to cross the Atlantic. Elizabeth and Henry had fallen in love while they were both deeply involved in the American abolitionist movement. She was upbeat, outspoken, educated and a very independent woman for her time. Her long-sleeved dress and high-buttoned collar concealed a woman who didn't want to be constrained. The day she married her husband she promised to love and to honor him, but she asked the minister to remove the words “to obey” from her wedding vow. She believed that no person should ever be the property of another, so she refused to be called “Mrs. Henry Stanton” and insisted on keeping her maiden name of Cady. For the record and for the rest of her life, she was known as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her full name is now on the wall of the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, N.Y.

Maybe you've never heard of such a place, but the National Women's Hall of Fame traces its roots to Elizabeth's voyage to London. While in Great Britain, Elizabeth befriended Lucretia Mott, who was also a delegate to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention. Like Elizabeth, this American mother and Quaker minister had sailed the seas and was eager to cast

her vote calling for an end to slavery. But, as the two women bustled through the convention in their bonnets and hoop skirts, the men rebelled. They forbade the women delegates from voting, saying female enfranchisement would make the world event “ridiculous.” Well, it was ridiculous and hurtful. And both Elizabeth and Lucretia were indignant.

Over the next eight years, Elizabeth and Lucretia raised children — Elizabeth had seven in all — but, the two passionate mothers kept in touch. Their letters poured out their frustration at a society that would deny women the basic rights of citizenship.

So, they called a convention of their own. They organized the nation's first women's rights conference in July 1848 in Seneca Falls. Elizabeth, who was now 32 years old, had written a document called the “Declaration of Sentiments” demanding that the rights of women be acknowledged and respected by society. It called for an end of man's tyranny over woman, declared her right to own property, asked that women be held accountable for their own decisions and insisted that women be granted their inherent right to vote. Sixty-eight women and 32 men signed it. News of the convention spread and similar conferences on women's rights reached across the nation. It took a civil war, 72 years, protests, arrests and a constitutional amendment, but women earned the right to vote in 1920.

Elizabeth had envisioned the right of women to vote, but she didn't live long

enough to see the 19th Amendment pass. But, if she could have looked into the future, I think she would have blinked. In 2006, the U.S. Census showed that only 36.8 percent of Utah's voting-age women cast ballots. Blink. Twenty-seven percent of us said we skipped voting because we were too busy. Blink. Blink. And guess what? Utah came last in the nation for voting participation. Sigh.

This November is an important election. It's when we'll choose the next president of the United States. But really, all elections are important because it is our chance to use the words of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and “declare our sentiments.” If you don't do it for yourself as a rights-bearing woman, please do it for Lizzie. ww



by **Rebecca Cressman** FM100 Morning Show Cohost

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