

Feminist Abolitionism and its Ostensible Paradox in Mid-Nineteenth Century America

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident:
that all men and women are created equal”*

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton

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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is on reasoning of the white advocates of women's rights at the time of the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era. The advocates for women's rights were collaborating with the abolitionist movement because they both were suffering from white supremacy. White women were often confined to the private sphere and suffered from the patriarchal norms in the society. The suffragists had become social reformers for the slavery cause and they actively fought for emancipation. When the Civil War had come to an end, the American political system was going to be restructured because the war had changed hierarchies and conventions. It was a window of opportunity for previously excluded groups to step in the political arena. Both the women's rights movement and the black rights movement started to prioritize their own gain and started to agitate for voting rights. The considerations of Congress about the Reconstruction Amendments proved that Congress was more open for voting rights for black men than it was to voting rights for women. When this was noticed by the suffragists, some of them started to engage with harmful rhetoric that often included racist sentiments and they made alliances with notoriously racist historical figures. Not many scholars have explored this ostensible racism at length, instead, they confirm its existence and provide an often limited theory to explain it. This thesis aims to examine the hearts and minds of the suffragists from the very beginning of the collaboration to its split in the Reconstruction Era and thus explores the origins of their ostensible racism. Other scholars' theories are analyzed and I come up with a restored view at the end. I suggest that instead of the racism being a matter on its own, it should be looked at with the reasoning of the suffragists in mind. They desperately wanted to prevent a new confirmation of male domination and their belligerency made them relentless.

Keywords: *Civil War, Reconstruction Era, Reconstruction Amendments, Abolitionists, Suffragists, Suffrage, Racism*

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Introduction

“Although this may remain a question for politician to wrangle over for five or then years, the black man is still, in a political point of view, far above the educated women of the country. The representative when of the nation have done their uttermost for the last thirty years to secure freedom for the negro, and so long as he was lowest in the scale of being we were willing to press his claim; but now, as the celestial gate to civil rights is slowly moving on its hinges, it becomes a serious question whether we had better stand aside and see “sambo” walk into the kingdom first. As self-preservation is the first law of nature, would it not be wiser to keep our lamps trimmed and burning, and when the constitutional door is open, avail ourselves of the strong arm and blue uniform of the black soldier to walk in by his side, and thus make the gap so wide that no privileged class could ever again close it against the humblest citizen of the republic? “This is the negro’s hour.” Are we sure that he, once entrenched in all his inalienable rights, may not be an added power to hold us at bay? Have not “black male citizens” been heard to say they doubted the wisdom of extending the right of suffrage to women? Why would the African prove more just and generous than his Saxon compeers? In fact, it is better to be the slave of an educated white man, than of a degraded, ignorant black one”.

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton in a letter to the *New York Standard* in December, 1865

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a middle-aged woman with curly hair and determined eyes, wrote this letter when her country just had started recovering from a horrendous war. Not many months before she wrote this, she felt victorious because the Civil War had come to an end the slaves were freed. At this point, however, she felt afraid. Afraid that the newly freed slaves would get rights she herself does not have, and never had. She expresses herself by using a rhetoric clearly influenced by Nineteenth-Century racism. She talks about ‘Sambo’, which is harmful stereotypical imagery to describe African Americans, and about her distrust in the competence of the former slave population to vote. This woman was one of the pioneers of a collaborative movement for women’s rights and black rights. It may sound counterintuitive to a modern reader that someone who initially was a passionate abolitionist would espouse such openly racist attitudes. It is complicated to clarify the rationale of Stanton and of the other women of the women’s rights movement concerning this harmful rhetoric they engaged in after the Civil War. Why did they start working against the black rights movement when their collaboration seemed sound and valid? The focus of my thesis will be on this ostensible paradox of the women’s rights movement: they put much effort in gaining universal suffrage, including African Americans, but when black men *did* gain suffrage they withdrew their support. My thesis will explore the rationale of the white women’s rights movement concerning their connection with the anti-slavery movement, which will offer insight into their split in the Reconstruction Era and its corresponding paradox.

I will examine the ostensible paradox by looking through a different perspective.

Instead of confirming the existence of racism in the movement based on events, I will dig deeper in the hearts and minds of the suffragists from the very beginning of the female abolitionist movement. This way, I attempt to reconstruct a restored view on their change in attitude concerning the support of voting rights for African American men.

In order to understand the underlying principles of the connection between the two movements, I will examine how African Americans were perceived by the women's movement. This will not only help to answer my main question but it will also help to understand the dynamics between social movements and its (im)possibility of unifying in general. This is not only relevant for understanding our past, but this knowledge might also be applied to the very same social movements that still exist today.

The newly freed slaves and white women were, to some extent, in the same position when the Civil War had come to an end. Their status in the American society was not as clear as it was before because the war had disorganized existing hierarchies. When the War commenced, many men went to the front but the industry in the North had to be sustained. As a consequence, women stepped out of the private sphere into the public sphere (Massey 40; Faulkner 181; Simpson 136). They replaced their husbands in the manufacturing industry and they sustained the land in the North to maintain the agriculture industry (Massey 142). While their husbands were gone, women became heads of the household and they assured that there was enough money to feed the family (Whites 10, Massey 40). Women also stepped into the public sphere by establishing the US sanitary commission to treat wounded Union soldiers in the field (Ford 388; Massey 187). When the war came to an end, women did not want to step back again into the private sphere. They hoped that, now they had proven their capabilities, they could have a role in national politics too. The two causes had promising similarities but this was allegedly not a guarantee for a harmonious collaborative movement.

The relationship between the advocates for women's rights and the advocates for black rights is a complex one for several reasons. One reason is that it involves many important historical figures who constantly shaped the collaboration, like abolitionists Frederick Douglass and William Garrison. A second one is that the collaboration was actively being shaped by external factors since the American society was going through drastic changes in the glory days of the collaboration. A horrendous Civil War broke out and slavery was abolished. It thus makes sense that the collaboration was internally changing too over the course of the collaboration. This is why it is important for my thesis to elaborately discuss the entire course of the collaborative movement.

There are certain scholars who did extensive research on this topic who will be important for my thesis. Faye Dudden is the author of *Fighting Chance*, a landmark book about the women's rights movement during the time of the Civil War. She concludes that the women were *not* fundamentally racist and that the harmful rhetoric in the Reconstruction era just stems from pure frustration about missing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They were deprived of money by Wendell Phillips and they were forced to make alliances that seemed to confirm their racist ideas if they wanted to continue their own agitation.

A. Davis, the author of *Women, Race & Class*, has a completely different perspective. She argues that "there was a strong element of political naïveté"(74) in the rationale of the women's movement. According to her, Stanton and Anthony did not understand the political system and that they just did not realize that suffrage for women was 'ahead of its time'.

Marilley, who wrote about 'the origins of liberal feminism in the United States' describes the concept of tactical racism. She believes that the harmful rhetoric of the women's movement was constructed to appeal to the powerful white men who were going to have to make the decisions. They obviously had the best chance to persuade men who already opposed the idea of black suffrage that *they* should get voting rights instead of black men: Democrats.

Lastly, Poirot did extensive research to Stanton's rhetoric and he argues that the concept of racism that we know nowadays should not just be applied to the Reconstruction era. According to him, Stanton did not believe that black men could have the vote sooner than the women simply because they never had an education and because they were an oppressed people. He argues that, according to Stanton, "certain humans were better equipped, intellectually and morally, to participate in public life" (21). She did not discriminate them because of their human bodies but because of their social history. The current scholarly debate and its implications will be extensively discussed in chapter three.

Methodology

My analysis is based on secondary sources, scholarly books and academic articles, and on primary sources that include oratory and memoirs. I will most heavily rely on books that are written by scholars about how the organized women's suffrage movement came into existence in the period of the Civil War and the Reconstruction era, and on books that focus on the historical figures who are important for my thesis. A book that is significant for my research is *Fighting Chance* by Dudden, because she offers an extensive theoretical framework concerning the white advocates for women's rights in the Civil War era and their attitude. She elaborately discusses their fight for suffrage and how their rhetoric and decisions were shaped by specific circumstances, like monetary issues or the opposition they encountered from Congress. Another important book that functions as a foundation for my research is *Women, Race and Class* by A. Davis. She elaborately discusses the dynamics between the women's movement and the abolitionist movement in the Mid-Nineteenth Century. She explains the birth of the women's rights movement in the abolitionist movement and also devotes attention to its racism. I also thought it was important that the scholars whose literature I used somehow gave attention to the reasoning of the individuals that matter for my thesis, and that they provide theories about the origins of ostensible racist sentiments, even though when they have limitations. With 'the reasoning of the individuals' I essentially imply how the white women's rights advocates felt and thought about the collaborative movement. These insights into their incentives are indispensable when attempting to account for the discussed paradox.

It is important to then take the limitations of my research into consideration. All accounts for the incentives, thoughts, and ideas of the women's rights advocates drawn from these books must be speculative, since no one can be sure about how they felt during a particular period of time. However, it is necessary to try and to come as close as possible because it is important for the completeness and accuracy of the collective memory of the women's rights movement.

I am going to examine the connection between the abolitionists and the white women's rights movement from the perspective of how the women's rights advocates perceived the African American race. In the period before the Civil War, I will do this by examining the incentives women had to be liberators of the enslaved population. In the period after the Civil War, I will especially examine this by taking a closer look at the rhetoric of one of the pioneer advocates for women's rights, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In the last section, I will discuss the scholarly debate about the rationale of the women's rights advocates concerning the African American race in this particular

period. Based on what I have examined, I will attempt to suggest my own unique view on the perceived racism of the white women's rights movement by examining how the African American race conveyed meaning to the women's rights advocates. In general, I will take a close look at the political arrangements, situations and individuals and their rhetoric that defined the coalition between the two social movements and try to account for the seemingly changed attitude by the female advocates towards the African American race.

Chapter 1: The involvement of white women in the abolition of slavery before the Civil War.

In this first chapter, I will take a close look at the different explanations for the establishment of a connection between the advocates for women's rights and the anti-slavery movement. It is important to explore why the connection was established in the first place to find out what the underlying principles were of the discussed collaborative movement and to later take a closer look at its ostensible paradox. I will show how white women came in touch with the slavery cause and why they were willing to become social reformers.

Grimké sisters & Garrisonian Abolitionism

One of the earliest linkages between abolitionism and women's rights was made by the Grimké sisters. The Grimké sisters were daughters of Southern plantation owners who were also holding slaves. They witnessed the cruel practice of holding slaves their entire lives and they slowly had developed anti-slavery sentiments. They moved to Philadelphia and they became a part of the Quaker community, a Christian denomination that believes in the equal creation of all people by God. The Quaker community also had liberal views on gender equality, which facilitated their agitation for both abolition and women's rights (Jordan 47; Marilley 20). They started to organize public gatherings throughout Massachusetts in which they spoke about the atrocities of slavery and the significance of its abolition (A. Davis 44). They spoke not only to women but also to men. This was considered shocking since giving speeches in public was a practice what was not supposed to be executed by women (Dudden 4; Ford 123). In as early as in 1837, Angelina Grimké wrote 'an appeal to the women of the nominally free states' in which she expresses her dissatisfaction regarding the criticism they drew: "we (..) cannot concede the position, that because this is a political subject women ought to fold their hands in idleness, and close their eyes and ears to the 'horrible things' that are practiced in our land. The denial of our duty to act is a bold denial of our right to act; and if we have no right to act, then may we well be termed 'the white slaves of the North'" (A. Davis 44). This indicates that they recognized the similar position of women and blacks in the racist patriarchal society of their time and that this also "nurtured and perpetuated (..) the continued existence of the slave system" (A. Davis 44), which were incentives for them to be social

reformers. They firmly believed that taking part in the abolitionist movement as a woman was inseparable with the fight for women's rights.

In the years of the Grimké sisters, women's involvement in abolitionism was a religious effort. Dubois describes how the rise of the Garrisonian wing of abolitionism in the late 1830s reinforced the secularizing of the abolitionism movement" (33; Jordan 6) . William Garrison was an abolitionist who believed that institutions like the state were 'the source of the sin' instead of individuals (Dubois 33). Garrisonian abolitionism explains how the activities of women who were active in abolitionism started to be secular too. Dubois claims that *'The clergy was the major force that controlled women's moral energies and kept pietistic activism from becoming political activism. Garrisonian anticlericalism was therefore critical to the emergence of abolitionist feminism and its subsequent development in the women's rights movement'* (33). Dubois is essentially saying that the power of clerical authority prevented women to take part in the abolitionist discourse in the political field.

She further argues that Garrisonian abolitionism enabled them to hold onto their religious beliefs but at the same time supported them to summon churches as institutionalized support systems of slavery and the oppression of women. Women got used to doing something that prominent individuals, like the clergy, did not agree with. This adaptation to going against the establishment fueled the women's rights movement. Garrisonian abolitionism provided the women's rights movement with a philosophical basis that comprehends the belief that every human being is morally equal (36). Dubois then claims that the women's rights movement copied the strategy of Garrisonian abolitionism, which can be defined as the agitation for change of public sentiment rather than the agitation for a change in institutional structures (38). However, I think that it should be noted that it is also possible that even though women's rights activists were considerably active trying to make a change in people's minds, they simply did not try to immediately influence politics because of the absence of its possibility, not because of the absence of willingness. We will later see that as soon as a possibility of influencing politics came in sight, which was just after the Civil War, they immediately went for it. The appeal of abolitionist feminism can thus partly be explained by its evangelical origins.

White women and their own oppression

Another reason for the willingness of women to become social reformers is the oppression they themselves experienced. Scholar Nancy F. Cott describes 'the bonds of womanhood': organized gatherings of women in New England from 1780 to 1835. Women already had started to

challenge their traditional position by pursuing ‘the widest range of interests and activities they could imagine without calling into question the whole notion of woman’s sphere’ (21, Dubois). However, In the dozen years before the Civil War, the women’s rights movement developed like never before. Dubois claims that this can be explained by two phenomena. The first one is that women started to feel more frustrated about their subordinate position and the second one is the emergence of reform politics that came along with the sentiment of abolitionism. During the industrialization of the economy, many white women, who were not working in the factories, began to feel as if they were not of that much worth because of the limitations they experienced in the domestic sphere. Before, they helped their husbands doing labor at their houses but the industrialization moved the labor from the home to the factory, and women became confined to their homes with less essential domestic labor to do. They started to feel useless and restless because they were confined to their homes while taking care of the household. They were generally mothers and wives and they were not allowed to play any role in the public sphere. There were even women who described their confinement as a form of slavery because they felt exploited by their husbands and the conventions of the American society. A number of the privileged group of women were slightly bored with their unsatisfying lives and they had much free time to overthink their perceived oppression and the brutal oppression of the slave population (Massey 142). Becoming social reformers was an interesting and demanding distraction for them (Massey 40; Faulkner 181). They saw possibilities in protesting white-supremacy by joining the abolitionist movement.

One could argue that the awareness of women about their limited domestic sphere led them to the antislavery movement in which they could play a part. However, the connection between the two movements remains debatable among scholars. Several historians, for example A. Davis and Dudden, have assumed that women discovered their own oppression by noticing similarities between their oppression and that of slaves, in the light of white male supremacy. Dubois, however, claims that women's awareness of their subordinate position is ‘as much cause as effect’ of their engagement with abolitionism. According to Dubois, they did not necessarily learn about their oppression because of the antislavery movement, but instead they learned how to cast their discontent into a political movement (32).

I find Dubois’ theory most convincing since I think it is likely that there would not have been an organized women’s rights movement around the fifties if there had not been an organized anti-slavery movement. Already unhappy about their circumstances, women learnt that there was a possibility to go against the establishment.

Shared maternal instincts

A. Davis adds another reason why the slavery cause appealed to white women. She explains that white women who joined the anti-slavery movement were mostly horrified by the stories they heard about sexual assaults on Black women (31). Some sort of simplified concept was constructed in which white women could identify themselves with black female slaves. White women liked to, in a way, feel connected to the slave mothers since they shared the notion of motherhood and the Christian faith. Slave mothers, however, developed traits different than white women because of their horrendous experiences as being a slave. Slave owners did not perceive or treat slave mothers as mothers, or women for that matter, but as breeders of the slave population. A. Davis claims that the notion of female slaves mostly being house servants is untrue, instead, they were just like their men mostly fieldworkers (5). Most of the time, the masters reminded slave women of their femaleness only while sexual assaulting them.

For white women, however, it seemed as if they shared mythical conceptions that came along with femaleness and motherhood. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by female abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, which came out in 1852, rallied many women to abolitionism. The central female figure in the text is a black slave mother, who is an equivalent to white mothers at the time. She is fragile, gentle, maternal, and has a strong Christian moral. Davis explains that she does not show much hatred for the institution of slavery, but instead decides to run away 'just because' her son was about to be sold (32). She did not decide to search for freedom because of the horrendous experience of being a slave or the fact that her children were going to be exposed to the institution too, but because she simply does not want her son to leave her: 'stronger than all was maternal love, wrought into a paroxysm of frenzy by the near approaches of a fearful danger' (72). It is safe to assume that this is an oversimplified story of female slaves, of which many stories exist who fought and ran away because of their unwillingness to accept the institution they were a part of. They ran away with their children, not only because of the possibility that they were going to be separate but because of the general injustices of the institution of slavery. White women, however, were, understandably, deeply impressed by the strong sense of relatable motherhood that is conveyed from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and it is plausible that it triggered many women to stand up for their 'black sisters' (Davis 33). Women's maternal instincts provided a natural basis for anti-slavery sentiments among white women.

In this chapter, we have seen that there were several incentives for women to become abolitionists before the Civil War: because of religious origins, because of a mutual feeling of

oppression, because of their desires to step out of the private sphere and because they believed they shared the maternal instinct with the slave mothers. This was important to discover because it provides us with information that is needed in order to explore the rationale of these women's rights advocates. Based on these findings, we can conclude that there was a notion of heartfelt willingness among these early female abolitionists to stand up for the slave population.

Chapter 2: The factual construction of the connection between the white advocates for women's rights and the anti-slavery movement.

In chapter one we have seen that there were multiple incentives to organize an equal rights movement which had to function as a collaboration between the advocates for women's rights and the advocates for abolition (and later black rights). In order to get more insight into the principles of this coalition, and in the rationale of the suffragists, it has to be clear what exactly happened when the equal rights movement got structured and became organized. Many scholarly books are written about the entire course of the collaboration of the movements. However, I will only describe the pivotal moments and events that shaped the collaboration since these will be important to explore the rationale of the suffragists. I chose these pivotal moments and events based on its significant participants like Stanton, Anthony and Douglass and their meaningful consequences for the movement. This chapter thus also functions as a time line.

Before the Civil War

In 1840, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton traveled along with their husbands to London, England to participate in the World Anti-Slavery Convention as representatives of the American Anti Slavery Society. This was the first meeting of the anti slavery societies. The abolitionist men debated almost the entire first day of the Convention about whether or not the four American women who had shown up could participate in the debate (A. Davis 48; Dubois 41). The majority vote decided that they could not, so they had to be only spectators in the gallery. Garrison felt like he could not join if the women could not join, so he gave up his seat and also became 'a silent listener' (A. Davis 48). The recognition of the women by some of the abolitionist men made them discover some confirmation of positive outcomes of, for example, Mott's earlier struggles against the supremacy of white men (A. Davis 47). The conversation Stanton had with Mott that opening day of the Convention that was described by Stanton herself in her *history of woman*

suffrage, was a significant moment (Flexner 69; A. Davis 46). It is stated by A. Davis that this conversation was the birth of the structured women's movement in the United States and that it has a somewhat 'legendary significance' (50). The fact that they were excluded from participating in a Convention that was so close to their hearts (mostly to Mott, since she was there as a delegate; Stanton was there mostly as the wife of her abolitionist husband) made them realize something that the Grimké sisters already had discovered: there was no way that women could play a part in the struggle against slavery if they did not fight against white male supremacy for the sake of themselves.

At the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which was organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton because they thought it was time for public agitation for women's rights, it was determined that the best way to claim their rights was to appropriate the language of the Declaration of Independence: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women were created equal*" (Mieder 6; Dudden 5). The women were not saying to the American society that they should change their ideas, but that they should live up to their ideas that should already exist because this is what was truly meant with the Constitution. It was the start of the organized public agitation for woman's rights in the Nineteenth Century and it was hoped that it would initiate a larger movement for women's rights (Dubois 23). Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed that it was the right time to express their hope for voting rights for women. Mott, among others, thought that claiming suffrage was too radical and that no one was going to take them seriously if they expressed this idea (Dudden 5, A. Davis 50). However, famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who participated in the Seneca Falls Convention, was one of the people who thought it was a good idea to claim suffrage for women at that point, even though the press and the vast majority of the society thought it was absurd because it was rather radical and a goal that was not yet articulated in the public sphere (Fought 152; Dudden 5). Douglass' attendance and his approval are significant for the course of the collaboration between the two movements because he was an already famous abolitionist and it thus set the precedent of a long collaboration between their two causes (Dudden 22)

During the Civil War

When the Civil War commenced in 1860, Stanton and the women suffrage advocates shifted their attention to ending slavery because they realized that they had to put the agitation for their own rights on hold (Dudden 8). Not just because there was not so much attention from the society for their cause anymore, but also because they themselves realized that emancipation deserved all of

their focus, now changes were likely going to happen. They raised their political activity for the abolition cause by gathering petitions for the abolition of slavery which were presented to Congress by Senator Charles Sumner (Dudden, 65). They also thought that President Lincoln was not radical enough about emancipation because he took too long to make decisions and he was not explicit enough about abolishing slavery as a war aim. In the Presidential election of 1864, Stanton and Anthony tried to replace Lincoln by Fremont, who used to be the first Republican party candidate for the Presidency in 1856, since they believed that he was more radical (Dudden).

In 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which changed the war. The abolitionist movement was obviously cheerful, but at the same time acknowledged the shortcomings of the document. It only freed the slaves in the rebellion states and it was an executive order instead of a Constitutional Amendment, which implies that its consequences were limited. This is the point in the war itself where Stanton and Anthony raised their political activity concerning abolition and at the same time, women's rights.

New voluntary organizations that were called 'Loyal Leagues' were established by abolitionists who realized that their fight was not over yet. They had to find more moral support in the North for the definite abolishment of slavery. Stanton and Anthony decided to establish their own league: the Women's Loyal National League, which Dudden calls 'renewed activism' (51). At this point, these women started to become political players by agitating for the Thirteenth Amendment (Faulkner 181; Simpson 151). Many prominent individuals of the women's rights movement were at the founding meeting of the women's League like Lucy Stone and Angelina Grimké (A. Davis 68). They had drafted several resolutions and resolution five linked abolition and women's rights. It states: "The property, the liberty and the lives of all slaves, all citizens of African descent, and all women are placed at the mercy of a legislation in which they are not represented (..) There never can be a true peace in this Republic until the civil and political equality of every subject of the Government shall be practically established" (15 Dickinson). They essentially define emancipation in an expanded manner; emancipation of the slave population should also imply equal rights for everyone, crossing the lines of both race and gender. Susan B. Anthony strengthened the resolution by stating that in a true democracy, everyone should have the right to be represented (Dudden 51). They again started to petition for a Constitutional Amendment. Dudden stipulates that this campaign *only* had as a goal the freedom of the slave population, not legal rights for either African Americans or themselves (52).

During the Civil War, the suffragists put the agitation for the emancipation of slavery first. For my research, it is interesting to examine the incentives of the suffragists to do this. It is

plausible that the suffragists, who had been abolitionists for years, knew that change was happening and that there was a real window of opportunity for slaves to be freed. In their hearts and minds, they wanted to help to agitate for this morally justified cause. At the same time, A. Davis, Dudden, and Marilley suggest that the suffragists were aware about the idea that when slavery was going to be abolished, women would probably receive more legal rights because they had put efforts in a noble cause. If this is true, their abolitionist efforts could all be deemed tactical. I suggest it is not as black-white as it may seem, and that there is a combination of heartfelt and tactical abolition. The suffragists considered abolition significant because then they would be closer to a society with social justice for all.

Immediately after the war

With the war over in 1865 and the slave population being emancipated, the women's rights movement regained the focus on their own goals. Dudden explains why. She claims that political movements need three elements in order to successfully bring about change concerning the social movement theory. They need arguments, resources and political opportunity (61). Over the years the women's rights advocates had constructed compelling arguments which were mostly based on their devotion to the Union and its liberation of the slave population. However, it was troublesome for the early women's movement in the early fifties to possess enough financial resources to pay for their speakers, print petitions and distribute newspapers. This was due to the property rights that existed back then, which prohibited women of having any property. Everything they had was officially owned by their husbands, even the clothes they were wearing, and they could not keep their earnings (Ford 124). The movement's most important supporters, other women, could not easily find a way to financially support the movement because of these laws. These laws were obviously heavily criticized by the movement. Fortunately, on the eve of the Civil War, two wealthy abolitionist men from Boston, Francis Jackson and Charles Hovey, appointed committees of trustees which provided the movement with enough money to campaign. It was decided that Wendell Philips was going to be the head of the trustees, so he had the power to decide where the money would be allocated. This came at exactly the right time since the future of the barely organized women's movement with no funding did not look bright (Dudden 23).

Again, it is debatable here whether or not the suffragists had anticipated on the idea that they might receive money from wealthy abolitionists as long as they agitated for both causes. The last element they needed, according to the social movement theory, was opportunity. The Reconstruction period offered the women a once in a lifetime opportunity. The Civil War was over and the political system

was breaking open. The political arrangements were going to be restructured and this was the moment for outsiders to step in.

With the abolishment of slavery but without any legal rights for the former slave population, activists were wondering what would work best to achieve social justice. This is the point where two different movements came into existence because they had different ideas about the answer to this question: should activists go for one thing at a time or should they go big? Stanton was convinced that the best way to gain social justice for everyone was to claim suffrage for both black men and women, to 'claim the uttermost' (Dudden 73; Stanton 87). She reasoned that, when claiming the uttermost, at least *something* will be attained. It seems that Stanton still thought that suffrage for only black men or only for women was an advancement at this point. It is also possible that she realized that the only way women were getting the vote at this point was by collaborating with the anti-slavery movement, because, quite rightly, she might have thought that they themselves on their own were not getting anything.

Unfortunately for the women's movement, some radical abolitionists were not convinced that 'claiming the uttermost' was the best strategy. Wendell Philips, one of the most prominent radical abolitionist, declared after the Civil War that it was the 'negro's hour' (Ginzberg 12; Dudden 62; A.Davis 75). He used to be a good friend of Stanton and Anthony but was persuaded that all focus should be on the agitation for suffrage for black men. They essentially did not care about whether or not women were getting the vote, but they *did* care about whether or not it would damage the likelihood of getting the vote themselves. Wendell Philips decided the strategy of the radical abolitionists after the war, and he was convinced that fighting for suffrage for both women and black men was going to damage the outcome for black men (Dudden, 62). He thought that it was simply too much they were asking for in the national political system. He believed that social justice could be reached best by making baby steps that were ultimately going to result in justice for all. Philips further believed that slavery was not really abolished until the former slave population would get the vote. According to him, freedom did not mean anything without having any rights. As a result, Phillips, who was the head of the Hovey trust fund, deprived Stanton and Anthony of the fund (Dudden, 64).

In 1866, Stanton and Anthony felt that they had to establish a new formal organization to agitate for universal rights since they had lost the support of the President of the Anti-Slavery Society, Wendell Philips. The new organization was called the American Equal Rights Association and its president was Lucretia Mott, who was denied to participate in the Anti-Slavery Convention in London around twenty years earlier. (Ginzberg 119; Dudden 10; Bank 2). Other prominent

members that already had been active in the abolitionist and women's movement were Abby Kelley Foster, Lucy Stone, and her husband Henry Blackwell. Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, an African-American female abolitionist, spoke at the founding convention which also was the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention. They did not have any funds, but they *did* have the support of Frederick Douglass. He even became the Vice President of the AERA. Douglass absolutely believed that suffrage for black men was a priority at this point, but that did not mean that women should be encouraged to stop agitating for their goal (Ginzberg 123; Epps 144).

Fourteenth Amendment

While both movements were trying to figure out the right ways to campaign, Congress was struggling with finding the right language to construct the Fourteenth Amendment. Wendell Phillips tried to persuade Stanton and Anthony to temporarily forget about the 'women's issue' but instead to focus on the vote for black men. The women, however, could not be persuaded and knew that this was the right time to raise their political activity. Especially Elizabeth Cady Stanton was highly educated and experienced in political matters and she was not going to let somebody tell her what the best strategy was. Dudden explains that, at this point, the women had constructed a three-ponged approach (76). There was an opportunity to claim suffrage for women's rights at the state level by means of the New York Constitutional Convention. Secondly, at the federal level, there was a need for preventing the word 'male' to be used in the Fourteenth Amendment. Congress was considering to put the word 'male' into the Amendment in order to clarify that 'universal voting rights' for all male citizens (also African American males) of the United States were established with the Amendment. Lastly, the women believed that they could as well try to establish voting rights for women too in the new amendment, in the light of 'claiming the uttermost'. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton spent Christmas 1865 writing and copying a petition to prevent the gendered language from being added to the Constitution (Free 105). They had learned how to successfully petition in the past and they knew its possible large impact.

The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868. Section one states that: "all persons born or naturalized in the United States (..) are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside", which officials makes the newly freed slaves in American civilians. The Amendment further rules in section two that all states that deny a man the right to vote will be penalized, which will ultimately have consequences concerning their representation in Congress. Even though it does not explicitly grant voting rights to African American men, it was a promising step in the right direction for the radical abolitionists (Faulkner 191).

Stanton and Anthony had actively tried to prevent a word in the Amendment that does discriminate gender. They hoped that they could turn the word 'male' into 'persons'. They lobbied to copperhead James Brook to, in his turn, persuade Congressman Thaddeus Stevens to draft a proposal of the Amendment including the word 'persons' instead of 'male'. Sadly for the suffragists, the Senate turned the proposal down and the Fourteenth Amendment was incorporated in the American Constitution including the word 'male' (Dudden 77).

The black rights movement was, just like the suffragists, not satisfied with the Amendment for clear reasons. The voting rights of African American men were not explicitly protected and Douglass was furious: *"To tell me that I am an equal American citizen, and, in the same breath, tell me that my right to vote may be constitutionally taken from me by some other equal citizen (..), is to tell me that my citizenship is but an empty name"*(Epps, 244). Douglass makes clear that even though the former slave population was official American civilians now, they still had no explicit voting rights. The suffragists were disappointed about their loss, but they noticed the progress they had made. It was discussed at the federal level whether or not there should be voting rights for women. The advocates for both black rights and women's rights were unsatisfied with the Amendment and they somewhat found their way back to each other since their agreement on the matter.

The white women's rights movement and their notorious alliances

I will shortly explain the alliances the suffragists made a few years into the Reconstruction Era in order to understand why they were exactly blamed for racism. The incentives for the making of these alliances are key to understanding the reasoning of the suffragists.

In 1867, the state of Kansas put two referenda on the ballot. One for black suffrage, and one for women's suffrage. It seemed like a good opportunity for the women because the Republicans outnumbered the Democrats in Kansas, even though that the Republican party was strongly divided. Besides the radical Republicans, it consisted out of free soil party members and conservative Republicans. The AERA wanted to send some members to Kansas to campaign for both of its goals. The electorate was considerably small so good campaigning might bring about forward positive changes. Wendell Philips, however, refused to go and campaign and he certainly was not going to fund it. He did not want to put any money of the Hovey fund in campaigning for a mixed cause since he really believed that this was not going to be successful. Eventually, only one individual went to Kansas to agitate for, mostly, women's suffrage: Olympia Brown (Dudden 115; Dubois 80).

However, there was an organized opposition that consisted of Republicans who were campaigning against suffrage for women but supported suffrage for black men (even though they never campaigned positively for the cause). Eventually, both women and black men did not receive voting rights and the women's rights movement was blamed for the loss of the black men; their campaign for women's suffrage ruined their chances, according to some radical Republicans. Stanton and Anthony were bitter about the loss of this unprecedented opportunity and that they were blamed for it. They refused to stop their agitation but in order to campaign, they needed money. They decided to endorse George Francis Train, a notorious Democrat who was undeniably racist (Dudden 128; Dubois 94; A. Davis 81; Faulkner 189; Marilley 79). He supported the women's cause and he gave money to Stanton and Anthony, which was used to set up the newspaper *The Revolution* (Dubois, 104). Obviously, they were criticized even more than before and the endorsement was some sort of confirmation of the existence of racism within their agitation. Dubois argues that this was 'a measure of her political desperation' (95).

In September 1868, Stanton and Anthony 'descended to the worst racism', according to the author of 'Fighting Chance', Dudden. On the front page of *The Revolution* they endorsed Frank Blair, the Democratic candidate for the vice presidency in the national election of 1868. Stanton made this radical decision based on Blair's speech in Indianapolis which was "an early high-profile expression of a deeply racist mythology that would be constructed around the figure of the black rapist" (Dudden 155). He further believed that radical Reconstruction was unconstitutional, but he *did* seem to support suffrage for women in this very same speech. This was the first time that a major party candidate seemed to do this and Stanton and Anthony took a step that set them miles apart from Frederick Douglass who used to be their longstanding ally. Dudden describes this move as pure political opportunism that was 'ill-informed and unprincipled' (105).

In this chapter, we have seen how exactly the collaboration of the two movements took shape. Douglass, a prominent abolitionist, had supported the women's movement from the beginning and during the Civil War it was the other way around; the women's movement fully focused on abolition. When the Civil War had come to an end, abolitionist leader Phillips declared that it now was the 'negro's hour'. However, the women refused to obey and they regained their full focus on the agitation for their own rights. The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified, without including voting rights for women, despite the efforts of the women's movement. By this time, the

movement was already shaking but was strong enough to agitate for a Fifteenth Amendment that would finally bring justice for all.

Chapter 3: The ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment and the seemingly changed attitude of the suffragists.

This last chapter will focus on the last phase of the collaborative movement. I will describe how they officially dismantled because of their conflict about the endorsement of the Fifteenth Amendment. I will also discuss the changed attitude of the women's movement and step into the scholarly debate about their ostensible racism. I will discuss several scholars' theories and I will conclude by attempting to provide a unique view.

Fifteenth Amendment

When the Fifteenth Amendment was on the verge of being ratified, we see all kinds of problems coming to the surface. It is debatable whether or not these tensions had been there all along, but the tension created by the possibility of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment burst the bubble. The coalition had been able to, despite their differences based on problematic aspects of the American society in times of the Civil War, hold it all together and to agitate for 'justice for all'. Until now.

In February 1869, Stanton warned the American government that when black males would get the vote, and women did not, the vote would empower black men in a way that they would rape women and that hell would break loose. This allegation was published in *The Revolution*, Stanton and Anthony's new newspaper. Stanton believed that if the Fifteenth Amendment would be passed, horrors would be dissent upon women (Dudden 3). She also called out stereotypical, African-sounding names of blacks and said that it was ridiculous that they were going to be a part of the decision-making process that concerned 'the daughters of Jefferson (..) and Adams' (Stanton, 367).

A few months later Stanton and Douglass were discussing whether or not to endorse the Fifteenth Amendment at the 1869 convention of the American Equal Rights Association. Douglass had been supporting the American Equal Rights Association all along, and he did not agree with Philips' 'negro's hour'. However, he obviously was not happy with the willingness of Stanton to use harmful, racist language. He wanted to make clear to Stanton that they were both members of subordinate groups and that both should be 'forgiven' for being black and for being a woman (Fought 200). He further argued that slavery would not be abolished until black men would have voting rights. He aimed at the importance of former slaves to get voting rights, and he felt that it was more urgent for them to get these than it was for women. He believed that for women it was

important too, but freedmen had to actually defend their lives while for women, it was not this urgent (Fought 198).

Even though slavery was nationally prohibited, this did not mean that there was no racism, discrimination or economic exploitation of blacks. There were violent mobs in cities against freedmen and they had to be constantly aware that they were not always safe because of Southern aggression towards them (Davis 67). At the 1869 convention of the ERA, Douglass stated that “when women because they are women, are dragged from their houses and hung upon lamp-posts; When their children are torn from their arms, and their brains dash upon the pavements; when they are objects of insult and outrage at every turn; when they are in danger of having burnt down over their heads; when their children are not allowed to enter schools; then they have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal to our own” (Frost-Knappman, and Cullen-DuPont 195; Fought 198). It was his last try to persuade the women that they should support the Amendment. Douglass also argued that there could be no economic progress for blacks as long as they did not get the vote. The essence of the oppression of blacks was different than the oppression that women suffered since white women did not have to fear for their lives or to fear that they could not take care of their children or themselves. Douglass further envisioned the importance of the Amendment as a successful completion of half of their demands, so they had good grounds to secure voting rights for women in the future (A. Davis 83).

The Fifteenth Amendment was passed by Congress in 1869. It protected the vote for black men, since it stated that the vote cannot be denied ‘on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude’ (US Const. amend. XV, sec 1). Stanton and Anthony were disappointed and they felt betrayed by their former allies since ‘gender’ is not included in the Amendment (Bank, 2). They felt that their inequality was, again, affirmed by the government. Stanton and Anthony did not support nor accept this Amendment and they left the American Equal Rights Association because of internal disagreements about its endorsement. They established a new, more radical organization: the National Woman Suffrage Association. Stanton and Anthony expressed their views in their newspaper *the Revolution*, that was initially financed by Democrat George F. Train, and often implied racist sentiments (Cimbala, and Miller 99). Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe established the American Woman Suffrage Association shortly after (Faulkner 196). They were the counterpart of Stanton and Anthony’s movement because they believed that suffrage for black men should be established first, what just recently happened. The American Equal Rights Association was officially dismantled and the collaborative movement had come to an end (Dudden 172; Faulkner 196).

After the Fifteenth Amendment, the collaborative social movement dismantled in two groups. The racism the women's movement engaged with surely accounts, at least partly, for this split. In the next section, several theories' of scholars will be discussed about the ostensible racism of the white women's movement.

Naiveté

A. Davis argues that there was some political *Naiveté* in the hopes and aims of Stanton and Anthony. Her theory is in line with Eleanor Flexner's arguments, who wrote the landmark scholarly book *Century of Struggle*, who also argued that women's suffrage was 'ahead of its time'. She claims that the women did not fully understand the political game of the Civil War. Stanton and Anthony felt that they 'deserved' voting rights after the ending of the Civil War because they actively aided the abolitionist movement; as if they had made a deal in which they would help defeat slavery and get the vote as a prize. However, this assumption is made because they believed that the Union fought the war based on the concept of the slave system being immoral, instead of the idea that the war was fought because of the Union's economic interests. Davis explains that the 'Northern capitalists sought economic control over the entire nation. Their struggle against the Southern slaveocracy did not, therefore, mean that they supported the liberation of Black men or women as human beings' (74). Based on her research, she concludes that suffrage for women was simply 'ahead of its time' in the 1860s, even though that it was openly discussed in Congress whether or not 'gender' should be included in the Fifteenth Amendment. At the same time, suffrage for black men was considered a real possibility just because of the political necessity of getting two million extra votes (Davis 75).

It is important to consider that extending of voting rights to black males would have positive consequences for the (mostly) Republican Congress. The three-fifths compromise was established during the Constitutional Convention which meant that, when counting the population of states to determine its representation in Congress, slaves counted for 3/5th of a person. The Thirteenth Amendment basically annulled this compromise, since it abolished slavery. Ironically, this indicated that, during Reconstruction, the Southern states got more representation in Congress as long as black males did not have voting rights. If they *did* get voting rights, it was very likely that they would vote for the Republican party and this would be a serious gain for the Republicans in Congress. It thus makes sense that Congress ultimately decided to grant voting rights to black males, which might be not because of sentiment but because of simply rational thinking.

Unfortunately, it can be concluded that even though the political arrangements were wide open in the Reconstruction era, the sentiment for social justice had not yet reached Congress and this was, according to Davis, not realized by Stanton and Anthony. She believes that if they would have thought about the political situation more thoroughly, their rhetoric would have been considerably different. The fact that black men were going to be granted voting rights was not because the politicians preferred black men over white women, but because of political necessity.

Contingent racism

The author of 'Fighting Chance', scholar Dudden, rejects A. Davis' ideas about political naiveté. She believes that the women understood politics really well and that they had a strong sense of history. Stanton and Anthony really believed that they had a chance to claim their rights in the Reconstruction era, and Dudden supports this idea. There was already proof that the American government and society were open for change in the Reconstruction Era: a few years earlier, it was still unthinkable that slavery would be abolished, and now all slaves were liberated. The political window of opportunity was wide open, and, according to Dudden, the women did have an actual chance. She further claims that the harmful rhetoric of the women's movement at the end of the sixties was a result of events, assumptions, and decisions that had happened over the years instead of it being inevitable; they were not always going to be influenced by the sense of the nineteenth-century racism. For example, the fact that Wendell Phillips made sure that the women had no access to the Hovey fund anymore led to much bitterness. The women also realized that the window of political opportunity was slowly closing and that they, quite rightly, were not going to have an opportunity like this in a long time. Dudden argues that Stanton and Anthony would not have gone this far if they did not really believe that they had a chance, and they started to feel frustrated that they were blocked by radical Republicans who believed it was the 'negro's hour'.

Stanton and Anthony wrote the History of Woman Suffrage which consists out of six volumes and started to be published in 1881. Dudden claims that they covered up their 'racism' as a reason for the divorce of the collaboration in the time around the Fifteenth Amendment, but pointed the finger to the sexism of men. They might have realized at this point that their harmful rhetoric was caused by heightened emotions. It was their passion combined with genuine hopes and later the frustration about monetary issues that eventually led to their harmful rhetoric and the despicable alliances they made.

Presentism

Scholar Poirot provides an entirely different approach on the ostensible racism of the white women's movement. He argues that their racism is not an 'opportunistic response' to the prevailing discourse of the Reconstruction Era, but based on the idea that race and sex are 'extracorporeal' and that they only can be differentiated by their sociocultural histories (9). People of the African American race have not been educated and, according to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, cannot participate in the decision-making process that concerns, among others, white women who did have an education. They have been oppressed themselves and had, in general, a problematic past. According to Poirot, her racism should not be perceived in the way of how racism is known nowadays, but as a method to simply differentiate between groups of people with a shared history (13). However, I wonder how Poirot would explain the utterances of Stanton about the 'myth of the black rapist' (Davis 189). It makes perfect sense to suggest that we cannot apply today's racism to that particular time, but it should be constituted by another framework that is able to explain harmful rhetoric about the connection between race and rape.

Tactical racism

The rhetoric that is used by Elizabeth Cady Stanton was, obviously, meant to make people change their minds about the rights of subordinate groups. In this context, 'people' mean white, middle class men. In her rhetoric she would use the idea that it was insane that other inferior groups, for example black men, were maybe going to have more rights than women had. However, by constructing her arguments like this, she is keeping the existing hierarchy that she desperately wants to change, in place. In her rhetoric she reveals that there is still a sense of hierarchy and that white, middle class men are dominant. In her rhetoric she does not outline the idea of a universal society in which everyone is equal, but a hierarchal society in which women have rights, but still know their place in an existing hierarchy.

According to the author who wrote about the 'Paradox of Social Reform Rhetoric', Skinnell, she tried to direct the attention of her audiences away of their unwillingness of granting rights to women to the fact that other inferior groups were at the same level as, or maybe even higher than, women in the existing hierarchy. Even though Cady Stanton is remembered as someone who was advocating equality, it is questionable in what sense this 'equality' was meant and how she herself perceived equality. Skinnell claims that the difficulties of Cady Stanton's rhetoric are more of a general problem: "Social reformers throughout American history have faced an inexorable paradox—how to acknowledge their fundamental difference from the dominant class even as they

seek to demonstrate their fundamental sameness” (3). Cady Stanton agitates for voting rights for both black men and women and thus equality for all, but uses a separation of classes in her rhetoric that perpetuates the existing hierarchy. By doing this, the women might be able to persuade the powerful men (mostly Democrats) that they were better off for receiving voting rights than black men were.

This idea of Skinnell is in line with Marriley, who argues that the suffragists were powerless when it came to politics and in order to see their rights established they had to use a rhetoric that appealed to the ones that *were* politically powerful. According to Marilley, the use of a rhetoric that contained racist utterances and a certain use of language (utilization of stereotypical imagery like “Sambo”) was widely understood by white, male politicians who were mostly active in the Democrat party. Using the same racist rhetoric as the Democratic party was a strategy to appeal to the powerful and thus indirectly to increase the chance of their own rights beings established (10). By sharing the same hatred the suffragists might have been able to construct a strong connection between them and the Democrats.

This concept can be substantiated by a remark of Stanton in the letter preceding the introduction. She wrote this at a point when the suffragists were still trying to persuade the Republicans to establish suffrage for women. Radical Republicans based their agitation for black men’s suffrage on ideas about the manhood of black men that is equal to theirs. Stanton writes: “As self-preservation is the first law of nature, would it not be wiser to keep our [women’s] lamps trimmed and burning, and when the Constitutional door is open, avail ourselves of the strong arm and blue uniform of the black soldier to walk in by his side, and thus make the gap so wide that no privileged class could ever again close it against the humblest citizen of the Republic?” (Free 109). By emphasizing the masculinity (“..of the strong arm”) of the black men and the necessity of them helping women to get the vote, Stanton steps into Republican rhetoric. The notion that the suffragists used strategic rhetoric in order to appeal to the powerful does not entirely illuminate how they really perceived the African American race, whether or not their rhetoric included heartfelt thoughts.

Unique view

The scholarly debate clearly shows how problematic it is to try to determine what really was in the hearts and minds of the women's movement concerning the African American race. I will suggest a restored view in the following section.

First and foremost it should be noted that the Civil War was a highly destructive war that was not only inescapable for the soldier but also for the home front. It is safe to assume that everyone was affected by the horrendous war and that hearts and minds simply had changed because of it. Dudden, for example, explains that Stanton's cousin who fought for the Union had to amputate his own leg in the middle of a battle and later died because he had bled out. It is plausible that this kind of events influenced the women's movement and that they may help to account for their rigidity in the Reconstruction era.

Secondly, it is highly important to consider that the African American race in general changed from an institutionalized oppressed people to a solid candidate for voting rights. This was a drastic change that might be not anticipated on by these women in the beginning of the process. I believe that they genuinely felt that they wanted to aid these people who had to endure social injustice; claiming that everything they did was based on political opportunism would devalue the many efforts of these women that went into the agitation for social justice. As mentioned before, Stanton attended the first World Anti-Slavery Convention with her abolitionist husband, which was before her strong expression about women's rights. I think that, because of the drastic change of the position of African-Americans in the American society, the perspective of the politically aware women's movement changed too. It should be noted that they supported universal suffrage: voting rights for *everyone*. They desperately wanted to prevent the enlargement of male domination caused by the addition of black men to the highest level of society, since it would be counterproductive to their efforts: they were trying to *diminish* the political domination of men. In trying to prevent this they started to reject the idea that black men were equal to them but placed them on a level that was underneath their own, which can be explained by plain racism. This change in perspective was invigorated by their helplessness and the bitterness about the unsupportive sentiments of the black rights movement, which is elaborately discussed by Dudden.

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that the Reconstruction Era really was the largest window of opportunity these women were going to encounter. The question how they perceived the African American race might not even provide an answer that would help explain their harmful rhetoric: they simply had their eyes on the prize. They knew it was a unique opportunity to improve the

position of women and their belligerency took them to undesirable states of mind: desperate needs lead to desperate deeds.

In this chapter we have seen different theories of scholars that try to account for the racism the suffragists engaged with. It was important for my research to consider as many explanations as possible, so that I was able to provide a well-considered conclusion of my own. I explained my own perspective, suggesting that this particular racism should not be looked at as a matter on its own, but instead as a consequence of the women's belligerency and their fear of repeated ratification of their subordination.

Conclusion

We have seen that before the Civil War, there were several incentives for women to develop anti-slavery sentiments and to cast these in a collaborative movement for social justice for all. These heartfelt sentiments led to women stepping out of the private sphere into the public sphere by actively trying to bring forward change; to bring forward social justice for all. Especially the war gave the suffragists the opportunity to mobilize and to fully fight for the freedom of the slaves. When the Reconstruction started, however, they regained focus on their own goal: suffrage for women. This is the point when Stanton wrote the letter preceding the introduction.

We might be able to now place Stanton's letter, preceding the introduction, in perspective. The letter was written just after the end of the Civil War in 1865. After almost twenty years of active agitation for their own rights, with a pause in the Civil War to fight for abolition, an opportunity to change the American society had come forward. Society was going to be restructured and the women's movement desperately wanted to assure that, after agitating for abolition in the public sphere, they had to step back in the private sphere again without the right to vote. This sentiment was strengthened by their realization that black men were closer to getting the vote than they were. We should keep in mind that these women were totally aware and extremely fiery about their subordination to men and the inequality they constantly experienced. They must have felt deeply frustrated about the fact that a group of people who have experienced oppression too for decades would probably get the vote and they themselves would not. This might explain the racist utterances of Stanton in her letter: if they themselves were not getting voting rights, other oppressed groups should not get it too, or it would only confirm and exacerbate their subordination.

When examining suffragists at the time of the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era, it should not just be confirmed that there was engagement with plain racism, but it should be looked at

with certain elements in mind. This belief is strengthened by the idea that the concept of racism cannot just be applied to a time such different than ours; to a time in which slavery was an institution just seconds ago. We have to try to make sense of it by placing it into context and by exploring the hearts and minds of the people in a particular society. As we have seen, many scholars have tried to shortly explain the racism in the women's rights movement, but few explored it over the entire course of the collaboration and tried to dig deeper into the reasoning of these women.

Suffrage for women was established in 1920 with the Nineteenth Amendment, 55 years after the end of the Civil War. Stanton and Anthony never got to vote. However, they did improve the position of women in the American society in some ways. Both active in the abolitionist movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony gained valuable education and experience of going against the establishment. They got used to do something most people would have disapproved with and to endure a social stigma. Women stepped out of the private sphere and they became social reformers. For the first time in American history, women engaged in the political system. The suffragists set a precedent for the many women who followed their footsteps trying to secure voting rights and equality for women.

What my thesis has been doing, in general, is that it has looked at the (im)possibility of social movements to unify. Times obviously have changed, but knowledge about the dynamics of social movements is still relevant for today since social movements that convey equality still exist and are, unfortunately, still necessary. Many people on this planet experience racism and sexism every day and movements are still campaigning for human equality on all fronts. Maybe they are not all as organized and structured as they were in the past when their goals were more explicit, but they do have goals in mind concerning equality. An interesting example of when the two discussed movements in this thesis were connecting nowadays was when Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton was going to be the next Democratic nominee for the Presidency in the Democratic Party presidential primaries of 2008. A debate was sparked about how sexism and racism were going to influence the election. When comparing the Democratic Presidency nominee election to the voting rights issue of the Reconstruction era, we see that, again, race and gender are in a race to get a position that used to be dominated by upper-class white men. Obama obviously won. Does this mean that women are still less in the center of national political power than African Americans? Are there still situations in which race and gender have direct confrontations when it comes to distribution of power? To what extent are social movements concerning race and gender unifying when there is something to gain in American politics? These are clearly interesting topics for further research, in which considerations of the dynamics of the movements in the past are essential.

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