

## Module 04: How Did Abolitionism Lead to the Struggle for Women 's Rights?

### Evidence 15: Letter From Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Elizabeth J. Neall, 1841

# A

#### Introduction

The following letter, written by activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the aftermath of the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London, highlights the obstacles that female abolitionists continued to face in the United States.

#### Questions to Consider

- According to Stanton, what kinds of problems did women face when they tried to work alongside men for the abolition of slavery?
- Why did Stanton believe she had a right to her own political voice?
- Earlier female activists may have preferred working in a Female Anti-Slavery Society because of the protection it offered against charges of "unfeminine" behavior. What reasons did Stanton give for wanting to work in an all-female association?
- How do you think Stanton would have responded to the idea that there were inherent and natural differences between women and men?

#### Document

Johnstown, New York  
November 26, 1841

Dear Lizzy,

Your letter dated Phil. July 18th was mailed at St. Johnsville August 30th for Johnstown & about the last of September I received it at Seneca Falls, where I was until last week when I returned home. . . . Oh! how much I have to tell you all of what happened to me after parting with you in the old world [referring to their meeting at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London], of facts, & of feelings since my return to my native land. It has been a sore trial to me not to have had for so long a time any opportunity

of seeing or talking to my dear Philadelphia friends. — Your letter is before me, & as I read along, one sentence causes me to pause. You say, "How much I have regretted your absence from our business meetings during your stays in New York. We wished to ask you to go with us, but feared that you might be disinclined to do so & that you certainly would attend them had you cared for or been interested in them." Let me assure you that nothing would have pleased me more than to have been present at a woman's business meeting, where I might have seen the faces & heard the voices of Abbey Kelly and Lydia M Child. How could I know of the existence of such meetings no one told me. Had I known of them why should I have been disinclined to go? because Henry [Stanton's husband] might not have wished me to go? — You do not know the extent to which I carry my rights. I do in truth think & act for myself deeming that I alone am responsible for the sayings & doings of E.C.S. I did not go to any business meetings with Henry because I knew I would have no voice in those meetings, & had I known of A.S. [Anti-Slavery] business meetings in which I should have been considered as an independent morally responsible being I should have been there if possible. Since I met you in New York be it known unto you that I have made my debut in public. I made a Temperance speech at Seneca Falls, & was so eloquent in my appeals as to affect not only my audience but myself to tears. The room in which I spoke was large & about an hundred women were present. I infused into my speech an Homeopathic dose of woman's rights, as I take good care to do in many private conversations. I intend to "keep it before the people. . . ."

. . .much love to you & all  
your friend,  
Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Source:

Ann D. Gordon, ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, vol. 1 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 24-25.