

Declaration of Sentiments (Excerpts) - Issued at the Seneca Falls Convention (New York, 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...

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

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

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education - all colleges being closed against her...

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 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...

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.

Name: _____ Hour: _____

APARTY – Please note that the questions accompanying each section aren't intended to be answered like a checklist. They're provided to give you an idea of what sorts of information might be appropriate for that section. Use them to help you think about the document – not as “rules.”

Author (Who wrote or created this document? What do you know about this person or organization? What biases or assumptions might they have which could impact how you understand this document?)

Place & Time (Where and when was this produced? How do you know? What was going on which might have impacted the writing of this document?)

Audience (For whom was this document created? How do you know? How might the audience have shaped the choices made while creating this document?)

Reason (Why was this document created? What did the author hope would happen as a result? It's almost never “to inform.” Usually the author wanted someone to THINK or DO SOMETHING differently.)

The Main Idea (If you were to reduce this document to a short, simple sentence or two, what would it say? This is NOT the same as explaining what the document is ABOUT. What does it SAY?)

Yeah, So What? (Why is this source important? What is there to be learned from analyzing it? To put it another way, why did your teacher make you read or examine this?)
