

Good comparative : women rights activists; stanton and truth essay example

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



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Introduction

In ancient America, men considered women to be second-class citizens and denied them many fundamental rights such as voting, leadership, choice of healthcare and reproduction rights among others. The US being the centerpiece of a lot of civil action saw the rise of women activists who engaged authorities in their agitation for equality. This essay compares two such women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth by examining their publicized works on women rights.

Elizabeth Candy Stanton (1815-1902) and Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) were both American abolitionists, social and women rights activists. Elizabeth Stanton wrote the speech “ home life” in 1875. It was an agitation for women emancipation after the fourteenth and the fifteenth amendments of the American constitution were passed giving blacks the equality before the law and the right to vote respectively. Stanton was demanding that the equality that had revolutionized American politics be extended to private life. She asserted that genuine liberty for women required an overhaul of the divorce laws and an end to the oppressive authority that men exercised over their wives.

Sojourner Truth delivered the speech “ Ain’t I a woman” sometime after she gained her freedom from slavery in 1827. Truth had been born in slavery. After her release, she became an anti-slavery speaker. Truth delivered her speech “ Ain’t I a woman” at a women’s convention in Akron, Ohio on May 29 1851. The speech was unwritten because Truth was unable to read and write. Although two versions of her speech late came up and the wrong one was handed down in American History, the truths about her original speech later became evident. Truth’s tireless fight for the abolition of slavery and the acknowledgement of women’s’ rights formed the hallmarks of her life. It also led to the achievement of numerous constitutional reforms to accord women their rights as well as to the abolition of slavery.

Although Truth and Stanton had several contrasts in their backgrounds, races, and socio-economic disposition their activism was the same. To begin with, Stanton was a white while Truth was a black American. Stanton was born to white parents-Daniel and Margaret Cady. Truth was a black woman born to slave parents. Truth served as a slave until 1826 while Stanton never served as a slave and neither did her parents. Truth was illiterate, and she never wrote down her speech. She just narrated her assertions to all who attended the 1851 New York Convention. Stanton, on the other hand, was a literate woman. She wrote down her assertions as an essay. All these differences were unified by the activism roles that the women played. They wanted to see a fair and just society where men treated women as their equals.

On the surface, Stanton addressed social revolution with a special emphasis on the role of the women in a marriage setup and at home. She was

concerned with the issue of whether man would yield what he considered being “ his legitimate authority over a woman with fewer struggles than have kings and popes their rights over their subjects or slaveholders over their slaves” (1875). Truth tailored her speech “ Ain’t I a woman” to remind men that she could do all that men could. Going by Marius Robinson’s transcription of the speech, Truth said, “ I have as much muscle as any man and I can do as much work as any man” (Truth, 1851). She used this as the basis of asking why the authorities could not grant women equal rights with men.

Stanton noted that men were not ready to recognize women’s equality at home. She stated that failure by men to recognize women as their equals, contributed to their failure to accord them voting rights. Men wanted to control systems by making laws that favored them and denied women to exercise the power within them. According to Stanton, men denied women their rights under the guise “ liberty for the woman would upset the family relation”. As such, she noted that women’s conditions were not of their own choosing. Further, she states , “ this is woman’s transition period from slavery to freedom and that the social upheavals, before which the wisest and bravest stand appalled, are but necessary incidents in her progress to equality” (Stanton, 1875). Stanton stated, “ Marriage as an indissoluble tie is slavery for woman (Stanton, 1875). In another statement, Stanton stated , “ there is no other human slavery that knows such depths of degradation as a wife chained to a man whom she neither loves nor respects” (Stanton, 1875). This statement shows that Stanton considered the then women’s situation to be a form of slavery. Her assertion, therefore, matches the views

of Sojourner Truth who was fighting for women rights and the abolition of slavery.

The two women point to fallacies about the empowerment of women. Going by Robinson's account, Truth stated, " you need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear that we will take too much we cannot take more than our pint can hold" (Truth, 1851). She also noted that men seemed to be in confusion and that they did not know what to do. She urges men to give women their rights, and, they would feel better. Stanton, on the other hand, states closely related issues about misconceptions and unfounded fears causing men to withhold women's rights. She notes that conservatism cried out that if women got their rights they would destroy the family. According to Stanton, timid reformers responded to the equality debate by stating that, empowered women would not change the family (Stanton, 1875). Stanton boldly states that both were wrong. According to her, empowerment of women and giving them their rights would revolutionize families. Stanton notes that state constitutions and statute laws did not create maternal love and conjugal rights and; therefore, they could not annul these issues. The two women set out to disapprove the myths that men used to deny women their rights.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Candy Stanton (1815-1902) and Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) were both American abolitionists, social and women rights activists. Stanton's essay " Home Life" and Truth's " Ain't I a woman" have several points of convergence although both women came from different races socio-

economic backgrounds and even levels of education. Truth stated that women could do as much as men could and so did Stanton. The two women also set out to dispel the myths that men had used to deny women their rights. They stated that empowered women could not destroy homes. They also told men that women were as powerful as men were and that they could do all that men could. Truth had been born to slave parents and served her time as a slave until 1826. She, therefore, spoke from the perspective of a slave, and her agitation for the abolishment of slavery had been informed by firsthand experiences. Although Stanton had never been a slave, she could relate the denial of women's rights to slavery especially those in unloving and disrespectful marriages. Truth and Stanton, therefore, compare relatively well through their publications and they attest to the zeal with which ancient activists fought for equality and justice.

References

- Stanton, E. C. (1875) " Home Life" Voices of Freedom. Library of Congress
- Truth, S. (1851). " Ain't I a woman?" speech.