

Free the declaration of olympe de gouges research paper sample

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



The Declaration of Olympe de Gouges

Olympe de Gouges was a woman born on 7 May 1748 and died on November 3, 1793. His original name is Marie Gouze. She was a political activist as well as a playwright whose works reached a very large audience. In addition to that, she was an abolitionist and a feminist. Her achievements span from her times up to today. She still inspires very many people with her works. Today, people celebrate her as one of the earliest famous activists whose demand that French women receive the same rights as men gave her a wide popularity. In 1791, she wrote 'The Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen'. In this declaration, she challenged the male authority and the notion that males are equal than females. She challenged male chauvinism that made women lesser people than their male counterparts. Because of this, execution was inevitable. This was by use of a guillotine during the time of the 'Reign of terror' this was the time when the Revolutionary government was in power. The reasons for her execution was not only for her feminist activism and for her 'Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen' but was also for her close ties with the Girondists. Girondists were a group of people that also fought for the same things as hers, but were rather bloodier. Her relationship with the French Revolution, therefore, is wide.

Olympe de Gouge was a woman with very many achievements. She was a butcher's daughter but learned to read and write by herself. In those days, people frowned upon girl education. Her father was also too poor to take her to any educational institution. She wrote very many plays, essays, manifestos and short stories on a number of issues. This not only included

<https://assignbuster.com/free-the-declaration-of-olympe-de-gouges-research-paper-sample/>

the rights of women and their need to be involve more in the running of the French nation, but also other issues such as anti-slavery and political awareness. Slavery to her was a vice in the society that needed attention immediately. She described slave owners as greedy people who did not have respect for the dignity of humanity. She attacked the National Assembly as well as other leaders for being corrupt, prejudice and greedy.

Before going into details, the Declaration of the rights of Man and the subsequent declaration of the rights of Women have to undergo examination. The Declaration of the rights of Man was an article and legislation that was approved by the French National Assembly on August 26, 1789. The main reason for this declaration was that the French people believed that neglect, ignorance and the contempt of the rights of all men were the main cause of public calamities. It was also the cause of corruption in governments. Therefore, man must have sacred and unalienable rights (7). This will remind the Social body of all the French people of their duties as well as their rights. The National Assembly consequently proclaimed and recognized the auspices and presence of the Supreme Being that gave rights of man and citizens.

Following are the Articles in in the Declaration. The first article assures all men of their freedom and equal rights. The second article states that a man has the right to associate with any political affiliation. There are seventeen articles in this document and to list each of them would be impractical. Since we are more interested in the association of Gauze with the French revolution, this paper will only concentrate on the rights that she was more interested in. the fifth article states that law can prohibit any action by any

man that is hurtful to the public. The tenth article gives anybody the right to speech since it states that no one will be disquieted in his opinions. Olympe de Gouges depended on this article to voice her opinion. However, her right to speech never received respect because she was not a man. The eleventh article that states that every man has the freedom to communicate ideas and opinions follows the tenth article closely. Olympe de Gouges never received this right. In as much as she tried to communicate her ideas and opinions through her works as a playwright and activist and through her literature materials, the government fought her. The reason is the same. It is because she was a woman. Women had no right to speak in front of men. They less regarded then men. Men were the sole authority. This is what the woman Gouges disapproved. She demanded that women enjoy equal rights as men. She wanted women to be involved in the running of the country. Men were unfair. They considered women as lesser beings, almost equal to animals. They were supposed to get married, give birth children, and take care of their homes. Gouges disapproved all this.

The denial of her rights by the government and men is the reason that drove her to get involved in the French Revolution. Her aim was to fight for the rights of women that continually received denial. Her ' Declaration of the Rights of Women' was just a tip of the iceberg in her fight for the rights of women. It was a start. Though later she received execution for this, she left a mark. Some of the Articles in this declaration came from the Declaration of the Rights of Men. The Declaration of the rights of Women was more of a copycat of the Declaration of the rights of Men. If carefully examine, it can be noticed that Olympe de Gouges only changed the words, but the message

remained the same. For instance, it starts by saying that the Declaration was decreed by the National Assembly of France or by the following legislature. The Declaration of the Rights of Man stated that it was decreed (Declaration of the Man and of the Citizen). The preamble of the Declaration of the rights of women changes the word men to 'mothers, daughters, sisters and female representatives. However, the other words remain the same. It is clear that she wanted to drive a point home. She wanted to show that females are equal to their male counterparts except that they are just biologically different.

She says in the Declaration that sex 'sex is superior in beauty as in courage.' This statement was one of the statements she made that made a huge difference in the fight for the rights of women. The other one, that was more famous than the first one is 'A woman has the right to mount the scaffold. She must possess equally the right to mount the speaker's platform'. This was the most famous statement she ever made. It was more of a political statement. She said that, a woman also has the right of speech and involvement in the legislation of laws. Women also have rights to lead and just to sit at their homes and take care of their families. She advocated for legal rights such the Right to be in the National Assembly and to get involved in the national issues. The first statement is found in the 'Olympe de Gouges, "The Declaration of the Rights of Woman" (September 1791)'. She goes ahead to say that maternal sufferings recognize and declare the presence of the Supreme Being. She copied the Declaration of the Rights of Men. Just as the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of men gave freedom and equality to men, the first article in the declaration of the Rights

of Women gave women the same rights. The others continue to be alike. For example, the second article gives all women the freedom to associate themselves with any political affiliation. The seventh article states that no woman can receive execution or exemption in relation to the cases determined by law. Concisely, what the Declaration of the Rights of Women did was majorly to emulate the Declaration of the Rights of Men. However, it changed the words to refer to women. The articles are similar but different. Instead of referring to men, they refer to women. Olympe de Gouges applied this to show that women, like men, deserved equal treatment. They also deserved to be in authority and have the rights of speech, association and others.

The Declaration of the Rights of Woman (September 1791) was in response to the Declaration of the Rights of Man. It was more of a parallel to it. In it, she also criticized the leaders and deputies who she said had forgotten women in the drafting of that declaration. To her, women had to be involved in the nation building. ' The Declaration of the Rights of Woman focused on the queen herself. Being fierce and feisty as she was, she gave a warning to the queen. She said that she (the queen) had work for the revolution or the monarchy would risk destruction altogether. At that time, people referred the queen as Queen Marrie Antoinette. In addition, she wrote a postscript whereby she denounced the objectivity treatment of women. This was a customary in France. She said that women were not mere objects but humans that had rights, as well. The sample of the declaration was also a form of a contract. In this, she called for communal sharing of the property in a marriage. Since marriage in France was more of a manly affair, property

belonged only to the man. She denounced this and called for the sharing of all property in the marriage union.

This was just one of the ways that Olympe de Gouges participated in the French revolution. As mentioned earlier, she was also a playwright. Her works concentrated on the need for the French nation to give women equal rights as men. Some of her works are in use up to today. She was an artist that also met many writers who were also involved in fighting the reason she was fighting. Olympe was not only a playwright, she was also anti-slavery literature, essays that concentrated on the revolutionary ideals, manifestos, treaties that were literature based and pamphlets that were very political. She was passionate about human rights. In fact, when the French Revolution broke out, she was overjoyed. She had so much hope. However, when the revolution did not include the fighting for rights of women, she became disillusioned. She then joined a group called 'The Society of the Friends of Truth'. This association was involved in the fighting of legal and political rights of women. This group in most cases gathered in the house of Sophie de Condorcet, a well-known advocate for their rights of women. In one of the gatherings, her famous statement finally came out. She said, 'A woman has the right to mount the scaffold. She must possess equally the right to mount the speaker's platform'.

In summary, de Gouges involved herself in revolutionary activities. She participated in the French Revolution in the mentioned ways. She was the one that drafted the 'Declaration of the Rights of woman'. As explained, it did not bear much difference with the other primary document, 'The Declaration of the Rights of Man'. The main difference is that the former was

about the rights of women while the latter was about the rights of men. The Declaration of the Rights of man as the one that came out first and it was the one that the law recognized. De Gouge's declaration was illegal by law. Her aim was to fight for the rights of women that received regular denial. Her 'Declaration of the Rights of Women' was just a tip of the iceberg in her fight for the rights of women.

Olympe de Gouge received sentence to the guillotine in 1793. She was condemned as a counterrevolutionary. This was one of her accusations. She was as an 'unnatural woman' according to the denouement she received. The execution of this great woman happened via guillotine. While arrested before the execution, she did not enjoy her right of an attorney by the presiding judge. This is because the judge had the mentality that show was able to represent herself as she had done very many times in her writings. She was in jail for over three months before the court found her guilty of wrongdoing. She received execution for a number of reasons. One of them is because of the Declaration of the Rights of Women. Another is because of her opposition of the execution of a man called Louis XVI. This King of France was overthrown. She considered him a better leader because she thought that he would be a King that would give rights to women and children. She also liked him because he opposed capital punishment. Her literary works also were the talk of opposition.

Bibliography

Agonito, Rosemary. History of Ideas on Woman: A Source Book. New York: Putnam, 1977.

<https://assignbuster.com/free-the-declaration-of-olymp-de-gouges-research-paper-sample/>

Carlyle, Thomas. *The French Revolution; A History*. New York: Modern library, 1934.

Cole, John R., and Olympe de Gouges. *Between the Queen and the Cabby Olympe De Gouges's Rights of Woman*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011.

Declaration of the Rights of Man & of the Citizen. [S. l.]: Great Neck Pub, 2009.

Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media. "Olympe de Gouges, The Declaration of the Rights of Woman (September 1791)." Accessed March 19, 2014. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/293/>.

Thiers, Adolphe. *The History of the French Revolution*. London: R. Bentley, 1838.