**Catharine E. Beecher, “A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School” (1841)**

*Catharine E. Beecher is the less-famous sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. But Catharine was an influential educator and writer in her own right. She promoted the idea of a liberal education for girls and women, and she opened several schools that taught domestic science. Her goal was to elevate the opinion of women’s work through educating women to approach their lives with a sense of greater purpose, of contribution to a greater good. Many of her works are still in print.*

There are some reasons why American women should feel an interest in the support of the democratic institutions of their Country, which it is important that they should consider. The great maxim, which is the basis of all our civil and political institutions, is, that "all men are created equal," and that they are equally entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

But it can readily be seen, that this is only another mode of expressing the fundamental principle which the Great Ruler of the Universe has established, as the law of His eternal government. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" and "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." These are the Scripture forms, by which the Supreme Lawgiver requires that each individual of our race shall regard the happiness of others, as of the same value as his own; and which forbids any institution, in private or civil life, which secures advantages to one class, by sacrificing the interests of another.

The principles of democracy, then, are identical with the principles of Christianity.

But, in order that each individual may pursue and secure the highest degree of happiness within his reach, unimpeded by the selfish interests of others, a system of laws must be established, which sustain certain relations and dependencies in social and civil life. What these relations and their attending obligations shall be, are to be determined, not with reference to the wishes and interests of a few, but solely with reference to the general good of all; so that each individual shall have his own interest, as much as the public benefit, secured by them.

For this purpose, it is needful that certain relations be sustained, that involve the duties of subordination. There must be the magistrate and the subject, one of whom is the superior, and the other the inferior. There must be the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, teacher and pupil, employer and employed, each involving the relative duties of subordination. The superior in certain particulars is to direct, and the inferior is to yield obedience. Society could never go forward, harmoniously, nor could any craft or profession be successfully pursued, unless these superior and subordinate relations be instituted and sustained.

But who shall take the higher, and who the subordinate, stations in social and civil life? This matter, in the case of parents and children, is decided by the Creator. He has given children to the control of parents, as their superiors, and to them they remain subordinate, to a certain age, or so long as they are members of their household. And parents can delegate such a portion of their authority to teachers and employers, as the interests of their children require.

In most other cases, in a truly democratic state, each individual is allowed to choose for himself, who shall take the position of his superior. No woman is forced to obey any husband but the one she chooses for herself; nor is she obliged to take a husband, if she prefers to remain single. So every domestic, and every artisan or laborer, after passing from parental control, can choose the employer to whom he is to accord obedience, or, if he prefers to relinquish certain advantages, he can remain without taking a subordinate place to any employer. . . .

In this Country, it is established, both by opinion and by practice, that women have an equal interest in all social and civil concerns; and that no domestic, civil, or political, institution, is right, that sacrifices her interest to promote that of the other sex. But in order to secure her the more firmly in all these privileges, it is decided, that, in the domestic relation, she take a subordinate station, and that, in civil and political concerns, her interests be intrusted to the other sex, without her taking any part in voting, or in making and administering laws. . . .

It appears, then, that it is in America, alone, that women are raised to an equality with the other sex; and that, both in theory and practice, their interests are regarded as of equal value. They are made subordinate in station, only where a regard to their best interests demands it, while, as if in compensation for this, by custom and courtesy, they are always treated as superiors. Universally, in this Country, through every class of society, precedence is given to women, in all the comforts, conveniences, and courtesies, of life.

In civil and political affairs, American women take no interest or concern, except so far as they sympathize with their family and personal friends; but in all cases, in which they do feel a concern, their opinions and feelings have a consideration, equal, or even superior, to that of the other sex. . . .

If those who are bewailing themselves over the fancied wrongs and injuries of women in this Nation, could only see things as they are, they would know, that, whatever remnants of a barbarous or aristocratic age may remain in our civil institutions, in reference to the interests of women, it is only because they are ignorant of it, or do not use their influence to have them rectified; for it is very certain that there is nothing reasonable which American women would unite in asking, that would not readily be bestowed. . . .

If this be so, as none will deny, then to American women, more than to any others on earth, is committed the exalted privilege of extending over the world those blessed influences, that are to renovate degraded man, and "clothe all climes with beauty."

. . . Thus, also, with those labors that are to be made effectual in the regeneration of the Earth. The woman who is rearing a family of children; the woman who labors in the schoolroom; the woman who, in her retired chamber, earns, with her needle, the mite to contribute for the intellectual and moral elevation of her country; even the humble domestic, whose example and influence may be moulding and forming young minds, while her faithful services sustain a prosperous domestic state;--each and all may be cheered by the consciousness, that they are agents in accomplishing the greatest work that ever was committed to human responsibility. It is the building of a glorious temple, whose base shall be coextensive with the bounds of the earth, whose summit shall pierce the skies, whose splendor shall beam on all lands, and those who hew the lowliest stone, as much as those who carve the highest capital, will be equally honored when its top-stone shall be laid, with new rejoicings of the morning stars, and shoutings of the sons of God. . . .

**Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Declaration of Sentiments* (1848)**

*Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Lucretia Mott played a major role in drafting the declaration that was presented at the Seneca Falls convention in 1848. The document paralleled the Declaration of Independence and listed the grievances of women, ending with the controversial request for women's rights.*

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. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience has shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

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 word.

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 made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

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

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master, the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women-the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

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

He allows her in Church, as well as in State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which the moral delinquencies which exclude women from society are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way 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.

Now, in the view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half of the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

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 on our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions embracing every part of the country.

**Mother's Magazine 1834**

*Founded in 1833 and edited by Abigail Goodrich Whittelsy,* The Mother's Magazine *was published to help women understand the importance of their maternal role, which it defined primarily as shaping their children's character so they would grow into good citizens. The magazine was very popular, and it reflected the idea of separate spheres for women, whose greatest influence was in the home.*

If, as a distinguished writer has observed, "Man is a bundle of habits," there is perhaps scarcely a subject to which maternal influence should be more unceasingly directed, than the early formation of right habits. And probably there is no one habit more important in a character formed for usefulness, than that of industry and regular application to business. This habit should be commenced at a very early period; long before the little ones can be very profitable from the fruits of their industry. I know it is often alleged that the labour and care of teaching young children various useful employments, is greater than all the benefits which may be expected to result. But this, I believe, is a fact only in regard to a few of their first lessons. I have a friend, who is both a gentleman and a scholar. For the sake of employment, his father required his little son, from the early age of eight years, to copy all his letters. I have often heard this friend ascribe his business talent, which, in regard to despatch, punctuality, and order, is seldom equalled, to his father's unremitting efforts, to keep him, at stated intervals, regularly employed.

In the formation of character, I had almost said, habits are every thing. Could the whole amount of knowledge, which a young man has acquired, just entering professional life, after nine years laborious preparatory study, have been at once imparted to his mind, without any effort on his part, the value to him would be immeasurably less than the slow process by which it was acquired. The mental discipline, the intellectual habits, are worth even more to him than the knowledge gained. But the importance of a habit may perhaps be best ascertained by its practical result. We refer mothers to the annals of great and good men, in all ages of the world, who have been the benefactors of mankind. By attention to their early history, it will be found, that their learning and talents are not merely the effects of genius, as many suppose, but are the precious fruits of which industry and persevering application were the early bud. The Bible furnishes impressive examples on this subject. Adam in a state of innocence, was required to "dress the garden, and to keep it. "The glorified beings in heaven rest not day nor night. It is said of the great exemplar of the Christian, that "he went about doing good." We are both instructed and warned by such scripture passages as the following: Ex. xx. 9. Eccl. ix. 10: v. 12. Prov. xxiv. 30-34: xx. 4. Ezekiel x. 49. Rom. xii. 11. 2 Thess. v. 10-12. Rev. vii. 15. When habits of industry and personal effort have been faithfully cherished, it will not be difficult to cultivate those of benevolence and self-denial. Children should be early encouraged and induced to contribute to the various institutions of benevolence in our country; but let it never be done without an effort, and a sacrifice, on their part. They should be made to feel, with David, that "they will not offer to the Lord a sacrifice which costs them nothing." It is a principle which they may easily apprehend, and one that will be of great value in forming their future characters. At a very early age they can be made to understand something of the wants and woes of the heathen world; and when their sympathies are excited, instruct them in what manner they may begin to aid in sending abroad the blessings of salvation. Mothers may encourage their little ones to resolve how much they will endeavour to earn in this way, and for such purposes in a year. Let a little book of accounts be prepared for them, in which all their little earnings shall regularly be entered, and as soon as they are able, let them keep these accounts themselves. In this way, several useful habits may be associated,-children may be thus early taught that money is valuable, rather as enabling them to do good, than as a means of selfish or sensual gratification.

The want of suitable regular employment for children, particularly for boys, is an evil extensively felt and deplored, especially by men in professional life, and the inhabitants of large cities and populous villages. Perhaps there is no one class of persons in our country, so highly favored in this particular as farmers; and it is one of the peculiar blessings of their condition, of which I fear they are not sufficiently aware, to be suitably grateful. But in respect to others, a remedy must be supplied, or their children will be ruined. If all other resources fail, it is better to consider a regular portion of each day as "a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together," to be again dispersed for the same object, rather than indulge or connive at habits of idleness.

At one of the most respectable colleges in New-England, the President and Professors have had the wisdom and precaution for a number of years, regularly to send their sons, during a considerable portion of each year, among their friends in the country, to labor on farms. The boys themselves are delighted with the plan, and all the judicious commend it, as affording the most healthful, improving, and pleasant employment. And probably even greater attainments are made in their studies, than if constantly confined in school the whole year. And perhaps not the least advantage which will result, will be found in giving to them an athletic frame, and a sound and vigorous constitution.

But in respect to daughters, the evil cannot be so great. The domestic duties of every family furnish sufficient employment to give a habit of industry to our daughters. And with these duties, it is disgraceful for any young lady to be wholly unacquainted; not less disgraceful, certainly, than to be ignorant of her alphabet; if the value of knowledge is to be estimated by its practical utility. Whenever a young lady becomes herself the mistress of a family, no matter how elevated her station may be, "looking well to the ways of her household" is her profession. What would be thought of the physician, or the pastor, who should enter upon his profession, ignorant of the duties it involved, because he was rich enough to employ a substitute? A knowledge of domestic duties in its various branches and operations, are indispensable for females, and mothers are held responsible, that their daughters acquire it, by a systematic and thorough course of training.

**Sojourner Truth, Address to the Woman's Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio (1851)**

*Frances D. Gage, a pioneer in the Women's Rights Movement during the early nineteenth century, recorded her impressions of Sojourner Truth's speech at the Woman's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851. Writing this reminiscence some 12 years after the fact, Gage tried to capture Truth's speech as she remembered it, complete with what Gage perceived to be Truth's manner of speech and actions before the audience.*

Reminiscences by Frances D. Gage

The leaders of the movement trembled upon seeing a tall, gaunt black woman in a gray dress and white turban, surmounted with an uncouth sun-bonnet, march deliberately into the church, walk with the air of a queen up the aisle, and take her seat upon the pulpit steps. A buzz of disapprobation was heard all over the house and there fell on the listening ear, "An abolition affair!" "Woman's rights and niggers!" "I told you so! "Go it, darkey!" . . . When, slowly from her seat in the corner rose Sojourner Truth, who, till now, had scarcely lifted her head. "Don't let her speak!" gasped half a dozen in my ear. She moved slowly and solemnly to the front, laid her old bonnet at her feet, and turned her great speaking eyes to me. There was a hissing sound of disapprobation above and below. I rose and announced "Sojourner Truth," and begged the audience to keep silence for a few moments. . . .

"Wall, chilern, whar dar is so much racket dar must be somethin' out o' kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf and de womin at de Norf, all talkin' 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talkin' 'bout?

"Dat man ober dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gibs me any best place!" . . . "And a'n't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! (and she bared her right arm to the shoulder, showing her tremendous muscular power). "I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And a'n't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear de lash as well! And a'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chilern, and seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And a'n't I a woman?

"Den dey talks 'bout dis ting in de head; what dis dey call it?" ("Intellect," whispered some one near.) "Dat's it, honey. What's dat got to do wid womin's rights or nigger's rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?" And she pointed her significant finger, and sent a keen glance at the minister who had made the argument. The cheering was long and loud.

"Den dat little man in black dar, he say women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wan't a woman! Whar did your Christ come from?" Rolling thunder couldn't have stilled that crowd, as did those deep, wonderful tones, as she stood there with outstretched arms and eyes of fire. Raising her voice still louder, she repeated, "Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothin' to do wid Him." Oh, what a rebuke that was to that little man.

Turning again to another objector, she took up the defense of Mother Eve. I can not follow her through it all. It was pointed, and witty, and solemn; eliciting at almost every sentence deafening applause; and she ended by asserting: "If de fust woman God ever made was strong enough to turn de world upside down all alone, dese women togedder (and she glanced her eye over the platform) ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now dey is asking to do it, de men better let 'em." Long-continued cheering greeted this. "'Bleeged to ye for hearin' on me, and now ole Sojourner han't got nothin' more to say."

Amid roars of applause, she returned to her corner, leaving more than one of us with streaming eyes, and hearts beating with gratitude. She had taken us up in her arms and carried us safely over the slough of difficulty turning the whole tide in our favor. I have never in my life seen anything like the magical influence that subdued the mobbish spirit of the day, and turned the sneers and jeers of an excited crowd into notes of respect and admiration. Hundreds rushed up to shake hands with her, and congratulate the glorious old mother, and bid her God-speed on her mission of "testifyin' agin concerning the wickedness of this 'ere people."

**Marriage Certificate, 1848**

This marriage certificate from 1848, detailing the respective marital requirements of husband and wife, clearly expresses male dominance and female subservience. Ironically, in that same year women's rights activists began their long struggle for equality at Seneca Falls, New York. *(Library of Congress)*