



“... there can be no reason in the world for denying to woman the exercise of the elective franchise, or a hand in making and administering the laws of the land.”

**Frederick Douglass**, African American social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer, and statesman, quote from an editorial in *The North Star*, July 1848

From colonial times women’s legal rights were extremely limited. Most states based their laws on those of English common law which stipulated that a woman did not have a separate legal existence. Women were legally tied to their fathers or husbands. A woman could not file a law suit or sign a contract on her own. In most cases, a woman could not own property in her own name or control her own earnings. In fact, when a husband died, his widow could not be the guardian to their under-age children.

By the time the Woman’s Rights Convention met in Seneca Falls in July 1848, few of these legal practices had changed. During that two day meeting, nearly 300 attendees - women and men - discussed and passed 11 resolutions addressing women’s rights, among them, the right to vote.

Frederick Douglass wrote editorials and spoke up about women’s suffrage.

Look through the news for modern examples of people speaking up for the rights, justice and dignity of others. Are any in the form of a news editorial or political cartoon?

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