

Suffrage Cantata Historical Text Sources

Movement 1: It Is Coming

“Deeply, deeply do I feel the degradation of being a woman. Not the degradation of being what God made woman, but what man has made her.”

– Lydia Maria Child, in a letter to Angelina Grimké, 1838

“But it will be said that the husband provides for the wife, or in other words, he feeds, clothes and shelters her! I wish I had the power to make everyone before me fully realize the degradation contained in that idea. Yes! He keeps her, and so he does a favorite horse; by law they are both considered his property...again, I shall be told that the law presumes the husband to be kind, affectionate and ready to provide for and protect his wife. But what right, I ask, has the law to presume at all on the subject? What right has the law to entrust the interest and happiness of one being into the hands of another?”

–Ernestine Rose, 1851

“I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is, that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy...All history attests that man has subjected woman to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasures, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought and says, the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior.”

- Sarah Grimké, from her letters on the equality of the sexes, 1837

“It is time we gave man faith in woman—and still more, woman faith in herself.”

– Lucy Stone, circa 1856

“We have all been thrown down so low that nobody thought we’d ever get up again; but we have been long enough trodden now; we will come up again, and now I am here. Now women do not ask half a kingdom, but their rights and they don’t get them. When she comes to demand them, don’t you hear our sons hiss their mothers like snakes? But we’ll have our rights...and you can’t stop us from them...you may hiss as much as you like, but it is coming.”

- Sojourner Truth, 1853, Broadway Tabernacle, New York City

Movement 2: Failure Is Impossible

Lyrics and narration for this movement were sourced and adapted from three sources: (a) the account of Susan B. Anthony’s trial; (b) the in depth essay below, provided by Autumn Haag who oversees the Susan B. Anthony archives at the University of Rochester; (c) Susan B. Anthony’s speech “Is it a Crime for a U.S. Citizen to Vote?” which is included in the essay link below; and (d) one of the many letters I reviewed in the archives at Rochester. As there are varying accounts online, the links below are to trusted resources recommended by Autumn Haag who oversees the Susan B. Anthony archives at the University of Rochester:

(a) A trusted account of the trial proceedings as there are many variations online, simply copy & paste into browser: babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.rslelb&view=Iup&seq=1

(b, c) In-depth essay, including Susan’s lecture. Simply copy & paste into browser: fic.gov/sites/default/files/trials/susanbanthony.pdf

(d) Letter dated July 31, 1869, from Susan B. Anthony to a “Mrs. Meredith”:
(University of Rochester special collections)

Haven't you a good word you want to say at the Tuesday pm meeting? If so, do prepare yourself and present it—Each and every young woman has a splendid opportunity to make herself heard in those meetings. She has ought to try her wings if she has them. She and the audience and especially the reporters will see and know. I feel very anxious that each woman shall try and develop all her speaking as well as writing talents. ...
Affectionately,
S.B. Anthony

Movement 3: A Woman's Place

The original lyrics telling the story of Ida B. Wells, Susan B. Anthony and the stenographer were based on Ida's account in her autobiography “Crusade for Justice” (1970, University of Chicago Press) and the full telling of when Ida B. Wells stayed with Susan B. Anthony in Rochester can be found in Chapter 27. A brief excerpt is provided below:

One morning she [Susan B. Anthony] had engagements in the city which would prevent her from using the stenographer whom she had engaged. She remarked at the breakfast table that I could use the stenographer to help me with my correspondence, since she had to be away all the morning and that she would tell her...and let me dictate some letters to her.

When I went upstairs to my room, I waited for her to come in; when she did not do so, I concluded she didn't find it convenient, and went on writing my letters in longhand. When Miss Anthony returned she came to my room and found me busily engaged. “You didn't care to use my secretary, I suppose. I told her to come to your room when you came upstairs. Didn't she come?” I said no. She said no more, but turned and went into her office. Within ten minutes she walked back again in my room. The door being open, she walked in and said, “Well, she's gone.” And I said, “Who?” She said, “The stenographer.” I said, “Gone where?” “Why,” she said, “I went into the office and said to her, “You didn't tell Miss Wells what I said about writing some letters for her?” The girl said, “No, I didn't...It is alright for you Miss Anthony, to treat Negroes as equals, but I refuse to take dictation from a colored woman.” “Indeed!” said Miss Anthony. “Then,” she said, “You needn't take any more dictation from me. Miss Wells is my guest and an insult to her is an insult to me. So, if that is the way you feel about it, you needn't stay any longer.” Miss Anthony said the girl sat there without moving, whereupon she said, “Come, get your bonnet and go,” and the girl got up and went.

The original lyrics telling the story of Ida's removal from her purchased seat aboard the train were based on Ida's account in her autobiography “Crusade for Justice” (1970, University of Chicago Press) and the full telling can be found in Chapter 2. I did take one lyrical liberty with history in this movement, as “man” is a better rhyme for “hand” than “men.” In reality, it took three men (not two) to move Ida from the ladies' train car for which she'd purchased a ticket—as you'll see from the excerpts provided below:

When the train started and the conductor came along to collect tickets, he took my ticket, then handed it back to me...I thought that if he didn't want the ticket I wouldn't bother about it so I went on reading. In a little while when he finished taking tickets, he came back and told me I would have to go in the other car. I refused, saying that the forward car was a smoker, and as I was in the ladies' car I proposed to stay. He tried to drag me out of the

seat, but at the moment he caught hold of my arm I fastened my teeth in the back of his hand.

I had braced my feet against the seat in front and was holding to the back, and as he had already been badly bitten, he didn't try it again by himself. He went forward and got the baggage man and another man to help him and of course they succeeded in dragging me out. They were encouraged to do this by the attitude of the white ladies and gentlemen in the car; some of them even stood on the seats so they could get a good view and continued applauding the conductor for his brave stand.

...When I saw that they were determined to drag me into the smoker, which was already filled with colored people and those who were smoking, I said I would get off the train rather than go in—which I did.

...I went back to Memphis and engaged a colored lawyer to bring suit against the railroad for me. After months of delay I...had to get a white one...and the case was finally brought to trial in the circuit court. Judge Pierce, who was an ex-union soldier from Minnesota, awarded me damages of five hundred dollars.

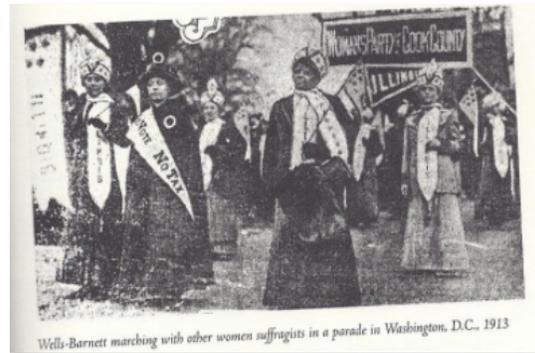
Declaration on the “demand” banner of the 1913 NAWSA parade in Washington, D.C.:

“We demand an amendment to the United States Constitution enfranchising the women of this country”

“We march today to give evidence to the world of our determination that this simple act of justice be done.”

-- Alice Paul, from the Official NAWSA Woman Suffrage 1913 processional program

Though Ida B. Well-Barnett's autobiography does not go into detail of her integration of the 1913 Women's Suffrage parade, there is photographic and journalistic evidence of the event, and an excellent account of the details of this event can be found in the book “One Woman, One Vote” (Ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, 1995, New Sage Press) A few excerpts from the book are below:



“As they lined up, Grace Wilbur Trout, president of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association and chairperson of the Illinois delegation, informed the Illinois group that the NAWSA advised them “to keep our delegation entirely white” because many women, especially those from the South, resented the presence of a black woman in the Illinois ranks.”

“When Trout pleaded with Wells-Barnett to march...at the back of the procession, she refused; [saying] “the southern women have tried to evade the question time and again by giving some excuse or other every time it has been brought up. If the Illinois women do not take a stand now in this great democratic parade then the colored women are lost.” ...But Wells-Barnett's pleas fell on deaf ears...angry at the blatant disregard for her right as a woman and Illinois resident...Wells-Barnett told delegates...”I shall not march at all unless I can march under the Illinois banner” because “[w]hen I was asked to come down

here I was asked to march with the other women of our state, and I intend to do so or not take part in the parade at all." One member of the group retorted, "If I were a colored woman, I should be willing to march with the other women of my race." Wells-Barnett replied, "there is a difference, ...which you probably do not see...I shall not march with the colored women. Either I go with you or not at all. I am not taking this stand because I personally wish for recognition. I am doing it for the future benefit of my whole race."

Movement 4: Shall Not Be Denied

*"We all believe in the idea of democracy. Woman suffrage is the application of democracy to women."
—Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, from her speech circa 1915, "China's Submerged Half"*

*"Now it is our turn. What are we going to do in answer to the call of duty?
—Mabel Ping-Hua Lee from her 1912 speech, "The Meaning of Woman Suffrage"*

*"When men are denied justice, they go to war. This is our war, only we are fighting it with banners instead of guns."
— Alice Paul, 1919*

*"Liberty must be fought for. And women of the nation, this is the time to fight."
—Inez Milholland Boissevain, 1916 "Appeal to the Women Voters of the West"*

*"You cannot be neutral. You must either join with us who believe in the bright future, or be destroyed by those who would return us to the dark past."
—Daisy Elizabeth Adams Lampkin, circa 1918*

National Woman's Party "Silent Sentinel" Banner Messages (circa 1917-1919):

Mr. President, What will you do for woman suffrage? How long must women wait for liberty?

To the Russian Envoys, We the women of America tell you that America is not a democracy. Twenty million American women are denied the right to vote. President Wilson is the chief opponent of their national enfranchisement. Help us make this nation really free. Tell our government it must liberate its people before it can claim free Russia as an ally.

We shall fight for the things we have always held nearest to our hearts. Democracy should begin at home. We demand justice and self-government at home.

Kaiser Wilson, Have you forgotten how you sympathized with the poor Germans because they were not self-governed? Twenty million American women are not self-governed. Take the beam out of your own eye.

Mr. President, How long must women be denied a voice in a government which is conscripting their sons?

Texts Regarding Imprisonment, Prison Abuse & Forced Feedings

Texts below (unless otherwise indicated) were sourced directly from the book "Jailed for Freedom" by imprisoned suffragist, Doris Stevens. These are primary source accounts of the women's experiences in the Occoquan Workhouse and the District Jail from 1917-1919. While not all the context for each fragment of text within the movement can be shared in this space, a few especially significant excerpts are provided below:

Excerpts from Alice Paul:

“Our meals consisted of a little almost raw salt pork, some sort of liquid—I am not sure whether it was coffee or soup—bread and occasionally molasses. How we cherished the bread and molasses, as almost every one was unable to eat the raw pork. Lucy Branham, who was more valiant than the rest of us called from her cell one day, ‘Shut your eyes tight, close your mouth over the pork, and swallow it without chewing it. Then you can do it.’ This heroic practice kept Miss Branham in fairly good health, but to the rest it seemed impossible, even with our eyes closed, to crunch our teeth into the raw pork.”

“all through the day, once every hour the nurse...came in, turned on an electric light sharp in my face, and observed me. This ordeal was the most terrible torture as it prevented my sleeping for more than a few minutes at a time. And if I did finally get to sleep it was only to be shocked immediately into wide-awakeness with the pitiless light.”

“I have never in my life before feared anything or any human being. But I confess, I was afraid of Dr. Gannon [the doctor responsible for Alice’s forced feedings]...I dreaded the hour of his visit.”

Excerpt from Elizabeth McShane (from 1917 court affidavit)

“At 4:30 that afternoon he returned, forced a tube down my throat...and swiftly poured down a pint of cold milk and eggs. I vomited in the midst of feeding but he paid no attention.”

Excerpt from Rose Winslow:

“Alice Paul is in the psychopathic ward. She dreaded forcible feeding frightfully, and I hate to think how she must be feeling. I had a nervous time of it, gasping a long time afterward and my stomach rejecting during the process...the poor soul who fed me got liberally besprinkled in the process. I heard myself making the most hideous sounds...One feels so forsaken when one lies prone and people shove a pipe down one’s stomach. Yesterday was a bad day for me in feeding. I was vomiting continually during the process. The tube has developed an irritation somewhere that is painful...The same doctor feeds both Alice Paul and me. Don’t let them tell you we take this well. Miss Paul vomits much. I do too. It’s the nervous reaction, and I can’t control it much. We think of the coming feeding all day. It is horrible. The doctor thinks I take it well. I hate the thought of Alice Paul and the others if I take it well. All the officers here know we are making this hunger strike so that women fighting for liberty may be considered political prisoners; we have told them. God knows we don’t want other women ever to have to do this over again.”

Excerpts from Mrs. Mary Nolan, age 73:

“...Suddenly the door literally burst open and Whittaker [Superintendent of Occoquan Workhouse] burst in like a tornado...Mrs. Lewis stood up to speak...she had hardly begun...when Whittaker said, ‘You shut up. I have men here to handle you.’ Then he shouted, ‘Seize her!’ I turned and saw men spring toward her, and then someone screamed...A man sprang at me and caught me by the shoulder. I remember saying, ‘I’ll come with you; don’t drag me; I have a lame foot.’ But I was jerked down the steps and away into the dark. I didn’t have my feet on the ground. I guess that saved me.”

“I saw Dorothy Day brought in. She is a frail girl. The two men handling her were twisting her arms above her head. Then suddenly, they lifted her up and banged her down over the arm of an iron bench—twice...they pushed me through a door...We had only lain there a few minutes, trying to get our breath, when Mrs. Lewis was literally thrown in. Her head struck the iron bed. We thought she was dead. She didn’t move...we were so terrified we kept very still...Mrs. Lewis was not unconscious; she was only stunned. But Mrs. Cosu was desperately ill as the night wore on. She had a bad heart attack and was then vomiting. We called and we called. We asked them to send our own doctor because we thought she was dying...The guards paid no attention. A cold wind blew in on us from the outside, and we lay there shivering and only half conscious until morning.”

Excerpt from a note Lucy Burns smuggled out of jail on a tiny scrap of paper:

“Dr. Gannon told me then I must be fed...I was held down by five people at legs, arms, and head. I refused to open mouth. Gannon pushed tube up left nostril. I turned and twisted my head all I could, but he managed to push it up. It hurts nose and throat very much and makes nose bleed freely. Tube drawn out covered with blood. Operation leaves one very sick. Food dumped directly into stomach feels like a ball of lead. Left nostril, throat and muscles of neck very sore all night...This morning Dr. Ladd appeared with the tube...Said he would call in men guards and force us to submit. Went away and we were not fed at all this morning. We hear them outside now cracking eggs.”

Excerpt from Mrs. Dora Lewis:

“I was seized and laid on my back...Dr. Gannon then forced the tube through my lips and down my throat, I gasping and suffocating with the agony of it. I didn't know where to breathe from and everything turned black when the fluid began pouring in. I was moaning and making the most awful sounds quite against my own will...”

Lyrics created by suffrage prisoners in the Occoquan prison workhouse, 1917, which they originally sang to the tune of a Scottish folksong:

*Shout the revolution of women, of women,
Shout the revolution for liberty
Rise, glorious women of the earth, the voiceless and the free
United strength assures the birth of true democracy
Invincible our army, forward, forward,
Triumphant daughters pressing to victory*

Movement 5: Forward Into Light

“By a miracle, the Nineteenth Amendment has been ratified. We women now have a weapon of defense which we have never possessed before. It will be a shame and reproach to us if we do not use it.”

--Mary Church Terrell, circa 1920

“Working women know their rights and proudly rise to face the struggle. The hour of their degradation is past. Women are no longer servants but rather the equals of men, companions to them.

--Jovita Idár (from “La Cronica”, circa 1911-1915, published in Spanish, translation by María R. González)

“Through weary, wasting years men have destroyed, dashed in pieces, and overthrown, but to-day we stand on the threshold of woman's era, and woman's work is grandly constructive. In her hand are possibilities whose use or abuse must tell upon the political life of the nation, and send their influence for good or evil across the track of unborn ages. As the saffron tints and crimson flushes of morn herald the coming day, so the social and political advancement which woman has already gained bears the promise of the rising of the full-orbed sun of emancipation. The result will be not to make home less happy, but society more holy; yet I do not think the mere extension of the ballot a panacea for all the ills of our national life. What we need to-day is not simply more voters, but better voters.”

–Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, “Woman's Political Future”, 1854

“Dear Son, ... Hurray and vote for Suffrage and don't keep them in doubt. I noticed Chandlers' speech, it was very bitter. I've been watching to see how you stood but have not seen anything yet.... Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt with her “Rats.” Is she the one that put rat in ratification, Ha! No more from mama this time. With lots of love, Mama.”

–Mrs. J.L. Burn, from letter to her son, Harry T. Burn, 1920

“Women be glad today. Let your voices ring out the gladness in your hearts. There will never come another day like this. Let the joy be unconfined and let it speak so clearly that its echo will be heard around the world and find its way into the soul of every woman of any and every race and nationality who is yearning for opportunity and liberty still denied her sex.”

–Carrie Chapman Catt, opening speech of the NAWSA convention, 1920

*“Though the morning seems to linger
O'er the hill-tops far away,
Yet the shadows bear the promise
Of a brighter coming day.”*

–Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, from her 1892 novel, Iola Leroy

“And so, lifting as we climb, onward and upward we go, struggling and striving and hoping that the buds and blossoms of our desires will burst into glorious fruition ere long. With courage, born of success achieved in the past, with a keen sense of the responsibility which we shall continue to assume, we look forward to a future large with promise and hope. Seeking no favors because of our color, nor patronage because of our needs, we knock at the bar of justice, asking an equal chance.”

– Mary Church Terrell, from her speech “The Progress of Colored Women”, 1898; the phrase “lifting as we climb” was later adopted as the motto of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs

Message on the banner carried by Inez Milholland Boissevain while leading the 1911 New York City suffrage parade, later adopted as the motto of the National Woman’s Party:

*Forward out of darkness,
Leave behind the night;
Forward out of error,
Forward into light*



**“TWENTY-SIX OF AMERICAS FINEST
WOMEN ARE ACCOMPANYING ME
TO JAIL ITS SPLENDID DONT
WORRY LOVE HAZEL”**

*–Hazel Hunkins Hallinan,
wiring a message to her parents in
Montana after being arrested at a suffrage
protest in Lafayette Park,
Washington, D.C.*

**“Let the hearts of the
women of the world respond
...and humanity will breathe freer
and the world will grow brighter.”**
–Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

