

## 6a - 'The Rights of Women'

Editorial by Frederick Douglass

*Among the 300 delegates to the Seneca Falls women's rights convention were 31 men, one of whom was abolitionist Frederick Douglass. While Douglass' primary objective during his life was attaining freedom and equality for African Americans, he spoke up repeatedly on behalf of women's rights. Following is an excerpt from an editorial that appeared in the July 28, 1848, edition of his anti-slavery newspaper the North Star in response to criticism of the Seneca Falls convention.*

We are not insensible that the bare mention of this truly important subject in any other than terms of contemptuous ridicule and scornful disfavor, is likely to excite against us the fury of bigotry and the folly of prejudice. A discussion of the rights of animals would be regarded with far more complacency by many of what are called the "wise" and the "good" of our land, than would a discussion of the rights of women...

Many who have at last made the discovery that the Negroes have some rights as well as other members of the human family, have yet to be convinced that women are entitled to any. Eight years ago a number of persons of this description actually abandoned the anti-slavery cause, lest by giving their influence in that direction they might possibly be giving countenance to the dangerous heresy that woman, in respect to rights, stands on equal footing with man.

In the judgement of such persons the American slave system, with all its concomitant horrors, is less to be deplored than this "wicked" idea. It is perhaps needless to say, that we cherish little sympathy for such sentiments or respect for such prejudices. Standing as we do upon the watch-tower of human freedom, we cannot be deterred from an expression of our approbation of any movement, however humble, to improve and elevate the character of any members of the human family.

[W]e hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man. We go farther, and express our conviction that all political rights which it is expedient for man to exercise, it is equally so for woman. All that distinguishes man as an intelligent and accountable being, is equally true of woman, and if that government only is just which governs by the free consent of the governed, 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.

Our doctrine is that "right is of no sex." We therefore bid the women engaged in this movement our humble Godspeed.

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