

Frederick Douglass

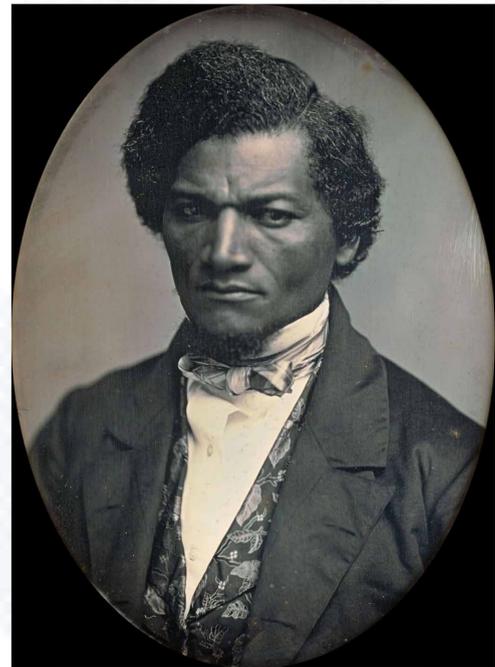
1818-1895



In the 1800's Frederick Douglass played a pivotal role in the debate about women's right to vote.

"I believe no man, however gifted... can voice the wrongs and present the demands of women with the skill and effect, with the power and authority of woman herself."

Frederick Douglass, 1888



Frederick Douglass around the time of the Seneca Falls Convention, ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

The word "suffrage" is derived from the Latin word "suffragium" meaning "a vote" or the "right of voting in the assemblies of the people."

In the Beginning

After escaping slavery in Maryland, Frederick Douglass settled first in Massachusetts and lectured for William Lloyd Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society. He later established an independent newspaper, The North Star, in Rochester, New York. One of his Rochester neighbors was abolitionist and suffragist Susan B. Anthony. He also collaborated with feminist pioneer Elizabeth Cady Stanton.



Neighbors: Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass in endless conversation near their homes in Rochester, New York. FINGER LAKES REGIONAL TOURISM COUNCIL

Frederick Douglass at Seneca Falls

Frederick Douglass's lifelong commitment to women's rights reflected a belief that rights should be universal, not limited by race or gender. He believed that disenfranchised groups should support each other. Douglass played a critical role in the 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention. Debating a number of issues, some delegates thought that a



Frederick Douglass is portrayed with fellow suffragists at the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York. Douglass participated in the first women's rights convention on this site and also spoke at the first "national" Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester in 1850. ALAMY

resolution on women's suffrage was too radical, beyond reach in nineteenth century America. Speaking forcefully, Douglass helped secure approval for a suffrage resolution.

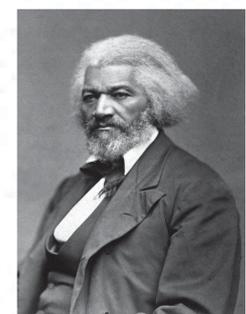
Conflict Among Allies

In 1869, the proposed Fifteenth Amendment provided voting rights for black men, but not women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton objected, "Surely there is no greater monopoly than that of all men in denying to all women a voice in the laws they are compelled to obey." Frederick Douglass favored ratifying the Amendment, arguing that voting rights for black men were a matter of life and death, while also supporting a separate amendment for women's suffrage.



After the Civil War Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, although dedicated abolitionists, objected to providing voting rights for black men if women's suffrage was not included. The issue split the suffragist movement. NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Frederick Douglass, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION



Fighting for The Cause

On the final day of his life, Frederick Douglass participated in a women's rights meeting in Washington, D.C. with Susan B. Anthony. During the meeting someone noticed Douglass rubbing a hand as if numb. Returning to his home, he died that evening of a likely stroke. Anthony was shocked. She delivered a eulogy at his funeral and read a tribute from Elizabeth Cady Stanton in which Stanton named Douglass a "women's rights man."



The Douglass home in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS