The First Women’s Rights Convention

Seneca Falls, New York
20 July 1848

Miami Model United Nations Conference
April 2020
Dear Delegates,

We are ecstatic to welcome you to MUMUNC XIII, and to our committee. Our committee this year is focused around the First Women’s Rights Convention, commonly known as the Seneca Falls Convention. You will be portraying the many women and men that attended the second day of the convention and were signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments.

Your chair is Sara Rainey, a sophomore studying Public Administration and Sport Management. This is her second year in Model UN, and she is currently the Undersecretary of Communications. Your Co-Chair is Ryan Barr, a freshman studying Diplomacy and Global Politics. This is his first year in University Model UN, but has participated since middle school. He is currently the Deputy Secretary-General.

We encourage you to do your own research in addition to this background guide, and the National Park Service has detailed information on the Convention here: https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/report-of-the-womans-rights-convention.htm
If you have any additional questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to us. We look forward to working with you all in April!

Best Regards,

Sara Rainey
raineysa@miamioh.edu

Ryan Barr
barrh@miamioh.edu
First Women’s Rights Convention

Origins of the Convention:
Organized by local families and activists, such as Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann M’Clintock, Jane Hunt, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Martha C. Wright, the Convention was organized in order “to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of woman” (National Park Service).

The Convention’s First Day:
The first day of the Convention, held on 19 July 1848, was open only to women. Men were able to attend, but were asked to remain quiet as the women discussed different points of women’s suffrage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton read the proposed Declaration of Sentiments, and then each point was discussed and amended. Other organizers spoke at different points throughout the day, reading from their own works or giving speeches about related points.

Second Day Plan:
For the second day of the Convention, all attendees are invited to participate in the discussion, specifically pertaining to:
   a. The Declaration of Sentiments and its resolutions
   b. Wider points of women’s suffrage, such as economic independence
   c. Women’s suffrage in relation to religious beliefs

With the main goal of amending, debating and signing the Declaration of Sentiments, attendees are challenged to bring a variety of opinions in order to present the most encompassing and convincing Declaration to the public.
The Declaration of Sentiments:
As proposed on the Second day of the First Women's Rights Convention

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 hath 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 world.

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 of divorce; 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 the 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 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 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 her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that 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 view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half 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 these 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 affect 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.
Signatories:

Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.

Lucretia Mott:
While attending the Quaker boarding school Nine Partners as a young child, Lucretia quickly realized the horrors of both slavery and the subjugation of women. In 1833, she founded the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society along with Mary Ann M’Clintock and 30 other female abolitionists. In 1840, while at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Their indignation at the fact that women were unable to participate due to their gender led to the talks about holding their own convention on women’s rights, which they followed through on eight years later, here at the first Women’s Rights Convention.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton
An eloquent speaker, Elizabeth was a very public figure in regards to women and their rights. After meeting Mott at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, she became even more involved in the fight for women’s rights. In 1848, along with Mott, M’Clintock, Wright and Hunt, she held the first Women’s Rights Convention, as well as authoring their Declaration of Sentiments.

Mary Ann M’Clintock
After founding the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society with Mott, Mary Ann soon moved to Waterloo, New York, where her and her husband would join a group of Quaker abolitionists that included the Hunts and the Pryors. Later, the group would found the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, joined by Frederick Douglas and the Posts. Some of the female members of this group then worked with Mott, Stanton and Wright to organize the first Women’s Rights Convention.

Martha C. Wright
As one of Lucretia’s sisters and an active member of the group of Quaker abolitionists in and around Seneca Falls, Martha helped to organize the first Women’s Rights Convention despite being several months pregnant. Some of her witty pieces published by a local newspaper were read aloud at the conference to demonstrate the necessity of the cause.
Jane Hunt
As a friend of many of the Convention’s leaders, Jane aided them by providing her house to be the meeting place for the beginning of the Convention’s planning. In her parlor, the women drafted the notices and planned out the weekend.

Harriet Cady Eaton
The older sister of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she attended the Convention with her son and Elizabeth. The Convention was almost unable to start on time, as the chapel they were to use was locked until her son was able to enter through a window and let the Convention attendees in.

Margaret Pryor
The Pryors were one of the many active Quaker families of Waterloo, along with the Hunts and M’Clintocks, that participated in many reform movements. Margaret thus attended the Convention with other members of the Quaker community and her son.

Amy Post
An active member of the local Quaker community, and thus very close in ideology to the leaders of the Convention, Amy played a role in helping the Convention proceedings. She led part of the second day’s discussion, as well as contributed to the publication on the Convention’s proceedings.

Lydia Mount
One of the more affluent, local Quaker families, Lydia attended the Convention with other members of the Quaker community.

Catharine C. Paine
As an advocate for the independence of women, Catharine’s actions, like signing the Declaration of Sentiments and adopting the Bloomer costume, demonstrated her commitment to the cause of women’s suffrage.

Elizabeth W. M’Clintock
An advocate for all forms of equality, Elizabeth played many roles in the Convention. She helped with aspects of the planning process, including extending an invitation to prominent advocate Frederick Douglass. She also published the Convention minutes and was on the proceedings committee. In addition, she was the only woman present at the convention with an occupation, as a clerk at her father’s drugstore, and made a point to advocate for more women joining the workforce.
Mary M’Clintock
Taking after her older sister Elizabeth, Mary participated in many of the reform movements in the local Quaker community. She helped with the planning of the convention, while also serving as their secretary and delivering the final address of the Convention.

Cynthia Davis
Cynthia likely attended the Convention with her neighbor and fellow signatory, Margaret Jenkins. She was active in the local abolitionist movement and was acquainted with many of the other attendees as well.

Hannah Plant
Another member of the active Quaker community, Hannah attended the Convention with family members, like the Hunts and Mounts.

Phebe King
She attended the Convention with other members of the local community, like Julia Ann Drake, and was likely active in the abolitionist movement along with many other signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments.

Julia Ann Drake
She attended the Convention with other members of the local community, like Phebe King, and was likely active in the abolitionist movement along with many other signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments.

Charlotte Woodward
A member of the local Quaker community, and suffering from her lacking opportunities, Charlotte was delighted when she learned of the Convention. She attended with many of the women in her neighborhood, and was encouraged by the high number of men in attendance to come back for the second day. She was also the only signatory to live to see the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, but due to her age and sickness, she was never able to vote.

Rachel D. Bonnel
Rachel was one of the younger generation of Quaker activists in attendance at the Convention, as she attended with other members of her family.
Rhoda Palmer
While she was not a Quaker by birth, Rhoda was active with many Quaker causes, like the abolitionist movement, and attending the Convention with many of the local Quaker families. She was the only female signatory ever able to vote, as she participated in the 1918 vote in New York after the state passed their own suffrage law, but she passed in 1919 before the inclusion of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Margaret Jenkins
A local Quaker activist, Margaret attended the Convention with many of the other families that signed the Declaration of Sentiments.

Rebecca Race
Rebecca was involved in a local temperance group, of which many members were signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments.

Mary E. Vail
As the daughter of Lydia Mount, Mary was part of the very active Quaker network of Waterloo, and thus attended with family like the Hunts and Plants.

Lavinia Latham
As a widow with 11 children, Lavinia, like many other signatories, wanted to be able to be economically independent and saw the path to that independence through suffrage. She attended and signed the Declaration of Sentiments with one of her daughters.

*The gentlemen present in favor of this new movement:*

Richard P. Hunt
As one of the richest and most socially active residents of Waterloo and the Quaker community, Richard lent his support to many reform movements. He attended the Convention with some of his extended family, like the M’Clintocks.

Frederick Douglass
Born into slavery, Frederick was one of the most well-known advocates of both abolition and women’s suffrage. He was invited to the Convention by Elizabeth M’Clintock, and participated throughout the second day.
**William S. Dell**
As the Dell family were active participants in the local Quaker community, William attended with his family and other Quakers.

**James Mott**
The husband of Lucretia Mott, James was active alongside her in the different reform movements, including the Convention. He helped with the planning, and was Chair of the Convention for most of the second day, the only time a male has ever been Chair of a convention for women’s suffrage.

**Thomas M’Clintock**
A member of the prevalent M’Clintock family, Thomas attended with other family members, like the Hunts, Posts and Pryors, and participated in the second day’s discussion.

**Jacob Chamberlain**
A local politician and activist, Jacob attended the Convention and signed the Declaration of Sentiments as part of his involvement in the community.

**Edward F. Underhill**
As a part of the younger generation of attendees, Edward attended with his aunt and started his life of activism with his signature to the Declaration of Sentiments.

**George W. Pryor**
The son of Margaret Pryor, George’s family were participants in many of the Quaker reforms, and thus he attended the Convention with them.

**Thomas Dell**
A member of the Quaker community and its younger generation, Thomas attended with his family, like his cousin Rachel D. Bonnel.