

Frederick Douglass's "New Departure" in the Reconstruction Era Woman Suffrage Movement

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African American abolitionist and civil rights leader Frederick Douglass has a well-deserved reputation as a supporter of women's rights. His close working association with women's leaders dates back to his attendance at the historic Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. However, this relationship was sorely tested by the acrimonious dispute in the early years of Reconstruction over passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to endow African American men but not women of any race with voting rights. How and why Douglass's commitment to woman suffrage survived the personal quarrels and charges of racism and countercharges of sexism with many of that movement's leaders are important historical questions. A close inspection of Douglass's activities in the early 1870s demonstrate that his faith renewed itself through his support for the suffragists' "New Departure" tactics that moved past old quarrels over the Fifteenth Amendment and into the nation's polling places where women heroically risked arrest to attempt to register and vote.

The runaway Maryland slave Frederick Douglass began his career as an abolitionist when he was recruited in 1841 as a lecturer by the American Anti-Slavery Society, led by Boston journalist William Lloyd Garrison. The abolitionist movement had recently split into hostile, competing factions. The antislavery followers of Garrison believed in moral suasion, nonparticipation in politics, nonviolence, strict Christian ideals, and significantly, the equality of men and women. Douglass was embraced by these Garrisonians who gave him a platform to deliver speeches and gain experience as a burgeoning reformer. Douglass believed in universal equality among all people and his activism reflected that belief. He recognized that oppression manifested itself in different forms: he was oppressed by racism and women were oppressed by sexism.¹

Douglass learned from female abolitionists early in his antislavery career, touring with Abigail Kelly soon after being hired by the Garrisonians as an itinerant lecturer. Lucretia Mott and Amy Post, two other Quaker abolitionists, also were important early influences. Their many talents enlightened Douglass about women's equality. When Douglass established his first newspaper in Rochester, New York, he displayed his commitment to the cause of women's rights through the mast head of his *North Star* that read "The Right is of no sex—Truth is of no color- God is the Father of us all, and we are brethren." Douglass attended the famous Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, the first women's rights convention in the United States where he gave a brief speech in support of woman suffrage.² The text of Douglass's remarks at Seneca Falls were not recorded but in his *North Star* he praised the proceedings as "characterized by marked ability and dignity."³

¹ Benjamin Quarles, "Frederick Douglass and the Woman's Rights Movement," *Journal of Negro History* 25, no. 1 (January 1940), 35.

² Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism & Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 40–41; Ellen Carol DuBois, *Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 11, 13; S. Jay Walker, "Frederick Douglass and Woman Suffrage," *The Black Scholar* 14, no. 5 (September–October 1983), 20; Quarles, "Frederick Douglass and the Woman's Rights Movement," 36.

³ *North Star*, 28 July 1848. Also see Quarles, "Frederick Douglass and the Woman's Rights Movement," 36.

Douglass regularly attended subsequent antebellum woman's rights conventions. In his newspapers, he endorsed the equality of the sexes arguing "the only true basis of right was the capacity of individuals."⁴ Douglass argued for woman suffrage from multiple perspectives. First he believed it was an inalienable right that the constitution guaranteed to all citizens, arguing that a man "should not dare claim a right that he would not concede to woman."⁵ At the same time, Douglass's arguments for woman suffrage emphasized that women had special attributes that men lacked: they were empathetic, more thoughtful, and their subsequent exclusion from the voting booth had a detrimental effect on the United States government.⁶ The latter sentiment perhaps caused Douglass to refrain from endorsing some other feminist reforms just as the demand for joint ownership of marital property, claiming "the husband labors hard, perhaps, while the wife lives in luxury."⁷ Douglass also implied that he believed winning suffrage for Black men held precedence over women's rights.⁸

In the antebellum era, African Americans and women shared the stigma of not being accorded full citizenship. Douglass could envision the two causes working cooperatively to achieve similar goals. The Civil War, however, would serve to push the two campaigns apart. Northern African American leaders, including Douglass, demanded and finally won the right for Black men to enlist in the Union Army. They used military service to strengthen their claim to suffrage and equal political and civil rights, embracing traditional gendered definitions of citizenship. Douglass forcefully argued that African American males "if he knows enough to shoulder a musket and fight for the flag, fight for the Government, he knows enough to vote."⁹

In contrast, the Civil War caused a setback for females who could not use military service as a claim to win suffrage. During the war years, the woman suffrage leaders regrettably decided to put their campaign on hold. In May 1863, Stanton and Rochester-based woman suffrage activist Susan B. Anthony held a small convention in New York City and organized the Women's Loyal National League (WLNL). The group's first meeting clearly endorsed a "war for freedom," but also obliquely supported woman's suffrage. The organization launched a petition drive coordinated by Anthony to demand a constitutional end to slavery. Douglass delivered lectures on behalf of the WLNL. By 1865, they collected over 400,000 signatures from women and men alike.¹⁰ The WLNL persisted in its work, risking negative reaction to the female activists' close

⁴ *North Star*, 11 August 1848. Also see Quarles, "Frederick Douglass and the Woman's Rights Movement," 37-38; DuBois, *Suffrage*, 28. One modern scholar, Helené Quanquin, describes Douglass as "a fixture at women's rights conventions" in the 1850s. However, she notes inconsistencies between his feminist professions and his personal behavior. She also cites evidence of his belief in separate roles for the genders and that the grounds of their demand for suffrage were different. Helené Quanquin, "Women's Rights" in Michel Roy, *Frederick Douglass in Context* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 176-77

⁵ Quoted in Quanquin, 176.

⁶ A. Kristen Foster, "'We Are Men!': Frederick Douglass and the Fault Lines of Gendered Citizenship," *Journal of the Civil War Era*, no. 2 (June 2011), 143-75.

⁷ John W. Blassingame et al., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series 1: *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, 5 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979-1991), 2:249.

⁸ Quanquin, "Women's Rights," 176-77.

⁹ *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 4:66. Also see Robert S. Levine, *The Failed Promise: Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass, and the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson* (New York, N.Y. W. W. Norton, 2021), 33-35; Hugh Davis, *'We Shall Be Satisfied with Nothing Less': The African American Struggle for Equal Rights in the North during Reconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 20, 22; Catherine A. Jones, "Women, Gender, and the Boundaries of Reconstruction," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 1 (March 2018) 115.

¹⁰ The American Anti-Slavery Society turned down a proposal from Anthony to send out lecturing teams composed of "a white man, a black man, and a woman" to generate public support for emancipation. Susan B. Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 10 October 1863, in Ann D. Gordon, eds., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton*

identification with the rights of the enslaved. Stanton related to Anthony in late 1864 that she was “happy to find Douglass on the same platform with us.”¹¹



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

Photograph, c. 1870. Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

The Union's victory and passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, persuaded women rights activists that the time had come to revive their movement. On Christmas day 1865, Anthony, Stanton, and Stone sent out a public letter calling for a new petition drive to demand Congress pass a woman suffrage amendment. After an effort by Stanton and Anthony to recast the American Anti-Slavery Society into a universal suffrage organization in 1866 failed, those women moved quickly to form the New York State Equal Rights Association. Douglass was an early, enthusiastic adherent of the new organization, writing Stanton: “Thank you for your letter giving me an account of the launching of the good ship ‘*Equal Rights Association*’ and the names and Character of her officers. No vessel like her has been given to the sea since Noah's Ark— Without the presence of woman the Ark would have been a failure. I have about made up my mind that if you can forgive me for being a negro—I cannot do less than to forgive you for being a woman.”¹²

and Susan B. Anthony, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997–2009), 45 reels (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 10:918; Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots Nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 101–22; DuBois, *Suffrage*, 49–53; Quarles, “Frederick Douglass and the Woman's Rights Movement,” 38.

¹¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Susan B. Anthony, 29 December 1864, in Patricia D. Holland and Ann D. Gordon, eds., *Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, 45 reels (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 10:918. The WLNL also sided with the more radical abolitionists like Wendell Phillips and Douglass against moderate voices such as Garrison in condemning Lincoln's sluggishness in pushing for emancipation and instead endorsed his replacement on the Republicans' 1864 ticket. Although not possessing the vote, women's leaders were learning to play the game of politics. James M. McPherson, *Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 2nd ed. (1964: Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 287–95; Faye E. Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59–60.

¹² Douglass to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 16 February 1866, Theodore Stanton Manuscripts, Rutgers University; Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 75, 82.

The New York group soon evolved into a national organization, the American Equal Rights Association, that brought together both abolitionists and woman suffragists who surprisingly opposed the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Republican congressmen had passed that legislation to protect African Americans from attacks on their civil rights by southern state governments sanctioned by the Johnson Administration.¹³ Blacks and abolitionists were disappointed, however, that the new amendment would acknowledge African American citizenship but do nothing to win them the franchise. Woman suffragists were offended at the insertion of the word “male” into the constitution through this amendment by apportioning congressional representation by the count of “male citizens.”¹⁴ Despite their efforts to lobby state legislatures against ratification, the amendment was ratified by Republican supporters in July 1868.

Tensions slowly grew between African American and woman suffrage leaders on how to work together on behalf of a further amendment to the U.S. Constitution. At the 1867 AERA annual meeting, when pressed if she would support congressional action that only enfranchised Black males, Stanton replied “I would say, no; I would not trust him with all my rights; degraded, oppressed himself, he would be more despotic with the governing power than even our Saxon rulers are. I desire that we go into the kingdom together”¹⁵ Perhaps statements by Black leaders like Douglass intensified the suffragist distrust of their alliance: Douglass consistently argued that the need of men for the vote outweighed that of women. In May 1868, at an AERA convention, he declared: “To the race to which I belong the ballot means something more than a mere abstract idea. It means the right to live and protect itself by honest industry. You women have representatives. Your brothers, and your husbands, and your fathers vote for you, but the black wife has no husband who can vote for her.”¹⁶ Concerned about Anthony’s and Stanton’s growing collaboration with the racist Democrats, Douglass and some other prominent pro-Republican Party members of the AERA, including Lucy Stone, and Abby Kelley Foster, formed the New England Woman Suffrage Association (NEWSA) in November 1868.¹⁷

The unexpectedly narrow victory of Republican candidate Ulysses S. Grant in the 1868 presidential election frightened Republican leaders who belatedly realized their need for Black voters to hold control over closely divided electorate in the Border States and the North.¹⁸ Most Republicans in Congress now became favorable to an amendment granting suffrage to African American males, but there was division in the party over the concept of universal adult suffrage that would have granted the vote not only to women, but Asian and other unpopular immigrant groups. With Democrats and pro-Johnson conservative Republican congressmen unanimously opposed to any national effort to define voting eligibility, Republican leaders also concluded that an amendment that went beyond enfranchising Black males would fail to be ratified.¹⁹ Douglass joined the chorus of African Americans applauding the Fifteenth Amendment’s congressional passage and endorsed its rapid ratification. He labeled the amendment the “keystone” in the

¹³ Eric Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution* (New York: N.Y.: W. W. Norton, 2019), 55–92; Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 83–87; DuBois, *Suffrage*, 59–82.

¹⁴ Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 80; Levine, *Reconstruction*, 259n.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 vols. (Rochester, N.Y. Susan B. Anthony and Charles Mann Printing, 1881–1912), 3:214; Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 98.

¹⁶ *New York Tribune*, 15 May 1868, as quoted in *Douglass Papers*, ser.1, 4:175.

¹⁷ DuBois, *Feminism & Suffrage*, 164–70; Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 163.

¹⁸ Foner, *Second Founding*, 93–98.

¹⁹ Foner, *Second Founding*, 93–108; DuBois, *Feminism & Suffrage*, 168–72.

“magnificent arch to bridge the howling chasm of slavery, over which four millions of bondsmen might pass to liberty.”²⁰

At what proved to be the final national convention of the American Equal Right Association in May 1869, long simmering internal tensions surfaced in acrimonious debate. Stanton attacked the Republican congressmen for their recent passage of the Fifteenth Amendment that if ratified would establish “‘manhood suffrage’ and ‘an aristocracy of sex on this continent.’” She then complained against the injustice of giving the vote to "Patrick and *Sambo* and Hans and Yung Tung" ahead of educated White women like herself.²¹ Douglass stood up and rebutted her with stories of African American males being lynched in the South, arguing that they had a more pressing need for the vote than any woman did:

When women, because they are women, are hunted down through the cities of New York and New Orleans, when they are dragged from their houses and hung upon lamp-posts; when their children are torn from their arms, and their brains dashed out upon the pavement, when they are the objects of insult and outrage at every turn; when they are in danger of having their homes burnt down over their heads; when their children are not allowed to enter schools; then they will have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal to our own.²²

Anthony responded angrily: “Mr Douglass talks about the wrongs of the negro...but all of the wrongs and outrages that he today suffers, he would not exchange his sex and take the place of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.”²³ Lucy Stone then made an address that acknowledged the merits of each sides arguments, but concluded by supporting Douglass: “Woman has an ocean of wrong too deep for any plum, and the negro, too, has an ocean of wrong that can not be fathomed. There are two great oceans; in the one is the black man, and in the other is the woman. But I thank God for that Fifteenth Amendment, and hope that it will be adopted in every state. I will be thankful in my soul if *anybody* can get out of the terrible pit.”²⁴ Douglass’s efforts to get the convention to pass his resolution to endorse the Fifteenth Amendment as “the culmination of one half of our demands” failed.”²⁵ With these acrimonious exchanges the woman suffrage movement would be split for more than two decades.

Within a few days after the AERA’s convention, Stanton and Anthony created a new suffragist group, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). The new group made its position known at its founding convention:

²⁰ New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 29 May 1869; *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 4:201; Hugh Davis, “*We will Be Satisfied with Nothing Less*”: *The African American Struggle for Equal Rights in the North during Reconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 63–66, 70–71.

²¹ Quoted in Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 179–81. For fuller descriptions of the contentious 1869 AERA convention, see DuBois, *Feminism & Suffrage*, 186–89; Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 176–82.

²² Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, 4:216. See also DuBois, *Suffrage*, 75–76; Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 80–82.

²³ Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, 4:217.

²⁴ Holland and Gordon, *Papers of Stanton and Anthony*, 13:504–05. See also Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 182. Douglass proposed a compromise to the AERA which would welcome the Fifteenth amendment and black male suffrage while also emphasizing the group’s continued dedication to the creation of an amendment that would guarantee equal rights for all. Douglass’s proposal was ignored by Stanton and Anthony. Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 178–80.

²⁵ New York *Revolution*, 27 May 1869, quoted in Quarles, “Frederick Douglass and the Woman’s Rights Movement,” 41. See also DuBois, *Suffrage*, 77–78.

Resolved, That while we rejoice in every step toward an end on the Continent, of an aristocracy of color, we repudiate the Fifteenth Amendment, because by its passage in Congress the Republican Party propose to substitute an aristocracy of sex, the most odious distinction in citizenship that has ever yet been proposed.²⁶

Soon after, Stanton's and Anthony's opponents led by Lucy Stone transformed the New England Woman Suffrage Association into the nationwide American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). The NWSA pushed for a broader—critics charged a more radical—platform of feminist reforms, including loosening divorce laws, while the AWSA stuck to a narrow suffrage-only agenda, and claimed to be the defenders of marriage against the Stanton group.²⁷ Most important to Douglass, the AWSA firmly endorsed the Fifteenth Amendment.²⁸



Lucy Stone. Photograph, c. 1886. Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

The rivalry between the new woman suffrage organizations created great problems for the movement they both supported. The AWSA's leaders attacked the NWSA's for advocating divorce law reform and "free love."²⁹ Anthony shot back that AWSA members were "sick unto death with propriety."³⁰ The race issue, however, remained the most divisive point in the woman suffrage movement. In the *Revolution*, Stanton editorialized that she regretted the "antagonism with [black] men whom we respect, whose wrongs we pity, and whose hopes we would fain help them

²⁶ As quoted in Walker, "Frederick Douglass and Woman Suffrage," 23. See also DuBois, *Feminism & Suffrage*, 189–99.

²⁷ Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 185–86. Not all AWSA leaders seemed free of racism, as Henry Blackwell, Lucy Stone's husband publicly appealed to southern states to enfranchise White women as a bulwark against the political power of black men would soon gain the vote under the Fifteenth Amendment. Walker, "Frederick Douglass and Woman Suffrage," 24.

²⁸ Walker, "Frederick Douglass and Woman Suffrage," 24.

²⁹ Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 200–201, 214–15; DuBois, *Feminism & Suffrage*, 191, 195–99; Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 181–82.

³⁰ Quoted in Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 218; Philip S. Foner, *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), 35–36.

realize.”³¹ Nevertheless, Douglass ended up aligned with the AWSA because of that group's stand in favor of the 15th Amendment which was ratified in February 1870.

Although a longtime friend of veteran abolitionist Stone, Douglass might have felt uncomfortable aligned with mainly social conservatives like Catherine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mary Ann Livermore and outside the circle of former radical associates like journalist Theodore Tilton and lyceum star Anna Dickinson who joined the NWSA.³² When both the NWSA and AWSA had their 1870 annual meetings in New York City, attendance showed the AWSA far more popular. Significantly, Douglass attended neither group's convention. Stanton later wrote about this low moment in the suffrage campaign that only a few friends “stood firmly together under a steady fire of ridicule and reproach even from their lifelong friends....and most of the liberals in the press.”³³

Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment allowed Douglass to campaign for woman suffrage without the worry of jeopardizing his long sought-after goal of obtaining Black male suffrage. To do this effectively, he needed to learn to look past or better forget the evidence of racism that the wing of the woman suffrage movement led by Stanton and Anthony had demonstrated in the battle over that amendment. Perhaps fortuitously, this time for a new beginning coincided with an important geographic and professional transition in Douglass's life when he left Rochester, New York, to relocate to Washington, D.C., to take up the editorship of the first Black-owned weekly newspaper in the nation's capital, the *New National Era*.³⁴ In this new theatre of reform action, Douglass would rebuild his support for woman suffrage.

In Washington, Douglass moved closer to the center of Reconstruction policy, involved himself in national political debates, and entered elite political circles. Symbolically, he bought a row house on A Street near the Capitol. While focused on national political issues, the *New National Era* was also the place for coverage of local Black voices and politics. The *New National Era* supported the Republican party, Radical Reconstruction, and significantly Universal suffrage. Douglass's belief in human rights and equal participation in society did not end when he got the vote himself in 1870. His politics were not only about how to make his life better, but his politics came from universal beliefs about liberty and natural rights. By October 1870, five months after the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, Douglass was able to editorialize in the *New National Era*:

We know of no truth more easily made appreciable in human thought than the right of woman to vote, or, in other words, to have a voice in the government under which she lives and to which she owes allegiance.... Woman herself loses to her own estimation by her enforced exclusion from the elective franchise just as the slaves

³¹ New York *Revolution*, 28 January 1869. See also Dudden, *Fighting Chance*, 3.

³² Historian Dudden notes that Tilton even invited Stanton and Douglass to a private dinner in his own Brooklyn home in an attempt to soothe feelings. Durden, *Fighting Chance*, 186; Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 217.

³³ Quoted in Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 218. Also see Washington *New Era*, 12 May 1870; Kathleen Barry, *Susan B. Anthony: A Biography of a Singular Feminist* (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1988), 223–24.

³⁴ Douglass was assisted in editing the *New National Era* by his sons Lewis Douglass and Frederick Douglass Jr. John R. McKivigan, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series 4: Journalism and Other Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022) 1:xxxiii–xxxvi; David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 524–25, 59–30.

doubted their own fitness for freedom, from the fact of their being looked upon as only fit for slaves.³⁵

In his *Era*, Douglass wrote specifically on the “Woman Question”:

[Women] bring with them the same considerations to public matters, that they give to household wants...the colored man has become so important a member of the body politic, let the colored women be prepared with the sixteenth amendment becomes law to co-operate in the various schemes which will be presented to their favor.³⁶

As a resident of the District of Columbia, the campaign for woman’s suffrage there would attract Douglass’s attention and help him forget past acrimony with that movement’s leaders over ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. Historically voting rights in the District of Columbia had been restricted to White males. Even after Congress abolished slavery in the District in April 1862, suffrage had remained the exclusive privilege of White men. In 1867, however, Congress finally extended suffrage to Black males. A lobbying effort in January 1869 by Stanton and Anthony to persuade Congress to extend the voting franchise to the District’s women failed.³⁷ Under the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1871, Washington was incorporated into a federal territory. There was a governor, an eleven-member council, both appointed by the president, and a twenty-two-member assembly that was locally elected.³⁸ Left out of Black enfranchisement, African American women in the District suffered discrimination on account of their race and remained second class citizens because of their gender.

At the same time, on the national level, the two competing wings of the women’s movement had trouble cooperating behind a campaign for a sixteenth amendment to enfranchise their sex. Many women instead turned to a more radical strategy of direct action by women to exercise the right to vote emerged. Historian Ann D. Gordon has expanded on a list begun by Susan B. Anthony of women attempting and sometimes succeeding to register and/or vote in elections in elections from 1868 to the mid-1870s. In some cases, these were actions by veteran woman suffrage campaigners across the north, but other instances included recently emancipated African American women in the South. A small integrated group of female residents of Washington had unsuccessfully attempted to register for municipal elections in 1869 before the creation of the District of Columbia’s territorial government.³⁹

³⁵ As quoted in Philip S. Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 4 vols. (New York, N.Y.: International Press, 1955), 4:231–32, 237. See also Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 532–35; Walker, “Frederick Douglass and Woman Suffrage,” 24. In the *New National Era*, Douglass advised African American women to be prepared to vote under a future Sixteenth Amendment. *New National Era*, 12 May 1870 quoted in Quarles, “Frederick Douglass and the Woman’s Rights Movement,” 42.

³⁶ *Washington New Era*, 17 May 1870. Also see Foner, *Frederick Douglass on Women’s Rights*, 91–92.

³⁷ Any male also could hold local office, without restrictions based on race. Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870–1929* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2008), 22–23, 26–27.

³⁸ “An Act to Provide a Government for the District of Colombia,” 41st Congress, 3rd Session, (Library of Congress, 1871), 419–20; John R. McKivigan, “Washington, DC,” in Roy, *Frederick Douglass in Context*, 47–50.

³⁹ Ann D. Gordon ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, 6 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997–2013), 2:645–54; *New York Tribune*, 2 June 1869; Carole Ione, *Pride of Family: Four Generations of American Women of Color* (New York, N.Y.: Summit Books, 1991), 106–12, 129–32, 175–80; Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 152; Nancy A. Hewitt, “Recasting Women’s Votes: Race, Region and Rights, 1869–1970” (NPS Webinar, 8 November 2018), 5–7.

While earlier voting attempts by women were publicized in sympathetic newspapers, this tactic won wide recognition as the "New Departure," when proposed in 1869 by Francis and Virginia Minor, husband and wife suffragists from Missouri. The Minor's constitutional theory was publicized in the *Revolution* and quickly attracted adherents. Stanton, Anthony, and other leaders of the new NWSA argued that by its very nature, citizenship now granted all natural-born Americans by the Fourteenth Amendment, conferred the right to vote on men and women alike. Their strategy was to bring the issue before the courts. Women would violate the law by voting illegally, be arrested, and then file suit. Hopefully, a sympathetic federal judge would agree with them and issue an order enfranchising all women. Perhaps the most significant NWSA advocate to endorse the New Departure strategy was Victoria Claffin Woodhull, a flamboyant editor and orator active in the ranks of spiritualism, labor reform, feminism, and "free love." The AWSA did not officially adopt the "New Departure" strategy, but Lucy Stone, its leader, later attempted to vote in her hometown in New Jersey.⁴⁰

The New Departure was rapidly gaining adherents when, as a Washington resident, Douglass attended the National Woman Suffrage Association's third convention in the District's Lincoln Hall in January 1871. Suffrage leaders Anthony, Woodhull, Isabella Beecher, and Paulina Wright as well as many congressmen and senators attended. Anthony and other speakers gave addresses advancing the New Departure's theory of woman's constitutional right to vote. Douglass was reported as briefly speaking one time at this convention, but his remarks were not recorded.⁴¹ Anthony convinced the audience during the last evening of the Washington Convention to endorse the New Departure. The gathering unanimously passed her resolution:

That it is the duty of American women in the several states and in the District of Columbia to apply for registration at the proper times and places for registration of voters, and in all cases, when they fail to secure registration, that suits be instituted in the various courts having jurisdiction of such cause to secure adjudication of their rights in the premises, to the end that their existing franchises shall secure general and judicial recognition.⁴²

District of Columbia lawyer A. G. Riddle then announced that he would present several women for registration in the next election and, if rejected, take their case to federal court.⁴³

Many NWSA delegates remained in Washington to launch a lobbying campaign of Congress. At the invitation of Massachusetts Radical Republican Congressman, Victoria Woodhull gave testimony before the combined Judiciary Committees of both houses of Congress chaired by Massachusetts Radical Republican Benjamin Butler. Woodhull argued that under the Fourteenth Amendment women already possessed the right to vote and all that was needed was

⁴⁰ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Women's Suffrage*, 2:407-16; Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1998), 98-100, 117, 119-20; Amanda Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution: Political Theater and the Popular Press in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 28-34; Mary Gabriel, *Notorious Victoria: The Life of Victoria Woodhull, Uncensored* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 1998), 136-38; DuBois, *Suffrage*, 83-90; Barry, *Susan B. Anthony*, 229-31; Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 30-32.

⁴¹ *Washington Evening Star*, 12-13 January 1871; *New York Times*, 13 January 1871; *New York Revolution*, 19 January 1871; Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 2:442; DuBois, *Suffrage*, 83; Gordon ed., *Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, 2:416n.

⁴² *New York Revolution*, 26 January 1871.

⁴³ *New York Revolution*.

for Congress to pass a declaratory act to that effect. Although Woodhull's memorial received national publicity and Butler supported it strongly, the Committee's majority rejected her reasoning.⁴⁴ Douglass did not attend Woodhull's precedent-breaking testimony or assist the lobbying of the suffragists in his new home city because he was busy attending meetings of the Colored National Labor Union simultaneously being held in the capital city.⁴⁵

Woodhull's advocacy helped intensify the national debate over the constitutional claims of the New Departure campaign. Douglass read an editorial seconding the suffragist's position in Theodore Tilton's Brooklyn new weekly, *The Golden Bough*, and announced his full conversion in the *New National Era*: "As a legal argument it is absolutely without a flaw. With a public sentiment at all favorable to the enfranchisement of women, we believe the courts of the country would readily adopt Mr. Tilton's reading of the Constitution, and declare women legally entitled to vote."⁴⁶ Douglass applauded the woman suffrage's maneuver to evade the necessity of passing a new constitutional amendment, declaring "It is wise for any reform to avail itself of any and every moral and legal force logically within its reach, by which it can attain a righteous end."⁴⁷

Douglass's reinvigorated support for woman suffrage was encouraged by contact with enthusiastic female allies in that cause from his new home in the District of Columbia. One of them was an old ally from the ranks of abolitionist journalism Mary Ann Shadd Cary. The Delaware-born Mary Ann Shadd joined the emigration of free blacks and runaway slaves to Ontario, Canada in the 1850s, and operated a newspaper called the *Provincial Freeman* for said community.⁴⁸ During the Civil War, she returned to the United States and settled in Washington where she taught Black children, enrolled at Howard Law School, and continued her activism. She wrote for Douglass's *New National Era* and lectured in public on issues dealing with discrimination faced by Black people, but also by women. Cary became involved in the National Woman Suffrage Association and actively supported an additional amendment that removed "male" from the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, giving women the full rights, voting, that came with citizenship. In 1880, Cary founded a suffrage organization called the Colored Women's Progressive Franchise Association in the District of Columbia that addressed the needs of Black women and groups segregated on race. Cary's association advocated for women ownership of companies, suffrage, school for Black children, and equal rights.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Women's Suffrage*, 445–47; Lois Beachy Underhill, *The Woman Who Ran for President: The Many Lives of Victoria Woodhull* (Bridgehampton, N.Y.: Bridge Works Publishing Company, 1995), 96–107; DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women's Rights*, 100, 122; Barry, *Susan B. Anthony*, 231–34; Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 42–46; Gabriel, *Notorious Victoria*, 82–87; Goldsmith, *Other Powers*, 251–54.

⁴⁵ Douglass also was preparing in mid-January 1871 to depart the United States as secretary of the U.S. commission to investigate the possibility of annexation of Santo Domingo, *New National Era*, 12 January 1871; *Washington Evening Star*, 12–13 January 1873; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 539.

⁴⁶ *New National Era*, 21 September 1871.

⁴⁷ *New National Era*.

⁴⁸ Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850–1920*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998), 19–21; Martha S. Jones, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All* (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 2020), 73–75.

⁴⁹ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 83; Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 28–29; Jones, *Vanguard*, 11–18, 73–77, 103–05, 117–18.



Mary Ann Shadd Cary. Photograph. Courtesy of National Archives of Canada.

Like Victoria Woodhull, Cary in 1872 gave a speech to the Judiciary Committee about women's suffrage. Cary then entered a "separate sphere"; she had to establish her credibility as a speaker and show that she belonged in the same arena as the men. In her speech, she pointed to the condition of Black women in America, the convergence of their identity as women but also as Black, showed that their experience was unique and differed from the experience of the White women and Black men in America. Just seven years prior, all Black people remained segregated from full participation in American life. But it was women, especially Black women, who remained the most alienated from all aspects of their status as citizens. Part of why Black men received the right to vote was through their service in the military during the Civil War. In her speech to the Judiciary Committee, Cary observed that Black women also served during the Civil War:

The colored women though humble in sphere, and unendowed with worldly goods yet, led as by inspiration, — not only fed, and sheltered, and guided in *safety* the prisoner soldiers of the Union when escaping from the enemy, or the soldier who was compelled to risk life itself in the struggle to break the back-bone of rebellion, but gave their sons and brothers to the armies of the nation and their prayers to high Heaven for the success of the Right.⁵⁰

Cary conceded that women take on different roles than men, but just because they assume separate roles it does not make them less of a citizen or that they should be denied the right to vote.

Cary was one of the African American women prepared to take power into their own hands and engage in direct political action. Women turned away from lobbying Congress for more amendments because men were reluctant to move on the issue, so they took a different path to agitate for their rights, petitions, and attempts to register to vote to gain support on grounds that would force men in Congress to push for an amendment that enfranchised women. These New Departure arguments led many women to try and vote at local elections because they believed they

⁵⁰ Mary Ann Shadd Cary, "Speech to the Judiciary Committee," *Mary Ann Shadd Cary Papers* (1872); Terborg-Penn, *African American in the Struggle for the Vote*, 39; Jones, *Vanguard*, 119–20.

already had the right to vote as enumerated in the Fourteenth Amendment when they were declared citizens.⁵¹ Cary soon found other women in the District of Columbia prepared to join her in these more confrontational tactics.

One such woman was Sara J. Spencer, a White suffragist who had been a teacher and journalist in New York and Missouri before marrying another teacher, Henry J. Spencer, and settling in the District of Columbia.⁵² As a member of the NWSA, Spencer gave speeches at national events in the 1870s and campaigned in the District for woman suffrage. As an officer of the Woman Franchise Association of the District of Columbia, Spencer organized a petition for women to be registered to vote in the first-ever election for territorial officials in the District of Columbia in April of 1871.⁵³



Sara Jane Clarke Lippincott. Painting, oil on canvas, c. 1850. Courtesy of University of Michigan Museum of Art.

These women’s petition stated, “We, the undersigned, citizens of Washington, D.C., believing it to be our solemn duty—a part of the allegiance we owe to our Maker, to our country, and to our homes—to exercise the right of elective franchise, hereby earnestly petition that our names be registered as qualified voters in our several districts.”⁵⁴ In line with the New Departure ideology, these women professed that they had the right to vote since they were citizens of the United States—citizenships included the right to vote no matter ones sex.

After an informal effort by some of the women to register the previous week, Sarah Spencer organized a meeting on 20 April 1871 at the Business College she operated with her husband to teach clerical skills to interested District women. The press reported an interesting exchange at the meeting where the signatories gathered: “But they say we women don’t want to vote, said Mrs. Spencer.” Another suffrage campaign veteran Emma Southworth replied “Oh, to be sure, they said

⁵¹ DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women’s Rights*, 114–38; Hewitt, “Recasting Women’s Votes” 5–7.

⁵² *Washington Evening Star*, 18 October 1909; DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women’s Suffrage*, 103, 126; Jones, *Vanguard*, 119; Rachel B. Tiven, *Biographical Sketch of Sara Jane Andrews Spencer*, in *Part III: Mainstream Suffragists—National American Women Suffrage Association*, <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1011002066>.

⁵³ Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 53.

⁵⁴ *New National Era*, 20 April 1871.

the negroes didn't want freedom, you know. Where's my pen?"⁵⁵ There was little debate or hesitation at this meeting over signing the petition observed the AWSA's *Woman's Journal* because "Women like these, who have struggled with the world and achieved success, don't need to discuss the woman question. They have investigated the subject in all its bearings, and see plainly what women need, and what the country needs."⁵⁶

Albert G. Riddle and fellow lawyer O. D. Barrett, both husbands of petitioners, were present to advise the women of their rights. Spencer noted that one member of the group from the previous attempt had been threatened with dismissal from her federal clerk's job. It was then announced that another of those women, Elizabeth E. Wilson, had already been fired. Unintimidated, more women announced that they were prepared to act.⁵⁷ By this time, the Congressional committee before which Woodhull had testified in January, had issued a report dismissing her claims that citizenship guaranteed women the right to vote. Noting that the women who persisted in the effort to register and vote in Washington were aware of this ruling, one historian described their attempt as "a self-consciously radical act of civil disobedience designed to bring their claims into court in the face of congressional disfavor."⁵⁸

Before presenting their petition, the group of women visited Frederick Douglass in his editor's office and asked him to accompany them to City Hall. Douglass responded to the invitation by exclaiming "Do you really mean it? Well, I believe in women's suffrage most profoundly. I believe in bringing the moral power of the country to bear in our nation's councils...The masses are more trustworthy than individuals. I will go with you. I know what struggle means."⁵⁹ Douglass accompanied the multi-racial group of women to City Hall in Washington, D.C. to register to vote. Douglass did not lead the women to vote; the women oversaw this political act and were the ones that presented the petition to the clerk, Mr. John S. Crocker, demanding to be registered as voters. Historian Waldo E. Martin observed that "As Douglass's feminist consciousness grew, he become more sensitive to the need for women to articulate and to lead their own liberation [because of] their personal knowledge of sexism."⁶⁰ Douglass's decision to take a secondary role in the political act was symbolic and reflective of his belief in women's ability to advocate for themselves.

The *New National Era* recorded sixty-three women signed the petition that was given to the clerk. Stanton and Anthony also published a similar, but not quite identical list of signers, in the *Revolution*. The local press reported on the event and named several additional women, the most significant of whom was Dr. Mary Walker, a trained physician who had worked in a Union Army hospital and was a rival of leaders of the National Women Suffrage Association. The Washington press coverage also reported Belva Lockwood, a Walker ally and a newly enrolled law school student, as playing a prominent part on the group's leadership.⁶¹

Besides Spencer, Walker, and Lockwood, the petition signers included a diverse collection of the District's female population. At least three black women participated: Amanda Wall, Mary Anderson, Ruth D. G. Havens, and Mary Anderson. Wall, an Oberlin graduate, educator, and wife of Orindatus Wall, was the first black justice of peace in the District. Havens was a long-time clerk

⁵⁵ *New National Era*; Boston's *Woman's Journal*, 29 April 1871.

⁵⁶ Boston *Woman's Journal*, 29 April 1871.

⁵⁷ *Washington Evening Star*, 19, 20 April 187.

⁵⁸ Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 53.

⁵⁹ Sneider, *Suffragists*.

⁶⁰ Waldo E. Martin, Jr. *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 145.

⁶¹ Theresa Kaminski, *Dr. Mary Walker's Civil War* (Essex, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2020), 211–12.

in the Treasury Department and remained active in the woman suffrage movement into the 1890s. Anderson's identity is obscure, although directories list her as a widow.

Among the White women inviting Douglass to accompany them were several long-time friends and acquaintances. The best known was Sarah J. Lippincott, the nationally prominent journalist better-known by her penname "Grace Greenwood," a long-time friend of Douglass's. Greenwood's mother, Deborah C. Clarke, in her eighties was another signer. When the latter was asked if she wanted her name on the petition, she responded "Yes, write it twice."⁶² Another petitioner was Douglass's friend Julia A. Wilbur, who had lived in Rochester in the 1850s and raised funds for his abolitionist newspaper there before relocating to Washington to work assisting freedmen. Douglass also corresponded and probably met with Josephine S. Griffing, an abolitionist veteran, member of the Women's Loyal National League, agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, and officer of the National Woman Suffrage Association.

Many petition signers had national reputations such as E. D. E. N. Southworth, a prolific novelist. Dr. Caroline B. Winslow the nation's fifth woman to have graduated from a medical college. Two sisters were among the signers, Dr. Susan A. and Sarah P. Edson, both of whom had been nurses in the Civil War, along with their mother Sarah E. Webster, who in her mid-eighties was the oldest petitioner. Also signing was Caroline Avery Riddle, Mary A. Riddle, Florence Riddle Bartlett, wife and daughters of Albert G. Riddle, the lawyer who had promised at the National American Woman Suffrage convention in Washington three months earlier to represent any women who attempted to register to vote in court.⁶³ Many others of these women had attended one or more women rights conventions or corresponded with the movement's officers and newspapers. Significantly, the Washington City directory lists twelve of the petitioners as clerks or "copyists" at one of District's federal agencies.⁶⁴ While young and old, black and white, married and unmarried, a Washington daily newspaper characterized the overall group as "ladies of respectability and social standing."⁶⁵

When the group reached the registrar's office in the Washington City Hall, they found it already crowded by males desiring to vote in the first territorial election just six days later. John S. Crocker, the clerk, refused to register them to vote, but voiced sympathy for their cause. There were reports that some women attempted to give bouquets of flower to any registrar that would add their names to the voting list.⁶⁶ The typically irrepressible Dr. Walker lectured men in the room: "These women have assembled to exercise the right of citizens of a professed-to-be-republican country, and if you debar them of the right to register, you but add new proof that this is a tyrannical government, sustained by force not justice."⁶⁷ Crocker eventually allowed the women to fill out applications to register but those applications were not accepted. The women

⁶² *New York Revolution*, 27 April 1871.

⁶³ *New National Era*, 20 April 1871; Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 40; Dubois, *Woman Suffrage & Women's Rights*, 126–27; Jones, *Vanguard*, 118–20.

⁶⁴ Biographical information on these women was found in *Boyd's Directory of Washington & Georgetown: Together with a Business Directory of Alexandria, Va. ...1867* (Washington, D.C.: Boyd's Publishing Co., 1867) and *Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia...1877* (Washington, D.C.: William H. Boyd Directory Publisher, 1877) as well as standard biographical directories.

⁶⁵ *Washington Evening Star*, 22 April 1871.

⁶⁶ *Washington Evening Star*, 14 April 1871; *New York Revolution*, 27 April 1871; Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 155.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Kaminski, *Dr. Mary Walker's Civil War*, 212.

who organized to vote were not arrested. Some of the same women attempted to vote in the 20 April 1871 election but all were rebuffed.⁶⁸

Sarah "Grace Greenwood" Lippincott left the most detailed account of her effort to vote. She admitted to fearing becoming a subject of ridicule and abuse, but explained why she persisted: "When the first step, the 'step that costs,' a step in the direction my own principles have marked out, is to be taken, I certainly cannot hold back without loss of self-respect." She doubted many men would have tried to vote if faced with such obstacles but encouraged women to be braver: "We must be in earnest; we must have calculated the cost, for such things *hurt*."⁶⁹

Douglass's *New National Era* reported on the event:

As they [the suffragists] anticipated, they were politely but decidedly refused registration, and, as they desired, the case is now in a form to be presented to the courts. The two purposes the ladies had in view are accomplished. They have proven that intelligent Christian women in Washington feel it their duty to exercise the elective franchise, and they have taken the first steps toward securing a legal recognition of their citizenship.⁷⁰

The *Revolution's* assessment of the achievement of the Washington women echoed Douglass's, declaring:

The first step towards securing a legal recognition of their citizenship has been taken, and an immense moral advantage thus gained by showing the world that Christian women of the highest standing and unimpeached respectability not only want to vote, but are ready to make all needful sacrifices to accomplish their object. The reform has now passed, partially at least, out of the phase of talk and entered upon that of work; women are showing that they can be fully relied upon, now that the moment for practical effort has come, and this of itself is an immense gain."⁷¹

The *Revolution* also observed the important symbolism of Douglass's assistance to this effort:

Frederick Douglass, whose long services have identified him with the friends of woman, and given him an enviable place, accompanied the women, applicants for registration, to the City Hall, feeling doubtless an elation of spirit at the prospect of the speedy emancipation of the sex akin to what he felt at the liberation of his own oppressed and downtrodden race. As one of the great emancipators of the age, with the memory of the prison-house in his soul, he was well and fitly chosen to accompany that little band of earnest women on their mission.

As promised, Albert G. Riddle took the case of Spencer and her compatriots into federal court in October 1871. He employed an array of arguments based on Natural Law, English Common Law, local District of Columbia statutes, but most of all the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment used by New Departure advocates to convince the Supreme Court of the

⁶⁸ Kaminski, *Dr. Mary Walker's Civil War*, 212.

⁶⁹ *New York Revolution*, 27 April 1871.

⁷⁰ *New National Era*, 20 April 1871.

⁷¹ *New York Revolution*, 27 April 1871.

District of Columbia to register his clients as voters. The federal court ruling, however, instead affirmed that those women were indeed citizens, but declined to consider their constitutional claims. Judge David Cartter held that without a change to the District's law specifying voters must be male, women could not vote. As a federal territory, such a change, would have to be made by Congress. A second case argued by Riddle's law partner, Francis Miller, on behalf of another of the women seeking to vote, Sarah E. Webster, against the District's election officers met the same fate.⁷²

The strategy of the New Departure ultimately was unsuccessful; the suffragist's court cases failed, and women continued to be denied when they tried to register to vote. Lucy Stone, Victoria Woodhull, Sojourner Truth, and hundreds of other women attempted to either register or vote but were repulsed. In 1872, Susan B. Anthony succeeded in casting a ballot in Rochester, New York. She was subsequently arrested and found guilty by a directed verdict from the bench. Anthony famously refused to pay the court's \$100 fine.⁷³ In the court case *Minor V. Happersett* (1874), Virginia Minor, the Missouri suffragist, and her husband sued the St. Louis register Reese Happersett after he refused to allow Minor to vote in 1872. Her case made it to the United States Supreme Court, and the court unanimously decided the United States Constitution did not include suffrage as a right of a citizen—women were citizens, but citizenship did not include the right to vote.⁷⁴

While woman suffragists' claims to the ballot advanced through New Departure tactics were still being litigated, the nation's political attention turned to the 1872 presidential election. Since passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the influence of Radical Republicans had been ebbing as northern public attention turned away from Reconstruction. A growing Liberal Republican movement both assailed corruption in the Grant administration and alleged "Negro Rule" in southern state governments. These Liberals defected from the Republicans and joined forces with the Democrats in support of a ticket of New York City newspaper editor Horace Greeley and Missouri Governor Benjamin Gratz Brown to contest Grant's reelection.⁷⁵

The issue of woman's suffrage was not the focus of the 1872 election. Most of the movement's leaders were well aware of Greeley's long-standing opposition to woman suffrage and actively campaigned for Grant.⁷⁶ The most significant exception was Victoria Woodhull, who decided to run for president that year for the Equal Rights Party, which she created to advance radical economic positions, "free love," spiritualism, as well as women's rights. The new party's convention selected Douglass to be her running mate as the "true friend of human liberty."⁷⁷

⁷² *Suffrage Supported by the Fourteenth Amendment: Woman's Suffrage Supported in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, In General Term, October, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: Judd & Detweiler Printers and Publishers, 1871), 3–73; Stanton and Anthony, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 2:587–600; Jones, *Vanguard*, 118.

⁷³ N. E. H. Hull, *The Woman Who Dared to Vote: The Trial of Susan B. Anthony* (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 63–75, 114–59; DuBois, *Suffrage*, 98–104; DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women's Rights*, 129; Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution*, 33.

⁷⁴ DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women's Rights*, 131–32; DuBois, *Suffrage*, 104–05; Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 41.

⁷⁵ Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 102–05; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988), 488–511; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 533–38.

⁷⁶ DuBois, *Woman Suffrage & Women's Rights*, 128.

⁷⁷ As quoted in Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution*, 67. Also see Gabriel, *Notorious Victoria*, 175, 178; Underhill, *Woman Who Ran for President*, 211–12.

Woodhull's presidential run did not gain much traction and Douglass ignored his nomination.⁷⁸ Instead, Douglass stumped vigorously for the reelection of Grant and advocated for African Americans to vote Republican. He believed a vote for the Republican party ensured progress towards equal rights, and that third-party or Democrat votes risked a reversal of the gains made under Reconstruction for African Americans and women.⁷⁹

After rulings in the mid-1870s demonstrated that the judicial barriers to New Departure tactics were unbreachable, the woman suffrage movement shifted back to lobbying legislative bodies to gain the ballot. Members of Douglass's own family enlisted in the suffrage campaign in the District during the 1870s. His daughter, Rosetta Douglass Sprague, and daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Murphy Douglass, wife of his oldest son Lewis L. Douglass, both signed their names to woman suffrage petitions in the early 1870s. Rosetta, her husband Nathan Sprague, her brother Frederick Douglass, Jr., and his wife Elizabeth Murphy Douglass also signed and circulated another petition to Congress for woman suffrage.⁸⁰ All of the petitions called for a new constitutional amendment indicating that the Woman suffrage movement had moved away from their New Departure tactics. Douglass's family members became part of an active biracial suffrage movement in the District led by Shadd, Spencer, Lockwood, Walker, Lippincott, and many other female activists who invited him to accompany them to City Hall that day in April 1871.⁸¹

By the mid-1870s, Douglass was a frequent participant at conventions called by Lucy Stone's American Woman Suffrage Association.⁸² He described himself to one AWSA gathering as being among the "colored men in the country who have not forgotten the rights of others in having received their own rights."⁸³ When the competing wings of the woman suffrage movement resolved their disagreements and merged to campaign for a new constitutional amendment, Douglass was again found at the side of Stanton and Anthony as well as Stone at woman suffrage conventions.⁸⁴ Many factors contributed to the ultimate reproachment but the New Departure Movement, especially his active cooperation with its advocates in the District of Columbia, had supplied a bridge for Douglass to rejoin the active ranks of woman suffrage campaign.

⁷⁸ In Washington, Belya Lockwood was the only one of the District's New Departure group known to have backed Woodhull. Lockwood would herself run for President in 1884 and 1888. Frisken, *Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution*, 190; Quarles, "Frederick Douglass and the Woman's Rights Movement," 42,

⁷⁹ Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 4:302–341; Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 533–34.

⁸⁰ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 46–47;

<https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/douglass-petition-woman-suffrage> ;
<https://usnatarchives.tumblr.com/post/172350590129/petition-for-woman-suffrage-signed-by-residents-of>

⁸¹ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 40–42.

⁸² Quanquin notes that by 1873 Douglass was attending and playing an active part in the AWSA meetings.

⁸³ Blassingame, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, 4:396

⁸⁴ In his third autobiography in 1881, Douglass declared: "I would give women a vote, give her a motive to qualify herself to vote, precisely as I insisted upon giving the colored man the right to vote, in order that he should have the same motives for making himself a useful citizen as those in force in the case of other citizens. In a word, I have never yet been able to find one consideration, one argument, or suggestion in favor of man's right to participate in civil government which did not equally apply to the right of women." McKivigan, *Douglass Papers*, ser. 2, 3:371.