

**Schroeder/US History**  
**Support of Woman Suffrage**

**The Solitude of Self, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1892)**

The point I wish plainly to bring before you on this occasion is the individuality of each human soul; our Protestant idea, the right of individual conscience of judgment; our republican idea, individual citizenship. In discussing the rights of woman, we are to consider, first, what belongs to her as an individual...

Secondly, if we consider her as a citizen, as a member of a great nation, she must have the same rights as all other members, according to the fundamental principles of our government.

Thirdly, viewed as a woman, an equal factor in civilization, her rights and duties are still the same-individual happiness and development.

Fourthly, it is only the incidental (situational) relations of life, such as mother, wife, sister, daughter, which may involve some special duties and training.

The strongest reason why we ask for woman a voice in the government under which she lives, in the religion she is asked to believe, equality in social life, where she is the chief factor, a place in the trades and professions, where she may earn her bread, is because of her birthright to self-sovereignty; because as an individual, she must rely on herself. No matter how much women prefer to lean, to be protected and supported, nor how much men desire to have them do so, they must make the voyage of life alone, and for safety in an emergency, they must know something of the laws of navigation...It matters not whether the solitary (single) voyager is a man or woman; nature...leaves them to their own skill and judgment in the hour of danger, and if not equal to the occasion, alike they perish.

We ask for the complete development of each individual, first, for his own benefit and happiness. In fitting out an army, we give each soldier his own knapsack, arms, powder, his blanket, cup, knife, fork, and spoon. We provide alike for all their individual necessities; then each man bears his own burden.

Nothing strengthens the judgment and quickens the conscience like individual responsibility. Nothing adds such dignity to character as the recognition of one's self-sovereignty, the right to an equal place...a place earned by personal merit, not an artificial attainment by inheritance, wealth, family, and position. Conceding, then, that the responsibilities of life rest equally on man and woman, that their destiny is the same, they need the same preparation for time and eternity. The talk of sheltering woman from the fierce storms of life is the sheerest mockery, for they beat her from every point of the compass, just as they do on man, and with more fatal results, for he has been trained to protect himself, to resist and conquer. Such are the facts in human experience, the responsibilities of individual sovereignty (freedom). Rich and poor, intelligent and ignorant, wise and foolish, virtuous and vicious, man and woman; it is ever the same, each soul must depend wholly on itself.

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