

# The Dinner Party Curriculum Project

## *Susan B. Anthony & the Suffrage Movement: A Companion Curriculum*

by Hannah Koch



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My goal in this project is to illuminate the life and work of Susan B. Anthony and the women of the American Women's Suffrage Movement. My hope is that a new understanding of the American Women Suffragists' role in history can provide a larger context for the work of Judy Chicago as an artist and feminist. I also hope to bring a sincere appreciation to the unfading tenacity and dedication with which Susan B. Anthony and the suffragists fought for American Women's Suffrage. These brave women fought an uphill battle in a way that is all their own, shaped by their strengths and their limitations. Their lives and work inspired future American movements including the Feminist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement.

This curriculum explores the life and work of Susan B. Anthony and the American Women's Suffrage Movement by following three main threads throughout the movement. They are *Collaboration, Activism, and Power and Empowerment*.

### *Why Collaboration, Activism, and Power & Empowerment?*

#### Collaboration



Collaboration is an essential thread for two reasons, the first being that collaboration is one of the backbones of Feminism. The other is that without collaboration the Suffrage Movement would have never existed. Collaboration among women, and sometimes between women and men, was integral on every level of the Suffrage Movement from rallies to parades, conventions to campaigning, and demonstrations to arrest. Working together, failure was impossible.

This portion of the curriculum highlights the collaborative relationship between Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the founders of the American Women's Suffrage Movement. Anthony felt that working together was imperative to the success of the Suffrage Movement. It seems as though her collaborative spirit was stronger than any of the other Suffragists. Anthony had a special relationship with Elizabeth Cady Stanton; both women speak of their partnership as one that allowed the strengths of each to complement and enhance the other.

The thread of collaboration continues throughout the Suffrage Movement. Alice Paul, perhaps the most significant American suffragist next to Anthony and Stanton, was also a great collaborator. Her formation of the National Woman's Party galvanized the Suffrage Movement in the 20th century and was responsible for ratification of the 19th amendment. Paul and her collaborators conspired together, were arrested together, and were victorious together.

## Activism

Activism, the second thread, played an enormous role in the American Women's Suffrage Movement, and Susan B. Anthony was a true activist at heart. She made suffrage her life's purpose. Anthony was so dedicated to "The Cause" that she spent her life ceaselessly touring the country working for the rights of women. Activism came naturally to Anthony as she grew up in a climate of activism and rebellion. Her family's background as influential Quakers and Abolitionists strongly influenced her belief in the inherent equality of women.

This portion of the curriculum focuses largely on the other leading activist of the American Women's Suffrage Movement, Alice Paul. Like Anthony, Paul dedicated her life to the cause of suffrage. However, Paul's methods were much more radical than those of Anthony or other earlier suffragists. Paul's relationship with the Suffrage Movement began in England, where she learned to use extreme practices to spread the message of equality and to demand suffrage. After returning from England, Paul became the tour de force of the last stage of the American Women's Suffrage Movement. Her leadership and activism won American women the right to vote.



## Power and Empowerment

The Suffrage Movement began at a time when American women had very little power over the matters of their lives. Married women had no legal rights to their children, property, or their wages. In 1848, a convention was held at Seneca Falls to discuss the rights of women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton addressed the audience and discussed the injustices towards women that she was determined to see change. One of them was the right to vote. At first, many in the audience considered women's suffrage a scandalous idea, but a while later; many began to see it as necessary. It was Susan B. Anthony who determined that without access to the vote, women's voices would not be heard. She and her fellow suffrage leaders saw suffrage as the essential means to the desired ends. They understood that the right to vote would give them the right to determine their own destiny.

This portion of the curriculum also investigates the many leaders and philosophers who were influential to the ideas of power and empowerment within the Suffrage Movement. Among them were the Reverend Antoinette Brown, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Matilda Joslyn Gage, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Frederick Douglass. These people inspired Anthony, but more than that, they were her peers and contemporaries. She was as much a part of their inspiration as they were of hers. Together they formed a new idea of power whereby women and men, black and white, are each empowered with individual rights, instead of only one group having most of the power and the rights.