

The American Civil War and Women's Citizenship: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the Women's Loyal National League

Serena Covkin

In March 1863, at the first meeting of the National Loyal League in New York City, lawyer and essayist James T. Brady identified two groups of people whose disloyalty most threatened the success of the Union war effort: Peace Democrats, or “copperheads,” who advocated for a negotiated peace with the Confederacy and “the women of this country.”¹ “If the women of the North had manifested that interest which the women of the South have,” he claimed, “thousands more white men would have been stimulated to their position in the field.”² In fact, according to Brady, northern women were at the heart of this “copperhead conspiracy” as well. It was largely in response to this challenge that, on April 10, 1863, abolitionists and suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton issued a “Call for a Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Nation” in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in the following month.

In response to the “many complaints of the lack of enthusiasm among Northern Women,” Stanton and Anthony encouraged their countrywomen to “lay hold of their birthright of freedom” and contribute more substantively to the Union cause. “In this crisis of our

¹ LeeAnn Whites, *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 25-26.

² *Ibid.*, 26.

Country's destiny," they proclaimed, "it is the duty of every citizen to consider the peculiar blessings of a republican form of government and decide what sacrifices of wealth and life are demanded for its defense."³ To Stanton and Anthony, this obligation of citizenship fell upon the nation's women as firmly as it did upon its men. In articulating this radical understanding of women's relationship to the nation, their goal was two-fold: to substantiate their claims to political equality and to challenge the widely acknowledged superiority of southern women's patriotism. Their own loyalty was, in their eyes, more genuine, based as it was on a deeper understanding of and fidelity to fundamental American democratic principles.

The meeting, held on May 14 and 15 of that year, resulted in the formation of the Women's Loyal National League (WLNL), a patriotic organization that pledged "to educate the nation into the true idea of a Christian Republic" by campaigning for universal emancipation and universal suffrage.⁴ Many historians, including Wendy Hamand, Ellen Dubois, Faye Dudden, and Christine Stansell, have written about the WLNL, but they have typically regarded the organization as little more than a footnote in a larger story of Stanton and Anthony's fight for women's suffrage. This approach, however, fails to account for how the universal rights argument for women's suffrage was fundamentally defined by the political climate of the Civil War, and particularly by an enduring competition with southern women. Moreover, this approach cannot adequately explain the league's success in popularizing abolition during the war. Analyzing the WLNL within the context of other northern patriotic organizations reveals the ways in which the league was able to capitalize on those other associations' novel re-interpretations of patriotic devotion. Additionally, the WLNL attempted to further re-define these patriotic standards in order to produce the political changes—namely, universal emancipation and universal suffrage—that they sought.

Indeed, the league was successful in its mission to effect popular support for emancipation, which constituted the bulk of its work. Only one year after its inception, the league claimed 5,000 members. By the war's end, almost 400,000 men and women—approximately four percent of the Union's total population and more people than had ever joined a

³ Call to WLNL Founding Convention, Apr. 10, 1863, *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* Microfilm, Series 3: Chronological Collection 1831-1906, M-151, Reel 10, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

⁴ Woman's National Loyal League, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic, Held May 14, 1863* (New York: Phair & Co., 1863), 53.

congressional petition-had signed their petition demanding that Congress abolish slavery.⁵ However, in the end they were unable to leverage their loyalty into a successful claim for their own political equality precisely because their self-interested war work was contrary to accepted notions of women's patriotic sacrifice.

Though initially the war threatened to divert attention from Stanton and Anthony's fight for women's suffrage, the opposite proved true. In 1862, they cancelled the Eleventh National Woman's Rights Convention because, as suffragist Martha Coffin Wright explained, "it is useless to speak if nobody will listen—and everybody now is absorbed in watching the course of our politicians, calculating the effect of every action on the future of the nation, reading with anxiety the act of battles, in wh. so many of us have a personal interest."⁶ Though that convention was indeed postponed until 1866, the WLNL presented "the first time in our history" that "the women of the nation assembled to discuss the political questions of the day"—the very issues, as Wright acknowledged, that captivated the nation in wartime.⁷ Indeed, the war presented Stanton and Anthony with a unique opportunity to expand their audience and realize their political goals.

Under the auspices of "loyalty," historian Ann D. Gordon explains, "War Democrats, Republicans, and abolitionists," like Stanton and Anthony, "could cooperate to mobilize the North."⁸ Patriotic language provided legitimacy. In addition to the National Loyal League, associations like the Loyal Publication Society (LPS) and the Loyal Union League had recently emerged as well; presumably, by naming their organization the Women's *Loyal* National League, Stanton and Anthony sought to take advantage of these men's organizations' burgeoning popularity.⁹ Moreover, this legitimacy enabled the WLNL not only to rely

⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. II: 1861-1876* (Rochester: Charles Mann Printing Co., 1882), 81; Wendy F. Hamand, "Woman's National Loyal League: Feminist Abolitionists and the Civil War," *Civil War History* 35, no. 1 (1989): 53-54, accessed January 15, 2013, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/civil_war_history/v035/35.1.hamand.html.

⁶ Letter from Martha Coffin Wright to SBA, Mar. 31, 1862, *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* Microfilm, Series 3: Chronological Collection 1831-1906, M-151, Reel 10, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

⁷ Woman's National Loyal League, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic*, 53.

⁸ Ann D. Gordon, editorial note in *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Vol. I: In the School of Anti-Slavery* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 480.

⁹ *Ibid.*

upon the membership of existing anti-slavery and women's rights associations, but also upon established women's patriotic organizations. For example, in response to their initial call for a meeting, the league received enthusiastic responses from the Ladies' Aid Society of Randolph, Vermont and the Ladies' Union League of Richwood, Ohio.¹⁰ It seems likely that the members of these groups, like thousands of northern women, primarily produced and sent needed clothing and supplies to Union military hospitals, much like their southern counterparts.¹¹ By joining the WLNL's network, however, they pledged themselves to more political involvement.

According to historian Melinda Lawson, in order to justify wartime expansions of federal authority, like conscription and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, union leagues fostered a new kind of patriotism. In place of traditional "contractual patriotism," which was predicated upon the state's fulfillment of its citizens' rights, this new brand of national loyalty was unconditional.¹² As Union General Benjamin Butler declared in a Loyal Publication Society (LPS) pamphlet, "A man must be either for his country or against his country."¹³ In another, historian Charles J. Stillé explained that internal dissent would inevitably arise in any democratic society waging a "war for the defense of a principle," but nonetheless anticipated "not only disarm[ing] the rebellion, [but] rid[ding] ourselves forever of the pestilent tribe of domestic traitors" who had attempted to undercut various American war efforts since the Revolution.¹⁴ The authors' harsh rhetoric underscored northerners' deep suspicion and fear at a time when the prospect of Union victory was still quite dim.

Northern women, in particular, were blamed for perpetuating anti-Union sentiment. Indeed, the anonymous female writer (later identified as Caroline Kirkland) of the LPS's tenth pamphlet, "A Few Words In Behalf of the Loyal Women of the U.S.," felt it necessary to defend northern women from the claim that "Had the women of the North with like zeal [to that of southern women] addressed themselves to

¹⁰ Woman's National Loyal League *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic*, 57, 62-63.

¹¹ Jeanie Attie, *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 3.

¹² Melinda Lawson, "The Civil War Union Leagues and the Construction of a New National Patriotism," *Civil War History* 48, no. 4 (2002): 339-341, accessed May 26, 2013,

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cwh/summar/v048/48.4lawson.html>.

¹³ Quoted in Lawson, "Civil War Union Leagues," 357.

¹⁴ Charles J. Stillé, *How a Free People Conduct a Long War: A Chapter from English History* (Philadelphia: Martien, 1863), 3, 16.

the work of encouraging a loyal and devoted spirit among us, the copperhead conspiracy in behalf of the enemy would have been strangled at its birth.”¹⁵ This accusation motivated the women of Bridgeport, Connecticut to create a women’s loyal league “unconditionally loyal to our government and its institutions,” which aimed to stamp out dissent, declaring unequivocally “those who are not for the government are against it.”¹⁶ They resolved to only purchase consumer goods from “those known to be truly loyal and patriotic,” to dress in “Union colors,” and to reprimand harshly every “traitor to his country” that they encountered.¹⁷ It seems reasonable that the women of Bridgeport acted so forcefully precisely because women had been criticized for advancing the copperhead cause.

In light of this new brand of patriotism, it seems all the more remarkable that the WLNL’s founding members were not unconditionally loyal to their government. The league supported a more powerful national government. For example, they supported conscription as “necessary for the salvation of the country, and cheerfully resign it to our husbands, lovers, brothers, and sons.”¹⁸ More importantly, they did not tolerate a political system that authorized individual states to decide whether or not to permit slavery; instead, they argued that the Civil War had “made it the *Constitutional right of the Government*, as it has always been the *moral duty of the people*, to abolish slavery.”¹⁹ In fact, it was precisely because of their fervent belief in the need for abolition that Stanton, Anthony, and their compatriots could not pledge their unqualified devotion, which frequently put them at odds with men’s union leagues.

To be sure, during the war, men’s union leagues began to support abolition, as well. Particularly after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, they began to view emancipation and African American enlistment as opportunities to fortify the state and its war effort so they advocated these measures.²⁰ Criticizing slavery also enabled the men to place the blame for the war

¹⁵ Caroline Kirkland, *A Few Words in behalf of the loyal women of the United States, by one of themselves* (New York: Loyal Publication Society), 1963), 1.

¹⁶ *Addresses at the Inauguration of the Women’s Loyal League of Bridgeport, April 17th, 1863* (Bridgeport: Samuel B. Hall, 1863).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Woman’s National Loyal League, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic*, 49.

¹⁹ Charles Sumner, *The Prayer of One Hundred Thousand: speech of Hon. Chas. Sumner on the presentation of the first installment of the emancipation petition of the Women’s National League* (New York: Women’s Loyal National League, 1864).

²⁰ Lawson, “Civil War Union Leagues,” 352.

squarely on the South, as the Loyal Publication Society did in pamphlets entitled “The Cause of the War” and “Emancipation is Peace.”²¹

To the members of the WLNL, however, abolition stood to bolster the Union war effort even more fundamentally. In their initial call for a meeting, Stanton and Anthony asserted, “No mere party or sectional cry, no technicalities of Constitution or military law, no mottoes of craft or policy are big enough to touch the great heart of a nation in the midst of revolution. A grand idea, such as freedom or justice, is needful to kindle and sustain the fires of a high enthusiasm.”²² The pursuit of universal freedom would give Union soldiers something to fight *for*. Moreover, the women of the WLNL felt that because slavery had caused the war, abolition promised to end it. WLNL member Ernestine Rose captured this sentiment when she proclaimed at the league’s first business meeting on May 15, 1863, “Slavery being the cause of the war, we must look to its utter extinction for the remedy.”²³

Thus, it was actually in an attempt to hasten the end of the war that the WLNL “pledge[d] [themselves] loyal to justice and humanity, and to the Government in so far as it makes the war a war for freedom.”²⁴ WLNL members pursued the same end as the members of men’s union leagues—namely, northern victory—but with an opposite understanding of the goal of patriotic support. Stanton’s opening remarks at the league’s initial meeting were particularly revealing: “In giving our pledge of loyalty to the Government, let us remember that true patriotism is not summed up in the motto, ‘OUR COUNTRY RIGHT OR WRONG’—a narrow, base sentiment, unworthy citizens of a true republic; rather let us, ever loyal to principle and God, choose that better motto, ‘FREEDOM AND OUR COUNTRY.’”²⁵ According to this understanding, unconditional patriotism actually contradicted the essential nature of republican government. By re-defining patriotism as, first and foremost, loyalty to American *principles*, the women of the WLNL hoped to create a society that would be more deserving of the title “a true republic.” At the league’s anniversary meeting, held on May 12, 1864, its members passed a resolution, “That until the old union with slavery be broken, and the

²¹ Loyal Publication Society pamphlets (17 and 22), Library of Congress.

²² Call to WLNL Founding Convention, Apr. 10, 1863, *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* Microfilm, Series 3: Chronological Collection 1831-1906, M-151, Reel 10, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

²³ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. II*, 74.

²⁴ Woman’s National Loyal League, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic*, 49.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

Constitution so amended as to secure the elective franchise to all citizens who bear arms, or are taxed to support the Government, we have no foundations on which to build a true Republic.”²⁶

In fact, according to the members of the WLNL, slavery had undermined the integrity of America’s political system even before the war began. Susan B. Anthony summarized this idea best, at the league’s first meeting:

We talk about returning to the old Union—‘the Union as it was,’ and ‘the Constitution as it is’—about ‘restoring our country to peace and prosperity—to the blessed conditions that existed before the war!’ I ask you what sort of peace, what sort of prosperity, have we had? Since the first slave-ship sailed up the James River with its human cargo, and there, on the soil of the *Old Dominion*, sold it to the highest bidder, we have had nothing but war...No, no; we ask for no return to the *old* conditions. We ask for something better. We want a Union that is a Union in fact, a Union in spirit, not a sham.

Instead of patriotically defending a pre-war way of life, WLNL members sought to use the Civil War to create a new society more in line with American principles of democracy and equality. Many wartime supporters of abolition perceived that the conflict afforded an opportunity to change the prevailing social and political system, but this conviction formed the very basis of the WLNL members’ patriotism. In their eyes, the Civil War promised a second revolution. In an 1864 letter sent to President Lincoln, the league explained that, in the absence of southern slaveholders, the government was finally “free to carry out the Declaration of our Revolutionary fathers, and ma[k]e us in fact what we have ever claimed to be, a nation of freemen.”²⁷ Lincoln himself, in his famed Gettysburg Address, promised “that the nation, shall have a new birth of freedom,” but Stanton and Anthony’s aspirations ran even deeper.²⁸ In April 1861, two years before the WLNL was even established, Anthony predicted that the war, this “glorious revolution,” could only result in emancipation.²⁹ Moreover, according to Stanton and Anthony, not only were women central to this endeavor, but womanhood itself would be transformed—by asking women “by the

²⁶ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. II*, 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁸ Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address,” accessed December 5, 2013, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=36&page=transcript>.

²⁹ April 29, 1861 letter from SBA to Wendell Phillips, Wendell Phillips Papers, Houghton Library.

magic work of freedom, to speak a dying nation into life," the WLNL would inaugurate a new "type of womanhood."³⁰

It was through their patriotic work that Stanton and Anthony elucidated the fundamental connections between women's suffrage and abolition. In the postwar society they imagined, all American citizens, including blacks and women, would have political equality. Northern women's interest in postwar reconstruction marks one of the biggest differences between their patriotic vision and that of their southern counterparts. If the South won, the Confederacy would survive as a separate entity; if the North was victorious, the southern states would be reintegrated into the Union and Stanton, Anthony, and their compatriots wanted women to engage in the "broader, deeper, higher work of reconstruction" that would require.³¹ As early as December 1863, long before Union victory was assured, Anthony had framed the women's petition for universal emancipation as they only way "[they] could have [a] voice as to what should be the basis of reconstruction of this government."³² She and her fellow activists only felt the need for women's participation in this process more deeply as the war's end approached.

According to historian Christine Stansell, in advance of the more equal postwar nation they imagined, Stanton, Anthony, and the other members of the Women's Loyal National League "will[ed] themselves into political equality."³³ Since women could "neither take the ballot nor the bullet" to make their views known, they took advantage of the one political right available to them, the right to petition.³⁴

At the same time, to further substantiate their claims to political equality, the women sought to demonstrate that they had accepted the obligations of citizenship. In their initial petition to Congress, presented by Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner on February 9, 1864, they recognized that because "With us, *the people*, is the power to achieve the work by our agents in Congress," they carried the obligation to make

³⁰ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. II*, 83.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Proceedings of Meeting of American Anti-Slavery, Dec. 4, 1863, *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* Microfilm, Series 3: Chronological Collection 1831-1906, M-151, Reel 10, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

³³ Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present* (New York: The Modern Library, 2010), 83.

³⁴ Proceedings of Meeting of American Anti-Slavery, Dec. 4, 1863, *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* Microfilm, Series 3: Chronological Collection 1831-1906, M-151, Reel 10, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

Congress aware of their concerns.³⁵ Moreover, they acknowledged, “On our own hands will be the blood of our thousands slain, if, with the power in our hands, we do not end the system forever.”³⁶ The women accepted every consequence of their call for inclusion in “the people.”

The WLNL’s stance on women’s participation in national politics was not only radical, but also threatened to undermine mainstream northern conceptions of women’s patriotism. According to this vision of patriotism, women were not obligated to the state as citizens, but as wives and mothers whose unpaid labors had been kept distinct from the market economy since the advent of industrial capitalism and its accompanying notion of separate spheres for men and women.³⁷ In *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War*, historian Jeanie Attie explains that it was precisely because women were allegedly the “least partisan and most virtuous members of the community” that their voluntary patriotic contributions enabled the Union to “clai[m] a unique legitimacy for the war.”³⁸ Even if many women did not perfectly fit this archetype, it was the prevailing rhetoric employed to describe the activities of thousands of northern women who sent clothing and supplies to sick and wounded Union soldiers through the United States Sanitary Commission.³⁹

The members of the WLNL were not the first to challenge this model of women’s patriotism, however. In fact, they constituted only one of a chorus of voices that, because of the conflict’s unprecedented scale and ideological nature, called for women to engage more directly with the war and the Union’s foundational principles. For example, in March 1863, northern writer and essayist Mary Abigail Dodge (writing under the pseudonym “Gail Hamilton”) denounced northern women for “not com[ing] up to the level of to-day.”⁴⁰ She opined, “They do not stand abreast with its issues. They do not rise to the height of its great argument.”⁴¹ In response to criticisms such as this one, northern women began to form patriotic organizations that would promote their more principled involvement in the war effort.

These organizations largely eschewed direct, material contributions. As Caroline Kirkland, the author of *A Few words in behalf of the loyal women of the United States*, wrote, “stitching does not crush rebellion, does not annihilate treason, or hew traitors in pieces before the

³⁵ Sumner, *The Prayer of One Hundred Thousand*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Attie, *Patriotic Toil*, 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁴⁰ Kirkland, *A Few words*, 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Lord.”⁴² Likewise, the members of the Women’s Loyal League of Bridgeport pledged to “encourage and sustain our brave soldiers by constant tokens of interest; but still more by the expression of our cheerful and unflinching determination to stand by the dear old flag till the day of its triumph.”⁴³ Though they never identified how this resolution would manifest itself, they believed that just the knowledge that northern women believed in them and their inevitable success would encourage Union soldiers in a way that supplies never could.

Even more striking was the Women’s Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries, formed in New York City in May 1864. The organization’s initial call exhorted women, “There is something more we can do for our country!” While they applauded the women who had provided the military with material contributions, they now asked women to “help our country by *not doing*, as you have hitherto helped it by *doing*.” The group emphasized that refraining from purchasing luxury items was assistance that even “we, non-combatants” could offer.⁴⁴ While women had instituted consumer boycotts in previous American wars, here they boasted that they had selected this particular form of service after involving themselves “in the financial affairs of the country” and determining “that we are sending gold out of the country at the rate of nearly \$2,000,000 a week, when we need it so much at home.” They claimed that their previous indiscretions (that “we have been thoughtless, heedless, extravagant in our expenditures”) had only been a consequence of their “ignorance.”⁴⁵ Now, they pledged to correct their behavior and offer crucial assistance to the Union war effort. Even if, in reality, this consumer boycott was not effective, their rhetoric illustrates how the war made women’s engagement in matters of policy more acceptable.

Widespread interest in encouraging women’s more substantive contributions largely stemmed from a perceived competition between southern women and northern women. Southern women were widely acknowledged to be more patriotic. According to Kirkland, however, this was a flawed premise. She argued that whereas southern and northern newspapers alike extensively covered Confederate women’s activities, northern women, more cognizant of their proper place in society, were

⁴² Kirkland, *A Few words*, 2-3.

⁴³ *Addresses at the Inauguration of the Women’s Loyal League of Bridgeport, April 17th, 1863*.

⁴⁴ Women’s Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries, *An account of the meeting of May 16, 1864, with addresses*, *History of Women* Microfilm, Reel 935, no. 7913, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

“especially careful *not* to get into the newspapers, whether good or evil.”⁴⁶ (Presumably this is why Kirkland chose to remain anonymous.) In fact, southern women’s “ferocious patriotism” was not only unbecoming, but was the “mere ebullition of that which has no support in reason or principle.”⁴⁷ Moreover, this misplaced passion had been at the root of the South’s secession and promised to doom its political project.⁴⁸ Slavery was inherently “unsexing,” and had transformed southern women into masculine, “low-bred” people.⁴⁹

Certainly Stanton and Anthony’s stance on women’s right to equal participation in national politics, not to mention their pursuit of publicity, also made them vulnerable to attacks on their femininity. Indeed, the proceedings of the WLNL’s first meeting revealed some members’ deep reservations about women’s involvement in politics.⁵⁰ However, the WLNL members’ investment in the principles of republican government also invited a favorable comparison with Confederate women, which helped protect them from censure. For example, Kirkland wrote of southern women’s storied wartime sacrifices, “[b]ut we cannot class such sacrifices with those voluntarily borne by our revolutionary mothers, for they suffered gladly in the cause of LIBERTY, while the women of the South have no higher incentive than the determination to uphold their husbands in the attempt to perpetuate SLAVERY.”⁵¹ She condemned southern women both because their principles were immoral and because their relationship to politics was mediated through their husbands. Indeed, it was southern women’s lack of conviction that had enabled the present conflict: “If it be true, as moralists declare, that women in civilized countries powerfully influence the tone of public opinion, how did it happen that women who must have known, at least, of these atrocities, did not insist on their being disclaimed and branded with a public stigma?”⁵²

This was precisely the role that the women of the WLNL embraced—to be the moral voice of the nation and, accordingly, to triumph in their moral and patriotic competition with southern women. However, unlike Kirkland, WLNL members *did* characterize southern women as being loyal to Confederate principles, and urged northern

⁴⁶ Kirkland, *A Few words*, 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-3, 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁵⁰ For example, see *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. II*, 58-59.

⁵¹ Kirkland, *A Few words*, 16.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 14.

women to work for their own principles with similar “zeal.”⁵³ Stanton declared, “We might learn lessons of wisdom from the untiring care and assiduity of the mothers of the South. How sedulously at every point have they guarded slavery, and trained their youth to love and honor the institutions of the South.”⁵⁴ By encouraging northern women to uphold their own “cherished principles,” she pushed them to surpass southern women’s successes.⁵⁵ Furthermore, by re-framing the competition with southern women in this way, Stanton also bolstered her call for women’s greater political involvement. She proclaimed, “The women of a nation mold its morals, religion, and politics; not by the sermons they preach, but by the lives they live.”⁵⁶ Claiming to uphold American principles was not enough—women needed to take action in order to wield their moral influence.

The members of the WLNL employed their presumed ability to influence their husbands and sons in order to justify their foray into national politics. This was most apparent in their May 1864 call for an anniversary meeting:

The work of the hour is not alone to put down Rebels in arms, but to EDUCATE THIRTY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE INTO THE IDEA OF A TRUE REPUBLIC...As the educators of future statesmen, heroes and martyrs, it is the duty of women to inform themselves on all questions of national life, that they may infuse into the politics of the nation a purer morality and religion.⁵⁷

If everyone agreed that “charit[y] must begin at home,” WLNL members argued that justice must, as well.⁵⁸ They argued that it was precisely because women were “independent...of party lines” that they could most ably recognize what needed improvement.⁵⁹ Moreover, according to Stanton, this obligation transcended this particular conflict—to teach the nation “the first principles of human rights” was the task of the “woman of the [nineteenth] century.”⁶⁰

⁵³ Woman’s National Loyal League, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic*, 7-8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁷ Women’s Loyal National League, *Anniversary of the Women’s Loyal National League*.

⁵⁸ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. II*, 77.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶⁰ Woman’s Loyal National League, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic*, 9-10.

The WLNL further defended their involvement in politics by extolling the role of religion in American democracy and in women's "separate sphere." For example, they frequently referred to America as a "*Christian Republic* [emphasis added]."⁶¹ At the league's first meeting, Angelina Grimké Weld characterized the Declaration of Independence as the manifestation of Jesus' "great doctrine of brotherhood and equality."⁶² Furthermore, according to Weld, the "most fearful thing in this rebellion" was that "the South ha[d] incorporated slavery into her religion."⁶³ Perhaps, by emphasizing the Christian roots of American democracy, WLNL members hoped to cast aspersions on the celebrated religiosity of southern women and undermine the Confederacy's religious justification for its slave republic.

Though framing their activities in these ways certainly helped the WLNL gain wider acceptance, it also appears that they genuinely saw value in their educational role. For example, they described their emancipation petitions as a "mode of teaching."⁶⁴ Each petition was mailed with an "accompanying tract" meant to enlighten everyone who received one.⁶⁵ The league also offered an educational prize to whoever collected the most petition signatures—a "bound copy of each of the two celebrated and recently published works of Augustin Cochin on slavery, and Emancipation."⁶⁶ Furthermore, they deliberately reached out to boys and girls under the age of 18, too young to sign the petitions, offering them membership badges if they helped collect enough signatures or donations.⁶⁷

If the women hoped to improve American politics by inculcating these values in the nation's citizens, they also sought to provide a model for a truer democracy in their own organization. They envisioned their association as a national one, and thus mailed petitions to women in every northern state and asked them "to initiate and organize Auxiliary Leagues in [their] town or neighborhood."⁶⁸ This degree of assistance was imperative if they were to succeed in collecting one million signatures on their petitions (and even to collect the 400,000 signatures that they

⁶¹ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Women Suffrage, Vol. II*, 81.

⁶² Woman's Loyal National League, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic*, 11.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁴ Letter from Susan B. Anthony to Charles Sumner, Women's Loyal National League, *Anniversary of the Women's Loyal National League*.

⁶⁵ Women's Loyal National League Circular, June 20, 1863, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

did).⁶⁹ Even this goal was unparalleled; never before had any group sought to communicate the convictions of so many American citizens. Accordingly, the league also sought to minimize any financial barriers to participation; while their membership dues were higher, they requested only one penny per signature in order to cover the cost of postage.⁷⁰ As Elizabeth Cady explained, strengthening democracy in this way marked one of the league's greatest successes: "Through us, two hundred thousand people—the labor and virtue of the Republic—have spoken in our national Capitol, where their voices were never heard before."⁷¹

Thus, when Charles Sumner submitted the league's petition to Congress on February 9, 1864, he took great care to emphasize the organization's broad appeal to men and women from different states and socioeconomic status, a claim that was particularly salient to a nation torn apart by regional and class conflicts. He wrote,

They are from all parts of the country and from every condition of life. They are from the sea-board, fanned by the free airs of the ocean, and from the Mississippi and the prairies of the West, fanned by the free airs which fertilize that extensive region. They are from the families of the educated and uneducated, rich and poor, of every profession, business, and calling in life, representing every sentiment, thought, hope, passion, activity, intelligence which inspires, strengthens, and adorns our social system.⁷²

This new, supposedly comprehensive sample of Americans' opinions seemed to indicate that the nation was actually more unified than it appeared. The women of the WLNL believed that demonstrating the virtue of this more inclusive political system would ensure it would be implemented after the war.

In hopes of effectuating this postwar vision, the members of the WLNL pledged, at their anniversary meeting in May 1864, to continue their patriotic work even after the war's conclusion:

This is the only organization of women that will have a legitimate cause for existence beyond the present hour. The Sanitary, Soldiers' Aid, Hospital, and Freedmen's Societies will end with the war; but the soldier and the negro in peace have yet to be educated into the duties

⁶⁹ Women's Loyal National League Circular, June 20, 1863, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ From the WLNL's anniversary meeting, held on May 12, 1864, *History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. II*, 82 (the league had collected 200,000 signatures up until that point).

⁷² Sumner, *The Prayer of One Hundred Thousand*.

of citizens in a republic, and our legislators to be stimulated by a higher law than temporary policy.⁷³

The WLNL did not outlast the war; in fact, it dissolved months before the Confederate surrender at Appomattox. In August 1864, as soon it became apparent to the league's members that slavery would be abolished, they discontinued their patriotic work.⁷⁴ Their own political equality, however, was far from assured. Patriotic language had enabled Stanton and Anthony to combine their abolitionist and suffragist agendas; after the Women's Loyal National League disbanded, it was simple for politicians to concede to abolitionist demands while continuing to ignore women's suffrage.

In May 1866, Stanton, Anthony, and their compatriots built upon the connections they had established through the WLNL between the abolition and women's suffrage movements and created the joint American Equal Rights Association (AERA).⁷⁵ It was through these auspices that they circulated "A Petition for Universal Suffrage," which, according to historian Susan Zaeske, marked the first time that suffragists had petitioned Congress on their own behalf.⁷⁶

Their efforts were unsuccessful—the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution, adopted on February 3, 1870, granted only black men the right to vote. The suffragists were incredibly disappointed and, thereafter, "never again understood women's cause to be merged with that of African Americans."⁷⁷

The members of the Women's Loyal National League claimed to "have done as much to kill the rebellion, by educating the people for the final blow, as any other organization, civil, political, military, or religious in the land."⁷⁸ It was only natural, they believed, to be rewarded with political equality. Alas, though the members of the Women's Loyal National League employed patriotic language to fight for the rights of others, they proved unable to leverage their loyalty to lay claim to their own equal citizenship. Even the most politicized women in the Civil War, precisely because their patriotism was so politicized, could not share in the blessings of Union victory.

⁷³ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. II, 87.

⁷⁴ Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony: Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters and Many from Her Contemporaries During Fifty Years*, Vol. I (Indianapolis: The Hollenbeck Press, 1898), 238.

⁷⁵ Stansell, *Feminist Promise*, 85.

⁷⁶ Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitions, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 179.

⁷⁷ Stansell, *Feminist Promise*, 92.

⁷⁸ Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. II, 83.

Sources

- Addresses at the Inauguration of the Women's Loyal League of Bridgeport, April 17th, 1863.* Bridgeport: Samuel B. Hall, 1863.
- Against an Aristocracy of Sex, 1866 to 1873.* Vol. II of *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Anthony, Susan B., Papers. Microfilm Collection. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
- Attie, Jeanie. *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Bates, Daisy. Foreword to *Women in the Life and Time of Abraham Lincoln* by Women's Loyal National League. New York: Emma Lazarus Federation of Women's Clubs, 1963.
- Cramer, Janet M. "For Women and the War: A Cultural Analysis of the *Mayflower*, 1861-1864." In *The Civil War and the Press*, edited by David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Debra Reddin van Tuyl, 209-226. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000.
- Dicken-Garcia, Hazel and Janet M. Cramer. "Images of Women in Civil War Newspapers: Leave the 'Proper Sphere.'" In *The Civil War and the Press*, edited by David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Debra Reddin van Tuyl, 257-274. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000.
- DuBois, Ellen Carol. *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-69.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Gage, Matilda Joslyn, Papers. Microfilm Collection. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, MA.
- Giesberg, Judith. *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Gordon, Ann D., ed. *In the School of Anti-Slavery, 1840 to 1866.* Vol. I of *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Gullace, Nicoletta F. *"The Blood of Our Sons": Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Hamand, Wendy F. "The Woman's National Loyal League: Feminist Abolitionists and the Civil War." *Civil War History* 35, no. 1 (1989): 39-58. Accessed January 15, 2013. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/civil_war_history/v035/35.1.hamand.html.

- Harper, Ida Husted. *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony: Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters and Many From Her Contemporaries During Fifty Years, Vol. I*. Indianapolis: The Hollenbeck Press, 1898.
- History of Women. Microfilm Collection. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, MA.
- Howe, Julia Ward, Papers. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
- Kerber, Linda K. *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1998.
- Kirkland, Caroline. *A Few words in behalf of the loyal women of the United States, by one of themselves*. New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1963.
- Lawson, Melinda. "The Civil War Union Leagues and the Construction of a New National Patriotism." *Civil War History* 48, no. 4 (2002): 338-362. Accessed May 26, 2013.
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cwh/summary/v048/48.4lawson.html>.
- Loyal Publication Society. *Pamphlets*. New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1864.
- Pamphlets and reprints*. New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1866.
- Phillips, Wendell, Letters. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, MA.
- Papers. Microfilm Collection. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, MA.
- Rayner, D. "A special meeting," *Cleveland Morning Leader*, March 26, 1864, accessed January 15, 2013,
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035143/1864-03-26/ed-1/seq-4/>.
- Silber, Nina. *Gender and the Sectional Conflict*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Stansell, Christine. *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present*. New York: The Modern Library, 2010.
- Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, Papers. Microfilm Collection. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
- Stanton, Elizabeth Cady and Susan B. Anthony, Papers. Microfilm Collection. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, MA.
- Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds. *Volume I: 1848-1861*, Vol. I of *History of Woman Suffrage*. 2nd ed. Rochester: Charles Mann Printing Co., 1889.
- Stillé, Charles J. *How a Free People Conduct a Long War: A Chapter from English History*. Philadelphia: Martien, 1863.
- Sumner, Charles, Correspondence, 1841-1874. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

- The Prayer of One Hundred Thousand: Speech of Hon. Chas. Sumner on the Presentation of the First Installment of the Emancipation Petition of the Women's National League.* New York: Women's Loyal National League, 1864.
- Tetrault, Lisa. "We Shall Be Remembered: Susan B. Anthony and the Politics of Writing History." In *Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights*, edited by Christine L. Ridarsky and Mary M. Huth. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012.
- Venet, Wendy Hamand. *Neither Ballots nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991.
- Volume II: 1861-1876*, Vol. II of *History of Woman Suffrage*. Rochester: Charles Mann Printing Co., 1882.
- Wendell Phillips Papers (MS Am 1953). Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
- Women's Loyal National League, *Anniversary of the Women's Loyal National League*, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
- Women's Loyal National League Circular. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
- Women's National Loyal League. *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Loyal Women of the Republic, Held in New York, May 14, 1863.* New York: Phair & Co., 1863.
- Zaeske, Susan. *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitions, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.