2008

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April 18, 2008

"Martha, keep your lamp trimmed and burning, and press in through that constitutional door the moment it is opened for the admission of Sambo."[1] Elizabeth Cady Stanton penned these words in 1865. As the Civil War was drawing to a close, she and the other advocates of woman suffrage believed that victory was at hand. They had allies in high places and invoked the same natural-rights principles that would soon win the ballot for the newly emancipated slaves. But something was wrong with their calculations. When the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments opened the "constitutional door" for the freedmen, women of all races were left standing outside.

Historians point to many factors that led to the failure of the early woman suffrage movement. Nina Silber believes the feminists were wrong to think that the Civil War had created a window of opportunity for them. "The war did not emancipate women so much as teach them about their second-class status," she writes.[2] Most female clerks, nurses, pensioners, and aid-society members found themselves more directly controlled by men during the war than ever before. She believes that "many women emerged from the Civil War . . . with a profound sense of estrangement, political weakness, and even economic victimization."[3] Furthermore, she says, the war infused American society with a hyper-masculine ethos. Military service was glorified, and women's work was devalued. Many politicians argued that women should not vote because they had not earned the right on the battlefield. Silber quotes Senator Lot Morrill of Maine, who declared the ballot to be "the inseparable concomitant of the bayonet."[4]

Other scholars focus on the immediate circumstances of the movement's failure. Ellen Carol DuBois, for example, analyzes the political reasons for abolitionists' decision to withdraw

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[1] Stanton to Martha C. Wright, New York, 20 December 1865, in *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Theodore Stanton, and Harriot Stanton Blatch, 108-109.
[2] Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 284.
[3] Silber, 283.
[4] Lot Morrill, 1869, in Silber, 151, 263.

their support from woman suffrage. Before the war, she says, abolitionists had nothing to lose by carrying their equal-rights philosophy to its logical conclusion of universal suffrage, that is, suffrage for men and women of all races. Once the Union's victory had catapulted them into the national political scene, however, abolitionists "were no longer agitators on the periphery of American society. . . . Instead, they were in a real position to affect the shape of congressional Reconstruction."[5] As such, they felt the need to temper their idealism and focus on achievable goals.

Michael D. Pierson notes that the Republican Party also became more conventional in its gender ideologies as it moved into the political mainstream. While Jessie Frémont figured prominently in the 1856 campaign of her husband, John Frémont, Mary Todd Lincoln was relegated to the sidelines during her husband's presidential bid four years later. Literature and posters portrayed Mrs. Lincoln as a subordinate wife and mother, a far cry from the adventurous and opinionated persona that publicity directors had created for Jessie Frémont.[6]

Lee Ann Banaszak's systematic work, *Why Movements Succeed or Fail*, compares the American and Swiss woman suffrage movements. Banaszak pinpoints a number of factors she believes determine the success or failure of reform movements. These include resources, political connections, member values, decision-making patterns, and political opportunity structures.[7]

These historians tend to overlook or minimize the issue that I believe doomed the American woman suffrage movement during the 1860s: the gendered division of life commonly referred to as "separate spheres." The movement had weaknesses, and its leaders made mistakes.

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[5] Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 55.
[6] Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 165-168.
[7] Lee Ann Banaszak, *Why Movements Succeed or Fail: Opportunity, Culture, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 215-223.

But even if all errors could have been avoided and all opportunities had been fully taken advantage of, there is still no feasible way in which women could have won the ballot during this period. Many more years of combating separate spheres were necessary before Americans of both genders were ready to accept the enfranchisement of women. It was impossible for the feminists to revolutionize America's conceptions of femininity and masculinity in a single generation. The achievement of woman suffrage was beyond their reach.

Separate Spheres

As the term "separate spheres" implies, nineteenth-century Americans divided life into two gendered spheres. In 1867, abolitionist Charles Burleigh described this paradigm as the belief in "a sex of soul as well as of body."[8] The female sphere revolved around the home, and the male sphere encompassed virtually everything outside of the home. While many women did work outside of the home, the ideal was to do so only until marriage.

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French nobleman who visited the United States in the early 1830s, commented,

> In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways that are always different.[9]

Americans justified separate spheres by emphasizing the supposedly innate differences between men and women. These were articulated by the *Ladies Museum* in 1825:

> Man is strong—woman is beautiful. Man is daring and confident—woman is diffident and unassuming. Man is great in action—woman in suffering. Man

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[8] C. C. Burleigh, address at the American Equal Rights Association, New York, 9 May 1867, Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbnawsan3542div7)).

[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (University of Virginia, 1997), http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/detoc/toc_indx.html, vol. II, book III, ch. 12.

> shines abroad—woman at home. . . . Man has judgment—woman sensibility. Man is a being of justice—woman of mercy.[10]

If the abilities of men and women were as divergent as this article portrayed them to be, it followed naturally that the sexes should be assigned different roles.

Americans also drew justification for separate spheres from the efficiency-oriented culture of the industrial revolution, in which hierarchy was seen as the prerequisite of productivity and order. The Americans, wrote Tocqueville, "hold that every association must have a head in order to accomplish its object, and that the natural head of the conjugal association is man."[11] Catherine Beecher, female education advocate and sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe, articulated the same idea in her book *The Domestic Economy*: "Society could never go forward harmoniously, nor could any craft or profession be successfully pursued unless these superior and subordinate relations be instituted and sustained."[12] To disrupt the "superior and subordinate relations" of husband and wife by confusing or conflating their roles was to undermine society itself.

The average woman happily accepted separate spheres because it taught her that she had a vital and unique role to play in society. She was flattered by the idea that she was superior to men "in all questions relating to morals or manners," and eager to believe that her mundane domestic duties were part of a divine mission.[13] Women also benefited from the glorification of their childrearing role because it helped to justify their higher education. "Let the women of a

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[10] Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 238.
[11] Tocqueville, vol. 2, book 3, ch. 12.
[12] Catherine E. Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School* (Boston: T. H. Webb, 1842), 26.
[13] *Ibid.*, 33, 37.

country be made virtuous and intelligent, and the men will certainly be the same," wrote Beecher.[14] She shared Ralph Waldo Emerson's view of women as "the civilizers of mankind."[15]

Women were taught that in order to preserve their moral superiority and fulfill their roles as childrearers and "civilizers," they must avoid corrupting influences, including politics. While women embodied the abstract ideals on which the nation was founded, men were supposed to do the dirty work of translating those ideals into reality. As Republican Senator John Brooks Henderson declared in 1866,

> Our government is built as our Capitol is built. The strong and brawny arms of men, like granite blocks, support its arches; but woman, lovely woman, the true goddess of Liberty, crowns its dome.[16]

Voting was thus taboo for respectable women for two main reasons: it threatened to disrupt the hierarchy of domestic authority and to disqualify women from serving as the nation's moral guardians. Therefore, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and the other feminists set out to win woman suffrage, they were fighting against more than a few sexist politicians. They were battling an intangible enemy more deeply entrenched in both men and women than they ever imagined.

The Republicans and the Fourteenth Amendment

During the Civil War, Stanton, Anthony, Stone, and many other feminists actively supported the Union in the hopes that Republicans would reward their loyalty with suffrage at the war's end. On the home front, women founded over 7,000 aid societies and raised millions of

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[14] *Ibid.*, 37.
[15] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Woman: A Lecture Read before the Woman's Rights Convention," Boston, 20 September 1855, in *Against the Tide: Pro-Feminist Men in the United States, 1776-1990: A Documentary History*, eds. Michael S. Kimmel and Thomas E. Mosmiller (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 218.
[16] *Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1866, 951.

dollars to benefit soldiers, including $50,000,000 for the Sanitary Commission alone.[17] Many women served as nurses and spies on the battlefield, and others served the party directly as speakers and writers. In the spring of 1863, Stanton and Anthony organized the Women's National Loyal League, through which they promoted "immediate emancipation as the most speedy [sic] way of ending the war."[18] By the end of 1865, when the thirteenth amendment was ratified, league members had collected nearly 400,000 signatures, which Senator Charles Sumner triumphantly presented before Congress.[19]

With the completion of the thirteenth amendment's ratification process, Stanton and the other feminists felt at liberty to resume their women's rights activities, which they had willingly suspended during the war. Now that blacks had joined women as free but disenfranchised citizens, the feminists felt at liberty to advocate the voting rights of both groups, based on the same principle. They soon realized, however, that victory would not come as easily as they had anticipated. Just as the activities of the Women's National Loyal League were winding down, they faced their first major roadblock: the fourteenth amendment.

Stanton and Anthony first caught wind of the new amendment in the summer of 1865 when Congressman Robert Dale Owen began sending them drafts of the bill.[20] They were particularly appalled by section two. It threatened to decrease the national representation of states that banned from the polls any "male inhabitants" over twenty-one who had not participated in the rebellion. Up to that point, women had been denied suffrage based on state and local laws,

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[17] S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States, 1830-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 98-99.
[18] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898), ch. 15.
[19] The thirteenth amendment officially abolished slavery in the United States.
[20] Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*

but the Constitution itself had left the possibility of woman suffrage open. The inclusion of the word "male" in the amendment would make woman suffrage unconstitutional.

Seeking help, the feminists turned to Republican lawmakers. Few of these men had ever expressed open support for woman suffrage, but the party's equal-rights principles and its reliance on female supporters before and during the war led the suffragists to view these politicians as probable allies. In the 1850s, for example, women had attended Republican rallies in nearly the same numbers as men.[21] The party benefited from the symbolic moral sanction their presence provided and from the tangible contributions of female writers and orators.[22] The feminists especially counted on the political capital women had accrued during the Civil War. In large numbers, they had served as nurses, fundraisers, writers, speakers, and petitioners, and many feminist leaders had formed relationships with high-profile Republican politicians.

However, Stanton and the other feminists soon discovered that their confidence in these lawmakers was unfounded. They had misinterpreted praise and gratitude as expressions of solidarity with their cause. Charles Sumner, for example, though enthusiastic about the Women's National Loyal League, decided that woman suffrage was "obviously the great question of the future." He did not want his civil-rights legislation "clogged, burdened, or embarrassed" by its association with woman suffrage.[23] Other politicians shared his sentiments. According to Senator Owen, the word "male" was not included in the fourteenth amendment by accident. As he relayed to Stanton,

> One of the committee proposed "persons" instead of "males." "That will never do," said another; "it would enfranchise wenches." "Suffrage for black men will be all the strain the Republican Party can stand," said another.[24]

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[21] Melanie Susan Gustafson, *Women and the Republican Party, 1854-1924* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 18.
[22] *Ibid.*, 10, 20.
[23] Charles Sumner, in David Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 282.
[24] Donald, 282.

Although a number of Republicans were willing to concede that women theoretically *deserved* to vote, they did not seem to believe that women *needed* to vote. In their estimation, the injustice suffered by disenfranchised women did not equal the injustice suffered by disenfranchised black men. Republican prioritization of male suffrage over female suffrage demonstrated their conscious or unconscious loyalty to separate spheres, with its assumption that men could adequately represent women in the political arena.

Stanton and Anthony found the proposed amendment deeply distressing, but they still believed that Reconstruction was a rare window of opportunity they could not afford to miss. The constitution was being amended, and citizenship was being redefined, based on natural-rights philosophy. As Stanton correctly anticipated, many years would pass before a moment more conducive to their cause arrived. "If that word 'male' be inserted," she warned, "it will take us a century at least to get it out."[25]

Anthony and Stanton "at once sounded the alarm."[26] They prepared a petition for universal suffrage, that is, suffrage for men and women of all races, and spent the Christmas season fervidly writing letters and broadsides to accompany it. The petition read, in part,

> The Constitution classes us as "free people," and counts us as *whole* persons in the basis of representation; and yet we are governed without our consent, compelled to pay taxes without appeal, and punished for violations of law without choice of judge or juror.[27]

Their pleas fell on deaf ears. Stanton and Anthony soon found that they had been overly optimistic in their assessment of women's progress during the Civil War and of Republican

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[25]Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 179.
[26] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 2 (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 91.
[27] National Archives, "Petition for Universal Suffrage from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and others," http://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/suffrage/index.html.

politicians' willingness to support their cause. Their trust in abolitionists, however, was better founded, as many abolitionist leaders had made unequivocal declarations of support for woman suffrage. It was to them that the suffragists turned next.

The Abolitionists and the AERA

Ties between the women's rights movement and the anti-slavery movement extended back to the 1830s. It is difficult even to distinguish between the two movements during the pre-war years, given their shared natural-rights philosophy and their common supporters. Female abolitionists served the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) as writers, lecturers, and even administrators. When women were excluded from the 1840 London Anti-Slavery Convention, American abolitionists of both genders were outraged. William Lloyd Garrison, president of the AASS, protested by refusing to participate in the convention himself. "After battling many long years for the liberty of African slaves, I can take no part in a convention that strikes down the most sacred rights of all women," he declared.[28]

Other prominent male abolitionists were equally emphatic about women's rights. Wendell Phillips, who later succeeded Garrison as president of the AASS, gave a speech in 1851, in which he declared that "woman . . . ought to choose for herself what sphere she will fill, what education she will seek, and what employment she will follow."[29] Abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass wrote in 1866,

> If any man can give one reason . . . why he should have a voice in the selection of those who shape the policy and make the Laws of Government under which he lives, which reason does not apply equally and as forcibly to woman, I for one, shall like to hear that reason. To me, the sun in the heavens at noonday is not

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[28] William Lloyd Garrison, in Stacey M. Robertson, *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist, Male Feminist* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 153.

[29] Wendell Phillips, speech in Worcester, Massachusetts, 15-16 October 1851, Worcester Women's History Project, http://www.wwhorg/Resources/WomansRights/shallwomen.html.

> more visible than is the right of woman, equally with man, to participate in all that concerns human welfare.[30]

Douglass proceeded to vow that until woman achieved full equality with man, he could be counted "among the friends of the 'Woman's Rights Movement.' "[31]

Based on statements such as these and decades-long partnerships with these men, feminist leaders were confident that abolitionists would stand by them during this critical time of constitutional revision.[32] As the war drew to a close, the woman suffragists received a rude awakening. In May 1865, Phillips wrote in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, "As Abraham Lincoln said, 'One war at a time'; so I say, one question at a time. This hour belongs to the negro."[33] "The negro's hour" quickly became a catch-phrase among abolitionists.

These men did not change their minds regarding the theoretical equality of the sexes. As Phillips wrote to Stanton in May 1865, "The only point where you and I differ [is] in a matter of method, of expedient action. I think such a mixture [of abolitionism and feminism] would lose for the negro far more than we should gain for the woman."[34] His prioritization of male suffrage over female suffrage, however, evinces the philosophical difference between him and Stanton. While the feminists believed that the political rights of men and women were equally sacred, Wendell's conception of equal rights allowed him to prioritize the rights of men over the rights of women. This demonstrates that even he was influenced by separate spheres.

In January 1866, Anthony and Stone asked Phillips to make universal suffrage the goal of the AASS and to help them strike the word "male" from the proposed fourteenth amendment.

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[30] Frederick Douglass, *The Woman's Advocate* 1 (1866): 16, in *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 78.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Although the term "abolitionist" seems obsolete following the thirteenth amendment, advocates of black civil rights continued to identify themselves in this way during the post-war years, and I will do the same.
[33] Wendell Phillips, "American Anti-Slavery Anniversary," *Anti-Slavery Standard* (1865): 2, in DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 59.
[34] Wendell Phillips to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 10 May 1865, in Stanton, Stanton, and Blatch, 105.

Although this broadened focus would have been in line with the equal-rights philosophy of Garrisonian abolitionism, Phillips refused to even let the AASS vote on the proposal.[35] In response, Stanton, Anthony, Stone, and other feminists founded the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) in May 1866 to promote universal suffrage. Phillips and many other abolitionists joined the organization, but they continued to support Republican legislation, such as the fourteenth amendment, regardless of its implications for women.

Abolitionists were only willing to advocate woman suffrage when it did not seem to threaten black suffrage. Before the war, they had been reformers who lost nothing by championing a variety of causes and challenging society to embrace the highest ideals. They did not mind being branded as radicals. After the war, however, they found themselves closely allied to the Republican Party and intimately involved with the legislative process. Now that they were political actors, they felt the need to rid themselves of the radical label.[36] They wanted their ideas to be viewed as realistic and as non-threatening as possible to people's way of life. While allowing blacks to vote was controversial, allowing women to vote was downright revolutionary. The implications of woman suffrage struck too close to home.

Abolitionists feared that if woman suffrage were seen as the necessary corollary of black suffrage, the latter's public and, therefore, political support would decline significantly. Thus, they disassociated themselves from woman suffrage as a political necessity. As we will see, this political necessity can be traced directly to separate spheres.

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[35] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 63.
[36] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 55.

Woman Suffrage Debates in Congress

In December 1866, Senator Edgar Cowan introduced a woman suffrage amendment to a civil rights bill. Like all politicians willing to actively promote female suffrage during this time, he was an opponent of black suffrage. In fact, the amendment was a blatant attempt to sabotage the bill itself, which would enfranchise blacks in the District of Columbia.[37] Cowan's move also served as a warning to his colleagues that, in supporting black suffrage, they were supporting woman suffrage, whether they liked it or not. The principles of equality and democracy invoked by civil-rights advocates applied logically to women as well as to blacks. "I should like to hear even the most astute and learned Senator upon this floor give any better reason for the exclusion of females from the right of suffrage than there is for the exclusion of negroes," he challenged.[38] Although it was apparent to all that the amendment was a ruse, the senators followed its proposal with a thoughtful debate on woman suffrage. Their discussion provides insight into the various attitudes Republicans held toward woman suffrage during this time.

The arguments of many senators against woman suffrage were derived directly from separate spheres ideology. These men argued that women had no need of the franchise because their husbands voted on their behalf. "In civilized society," said Senator James Doolittle of Wisconsin, "the family is the unit, not the individual."[39] When any "true man" goes to the polls, he always remembers his "loving constituency" at home, said Senator Frederick Frelinghuysen of New Jersey.[40] The senators strengthened their position by emphasizing the fact that most women did not want to vote. True "ladies," said Senator Reverdy Johnson, would consider

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[37] Mills Marion Miller, ed., *Great Debates in American History*, vol. 8. (New York: Current Literature Publishing Co., 1913), 27.
[38] *Ibid.*, 26.
[39] *Ibid.* 31.
[40] *Ibid.*, 29.

voting "a dishonor." They would never willingly surrender their high moral position by descending into the corrupting political fray.[41]

Other senators expressed sympathy for woman suffrage. Benjamin Wade of Oregon, for example, echoed an argument commonly employed by the feminists when he said, "Both [women and men] are liable to all the laws you pass; their property, their persons, and their lives are affected by the laws. Why, then, should not the females have a right to participate in their construction as well as the male part of the community?"[42] Yet Wade and others denied support to this particular amendment for tactical reasons. As Senator Richard Yates of Illinois said, "While I will vote now or at any time, for woman suffrage as a distinct, separate measure, I am unalterably opposed to connecting that question with the pending question of negro suffrage."[43] Black suffrage itself was a controversial matter and these men were unwilling to make the bill even more radical by tying it to woman suffrage.

Radical Republicans had several reasons for wanting their bills to generate as little controversy as possible. For one, they were facing the reality that racism could even persist among advocates of abolitionism. A vast majority of Republicans had been in favor of freeing the slaves, but fewer supported their establishment as full-fledged citizens. Even without the amendment, the black suffrage bill narrowly passed over President Johnson's veto.[44] Party leaders also knew that the passage of civil-rights bills would become even more difficult once the Southern congressmen returned. They were thus in a hurry to pass as much legislation as possible while Republicans still constituted an overwhelming majority in both houses.[45] Their urgency only increased with news of anti-black riots in Memphis and New Orleans and the

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[41] *Ibid.*, 29.
[42] *Ibid.*, 27-28.
[43] *Ibid.*, 28.
[44] *Congressional Globe,* 39th Cong. 1st sess., 1866, 3148.
[45] *Ibid.*

emergence of the Ku Klux Klan. Woman suffrage provisions only served to "clog" civil-rights legislation, as Sumner had predicted.

The reason for the "clogging" effect was Americans' loyalty to separate spheres. Many senators opposed woman suffrage specifically because of their beliefs regarding gender roles, but even lawmakers who were personally willing to welcome women into the political arena did not do so for fear of being censured by colleagues and constituents. Unfortunately for the feminists, American democracy was designed to impede attempts at rapid innovation. Reformers needed to alter public opinion before politicians would be willing to take up their cause in earnest.

New Directions

Redefining society's view of women was a gargantuan task, and the feminists' strategy of basing their suffrage claims on women's competency, intelligence, and party loyalty was not bearing fruit. In 1866, they began actively cultivating new alliances and alienating Republicans and abolitionists in the process.

In November 1866, Stanton became the first woman to run for Congress. She hoped to create a test case that would demonstrate the inconsistency of the fourteenth amendment, which had firmly established them as citizens, yet explicitly disqualified women from voting.[46] According to section one, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."[47] She believed that the court would find citizenship and enfranchisement to be inseparable and would therefore require a revision of the amendment.

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[46] Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 153.
[47] U.S. Const. amend. XIV, sec. 1.

Stanton ran as an Independent candidate in an effort to "rebuke" the Republican Party "for its retrogressive legislation [that made] invidious distinctions on the ground of sex." She chose not to run as a Democrat because of the party's "idea of class and caste among men."[48] Stanton tried to attract white voters, in part, by comparing educated women to ignorant blacks. If politicians or voters insisted on differentiating between the two groups, women were clearly more deserving of the ballot, she argued. Stanton received only 24 votes in the election, but her true disappointment was due to the fact that the matter was not taken to court.[49] The campaign sent a clear message to Republicans and abolitionists that if they were unwilling to support her cause, she would look elsewhere for allies and resources.

Henry Blackwell went a step further than Stanton in distancing himself from the Republicans and abolitionists. Although Blackwell and his wife, Lucy Stone, were long-time abolitionists, he attempted to promote woman suffrage by pandering to southerners' desire for continued white supremacy. In January 1867, while the fourteenth amendment was still being debated in some states, Blackwell authored a letter to southern legislatures promoting woman suffrage as the best way to beat the Radical Republicans at their own game. "If you must try the Republican experiment," he said, "try it fully and fairly," that is, apply the principle of "the consent of the governed" not only to the freedmen, but also to women.[50]

Blackwell encouraged the state lawmakers to enfranchise the women within their borders and predicted that if Republicans refused to admit representatives elected by women, it would prove to be the party's ideological undoing. Even if this did not happen, woman suffrage would give Democrats a greater numerical advantage over Republicans in the South, as it would

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[48] Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, 180-181.
[49] Venet, 153.
[50] Henry Blackwell to southern legislatures, 15 January 1867, Library of Congress, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.12701100.

enfranchise more white women than black women. While the letter was a flagrant statement of disloyalty to both the Republican Party and the abolitionist cause, Blackwell's private rebellion was short-lived. He soon reconciled with both groups.

Stanton, on the other hand, never fully reconciled with her former allies. For a time, she and Anthony tried to keep their options open by continuing to associate with Republicans and abolitionists and continuing to hold leading positions in the AERA. An 1867 referenda campaign in Kansas, however, forced them to clarify their ideological position and triggered the final unraveling of their alliance with Republicans and abolitionists.

A Deal with the Devil

Kansas voters were scheduled to decide on two referenda in November 1867: one on woman suffrage and the other on black suffrage. State legislator Sam Wood originally proposed the woman suffrage provision as an amendment to the black suffrage referendum. Based on his voting record, it is likely that, like Cowan, he was trying to thwart civil-rights advances.[51] The other Republicans dismissed the amendment, but they approved the creation of a separate woman suffrage referendum.

Although the only politician actively advocating woman suffrage in Kansas was doing so for false motives, Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell arrived there in early 1867 and spent three months campaigning for both referenda on behalf of the AERA. During this time, Republicans and abolitionists in the East, many of whom were AERA members, refused to endorse the woman suffrage referendum in their publications. Stanton and Anthony later wrote, "The editors of the *New York Tribune* and the *Independent* can never know how wistfully, from day to day,

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[51] Andrea Moore Kerr, *Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 124 (see note 15).

their papers were searched for some inspiring editorials on the woman's amendment, but naught was there."[52] Anthony pleaded for an endorsement from Wendell Phillips, editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, as did Stone from Theodore Tilton and Horace Greeley, the respective editors of the *Independent* and the *New York Tribune.*[53] These men had supported women's rights efforts before the war but now feared that even an endorsement would jeopardize the black suffrage referendum by associating it with woman suffrage in voters' minds.

Greeley's ambivalence toward woman suffrage turned into antipathy when Stanton offended him midway through the Kansas campaign.[54] They were at a constitutional convention in New York, where Greeley chaired a committee assigned to make a recommendation regarding a woman suffrage provision. When Stanton learned that his committee had decided to not endorse the measure, she arranged for a woman suffrage petition to be presented immediately before his announcement. The stunt was profoundly insulting and humiliating to Greeley because the petition's first line carried the name of his wife, who was known to be mentally unstable.[55]

Based on this episode, Greeley decided that woman suffrage was "to be tabooed" at the *Tribune*, and his example emboldened Kansas Republicans to oppose the woman suffrage referendum more virulently.[56] On September 5, 1867, they formed the Anti-Female-Suffrage Committee, which operated in conjunction with the Republican State Committee. As the actions of these committees wheeled out of control, Republicans and abolitionists finally decided to publish statements in support of the woman suffrage referendum. They did so in September, but

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[52] Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, 264-265.
[53] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 82-83.
[54] Carolyn S. Vacca, *A Reform against Nature: Woman Suffrage and the Rethinking of American Citizenship, 1840-1920* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 49.
[55] Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Emily Howland, New York, 1 September 1867, in Stanton, Stanton, and Blatch, 116-117.
[56] *Ibid.*

it was too little, too late. These nominal, eleventh-hour endorsements neither turned the tide in Kansas nor regained the trust of Stanton and Anthony, who arrived in the state in September.[57]

In their boldest affront to Republicans and abolitionists yet, Stanton and Anthony partnered with presidential hopeful George Francis Train, a Confederate sympathizer and an outspoken racist. [58] Train unapologetically admitted that his primary motive in advocating woman suffrage was "to beat the Republicans." By theatrical speeches, bawdy humor, and racial slurs, he presented woman suffrage as the best way to ensure continued white supremacy despite black enfranchisement. The lyrics to one of his ditties went,

> Woman votes the black to save,
> The black he votes to make the woman slave,
> Hence when blacks and "Rads" unite to enslave the whites,
> 'Tis time the Democrats championed woman's rights.[59]

Anthony traveled with Train during the final two weeks of the campaign, and he exploited the irony that she, an abolitionist, had partnered with him. He bragged to audiences that she was his first "convert" to woman suffrage. "She commenced the campaign four-fifths a negro and one fifth woman," he said; "now she is four-fifths woman and only one-fifth negro."[60] He also poked fun at her singleness: "Keep your nose twenty years on a negro and you will have hard work to smell a white man again."[61]

Other AERA members were chagrined at Stanton and Anthony's association with Train. Garrison wrote that he was "mortified and astonished beyond measure in seeing Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony travelling about the country with that harlequin and semi-lunatic

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[57] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 96, 92.
[58] Train was also a founder of the Crédit Mobilier and the first man to be arrested under the 1873 Comstock law.
[59] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 94.
[60] George Francis Train, *The Great Epigram Campaign of Kansas; Championship of Women; the* Revolution (Leavenworth, Kansas: Prescott & Hume, 1867), 60-61, in Kerr, 128.
[61] *Ibid.*

George Francis Train."[62] Lucy Stone declared, "[Train's] presence as an advocate of woman suffrage [is] enough to condemn it in the minds of all persons not already convinced."[63] She was particularly vexed over Stanton and Anthony's use of her name and that of the AERA in their campaign advertising.[64]

Stanton defended her decision to partner with Train by saying, "[Train] is willing to devote energy and money to our cause when no other man is. It seems to me it would be right and wise to accept aid even from the devil himself, provided he did not tempt us to lower our standard," which Train, apparently, did not do.[65]

In Kansas, Stanton and Anthony finally came to terms with the fact that their movement lacked reliable male support. The only politicians willing to advocate their cause did so out of ill will and only while it was politically advantageous. Stanton and Anthony responded to this realization by foreswearing all future dependence on men. They wrote that they "thoroughly comprehended for the first time" that "woman must lead the way to her own enfranchisement"[66] They continued to accept financial support and endorsements from men, such as Train, but they refused to allow male-led organizations to set the feminist agenda or tell them when "their time" had arrived.

Some scholars consider this assertion of independence to be an important step in the development of the suffrage cause.[67] This may be true in the long run, but their statement, in its immediate context, was an acknowledgement of their desperate situation. In the nineteenth century, women were powerful based on their relationships to powerful men. What we read here

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[62] William Lloyd Garrison to Alfred Love, December 18, 1867, in Kerr, 130.
[63] Robertson, 144.
[64] Kerr, 129-130.
[65] Stanton to Martha C. Wright, 8 January 1868, in Stanton, Stanton and Blatch, 119-120.
[66] Stanton, Anthony, and Gage., 267-268.
[67] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage.*

is an admission of the fact that no powerful party or organization could be trusted to consistently advocate woman suffrage. Stanton and Anthony resolved to keep fighting, but they knew that they would be doing so in a man's world without reliable male support. By no stretch of the imagination was declaration a reason to celebrate.

In the face of the glaring lack of support, Stone and Blackwell settled on an entirely different strategy. They took courage from the last-minute endorsements of Republican and abolitionist publications and decided that the safest course of action was to maintain ties with their traditional allies. In doing so, they were submitting to the doctrine of the "negro's hour" and accepting the fact that woman suffrage was, as Sumner had declared, "the great question for the future."[68]

Separate Paths

Following the Kansas experience, the gap between Stanton's and Stone's contingents widened. In January 1868, Stanton and Anthony began publishing a women's rights journal entitled *Revolution*. Train financed the paper, and Stanton and Anthony served on the editorial staff along with disaffected abolitionist and former congregational minister Parker Pillsbury.

Stanton's and Pillsbury's articles were replete with racist rhetoric and criticism of Republicans. They decried the proposed fifteenth amendment, which would further distance women from the polls, and argued that while blacks were intrinsically no less worthy of the franchise than women, they were not qualified to vote in their present, degraded state. Pillsbury wrote, "New language must be invented before my loathing of the democracy and religion that have thus enslaved, degraded, brutalized them, yea, beastialized [sic] myriads of them, can be

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[68] Charles Sumner, in Donald, 282.

half expressed."[69] The *Revolution* staff hoped that blacks would eventually obtain the franchise, provided they did not beat women to the polling booths. Stanton promised,

> As soon as we women get a foothold among the "white males," instead of selfishly rejoicing in our own good fortune, forgetting all that are behind, we [will] turn to help our colored brothers up to the same platform. The world never hears us say, "This is the woman's hour."[70]

Stanton had grown to distrust men, and she shuddered at the prospect of being subordinated to yet another class of males, especially an ignorant one.

She articulated her fear of enfranchised blacks and foreigners more clearly at the National Woman Suffrage Convention in January 1869:

> If American women find it hard to bear the oppressions of their own Saxon fathers, the best orders of manhood, what may they not be called to endure when all the lower orders of foreigners now crowding our shores legislate for them and their daughters. Think of Patrick and Sambo and Hans and Yung Tung, who do not know the difference between a monarchy and a republic, who can not read the Declaration of Independence or Webster's spelling-book, making laws for Lucretia Mott, Ernestine L. Rose, and Anna E. Dickinson.[71]

At the same conference, Stanton revealed that her new philosophical arsenal included not only racist rhetoric, but also arguments based on an essentialized understanding of gender. "The male element," she said, "is a destructive force, stern, selfish, aggrandizing, loving war, violence, conquest, [and] acquisition." The "female element," if allowed into politics, would "secure the health, strength, and prosperity of the nation . . . and help to usher in a new day of peace and perfection for the race."[72] Women should not enter the political arena because they are merely men's intellectual equals, she argued, but because men cannot responsibly govern without them.

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[69] Pillsbury Parker, "The South as It Is," *Revolution*, 11 November 1969, in Robertson, 148.
[70] Stanton, "The *Revolution*, 1868-1870: Expanding the Woman Suffrage Agenda," *Revolution* (1868), in Dow, 81.
[71] Stanton, address at the National Woman Suffrage Convention, Washington D.C., 19 January 1869, http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/dubois/classes/995/98F/doc29.htm.
[72] *Ibid.*

Stanton compromised her belief in absolute equality in order to take advantage of people's deeply held sentiments. For those who feared the rising political power of blacks and immigrants, she presented woman suffrage as a way to increase the number of native white voters. For those who were uncomfortable with women crossing into men's sphere, she presented politics as another place where the two spheres stay separate yet complement one other. These new justifications made it possible for people to support woman suffrage without dismantling their beliefs about gender and race. Her efforts, however, still failed to attract a large following.

In contrast, Stone and Blackwell spent the months following the Kansas campaign deepening their ties with Republicans and abolitionists. In the fall of 1868, they formed the New England Woman Suffrage Association, in which male abolitionists and politicians held leading roles and set the agenda. The organization refrained from criticizing the fifteenth amendment for its exclusion of women and concentrated its lobbying efforts at the state level rather than at the national level so as to not detract from the amendment's ratification process.[73] Politicians likely saw the organization as a way to contain and control the woman suffrage movement and thereby avoid embarrassments, such as those caused by Stanton and Anthony in the Kansas campaign and in the *Revolution*. The historical ties of these women to abolitionism meant that their indiscretions reflected poorly on all abolitionists.

Stone found herself trying to maintain a middle position between the more radical feminists on the one hand and the Republicans and abolitionists on the other. At the final AERA convention, held in May 1869, she found herself caught in the crossfire. Abolitionist Stephen Foster fired scathing rebukes at Stanton for the content of the *Revolution* and especially for its

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[73] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 164-167.

motto, "Educated suffrage."[74] Stanton shot back a response, and after she and Foster had argued for a few minutes, Frederick Douglass joined the debate. He resurrected an old argument, saying, "I do not see how anyone can pretend that there is the same urgency in giving the ballot to woman as to the negro."[75] Anthony then challenged Douglass that for "all the outrages that he [suffered], he would not exchange his sex and take the place of Elizabeth Cady Stanton."[76] Although Stone disagreed with Douglass's assertion that the freedmen had greater need of the ballot than women, she conceded that it was better for black men to receive the ballot than for neither group to receive it. "I will be thankful in my soul if *anybody* can get out of the terrible pit," she said.[77]

Following the dissolution of the AERA, the diverging paths of the feminists crystallized into two new suffrage organizations. The first was the National Woman Suffrage Association, founded by Stanton and Anthony in May 1869. Its stated purpose was "to discuss woman suffrage separate and apart from the question of equal rights and manhood suffrage."[78] The members officially divorced themselves from the cause of black rights, although Stanton and Anthony had done so in practice some time earlier. The organization's primary goal was suffrage, but it also called for equal rights in marriage and equal pay for equal work.[79] The NWSA refused to associate itself with a particular ideology or party. Its members were free agents, willing to ally with anyone who would sympathize with their cause.

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[74] Stephen Foster, address at the American Equal Rights Association annual meeting, New York City, 12-14 May 1869, quoted in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, 381.
[75] Frederick Douglass, address at the American Equal Rights Association annual meeting, New York City, 12-14 May 1869, quoted in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, 382.
[76] Susan B. Anthony, address at the American Equal Rights Association annual meeting, New York City, 12-14 May 1869, quoted in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, 383.
[77] Stone, address at the American Equal Rights Association annual meeting, New York City, 12-14 May 1869, quoted in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, 384.
[78] "The Woman's Suffrage Association," *New York Times*, 18 May 1869.
[79] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, 197.

Stone commented in August, "I think we need two National Associations for the Woman Suffrage so that those who do not oppose the 15th amendment nor take the tone of the *Revolution* may yet have an organization."[80] She proceeded to found the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which endorsed the fifteenth amendment and maintained close ties to Republicans and abolitionists. It avoided peripheral issues, such as the rights of wives within the home and the rights of female laborers, implying that women in possession of the ballot would still be submissive wives and employees. The societal order enabled by separate spheres would not be disrupted.

The division of the woman suffrage movement was a mixed blessing because, while it divided the movement's resources, it allowed woman suffrage to develop in two philosophical directions and to appeal to two different audiences. The NWSA's provocative, avant-garde style kept the woman suffrage movement on the cutting edge and appealed to working women and intellectuals, and the AWSA *Woman's Journal* appealed to middle-class and traditionally minded readers. The movement regained its united front when the NWSA and the AWSA merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890.[81]

Conclusion

The failure of the Reconstruction-era woman suffrage movement is often attributed to mistakes made by the suffragists and to interpersonal conflict. Episodes such as Blackwell's shocking appeal to southern legislatures, Stanton's affront to Greeley in New York, and the hostile exchanges at the AERA meetings of 1869 may appear to be tipping points. However, these failed strategies, lapses of judgment, and internecine quarrels are outweighed by and can

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[80] Stone to Charles Sanborn, 18 August 1869, in Kerr, 142.
[81] Venet, 154-158.

largely be traced back to the separate spheres paradigm. It was the deeply held beliefs of average men and women that made woman suffrage a lost cause.

Even though some Radical Republicans were personally in favor of female enfranchisement, the lack of public support made them unwilling to advocate it. As elected representatives, it was their duty to legislate according to the wishes of their constituents. Ironically, it was the enemies of black enfranchisement who authored the universal suffrage bills and referenda. Both they and the Radical Republicans knew that to couple woman suffrage with black suffrage would be to doom both propositions. The fact that woman suffrage could be used in this way further emphasizes the fact that Americans viewed it as a severe threat.

As abolitionists moved to the political forefront following the Civil War, they began to distance themselves from the cause of woman suffrage for similar reasons. As reformers, they had sought to mold public opinion to their ideals, but as political activists, they had to mold their ideas as closely as possible to current public opinion. Abolitionists knew that universal suffrage would seem more threatening to voters' way of life than black suffrage alone. Furthermore, as woman suffrage increasingly became a tool of Democrats and racist Republicans to thwart attempts at black enfranchisement, both radical Republicans and abolitionists felt the need to further disassociate themselves from it.

A sense of abandonment by Republicans and abolitionists drove Stanton and Anthony (and Blackwell, briefly) to do a political and ideological about-face. They sacrificed their long-time alliances to partner with Democrats and sacrificed their belief in equal rights to appeal to racism, nativism, and even separate spheres itself. Yet in spite of these desperate maneuvers that compromised their beliefs and alienated their long-time allies, at no point did the movement even begin to pick up momentum. Stone firmly maintained her principles and alliances, but she also

met with failure. Neither Stone's loyalty nor Stanton and Anthony's audacity could turn the tide. The central obstacle to woman suffrage was beyond their control.

In the American psyche, women and politics were inextricably divorced from one another, and no amount of logic or sophistry could change that in a single generation. Even if the suffragists had maintained positive relations with their allies and fully capitalized on every opportunity, the end result would have been the same. Even in hindsight, I see no path that could have led them to victory.

The woman suffrage movement continued without interruption for fifty more years. Like the proverbial tortoise, it gradually chipped away at separate spheres until, in the 1910s, another war caused America to reexamine woman's place in society and finally enfranchise her. Stanton and Anthony did not live to see the realization of their dream, but their legacy lives on in the nineteenth amendment.

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Southern Scholars Honors Program
Senior Project Proposal Information Sheet

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Name Shaunda Helm **Date** 8-31-07

Major History + International Studies (Spanish)

A significant scholarly project, involving research, writing, or special performance, appropriate to the major in question, is ordinarily completed the senior year. The project is expected to be of sufficiently high quality to warrant a grade of "A" and to justify public presentation.

Under the guidance of a faculty advisor, the Senior Project should be an original work, should use primary sources when applicable, should have a table of contents and works cited page, should give convincing evidence to support a strong thesis, and should use the methods and writing style appropriate to the discipline.

The completed project, to be turned in in duplicate, must be approved by the Honors Committee in consultation with the student's supervising professor four weeks prior to the last day of class for the semester the project is turned in. Please include the advisor's name on the title page. The 2-3 hours of credit for this project is usually done as directed study or in a research class.

NOTE-Senior Project Proposal Due Date: The senior project proposal is due in the Honors Program Director's office two weeks after the beginning of the semester the project will be completed. The proposal should be a detailed description of the Honors Project's purpose and proposed methodology.

Keeping in mind the above senior project description, please describe in as much detail as you can the project you will undertake. Attach a separate sheet of paper.

Signature of faculty advisor Lisa Diller

Expected date of completion ~~12/5/07~~ 4-4-08

NOTE: An advisor's final project approval does not guarantee that the Honors Faculty Committee will automatically approve the project. The Honors Faculty Committee has the final vote.

Approval to be signed by faculty advisor when the project is completed:

This project has been completed as planned (date) 4/1/08

This is an "A" project yes

This project is worth 2-3 hours of credit 3

Advisor's Final Signature Lisa Diller Date: 4/7/08

Chair, Honors Committee Mark Peach Date Approved: 1 May '08

Dear Advisor,

(1) Please write your **final** evaluation on the project on the reverse side of this page. Comment on the characteristics that make this "A" quality work.

(2) Please include a paragraph explaining your specific academic credentials for advising this Senior Project.

Shaunda Helm
Without a Voice and Without a Following: the Woman Suffrage Movement of the Reconstruction Period

My credentials for evaluating Shaunda Helm's work lie primarily in my knowledge of the process of researching and writing. I have experience in finding primary sources and evaluating their usefulness for understanding the subject. While not an expert on the Civil War itself, I have experience in reading the historiography of a subject, finding a question, and then finding relevant evidence. I have done this in my own dissertation and I have supervised dozens of history majors in doing this for their senior thesis.

History is full of almost-beens and what-might-have-beens and Shaunda Helm has traced one of the most tragic of these—the failure of the 19th century woman suffrage movement. She argues that the pre-Civil War political movement which allowed the first feminists in America to find their agenda and strategy ultimately failed, not primarily because of the strategy mis-steps and personal conflicts, but because how compelling separate spheres ideology was for nineteenth-century Americans.

Helm bases most of her research and analysis on the leaders of the feminist movement: Stanton, Anthony and Stone. She also analyzes the language used by those who supported and opposed the various amendments for sexual equality. Helm's tight integration of a wide range of sources, effective use of quotes from a variety of voices during the Reconstruction, and nuanced understanding of the personalities involved all make her argument compelling. She also roots her research in the theory of separate spheres and has read widely into the historiography surrounding the study of women's suffrage. Helm has taken her argument even further in this second edition of it than in her first one—making a stronger case that the failure of women's suffrage was inevitable due to the entrenched notions of women's "place" and "roles" in society. I think her paper is stronger and more compelling because of this.

Helms achieved an A from me because of the very close reading of texts and the complex tracing of personalities and events that was required to make this argument. She wrote analyses of primary texts each week, weaving them into the political and historiographical theory that she was also reading. She has drafted extensively in writing this paper. Helms had to make tough decisions about what to include, but what she has left is read-able, nuanced, and a helpful addition to our understanding about how difficult it has been for women to achieve equality.

Lisa Clark Diller
Professor of History

Thesis: 48/50
Clarity/Flow: 50/50
Documentation: 50/50
Technical Writing: 50/50
Presentation: 50/50

Total: 248/250
Grade: A