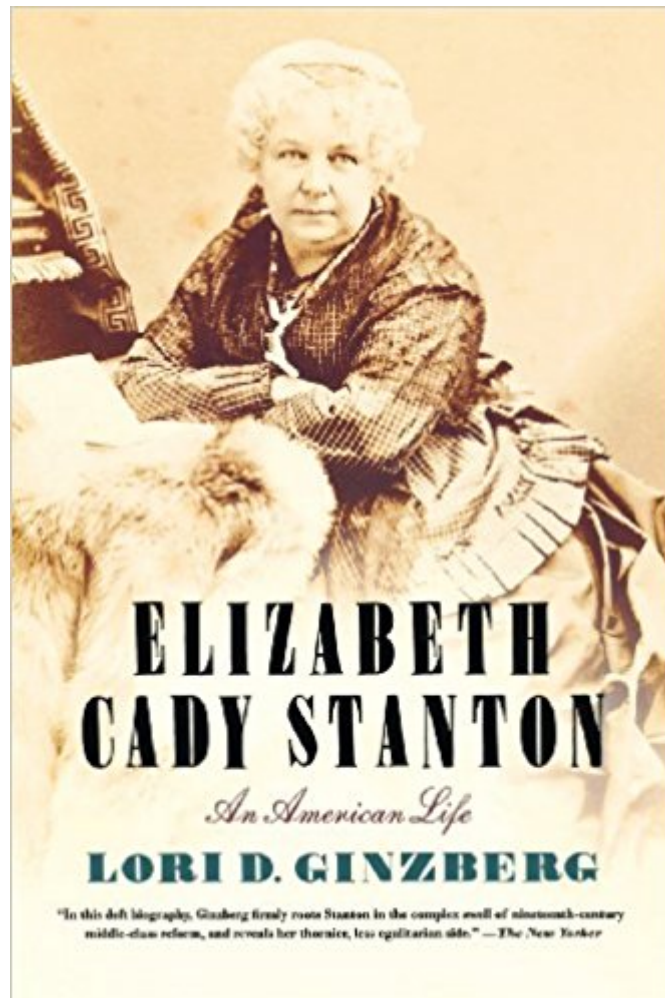


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# Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life



## Synopsis

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a brilliant activist-intellectual. That nearly all of her ideas—that women are entitled to seek an education, to own property, to get a divorce, and to vote—are now commonplace is in large part because she worked tirelessly to extend the nation's promise of radical individualism to women. In this subtly crafted biography, the historian Lori D. Ginzberg narrates the life of a woman of great charm, enormous appetite, and extraordinary intellectual gifts who turned the limitations placed on women like herself into a universal philosophy of equal rights. Few could match Stanton's self-confidence; loving an argument, she rarely wavered in her assumption that she had won. But she was no secular saint, and her positions were not always on the side of the broadest possible conception of justice and social change. Elitism runs through Stanton's life and thought, defined most often by class, frequently by race, and always by intellect. Even her closest friends found her absolutism both thrilling and exasperating, for Stanton could be an excellent ally and a bothersome menace, sometimes simultaneously. At once critical and admiring, Ginzberg captures Stanton's ambiguous place in the world of reformers and intellectuals, describes how she changed the world, and suggests that Stanton left a mixed legacy that continues to haunt American feminism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this deft biography, Ginzberg firmly roots Stanton—the first American to synthesize arguments for women's equality in employment, income, property, custody, and

divorce— in the complex swell of nineteenth-century middle-class reform, and reveals her thornier, less egalitarian side. An abolitionist more out of political convenience than conviction, she not only abandoned the movement for black male suffrage after the Civil War to focus on white women's suffrage but increasingly made vitriolic attacks on immigrants, the working class, and African-Americans in her writing and speeches. The consequences of Stanton's racism and elitism were "deep and hurtful," Ginzberg says, and she attributes the continuing difficulty of incorporating race and class differences into gender politics, in large part, to Stanton's mixed legacy. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"In this deft biography, Ginzberg firmly roots Stanton--the first American to synthesize arguments for women's equality in employment, income, property, custody, and divorce--in the complex swell of nineteenth-century middle-class reform, and reveals her thornier, less egalitarian side." "Lori Ginzberg makes a convincing case for Stanton as the founding philosopher of the American women's rights movement in a lively voice that enhances her eccentric subject." "Ginzberg provides an excellent biography of Stanton, listing both the positive and negative aspects of Stanton's life. In areas where information was sparse (due to Stanton's children 'editing' their mother's correspondences), Ginzberg did an excellent job filling in the gaps. As for Stanton and Anthony's famous partnership, Ginzberg covers their highs and lows, as well as many of difficulties the two faced in their journey together. As an additional bonus, photos throughout Stanton's life are put in a special section. Not only is this a comprehensive biography, but it truly captures all of Stanton's little quirks." "A readable and realistic account of the life of one of the most important feminists and intellectuals of the nineteenth century, a woman who was at once an abolitionist who could sound like a racist and an advocate of civil rights for women whose language often reeked of elitism. This work promises to be a classic and is recommended for all readers." "A well-documented, well-balanced account of the life of the founding philosopher of the American movement for woman's rights." "This biography, while deeply critical of the impact Stanton's racism and elitism have on her legacy, acknowledges that women's rights are ordinary, commonsense ideas in large part because of her life work." "Elizabeth Cady Stanton deserves a biographer that is at least her equal in

intelligence, eloquence, intensity and critical insight. Lori Ginzberg is precisely that author, and the portrait she presents of this exceptional early feminist consistently embodies precisely these qualities. While providing an illuminating explanation of the origins and developments of the women's rights movement, her rendering of Stanton's life, public and private, is a masterpiece of biography.

—James Brewer Stewart, James Wallace Professor of History, Emeritus, Macalester College

“Lori Ginzberg's biography not only brings Elizabeth Cady Stanton to life as never before done, showing her personal and philosophical faults without defensiveness, but also shows the reader Stanton's principled and passionate radicalism and the continued relevance of her thought. The book provides a fine introduction to the nineteenth-century women's rights movement.”

—Linda Gordon, Professor of History, New York University

“In this deft and provocative biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lori Ginzberg is a savvy guide through the many thorny controversies surrounding this brilliant, charismatic leader of the struggle for women's rights. Both sympathetic and critical, Ginzberg judiciously assesses Stanton's huge achievement and blind spots, providing an excellent introduction to the ideas and actions behind one of the most far-reaching social movements in our history.”

—Alix Kates Shulman, author of *To Love What Is*

“Lively, readable, and rich with insights, Ginzberg's biography is also unflinching in its assessment of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's flaws. But Ginzberg never downplays Stanton's central place in the history of women's rights. Ginzberg shows how the women's rights movement never quite caught up with its greatest early thinker while Stanton, in turn, never fully connected women's rights to the cause of racial justice and the fight against industrial poverty, both of which unfolded during her long and exceedingly active life. All in all, this breezy, readable book is a remarkable achievement.”

—Rebecca Edwards, Eloise Ellery Professor of History, Vassar College

I have not read this book in its entirety, but that which I have read I find most engaging. The author attempts to put forth a picture of Elizabeth Cady Stanton at once sympathetic and objective, one that places her life in its rightful historic context as the true founder of the women's movement in America. When we are filled with the Spirit of Seneca Falls, we must recognize Elizabeth Cady Stanton as its inaugurator. Ginzberg herself fully recognizes this fact without ever losing sight of Stanton's very human character-flaws. For Stanton's was a very human life in the deepest sense of the term. Jacques Koenig.

It is clear that the author finds Stanton both admirable and irritating, and the author's strong positive

and negative reactions to Stanton's personality greatly enliven the book. Probably more so than any 500 to 800 page doorstop could, this well-shaped short book brings Stanton to life. I for one did not miss the myriad of probably forgettable details that another author might have accumulated about Stanton's long and active career. I strongly recommend this book, and also "A Very Dangerous Woman", which is a compact and highly readable biography of Stanton's colleague Martha Coffin Wright. A Very Dangerous Woman: Martha Wright and Women's Rights

Not only was this book full of new and surprising takes on a number of women's' right events, but it provides a filled out description of Stanton's fulsome personality with all it's positive and negative features. Stanton emerges here as more than just a larger than life person, but as a more believable and understandable woman. Ginzburg's writing is lovely and a joy to read!

It is a well written book, but I think too critical of its subject. The author wrote an oversimplified view of Stanton's life choices which diminishes rather than enriches our understanding of this American original.

Well written. It should be part of history studies for 7th and 8th grade students and then again for junior or senior high school students. All people should be reminded that all of us didn't always have the right to vote. It is such an important responsibility. And, for women, it took over 50 years of perseverance and hard work to be granted that right.

Way too long and boring.

This is a tremendous book filled with history of which I was unaware. She and her friends, one being Susan B Anthony, fought for voting rights for women, and many other rights. Extremely important history, much of which can be pertinent in today's climate.

I bought this to help w a college essay on her speech declarations of sentiments.

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