The Triumphs and Tragedies of Susan B. Anthony

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Historical Paper

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Susan B. Anthony is a triumphant inspiration to people across the world, especially women. Even though in her own time she was criticized for fighting for equality, she continued to persist and dedicated her whole life to women's rights.

Susan B. Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts on February 15, 1820. She was the second oldest of 7 children. Susan´s dad encouraged all of his children to be self-supporting. He
taught them business principles and responsibilities at an early age. ¹

When Susan B. Anthony was six years old, her family moved to Battenville, New York where her dad managed a large cotton mill. When she was 17, Susan B. Anthony was sent to a Quaker boarding school in Philadelphia. Sadly, she had to leave after one term because her family could no longer afford the tuition during the economic downturn known as the Panic of 1837. They were forced to sell everything her family owned at an auction. However, they were fortunate to be rescued by her uncle who bought most of their belongings and gave them back to the family. To help her family with money, Susan left home to teach at an academy in a small town in New York where she made $110 a year. Men made so much more money for doing the same thing which bothered Susan B. Anthony. She is known to have said, "I did want equal pay for equal work." Then spent her entire life fighting for it.²

Her family supported her beliefs, such as anti-slavery, the equality for men and women and the effort to abolish alcohol. Later, her brother Daniel moved to Kansas to support the anti-slavery movement and eventually owned a newspaper and became mayor of Leavenworth, Kansas. Her brother Merritt fought against pro-slavery forces during the Bleeding Kansas crisis.

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² Wikipedia. “Women’s Suffrage”
Susan B. Anthony's sister, Mary, became a public school principal in Rochester, NY and a woman's rights activist also.³

Susan B. Anthony believed that the key to achieving equal rights and economic freedom was a good education. In the 1800’s, when a girl attended school, if she was even allowed to go, she was looked down upon. Susan B. Anthony overcame the obstacle and ended up actually teaching school at Canajoharie Academy for 15 years.⁴ “She taught her students that the real beauty of a true life is found in the harmonious blending of diverse elements and where freedom is, there is power.” -Anna Howard Shaw.⁵

In 1851, Susan B. Anthony traveled to Syracuse, NY for an equal rights convention. There she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and right away they began to write news articles and speeches. The two of them became lifelong friends, both were abolitionists, and they founded the Women's Suffrage Movement together.⁶

The Women's Suffrage Movement was a protest for women to legally vote. Susan B. Anthony traveled the country, stopping in barns, schools, and she even appeared in front of congress 40 times, fighting for women's rights.⁷ She was passionate. Nobody could stop her.

In 1868, Susan B. Anthony published a newspaper column with Elizabeth Cady Stanton called “The Revolution”. Even though they never sold more than 3,000 copies, the impact it had on the Women's Suffrage Movement was huge. The paper included subjects that were not

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³ Wikipedia. “Women’s Suffrage”
⁵ Wikipedia. “Women’s Suffrage”
⁶ Susan B. Anthony Timeline”
discussed in most newspapers and contained real topics women were facing in society such as domestic abuse.  

Susan B. Anthony was also an agent for the anti-slavery association. She arranged meetings, wrote speeches and put up posters for the cause. Susan B. Anthony strongly believed that slavery was wrong and worked hard to play an important role in freeing slaves.  

Although Susan B. Anthony was an inspiration to some, others felt that her beliefs were crazy. It only takes one person to lead the charge, and she kept fighting even when nobody thought she could make change. In fact, newspaper cartoonists all over the country mocked her

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for standing up for women yet Susan B. Anthony kept on fighting.\textsuperscript{11}

"The Apotheosis of Suffrage," a cartoon mocking Stanton and Anthony. Division, Library of Congress.\textsuperscript{12}

Courageously, Susan B. Anthony illegally cast her vote as a woman in the 1872 presidential election. This caused a huge controversy and many protests began. She believed in what she did. Susan B. Anthony was arrested and sent to trial and was fined $100.\textsuperscript{13} Considering she only made $110 a year teaching school, this was a huge fine back then. The best part is that she never paid it! Here is a highlight of some powerful statements made during her trial:

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"Yes, your honor," replied Miss Anthony, "I have many things to say. My every right, constitutional, civil, political and judicial has been trampled upon. I have not only had no jury of my peers, but I have had no jury at all.” Court—"Sit down Miss Anthony. I cannot allow you to argue the question.”

Susan B. Anthony—"I shall not sit down. I will not lose my only chance to speak."

Court—"You have been tried, Miss Anthony, by the forms of law, and my decision has been rendered by law."

Susan B. Anthony—"Yes, but laws made by men, under a government of men, interpreted by men and for the benefit of men. The only chance women have for justice in this country is to violate the law, as I have done, and as I shall continue to do, does your honor suppose that we obeyed the infamous fugitive slave law which forbade to give a cup of cold water to a slave fleeing from his master? I tell you we did not obey it; we fed him and clothed him, and sent him on his way to Canada. So shall we trample all unjust laws under foot. I do not ask the clemency of the court. I came into it to get justice, having failed in this, I demand the full rigors of the law."14

Susan B. Anthony took action and worked hard to influence her generation. She had countless memorable quotes that people remember today. My personal top ten favorites are listed here:

1. "Independence is happiness!"

2. “Failure is impossible!"

3. "Organize, agitate, educate, must be our war cry."

4. "There never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers."

5. "Men, their rights, and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less."

6. "No man is good enough to govern any woman without her consent."

7. "Oh, if I could but live another century and see the fruition of all the work for women! There is so much yet to be done."

8. "The principle of self-government cannot be violated with impunity. The individual's right to it is sacred - regardless of class, caste, race, color, sex or any other accident or incident of birth."

9. "I declare to you that woman must not depend upon the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself, and there I take my stand."

10. "The day may be approaching when the whole world will recognize woman as the equal of man."15

Tragically, Susan B. Anthony suffered from serious heart trouble for the last seven years of her life. On March 13, 1906 she passed away at 86 years old. Today, people put their “I voted” stickers on her memorial in honor of her. Even though she never was able to cast her vote legally, she impacted so many American lives.16


In 1978, president Jimmy Carter officially presented the Susan B. Anthony coin in her honor. She was the first woman to receive her own coin.\textsuperscript{17} “The league (of Women Voters) believes the time has come, and indeed long past, for the likeness of a prominent American women to be placed on a denomination of U.S. currency. We believe strongly that the likeness should be that of an actual women and not that of an imaginary or symbolic figure. Susan B. Anthony contributed immeasurably to the advancement of human dignity in this nation. It is entirely fitting and appropriate that her memory be honored though this measure.” -The league of Women voters.\textsuperscript{18}
Susan B. Anthony traveled the country giving speeches and she even appeared in front of congress 40 times fighting for equality. Many people made fun of Susan B. Anthony for standing up for what she believed in. She persevered and made great progress for all women on equal pay, divorce equality, land ownership, anti-slavery and women’s right to vote. Susan B. Anthony's greatest impact was being a leader for women. She dedicated most of her life to women's rights. Her belief was that having the right to vote and having access to good education would give women the ability to achieve equal rights and economic freedom. When Susan B. Anthony cast her illegal vote in the 1872 presidential election, it led many people to acknowledge that our country needed change.

Susan B. Anthony is my role model because she represents a triumphant leader. She made incredible change, especially for women. She proved that women are every bit as capable as men and women deserve respect in every way. She was powerful and continued to fight even though the tragedies that she faced were incredibly hard. Susan B. Anthony was and continues to be a strong inspiration in history.

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Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:


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Secondary Sources:


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en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage

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