



Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life

By Lori D. Ginzberg

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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.

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Editorial Review

From [The New Yorker](#)

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 élitism 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.

Review

“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.” —*The New Yorker*

“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.” —Andrea Cooper, *American History*

“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.” —Elizabeth Stannard Gromisch, *Feminist Review*

“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.” —Theresa McDevitt, *Library Journal*

“A well-documented, well-balanced account of the life of ‘the founding philosopher of the American movement for woman’s rights.’” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“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.” —Marshal Zeringue, *The Page 99 Test*

“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

About the Author

A professor of history and women’s studies at Pennsylvania State University, Lori D. Ginzberg has written several books on women’s history, including *Untidy Origins: A Story of Woman’s Rights in Antebellum New York*. She lives in Philadelphia.

Users Review

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Clara Bearden:

This book untitled Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life to be one of several books that will best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this reserve you can get a lot of benefit onto it. You will easily to buy this kind of book in the book store or you can order it through online. The publisher in this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more readily to read this book, as you can read this book in your Smart phone. So there is no reason to you personally to past this book from your list.

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