

# THE AMERICAN FEMINIST®

FEMINISTS FOR LIFE.org

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Suffrage organizer Susan B. Anthony (left) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, founder of the women's movement.

## The Truth About Susan B. Anthony: Did One of America's First Feminists Oppose Abortion?

by Cat Clark

As Feminists for Life has gained more attention in the media, FFL's pro-life feminist legacy has met with increasing suspicion and skepticism, with some accusing FFL of hijacking America's leading suffragist, Susan B. Anthony.

"There's absolutely nothing in anything that she ever said or did that would indicate she was anti-abortion," Gloria Feldt, former head of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, told *Women's eNews*.

"I don't know what [Anthony's] position on abortion is," Lynn Sherr, an Anthony biographer and ABC 20/20 correspondent, told *Women's eNews*, "and for [pro-life feminists] to pretend they do is simply flat-out wrong.... I looked desperately for some kind of evidence one way or the other as to what her position was, and it just wasn't there."<sup>1</sup>

Abortion was not an issue to which Anthony devoted much time. But the historical evidence that exists points toward her opposition to abortion.

"Her stance on abortion was one integral expression of her commitment to undo gender oppression, just like her sheltering of a woman and child fleeing domestic violence," notes pro-life feminist historian Mary Krane Derr. "Susan B. Anthony identified socially entrenched patterns of male sexual and reproductive violence (often fueled by alcohol abuse; hence many early feminists' concern, including hers, with temperance) as the root cause of abortion and many other miseries of women."

However, Derr cautions, "while it's not outrageous to speculate that today Anthony would vigorously champion women's right to make *nonviolent* choices regarding their bodies and lives, no one can ever know with absolute certainty what any person from the past would say and do now."

What did Susan B. Anthony say about abortion? How do modern pro-life feminists continue her legacy?

### Her Friends and Colleagues Denounced Abortion

"Without known exception," FFL President Serrin Foster says in *The Feminist Case Against Abortion*, "the early feminists condemned abortion in the strongest terms."

*continued on page 2*

Welcome to the new format of *The American Feminist*.<sup>®</sup> Please go online and download the corresponding components of our e-activist kit.

Help us race towards the day when abortion is unthinkable. By systematically eliminating the root causes that drive women to abortion, you too walk in the shoes of great women like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Because women deserve better,  
Serrin M. Foster  
President

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