

1. Civil Disobedience

One of the most famous examples of a citizen using civil disobedience to protest government action they viewed as unjust, was American essayist and abolitionist Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau was jailed for refusing to pay taxes. He refused to pay as a way to show his opposition to both the Mexican American War and slavery. Thoreau was freed after someone anonymously paid his back taxes against his wishes. He would still go on to argue for the effectiveness of this practice and coin the term in his essay *Civil Disobedience*.



3. Boycotts

Boycotts occupy an important place in American history. Boycotts of British goods were one of the earliest acts of organized resistance by the American colonies. They gave voice to colonial displeasure at British tax policy following the French and Indian War.

One of the most famous of these boycotts was in response to the British Stamp Act 1765 which placed a tax on paper goods to generate revenue in an attempt to pay off war debts. Many colonists either refused to buy the taxed goods or refused to pay the tax. The pressure was enough that merchants and manufacturers in Britain convinced Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act the next year.

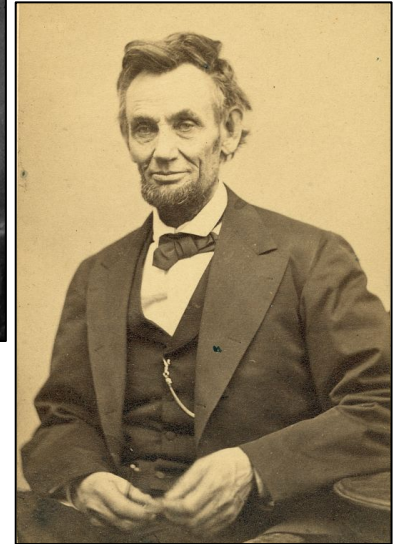
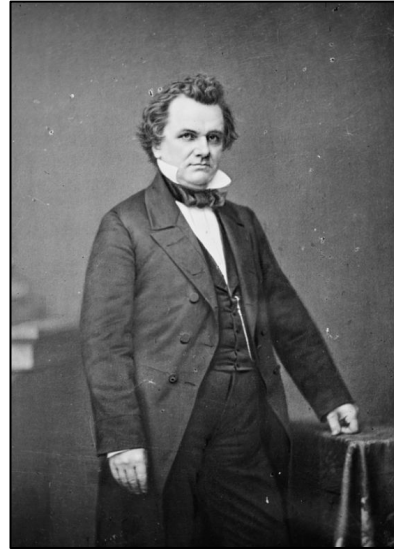


4. Political Speeches and Debates

One of the most famous series of speeches ever given in American history took place during the 1858 race for an Illinois senate seat. The debates were between Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas and challenger Abraham Lincoln.

The focus of the debates centered around the issue of slavery and its expansion. Douglas argued for “popular sovereignty” and defended the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

Aided by the telegraph, the debates were published in newspapers nationwide, turning both candidates into nationally-known household names.

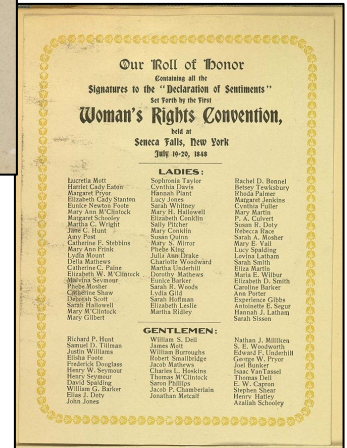


5. Civic Meetings

Sometimes, a civic meeting brings together activists devoted to certain causes. One famous example was the Seneca Falls Convention. This convention was held in Seneca Falls, NY in 1848 and was the first major women's rights convention.

The convention attracted a lot of attention as women in this era were not supposed to speak publicly like this. It's greatest achievement was the publication of the Declaration of Sentiments. It mirrored the language of the Declaration of Independence to make women's rights seem "self-evident".

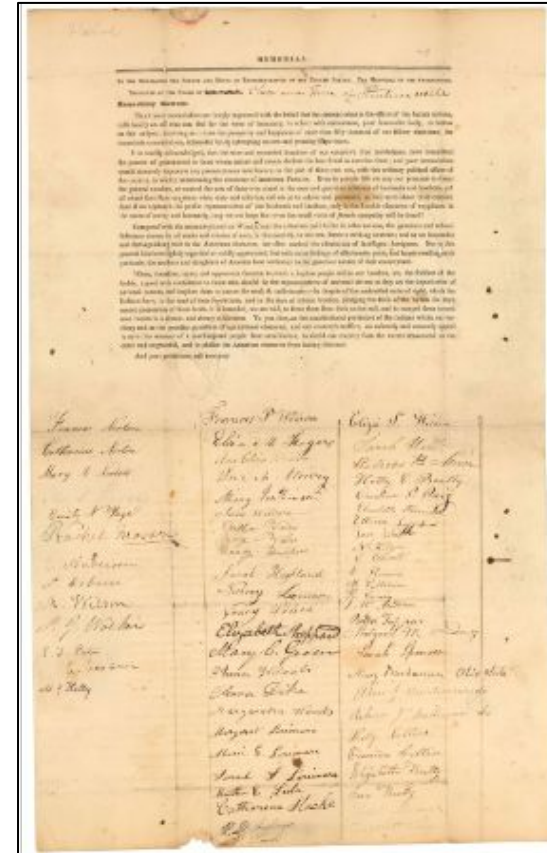
Women would finally see one of the convention's resolutions achieved in 1920 when the 19th amendment granted women the right to vote.



6. Petitions

Americans have a long tradition of petitioning their government for a redress of grievances. Colonists repeatedly petitioned King George III in the lead up to the American Revolution.

After independence, the first nationally organized petition drive was against the Indian Removal Act. In Steubenville, OH, 60 women begged President Jackson and Congress to reconsider. In this case, although Congress received tons of petitions that year, the Indian Removal Act went into effect anyway.

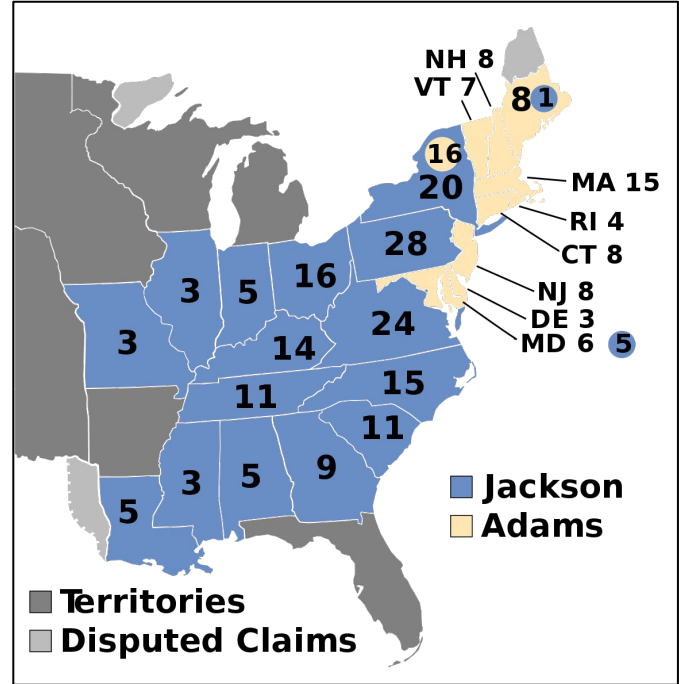


7. Voting

Voting rights in the United States today are universally applied to all U.S. citizens who meet age and residency requirements. This was not always the case. Early in U.S. history, voting was restricted to white males, with some states enacting significant property requirements as well.

The property requirements began to go away over the first half of the 1800s, and by 1828 the majority of states allowed universal white male suffrage.

The 1828 presidential election was a re-match between John Q. Adams and Andrew Jackson. The electorate had expanded from 3.4% to 9.5% of Americans. Jackson, the “man of the people” won, with a record number of new voters elevating him to the White House.



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