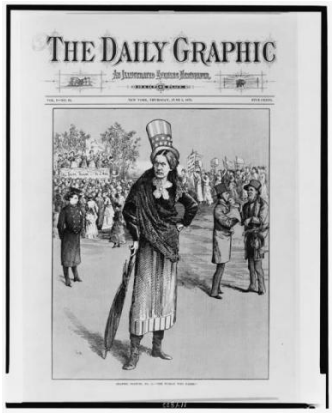
Cartoon - Disparaging Susan Anthony



Susan Anthony was berated by many different American-media publications—including unflattering poses—as she continued to fight for a woman's right to vote in the United States.

This illustration—featured on the cover of New York's *The Daily Graphic* (v. 1, no. 81, published on the 5th of June, 1873)—depicts her as "The Woman Who Dared."

Among the things Susan Anthony "dared" was to vote in the 1872 presidential election. She was promptly arrested, by federal authorities, for violating the law.

Susan didn't believe she had violated the law. After all, the 14th Amendment guaranteed that the rights of American citizens could not be trampled upon. It's exact language is:

> *No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge* [that is, to lessen] *the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States.*

Susan was an American citizen, and she believed that not allowing her to vote would abridge the rights she had as a citizen. Sixteen other women agreed with her position. They also voted, in New York, and were also arrested.

Only Susan's case, however, went to trial. She was tried as a criminal defendant.

Looking at the situation with 21st-century eyes makes us cringe, but the charge against Susan—for voting on the 5th of November, 1872—was essentially this (according to the prosecutor, U.S. Attorney Richard Crowley):

> *At that time she was a woman.*

That statement was important to Crowley's case because the 14th Amendment also provides that only male citizens (including African-American males) could vote. That right-to-vote cannot be:

> *... denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State.*

When the 14th Amendment was passed, in 1868, it was the first time such a distinction was drawn between males and females in the U.S. Constitution. American suffragists were very upset about that language.

Looking at the first part of the 14th Amendment, Susan Anthony believed that she—and all female American citizens—could vote. She was likely not surprised, however, when the federal government's representatives disagreed with her.

Standing firm in her trial, she wanted to testify. Ward Hunt—the presiding Judge—would not let Anthony take the stand. This was a clear violation of her rights as a criminal defendant.

This was not the only mistake which Ward Hunt made in the trial. At the end of the case, instead of letting the jury decide Ms. Anthony's fate, he directed a verdict against Susan Anthony. In other words, he removed the case from the jury and, instead, decided it himself. Then he ordered the clerk to record the guilty verdict.

The next day, before he passed sentence on Susan, the Judge asked:

> *Has the prisoner anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced?*

This gave Susan her first chance to speak on the record. She took advantage of the opportunity:

> *Yes, Your Honor. I have many things to say. In your ordered verdict of guilty, you have trampled underfoot every vital principle of our government. My natural rights, my civil rights, my political rights, my judicial rights are all alike ignored.*

Hunt, who was personally not in favor of a woman's right to vote, became angry. He shouted at Susan:

> *The court orders the prisoner to sit down. It will not allow another word.*

That's because the Judge already had his mind made-up. He announced Susan's punishment:

> *The sentence of the court is that you pay a fine of $100 and the costs of prosecution.*

Susan would not be silenced:

> *May it please your honor. I shall never pay a dollar of your unjust penalty. And I shall earnestly and persistently continue to urge all women... that resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.*

The Judge could have put Susan behind bars, but he didn't follow that path. She would surely have appealed since her trial was unfair. Because it was unfair, she would have likely won her appeal.

Likely expecting such a result, Hunt took no further action. Nor did Susan. Instead, she kept doing everything she could to change the law in favor of allowing women to vote.

She worked really hard at this and devoted her life to it. One year she traveled around 13,000 miles and gave around 171 lectures as she tried to convince people to support women's suffrage. Sometimes she slept in railroad stations, as she moved from place to place.

During her last speech—in February of 1906—she told a crowd in Baltimore:

> *I am here for a little time only, and then my place will be filled... The fight must not cease. You must see that it does not stop. Failure is impossible.*

The audience gave her a ten-minute standing ovation.

The following month she became very ill and spent the rest of her life in her Rochester, New York home. Approaching the end of her life, Susan knew she would not live long-enough to see the law change.

Two days before she died, Susan told a friend:

> *I have been striving for over 60 years for a little bit of justice... and yet I must die without obtaining it. Oh, it seems so cruel.*

After her death, other activists continued the struggle. Finally, Congress passed the 19th Amendment (in 1919) which the States ratified in 1920:

> *The right of a citizen of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.*

One hundred years after Susan Anthony was born—in 1820—American women had the right to vote. Susan had "dared it;" now it was the law.

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Media Stream

19th Amendment Becomes Law - Vote in Tennessee
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