

# THE BEST OF THE OLL #50

*Condorcet and Olympe de Gouges, “The Rights of Women” (1790-91)*

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*“The rights of men result simply from the fact that they are rational, sentient beings, susceptible of acquiring ideas of morality, and of reasoning concerning those ideas. Women having, then, the same qualities, have necessarily the same rights.”*



**Condorcet (1743-1794) and Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793)**

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*[July, 2013]*

## Editor's Introduction

The Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794) was a mathematician, a philosophe, permanent secretary of the French Academy of Sciences (from 1776), and a politician during the French Revolution in the liberal Girondin faction. He was active in a number of committees which drew up legislation during the Revolution (especially on public education and constitutional reform) but became a victim of Jacobin repression when the liberal Girondin group was expelled from the Convention. He was guillotined in March 1794. He was also a pioneer in advocating the right of women to vote and to participate fully in politics, writing "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship" in 1790.

Marie Gouze (1748-1793), who wrote under the name of Marie-Olympe de Gouges, was the daughter of a butcher who became a playwright and early feminist during the French Revolution. She was active in the abolitionist movement, writing *Reflections on Black Men* (1788) and being active in la Société des amis des Noirs (Society of the Friends of the Blacks). Gouges was a supporter of the French revolution and felt that that the official French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of August 1789 had compromised the universality of its principles by ignoring women. So she wrote her own in the form of a petition to the Queen using the same rhetoric and words of the Declaration, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen" (3 September 1791). She was guillotined by the Jacobins in November 1793 for her liberal views and political activities.

Both Condorcet and Gouges moved in the same liberal circles in Paris, as supporters of the Girondin group and in the abolitionist movement. It is thus very likely that Gouges knew of Condorcet's writing on women. Whereas Condorcet's arguments in his short pamphlet are straight forward, Gouges is angrier and more sarcastic in her style denouncing the "perpetual tyranny" of males in violating the natural rights of women, arguing that women have just as much right "to take the rostrum" to speak as they do "to mount the scaffold" to be executed. The sad thing for liberalism in France was that both Gouges and Condorcet would be guillotined by the Jacobins within a few months of each other for arguing for these and other liberal views.

*“Mothers, daughters, sisters, and, the representatives of the nation demand to be constituted into a national assembly. Considering that ignorance, omission, or scorn for the rights of the woman are the only causes of public misfortunes and of the corruption of governments, they have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of the woman, in order that this declaration, being constantly exposed before all the members of the society, may ceaselessly remind them of their rights and duties; in order that the authoritative acts of women and the authoritative acts of men may be at each moment compared with and, be respectful of the purpose of all political institutions; and in order that the female citizens’ demands, henceforth based on simple and incontestable principles, may always support the constitution, good mores, and the happiness of all.”*

## **Condorcet, “On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship” (3 July, 1790)<sup>1</sup>**

CUSTOM may familiarise mankind with the violation of their natural rights to such an extent, that even among those who have lost or been deprived of these rights, no one thinks of reclaiming them, or is even conscious that they have suffered any injustice.

Certain of these violations (of natural right) have escaped the notice of philosophers and legislators, even while concerning themselves zealously to establish the common rights of individuals of the human race, and in this way to lay the foundation of political institutions. For example, have they not all violated the principle of the equality of rights in tranquilly depriving one-half of the human race of the right of taking part in the formation of laws by the exclusion of women from the rights of citizenship? Could there be a stronger proof of the power of habit, even among enlightened men, than to hear invoked the principle of equal rights in favour of perhaps some 300 or 400 men, who had been deprived of it by an absurd prejudice, and forget it when it concerns some 12,000,000 women?

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To show that this exclusion is not an act of tyranny, it must be proved either that the natural rights of women are not absolutely the same as those of men, or that women are not capable of exercising these rights.

But the rights of men result simply from the fact that they are rational, sentient beings, susceptible of acquiring ideas of morality, and of reasoning concerning those ideas. Women having, then, the same qualities, have necessarily the same rights. Either no individual of the human species has any true rights, or all have the same; and he or she who votes against the rights of another, whatever may be his or her religion, colour, or sex, has by that fact abjured his own.

It would be difficult to prove that women are incapable of exercising the rights of citizenship. Although liable to become mothers of families, and exposed to other passing indispositions, why may they not exercise rights of which it has never been proposed to deprive those persons who periodically suffer from gout, bronchitis, etc.? Admitting for the moment that there exists in men a superiority of mind, which is not the necessary result of a difference of education (which is by no means proved, but which should be, to permit of women being deprived of a natural right without injustice), this inferiority can only consist in two points. It is said that no woman has made any important discovery in science, or has given any proofs of the possession of genius in arts, literature, etc.; but, on the other hand, it is not pretended that the rights of citizenship should be accorded only to men of genius. It is added that no woman has the same extent of knowledge, the same power of reasoning, as certain men; but what results from that? Only this, that with the exception of a limited number of exceptionally enlightened men, equality is absolute between women and the remainder of the men; that this small class apart, inferiority and superiority are equally divided between the two sexes. But since it would be completely absurd to restrict to this superior class the rights of citizenship and the power of being entrusted with public functions, why should women be excluded any more than those men who are inferior to a great number of women? Lastly, shall it be said that there exists in the minds and hearts of women certain

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<sup>1</sup> Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, *The First Essay on the Political Rights of Women. A Translation of Condorcet's Essay "Sur l'admission des femmes aux droits de Cité" (On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship)*. By Dr. Alice Drysdale Vickery (with preface and remarks) (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1912). Chapter: On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1013/81939>>.

qualities which ought to exclude them from the enjoyment of their natural rights? Let us interrogate the facts. Elizabeth of England, Maria Theresa, the two Catherines of Russia—have they not shown that neither in courage nor in strength of mind are women wanting?

Elizabeth possessed all the failings of women. Did these failings work more harm during her reign than resulted from the failings of men during the reign of her father, Henry VIII., or her successor, James I.? Have the lovers of certain empresses exercised a more dangerous influence than the mistresses of Louis XIV., of Louis XV., or even of Henry IV.?

Will it be maintained that Mistress Macaulay would not have expressed her opinions in the House of Commons better than many representatives of the British nation? In dealing with the question of liberty of conscience, would she not have expressed more elevated principles than those of Pitt, as well as more powerful reasoning? Although as great an enthusiast on behalf of liberty as Mr. Burke could be on behalf of its opposite, would she, while defending the French Constitution, have made use of such absurd and offensive nonsense as that which this celebrated rhetorician made use of in attacking it? Would not the adopted daughter of Montaigne have better defended the rights of citizens in France, in 1614, than the Councillor Courtin, who was a believer in magic and occult powers? Was not the Princesse des Ursins superior to Chamillard? Could not the Marquise de Chatelet have written equally as well as M. Rouillé? Would Mme. de Lambert have made laws as absurd and as barbarous as those of the “garde des Sceaux,” of Armenouville, against Protestants, invaders of domestic privacy, robbers and negroes? In looking back over the list of those who have governed the world, men have scarcely the right to be so very uplifted.

Women are superior to men in the gentle and domestic virtues; they, as well as men, know how to love liberty, although they do not participate in all its advantages; and in republics they have been known to sacrifice themselves for it. They have shown that they possess the virtues of citizens whenever chance or civil disasters have brought them upon a scene from which they have been shut out by the pride and the tyranny of men in all nations.

It has been said that women, in spite of much ability, of much sagacity, and of a power of reasoning carried to a degree equalling that of subtle

dialecticians, yet are never governed by what is called “reason.”

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This observation is not correct. Women are not governed, it is true, by the reason (and experience) of men; they are governed by their own reason (and experience).

Their interests not being the same (as those of men) by the fault of the law, the same things not having the same importance for them as for men, they may, without failing in rational conduct, govern themselves by different principles, and tend towards a different result. It is as reasonable for a woman to concern herself respecting her personal attractions as it was for Demosthenes to cultivate his voice and his gestures.

It is said that women, although superior in some respects to man—more gentle, more sensitive, less subject to those vices which proceed from egotism and hardness of heart—yet do not really possess the sentiment of justice; that they obey rather their feelings than their conscience. This observation is more correct, but it proves nothing; it is not nature, it is education, it is social existence which produces this difference.

Neither the one nor the other has habituated women to the idea of what is just, but only to the idea of what is “honnête,” or respectable. Excluded from public affairs, from all those things which are judged of according to rigorous ideas of justice, or according to positive laws, the things with which they are occupied and which are affected by them are precisely those

which are regulated by natural feelings of honesty (or, rather, propriety) and of sentiment. It is, then, unjust to allege as an excuse for continuing to refuse to women the enjoyment of all their natural rights motives which have only a kind of reality because women lack the experience which comes from the exercise of these rights.

If reasons such as these are to be admitted against women, it will become necessary to deprive of the rights of citizenship that portion of the people who, devoted to constant labour, can neither acquire knowledge nor exercise their reason; and thus, little by little, only those persons would be permitted to be citizens who had completed a course of legal study. If such principles are admitted, we must, as a natural consequence, renounce the idea of a liberal constitution. The various aristocracies have only had such principles as these for foundation or excuse. The etymology of the word is a sufficient proof of this.

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Neither can the subjection of wives to their husbands be alleged against their claims, since it would be possible in the same statute to destroy this tyranny of the civil law. The existence of one injustice can never be accepted as a reason for committing another.

There remain, then, only two objections to discuss. And, in truth, these can only oppose motives of expediency against the admission of women to the right of voting; which motives can never be upheld as a bar to the exercise of true justice. The contrary maxim has only too often served as the pretext and excuse of tyrants; it is in the name of expediency that commerce

and industry groan in chains; and that Africa remains afflicted with slavery: it was in the name of public expediency that the Bastille was crowded; that the censorship of the press was instituted; that accused persons were not allowed to communicate with their advisers; that torture was resorted to. Nevertheless, we will discuss these objections, so as to leave nothing without reply.

It is necessary, we are warned, to be on guard against the influence exercised by women over men. We reply at once that this, like any other influence, is much more to be feared when not exercised openly; and that, whatever influence may be peculiar to women, if exercised upon more than one individual at a time, will in so far become proportionately lessened. That since, up to this time, women have not been admitted in any country to absolute equality; since their empire has none the less existed everywhere; and since the more women have been degraded by the laws, the more dangerous has their influence been; it does not appear that this remedy of subjection ought to inspire us with much confidence. Is it not probable, on the contrary, that their special empire would diminish if women had less interest in its preservation; if it ceased to be for them their sole means of defence, and of escape from persecution?

If politeness does not permit to men to maintain their opinions against women in society, this politeness, it may be said, is near akin to pride; we yield a victory of no importance; defeat does not humiliate when it is regarded as voluntary. Is it seriously believed that it would be the same in a public discussion on an important topic? Does politeness forbid the bringing of an action at law against a woman?

But, it will be said, this change will be contrary to general expediency, because it will take women away from those duties which nature has reserved for them. This objection scarcely appears to me well founded. Whatever form of constitution may be established, it is certain that in the present state of civilisation among European nations there will never be more than a limited number of citizens required to occupy themselves with public affairs. Women will no more be torn from their homes than agricultural labourers from their ploughs, or artisans from their workshops. And, among the richer classes, we nowhere see women giving themselves up so persistently to domestic affairs that we should fear to distract their attention; and a really serious occupation or interest would take them

less away than the frivolous pleasures to which idleness, a want of object in life, and an inferior education have condemned them.

The principal source of this fear is the idea that every person admitted to exercise the rights of citizenship immediately aspires to govern others. This may be true to a certain extent, at a time when the constitution is being established, but the feeling can scarcely prove durable. And so it is scarcely necessary to believe that because women may become members of national assemblies, they would immediately abandon their children, their homes, and their needles. They would only be the better fitted to educate their children and to rear men. It is natural that a woman should suckle her infant; that she should watch over its early childhood. Detained in her home by these cares, and less muscular than the man, it is also natural that she should lead a more retired, a more domestic life. The woman, therefore, as well as the man in a corresponding class of life, would be under the necessity of performing certain duties at certain times according to circumstances. This may be a motive for not giving her the preference in an election, but it cannot be a reason for legal exclusion. Gallantry would doubtless lose by the change, but domestic customs would be improved by equality in this as in other things.

***“It is sufficiently curious that, in a great number of countries, women have been judged incapable of all public functions yet worthy of royalty; that in France a woman has been able to be regent, and yet that up to 1776 she could not be a milliner or dressmaker”***

Up to this time the manners of all nations have been more or less brutal and corrupt. I only know of one exception, and that is in favour of the Americans of the United States, who are spread, few in number, over a wide territory. Up to this time, among all nations, legal inequality has existed between men and women; and it would not be difficult to show that, in these two phenomena, the second is one of the causes of the first, because inequality necessarily introduces

corruption, and is the most common cause of it, if even it be not the sole cause.

I now demand that opponents should condescend to refute these propositions by other methods than by pleasantries and declamations; above all, that they should show me any natural difference between men and women which may legitimately serve as foundation for the deprivation of a right.

The equality of rights established between men by our new constitution has brought down upon us eloquent declamations and never-ending pleasantries; but up till now no one has been able to oppose to it one single reason, and this is certainly neither from lack of talent nor lack of zeal. I venture to believe that it will be the same with regard to equality of rights between the two sexes. It is sufficiently curious that, in a great number of countries, women have been judged incapable of all public functions yet worthy of royalty; that in France a woman has been able to be regent, and yet that up to 1776 she could not be a milliner or dressmaker (“marchande des modes”) in Paris, except under cover of her husband’s name;<sup>[1]</sup> and that, lastly, in our elective assemblies they have accorded to rights of property what they have refused to natural right. Many of our noble deputies owe to ladies the honour of sitting among the representatives of the nation. Why, instead of depriving of this right women who were owners of landed estates, was it not extended to all those who possessed property or were heads of households? Why, if it be found absurd to exercise the right of citizenship by proxy, deprive women of this right, rather than leave them the liberty of exercising it in person?

## Notes

[1] Vickery’s note: Before the suppression of “jurandes,” in 1776, women could neither carry on a business of a “marchande des modes” (milliner and dressmaker) nor of any other profession exercised by them, unless they were married, or unless some man lent or sold them his name for that purpose.—See preamble of the Edict of 1776.

## Olympe de Gouges, “The Rights of Woman” (1791)<sup>2</sup>

[The opening letter addressed to the Queen of France has been omitted for reasons of length.]

MAN, are you capable of being just? It is a woman who poses this question; you will not deprive her of this right at least. Tell me, what gives you the sovereign power to oppress my sex? Your strength? Your talents? Observe the creator in his wisdom; survey in all her grandeur that very nature with whom you seem to wish to be inharmony, and give me, if you dare, just one example of this tyrannical empire.[1] Go back to the animals, consult the elements, study the plants, and finally cast a glance at all the modifications of organic matter, and surrender to the evidence when I offer you the means to do so; search, probe deeper, and try to distinguish, if you can, the sexes in the administration of nature. Everywhere you will find them mingled; every where they cooperate in harmonious togetherness in this immortal masterpiece.

Man alone has raised his exceptional circumstances to a principle. Bizarre, blind, bloated with science and degenerated – in a century of enlightenment and wisdom – into the crassest of ignorance, he wants to command as a despot, a sex which is endowed with all intellectual faculties; he pretends to enjoy the Revolution and reclaim his rights to equality, in order to say nothing more about it.

### DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN AND OF THE FEMALE CITIZEN

To be declared by the National Assembly in its last sessions or in those of the next legislature.

#### PREAMBLE

Mothers, daughters, sisters, and the representatives of the nation demand to be constituted into a national assembly. Considering that ignorance, omission, or scorn for the rights of the woman are the only causes

of public misfortunes and of the corruption of governments, they have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of the woman, in order that this declaration, being constantly exposed before all the members of the society, may ceaselessly remind them of their rights and duties; in order that the authoritative acts of women and the authoritative acts of men may be at each moment compared with and, be respectful of the purpose of all political institutions; and in order that female citizens’ demands, henceforth based on simple and incontestable principles, may always support the constitution, good mores, and the happiness of all.

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In consequence, the sex that is as superior in beauty as it is in courage during the suffering of maternity recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the supreme being, the following Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen.[2]

Article 1. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in her rights. Social distinctions can be based only upon the common utility.

Article 2. The purpose of any political association is the conservation of the natural and unwritten rights of Woman and of Man: these rights are liberty,

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<sup>2</sup> “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen” in Olympe de Gouges, *Les droits de la femme* (1791). Translation: <[http://academia.edu/3100911/Olympe\\_de\\_Gouges.\\_1791.\\_Declaration\\_of\\_the\\_Rights\\_of\\_Woman\\_and\\_of\\_the\\_Woman-Citizen](http://academia.edu/3100911/Olympe_de_Gouges._1791._Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Woman_and_of_the_Woman-Citizen)> with my corrections.

property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.

Article 3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation, which is nothing but the union of Woman and Man: no body and no individual can exercise any authority that does not come expressly from it.

Article 4. Liberty and justice consist of restoring all that belongs to others; hence, the only limits on the exercise of the natural rights of woman are those that emanate from the perpetual tyranny of man; these limits are to be reformed according to the laws of nature and reason.

Article 5. Laws of nature and reason prohibit all acts harmful to society: all that is not forbidden by these wise and divine laws, can not be prohibited, and no one can be constrained to do that which these laws do not command.

Article 6. The Laws must be the expression of the general will; all Female and Male Citizens must take part either personally or through their representatives in its formation; it must be the same for all: male and female citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, must be equally eligible for all honors, positions, and public offices according to their capacity and without other distinctions besides those of their virtues and talents.

Article 7. No woman is an exception: she is accused, arrested, and detained according to cases determined by the Law. Women, like men, obey this rigorous Law.

Article 8. The law must establish only those penalties that are strictly and obviously necessary, and no woman can be punished except by virtue of a Law established and promulgated prior to the offence and legally applicable to women.

Article 9. Any woman being declared guilty, all severity is exercised by the Law.

Article 10. No one is to be harmed even for his very basic opinions. A woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must equally have the right to take the

rostrum, provided that her demonstrations do not disturb the public order established by the Law.

***“A woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must equally have the right to take the rostrum, provided that her demonstrations do not disturb the public order established by the Law.”***

Article 11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of woman, since this liberty assures the recognition of children by their fathers. Any Female Citizen thus may say freely, I am the mother of this child which belongs to you, without being forced by a barbarous prejudice to conceal the truth; save to respond to the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the Law.

Article 12. The guarantee of the rights of woman and of the Female Citizen implies a major benefit; this guarantee must be instituted for the advantage of all, and not for the specific benefit of those to whom it is entrusted.

Article 13. For the support of the public force and the expenses of administration, the contributions of women and men are equal. She has a share in all the duties and in all the painful tasks; therefore, she must have the same share in the distribution of posts, employments, offices, honors and jobs.

Article 14. Female and Male Citizens have the right to verify, either by themselves or through their representatives, the necessity of the public fund. This can apply to Female Citizens only if they are granted an equal share, not only in wealth, but also in public administration, and in the determination of the quota, the tax base, the collection, and the duration of the tax.

Article 15. The collectivity of women, along with men contributing to the public fund, has the right to demand an accounting of its administration, from any public agent.

Article 16. No society has a constitution without the guarantee of the rights and the separation of



powers: the constitution is null if the majority of individuals comprising the Nation have not cooperated in drafting it.

Article 17. Property belongs to both sexes whether united or separate; for each it is an inviolable and sacred right; no one can be deprived of it, since it is the true heritage of nature, unless the legally determined public need obviously dictates it, and then only under the condition of a just and prior indemnity.

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true heritage of nature”***

#### POSTAMBULE

Woman, wake up! The tocsin of reason is being heard throughout the universe; recognize your rights. The powerful empire of nature is no longer surrounded by prejudice, fanaticism, superstition, and lies. The flaming torch of truth has dispersed all the clouds of folly and usurpation. Enslaved man has multiplied his strength and, needs recourse to yours to break his chains. Having become free, he has become unjust to his companion. O women! Women, when will you cease to be blind? What advantages have you received from the Revolution? Only a more pronounced scorn, a more marked disdain. In the centuries of corruption you have ruled only over the weakness of men. Your empire is destroyed, what then are you left with? The conviction of man’s injustices and, the reclamation of your patrimony, based on the wise decrees of nature – what have you to dread from such a fine undertaking? The bon mot of the Legislator of the marriage of Cana? Do you fear that our French Legislators, correctors of morality, long ensnared by political practices and, hanging from the branches of politics now out of date, will only say again to you: women, what is there in common between you and us? Everything, you will have to answer. If they stubbornly persist in their weakness in putting this non sequitur in contradiction to their principles, oppose courageously with the force of reason the empty pretensions of

superiority; unite yourselves beneath the standards of philosophy; deploy all the energy of your character, and you will soon see that these haughty men, will not be groveling at your feet as servile adorers, but will be proud to share with you the treasures of the Supreme Being. Regardless of what barriers confront you, it is in your power to free yourselves; you have only to wish it. Let us pass now to the shocking tableau of what you have been in the past; and since national education is in the air at this moment, let us see whether our wise Legislators will think judiciously about the education of women.

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Enslaved man has multiplied his  
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to break his chains.”***

Women have done more harm than good. Constraint and dissimulation have been their lot. What force has robbed them of, guile has returned to them; they had recourse to all the resources of their charms, and the most irreproachable person could not resist them. Poison, the chains and the sword were all subject to them; they commanded crime, fortune and virtue. The French government especially depended throughout the centuries on the nocturnal administrations of women, the cabinet kept no secret from their indiscretion; embassies, military commands, ministry, presidency, pontificate,[3] college of cardinals; in short, anything which characterizes the folly of men, profane and sacred, all have been subject to the cupidity and ambition of this sex, formerly contemptible and respected, and since the Revolution, respectable and disdained.

In this sort of contradictory situation, what remarks could I not make! I have but a moment to make them, but this moment will arrest the attention of the remotest posterity. Under the Ancien Regime, all was perverted, all guilty; but could not the amelioration of conditions be perceived even in the very substance of vices? A woman only had to be beautiful or pleasant; when she possessed these two advantages, she saw a hundred fortunes at her feet. If she did not profit from them, then she was a bizarre character or had a rare philosophy which made her scorn wealth; then she was deemed to be considered a crazy, headstrong woman; the most indecent woman made herself respected with gold; and, commerce in women was a kind of industry in the upper classes, which, henceforth, will have no more credit. If it still had it, the Revolution would be lost, and under the new relationships we would still be corrupt. However, can reason conceal the fact that any other path to fortune is closed to the woman bought by a man like the slave on the African coasts? The difference is great; that is known. The slave is commanded by the master; but if the master gives her liberty without recompense, and at an age when the slave has lost all her charms, what will become of this unfortunate woman? She will be the toy of scorn, even the doors of charity are closed to her; she is poor and old, and they say: why did she not know how to make her fortune? Reason finds other examples that are even more touching. A young, inexperienced woman, seduced by a man whom she loves, will abandon her parents to follow him; the ingrate will leave her after a few years, and the older she has become with him, the more inhuman is his inconstancy; if she has children, he will abandon her all the same. If he is rich, he will consider himself excused from sharing his fortune with his noble victims. If some involvement binds him to his duties, he will deny them, trusting that the laws will support him. If he is married, any other obligation loses its rights. Then what laws remain to extirpate this vice all the way to its roots? The law of dividing wealth between men and women and public administration. It can easily be seen that one who is born into a rich family gains very much from such equal sharing; but the one born into a poor family with merit and virtue: what is her lot? Poverty and opprobrium. If she does not excel precisely in music or painting, she cannot be admitted to any public function even when she has all the capacity for it. I will go more deeply into this in the

new edition of all my political writings, with notes, which I propose to give to the public in a few days.

*“However, can reason conceal the fact that any other path to fortune is closed to the woman bought by a man like the slave on the African coasts? ... The slave is commanded by the master; but if the master gives her liberty without recompense, and at an age when the slave has lost all her charms, what will become of this unfortunate woman?”*

Now, again on the subject of mores. Marriage is the tomb of trust and love. The married women can with impunity give bastards to her husband, and also give them the wealth which does not belong to them. The woman who is unmarried has only one feeble right; ancient and inhuman laws refuse to her and to her children the right to the name and the wealth of their father; and no new laws have been made in this matter. If it is considered a paradox and impossibility on my part to try to give my sex an honorable and just place, then I leave it to future people to attain glory for dealing with this matter; but while we wait, the way can be prepared through national education, by restoring customs and conjugal conventions.

[The remainder of the pamphlet has been cut for reasons of space.]

## Notes

[1] From Paris to Peru, from Japan to Rome, the stupidest animal, in my view, is man.

[2] OLL Editor’s note: We have translated “Citoyen” and “Citoyenne” as “Male Citizen” and “Female Citizen” respectively. We have also attempted to retain Gourges’ use of capital letters such as “Law” and “Nation.”

[3] M. de Berais, in the manner of Madame de Pompadour.

## Further Information

### SOURCE

The editions used for these extract: Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, *The First Essay on the Political Rights of Women. A Translation of Condorcet's Essay "Sur l'admission des femmes aux droits de Cité"* (*On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship*). By Dr. Alice Drysdale Vickery (with preface and remarks) (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1912). Chapter: On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1013/81939>>.

"Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen" in Olympe de Gouges, *Les droits de la femme* (1791).

Translation: <[http://academia.edu/3100911/Olympe\\_de\\_Gouges\\_1791\\_Declaration\\_of\\_the\\_Rights\\_of\\_Woman\\_and\\_of\\_the\\_Woman-Citizen](http://academia.edu/3100911/Olympe_de_Gouges_1791_Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Woman_and_of_the_Woman-Citizen)> with my corrections.

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### FURTHER READING

Topic: The French Revolution <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/collection/66>>.

Topic: The Rights of Women <[oll.libertyfund.org/collection/61](http://oll.libertyfund.org/collection/61)>.

***"The distinctive principle of Western social philosophy is individualism. It aims at the creation of a sphere in which the individual is free to think, to choose, and to act without being restrained by the interference of the social apparatus of coercion and oppression, the State."***  
***[Ludwig von Mises, "Liberty and Property" (1958)]***



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Another useful sampling of the contents of the OLL website is the collection of weekly *Quotations about Liberty and Power* which are organized by themes such as Free Trade, Money and Banking, Natural Rights, and so on. See for example, Richard Cobden's "I have a dream" speech <[oll.libertyfund.org/quote/326](http://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/326)>.

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