

# Statement of Charlotte Perkins Stetson



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**Hearing of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., January 28, 1896**

**STATEMENT OF MRS. CHARLOTTE PERKINS STETSON, OF CALIFORNIA.**

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Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen: I wish to speak a word for suffrage rather on the ground that has been taken, that a majority of women do not want it. That is perfectly true. The great advantage of woman suffrage to the world is that it will improve the race by improving the women. Suffrage is not a function which is supposed to benefit all humanity by the exercise of the superior powers of those who vote, but it is a function which develops the class who use it. You are better men because in your country you have the right of suffrage; it has improved the quality of citizenship. As a human function it develops the people who use it.

We hear a great deal of the superior mothers of great men; how about the inferior mothers of all the little men? We hear much of the mothers of Washington and Abraham Lincoln; but we should remember that Charles J. Guiteau and Jesse Pomeroy also had mothers. Mothers are not all superior. I think a great benefit would come from the improvement in the quality of the human race. You can not have as good a citizen, as good a class of people, where half the people are no part of the Government, no part of the society in which they live. Women stand in the world, but not of it; they do not have any integral part, and that limits their development; it limits the development of the soul and brain and all activities; and that is why our men are not better, and why the world is not better. I do not rest the claim on the better quality of the women. For unnumbered thousands of years women have suffered from repression, and it has hurt them and hindered them, limited them and interfered with their development, and in checking the development of the mothers of the race you restrict the development of the race.

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There is no better way to improve the quality of the people on earth than to improve the mothers of that people. To my mind, the strongest claim for suffrage, therefore, is that women need it; it matters not whether they know enough to want it. It is for you who do know, or should know, to see to it that they have this right of suffrage, and that all other citizens have it, in order that they may become full, intelligent citizens of this country. It will add not only to human affairs, but it is the best thing of all tending to the better work of economy in government and social life. It will give you another set of