their commitment to stage a dramatic demonstration on the Fourth of July. The rooms were finally rented by Susan B. Anthony, a single woman, and the work, which included the drafting of a new proclamation of rights, was feverishly underway.

The executive committee of the National Woman Suffrage Association attempted to secure a place on the official centennial program but their request was denied. Reasoning that the government’s denial was consistent with its long history of excluding women’s presence in political life, they remained unperturbed and managed to obtain five press invitations to the gala event held in Independence Hall. On the day of the festivities, directly after the solemn reading of the Declaration of Independence, Susan B. Anthony led the small group of women to the platform where they presented a copy of their declaration to the shaken vice-president, Thomas Ferry. Hastily scattering copies of the document throughout the auditorium, the women exited and reconvened among a large crowd of spectators in front of the Liberty Bell. There, the text of the woman’s Declaration of Rights was read aloud by Susan B. Anthony.

Although the Woman’s Coalition for a Third Century has drafted a bicentennial declaration disclaiming the relevance of independence as a unifying principle, the women of 1876 seized upon its promise of self-government. Both feminist groups identify their impatience with their respective civil exclusion: the Coalition, in a list of imperatives; the 19th century Association, in their “articles of impeachment”. The earlier feminists declared that they had been deprived of the same basic rights which had been the source of the revolutionary disavowal by our national fathers of colonial dominance. Unequal codes of law, disenfranchisement, taxation without representation were among the charges leveled against the federal and state governments. Affirming the right to a full and complete opportunity to participate and grow, the Declaration of Rights concludes with this appeal:

We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation. We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States, be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever.³

On that Fourth of July 1876, the women’s counter-celebration adjourned to the First Unitarian Church where the audience listened with unabated enthusiasm to speeches interpreting the text of the Declaration of Rights, testimonies and sympathetic

³Ibid., p. 34.