

LAWS AND PRACTICES IN THE U.S. IN 1848

SHAPING THE LIVES OF WOMEN

- Women were not allowed to vote in any state in the United States.
- In most states, it was very difficult for a woman to divorce her husband. However, a man could easily divorce his wife.
- In the case of a divorce, most courts would grant custody of the children shared by a man and woman to the man.
- It was thought of as improper and inappropriate for women to speak in public or be involved in political affairs. It was believed that a woman's "place" was in the home.
- With few exceptions, women were not allowed to own property, and in the cases that they did, women had to pay property tax without representation.
- When married, all of a wife's property and any wages she earned legally belonged to her husband.
- In most states in the United States, it was legal for a man to beat his wife.
- With very few exceptions, colleges in the United States did not admit women.
- Most professions were not open to women. Even in those that were, such as teaching school, women were paid less than men.
- Slavery was legal in many states in the United States. Most Black women were enslaved and legally considered property with no rights or freedoms. Even those Black women who were free from enslavement were denied rights based on race as well as gender.

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