

“TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN”:
WOMEN ABOLITIONISTS AND
THE WOMEN’S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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Abstract

Between 1830 and 1850, women became a significant force within the anti-slavery movement in America. They formed female anti-slavery societies and coordinated their efforts by conducting women's national anti-slavery conventions. Women were involved in other reform movements at the time, but in comparison to abolitionism, these organizations endured far less opposition. Quaker ideals played an influential role that helped women abolitionists stand up to opposing attitudes of the nineteenth century. The work accomplished by women abolitionists from 1830 to 1850 reformed women's roles through their determination to overcome the forces opposed to the anti-slavery cause. Criticism by conservative religious leaders, public opposition, gender bias, and racial discrimination led women to challenge the gender barriers of the nineteenth century, creating opportunities for the birth of the women's rights movement by 1850.

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Introduction

The early nineteenth century in America was a time of rapid industrial growth with a growing middle class and increasing personal wealth. As men left the house to take jobs, women maintained the domestic sphere. They were responsible for raising children, encouraging religious study, and maintaining moral order at home. Society expected proper women to be submissive, pious, and engaged in domesticity. As Barbara Welter explained in her seminal article “Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” people believed that a virtuous and pious woman could save a man’s soul from destruction through her moral perfection and domesticity. A timid attitude, dependence on one’s husband, piety, and a submissive disposition defined true femininity. If women chose not to be submissive, society interpreted their behavior as an attack on the natural order of the universe and a threat to societal norms.¹

Even though women directed family life, they increasingly became involved in collective religious work and societies during the 1820s. Society accepted this type of activity and judged it as an extension of domesticity. Women primarily occupied themselves at home and with obligations for church fundraising and charity work, but they became more active in benevolent and religious collective societies. For instance, there were organizations that promoted the Congregationalist churches in Boston such as the Female Bible Society and the Graham Society, which helped support young men in training for the ministry. Other organizations helped women and children in need such as the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. These organizations

¹ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151–160, doi:10.2307/2711179 and Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 3.

appealed to many middle-class women through their role as guardian of religion and morality in the domestic sphere. By the early 1830s, women went further and expanded their roles by becoming involved in reform groups that pressed for radical and moral changes in society. As more women became involved in reform work, they began to be judged by the type of organizations they joined. When women began to form female anti-slavery societies to work for the emancipation of the slaves it was seen as controversial. Despite public disapproval, they continued to support abolition.² From their work in church and charitable organizations to controversial abolition societies, women gained valuable experience in activism. Their efforts for abolitionism became so controversial that it led to a split in the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS), founded by William Lloyd Garrison. The work accomplished by women abolitionists from 1830 to 1850 reformed women's roles through their determination to overcome the forces opposed to the anti-slavery cause. Criticism by conservative religious leaders, public opposition, gender bias, and racial discrimination led women to challenge the gender barriers of the nineteenth century, creating opportunities for the birth of the women's rights movement by 1850.

William Lloyd Garrison, before organizing the AAS, worked as the editor of the *National Philanthropist*. By 1831, he began publishing his own newspaper, *The Liberator*, preaching his ideas on immediatism: the instant release of all slaves. Shortly thereafter, Garrison formed the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS) based in New

² Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 24–25, accessed April 24, 2014, <http://www.nwmissouri.edu/Library/IPChecking.asp?http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=99925&site=ehost-live>; Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 152–160; Stanley Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, Seminar Studies in History (New York: Longman, 2001), 41–42.

York and encouraged his readers to become involved. During the 1820s, Elizabeth Chandler introduced many women to abolition through her writings in Benjamin Lundy's paper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. Chandler began to submit her articles to Garrison's *Liberator*, as he also recruited women to the abolition cause with the popular "Ladies Department." This regular column in Garrison's newspaper featured a picture of a female slave in chains with the title "Am I not a Woman and a Sister?"³ The "Ladies Department" discussed the difficult life of women slaves and the harsh treatment they endured even while pregnant. This frank discussion of the lives of enslaved women helped grab the attention of many women readers who began to support Garrison's ideas on immediatism and became active in the cause of abolitionism.⁴

In the early nineteenth century, society accepted women forming auxiliary groups of men's reform organizations, including those in the abolition movement. By the 1830s, women began to form their own anti-slavery societies. Maria Weston Chapman and some of her friends formed the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFAS) in 1832. The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (PFAS) formed a year later. Both societies raised money for the anti-slavery movement through annual fairs, fundraising, and membership drives. Many people began to criticize the women because of their increasing activist work. As these societies were racially integrated and they boldly spoke about a political subject such as slavery, both organizations endured mob violence and public ridicule for their reform work.⁵ Integration and the radical activism of these

³ "Liberator-02-21.pdf: May 26, 1832," 82, accessed May 11, 2014, <http://fair-use.org/the-liberator/1832/05/26/the-liberator-02-21.pdf>.

⁴ Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 31–32 and Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 2–3.

⁵ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 4.

societies helped raise women's awareness of their limited roles in the antebellum period. As the women experienced racist attacks, because they dared to associate with free blacks in their societies and to speak upon the plight of the slaves, they faced disapproval from many. This struggle caused the women abolitionists to realize their limited status in society. Opposition from conservative religious ideology, attacks by violent mobs, and gender and racial discrimination drove women to challenge these barriers of the nineteenth century and led some women from working in the anti-slavery movement to working for their own rights as women.

Two notable women converts to the abolition movement during the 1830s, and members of the PFAS, were Angelina and Sarah Grimké. They grew up on a plantation in South Carolina and were eyewitnesses to the cruelty of slavery. Sarah moved to Philadelphia in 1821 and joined the Society of Friends. Angelina later joined her in 1829 and both women became involved with the abolition movement. The sisters were hired by the AAS to lecture in the Northeast in 1836. This employment created a scandal as society considered it inappropriate for women to lecture publicly. Angelina was a popular and powerful speaker and, eventually, mixed crowds of men and women listened to her lectures. The sisters' speaking prompted public opposition and criticism by conservative religious leaders. This forced Angelina and her sister to address the questions of women's rights in their speeches and writings.⁶ The Grimké's work influenced other women such as Abby Kelley who also pushed for the emancipation of the slaves and equality for women working in the abolition cause. Antebellum women

⁶ Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 47–48; Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 8–11; “Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers, Massachusetts, 1837,” accessed June 4, 2014, <http://www1.assumption.edu/ahc/Kansas/abolition/PastoralLetter>.

abolitionists awakened the female consciousness concerning equal rights in society by standing up to opposing forces of conservative religious doctrine and sexism.

Black women abolitionists also organized early in the 1830s and participated in female anti-slavery societies. Some held offices in integrated societies, such as in the PFAS and the BFAS. Despite some integration, most African American women abolitionists did not hold leading roles within the major women's societies. Other female anti-slavery organizations such as the Ladies New York City Anti-Slavery Society and the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society denied participation to black women. Due to this racial discrimination some African American women reformers formed their own anti-slavery societies.⁷ They frequently combined the work of self-help and mutual aid in the black community with the abolition cause.⁸ Even though there is ample room for study and comparison on that topic, this thesis focuses primarily on the work of white women abolitionists from 1830 to 1850 who withstood forces opposed to the anti-slavery cause and who transitioned into the budding women's rights movement.

Women were involved in other reform movements at this time, but in comparison to female abolition societies, these organizations endured far less opposition. Sanctioned by many evangelical clergy, the American Temperance Society and the New York Female Moral Reform Society worked to rid the city of drunkenness and prostitution.⁹

⁷ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 7.

⁸ Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 120,127,130,134 and Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 110,136–140.

⁹ Ian R. Tyrrell, "Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South: An Overview and Interpretation," *The Journal of Southern History* 48, no. 4 (November 1982): 55–61, doi:10.2307/2207850 and Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, The American History Series (Wheeling, Il: Harlan Davidson, 2000), 40.

Although women in these other societies endured gender bias, the abolition women withstood fiercer attacks due to the very subject of their radical cause: the freedom of the slaves. Women working in abolition created such controversy that their activism caused an internal split within the national anti-slavery movement leading to a radical branch of abolitionists. This progressive organization continued to work for the emancipation of the slaves as well as push for women's rights. Women's work for temperance and moral reform did not create division within their organizations or grow into a women's rights movement. Racial prejudice, along with gender bias, religious condemnation, and public ridicule provoked the women abolitionists to challenge the existing social norms for women, opening doors for a women's rights movement by 1850.

During the 1840s, women maintained their abolition work despite the tremendous resistance fueled by racism, sexism, and conservative religious ideology. By the end of the decade, many women agreed on the need for a women's rights movement. Denied participation at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London 1840 because of their gender, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton decided to organize a women's rights convention.¹⁰ A group of women, many of them abolitionists, set this new movement in motion in July 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York.¹¹

A variety of secondary sources exist on the study of women's work in reform, abolitionism, and women's rights during the antebellum period. Some sources explore women's work in reform movements during the nineteenth century such as Anne M.

¹⁰ Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention*, Women in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 61–64.

¹¹ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 64 and Ira V Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 102, no. April (1978): 166.

Boylan's work *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* and her article "Women and Politics in the Era Before Seneca Falls"; Larry Whiteaker's *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860*; and Ian R. Tyrrell's *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860*. Other works investigate a single abolitionist event or female anti-slavery organization such as Ira V. Brown's "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840" and Douglas H. Maynard's "The World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840." Still other authors make a connection between women's rights and women abolitionists, such as Sally G. McMillen in *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* and Judith Wellman in *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention*.

Lori D. Ginzberg's work, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, compares the different reform movements of the early nineteenth century and looks at religion, race, and class and the various tasks women accomplished within the reform movements. Ginzberg touches on the separate spheres of women's place in nineteenth-century society and completes her work with a chapter on women's rights. Her research includes discussion of many benevolent and reform movements that advocated for temperance, prison reform, anti-slavery, eliminating prostitution, and the proper care of the insane.¹²

Anne M. Boylan's article, "Women and Politics in the Era Before Seneca Falls," explores the contrast in leadership styles between the benevolent movements and the anti-slavery and moral reform movements. Boylan finds that well-connected women in benevolent work approached politics discreetly and partnered privately with male public officials for funding of their activist projects, but that women involved in the anti-slavery

¹² Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, 57-89.

groups went directly to politicians and to the public with their signed petitions gathered from thousands of people. According to Boylan, the female anti-slavery societies were daring and interracial and contained women of varied social classes. She says that the social class of the women was connected to the leadership styles in the various movements.¹³

This thesis draws on both of these works and certainly agrees with Boylan's assessment that women abolitionists were daring to form interracial organizations. It also agrees with Ginzberg's idea that the women faced enormous opposition.¹⁴ However, this thesis focuses on the forces opposed to women abolitionists and makes a connection to women's rights, whereas Ginzberg and Boylan compare the work and leadership styles of women antebellum reformers based on race, class, and religion.

Unlike Ginzberg and Boylan, who take a more sociological approach to women reformers, Ira Brown and Douglas Maynard investigate a single event or organization tied to women abolitionists. Brown explores the work of the PFAS and its members. His research is a chronological discussion of the founding of the society, its work, and the experiences of some of its members. He credits the significant influence of the Quakers and the members of the PFAS in the birth of women's rights.¹⁵ Maynard's research highlights the significance of the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, but his work makes no connection between the convention and the development of the women's rights movement in America. Instead, he emphasizes the reaction of American

¹³ Anne M. Boylan, "Women and Politics in the Era Before Seneca Falls," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, no. (Fall 1990): 363–382.

¹⁴ Boylan, "Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls," 363-382.

¹⁵ Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.," 143–166.

churches and southern states to the convention's published ideas. The article specifically points out the exclusion of women in the convention.¹⁶ Despite the perspective of Maynard's interpretation of the event, the article reveals an important barrier that women abolitionists had to overcome and a goal for their future, namely gender bias and women's rights. This thesis draws on both Brown and Maynard's research and also makes a connection between women abolitionists and the women's rights movement.

Judith Wellman's work, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention*, and Sally G. McMillen's book, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Woman's Rights Movement*, connect important female abolitionists of the antebellum period to the women's rights meeting in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. Wellman's focus is on Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the role she played as a catalyst in the quest for equal rights for women through her connection to Lucretia Mott.¹⁷ McMillen's work is similar, except her focus includes later women abolitionists such as Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony. She also recognizes early women anti-slavery activists, such as Lucretia Mott, and gives them credit for breaking barriers and opening paths for women to develop a feminist movement.¹⁸ This thesis draws on Wellman and McMillen's discussions of the 1840 meeting between Stanton and Mott in London, but highlights women other than Stanton. In addition, this thesis investigates the many barriers women

¹⁶ Douglas H. Maynard, "The World's Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47, no. 3 (December 1960): 457–466, doi:10.2307/1888877.

¹⁷ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 37–64.

¹⁸ Sally G. McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*, *Pivotal Moments in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4–70.

abolitionists faced, including the challenges of gender discrimination, which Wellman and McMillen's works support.¹⁹

In addition to these secondary sources, many primary sources exist on women abolitionists between 1830 and 1850. Materials such as the *Minutes of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1838*; the *Fourth and Fifth Reports of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society* from January 1, 1837 and January 11, 1838 respectively; and *The Anti-Slavery Record* reveal the tenacity early abolitionist women from Philadelphia and Boston exhibited toward the anti-slavery cause and the angry mobs they faced. Catherine H. Birney's, *The Grimké Sisters, Sarah and Angelina Grimké: The First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Women's Rights*, includes important writings, speeches, letters, and experiences the two sisters had when confronting opposition from conservative ministers and sexist attitudes while lecturing for the AAS. These sources are helpful in connecting the enormous challenges the women faced to the foundation of a women's rights movement. They give a voice to the women abolitionists discussed in this thesis.²⁰

The opposition that the early women abolitionists contended against propelled them forward in their work for the movement. In forming their own separate societies, these women challenged gender discrimination and the boundaries of propriety. Chapter One discusses the split created within the anti-slavery movement when women began

¹⁹ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 37–64 and McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*, 4, 9–34, 35–70.

²⁰ Catherine H. Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969); Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); *The Anti-Slavery Record* (American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836); "Historical Society of Pennsylvania Third Annual Report of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society Printed January 1, 1837," accessed May 10, 2014, http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/10842.

successfully organizing and working in anti-slavery societies. Leaders like Lucretia Mott and Maria Weston Chapman overcame sexism and public opposition in order to lead the ladies' organizations. Chapter Two looks at other reform movements that involved women between 1830 and 1850 and compares those movements to female abolition. The chapter shows that women in abolition faced fiercer opposition when compared to women working in other reform movements of the antebellum period. Chapter Three highlights important Quaker women abolitionists and demonstrates how their Quaker religion helped the women stand against the barriers of the nineteenth century. A belief in the equality between the sexes, salvation for all people, and the sinfulness of slavery helped these Quaker women lead others working in abolition to brave a variety of barriers such as racism, sexism, conservative religious ideology, and public opposition.

As the women reached further out of their domestic sphere, opposing forces strengthened their resolve to keep speaking for an end to slavery and eventually for an expansion of their own rights. Influenced by the Grimké sisters, other women abolitionists began to lecture for the AAS and pushed for the rights of women to speak for the anti-slavery cause.²¹ Compared to similar reform movements of the antebellum period, women abolitionists faced extraordinary opposition. The work accomplished by the women from 1830 to 1850 helped open up women's roles through a determination to overcome public opposition, religious criticism, and gender and racial discrimination. Female abolitionists squarely challenged these obstacles of the nineteenth century, opening paths for the birth of the women's rights movement by 1850.

²¹ Blanche Glassman Hersh, *Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America*, 1st ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 14–15; Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*, 165–166, 182–185; Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Anti-Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 67, 81–83, 93.

Chapter 1

*“Yield to No Opposition”: Women Abolitionists and Controversy
in the American Anti-Slavery Society*

During the 1830s, women became a significant force within the anti-slavery movement in America. As more women were drawn to the plight of the slaves, they formed female anti-slavery societies to act as auxiliaries to the national organization, the all-male American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS). As the women gained prominence in the anti-slavery movement, they coordinated their efforts by conducting women’s national conventions. The women working in these female societies faced tremendous barriers from nineteenth-century social norms in order to work for anti-slavery reform. By the late 1830s, the growing influence of women in the anti-slavery movement began to generate controversy. Women abolitionists encountered resistance from conservative clergy, public opposition, and gender and racial prejudices while organizing and working for the anti-slavery movement. As the women pushed back against these challenges, they created debate over women’s roles within the anti-slavery movement that led to a split in the American Anti-Slavery Society. The schism within the AAS created a radical wing of abolitionists who not only promoted the emancipation of the slaves but also women’s rights.

During the 1820s, women were involved in the earliest days of the anti-slavery movement. Quakers had long denounced slavery as sinful, and later, free black women organized anti-slavery groups in Salem, Massachusetts. In 1826, Elizabeth Chandler, a young Quaker, began writing articles to contribute to Benjamin Lundy’s newspaper *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. Lundy was an anti-slavery advocate and believed in the gradual emancipation of the slaves. He recognized that Chandler was a gifted writer

and hired her, at the age of twenty-two, as editor of the “Ladies Repository” column of the newspaper. Chandler later settled in Michigan territory after leaving Philadelphia with her Quaker family in 1830 and organized one of the first female anti-slavery societies. She continued to write for Lundy and later for William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator*, which was much more radical. Chandler pleaded for women to become involved in the anti-slavery movement. She believed that they had a moral obligation to oppose slavery and exhorted women in her first column, “An Appeal to the Ladies of the United States,” to not stand by while African American women slaves were tortured and sexually abused by their masters. She believed that women who lived in relative comfort were obligated to agitate for the slaves and to call attention to their living conditions. Chandler endured opposition because of her gender and people accused her of acting improperly. People perceived her as advocating for women to become public activists and as wanting women to take over “men’s work.” Chandler defended herself in her writings by stating that slavery was “an outrage against humanity and morality and religion” and that women should work for the abolition cause to help others less fortunate than themselves.²² She believed that white people who subscribed to the idea that blacks were inferior were in a state of sin, and she challenged her readers to reject racist assumptions about the slaves. Chandler died in 1834 at the age of twenty-six, but her early advocacy for anti-slavery influenced other women to become involved.²³ Chandler set a precedent for other women abolitionists to overcome barriers of the nineteenth

²² Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 190–191 and Blanche Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, First edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 9.

²³ Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, 7–9 and Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War*, Nation Divided (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 2–3.

century such as sexism and racial prejudice in order to agitate for a worthy cause: the emancipation of the slaves.

William Lloyd Garrison attracted more women to the anti-slavery movement by including Chandler's articles in *The Liberator* in the early 1830s. After seeing the literary talent in Chandler's articles, Garrison realized the potential of attracting more women to abolitionism. His "Ladies' Department" column featured a depiction of a female slave in chains with the caption, "Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?"²⁴ This regular column in Garrison's paper educated his audience on the harsh treatment and even torture of female slaves. Many women readers related to the news articles on female slaves and were motivated to become involved in abolitionism, which led to the development of female anti-slavery societies.²⁵

An avid reader and supporter of Garrison's *Liberator*, Maria Weston Chapman, and some of her friends and family organized the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFAS) in 1832. In that same year, the all-male New England Anti-Slavery Society formed in Boston and had enough male followers for Garrison to create a national organization called the American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS). This national organization employed traveling speakers, distributed anti-slavery documents, and published the weekly *Emancipator*. State and local anti-slavery societies formed and their memberships included both African Americans and women. Other groups formed separate female and male societies. These groups responded to Garrison's appeal for more people to become involved in abolitionism and raised money to support the national

²⁴ "The-Liberator-02-21.pdf: May 26, 1832."

²⁵ Stanley Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, Seminar Studies in History (New York: Longman, 2001), 31–33 and Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 3.

organization. The BFAS and other female anti-slavery societies served as auxiliary societies to the New England Anti-Slavery Society as it was considered socially improper for women and men to serve in gender-inclusive organizations.²⁶

Chapman, a leading officer in the BFAS, was married to Henry Grafton Chapman, a wealthy merchant from Boston who supported Garrison and the AAS. She was an intelligent, sophisticated woman who was determined to advocate for the slaves. The BFAS was successful at raising money through its annual fairs and over time raised \$65,000. These fairs were large, social events that featured abolitionist speakers; the sale of the annual gift book edited by Chapman, the *Liberty Bell*, and the sale of handmade items crafted by the women abolitionist sewing circles. Other female societies that supported the national organization followed in the footsteps of the BFAS and held annual fairs of their own, raising money to send to the AAS and other regional anti-slavery societies.²⁷

The AAS, headquartered in New York, coordinated petition drives intended to influence Congress, with the women's societies involved as well. Chapman and the BFAS were active in these campaigns during the 1830s. The task of the female members was to collect signatures from both men and women on petitions to send to Congress. A major goal of the BFAS was to outlaw slavery in the District of Columbia. The women continued to send signed petitions every year, even after a gag rule was put in effect by Congress in 1836 to table further debate on slavery. Chapman's *Address of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society* urged the women to continue their collection of signatures to

²⁶ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 3–4 and Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 32–35.

²⁷ Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 32–33; Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 2–5; Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 23–25, 108, 115.

send, “that it may at least be a memorial of us, that in the holy cause of Human Freedom, ‘We have done what we could.’”²⁸ She further exhorted the women abolitionists to, “leave no energy unemployed, no righteous means untried . . . grudge no expense—yield to no opposition . . .”²⁹ Much of the Boston press ridiculed Chapman and the women abolitionists for their work collecting petitions. The *Boston Centennial and Gazette* mocked them as “a parcel of silly women” who acted like “petticoat politicians.”³⁰ Congressman Henry Wise of Virginia, clearly annoyed by the number of petitions submitted by women abolitionists, accused the women of being out of their proper sphere and even compared them to the devil.³¹ The women, despite attacks from male politicians and newspapers, continued to flood Congress with signed memorials. By 1839, women’s signatures accounted for 54.9 percent of the total on the 304 petitions gathered and sent to Congress.³² Chapman and the women of the BFAS stood up to gender barriers and public opposition of the nineteenth century by continuing to collect petitions to send to Congress to outlaw slavery.

Abolitionism was unpopular and in 1835 members of the BFAS encountered mob violence because of their activism. When the ladies of the BFAS began their annual meeting with a prayer, a rowdy crowd appeared outside the meetinghouse. As the secretary began to read a report to the members, she could hardly be heard over the noisy

²⁸ Maria Weston Chapman, “Address of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, August 13, 1836,” accessed May 11, 2014, http://www.primaryresearch.org/bh/liberator/g_show.php?file=333.jpg&id=333.

²⁹ Chapman

³⁰ Goodman, *Of One Blood*, 218.

³¹ Goodman, *Of One Blood*, 218.

³² Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 14 and Louis Filler, *The Crusade against Slavery, 1830-1860*, 1st ed., New American Nation Series (New York: Harper, 1960), 96–100.

rioters outside, as flying rocks and debris crashed through the windows. Eventually, the mayor entered the building and asked the women to disperse, but Chapman rallied them to remain, saying, “if this is the last bulwark of freedom, we may as well die here as anywhere.”³³ After the crowd intensified, the mayor again insisted that the women leave their meeting or risk injury or death. The presiding officer then asked the mayor if he could guarantee their safety if they left. He stated that he could if they adjourned their meeting at that instant. The women agreed to leave while the mayor offered them safe passage through the angry crowd. As they exited the building accompanied by the mayor, the rioters threatened them with hateful and racist remarks.³⁴ While this was one of the more extreme encounters, the women abolitionists of the BFAS risked their own safety for the anti-slavery movement during the 1830s. Harsh criticism from politicians against the women petitioners, ridicule from newspapers, and acts of mob violence failed to stop the women’s efforts for the anti-slavery cause. Their efforts only intensified.

In 1833, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (PFAS) was organized with the help of local Quakers. This group formed after the AAS initially organized in Philadelphia, though the AAS later was headquartered in New York. The PFAS was different from the BFAS because of its strong Quaker influence and the women’s diffidence. At first, the women of this female society were uncomfortable leading meetings and turned to the well-known male abolitionists Samuel May and Nathaniel Southard to speak at the first assemblies. Lucretia Mott, one of the founding members, later recalled that the women were initially unsure of how to proceed and called on James

³³ American Anti-Slavery Society, *The Anti-Slavery Record* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836), 47.

³⁴ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 5; Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, 11; American Anti-Slavery Society, *The Anti-Slavery Record*, 47–48.

McCrummell, an African American abolitionist speaker, to help lead the meetings.³⁵

Years later, Mott recalled the awkwardness of the women, saying, “at that time, even to the present day, Negroes, idiots and women were in legal documents classed together; so that we were very glad to get one of our own class to come and aid in forming that Society.”³⁶ Mott’s recollection shows that the women abolitionists were aware of their lower social status. They faced enormous levels of sexism and racism as they organized their anti-slavery movement, but they overcame their initial lack of self-confidence to push back against those barriers and agitate for the emancipation of the slaves.

Despite the gender restrictions placed on women during the nineteenth century, the PFAS mobilized with Lucretia Mott as their leader. Even though she was reluctant to take the position, she was an experienced Quaker minister from the Hicksite sect. Her role within the Society of Friends fostered the capability to exhort for a cause in which she believed. The Hicksite Quakers believed in the equality of all persons before the eyes of God and that every human being possessed the Inner Light; therefore, as a religious sect they were committed to the immediate emancipation of the slaves. Many Hicksite Quakers joined the PFAS to work for the abolition movement and included free African American women in their society.³⁷

Mott and a diverse committee of fourteen women wrote a constitution for the society that advocated for the immediate abolition of slavery and opposed racial

³⁵ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 5–6 and Harrold, *American Abolitionists*, 44.

³⁶ American Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at Its Third Decade, Held in the City of Philadelphia, Dec. 3rd and 4th, 1863, with an Appendix and a Catalogue of Anti-Slavery Publications in America from 1750 to 1863* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1864), 43.

³⁷ Ira V Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (April 1978): 145–147; Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, 14–15; Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 6–7.

discrimination. The committee presented the completed document on December 14, 1833, only five days after the first meeting of the PFAS. The constitution provided for a board of managers and included a president, a recording secretary, treasurer, corresponding secretary, and librarian. The document described the duties of these offices and called for quarterly meetings, although this was later changed to monthly meetings. The charter declared that racism and slavery were sinful and contrary to the Declaration of Independence and the concepts of democracy in America. The document stated that it was the members' duty to educate the public on the injustices of slavery and work to immediately remove it from the nation. The charter further stated that African Americans were entitled to their inalienable rights and that the PFAS would work to restore these rights to "the people of colour."³⁸ Membership was open to all females who agreed with these directives and contributed money to the society. Like the BFAS, the PFAS raised funds from annual fairs and contributed to the AAS. The women also used their funds to support a library and a school for free black children and were active in collecting petitions to send to Congress demanding the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. The society encouraged the members to avoid buying products made with slave labor.³⁹

During the spring of 1835, Angelina Grimké became a member of the PFAS. Angelina and her sister, Sarah, grew up on a plantation in South Carolina and witnessed the cruelties of slavery. Angelina joined her sister who had moved to Philadelphia in

³⁸ Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.," 146 and Minutes of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, Dec. 14, 1833, on microfiche at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁹ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 7; Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.," 145–146; Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism*, 61–62.

1821. They both became active in the abolition movement. Later, after moving to Philadelphia in 1829 to be with her sister, Angelina wrote a letter in support of abolitionism to Garrison's *Liberator*. Soon the sisters obtained positions as lecturers for the AAS in 1836, touring New England and recounting their eyewitness testimony on the cruelties of slavery. At the time, people expected that Angelina and Sarah would speak only to female audiences, but soon they lectured to mixed crowds containing both men and women. This created controversy within the anti-slavery movement as some women and men abolitionists did not approve of women speaking to mixed audiences.⁴⁰ A group of Massachusetts Congregationalist ministers issued a letter condemning the sisters for taking "the tone of a man" by speaking publicly on anti-slavery.⁴¹ Despite the controversy and the attacks by conservative religion, the PFAS supported the Grimké sisters and stated that "we would never overstep the boundaries of propriety . . . but when our brethren and sisters lie crushed under the arm of tyranny, we must do with our might what our hands find to do for their deliverance, pausing only to inquire 'what is right?' and not 'what will be universally approved?'"⁴² The PFAS stood squarely behind the Grimké sisters and challenged the barriers of sexism and conservative religious ideology during the 1830s, creating controversy over women's position in the anti-slavery movement.

⁴⁰ Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.," 151 and Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 9–10.

⁴¹ "Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers, Massachusetts, 1837," accessed June 4, 2014, <http://www1.assumption.edu/ahc/Kansas/abolition/PastoralLetter> and Catherine H. Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969), 185–187.

⁴² "Historical Society of Pennsylvania Third Annual Report of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society Printed January 1, 1837," accessed May 10, 2014, http://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/10842 and Minutes of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, November 11, 1836, on microfiche at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Holding an important place in anti-slavery activism by the late 1830s, women anti-slavery groups decided to conduct annual, national conventions in order to coordinate their work better. The first Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women convened in New York in May 1837. The members from the BFAS along with the PFAS organized the event and coordinated their efforts with the Grimké sisters. Almost one-third of the delegates came from Pennsylvania. Many prominent women abolitionists, including Lucretia Mott, Lydia Maria Child, Abby Kelley, and the Grimkés and over one hundred delegates from ten states attended the event. Several African American women, such as Grace Douglass and her daughter Sarah, participated and held offices at the convention.⁴³

The meetings opened with prayers and scripture readings, with the women adopting several resolutions condemning gender and racial prejudices. The members of the convention disapproved of the North's practice of returning fugitive slaves to the South. The women demanded that runaway slaves be guaranteed a trial by jury before being transported to southern plantations. They also urged more women to petition their state legislatures concerning the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Lucretia Mott made a motion for the women to participate in a boycott of all products of slave labor. Sarah Grimké made a motion that women were obligated to discuss slavery openly and become more informed on the matter in order to educate others of its sinfulness. Martha Storrs made a motion that the women should pray that all churches denounce slavery as evil. Angelina Grimké made several remarkable motions concerning race and gender bias. She introduced a resolution urging the women to make every effort to

⁴³ Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.," 155-156 and Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 12-13.

associate with free blacks as much as possible in order to root out “an unnatural prejudice against our colored population.”⁴⁴ Grimké went further in her resolutions by calling for women to “move in that sphere which Providence has assigned her, and no longer remain satisfied in the circumscribed limits with which corrupt custom and a perverted application of the Scripture have encircled her.”⁴⁵ This resolution was controversial and hotly debated, but finally approved, though not unanimously.⁴⁶ These resolutions show that many women abolitionists took a stand on political and social issues. They moved beyond the anti-slavery cause and assessed their own status as women in American society. Many people considered their denouncement of racial and gender prejudices and the criticism of conservative churches as radical actions. Despite the women’s success with the national convention and the positive reviews by Chapman and Garrison’s *Liberator*, people ridiculed them in other newspapers. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* poked fun at the women and called them an “Amazonian farce.”⁴⁷ The colonizationist William L. Stone wrote an editorial that further belittled the women’s accomplishments, calling the “resolutions spontaneously cut and dried beforehand,” as if the women were unable to conduct a proper vote or business without the help of men.⁴⁸ As the women pushed back against these barriers of the nineteenth century in order to

⁴⁴ *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in the City of New-York, May 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1837* (New York: W.S. Dorr, 1837), 13.

⁴⁵ *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in the City of New-York, May 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1837*, 2.

⁴⁶ *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in the City of New-York, May 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1837*, 1–18 and Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.,” 155–156.

⁴⁷ *New York Commercial Advertiser* quoted in *The Liberator*, June 2, 1837, accessed July 19, 2014, <http://fair-use.org/the-liberator/1837/06/02/the-liberator-07-23.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Anti-Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 50 and *New York Commercial Advertiser* quoted in *The Liberator*, June 2, 1837.

work for the abolition movement, they created questions over women's position in the abolition movement, which caused division within the AAS by 1840.

The second Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women gathered in Philadelphia in May 1838. Unlike the first convention that met peacefully in New York, these women faced mob violence and racist crowds. Almost three hundred women delegates met in the newly constructed Pennsylvania Hall, which opened on May 14, 1838. The large and luxurious building was owned by the Pennsylvania Hall Association and cost \$40,000 to construct.⁴⁹ The funds had been partly raised by the PFAS and by individual contributors because the PFAS wanted a building in which they could openly conduct meetings. Abolitionists experienced difficulty finding large churches and meetings halls to host gatherings. Most property owners were unwilling to risk damage to their facilities due to the controversial nature of abolitionism and the large, often hostile, crowds their meetings attracted.⁵⁰

At a meeting held on the evening of May 16, the women first elected officers of the convention: Mary Parker as president and Maria Weston Chapman, Anne Weston, Sarah Grimké, and Lucretia Mott as vice-presidents. The women conducted business by introducing and approving resolutions. These included asking the women to continue to petition Congress for the immediate emancipation of the slaves. They also approved a resolution calling for all members to avoid churches that refused to openly condemn

⁴⁹ Samuel Webb and Pennsylvania Hall Association, *History of Pennsylvania Hall* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838), 5 and Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women: Held in Philadelphia, May, 1838; Including an Account of Other Meetings Held in Pennsylvania Hall, and of the Riot. Addressed to the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, and Published by Its Request* (Boston: I. Knapp, 1838), 4.

⁵⁰ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 63–66; Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women*, 4; Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.,” 157.

slavery. This resolution resulted in much discussion and was not unanimously approved.⁵¹ This shows that the women's condemnation of churches that refused to publicly denounce slavery was controversial within the abolition movement, which would later lead to a split within the national organization.

On that same night, the women conducted an informal session of the convention in which both men and women activists spoke including William Lloyd Garrison, Maria Weston Chapman, Abby Kelley, Lucretia Mott, and Angelina Grimké. When the women walked to Pennsylvania Hall to hold this meeting, many men and young boys filled the streets. Abby Kelley, a Quaker from Worcester, Massachusetts and one of the speakers at the convention, reported that while she was walking towards the hall she saw posters visible everywhere condemning the conference and threatening to run the abolitionists out of the city. The rioters yelled and called the women "amalgamationists" because the white women and men abolitionists walked together with free blacks.⁵² Abby Kelley spoke after Chapman amid yells from rioters outside who were throwing rocks and bricks through the glass windows.⁵³ Many people sitting in the convention hall were frightened by the noise and confusion, but Angelina Grimké, the next speaker, raised her voice in to calm the audience, declaring "what if the mob should burst in upon us, break up our meeting and commit violence upon our persons? Would this be anything compared to

⁵¹ Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia. May 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, 1838* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838), 4–5, accessed May 20, 2014, <http://archive.org/details/proceedingsofant00anti>.

⁵² Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 63.

⁵³ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 62–65; Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia. May 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, 1838*, 4–5; Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women*, 4–5.

what the slaves endure?”⁵⁴ Later that evening, after hearing Abby Kelley speak, Theodore Weld, a lecturing agent for the AAS, asked her to commit to lecturing for the movement in the future.⁵⁵

The next day, May 17, only the women delegates met at 4 p.m. in Pennsylvania Hall. They quickly found themselves surrounded by an even larger and more violent crowd of rioters. The delegates conducted business and passed resolutions over the noise and verbal assaults from rioters outside the convention hall. As the fury of the mob intensified, the Pennsylvania Hall Association sent messages urging the women to keep black women away from the building for the evening meetings in an effort to ease tensions. Mott read the request to the delegates, but she encouraged the women not to be troubled by “a little appearance of danger.”⁵⁶ Abby Kelley also spoke in favor of ignoring the request, indicating that no one should stay away from the evening’s proceedings. The convention president, Mary Parker, relayed more messages from the mayor. He asked the women to stay and meet through the supper break in order to conclude their business earlier than planned and the women agreed to his request. By the time the ladies reconvened the meeting, after a brief deliberation concerning the mayor’s note, he sent an urgent message demanding the ladies leave the convention hall at once as he was canceling all meetings. As the women prepared to exit the building, Angelina Grimké suggested that the women, both white and black, walk out the door arm in arm in order to protect themselves from the violent mob of over three thousand men and boys gathered outside the convention hall. Immediately after the women left, the rioters broke

⁵⁴ Webb, *History of Pennsylvania Hall*, 125 and Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 64.

⁵⁵ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 63–66 and Webb, *History of Pennsylvania Hall*, 117–127.

⁵⁶ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 65.

into Pennsylvania Hall and burned the newly-constructed building to the ground. Others threatened the Motts' home, but it was not harmed. Vandals also damaged an orphanage for black children.⁵⁷

The next morning, the women attempted to meet in Temperance Hall but found the doors locked by its owners who feared damage to their building. Undeterred by the previous evening's events, the women concluded their meeting in the schoolhouse of Sarah Pugh, a delegate at the meetings. The women approved other resolutions providing for the religious education of slaves, the distribution of information about the cruelties of slavery, and the continuation of their commitment to work for the emancipation of the slaves. Another resolution offered by Sarah Grimké stated that prejudice was the direct cause of slavery and that it was the ladies' duty to associate with African Americans in order to improve the lives of all free blacks. This resolution encountered discussion and was approved, but not unanimously, as some members believed it would harm the abolition movement. As the meeting adjourned, the women approved the publishing of the minutes of the proceedings and the collection of donations by the members of the convention to pay for expenses. The women planned a third convention to meet in May 1839, in the same city.⁵⁸

In May 1839, the women abolitionist held their third convention on anti-slavery in Philadelphia. Little public opposition was encountered as the meetings were conducted during the daytime at the mayor's request. The group had difficulty in finding quarters to accommodate their needs but finally secured a location in the Pennsylvania Riding

⁵⁷ Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women*, 15–18; Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 65–66; Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 13.

⁵⁸ Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia. May 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, 1838*, 7–10.

School. The women conducted business as before and voted on passage of resolutions supporting the free produce movement and to assist free blacks in obtaining a proper education to work at a trade or gainful employment. Other resolutions included a denouncement of ministers opposed to the work of the women abolitionists and the anti-slavery cause. The women also wrote and presented an “Appeal to American Women on Prejudice Against Color ” and an “Address to the Society of Friends on the Subject of Slavery” chastising the Quakers for not following in the anti-slavery footsteps of their predecessors and not diligently supporting the work of anti-slavery activists. At the conclusion of the meeting, the women decided to meet again the following year in Philadelphia.⁵⁹ This final national convention of anti-slavery women reveals that the members dared to stand up to the obstacles of racism and conservative religion in order to work for the emancipation of the slaves. The women’s radical behavior in the national conventions led to contentions over women’s roles in the anti-slavery movement.

In May 1839, the AAS in New York voted to allow women to be placed on the roll as members and participants of the society. As a result, the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women did not meet in 1840.⁶⁰ A year later, the AAS voted on a resolution to permit women to hold office in the society. This added further fuel to the controversy that had plagued the AAS since 1836 when the society hired the Grimké sisters as lecturing agents. When the resolution to allow women to hold office passed, Garrison and his followers supported equal rights for women within the movement. In 1840, the

⁵⁹ Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.” 161; Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, *Proceedings of the Third Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia, May 1st, 2d and 3d, 1839* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1839), 1–36, accessed July 22, 2104, <http://archive.org/details/proceedingsofthi00anti>.

⁶⁰ American Anti-Slavery Society, *Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 28, accessed May 21, 2014, <http://archive.org/details/annualreport06amer>.

AAS elected Abby Kelley to the executive committee for the national convention with a vote of 557 in favor and 451 opposed. In response, an all-male faction of three hundred, led by Congregationalist clergymen Reverend Amos Phelps and Arthur and Lewis Tappan, walked out of the AAS gathering and formed the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. These members did not support women holding office or voting within the society and left the AAS to form the new organization. The split, however, weakened the movement. The members of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, called “new organizationists,” turned to politics and soon threw their support behind the Liberty Party, the Free-Soil Party, and later in 1854, the Republican Party. In contrast, the Garrisonians or “old organizationists,” did not support voting or working within the political system and condemned all institutions that did not openly support abolition. Garrison and his followers promoted peace, women’s rights, and “come-outerism,” meaning the open condemnation of slavery.⁶¹

After the schism, the Garrisonian wing continued its work in abolition and urged the inclusion of women in the AAS. The members appointed other women to offices in the national society. Many local and regional societies remained separate female and male associations and avoided taking sides between the two national abolitionist camps. Some formed a third type of group, such as the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, which integrated both men and women into their organization as well as promoted both women’s rights and political participation to further advance the cause. Some groups continued to work entirely as separate female and male organizations but endorsed the old organizationists’ view. Other societies, such as the Boston Female Anti-Slavery

⁶¹ Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.,” 160–162; Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 104–106; Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 54–58.

Society (BFAS), broke apart over the women's rights issue. Chapman and other old organizationists were able to save the BFAS after a bitter break-up in 1839. The Garrisonians of the BFAS continued to support women's rights and the immediate emancipation of the slaves. The other members of the BFAS, including many African American women, left and formed the Massachusetts Female Emancipation Society, clearly favoring separate male and female societies and the new organizationists' ideology.⁶²

Despite the disagreement within the anti-slavery movement over women's roles, the two camps continued to work for the emancipation of the slaves. The division created by the women abolitionists pushing back against the attitudes of the nineteenth century led to the split in the AAS. Out of this division, a radicalized camp of abolitionists, namely the Garrisonians, emerged to promote women's rights alongside the anti-slavery cause. These Garrisonian women made a significant impact in abolition between 1830 and 1850 through their grassroots work of organizing, raising funds, and petitioning Congress. While working for the movement, the women remained set against racism, sexism, traditional religious ideology, and public denouncements fueled by the social norms of the nineteenth century. When the women acquired the credibility to organize national conventions and continued to speak for the immediate emancipation of the slaves, they endured further public ridicule and violence, culminating in the burning of Pennsylvania Hall in 1838. By 1840, the contention over women's position in the anti-slavery movement led to a split in the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York. This division resulted in a reformed AAS, one that would support not only the immediate

⁶² Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840.," 162; Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 14-15; Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 57-58.

emancipation of the slaves, but also peace, equality, and women's rights. By the end of the 1840s, these ideas contributed to the rise of a separate women's rights movement.

Chapter 2

The Battle Against Liquor, Lust, and Slavery: Women's Experiences in Temperance, Moral Reform, and Abolitionism from 1830 to 1850

Women organized and were active in several reform movements between 1830 and 1850. In addition to abolitionism, women also worked for temperance and moral reform. The temperance movement advocated moderation in alcohol consumption or, as some reformers insisted, total abstinence from drinking. The moral reform movement sought to eradicate prostitution in the cities. Like abolitionism, temperance and moral reform appealed to a variety of women at the time. Some women who were active in abolitionism also worked in, or influenced, other reform organizations. Although all three of these reform movements generated controversy, not all women reformers experienced the same levels of opposition. The temperance and moral reform women endured sexism from their male counterparts in the movement, but they did not experience the racist backlash and violence that female abolitionists faced. Neither did the temperance and moral reform societies experience an internal break-up over the roles of women working in their organizations. Compared to female abolitionists, women working in other antebellum movements such as temperance and moral reform did not face the same extraordinary levels of opposition. Unlike the radical approach of the anti-slavery cause, which paved the way for the development of a women's rights movement, these other groups did not directly challenge the nineteenth-century barriers of race and sex.

The temperance movement gained ground after the Second Great Awakening began around 1795 with a series of religious revivals. Women were greatly affected by these religious meetings, and they became the majority of the converts. Ministers

encouraged women to testify and pray in public at these revivals.⁶³ Although women would become prominent in temperance by the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was at first a men's movement. In 1813, wealthy businessmen and clergy formed the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance to combat intemperance. The organization emphasized drinking problems among the lower classes and stressed moderation, but the organization fell into decline by the early 1820s.⁶⁴

Revival meetings were held in a variety of locations in the Northeast and on the western frontier. Charles Grandison Finney, a Presbyterian minister, preached at religious revivals in central and western New York between 1823 and 1831. He persuaded his audience that religion involved a response on the part of the believer. According to Finney, new converts should take direct action to improve their society in order stamp out immorality. By perfecting the world, he believed, evangelicals could hasten the coming of Christ. These ideas motivated people to become involved in reform movements. For instance, in 1825 Lyman Beecher, a prominent evangelical minister from Connecticut, delivered fiery sermons on intemperance and alcohol abuse. Beecher published his exhortations in 1826 in a pamphlet to spread the message of temperance.⁶⁵ Beecher and other clergy believed that drunkenness was responsible for many problems in society, such as crime, homelessness, and poverty. The temperance movement also began to focus on the detrimental effects of alcohol abuse on women and families.⁶⁶

⁶³ John Corrigan and Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, 7 edition (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003), 158.

⁶⁴ Thomas R. Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933*, 1st ed. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 13-19.

⁶⁵ Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*, 18-19.

⁶⁶ Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*, 13-19.

Also in 1826, white, northern, evangelical clergy, who promoted total abstinence from alcoholic beverages, founded the American Temperance Society (ATS) headquartered in Boston. Many businessmen and clergy from a variety of churches came together to solve the problem of drunkenness. They believed that the ideas promoted in the religious revivals by Finney could be helpful in furthering the temperance movement by encouraging others to become involved in bettering society.⁶⁷ Finney was not the only religious influence on the temperance movement. The Reverend Justin Edwards, an evangelical minister and a prominent organizer of the ATS in the 1820s, became a key figure in the national temperance movement. Edwards dedicated his life to Christian principles and was a teacher and administrator of Andover Seminary, a school of theology in Massachusetts.⁶⁸ Edwards delivered some of his first sermons dedicated to the topic of the “sin of alcohol” in 1822. He insisted that alcoholism ruined many people’s lives, and he pledged to help reform society.⁶⁹

The founding members of the ATS were highly educated, white, wealthy men. Over one-third of the members were clergymen.⁷⁰ Most of the members were from the Northeast and came from the Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches. A small number were Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Quakers.⁷¹ Black, male temperance groups existed at the time but worked separately from the ATS, since the

⁶⁷ Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*, 18–21.

⁶⁸ Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 61.

⁶⁹ Tyrrell, *Sobering up*, 60–61 and Rev William A. Hallock, *A Sketch of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Justin Edwards, D.D.* (New York: American Tract Society, 1855), 194.

⁷⁰ Tyrrell, *Sobering up*, 55, 62.

⁷¹ Tyrrell, *Sobering up*, 60–62.

white, national temperance movement wanted to maintain support from the South.⁷² By the mid-1830s, the southern temperance reformers became alienated from the northern temperance crusade due to the flourishing abolition movement in New England. With this in mind, the National Temperance Convention, which had been meeting in Boston, formed a new temperance association, headquartered in Philadelphia, so they would not be associated with the Boston abolitionists.⁷³ Initiated by clergymen Beecher, Edwards, and Edward Delevan, a wealthy financial backer of temperance, the male members supported the newly reorganized movement and formed the American Temperance Union (ATU) to retain southern membership and further spread their belief in the total abstinence from alcohol.⁷⁴

Justin Edwards and other evangelical clergy within the ATU encouraged the recruitment of women in the temperance organization based on their good religious character. Women had been active in the religious revivals of the 1820s and had made many converts to evangelicalism among their own family members.⁷⁵ Edwards and other clergy saw the advantages of women also working in the temperance organization. The women raised funds and brought new members into the movement, but they did not take leadership roles or direct policy in the organization.⁷⁶ Black temperance organizations worked in much the same way. The black, women workers served under the direction of

⁷² Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 97–98.

⁷³ Tyrrell, “Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South,” 486–487.

⁷⁴ Ernest Hurst Cherrington, *The Evolution of Prohibition in the United States of America: A Chronological History of the Liquor Problem and the Temperance Reform in the United States from the Earliest Settlements to the Consummation of National Prohibition*, by Ernest H. Cherrington ... (Westerville, OH: American issue Press, 1920), 93–94.

⁷⁵ Tyrrell, *Sobering up*, 67–68.

⁷⁶ McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement*, 55.

the black, male temperance officers and both remained segregated from the white, national movement.⁷⁷ The women who worked for the ATU raised money, recruited new members, gathered petitions for temperance legislation, and increased the prominence of the temperance movement.⁷⁸ By 1836, the ATU had 5,000 local chapters and over 100,000 members.⁷⁹ On average, women made up around half of the total memberships in the many local temperance societies.⁸⁰ Despite this early success, during the economic depression of 1837, the ATU lost members. Many of the wealthy sponsors suffered personal financial loss, and conflict within the movement over total abstinence from alcohol versus moderation caused the movement to decline further for the next three years.⁸¹

The temperance movement rejuvenated with the founding of the Washington Temperance Societies, or Washingtonians, named in honor of President George Washington. The Washingtonians included female auxiliary groups called Martha Washingtonians. The male organization began in 1840 when a group of six friends, drinking in a bar in Baltimore, decided to attend a temperance meeting in order to see what the movement had to offer for drinking men like themselves. The six friends unexpectedly converted to sobriety and changed their lives. Within six months, these former drinkers founded the Washingtonian organization. Many other Washingtonian

⁷⁷ Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 94.

⁷⁸ Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*, 20–22 and Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, The American History Series (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2000), 37.

⁷⁹ Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, 35.

⁸⁰ Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*, 20; According to Pegram, female membership in various local temperance societies was 35% to 60% of the membership rolls among temperance societies.

⁸¹ Tyrrell, “Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South,” 490.

societies soon formed, and they urged individuals to take a public pledge of sobriety.⁸² Within three years, the activists claimed close to 600,000 pledges of sobriety from former drinkers, of whom 100,000 had been alcoholics.⁸³

Many of the women involved in the Martha Washingtonians were wives and daughters of male members in the Washingtonian movement who had taken the pledge of sobriety.⁸⁴ These Martha Washingtonians, unlike the women in the ATU, took on more independent roles in the movement. The organizations were made up of working and lower-class females. The women held jobs as teachers, boardinghouse keepers, and dressmakers. Women of higher socio-economic standing were present in these groups, but more often women of modest means led the women's auxiliaries.⁸⁵ The Martha Washingtonians provided aid to the needy and met weekly to sew clothing for the victims of intemperance. They gave away furniture and bedding and donated money to families recovering from alcoholism. These women encouraged drinkers, both male and female, to take the pledge of abstinence, educated young mothers on preventing their children from drinking, and inspired young men's groups who had taken the pledge to remain sober. Many local Martha Washingtonian groups presented banners to young male volunteer firefighters in order to encourage them to remain sober. These young men were often new residents to the city who could be tempted to fall victim to alcohol abuse.

⁸² Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 1st ed, American Century Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 130–134.

⁸³ Charles Thomas White, *Lincoln and Prohibition* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1921), 37–39.

⁸⁴ T. W. Johnson, *A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of the Temperance Reform ...* (Glen's Falls: M. & T.J. Strong, 1845), 28–29.

⁸⁵ Ruth M. Alexander, "'We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters': Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (December 1988): 764–767, doi:10.2307/1901529.

The temperance women maintained connections with the men's groups to encourage the men to honor their pledge of sobriety. Despite their efforts, both male and female Washingtonian societies began to weaken in 1842 due to disputes within the inexperienced, working-class leadership; alienation of the religious and upper-class temperance leaders; and a general lack of direction.⁸⁶

The Sons of Temperance and the Daughters of Temperance were formed after the Washingtonian temperance movement disbanded between 1842 and 1843. The Daughters of Temperance were local auxiliary groups who helped care for one another during times of illness or death, encouraged female unity within the temperance movement, and organized non-drinking entertainment for all members who were committed to sobriety.⁸⁷ The groups thrived in the Northeast and the Midwest, and they gained in popularity throughout the late 1840s and into the 1850s. In 1849 in Canajoharie, New York, Susan B. Anthony, a Quaker and former teacher, made her first speech at a Daughters of Temperance assembly. Anthony, already an abolitionist, later became involved in women's rights.⁸⁸

By the early 1850s, women in the temperance movement were becoming frustrated with their auxiliary status. When male members denied several women from the Daughters of Temperance the right to speak at a national temperance convention in New York in 1852, they walked out in protest. The women believed that they had valuable ideas to contribute to the temperance cause and, as women and their children

⁸⁶ Alexander, "We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters': Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850," 770-775.

⁸⁷ Alexander, "We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters': Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850," 775-777.

⁸⁸ McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*, 54-55.

were often the victims of alcoholic husbands, they deserved to be heard.⁸⁹ Several months later, Susan B. Anthony, Amelia Bloomer, and other women called their own temperance meeting in Rochester, New York and elected Elizabeth Cady Stanton as their president. Stanton, also a supporter of both abolitionism and women's rights, had helped organize the first women's rights convention held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. Conservative ministers ridiculed and criticized the temperance women and referred to them as a "hybrid species" and unfeminine.⁹⁰ Again in 1853, the men denied women participation at the World's Temperance Convention held in New York and told them to stay in their proper place. The male members refused to allow Anthony to speak or the women delegates from the New York State Female Temperance Society to participate. The president of the convention stated that he would "rather resign" than allow the women to take part in the meeting.⁹¹ These events show that male members of temperance subjected these women to gender discrimination and that conservative ministers also criticized them for attempting to independently agitate for the temperance cause. Angered by their denial to be recognized as delegates, these women, including Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Abby Kelley, Lucretia Mott, and her sister Martha Wright, along with Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison formed another meeting and named it the Whole World's Temperance Convention. All of the aforementioned activists supported not only temperance and abolition, but also a women's rights movement.⁹² The temperance movement, however, was not a driving force in the

⁸⁹ Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, 38–39.

⁹⁰ Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, 38.

⁹¹ McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*, 56.

⁹² McMillen, *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*, 54–56.

establishment of women's rights as the radical Garrisonian abolition society had been. Rather, it was the emerging women's rights movement that worked its influence on the roles of women in the temperance movement.

Moral reform was another important antebellum reform movement in which women participated. In May 1834, a group of women met at the Third Presbyterian Church in New York City and founded the New York Female Moral Reform Society (NYFMRS). This society of mostly white, Protestant, middle-class women sought to reform the prostitutes in the poorest parts of the city. This group originated from the New York Magdalen Society, a group formed in 1832 that was also devoted to reforming prostitutes in New York City. The Magdalen Society employed Reverend John McDowell as a missionary and agent to enter the poorest parts of the city, including the Five Points neighborhood in the Lower East Side. He tried to rescue prostitutes from what he saw as their life of vice. After spending time in the inner city, he wrote a report called the *Magdalen Facts* on the presence of prostitution and vice in New York.⁹³ The investigation revealed that more than ten thousand prostitutes existed in the city and that they entertained a variety of men, from sailors and temporary workers to the city's upper-class male citizenry.⁹⁴ Many New Yorkers were shocked and embarrassed by the investigation. Others believed that McDowell's report was too obscene for readers and that he only sought to enhance his reputation. People verbally attacked and threatened

⁹³ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 109–112.

⁹⁴ John Robert McDowell, *Magdalen Facts* (The Author, 1832), 69.

the members of the New York Magdalen Society. As a result, the society quickly disbanded in 1833.⁹⁵

Female former members of the New York Magdalen Society still supported John McDowell and his moral reform work in the city. These women refused to back down. They worked for a year to obtain religious support and to create networks of female moral reform advocates within the local Protestant churches. These devout women believed that all Christians should be warned of the pervasiveness of vice in the city, and prostitutes living there needed assistance to change their lives. The women began to support McDowell's newspaper, the *Advocate of Moral Reform*. By 1834, these ladies believed that they had organized sufficiently among the local churches to form a city-wide society called the New York Female Moral Reform Society (NYFMRS).⁹⁶

The NYFMRS maintained that licentious men were part of the problem of prostitution in New York City and that they should be held accountable.⁹⁷ The female reformers encouraged the female standard of proper sexual behavior and demanded that men who sought out the company of prostitutes also endure a soiled reputation just as their female counterparts did.⁹⁸ The NYFMRS insisted that women prostitutes were victims of their male suitors and that the men should not be allowed to avoid responsibility for their actions. They believed that only women could be entrusted to correct the problems of morality and prostitution in the city, since women were the more

⁹⁵ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 110–112.

⁹⁶ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 111–112.

⁹⁷ Anne M. Boylan, "Women in Groups: An Analysis of Women's Benevolent Organizations in New York and Boston, 1797-1840," *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 3 (December 1984): 504, doi:10.2307/1887469.

⁹⁸ Reverend S. S. Smith, address to the FMRS of Lockport, in the *Advocate of Moral Reform* 3:4 (July 15, 1837): 289.

virtuous sex. Some men tried to join the reform movement, but the women insisted that they were more naturally fitted to the work of moral reform.⁹⁹

In 1834, the women activists purchased the *Advocate of Moral Reform* and staffed it exclusively with women.¹⁰⁰ Their goal was to create a nationally-read newspaper to educate people on the problem of vice in New York City. Three years after the NYFMRS purchased the newspaper, it had attracted a large audience and boasted 16,500 subscribers in total. The publication became one of the Society's most important accomplishments, reaching thousands of people nationwide on the subject of moral reform. Articles regularly accused American men of predatory behavior towards women and of visiting prostitutes without consequences for their actions. The newspaper frequently published the names of the male offenders as well as agencies where women were hired to work in brothels, telling its readers to avoid such people and places. *The Advocate* also called for the creation of a nationalized group of women to expose the problems of prostitution and vice in American cities and to take action to control these behaviors.¹⁰¹

In 1834, the NYFMRS hired John McDowell as a missionary to work with the city's prostitutes and two other young men to assist the minister in his work. They also hired Margaret Prior as a social worker to counsel prostitutes in the poor districts of New

⁹⁹ Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, Yale Historical Publications (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 19–20.

¹⁰⁰ Larry H. Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860*, Garland Studies in American Popular History and Culture (New York: Garland Pub, 1997), 102.

¹⁰¹ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 115.

York City.¹⁰² McDowell made a habit of showing up on Sunday mornings across the street from known brothels, reading Bible scriptures and praying loudly. Many of the prostitutes' clients were frightened away by McDowell's conduct. The Reverend and his companions also entered the jails, poorhouses, and city hospitals to pray with the women and give them Bible tracts and literature to encourage them to change their lives. Along with this missionary work, the NYFMRS opened a House of Reception for prostitutes. The moral reformers designed the House of Reception as a place for women to live while seeking to change their lives and learn a new trade. Despite the Society's attempts, most prostitutes who came there to live eventually returned to their former lifestyles. As a result, the society closed the House of Reception.¹⁰³

Undeterred, the NYFMRS decided to continue its pursuit of moral reform by starting societies in other cities and creating a national organization. In 1836, the NYFMRS sent female agents and representatives on a tour of New England to organize new auxiliary societies. These women traveled alongside the editor of *The Advocate* and talked to religious women in various churches in Deerfield, Northampton, Pittsfield, Brattleboro, and many other rural locations in the Northeast. Forty-one new societies were organized as a result of their initial efforts. By 1839, more than 445 female auxiliaries existed. The NYFMRS invited representatives, chosen from the rural organizations, to attend the Society's convention in New York. At this 1839 meeting, the NYFMRS, acting as a subsidiary organization along with representatives from the rural organizations, founded the American Female Moral Reform Society (AFMRS). The rural societies helped strengthen the moral reform movement and increased its influence

¹⁰² Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform*, 41.

¹⁰³ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 113–115.

as many of their citizens worked in New York City.¹⁰⁴ These smaller communities worried that the immoral behaviors that existed in urban areas might lure their young, working men and women into a life of crime and prostitution. Therefore, they supported moral education of the public on the immorality that existed in the cities and how to avoid it.¹⁰⁵ Strengthened by support from these agrarian villages, the women reformers wrote to their state legislators and helped lead a petition campaign for the passage of an anti-seduction bill that became New York state law in 1848. This law made it illegal for a man to seduce an unmarried female in New York State.¹⁰⁶

Even with this level of prominence, the moral reform women encountered criticism from the clergy for their activism. Some clergymen encouraged the women activists to dissolve their local organization. They believed that the women were acting beyond their proper sphere, and they should allow male reformers to lead the battle against prostitution and seduction. The women of the NYFMRS refused and maintained the support of many rural female moral reform societies in their decision.¹⁰⁷ Women were encouraged to express their opinions to *The Advocate* and to be united with other like-minded women in the cause of moral reform.¹⁰⁸

By the late 1830s, some officers of the NYFMRS began corresponding with Lucretia Mott, the abolitionist from Philadelphia, concerning women's rights. The Society also endorsed Emma Willard, who helped establish the Troy Female Seminary

¹⁰⁴ Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860*, 96.

¹⁰⁵ Mary P. Ryan, "The Power of Women's Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum America," *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1979): 70–72, doi:10.2307/3177551.

¹⁰⁶ Boylan, "Women in Groups," 506.

¹⁰⁷ Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860*, 119.

¹⁰⁸ Whiteaker, 119 and Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 120–122.

and promoted women's education. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman physician in the United States, also wrote to the executive committee of the NYFMRS. When Blackwell's story appeared in *The Advocate*, the women in the movement helped her locate a job. The women officers of the NYFMRS followed the writings of female abolitionists and their interest in women's rights. In January 1838, the editors of *The Advocate* printed an essay written by the abolitionist Sarah Grimké "What Are the Duties of Woman at the Present Time?"¹⁰⁹ Grimké's article criticized male clergy and their interpretation of Paul's epistles in the Bible, especially concerning his instructions on women's place in the Church. Grimké went on to say that men and women were created equal and they should read and interpret the Bible for themselves. She accused women of being intellectually lazy and not thinking for themselves, being content to stay in the home.¹¹⁰

Many female supporters of moral reform disagreed with Sarah Grimké's ideas on women's rights. Most women living in rural areas who supported the AFMRS and the NYFMRS championed the traditional roles of women. They wrote letters that sharply criticized *The Advocate* for printing Grimké's views.¹¹¹ The rural societies believed in the traditional family and maintained their support of conservative religious ideology. The newspaper quickly backed away from women's rights and stated that *The Advocate* and its staff remained neutral on the subject of women's roles in society. They asserted the right of the newspaper to promote a search for the truth concerning women's rights,

¹⁰⁹ Sarah Grimké, "What are the Duties of Woman at the Present Time?" *Advocate of Moral Reform*, January 1, 1838.

¹¹⁰ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 124–126.

¹¹¹ Letter to the Editor, *Advocate of Moral Reform*, April 1, 1838.

but *The Advocate* never again published any essays discussing feminist ideas.

Subsequently, the editors maintained that women held separate, but equal, domains from men.¹¹² Women, according to *The Advocate's* position, were the protectors of the home who were to educate children properly and provide for the moral direction of the family. In this sphere, women could expand their roles to help enlighten their communities on the sin of prostitution and seduction and still maintain their propriety.¹¹³

The American Female Moral Reform Society included women of white, middle-class, Protestant backgrounds who supported the cause of eradicating prostitution and seduction. The women who worked in the temperance cause were also Protestant and came from middle and working classes. Female abolition societies comprised women from various socio-economic classes and denominations. However, many abolition women were Quakers or were influenced by Quaker ideology. Quaker beliefs had a profound effect on the anti-slavery and women's rights movements, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

These temperance organizations were not racially integrated, though some black temperance groups existed separately.¹¹⁴ The American Female Moral Reform Society and its rural auxiliaries also were not integrated. In contrast to women's temperance and moral reform groups, some female anti-slavery groups embraced diversity within their societies. Both the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society included black women members, some of whom held offices within

¹¹² Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 126–127.

¹¹³ Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860*, 128–130.

¹¹⁴ Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*, 22 and Samuel Fenton Cary, *Historical Sketch of the Order of the Sons of Temperance: An Address Delivered at the Fortieth Annual Session of the National Division, Held at Halifax, N.S. in July, 1884* (Halifax: W. Theakston, 1884), 12–13.

the societies. The constitution of the PFAS specifically addressed racism and called it a sin. The written document, designed by a committee of the female members, including two free black women, insisted that a goal for the society was to restore to the slaves their inalienable rights as citizens. The national convention held in New York in 1837 openly included black women together with white women. During the meetings, the female abolitionists passed a resolution calling for the members to associate freely with blacks as much as possible, in order to alleviate prejudice in the nation. The press ridiculed the women for their radical actions, but they persisted in their abolition work.

The women in the temperance and moral reform movements did not experience the racism and corresponding mob violence that the abolition women faced due to the radical subject of their reform movement: the immediate emancipation of the slaves. By contrast, the temperance and moral reform movements purposely avoided inflaming racial prejudice. While some black temperance groups did experience violence, the attacks were a reaction to the race of their members rather than their agitation for the temperance cause. On several occasions, black and white women abolitionists faced angry mobs that threatened them with personal injury. Despite these incidents, the women abolitionists continued to work for the anti-slavery cause and pushed back against the racism of the nineteenth century. Overall, women working for abolitionism faced fiercer public opposition than women working in moral reform and temperance during the same time. Abolitionists sought to change the long-standing social order in American society between blacks and whites. Their work threatened the South economically by advocating for the immediate release of the slaves without compensation to the owners. Ultimately, abolitionism endangered the relationship between the North and the South.

Unlike the temperance and moral reform movements, the very nature of anti-slavery reform was socially and politically radical.

All women's reform movements working for temperance, moral reform, and abolition from 1830 to 1850 faced opposition based on their gender. As the moral reform women worked to clean up vice in their cities, clergy and other men scolded them for their assertiveness and aggressive writings. The male-dominated national organization denied the temperance women the right to participate. Women in both of these groups believed that women were equal to men in advocating for their causes, but they did not openly endorse women's rights at that time. Some supported the traditional roles of women but advocated an acceptable extension of the domestic sphere of women in reform work. In contrast, some women who worked in the anti-slavery movement chose to directly challenge the sexist attitudes of the nineteenth century. Their actions created controversy within the anti-slavery movement itself because not all abolitionists supported expanded roles for women. This conflict led to a split in the national anti-slavery organization, which created a pro-women's rights wing within abolitionism in 1840. Thirteen years later, in 1853, with the help of Garrisonian abolitionists, temperance women organized a gender-inclusive World's Temperance Convention. Temperance women did not receive full-membership within the national temperance organization until 1866.¹¹⁵ The moral reform women continued to work within their female societies and gradually gained public acceptance and legislative support for their cause.

The female temperance and moral reform organizations empowered women to speak out for a cause they believed in, but they did not all seek to make revolutionary

¹¹⁵ Cary, *Historical Sketch of the Order of the Sons of Temperance*, 12–13.

social and political changes in America. They avoided racial controversy and as a result they did not face the violent public opposition that the abolition movement had seen.

Although these groups pushed for the right of women to speak for temperance and moral reform as equals to men, they did not advocate for a separate women's rights movement.

Rules of society that confined other reform movements were, to the abolition women, barriers to be overcome if they were to reach their goals. While the missions of the female moral reform and temperance organizations were to improve society, women abolitionists sought to reshape it radically, according to their own vision.

Chapter 3

Founders of Feminism: Quaker Women in the Abolition Movement

Lucretia Mott, Angelina and Sarah Grimké, and Abby Kelley were prominent female abolitionists, active during the antebellum years. They were also Quakers, deeply influenced by their religious beliefs. The Religious Society of Friends believed in the equality of all people. Quakers expanded the participation of women within their religious meetings. Their adherence to egalitarianism also led some Quakers, unlike Christians in many other denominations, to denounce slavery openly in the United States. These four female abolitionists ended up advocating not only for the emancipation of the slaves, but also for the defense of women's rights to work in the anti-slavery cause. Their efforts, along with other women abolitionists, helped set the stage for the development of a women's rights movement. The Quaker ideals of equality between men and women, opposition to slavery, and salvation for all people played an influential role that helped these remarkable women abolitionists stand up to the opposing attitudes of the nineteenth century, leading to a women's rights movement by 1848. Although not all women abolitionists belonged to the Religious Society of Friends, Quakerism played a significant role in the birth of a women's rights movement.

Early in the colonization of America, Quakers took a humanitarian stand on relations with the enslaved blacks. William Penn established Quakerism in America in 1682. By 1750, the Society of Friends openly condemned the keeping of slaves. Based on their religious doctrine that all people, including blacks, have the gift of the Inner Light, they believed that it was sinful to hold African Americans in slavery.¹¹⁶ *Some*

¹¹⁶ Thomas Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 26–29, 33–35.

Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes by John Woolman, a Quaker minister, influenced many Quakers at the time. Woolman tried to convince slaveholders that the practice of holding slaves was ungodly.¹¹⁷ By 1784, all of the yearly meetings of the American Society of Friends ordered that members must emancipate their slaves. Beginning in the early 1800s, Quakers became a significant voice in the anti-slavery cause.¹¹⁸

In the early nineteenth century, Quakers from New England and the American South began moving west. As they relocated throughout the nation, their yearly meetings continued to look to London and Philadelphia for doctrinal guidance.¹¹⁹ Philadelphia remained a Quaker stronghold, even though the number of Friends there declined. All Quakers held many ideological concepts in common, such as the gift of the Inner Light in all humans, direct revelation from the Holy Spirit, the equality of women and men, unpaid ministers, unscripted meetings, pacifism, plain dress and speech, and a separation from worldliness. Quakers, as a group, believed that the keeping of slaves was sinful.¹²⁰

By the 1820s, a split developed in the Quaker community over ideas espoused by Elias Hicks, a traveling Quaker minister from Long Island. At issue were Hicks' thoughts on Christ and the Bible that some Friends did not accept. He implied Christ was not born divine; he believed that Jesus lived a life of perfection which allowed him to become the Son of God. Hicks was also critical of the urban elites within the Quaker

¹¹⁷ Pink Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25–27.

¹¹⁸ Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, 33–35.

¹¹⁹ Herbert Aptheker, "The Quakers and Negro Slavery," *The Journal of Negro History* 25, no. 3 (July 1940): 341, doi:10.2307/2714799.

¹²⁰ Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, 37–39.

meetings. He believed that these city Quakers had become too worldly and overly connected with the paid evangelical ministers in non-Quaker denominations. Hicks condemned slavery openly and endorsed the free produce movement, which advocated that its members only purchase products made from non-slave labor. Hicks vigorously endorsed humanitarian and reform causes.¹²¹ He placed more emphasis on the authority of the Inner Light than the Biblical Scriptures and asked, “is it possible that men can be guilty of greater idolatry, than to esteem and hold the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice, by which they place them in the very seat of God and worship them as God?”¹²² Orthodox Quakers rebuked the Long Island minister and stated that even though they also believed in the power of the Inner Light, the Scriptures were important for all mankind and Hicks’ statements concerning his disregard for the Holy Scriptures were arrogant and prideful. In 1826, at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, two-thirds of the members sided with Elias Hicks and walked out to form their own yearly meeting. These Quakers became known as the Hicksites, and the break between the two groups left a bitter scar for many years.¹²³ The reform ideas preached by Elias Hicks, such as abolition and the free produce movement, profoundly influenced Lucretia Mott, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, and Abby Kelley in the abolition cause.

Lucretia Mott sided with the Hicksites along with her husband James. Mott grew up on Nantucket Island and was raised in the Quaker tradition. She witnessed her mother running the home and family affairs alone for long periods of times, as her father was often away at sea. Mott went to New York to attend Nine Partners religious boarding

¹²¹ Aptheker, “The Quakers and Negro Slavery,” 357–358.

¹²² Elias Hicks, *Letters of Elias Hicks* (New York: Isaac T. Hopper, 1834), 64.

¹²³ Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, 39–43 and Hicks, *Letters of Elias Hicks*, 9–12.

school where she met her future husband James Mott, a teacher at the school. After marriage in 1811, they settled in Philadelphia and raised a family.¹²⁴ They were active with the Society of Friends and witnessed the schism that developed between the Orthodox Quakers and the Hicksites. The Motts joined with the Hicksite sect, as they agreed with the supporters of Elias Hicks on the work of abolitionism. The Orthodox Quakers did not openly endorse anti-slavery reform or the free produce movement. Lucretia Mott and her husband also joined the free produce movement endorsed by the Hicksites.¹²⁵

During the initial organization of the male-directed American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS) in Philadelphia in 1833, Mott was one of a small group of Quaker women who attended and contributed to the organization's ideas. Mott, an experienced Quaker minister since 1821, was accustomed to speaking to mixed audiences of men and women. This was an accepted practice since the 1640s, as Quakers believed in the equality of both sexes and permitted women to preach in Quaker meetings. During this first gathering, male activists from Philadelphia, along with others from New England and New York, met for three days to organize the AAS. Close to one-third of the total in attendance were Quaker, and most of those were Hicksites.¹²⁶ Male abolitionists invited women abolitionists to attend on the second day of the meeting. Mott arrived at the convention with her mother, one daughter, and two sisters.¹²⁷ When the leaders of the assembly

¹²⁴ Ira V Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 102 (April 1978): 147.

¹²⁵ Wendy Hamand Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets: Women Abolitionists and the Civil War, Nation Divided* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 6-7.

¹²⁶ Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, 44.

¹²⁷ Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, 13-14.

encountered a delay by some late speakers, they became discouraged. Mott encouraged the men to continue the meeting, remarking, “if our principles are right, why should we be cowards? Why should we wait for those who never had the courage to maintain the inalienable rights of the slave?”¹²⁸ Mott also made suggestions on the written draft of a “Declaration of Sentiments and Purposes” composed at the meeting.¹²⁹ Mott’s remarks on the rights of the slaves at the initial meeting of the AAS and her contributions to the writings of the men’s society are examples of the influence of Quaker ideology on humanitarian beliefs. Her actions prove that she believed that all persons were equal before God and that women had the right to speak for themselves and for those less fortunate. These beliefs influenced her to resist the racism and eventually the sexism of the nineteenth century.

Mott was a key organizer for the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (PFAS) in 1833 and became an influential leader for the association. She was the organization’s first corresponding secretary for this racially-integrated group. Mott and a committee of other women helped write a constitution for the society five days after the first meeting of the PFAS.¹³⁰ A committee of fourteen women wrote the document, which emphasized anti-slavery and humanitarian beliefs. The first article of the constitution stated that the goal of the society was to educate all people on the deplorable living conditions of the slaves and also the mistreatment of the free blacks. The members promised to help eliminate prejudice against slaves and free blacks and to help improve

¹²⁸ Anna Davis Hallowell, *James and Lucretia Mott: Life and Letters* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1890), 116.

¹²⁹ Hallowell, *James and Lucretia Mott*, 112–116.

¹³⁰ Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840,” 145–146.

their lives. The society encouraged the women to abstain from products made by slaves. Any woman who believed in these principles and contributed to the society's funds could join.¹³¹ Despite the fact that the all-male AAS barred women from joining its organization, the PFAS became a prominent auxiliary to the male society through its work and advocacy for the abolition cause.¹³² The Quaker ideology, which included anti-prejudice principles and a commitment to free produce, influenced Mott and the other women of the PFAS. These ideas helped Mott take a stand against the prejudicial attitudes of the nineteenth century.

Mott attended and contributed to the Anti-Slavery Conventions of American Women held during the late 1830s. Maria Weston Chapman, the abolitionist from Boston, suggested that women hold national conventions in order to coordinate their work for the anti-slavery cause. A variety of women delegates, including black women, attended from many state and local female societies. The first convention, held in New York in 1837, featured many prominent women abolitionist speakers including Mott, Maria Weston Chapman, Abby Kelley, Lydia Maria Child, and the Grimké sisters.¹³³ While in attendance, Mott inspired other female abolitionists to continue their anti-slavery work despite public opposition to women holding a national convention and speaking for the abolition cause.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, "Minutebook of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society," December 14, 1833. These minutes appear to have been written in 1834.

¹³² Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, 14–15.

¹³³ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 12–13.

¹³⁴ *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in the City of New-York, May 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1837* (New York: W.S. Dorr, 1837), 3–18.

In 1838, at the Women's Convention held in Philadelphia, Mott served as a vice-president and encouraged the women to continue the meetings amid the risk of riots and violence.¹³⁵ At the first informal gathering held on the evening of May 16, Mott addressed concerns from others in attendance that it was improper for women to speak to mixed audiences. She reminded the critics the meeting was an unofficial gathering of abolition men and women and that she hoped "such false notions of delicacy and propriety would not long obtain in this enlightened country."¹³⁶ William Lloyd Garrison was the first speaker of the evening, followed by Maria Weston Chapman, Angelina Grimké Weld, Abby Kelley, and finally Mott with the closing remarks.¹³⁷ The following day, the women conducted business and passed resolutions amid the noise of angry crowds in the streets surrounding the building. That same evening, the women narrowly escaped personal injury when Pennsylvania Hall was burned to the ground by anti-black rioters. The police stood idly by and did not respond to the emergency.¹³⁸ For several hours after the fire, the racist crowd threatened to burn Lucretia's home, but the mob headed another direction after given false information by a family friend. Mott commented at the closing meeting held in a schoolhouse the next day on her reaction to the threats against her home that "I felt at the moment that I was willing to suffer

¹³⁵ Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia. May 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, 1838* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838), 3–11, accessed May 20, 2014, <http://archive.org/details/proceedingsofanti00anti>.

¹³⁶ Brown, "Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840," 159.

¹³⁷ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 63–64.

¹³⁸ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 65.

whatever the cause required.”¹³⁹ After hearing these brave words from Mott, the assembly agreed to hold another convention the next year.¹⁴⁰ The actions by Mott, after riots and violence in Philadelphia in 1838, show that she was committed to her Quaker beliefs of improving the lives of others less fortunate.

Even though Mott was a Quaker, not all of the women abolitionists belonged to the Society of Friends. Maria Weston Chapman, her sister Ann, and Lydia Maria Child are some examples of women abolitionists who were not Quakers; however, it is impossible to ignore the Quaker influence on many of these leading women. Quakerism was a catalyst for Mott to remain steadfast against racism and sexism despite the risk of personal injury.

Lucretia Mott served as an influential mentor to Elizabeth Cady Stanton while attending the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. Stanton met Mott in London in June 1840 while on her honeymoon with her husband, Henry B. Stanton, a prominent abolitionist speaker. Henry Stanton served as a delegate from the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in the London Convention. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was not a Quaker, but she was an abolitionist and supported women’s rights. Profoundly influenced by Mott’s Quaker progressiveness, Stanton later helped organize a women’s rights convention along with other Quaker women abolitionists. Joseph Sturge and Reverend John Scoble, British abolitionists, organized the London Convention and sent requests to American abolitionists to send delegates to the meeting. The invitations

¹³⁹ Fall River Female Anti-Slavery, *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women: Held in Philadelphia, May, 1838; Including an Account of Other Meetings Held in Pennsylvania Hall, and of the Riot. Addressed to the Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, and Published by Its Request* (Boston: I. Knapp, 1838), 22.

¹⁴⁰ Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840,” 157–160.

welcomed “friends of the slave of every nation and of every clime.”¹⁴¹ When the British organizers heard that women delegates from America planned to attend, they quickly changed the invitation to include only men. Close to five hundred people attended the event held in London, including approximately fifty anti-slavery delegates from the United States. Undeterred by the amended invitation excluding women, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society sent Mary Grew, Abby Kimber, Lucretia Mott, Sarah Pugh, and Elizabeth Neall to the meeting. The gender-integrated American Anti-Slavery Society, which had recently split over the role of women in the AAS, sent several delegates including William Lloyd Garrison and Lucretia Mott. The State of Massachusetts also sent abolition representatives, including Ann Green Phillips, wife of prominent abolitionist Wendell Phillips, Abby Southwick, and Emily Winslow.¹⁴²

When the American delegates and female abolitionists arrived in London, the sponsors asked the women not to force the issue on female participation in the convention. Mott and the other American female abolitionists protested the exclusion of women from the event and wrote a letter to the British organizers demanding an explanation. As a result, the first order of business on the first day of the London Convention addressed the controversy of allowing women to participate in the Convention. Wendell Phillips moved to permit all persons credentialed by their local anti-slavery organizations to participate. Much debate ensued, but when a vote was taken, the Convention barred women from participation.¹⁴³ Many Americans who belonged to the new organization,

¹⁴¹ Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840,” 162.

¹⁴² Maynard, “The World’s Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840,” 456–457.

¹⁴³ Brown, “Cradle of Feminism: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1833-1840,” 163–166.

the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, as well as Orthodox Quakers who had received letters from America concerning the Motts' membership with the Hicksite sect, voted against the admission of women.¹⁴⁴

The all-male delegation forced the women delegates to sit in the visitors' gallery during the eleven-day Convention and denied them participation. William Lloyd Garrison, after being delayed by bad weather, protested along with the women, refused to take his seat on the Convention floor, and sat with the women in the gallery.¹⁴⁵ Mott tried to organize a separate meeting for the women during her stay in London, but to no avail. Despite these setbacks, Mott became quite famous for her continued presence and her protest. Many prominent members of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and English aristocrats met with her. As a result, Mott became known as "the lioness of the convention" as one journalist described her.¹⁴⁶ During this experience, Mott forged a life-long friendship with Elizabeth Cady Stanton while sitting in the gallery. Stanton and Mott had long talks about the condition of women's status both in the London Convention and more broadly at home in America. Elizabeth Cady Stanton became a strong admirer of Mott. The two women vowed to continue the fight for the emancipation of the slaves and for women's rights when they returned home.¹⁴⁷ Mott's Quaker background inspired her independent spirit to fight for women's participation at the London Convention. It also had a profound influence on Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

¹⁴⁴ Margaret Hope Bacon, *Valiant Friend: The Life of Lucretia Mott* (New York: Walker, 1980), 88–89.

¹⁴⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage ...: 1848-1861* (Rochester: Fowler & Wells, 1889), 61.

¹⁴⁶ Hallowell, *James and Lucretia Mott*, 189–190.

¹⁴⁷ Bacon, *Valiant Friend*, 98–99.

Eight years later, the two met again and planned a women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York.

Two other important female abolitionists, influenced by Quakerism who became involved in women's rights, were the sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké. Sarah and Angelina grew up in South Carolina in the early nineteenth century. In 1821, Sarah moved to Philadelphia to escape the pro-slavery environment. Sarah questioned the morality of the southern lifestyle and the keeping of slaves. After living in the North for two years, Sarah joined the Society of Friends and became active in abolitionism. Angelina, thirteen years younger than Sarah, also was horrified by her family's plantation life and later joined her sister in 1829. Both sisters read Garrison's newspaper *The Liberator*, and in 1835 Angelina became active in the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁴⁸

As the Grimké sisters expanded their interest in abolition, Angelina wrote a letter to William Lloyd Garrison supporting his ideas on anti-slavery work. In her letter, dated August 30, 1835, Angelina encouraged Garrison to continue his abolition work despite public disapproval and the scarcity of available meetinghouses. She explained that although she "expected opposition, I was not prepared for it so soon—it took me by surprise."¹⁴⁹ She rallied Garrison by concluding that if persecutions were to come then "let it come—let us suffer, rather than insurrections should arise."¹⁵⁰ Garrison, realizing the potential of such powerful writing from the daughter of a prominent, southern

¹⁴⁸ Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, 17.

¹⁴⁹ Catherine H. Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969), 124–125.

¹⁵⁰ Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*, 125–126.

slaveholder, published her letter and encouraged Angelina to work for the anti-slavery cause. At first, the publication of the letter upset her sister Sarah, as both Angelina and Sarah belonged to the Orthodox Quakers in Philadelphia.¹⁵¹ The Orthodox Quakers were not as outspoken on the subject of abolitionism as the Hicksites and rebuked those members who spoke during Quaker meetings on the subject. After much consideration, however, Sarah chose to commit to work within the anti-slavery cause with her sister.¹⁵²

Even though women could not become members or hold office within the all-male American Anti-Slavery Society, in November 1836, the AAS hired both sisters to tour New England and lecture for the Society. They began their mission by attending classes offered by seasoned AAS lecturing agent Theodore Weld, the future husband of Angelina. The sisters were the only women in the group of seventy on the tour, which aimed to advance the cause of immediate emancipation. When the two-year tour began, the sisters lectured only to women in churches and parlor rooms. The sisters were well received in New York, but some abolitionists were concerned that women speaking in public on a political matter might damage the cause of abolitionism. Despite the critics, Weld encouraged the sisters to move forward in the work. By mid-December, the sisters found themselves speaking to mixed audiences of both men and women. The sisters' southern, aristocratic background and personal experience with slavery fascinated audiences and attracted large crowds, including many men.¹⁵³ By mid-February 1837, the Grimké sisters found themselves speaking to groups of three hundred or more, including

¹⁵¹ Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*, 143–145.

¹⁵² Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 49–50.

¹⁵³ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 9–11.

African American men and women. In Lynn, Massachusetts the crowd numbered over a thousand people. The sisters' lectures for the anti-slavery cause were clearly beneficial for the AAS, as they increased the public's interest in abolition.¹⁵⁴ Their commitment to speak publicly for the anti-slavery movement reveals the influence of the Quaker progressive ideology on emancipation and the equality of the sexes on the sisters. Despite the disapproval of their Orthodox Friends for lecturing for the AAS, Quakerism provided the catalyst for the sisters to take radical actions against racism and sexism during the 1830s.

The Grimkés' public speaking and touring led to opposition from conservative religious authorities. In June 1837, the General Association of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts wrote a public letter condemning the two women's actions. The letter accused the sisters of taking on the tone of a man in their lectures for the AAS. The Massachusetts clergy commanded that churches not allow "strangers to preach on subjects the ministers do not agree with."¹⁵⁵ The letter warned congregations about "the dangers, which at present seem to threaten the female character with widespread and permanent injury."¹⁵⁶ The ministers insisted that a woman's strength is the result of her dependence on man and that she becomes "unnatural" when she acts independent from him.¹⁵⁷ Angelina and Sarah entered the lecture circuit prepared to advocate for the abolition cause and ended up defending their rights as women to do so.

¹⁵⁴ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 49–50 and Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 9–11.

¹⁵⁵ "Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers, Massachusetts, 1837."

¹⁵⁶ "Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers, Massachusetts, 1837."

¹⁵⁷ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 131–132.

Some historians consider Sarah Grimké to be the first feminist to develop a logical argument on women's rights. Beginning in July 1837, she wrote a series of letters on the equality of the sexes. Printed in *The Liberator* and the *New England Spectator*, she defended women's rights against the ministers who wrote the public pastoral letter.¹⁵⁸ Grimké stated that all roles ascribed to women from the Bible have "been the result of a misconception of the simple truths revealed in the Scriptures."¹⁵⁹ She further remarked that she believed many of the translations were erroneous and she used earlier versions of the Biblical text as her reference. Grimké stated that men and women were created as equals and that they were both guilty of the fall from innocence in the Garden of Eden. She noted that male translators of the Bible had imposed their bias onto the text of the Holy Scriptures in order to dominate and control women.¹⁶⁰ She charged that "men and women were CREATED EQUAL" and that if it is moral for man to do something, it is also moral for woman.¹⁶¹

While controversy was still boiling over the role of women in the anti-slavery movement, the Grimkés attended the Anti-Slavery Conventions of American Women in New York and Philadelphia. In May 1837, during the Women's Convention in New York, Angelina wrote *An Appeal to Women of the Nominally Free States*. With the funds it raised, the Convention published and distributed the seventy-page pamphlet for women

¹⁵⁸ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 135–139.

¹⁵⁹ Sarah Moore Grimké and Mary S. Parker, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman: Addressed to Mary S. Parker* (Boston: I. Knapp, 1838), 4.

¹⁶⁰ Grimké and Parker, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman: Addressed to Mary S. Parker*, 3–8 and Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 135–136.

¹⁶¹ Grimké and Parker, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman*, 16.

to read.¹⁶² In her *Appeal*, Grimké remarked that all citizens should be concerned about the actions of their government. Because government affects everyone, including women, their voices should be heard as true citizens. She asked, “are we aliens because we are women? Are we bereft of citizenship because we are mothers, wives, and daughters of a mighty people?”¹⁶³ She concluded that it was absurd to think that women could not be legal citizens of the United States, insisting that they too had a stake in public policy. She argued further that it was women’s duty to act as citizens against the brutal institution of slavery. If women chose not to take action, then they were guilty of supporting the idea that women have no right to act and they were nothing more than “the white slaves of the North.”¹⁶⁴ Angelina’s arguments tied women’s rights to the rights of female abolitionists to advocate for the anti-slavery movement as citizens. Her *Appeal* took a bold and daring step to advance abolitionism and women’s rights and the duty of female citizens to take action. Not all Quakers supported these radical ideas, but Angelina’s exposure to the progressive ideas of Quakerism helped her to speak for the African Americans held in slavery and for a woman’s right to advocate for the slaves. In doing so, she tied the right of women to speak for the anti-slavery cause with the right of women as citizens.

The young Quaker continued her arguments for women’s rights on February 21, 1838, when she became the first woman to address the Massachusetts State

¹⁶² Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 52 and *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in the City of New-York, May 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1837*, 10, 15.

¹⁶³ Angelina Grimké, “An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free St...,” 6–7, accessed May 11, 2014, <https://archive.org/stream/appealtowomenofn00anti#page/n1/mode/2up>.

¹⁶⁴ Grimké, “An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free St...,” 12–13.

Legislature.¹⁶⁵ Earlier, in January, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society had been in session in Faneuil Hall. Many women, including the Grimkés, were also present at these meetings to hear prominent male abolitionists such as Henry B. Stanton, Wendell Phillips, and Amos Phelps. After much public opposition to the society's use of Faneuil Hall, the Massachusetts State Legislature agreed to allow the use of the hall of the House of Representatives for the remainder of the meetings. Henry B. Stanton asked Angelina to speak on behalf of the thousands of women who had signed anti-slavery petitions sent to the Legislature. To his surprise, she agreed. Hundreds of people came to hear Angelina speak on the subject of abolitionism and women's rights to petition. Over five hundred were turned away for lack of room in the building.¹⁶⁶ She spoke on two separate days for over two hours each. In her first speech Angelina began, "I stand before you as a citizen, on behalf of the 20,000 women of Massachusetts whose names are enrolled on petitions which have been submitted to the Legislature."¹⁶⁷ She insisted that even though slavery "is a political subject, it has often tauntingly been said, that women had nothing to do with it."¹⁶⁸ She argued that women had the right not only to sign the petitions but a duty to act against slavery, and "that American women do have to do with this subject, not only because it is moral and religious, but because it is political, in as much as we are citizens of this republic."¹⁶⁹ Angelina finished her comments by insisting that women's lives were directly affected by the laws and government of the land and that women must

¹⁶⁵ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*, 226–229.

¹⁶⁷ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 7.

¹⁶⁸ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 7.

be accepted as citizens of the nation.¹⁷⁰ Her arguments concerning women's citizenship status within American society reflect the influence of Quaker ideology on her views of the equality of women as well as anti-slavery principles.

After Angelina married the abolitionist Theodore Weld in May 1838, she and Sarah left the lecture circuit. The Friends disowned Angelina for marrying a man outside of the Quaker religion and rejected Sarah for attending the ceremony. Both women remained committed to anti-slavery activism and women's rights, although family commitments and health problems limited Angelina's future speaking engagements.¹⁷¹

Abby Kelley admired the activism of Angelina and Sarah Grimké and became an important speaker and activist for the abolition movement beginning in the late 1830s. Kelley grew up in Worcester, Massachusetts in a Quaker household. Well educated, in 1836 she accepted a position as a teacher in Lynn, Massachusetts. While living and working in Lynn, Kelly joined the local female anti-slavery society. In April 1837, Angelina Grimké encouraged Kelley to attend the upcoming Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women. Kelley, elected as one of seven delegates from the female society in Lynn, attended the convention in New York. Kelley also followed the writings of Sarah and Angelina Grimké in defense of women's rights. She also sided with the sisters' condemnation of conservative religious ideology and women's traditional gender roles.¹⁷² In December 1837, Kelley attended the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Boston and sat with the Grimkés in the audience. The all-male

¹⁷⁰ Angelina Grimké, "Speech Before the Legislative Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature, February 21, 1838," in Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 267–269.

¹⁷¹ Venet, *Neither Ballots nor Bullets*, 11.

¹⁷² Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 15, 19, 20, 32, 40–49.

society agreed to an open debate and a southern slaveholder presented a defense of his right to own slaves. During his speech, Angelina whispered to Kelley, “Oh how I wish I could speak.”¹⁷³ Abby insisted that Angelina take the floor, but she replied, “The brethren will not like it.”¹⁷⁴ Kelley responded, “Is it better to listen to the brethren or to the divine voice in our own souls?”¹⁷⁵ Kelley’s response shows her commitment to the Quaker beliefs in the equality of women and men.

Kelley got her own chance to speak at the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in Philadelphia in May 1838. She, along with many other women abolitionists, both white and black, risked personal injury amid the racist mobs at Pennsylvania Hall. During an informal meeting on the night of May 16, Abby Kelley rose to address the gathering over the noise and yells of the angry crowds in the streets, insisting that a small voice called her to speak on behalf of the plight of the slaves. In her speech, she compared the North to the rich man “clothed in purple and fine linen” in the Biblical story of the “Rich Man and Lazarus” and the slaves to Lazarus, a poor beggar.¹⁷⁶ Kelley insisted that there lay ahead much work to do to free the slaves from their miserable condition. She encouraged others to get involved.¹⁷⁷ Her speech caught the attention of

¹⁷³ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 56.

¹⁷⁴ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 56.

¹⁷⁵ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 56.

¹⁷⁶ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 62–66.

¹⁷⁷ Samuel Webb and Pennsylvania Hall Association, *History of Pennsylvania Hall* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838), 126–127.

Theodore Weld, who demanded that she become a lecture agent for the AAS and join the Grimké sisters on the tour.¹⁷⁸

The next day, Kelley did not have time to dwell on her future as a lecture agent. As she and the other ladies prepared for another session, the crowds surrounding Pennsylvania Hall intensified. That evening the angry mob burned the building to the ground.¹⁷⁹ The following morning, Abby Kelley spoke in favor of a resolution to take action against prejudice. The resolution, offered by Sarah Grimké, asked the female abolitionists to visit blacks in their homes and to be seen with them in public places.¹⁸⁰ Kelley's speech encouraged the passage of the resolution and helped convince other ladies who were worried that they might be called "amalgamationists": persons who approved of the mixing of blacks and whites.¹⁸¹ After Kelley returned home to Lynn, she received a letter from Sarah Douglass, an African American abolitionist who attended the Philadelphia Convention, thanking her for "having stood forth so nobly in defence [*sic*] of woman and the slave. It rejoices my very heart to meet with an Abolitionist who has turned her back on prejudice."¹⁸²

In the spring of 1839, Kelley decided to not attend the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in Philadelphia, but rather to go to New York to participate in the AAS. The young Quaker believed that women were accepting an inferior position to

¹⁷⁸ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 54.

¹⁷⁹ Fall River Female Anti-Slavery Society, *Report of a Delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women*, 13–18.

¹⁸⁰ Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Held in Philadelphia. May 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, 1838*, 8.

¹⁸¹ Hersh, *Slavery of Sex*, 24–25 and Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 65–66.

¹⁸² Sarah Douglass to Abby Kelley, May 18, 1838, "Server.np (JPEG Image, 2394 × 3600 Pixels) - Scaled (9%)," *American Antiquarian Society*, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://gigi.mwa.org/netpub/server.np?preview=321536&site=public&catalog=catalog&aspect&width:4000>.

men if they held separate meetings.¹⁸³ Kelley previously had created controversy when she was named on the roll call of the New England Anti-Slavery Society in Boston. She served on a business committee alongside male members of this society to write a formal letter to clergymen, urging them to openly denounce slavery. Many other local anti-slavery societies were beginning to allow women to join and work with men abolitionists. Kelley believed that the prominence of women had risen within the abolition movement and now was the time to allow women to have an active role in the national organization, the AAS.¹⁸⁴

In 1840, a split within the AAS developed over the controversy of women's roles in the anti-slavery movement. Already in tumult from the previous year's decision to allow women to be listed as members on the roll, the AAS voted to allow women to hold office.¹⁸⁵ Garrison and his followers in the AAS supported women's rights. They believed that women should have the right to hold office and work for emancipation of the slaves in a gender-integrated group. When the AAS elected Abby Kelley to the executive committee in May 1840, an all-male delegation of three hundred led by Reverend Amos Phelps walked out in protest and formed a new organization known as the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁸⁶ Some, such as John Greenleaf Whittier, a founding member of the AAS, blamed Kelley for the split. Whittier thought that Kelley might be compared to past "predatory" Biblical females such as Eve and Delilah by the Reverend Amos Phelps and his supporters in the American and Foreign

¹⁸³ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 54–55.

¹⁸⁴ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 80 and Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 54–55.

¹⁸⁵ American Anti-Slavery Society, *Sixth Annual Report of the Executive Committee* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 28, accessed May 21, 2014, <http://archive.org/details/annualreport06amer>).

¹⁸⁶ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 57–58.

Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁸⁷ Newspapers said she had equated herself to a man. They invented a new phrase — “Abby Kelleyism.” It was defined as “an unlovely and unteachable sport.”¹⁸⁸ Despite these personal attacks, Kelley stood resolved in her Quaker principles, and she remained on the executive committee of the AAS.

Kelley, after much contemplation, decided to lecture for the Garrisonian-led AAS. She believed that she could use this opportunity to increase support for the anti-slavery cause and also to advocate for women’s rights. Since she was a Quaker, she refused any payment for her services, and she paid her expenses through donations and her own funds.¹⁸⁹ She began her work in the state of Connecticut where some in the audiences ridiculed and threatened her while she lectured on women’s rights and abolition. At one evening meeting in a schoolroom in Cornwall Bridge, a drunken man burst into the meeting and yelled, “where’s the damned nigger bitch that’s going to lecture here?”¹⁹⁰ He carried a large club and smashed it down onto a desk, breaking candles and oil lamps and threatening personal injury to Kelley until members of the audience removed her from the scene. Even though Kelley encountered much resistance and slander in Connecticut, she continued to advocate for the anti-slavery cause until June 1841 when she left for other opportunities to lecture and build new anti-slavery societies.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ John B. Pickard, “John Greenleaf Whittier and the Abolitionist Schism of 1840,” *The New England Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (June 1964): 253, doi:10.2307/364014.

¹⁸⁸ “The-Liberator-10-23.pdf,” June 5, 1840, accessed September 5, 2014, <http://fair-use.org/the-liberator/1840/06/05/the-liberator-10-23.pdf> and Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 105–106.

¹⁸⁹ Aptheker, “The Quakers and Negro Slavery,” 359 and Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 91.

¹⁹⁰ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 116.

¹⁹¹ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 116–117.

After her experience in Connecticut, Abby Kelley headed to western New York and lectured for the anti-slavery cause and women's rights. Her goal for the lecture series was to rebuild the anti-slavery societies after the 1840 schism over women's roles in the national anti-slavery movement. In 1842 and 1843, Kelley toured with Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave and hired lecture agent for the AAS. They worked tirelessly and held public lectures twice a week. Sometimes these meetings lasted for two or three days each, encountering many supportive audiences. In July 1842, she reported to *The Liberator* that she had reached much of western New York with the Garrisonian message of anti-slavery and women's rights. In the fall of 1842, Kelley along with Garrison and other prominent abolitionist speakers held a three-day convention in Rochester, New York and formed the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁹² Arriving in Waterloo, New York, Kelley met Mary Ann and Thomas McClintock. Mary Ann had helped write the constitution at the founding of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Both she and Thomas were progressive Quakers and had relocated to western New York. Kelley held meetings in the area and advocated for both women's rights and the anti-slavery cause.¹⁹³ Kelley's work in western New York helped set the stage for the development of a women's rights movement.

Kelley travelled to Seneca Falls, New York in August 1843 and helped support the local anti-slavery fair. She held outdoor meetings in a local orchard, as she was banned from the local churches.¹⁹⁴ Her work there inspired other women in the village to take a stand against slavery. For example, Rhoda Bement, excommunicated from the

¹⁹² Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 151–154.

¹⁹³ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 164–165.

¹⁹⁴ Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage ...*, 39–40.

Presbyterian Church for attending Kelley's lectures, eventually joined the local Wesleyan Methodist Church along with her husband, which was the lone congregation in Seneca Falls that supported the anti-slavery cause.¹⁹⁵ After the excitement of Abby Kelley's speaking tour of western New York, the residents of Seneca Falls remained interested in abolition and women's rights. Henry and Elizabeth Cady Stanton moved to Seneca Falls in 1847 in order for Henry to further his political career and work in abolition. One year later, Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized, along with four other progressive Quaker women, the first women's rights convention.¹⁹⁶

Near the villages of Seneca Falls and Waterloo, a split developed within the Quakers. The division within the Friends started in June 1848 when two hundred Quakers left the Genesee Yearly Meeting in Farmington, New York. This group started their own reform-minded Quaker Meeting called the Congregational Friends.¹⁹⁷ The newly-reformed Quakers believed in the right of the local monthly meetings to remain autonomous, to no longer conduct separate men's and women's business meetings, to allow abolitionists to speak in Quaker meeting houses, and to treat all people equally within the assemblies. Lucretia and James Mott, visiting from Philadelphia, participated in the June meetings where the religious split took place. The Motts supported the reformed Congregational Friends. Lucretia later attended a gathering in the home of Jane and Richard Hunt in Waterloo in July. Lucretia, along with Jane Hunt, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary Ann McClintock, and Mott's sister Martha Wright, planned a Women's Rights Convention to be held on July 19 and 20 of 1848 in the Wesleyan Chapel in

¹⁹⁵ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 181–185.

¹⁹⁶ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 185.

¹⁹⁷ Aptheker, "The Quakers and Negro Slavery," 360–361.

Seneca Falls.¹⁹⁸ The split within the Quakers in western New York in June 1848 proved to be a springboard for the development of a women's rights movement.

Quaker beliefs influenced Lucretia Mott, Angelina Grimké Weld, Sarah Grimké, and Abby Kelley. Their humanitarian ideals, coupled with their beliefs on the equality of women to men and salvation for all people, helped these women take action against slavery. Mott helped found the PFAS in 1833 and had the courage to contribute ideas to the first meeting of the all-male AAS. All four risked personal injury from the racist mobs in Philadelphia in 1838 and on other occasions. Sarah and Angelina Grimké fulfilled their moral duty to act against slavery by taking positions as lecture agents for the anti-slavery movement. They also defended women's rights when chastised by conservative clergy and others who thought they were operating outside of their proper sphere. Abby Kelley, an admirer of the Grimkés' work, labored alongside men in the New England Anti-Slavery Society and the AAS, believing men and women should work together for the cause. Kelley spread the Garrisonian principles of women's rights and abolition on the lecture circuit and helped set the stage for a women's rights movement. The division within the Quaker religion in western New York over women's rights and abolitionism led to a more reformed Quaker group that further represented progressive ideas. Although Stanton and others who worked for women's rights in the future were not Quakers, the influence of the Friend's ideology cannot be ignored. Quakerism emphasized humanitarianism, equality of the sexes, and salvation for all people, which played an influential role in helping women abolitionists remain impervious to the opposing forces of the nineteenth century, leading to a women's rights movement by 1850.

¹⁹⁸ Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls*, 178–182, 183–189.

Conclusion

During the nineteenth century, women abolitionists organized and worked for the emancipation of the slaves. By the early 1830s, women began to create separate, female anti-slavery societies that acted as auxiliaries to the national, all-male, American Anti-Slavery Society (AAS) based in New York. In 1832 Maria Weston Chapman, along with some of her family and friends, helped organize the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFAS). One year later, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (PFAS) formed with the help of Lucretia Mott and other Quakers. Mott and the women of the PFAS, although initially unsure of how to take charge of their meetings, overcame their concerns and Mott emerged as the leader of the organization. These female societies became leading organizations for the anti-slavery movement. The BFAS and the PFAS were so successful at raising money, gathering petitions, and educating the public on the lives of the slaves, that other female anti-slavery societies followed their examples. By the later part of the 1830s, women organized national conventions independently from men. These national conventions helped the women share their ideas and better coordinate their activism among the many local female societies.

As the female societies became increasingly prominent within the abolition movement, women grew more outspoken in their beliefs. Women lecturers and writers created controversy within the abolition movement. Angelina and Sarah Grimké were hired agents for the AAS and became noted speakers for abolitionism. When the sisters embarked on their speaking tour of New England, both men and women began to listen to their talks. The sisters created controversy within the anti-slavery movement because they spoke to mixed audiences of both men and women. The sisters' lecture tour for anti-

slavery reform challenged the nineteenth century sexist norms and conservative religious ideology of the nineteenth century. Some members of the clergy condemned the sisters' speaking tour and issued a public letter to denounce their actions. Despite this criticism, the sisters continued to speak for the anti-slavery effort. It is likely that the public condemnation of the Grimké sisters increased the audiences out of sheer curiosity to hear women speak on a political issue such as slavery. In fact, some men who came to the lectures to ridicule the sisters became interested in their message and stayed to hear them out.¹⁹⁹ Both women defended their right to speak for the abolition cause through published writings and speaking engagements. The bold actions of the Grimké sisters and other female abolitionists created debate over the proper role of women in the anti-slavery movement. The conflict led to a split in the national organization, creating a radical branch of abolitionists that not only fought to eradicate slavery, but also sought equal rights for women.

In 1840, the AAS divided when it passed a resolution allowing women to hold office in the Society. The abolitionists who did not approve of women voting or holding office within the national organization left to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. The remnant of the AAS, the Garrisonians, formed a radical, gender-inclusive group that endorsed women's rights alongside abolitionism. Their ideas helped develop a separate women's rights movement by the late 1840s.

Besides abolition, many other reform movements existed in the nineteenth century. Women were also active in these other movements, notably temperance and moral reform. The women in these two reform movements, however, did not face the same level of resistance encountered by the abolition women. The American

¹⁹⁹ Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina*, 139.

Temperance Society (ATS) founded in 1826, primarily by evangelical clergy, promoted total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. Membership was made up exclusively of white businessmen, clergy, doctors, and other professionals. Later, in 1836, they recruited women to work for the temperance cause where they raised money, circulated and gathered petitions, and converted new members. Women made up a large percentage of the memberships of the local associations of temperance societies, but the women did not take leadership roles or direct policy in the male-dominated organization. Later, women worked in auxiliary societies such as the Martha Washingtonians and the Daughters of Temperance. Within a few years, women temperance workers became frustrated with their second-class status. When the male members denied women the right to speak at the World's Temperance Convention in 1853, they walked out in protest and formed their own meeting. The temperance women clearly had to overcome sexist attitudes, but unlike the women in anti-slavery societies, they did not encounter racism or violent opposition because of their activism.

Women working for moral reform became active during the 1830s in New York City. A group of white, middle-class Protestant women formed the New York Female Moral Reform Society (NYFMRS). These women sought to reform the prostitutes in the poorest parts of the city. The moral reformers purchased *The Advocate of Moral Reform*, which called for the creation of a national organization of women to take action against the problems of seduction and vice in the cities. Clergymen accused the women of acting out of their proper sphere. Additionally, they insisted that the female moral reformers disband their organization, but the women refused. The moral reform women continued their activism with little other opposition.

Later, the editors of *The Advocate* printed Sarah Grimké's article "What Are the Duties of Woman at the Present Time," which criticized the clerical interpretations of the Biblical scriptures on women's roles. This essay was met with controversy within the moral reform movement. The female readership from the auxiliary societies in rural areas disagreed with Grimké's message. The newspaper staff quickly backed away from the support of women's rights. When given the opportunity to publically challenge the sexist attitudes of the nineteenth century by endorsing women's rights, the American Female Moral Reform Society refused. The female moral reform movement experimented with women's rights, but most women who advocated for moral reform supported the traditional roles of women.

The women working in the temperance, moral reform, and abolition movements during the nineteenth century faced opposition based on gender, but the women working in the anti-slavery movement also encountered racism and violence because of their radical ideas to free the slaves. The anti-slavery cause was, in itself, both political and racial, and generated enormous controversy. Because of this, the women working for the anti-slavery movement faced fiercer opposition than the women working in temperance and moral reform. Also, the temperance and moral reform groups did not split over the role of women's work within the movements. Unlike the American Anti-Slavery Society, the temperance and moral reform societies did not experience an internal division over women's roles that progressed into a women's rights movement.

Women working in temperance and moral reform were typically Presbyterian or Congregationalists. Many leading women abolitionists, on the other hand, belonged to the Religious Society of Friends. They were influenced by the Quaker principles of anti-

slavery, the equality of men and women, and salvation for all people. These women made important contributions to the anti-slavery movement. Their Quaker ideology led them to resist the opposing attitudes of the nineteenth century, which helped open paths for the advancement of women's rights. Not all of the women committed to abolition and women's rights were Quakers, but clearly Quakerism played a significant role in women's abolitionism and the women's rights movement.

Since some women served as approved Quaker ministers, they emerged as natural leaders for the women who worked in the anti-slavery movement. Quaker women were more outspoken and independent because they were treated as equals to men within the Society of Friends. They did not support the racism and sexism of the nineteenth century. Quaker women in abolition also influenced non-Quaker women. For example, Quaker abolitionist Lucretia Mott was a predominant mentor to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a Presbyterian. Mott created a life-long relationship with Stanton while both were in London at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. Both agreed that when they returned home to the United States they would continue to fight for emancipation of the slaves and also for women's rights.

Quaker women, such as Angelina and Sarah Grimké, became popular lecturers for the anti-slavery cause. Their commitment to abolition was inseparable from their Christian beliefs as Quakers.²⁰⁰ These principles helped them to stand against public opposition to their work for the anti-slavery cause. The Grimkés, criticized by Congregationalist ministers for lecturing to both women and men in their audiences, defended their actions. They continued to stand for women's right to argue for the anti-

²⁰⁰ Catherine H. Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969), 165.

slavery cause. In their speaking and writing, they began to link the right of women to plead for the anti-slavery movement as citizens to women's rights. Angelina realized the radical nature of the reform they proposed. As she remarked in a letter to Sarah Douglass concerning her speech at the Massachusetts State House in 1838, "We abolition women are turning the world upside down."²⁰¹

Angelina and Sarah Grimké influenced other female abolitionists to speak out for women's rights. One important example was the Quaker Abby Kelley, who emulated the activism of the Grimkés. After the sisters left public life, Kelley carried on their work, becoming an important lecture agent and activist for both the anti-slavery cause and women's rights. She believed that the time had come for women to join men abolitionists, to work together in gender-inclusive societies. Like other Quaker women abolitionists, Kelly's beliefs helped her to resist the racism and sexism of the nineteenth century and inspired other women to reconsider their roles within the anti-slavery movement and in society. Kelley's lectures during the 1840s helped lay the groundwork for the development of a women's rights movement. As a result of Kelley's activism in western New York, a split developed within the Quakers over equal rights for women and abolitionism, culminating in the founding of the Congregational Friends. In July 1848, Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann McClintock, Jane Hunt, Martha Wright, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met to organize a women's rights convention in Seneca Falls. Four of these five women belonged to the newly-formed, progressive Quaker sect.

Between 1830 and 1850, women abolitionists performed a variety of work for the anti-slavery movement. Women organized separate female societies, spoke publicly to

²⁰¹ Birney, *The Grimké Sisters; Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*, 228–229.

mixed audiences, and gathered and signed petitions opposed to slavery. The women accomplished this work while confronting the fierce opposing forces of sexism, racism, conservative religious ideology, and public resistance of the nineteenth century. As Stanton remarked years later, “Through continued persecution was woman’s self-assertion and self-respect sufficiently developed to prompt her at last to demand justice, liberty, and equality for herself.”²⁰² By the late 1830s, women organized national conventions to coordinate their work among the many separate female anti-slavery societies. Women abolitionists faced gender discrimination, public ridicule, and dangerous riots as a result of their work in these conventions. Their actions also led to controversy within the national anti-slavery movement over the proper roles of women. The conflict ultimately led to a break up in the American Anti-Slavery Society where men and women began to work together in the radical Garrisonian camp. This faction continued the work of emancipation alongside the promotion of women’s rights.

The work accomplished by women abolitionists expanded women’s roles through their determination to overcome forces opposed to the anti-slavery cause. Attacks by conservative religious ideology, riots, sexism, and racial discrimination led the women to directly challenge these barriers of the nineteenth century, opening doors for the birth of the women’s rights movement by 1850.

²⁰² Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage ...: 1848-1861* (Rochester, NY: Fowler & Wells, 1889), 40.

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