

Kansas City Public Library



**Women's Rights Lost History  
Recovered Tonight**

# The Abolitionist Feminists

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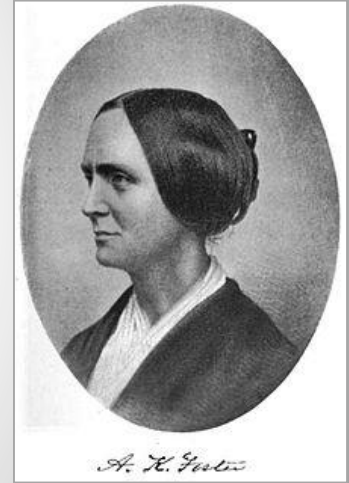
Nancy Grew



Lucy Stone



Sarah Mapps  
Douglass



Abbey Kelley

# Their Stories Were Almost Lost

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# 1830 Women Rose Up Against Slavery

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- Women were troubled by the National Hypocrisy.
- The Constitution espoused:  
“Liberty & Justice for all...”



**Yet The Institution Of Slavery Was Growing.**

# 1833 Women Help Found the A.A.S.

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Men and women came  
together to form the  
**American Anti-Slavery  
Society.**



Reunion photo of the PA abolitionist society

**Women were the backbone of this organization**

# But Were Excluded From Becoming Members

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Women had helped form the anti-slavery organization's constitution *but were barred from signing it.*

# Attendee Samuel May

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“... shall I ever forget the wise, the impressive, the animating words spoken in our Convention by dear *Lucretia Mott* and two or three other excellent women... **the mortifying fact, that we men were then so blind, so obtuse**, that we did not recognize those women as members of our Convention...”



# The Women Started Their Own Abolitionist Societies

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- 1832 – 1 (Salem)
- 1833 – 7
- 1834 – 17
- 1835 – 29
- 1836 – 42
- 1837 - 140

**They became public agitators!**



# Among Abolitionist Feminists

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Martha Coffin Wright



Phillis Wheatley



Lydia Maria Child

Their faith was a major catalyst.  
Women wanted a political voice... **But...**

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**The Government said:**

**NO**

**The Church said:**

**NO**

God's Message To Them Was:

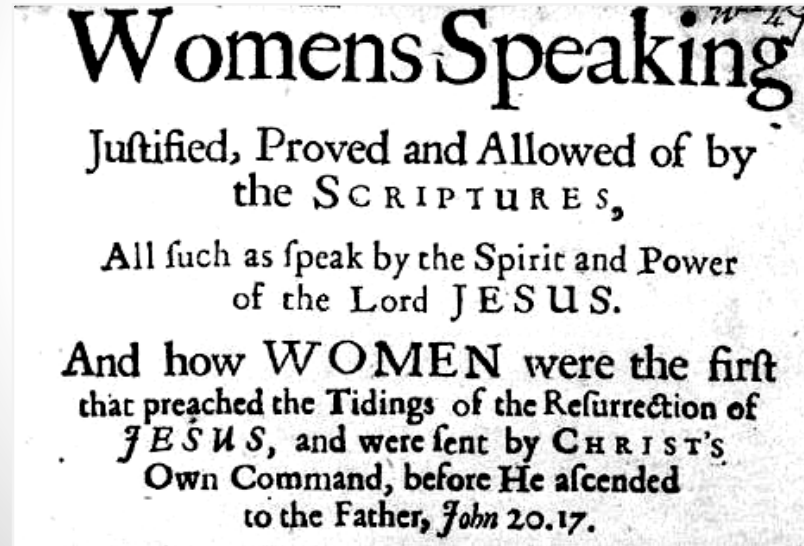
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**SHOUT  
IT  
OUT!**

# They Took Their Scripture Seriously

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The earliest feminists were in fact...



**Religious Revolutionaries!**

# The Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women 1837

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Unescorted, and from different backgrounds,  
174 delegates met in NYC.



# “Such A Convention The World Never Saw”

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## In a little church on Houston St:

- First national political meeting of U.S. women
- First interracial gathering of any consequence.
- The men's abolition meetings were not diverse





# Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women

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**Angelina Grimke** offered this  
**resolution:**

“...time has come for woman to move in that sphere which Providence has assigned her and no longer remain satisfied in the circumscribed limits with which corrupt custom and perverted application of the Scripture have encircled her...”

# I. Faith Fueled Their Vision

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*The women read the twenty-seventh Psalm:*

**“Though an army besiege me,  
my heart will not fear;  
though war break out against me,  
even then will I be confident.”**

*~Psalm 27:3 (NIV)*

# Theirs Was A Call To Action

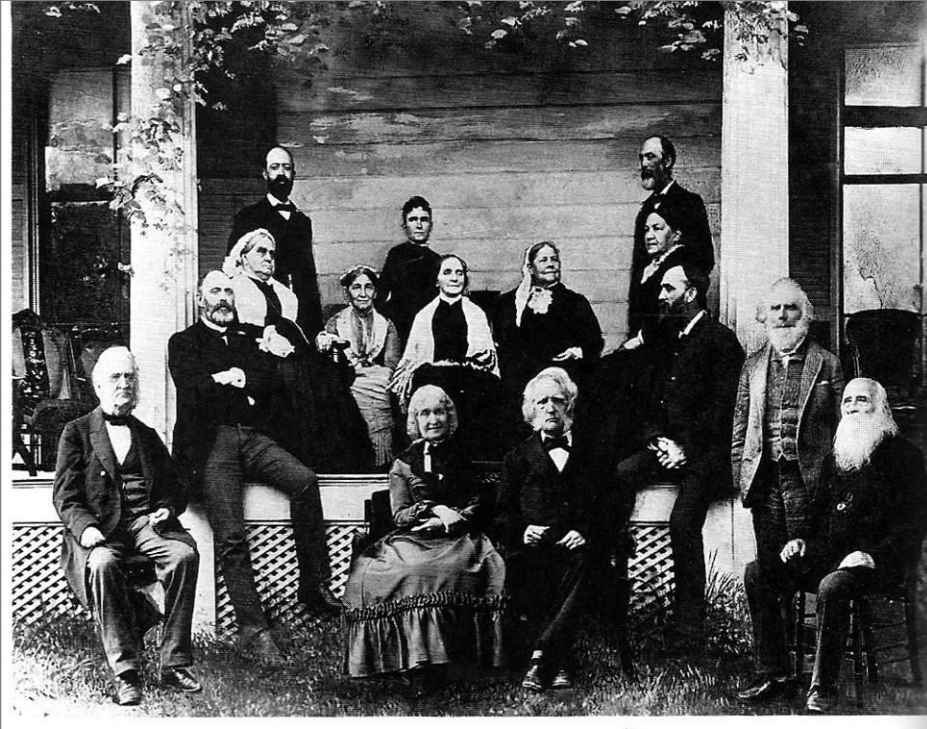
Esther was their role model:



"Therefore, that is the  
duty of every women...  
to petition Congress  
With the faith of an Esther."

## II. Relational Organizing Methodology

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Photograph of July 1886  
reunion of abolitionists and  
the home of Lucy Stone &  
Henry Blackwell.

# Sarah Grimke Offered This Resolution:

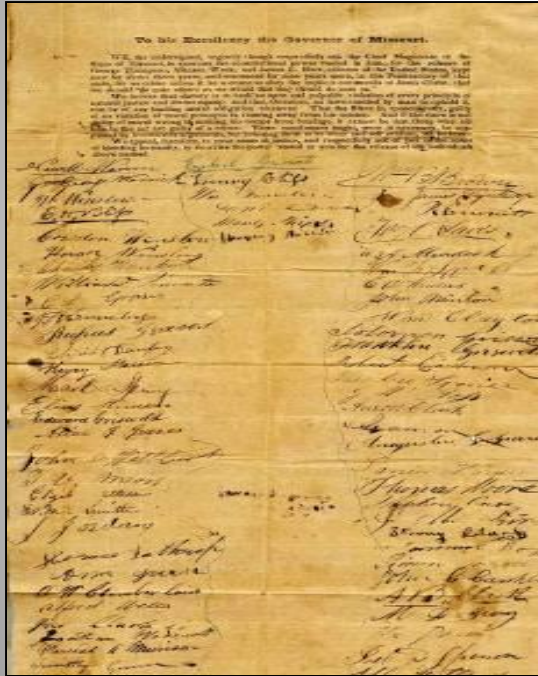


*Sarah M. Grimke*

“The right to petition is natural and inalienable, derived immediately from God... whether it be exercised by man or woman...”



# Petitioning Gave Them Voice



- At the convention, the women organized to collect 1 million signatures on petitions and they flooded congress with petitions.
- In Congress the Pickney-Pattan gag rule of 1837 resolved to ignore the petitions and take “no further action” on them.



# III. Empathy

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Elizabeth Chandler created for  
sewing circles a practice of  
**Mental Metempsychosis.**  
Practicing Sympathy.



Elizabeth Chandler

# Mental Metempsychosis

## LADIES' DEPARTMENT.

'Am I not a Woman and a Sister?'



White Lady, happy, proud and free,  
Lend awhile thine ear to me ;  
Let the Negro Mother's wail  
Turn thy pale cheek still more pale.  
Can the Negro Mother joy  
Over this her captive boy,  
Which in bondage and in tears,  
For a life of wo she rears ?  
Though she bears a Mother's name,  
A Mother's rights she may not claim ;  
For the white man's will can part,  
Her darling from her bursting heart.

*From the Genius of Universal Emancipation.*  
LETTERS ON SLAVERY.—No. III.

“Could we but persuade those with whom we plead, in behalf of the slave, to imagine themselves for a few moments in his very circumstances, to enter into his feelings, comprehend all his wretchedness, transform themselves mentally into his very self, they would not surely long withhold their compassion.”

# They Thought Their Efforts...

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Would be applauded!



"...stand side by side... in the great struggle between right and wrong... justice and oppression..."

**But...**

# When They Met Again

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## The Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women 1838



While the women  
spoke inside...  
**a mob gathered  
outside...**

# May 17<sup>th</sup> - The Public Backlash

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“...that building which the friends not only of abolition, but friends of free discussion, the friends of civil and religious liberty...”



**Went Up In Flames**

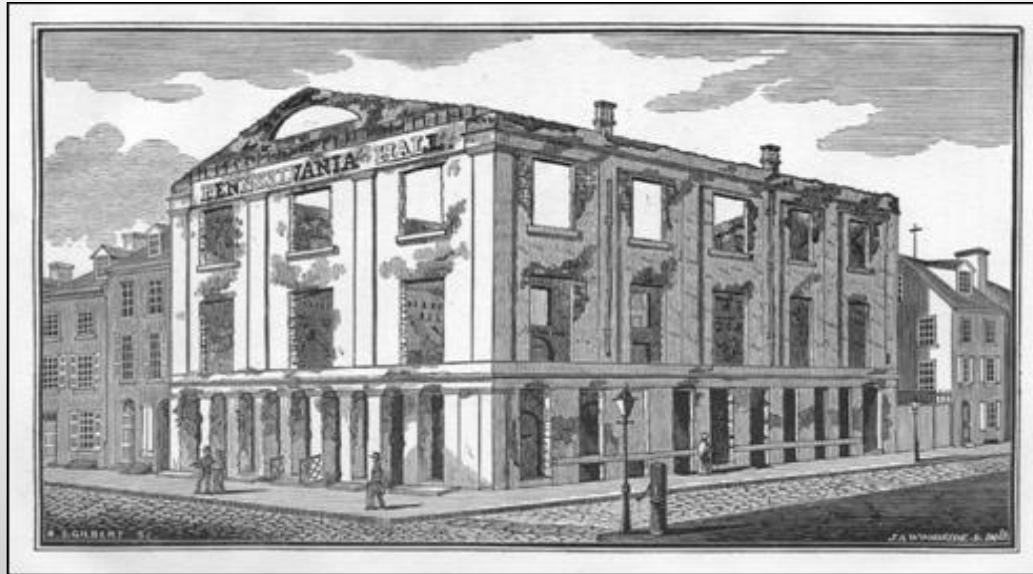
*Fall River Letter*



# Disremembered

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**“Mingle their prayers and their tears...”**



“The Ladies Anti-slavery convention”, *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, July 1837, 17-18.



# Third Convention

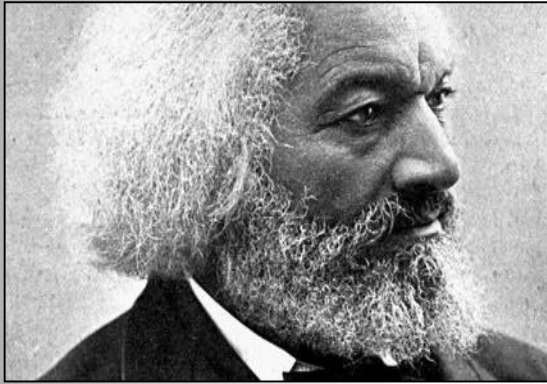
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- Half the size of the first two
- Then there were no more



# Frederick Douglass

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**“Why I Became  
A Woman’s Rights  
Man”**

“When the true history of the antislavery cause should be written, women will occupy a large space in it’s pages; **for the cause of the slave has been peculiarly women’s cause.** Her heart and her conscious have supplied in large degree it’s motive and mainspring. Her skill, industry, patience, and perseverance have been wonderfully manifested in every trial hour...”

# 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention

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Exeter Hall, London

# What is the Message

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## These Early Feminist Have For Us?

- I. Their faith & spirituality empowered them
- II. They worked relationally
- III. Empathy was part of the movement building

# Third Wave Feminism

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Rebecca Walker

- Women & Men working together
- Focus on Relationships
- Emphasis on Empathy

# 3 Phases Of Relationship

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- I. **Symbiosis - Fused**
- II. **Differentiate**
- III. **Connect**





# 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave Feminism

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**Fighting for our rights**

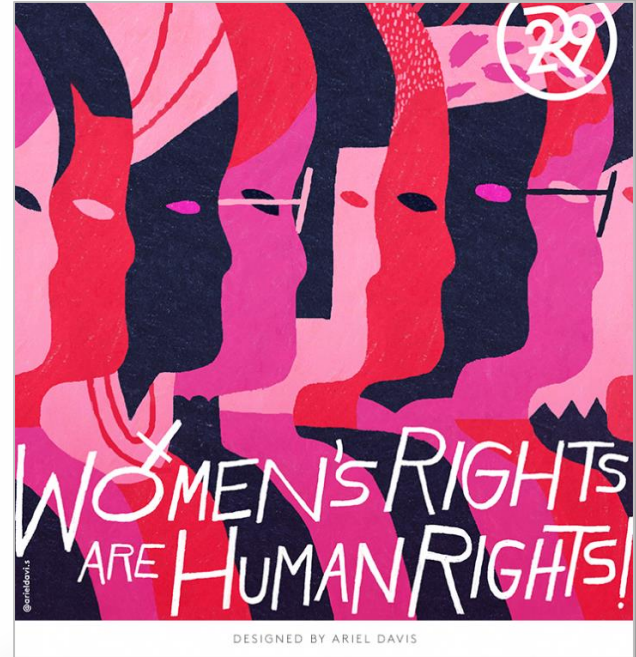
**“The personal is political”**

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Wave Feminism

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**“The personal is political”**

**Imagine feminism as the  
practice of love & empathy**



# What's The Next Step?

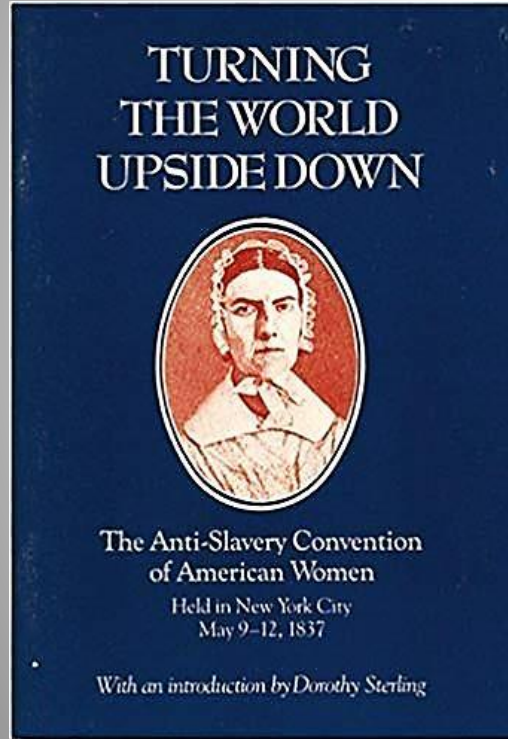
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- **Healthy Relationships**
- **Healthy Culture**
- **Healthy World**



# Thank You for Joining Me

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- To welcome these women to the table of history.
- We so much to learn from their wisdom today.



## WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

*Our mission is to advance all women's economic and civic leadership.  
We envision a world where all women are empowered  
to strengthen America's economy and democracy.*

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