

Module 04: How Did Abolitionism Lead to the Struggle for Women 's Rights?

Evidence 3: The First New England Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1832

A

Introduction

Anti-slavery societies dominated the culture of the abolitionist movement in the 1830s. Activists joined local, regional, state, and national associations as a way to end social isolation and further campaigns and projects designed to abolish slavery. Abolitionists made up a small minority, even in New England, where the movement was the strongest; yet anti-slavery societies provided the means to advance the cause and boost morale.

- Why, according to the announcement, should women join the abolitionist cause?
- Compare the announcement below to the "Ladies Department" article. What similarities can you find between the arguments presented in each?
- In what ways might joining a Female Anti-Slavery Society have reinforced the concept of a woman's sphere? How did it challenge the concept of separate spheres?

Document

Two capital errors have extensively prevailed, greatly to the detriment of the cause of abolition. The first is, a proneness on the part of the advocates of immediate and universal emancipation to overlook or deprecate the influence of woman in the promotion of this cause; and the other is, a similar disposition on the part of the females in our land to undervalue their own power, or through a misconception of duty, to excuse themselves from engaging in the enterprise. These errors, we repeat, are capital, and should no longer be suffered to prevail. The cause of bleeding humanity is always, legitimately, the cause of WOMAN. Without her powerful assistance, its progress must be slow, difficult, imperfect.

A million females, in this country, are recognized and held as property — liable to be sold or used for the gratification of the lust or avarice or

convenience of unprincipled speculators — without the least protection for their chastity — cruelly scourged for the most trifling offences — and subjected to unseemly and merciless tasks, to severe privations, and to brutish ignorance! Have these no claims upon the sympathies — prayers — charities — *exertions* of our white countrywomen?

*'Think of the frantic mother,
Lamenting for her child,
Till falling lashes smother
Her cries of anguish wild!
Shall we behold, unheeding,
Life's holiest feelings crushed?
When woman's heart is bleeding,
Shall woman's voice be hushed?'*

It is our privilege, to-day, to record in our column an account of the formation of the first 'Female Anti-Slavery Society' in New England. We trust it is the forerunner of a multitude of similar associations, not only in this but in every other part of the country. From the character and deep devotion to the cause of those who have thus associated themselves together, we are confident that they will persevere to the end, through evil as well as good report, animated by a spirit which no opposition can depress, by a love which many waters cannot extinguish, by a consciousness of duty which cannot be shaken.

Source:

The Liberator 2.28 (14 July 1832).