

Abolitionists in America

What is an Abolitionist?

(especially prior to the Civil War) a person who advocated or supported the abolition of slavery in the U.S.

More Generally - A person who favours the abolition of any law or practice deemed harmful to society.

eg: the abolitionists who are opposed to capital punishment.

Many also fought for equal rights for women.

The abolitionist movement was an organized effort to end the practice of slavery in the United States. The campaign, took place from about 1830 to 1870. Though it started as a movement with religious underpinnings, abolitionism became a controversial political issue that divided much of the country. Supporters and critics saw slavery as an abomination and an affliction on the United States and often engaged in heated debates and violent — even deadly — confrontations. They sent petitions to Congress, ran for political office and inundated people of the South with anti-slavery literature. The divisiveness and animosity fuelled by the movement, along with other factors, led to the Civil War and ultimately the end of slavery in America.

Despite its brutality and inhumanity, the slave system aroused little protest until the 18th century, when rationalist thinkers of the Enlightenment & religious bodies began to criticize it for its violation of the rights of man.

By the late 18th century, moral disapproval of slavery was widespread, and antislavery reformers won a number of deceptively easy victories during this period. In Britain, Granville Sharp secured a legal decision in 1772 that West Indian planters could not hold slaves in Britain, since slavery was contrary to English law.

In the United States, all of the states north of Maryland abolished slavery between 1777 and 1804. But antislavery sentiments had little effect on the centres of slavery themselves: the great plantations of the Deep South, the West Indies, and South America.

Turning their attention to these areas, British and American abolitionists began working in the late 18th century to prohibit the importation of African slaves into the British colonies and the United States. Under the leadership of William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, these forces succeeded in getting the slave trade to the British colonies abolished in 1807. The United States prohibited the importation of slaves that same year, though widespread smuggling continued until about 1862.

Even with the slave trade suppressed, the ownership of slaves in America was still legal.

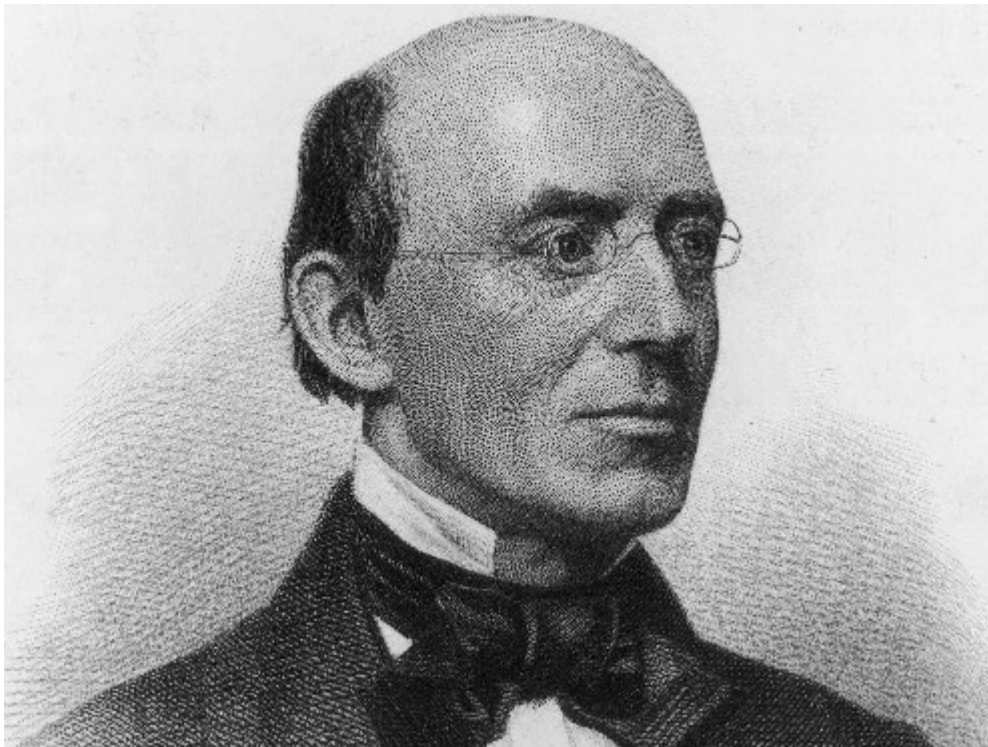
Fugitive Slave Acts, in U.S. history, were passed by Congress in 1793 and 1850 (and repealed in 1864) that provided for the seizure and return of runaway slaves who escaped from one state into another or into a federal territory. The 1793 law enforced Article IV, Section 2, of the U.S. Constitution in authorizing judges to decide finally and without a jury trial the status of an alleged fugitive slave.

The measure met with strong opposition in the Northern states, some of which enacted personal-liberty laws to hamper the execution of the federal law; these laws provided that fugitives who appealed an original decision against them were entitled to a jury trial. As early as 1810 individual dissatisfaction with the law of 1793 had taken the form of systematic assistance given to Black slaves escaping from the South to New England or Canada—via the Underground Railroad.

The demand from the South for more effective legislation resulted in enactment of a second Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. Under this law fugitives could not testify on their own behalf, nor were they permitted a trial by jury. Heavy penalties were imposed upon federal marshals who refused to enforce the law or from whom a fugitive escaped; penalties were also imposed on individuals who helped slaves to escape. Finally, under the 1850 act, special commissioners were to have concurrent jurisdiction with the U.S. courts in enforcing the law. The severity of the 1850 measure led to abuses and defeated its purpose. The number of abolitionists increased, the operations of the Underground Railroad became more efficient, and new personal-liberty laws were enacted in many Northern states. These state laws were among the grievances officially referred to by South Carolina in December 1860 as justification for its secession from the Union. Attempts to carry into effect the law of 1850 aroused much bitterness and probably had as much to do with inciting sectional hostility as did the controversy over slavery in the territories.

Some Famous Abolitionists.

William Lloyd Garrison, December 10, 1805 – May 24, 1879



He is best known for his widely-read anti-slavery newspaper *The Liberator*, which he founded in 1831 and published in Boston until slavery in the United States was abolished by Constitutional amendment in 1865.

Garrison was not an abolitionist who became a

publisher, but a printer who became an abolitionist. He wrote his editorials in *The Liberator* while setting them in type, without writing them out first on paper

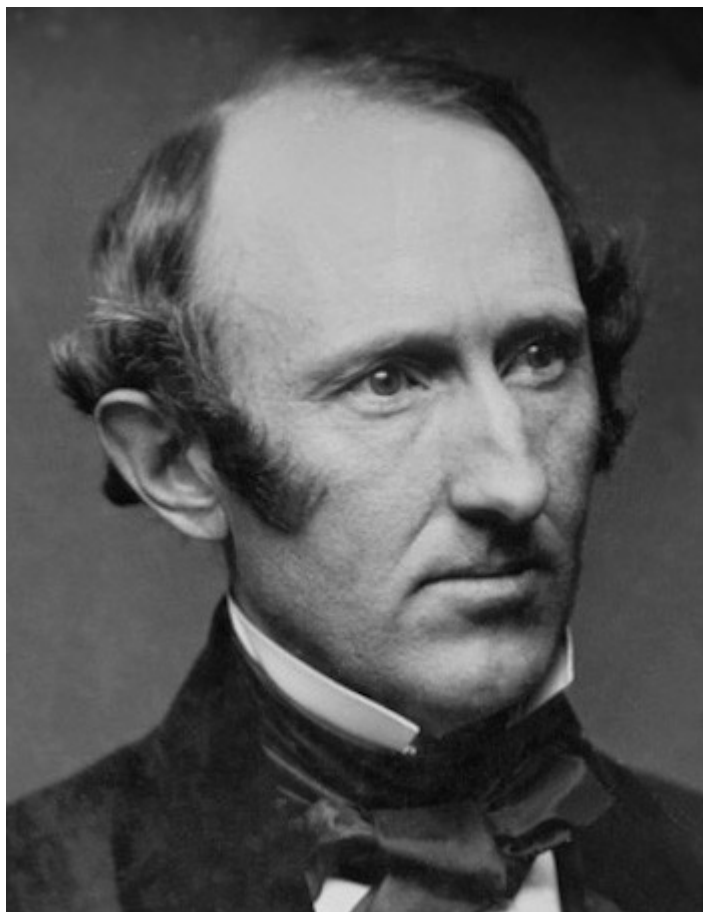
There was a price on his head; he was burned in effigy and a gallows was erected in front of his Boston office. While he was relatively safe in Boston, at one point he had to be smuggled onto a ship to escape to England, where he remained for a year.

He was one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and promoted immediate and uncompensated, emancipation of slaves, as opposed to gradual and compensated, emancipation in the United States.

His power of arousing uncontrollable disgust was a gift, like magic; and he seems to sail upon it as a demon upon the wind.

Garrison also emerged as a leading advocate of women's rights, which prompted a split in the abolitionist community. In the 1870s, Garrison became a prominent voice for the women's suffrage movement.

Wendell Phillips (November 29, 1811 – February 2, 1884) was an American abolitionist, advocate for Native Americans, orator, and attorney.



According to George Lewis Ruffin, a Black attorney, Phillips was seen by many Blacks as "the one white American wholly colour-blind and free from race prejudice". From 1850 to 1865 he was the "pre-eminent figure" in American abolitionism

In 1835 Phillips was a witness to the attempted lynching of Wm. Lloyd Garrison, & was converted to the cause.

Phillips stopped practising law in order to dedicate himself to the movement.

Phillips joined the American Anti-Slavery Society and frequently made speeches at its meetings. So highly regarded were Phillips' oratorical abilities that he was known as "abolition's golden trumpet"

Like many of Phillips' fellow abolitionists who honoured the free-produce movement, he condemned the purchase

of cane sugar and clothing made of cotton, since both were produced by the labour of Southern slaves. He was a member of the Boston Vigilance Committee, an organization that assisted fugitive slaves in avoiding slave catchers.

((He married Ann Terry Greene in 1838 (no pictures available – only a woman) a non-violent abolitionist who encouraged his work.

In 1840 they went to London to join up with other American delegates to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Phillips' new wife was one of a number of female

delegates. The delegates were astounded to find that female delegates had not been expected and they were not allowed at the convention.

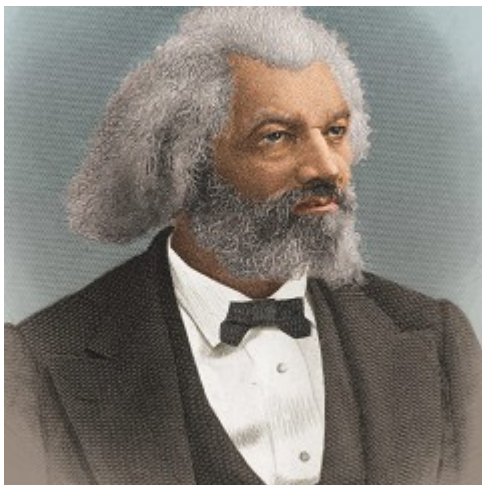
Instructed by his wife not to "shilly-shally", Phillips went in to appeal the case. Phillips spoke as the convention opened, scolding the organizers for precipitating an unnecessary conflict: We rightly interpreted 'friends of the slave' to include women as well as men.

The efforts of Phillips and others were only partly successful. The women were allowed in but had to sit separately and were not allowed to talk. This event has been credited for providing the essential momentum for the start of the women's rights movement.))

In 1860 and 1861, many abolitionists welcomed the formation of the Confederacy because it would end the Slave Power's stranglehold over the United States government. This position was rejected by nationalists like Abraham Lincoln, who insisted on holding the Union together while gradually ending slavery. Twelve days after the attack on Fort Sumter, Phillips announced his "hearty and hot" support for the war. Disappointed with what he regarded as Lincoln's slow action, Phillips opposed his reelection in 1864, breaking with Garrison, who supported a candidate for the first time.

Phillips was also active in efforts to gain equal rights for Native Americans, arguing that the Fifteenth Amendment (Voting rights for all) also granted citizenship to Indians. He proposed that the Andrew Johnson administration create a cabinet-level post that would guarantee Indian rights. Phillips helped create the Massachusetts Indian Commission with Indian rights activists. Although publicly critical of President Ulysses S. Grant's drinking, he worked with Grant's second administration on the appointment of Indian agents. Phillips lobbied against military involvement in the settling of Native American problems on the Western frontier. He accused General Philip Sheridan of pursuing a policy of Indian extermination

Frederick Douglass, c. February 1817 – February 20, 1895



was an escaped slave from Maryland who became a prominent activist, author and public speaker. He became a leader in the abolitionist movement. He was described by abolitionists in his time as a living counterexample to slaveholders' arguments that slaves lacked the intellectual capacity to function as independent American citizens.

After the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862, he continued to push for equality and human rights until his death in 1895.

As an advocate for women's rights, and specifically the right of women to vote, Douglass' legacy as an author and leader lives on. His work served as an inspiration to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and beyond.

Elijah Parish Lovejoy (November 9, 1802 – November 7, 1837)

was an American Presbyterian minister, journalist, newspaper editor, and abolitionist.

Elijah Lovejoy was in St Louis Missouri (a slave state) and worked on a newspaper. In 1834 he began writing about Abolition & this caused a lot of controversy. Elijah Lovejoy moved to Alton Illinois (a free state). Although Illinois was a free state, Alton, Illinois was a centre for slave catchers and pro-slavery forces. Many escaped slaves crossed the Mississippi River from Missouri, Alton had been settled by pro-slavery Southerners who thought Alton should not become a haven for escaped slaves.

In 1837 he started the *Alton Observer*, also an abolitionist paper. He served as pastor at Upper Alton Presbyterian Church



Lovejoy's views on slavery became more extreme and he called for a convention to discuss the formation of a state Anti-Slavery Society. Many in Alton began questioning allowing Lovejoy to continue printing in their town. After an economic crisis in March 1837, Alton citizens wondered if Lovejoy's views were contributing to hard times. They felt Southern states, or even St. Louis, might not want to do business with their town if they continued to harbour an abolitionist.

He was shot and killed by a pro-slavery mob just 2 days before his 35th birthday in 1837 in Alton, Illinois, during an attack on the warehouse where Lovejoy's press and abolitionist materials were stored.

According to John Quincy Adams (a former president), the murder "[gave] a shock as big as an earthquake throughout this country" "The *Boston Recorder* declared that these events called forth from every part of the land 'a burst of indignation which has not had its parallel in this country since the Battle of Lexington.' (in the American war of Independence)

When informed at a meeting about the murder, John Brown said publicly: "Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery."

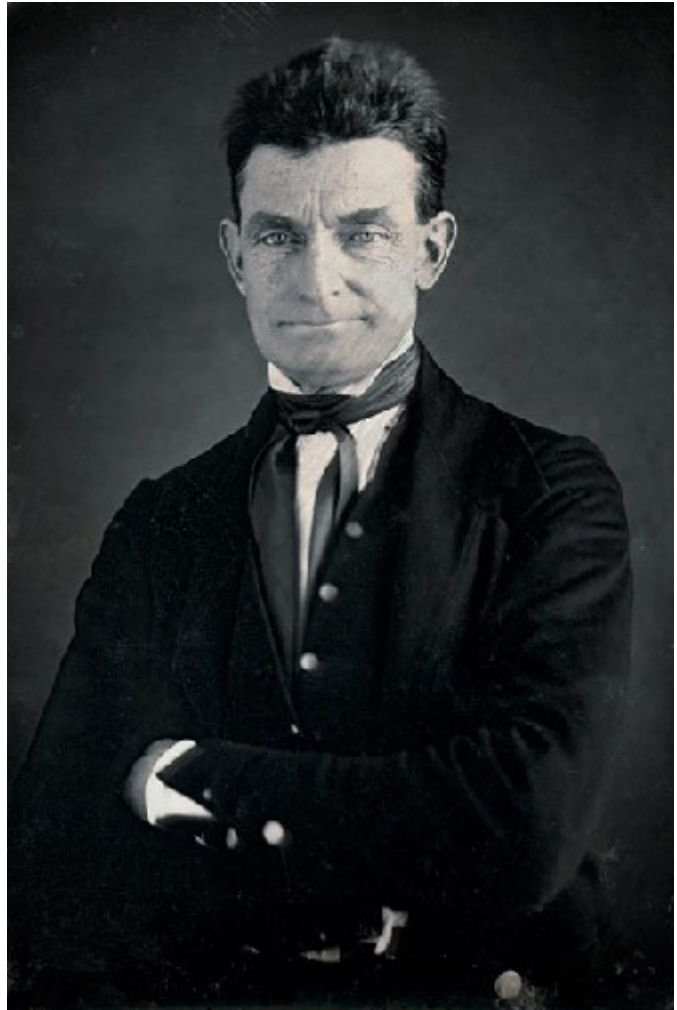
John H Brown, (May 9, 1800 – December 2, 1859)

was an American abolitionist leader. Brown felt that violence was necessary to end American slavery, as years of speeches, sermons, petitions, and moral persuasion had failed.

A religious man more than anything else, Brown believed he was raised up by God to strike the death blow to American slavery. "He also believed that in all ages of the world God had created certain men to perform special work in some direction far in advance of their countrymen, even at the cost of their lives. He believed that among his earthly missions was to free the American slave...and it *must be performed*. He was very strict in his religious duties and he regarded *this as sacred*. "I am an instrument of God."

Brown first gained national attention when he led anti-slavery volunteers during the Bleeding Kansas crisis of the late 1850s, a state-level civil war over whether Kansas would enter the Union as a slave state or a free state. He was dissatisfied with abolitionist pacifism: "These men are all talk. What we need is action!" In May 1856, Brown and his supporters killed five supporters of slavery in the Pottawatomie massacre (May 24), a response to the sacking of Lawrence by pro-slavery forces (May 21), and possibly also to the attack on the Free Kansas supporter, Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner in the senate by a pro slavery senator with his walking cane (May 22). Brown then commanded anti-slavery forces at the Battle of Black Jack (June 2) and the Battle of Osawatomie (August 30, 1856).

In October 1859, Brown led a raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (today West Virginia), intending to start a slave liberation movement that would spread south through the mountainous regions of Virginia and North Carolina; he had prepared a Provisional Constitution for the revised, slavery-free United States he hoped to bring about. He seized the armory, but seven people were killed, and ten or more were injured. Brown intended to arm slaves with weapons from the armory, but very few slaves joined his revolt. Within 36 hours, those of Brown's men who had not fled were killed or captured by local militia and U.S. Marines, the latter led by Robert E. Lee. Brown was hastily tried for treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia, the murder of five men, and inciting a slave insurrection. He was found guilty of all counts and was hanged on December 2, 1859, the first person executed for treason in the history of the United States.



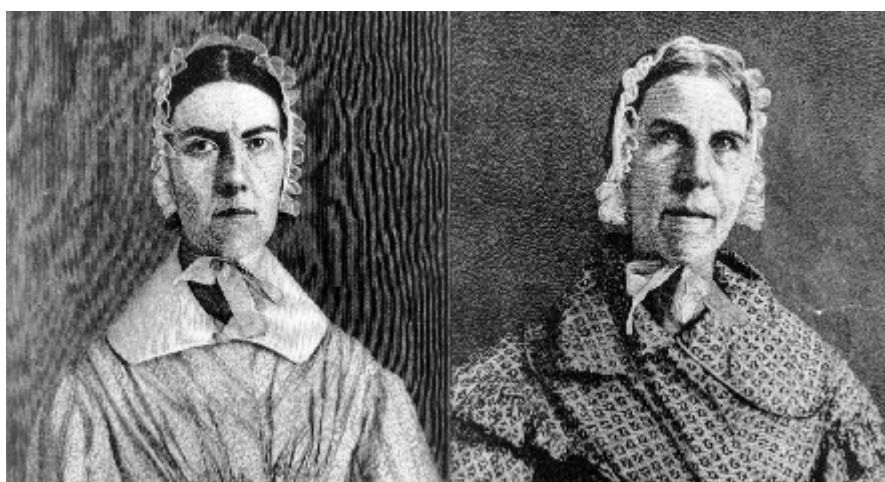
Brown said repeatedly that all of his anti-slavery activities, both in Kansas and Harpers Ferry, were in accordance with the Golden Rule (treating others as one wants to be treated). He said the most famous sentence in the Declaration of Independence—*all men are created equal*—"meant the same thing".

Historians agree that the Harpers Ferry raid and Brown's trial (*Virginia v. John Brown*), both covered extensively by the national press, escalated tensions that led a year later to the South's long-threatened secession and the American Civil War. Southerners feared that others would soon follow in Brown's footsteps, encouraging and arming slave rebellions. He was the hero and icon of the North; from 1859 until Lincoln's assassination in 1865, he was the most famous American. Union soldiers marched to the new song "John Brown's Body", that portrayed him as a heroic martyr whose "truth is marching on"; it was the origin of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic". Newly-freed blacks walked to the same song, and they lowered their voices speaking of Brown, as if he were a saint.

(By the way Kansas joined the union in 1861 as a free state)

Sarah Moore Grimké (1792–1873) and Angelina Emily Grimké (1805–1879),

known as the Grimké sisters, were the first nationally-known white American female advocates of abolition of slavery and women's rights. They were speakers, writers, and educators. ... They became early activists in the women's rights movement.



They grew up in a slave-owning family in South Carolina, and in their twenties, became part of Philadelphia's substantial Quaker society. They became deeply involved with the abolitionist movement, travelling on its lecture circuit and recounting their firsthand experiences with slavery on their family's plantation. Among the first American women to act publicly in social reform movements, they were ridiculed for their abolitionist activity. They became early activists in the women's rights movement. They eventually founded a private school.

After discovering that their late brother had had three mixed-race sons, whose mother was one of his slaves, they helped the boys get educations in the North. Archibald and Francis J. Grimké stayed in the North, Francis becoming a Presbyterian minister, but their younger brother John returned to the South.

Harriet Elisabeth Beecher Stowe, June 14, 1811 – July 1, 1896



was an American abolitionist and author. She came from the Beecher family, a famous religious family, and is best known for her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which depicts the harsh conditions for enslaved African Americans. The book reached millions as a novel and play, and became influential in the United States and Great Britain, energizing anti-slavery forces in the American North, while provoking widespread anger in the South. Stowe wrote 30 books, including novels, three travel memoirs, and collections of articles and letters. She was influential for both her writings and her public stances and debates on social issues of the day.

Sojourner Truth, ; born **Isabella "Belle"**

Baumfree; c. 1797 – November 26, 1883

was an American abolitionist and women's rights activist. Truth was born into slavery in Swartekill, New York, but escaped with her infant daughter to freedom in 1826. After going to court to recover her son in 1828, she became the first black woman to win such a case against a white man. She gave herself the name Sojourner Truth in 1843 after she became convinced that God had called her to leave the city and go into the countryside "testifying the hope that was in her".

[1] Her best-known speech was delivered extemporaneously, in 1851, at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. The speech became widely known during the Civil War by the title "Ain't I a Woman?", a variation of the original

speech re-written by someone else using a stereotypical Southern dialect, whereas Sojourner Truth was from New York and grew up speaking Dutch as her first language. During the Civil War, Truth helped recruit black troops for the Union Army; after the war, she tried unsuccessfully to secure land grants from the federal government for formerly enslaved people (summarized as the promise of "forty acres and a mule"). She continued to fight on behalf of women and African Americans until her death. As her biographer Nell Irvin Painter wrote, "At a time when most Americans thought of slaves as male and women as white, Truth embodied a fact that still bears repeating: Among the blacks are women; among the women, there are blacks."



Harriet Tubman was an American abolitionist and political activist.



Born as **Araminta Ross** in slavery in 1822, Tubman escaped and subsequently made some 13 missions to rescue approximately 70 enslaved people, including family and friends, using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad.

Early in life, in Maryland she was beaten by her owners she suffered a traumatic head wound when an irate overseer threw a heavy metal weight intending to hit another enslaved person, but hit her instead. The injury caused dizziness, pain, and spells of hypersomnia, which occurred throughout her life.

In 1849, Tubman escaped to Philadelphia, only to return to Maryland to rescue her family soon after.

Slowly, one group at a time, she brought relatives with her out of the state, and eventually guided dozens of other enslaved people to freedom. Travelling by night

and in extreme secrecy, Tubman (or "Moses", as she was called) "never lost a passenger". [3] After the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was passed, she helped guide fugitives farther north into British North America (Canada), and helped newly freed enslaved people to find work. Tubman met John Brown in 1858, and helped him plan and recruit supporters for his 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry.

During the American Civil War, she served as an armed scout and spy for the Union Army. In her later years, Tubman was an activist in the movement for women's suffrage.

Lucretia Mott (*née Coffin*; January 3, 1793 – November 11, 1880)



was an American Quaker, abolitionist, women's rights activist, and social reformer. She had formed the idea of reforming the position of women in society when she was amongst the women excluded from the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840.

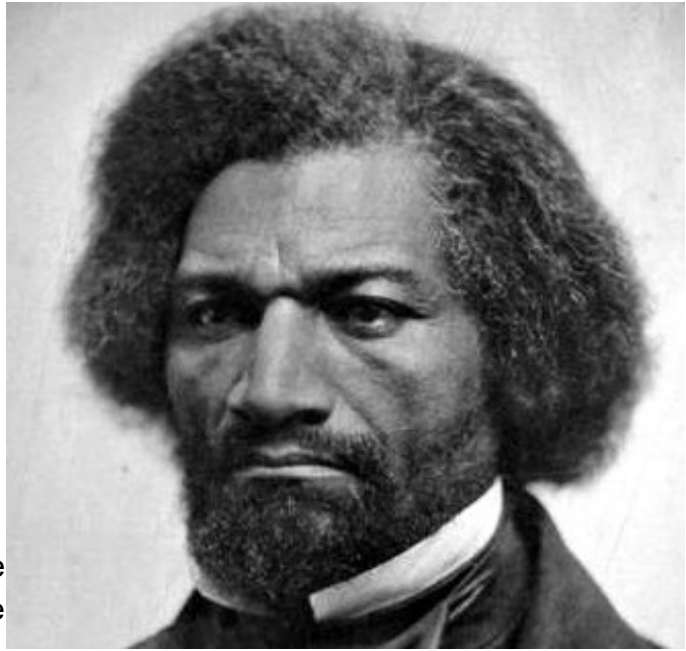
Her speaking abilities made her an important abolitionist, feminist, and reformer; she had been a Quaker preacher early in her adulthood.

When the United States outlawed slavery in 1865, she advocated giving former slaves, both male and female, the right to vote (suffrage).

She remained a central figure in reform movements until her death in 1880.

David Walker 1796 – August 6, 1830)

was an American abolitionist, writer, and anti-slavery activist. Though his father was enslaved, his mother was free; therefore, he was free as well. In 1829, while living in Boston, Massachusetts, with the assistance of the African Grand Lodge, he published *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, a call for black unity and a fight against slavery. The *Appeal* brought attention to the abuses and inequities of slavery and the responsibility of individuals to act according to religious and political principles. At the time, some people were aghast and fearful of the reaction that the pamphlet would provoke. Southern



citizens were particularly upset with Walker's viewpoints and as a result there were laws banning circulation of "seditious publications" and North Carolina's "legislature enacted the most repressive measures ever passed in North Carolina to control slaves and free blacks".

His son, Edward G. Walker, was an attorney and in 1866, was one of the first two black men elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature.