

Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams to John Adams, March - April 1776

I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember all men would be dictators if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to [start] a rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.

That men are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no argument. Why, then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and without respect. Men of sense in all ages oppose those customs which treat us only as the vassals [servants] of your sex.

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March – 5 April 1776 [electronic edition].

Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>

In letters to her husband, how did Abigail Adams exhibit power and influence?

Phyllis Wheatley

On Being Brought from Africa to America

Phillis Wheatley, 1753–1784

(Phillis Wheatley's poems were published in September 1773)

‘Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan land*,

Taught my benighted soul to understand

That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

Some view our sable race with scornful eye,

“Their colour is a diabolic die.”

Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,

May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

Virginia Commonwealth University

In what ways are her published poems an example of power?

Anne Hutchinson

Mrs. H.: What breach of law is that, Sir?

Gov.: Why dishonouring the commonwealth.

Mrs. H.: But put the case, Sir, that I do fear the Lord and my parents. May not I entertain them that fear the Lord because my parents will not give me leave?

Gov.: If they be the fathers of the commonwealth, and they of another religion, if you entertain them then you dishonour your parents and are justly punishable.

Mrs. H.: If I entertain them, as they have dishonoured their parents I do.

Gov.: No but you by countenancing them above others put honor upon them.

Mrs. H.: I may put honor upon them as the children of God and as they do honor the Lord.

Gov.: We do not mean to discourse with those of your sex but only this: you so adhere unto them and do endeavor to set forward this faction and so you do dishonour us.

Mrs. H.: I do acknowledge no such thing. Neither do I think that I ever put any dishonour upon you.

Gov.: Why do you keep such a meeting at your house as you do every week upon a set day?

Mrs. H.: It is lawful for me to do so, as it is all your practices, and can you find a warrant for yourself and condemn me for the same thing? The ground of my taking it up was, when I first came to this land because I did not go to such meetings as those were, it was presently reported that I did not allow of such meetings but held them unlawful and therefore in that regard they said I was proud and did despise all ordinances. Upon that a friend came unto me and told me of it and I to prevent such aspersions took it up, but it was in practice before I came. Therefore I was not the first.

Gov.: ...By what warrant do you continue such a course?

Mrs. H.: I conceive there lies a clear rule in Titus that the elder women should instruct the younger and then I must have a time wherein I must do it.

Constitution Society
<http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/hutchinson.html>

What rights/power did she have/not have? What was she trying to fight for?