

## INTRODUCTION

That tho' we are deprived of the privilege of suffrage, yet as free American women we claim the right of being heard on this subject, and that we should be under no other restraints than that of truth and justice in promoting our opinions concerning it. HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 6.

On 3 April 1841, one hundred nine women from Henry County, Indiana met in Spiceland to initiate the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society (HCFASS). The group comprised mostly Quaker women from farming families who had migrated to Henry County during the previous fifteen years from North Carolina and Tennessee, with a few arriving from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Within this homogeny, the group also included women and girls from merchant, Methodist, and even African American backgrounds. Regardless of individual identity, these women shared one goal, the immediate eradication of slavery in the United States. During their eight-year existence, the society maintained copious records, the majority of which are extant. Through a selective edition of the HCFASS records, five documents and correlative analysis will elaborate these women's commitment to activism, human rights, and women's agency.

Antebellum America uniquely positioned women as reformers. The American Revolution extended educational opportunities for women to better equip them "to raise boys for active citizenship"<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously the burgeoning Industrial Revolution and Market Economy freed women from the constraints of home manufacturing, encouraging some women to join the workforce, and requiring middle-class men to commit more time to business affairs away from home. Through this process women gained control over decision making in domestic matters. Despite this new position in American society,

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Harrold, *American Abolitionists* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education, Ltd., 2001), 41.

patriarchal concern over the female role outside of the home prompted social and legal boundaries for women. In her book *The Slavery of Sex*, Blanche Glassman Hersh observes, “The issue of citizens’ rights in the new republic was an important one, and debate on this question led to significant gains for white men. This situation contributed to an atmosphere of rising expectations, while at the same time calling attention to the widening gap between the rights of women and men.”<sup>2</sup> As Hersh illustrates in her book, in many ways antebellum women in the United States, especially married women, lived in a state of dependence not unlike the millions of American slaves. Their standard of living might have been higher, but their legal and civic rights were essentially non-existent. Popular culture and the socially conservative nature of the Second Great Awakening reiterated similar repression.

Despite its conservative nature, the evangelical thrust of the Second Great Awakening, which inspired missionary work and separation from the Market Economy, initiated a social reform agenda for women that allowed them to maintain their domestic role in society and at the same time initiate activism.<sup>3</sup> Women’s position on the delicate line between domestic modesty and social reform incited a furious debate in antebellum America. Even influential women, such as Catherine Beecher (1800-1878), who published popular domestic and education manuals, emphasized that a woman’s role should be as the moral leader for her family and not as an activist in the public realm. At its core, the argument of antebellum women’s role in society is one of agency.

Women engaged the challenge of public activism through multiple reform movements, most notably during the antebellum era, the fight against slavery. Although the original

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<sup>2</sup> Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana, IL, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Harrold, 39.

tactic of using moral suasion to eliminate slavery allowed women's involvement in activism, national debates over immediate emancipation and constitutional interpretation on slavery intensified issues of female involvement in public reform and leadership in national mixed-gender organizations.<sup>4</sup> Women responded to limited national opportunities by forming female antislavery societies, despite their minimal power in the public sphere.

Without a public arena, the women's abolitionist movement employed traditional women's activities in conjunction with writing for publication as their rhetorical force. Women's antislavery societies incorporated a range of tactics including sewing clothing for escaped slaves, organizing fund-raising bazaars, and petitioning politicians. As with societies of men, women elected recording secretaries, submitted reports and addresses for newspaper publication, and some groups even developed tracts for public distribution. Denied the right to speak publicly, female antislavery societies used organizational documentation not only as a device to record their activities but also as a persuasive tool to shape public opinion.

Many of the female antislavery societies communicated through the antislavery press. Local, regional, and national papers published constitutions, resolutions, reports, and addresses of women's organizations. HCFASS maintained vigorous publication activities. During their eight-year existence, from 1841 to 1849, the *Free Labor Advocate*<sup>5</sup> published HCFASS resolutions and addresses almost every year; some years witnessed multiple publications. HCFASS documents also appear in extant copies of *The*

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>5</sup> The *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle (FLA)* was published from 1841-1847 in New Garden, Indiana originally under the title *The Protectionist* and then continued by *The Free Territory Sentinel* and *The Indiana True Democrat*.

*Philanthropist*.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the antislavery periodicals, HCFASS leaders sent publication requests to national newspapers such as the *Greensboro Patriot*; however, either no corresponding issues of these newspapers are extant or the society's submission remained unpublished.<sup>7</sup> Although scholars have profiled several New England societies, the characteristics of individual societies in the Midwest remain slim. Since the HCFASS achieved the most prolific publication record of any female society in Indiana it provides a strong case study for female antislavery rhetoric in the Midwest.

Twentieth century publication of women's antislavery documents is limited. Four documentary editions stand out, Barbara Palmer's edition *Selected letters of Lucretia Coffin Mott*, Dana Greene's edition *Lucretia Mott, Her Complete Speeches and Sermons*, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's edition *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vols. 1-2, and Kathryn Kish Sklar's edition *Women's Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement, 1830-1870*.<sup>8</sup> Each edition provides insight into possible formats for presenting nineteenth century women's documents. The common characteristic of these editions is the focus on nationally recognized women abolitionists from the East Coast such as Lucretia Mott, Angelina Grimké, and Sojourner Truth. Beyond the publication of these renowned women, the voices of average female abolitionists are absent. Recently, Julie Roy Jeffrey's *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* and Beth A. Salerno's *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in*

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<sup>6</sup> *The Philanthropist* was published in Cincinnati, Ohio from 1836 until 1843 when it became the *Cincinnati Weekly Herald and Philanthropist*, the *Cincinnati Weekly Herald*, and the *Cincinnati Weekly Globe* until it merged with other Cincinnati newspapers.

<sup>7</sup> The *Greensboro Patriot* was published in Greensboro, North Carolina beginning in 1826.

<sup>8</sup> Lucretia Mott, *Selected Letters of Lucretia Coffin Mott*, ed. Beverly Wilson Palmer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Lucretia Mott, *Lucretia Mott, Her Complete Speeches and Sermons*, ed. Dana Greene (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1980); Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, Volume I and II (New York, Westport, CT, and London: Praeger Publishers, 1989); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Women's Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement 1830 – 1870* (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000).

*Antebellum America* used records from local women's societies to investigate the broader context of women involved in the antislavery movement; however, publishing documents was not Salerno and Jeffrey's goal. The select edition of the HCFASS records makes the rarely heard voices of women's antislavery organizations available to the twenty-first century public.<sup>9</sup>

Several justifications exist for this selective edition. First, a collection from a female antislavery society serves as documentary example of one society during its lifetime. HCFASS members met from 1841 until 1849, a time during which slavery incited major ideological, political, and international clashes, which are reflected in their writing. The members of the society also witnessed a divide in their Quaker Yearly Meeting and the death of one of the society's most active leaders; both events affected the activity and writing of the society. Second, HCFASS functioned as a Midwestern abolitionist voice. The antebellum Midwestern reflected the frontier lifestyle more so than daily life in urban Eastern cities. HCFASS demonstrates how these differences affect activism for antislavery women. Finally, the core investigation of this thesis, HCFASS, provides dynamic uses of the rhetoric women reformers developed to push beyond the boundaries of their prescribed sphere into the public and political arena. The language of an individual group provides a paradigm of women's political writing in the context of a nation divided by gender, attitudes on public and private domains, and "the woman question." Overall, this study will demonstrate how the Quaker background of HCFASS members influenced their abolitionist and women's rights ideologies. This analysis will illustrate how HCFASS writing and ideology are unique to their society, in

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<sup>9</sup> Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005).

addition to how they compare to those of other regional and national women's societies. Finally, this work will illustrate how these women used language that follows their expected role as moral guides and how they stepped outside the private sphere to argue on a political level.

## **Historiography**

### *Secondary Sources*

Prior to the late 1970s, most scholars overlooked the role of women in the abolitionist movement until historians Alma Lutz, Gerda Lerner, and Carol Thompson began the in-depth investigations into the role women played in the battle against slavery.<sup>10</sup> Blanche Glassman Hersh's *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist Abolitionists in America* (1978) furthered this examination by connecting abolitionist women to the limitations of social constructs such as the "women's sphere," the origins of feminism, and the burgeoning women's rights movement. Since *Slavery of Sex*, scholars continue to investigate abolitionist women's effect on feminism, reform organizations, antislavery rhetoric, public vs. private spheres, and the abolitionist movement itself. Thus, any complete historiography of this process must include works concerning nineteenth-century women, abolition, rhetoric, social and political activism, and the history of feminism.

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<sup>10</sup> Alma Lutz, *Crusade for Freedom: Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds its Past: Placing Women in History* (York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Carol Thompson, "Women and the Anti-Slavery Movement," *Current History* 70 (May 1976): 198-201.

## *Women's Roles in the Nineteenth Century*

The most influential work in this category is Nancy Cott's *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England 1780-1835* (1977).<sup>11</sup> In her investigation of the "cult of domesticity," Cott avoided published antebellum literature and instead sought private writing and periodical non-fiction such as advice columns to serve as her source materials. She recognized the challenge of investigating women from an era when women's public writing was minimal and private writing was reserved to the middle and upper classes. Cott elucidates the complex nature of the women's sphere which simultaneously empowered women as a moral voice while restricting any power independent of the domain of "women's sphere." As women found a means to utilize their moral power for improving society, they began to recognize their unity as women. "Not until they saw themselves classed by sex," concludes Cott, "would women join to protest their sexual fate."<sup>12</sup> Cott's explanation of women's complex and continually transforming self-perception during this period is essential to understand HCFASS's rhetorical choices.

Although contemporary society framed the argument against women's public activism in terms of female modesty and propriety, in reality they feared women's ability to change America. Mary P. Ryan concludes in *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* that "the public becomes a richly evocative term, a linguistic marker of highly privileged meaning, both moral and political."<sup>13</sup> Ryan describes how the scholarship of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas exemplify this argument. Based on

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<sup>11</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

<sup>12</sup> Cott, 206.

<sup>13</sup> Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 11.

Greek political standards, Arendt opines the “‘public realm,’ which extended beyond governmental institutions to a world where citizens might share equally in self-government and deliberate as peers about their mutual concerns.” Habermas extends Arendt’s classical view to include elements of the modern world in which “access” to the public sphere “is guaranteed to all citizens” including the “freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest.” In Habermas’ model the public sphere is not contiguous with the state but instead it “mediates between society and the state.”<sup>14</sup> Ryan’s acknowledgement that critics believe Arendt and Habermas limit their definition of public sphere by class and gender enhances consideration of women’s roles in antebellum America. Arendt and Habermas acknowledge the classical construct of equitable opportunities in the public sphere, models which the United States embraced during its early years. If the dynamic of change initiated by the Industrial Revolution and Market Economy began to challenge these classical ideas and extend the potential of the public sphere into a framework closer to Habermas’ modern definition of public, white property-owning men would obviously felt concern for their position of control in the patriarchal antebellum era.

#### *Nineteenth Century Women’s Activism*

The acceptance of women as moral guides during the early nineteenth century provided the potential for influence through charitable societies and became a means to empower women interested in societal change. For decades twentieth-century scholars believed that women’s involvement in early nineteenth-century charity reflected their Christian responsibility to reinforce class-oriented values on immigrants, African Americans, and the poor. Since the 1970s, however, women historians have challenged

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<sup>14</sup> Ryan, 11.



this theory. Lori D. Ginzberg, author of *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the 19th-century United States*, believes the concept of benevolent women as moral classifiers can be deconstructed because we now have “a greater understanding of white Protestant women as active participants in nineteenth-century society and as shapers of benevolence itself.”<sup>15</sup> Instead Ginzberg evaluates how changes in women’s activist rhetoric represented the fluctuating dynamic of nineteenth-century American culture. Ginzberg considers the development of the social constructs of “femaleness” and women’s role in determining morality as representative of a young country attempting to define itself in simple terms. As a new republic, the underlying potential of diverse ideologies and impending change intimidated American society. The Market Revolution and Second Great Awakening further exacerbated this unease. Instead of confronting these new ideas, societal leadership encouraged norms that marginalized groups demanding change. Women found themselves in a world with potentially more opportunity, but at the same time expected to maintain a certain level of propriety. Embracing this precarious position, women immersed themselves in benevolent causes to rid the United States of poverty, vice, and slavery, since educating others on the immorality of all three of these issues resided within the realm of women’s sphere.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Female Antislavery Societies*

The few monographs analyzing American women’s antislavery organizations assess women’s contributions in the fight against slavery, societal change, and activism. Julie Roy Jeffery and Beth A. Salerno provide the only recent comprehensive investigations into the history of female antislavery societies, each of these publications

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<sup>15</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the 19th-century United States* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ginzberg, 1990.

considering a different perspective.<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey investigates the ordinary women in antislavery societies, believing these women played an essential role because they provided the moral perspective of the slavery argument. Instead of being restrictive, the societal permissiveness of women's moral influence allowed them to step into the public realm. In their roles as moral archetypes women quietly linked activism and religion, introducing abolitionism to their fellow Christians. They also remained committed to the organizational aspects of antislavery societies at a time many men turned to politics. Politics, however, did not escape the tactics of women fighting slavery. Through petitioning and publishing women urged political transformation despite being disenfranchised. Committing to activism was not without challenges. The drive to initiate change pushed women further into the public world where they became fodder for criticism and abuse. Jeffrey demonstrates that women's involvement in the emancipation of enslaved black Americans extended beyond a desire to be involved with benevolent activities or even a need to eradicate slavery. "Above all," Jeffrey writes, "abolitionism had tested women's understanding of what it had meant to be female."<sup>18</sup>

Beth A. Salerno provides additional insight into women's antislavery societies. In her analysis of these organizations, Salerno finds mutual support to be the core of female activism. In a world that isolated females from the benefits of public interaction and knowledge, organizing in the name of emancipation "gave women a structure in which to meet regularly, educate themselves, stay motivated, and pool their efforts."<sup>19</sup> Not only did the local meeting structure enhance their social education, but the network of women's

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<sup>17</sup> Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey, 232.

<sup>19</sup> Salerno, 4.

societies throughout the country also provided additional resources for a successful organization.

Salerno also stresses the political flavor of women's groups. Even though women's abolitionist activism began from a moral perspective, this pulpit allowed them incredible political influence through lectures, newspapers, and publishing. "These educational efforts," Salerno believes, "combined with women's petitioning helped to create an antislavery constituency for new political parties."<sup>20</sup> Instead of pushing them away from the offensive world of politics, the disenfranchisement of women actually guided women into the political realm and eventually toward the fight for suffrage.

Many assessments of individual societies, activities, and activists preceded Salerno and Jeffrey's works. In 1989, the Library Company of Philadelphia held a symposium on women abolitionists celebrating of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the 1839 Anti-slavery Convention of American Women. The presented papers eventually merged into *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, a collection of fifteen essays on various aspects of women and abolition.<sup>21</sup> Most useful to this study are Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven's evaluation of women's petitioning and Margaret Hope Bacon's observations on nonresistance.

Van Broekhoven's analysis of petitioning demonstrates the subtle steps from women's non-political role as a moral paradigm to one of an active political force. Women committed to petitioning from the moment they signed an antislavery society constitution, most of which were framed in terms of God and morality. Eventually, this process included collecting other signatures. This seemingly natural progression incited

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<sup>20</sup> Salerno, 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).

protest from men and women alike. In order to assuage the controversy stimulated by their petitioning, Van Broekhoven deduces that women developed arguments justifying petitioning and female signatures based on their Christian duty not only to reiterate their female role but also to incorporate “the political reasoning offered by men when petitioning.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to accusing women of political activity, abolitionist organizations began to prefer male petitions because they contained signatures of voters. Unfortunately, the sentiments against antislavery activism eventually negated all antislavery petitioning through the Congressional Gag Rule passed in 1836 that tabled all petitions relating to slavery.<sup>23</sup> As the debate over the role of women in antislavery societies intensified, the frequency of women’s petitioning declined. Despite the decrease in their petitions, women’s organizations continued to appeal to governing bodies “because they had developed a new political consciousness of their responsibilities as female citizens.”<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Margaret Hope Bacon connects the conclusions made about violence during the women’s antislavery conventions of 1837-39 to the women’s rights movement’s embrace of nonresistance. Bacon accentuates the importance of Quakers to early abolitionists’ respect of nonresistance. The Society of Friends also enhanced the abolitionist commitment to the free produce movement. Attitudes toward both of these obligations vacillated between the 1830s and 1850s. Bacon praises abolitionists who maintained their nonresistance support even after they experienced violence themselves. Bacon also believes the commitment of abolitionist women to nonviolence led to post-

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<sup>22</sup> Deborah Van Broekhoven, “‘Let Your Names be Enrolled’: Method and Ideology in Women’s Antislavery Petitioning,” in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood*, eds. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 188.

<sup>23</sup> Harrold, 35. The Gag Rule was repealed in 1844, Harrold, 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

Civil War peace societies. These memberships often overlapped woman suffrage organizations, which influenced women's future nonresistance efforts.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to general assessments of women's antislavery activism, Debra Gold Hansen investigated the city organization in Boston, while Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven considered state associations within Rhode Island.<sup>26</sup> Hansen investigates the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society as a source of disagreement as well as discovery. Female abolitionists did not always agree on the role of women in public life. Using Boston as a case study, Hansen strives to demonstrate "how abolitionists' competing models of womanhood are revealed in their occupational situations, religious beliefs, moral codes, leisure pursuits, use of symbols and rituals, and modes of discourse."<sup>27</sup> Van Broekhoven discusses the difficulties faced by Rhode Island societies, which opened the door for women to take the place of men as major abolitionist organizers. Relying on the grassroots skills and networks of friendship they developed during the early days of the societies, women carried the efforts of abolition into the late 1850s. Van Broekhoven believes "that understanding the informal structure sustaining grassroots antislavery efforts may be more important to an accurate explanation of abolitionism than analysis of the formal organization of antislavery societies."<sup>28</sup> Her analysis is appropriate when considering HCFASS because living rural 1840s Indiana, success of the society required time and effort from individual members.

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<sup>25</sup> Margaret Hope Bacon, "By Force Alone: The Antislavery Women and Nonresistance," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, eds. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 275-297.

<sup>26</sup> Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, *The Devotion of these Women: Rhode Island in the Antislavery Network* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Debra Gold Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Boston Female Anti-slavery Society* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Hansen, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Van Broekhoven, 227.

Although the current literature lacks articles on specific Western female antislavery societies, Beth Salerno compares groups in the East to those in Ohio and further West. In the 1840s the earlier established Eastern societies struggled between shifting priorities and increasing political activism in the American antislavery movement. At the same time, newly formed Midwestern women's societies experienced "a period of growth, organization, and united action." Beth Salerno finds that both Eastern and Western societies "petitioned, published, resolved, sewed, convened, and read, creating like-minded women."<sup>29</sup> Although both regions used similar tactics, Eastern and Western societies differed somewhat on the subject of care for black people in the North. Salerno notes that Western antislavery society members "seem to have paid closer attention to fugitive slaves" throughout the existence of their groups while Eastern societies began to focus on fugitives after other forms of activism became less available.<sup>30</sup>

Another difference between East and West lies in regionalism. Although women frequently corresponded with friends and family across the United States, Western women rarely aligned with national societies. Salerno suggests the chronological delay in development between the Eastern and Western societies may have initiated this divide.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the ideological differences between the two American societies deterred national involvement. Regardless of why Western women chose regional alliances rather than national ones, as with their Eastern peers, Western societies eventually faced the debate

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<sup>29</sup> Salerno, 120.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 145.

over the role of women in antislavery activism despite the fact that these groups were less connected to the national societies.<sup>32</sup>

### *Nineteenth Century Feminism*

Leading the scholarly investigation of abolition as the forerunner of feminism is Blanche Glassman Hersh.<sup>33</sup> Hersh argues that the experiences of abolitionist women fighting for human rights became a source of “feminist consciousness-raising.”<sup>34</sup> The connection between the abolitionist and women’s rights movements is two-fold: first, women’s moral arguments against the inhumanity of slavery also justified a change in women’s rights. Aligning themselves to slave women, feminist abolitionists believed they were enslaved by the patriarchic American society. Second, women who pursued abolitionist activities established “new social roles for women.”<sup>35</sup> Hersh chronicles the connection between abolition and the antebellum women’s movement; then she profiles fifty-one feminist abolitionists who played a role in the emergence of feminist ideology, including Lydia Marie Child, Maria Weston Chapman, and Amanda Way, a Quaker minister who spent part of her life in Indiana.

### *Nineteenth Century Women’s Abolitionist Rhetoric*

A large portion of the investigation of nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric analyzes works of fiction. Alisse Portnoy and Jacqueline Bacon are several of the scholars who include non-fiction writing in their studies of women’s rhetoric.<sup>36</sup> Portnoy’s

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>33</sup> Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

<sup>34</sup> Hersh, vii.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Jacqueline Bacon, *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment, and Abolition* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).

work filled a gap in the investigation of nineteenth-century women's foray into the public world through their activism in the debates over American Indian removal policy, colonization of former slaves, and abolition. Exemplifying the public writing of Catherine Beecher and Angelina Grimké, Portnoy believes these conflicts cannot remain as a side-note to United States history because the rhetoric of these debates represents the search for identity and the contemporary challenges of early nineteenth-century America. Not only do the experiences of these women indicate the potential of women's roles in the public arena, but they also illuminate the conflicted views within the United States toward Native and African Americans.

Jacqueline Bacon places women's antebellum rhetoric in the context of three marginalized groups: African American men, African American women, and white American women. All three groups used rhetoric to defy the standard perception of their social standing. Bacon believes women incorporated their role as moral moderators into this activism through reiterating their womanly status, using biblical language, and justifying political arguments from a non-political stance. This technique relied upon learning the tactics of white men and other marginalized speakers who came before them. Through integrating these techniques, women became adept at arguing for social change and at the same time defending their actions. The rhetorical technique implemented by African American men and women, as well white women abolitionists, is important because it "becomes for later rhetors a dynamic framework that is continually expanding."<sup>37</sup> Bacon's thorough investigation of abolitionist language from the perspective of rhetoric provides a tested model for analyzing the HCFASS records.

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<sup>37</sup> Bacon, 236.



### *Primary Sources*

The HCFASS records are this study's main primary resource. The records are extant in an unusual format. In 1922, Sarah Edgerton, the surviving member of HCFASS requested Earlham College to make a transcription of these records. The transcript survives; however, the fate of the original materials is unknown. Currently located in the Indiana State Library Manuscript Division, the records include minutes, resolutions, addresses, correspondence, annual reports, and the societal constitution with one hundred and nine signatories. Nearly one third of the entries are reprinted in newspapers. In addition the HCFASS sent several addresses directly to press editors without including a copy in their minutes.

The first challenge in using these documents is that not all of the items written by HCFASS members appear in this record. Several recording secretaries chose to send resolutions and addresses directly to newspapers for publication. As extant copies of local mid-nineteenth-century periodicals are sometimes challenging to find, I relied on other sources to substantiate these documents. WPA transcripts of the *Indiana Courier*, a Whig paper published in New Castle, Indiana, include a scathing editorial indicating that the *Indiana Courier* had published proceedings from an 1848 meeting in which the HCFASS encouraged slaves to “quietly take their liberty whenever opportunity offers” and supported any who offered “aid and comfort” to those individuals fleeing from slavery.<sup>38</sup> In the transcript, the editor chastises HCFASS members' support of the Underground Railroad. Intrigued by this mention, I continued to look for copies of the *Indiana Courier*. After further investigation, I found a single copy of that issue in the Henry County

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<sup>38</sup> *Newspaper Readings in the History of New Castle, Indiana, Volume I, 1843-1859*, comp. Herbert L. Heller (New Castle, IN: Henry County Historical Society, City Schools of New Castle, and the Federal Writers Project of the W.P.A., 1941).

Historical Society Museum in addition to several previously unknown HCFASS documents.<sup>39</sup> Although newspapers published many submitted documents, petitions sent to state and local governments were not found in governmental journals or archives.

The second challenge is language syntax. Since many of the documents were written as speeches given to the members of HCFASS, they appear to be missing punctuation and rhetorical emphasis that most likely existed in the spoken version. Nineteenth-century lenience with writing structure might also be the source of syntactical or grammatical fluctuation. Such omissions may cause a reader to question the meaning of the writing and thus make the analysis somewhat speculative. Finally, the executive committees and recording secretaries changed yearly, so the format and style of entries varies with time.

Newspapers play an important role in researching the HCFASS. In addition to writings by and about the HCFASS, antislavery periodicals include information and submissions of other antislavery societies, articles on contemporary events in the state, region, and nation, and biographical data such as marriage and death announcements. The challenge in using nineteenth-century newspapers is finding extant copies. Plus, if copies of desired newspapers exist, they may be in poor condition, thus difficult to read.

Researching the lives of the society's women is necessary, to some degree, as a part of the investigation of the HCFASS documents. Unfortunately, after the initial list of members, the records included only elected officials and committee members. Because the majority of the women were Quakers the Society of Friends meeting records informed the fluctuating composition of the HCFASS due to the schism in the Indiana Yearly Meeting (see Appendix 1). Willard C. Heiss' *Abstracts of the Records of the*

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<sup>39</sup> *Indiana Courier*, 24 June 1848, 4, col. 1-2, (Document 4, 124).

*Society of Friends in Indiana* and Thomas Hamm's "Moral Choices: Two Indiana Quaker Communities and the Abolitionist Movement" eased the research process.<sup>40</sup> As with many nineteenth-century collections, some of the Quaker records are missing. Quaker meetings elected new recording secretaries every year, so the handwriting, and therefore the readability of the records, varies. Despite these challenges, the Friends maintained fairly detailed records providing dates, names, and resolutions of situations regarding the monthly meeting.

As a documentary edition, this thesis is comprised of two parts. The first section is the analytical assessment of the annotated documents. This analysis serves as a contextual device to illustrate the important ties between these documents and the scholarly investigation of the women's role in the antebellum American antislavery debate, activism, and social rhetoric in addition to contextualizing female antislavery societies' use of language to venture into the public realm as agents for social change. Examples from the HCFASS documents are quoted and referenced within the editorial analysis in addition to other contemporary writings from local and regional newspapers as well as published writings from the slavery debate of the 1840s. The editorial method introduces the documentary portion of this thesis, explaining the presentational style for the included or referenced documents. Documents in this selected edition represent models of HCFASS rhetoric and antislavery authorship.

Chapter One, "Truth and Justice in Promoting our Opinions," addresses the prevailing social issues featured in the HCFASS records. Issues such as participating in

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<sup>40</sup> Willard C. Heiss, *Abstracts of the Records of the Society of Friends in Indiana*, Vol. 4 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972); Thomas D. Hamm, et al., "Moral Choices: Two Indiana Quaker Communities and the Abolitionist Movement," *Indiana Magazine of History* 87 (June 1991).

the free produce movement, women's role in American society, and governmental change as the optimum solution to slavery are discussed and contextualized in two stages. First, HCFASS attitudes are defined. Second, HCFASS perspectives are compared to the ideologies of other Midwestern and national voices in the slavery debate.

Chapter Two, "Appearing Before the Public in Their Own Defense," examines the methods by which the HCFASS writers incorporated audience awareness into making rhetorical choices. This audience differentiation most frequently established by HCFASS was based on gender; therefore, Chapter Two will analyze the tactics used specifically for female audiences, male audiences, and the contrast between these two. HCFASS entries addressed to women often appeal to the female tendency to sympathize with those in need such as enslaved women and also reiterated the moral argument against slavery using biblical references. When addressing male audiences, the HCFASS often incorporated historical, biblical, and political quotations from universally recognized sources in order to demonstrate their understanding of the topic and provide multiple respected sources to support their argument. These women also appealed to men by asking them to approach the slavery debate through critical analysis. Regardless of the audience, the HCFASS members voiced commitment to abolition, equal rights, and African American equality.

### **Historical Context**

An accurate assessment of HCFASS records requires an understanding of where this Midwestern women's society fits in the history of abolition, Quakerism, and antebellum Indiana. Indiana obtained statehood in 1816, yet by the 1840s the state still retained much of its original character. Indiana was still predominately rural, canals were

in the planning phase, and statewide transportation included only the rustic National and Michigan roads. Agriculture fed the economy; reiterated by the fact that in the 1840 census Indiana included only three cities with populations larger than 2,500. The first major settlement influx into central Indiana began in the 1820s. New residents of central Indiana came from a variety of backgrounds. Historian James Madison believes the composition of central Indiana settlers was noteworthy, as “upland South, Mid-Atlantic, and New England cultures mingled and amalgamated, causing each to change and creating a distinctive culture, one that was neither northern nor southern but rather western and Hoosier.”<sup>41</sup>

Henry County typified central Indiana. Unavailable for settlement until the Treaty of St. Mary’s in 1818, the county’s first permanent residents arrived in 1819 and the state legislature declared it a county in 1821.<sup>42</sup> The natural environment offered residents forests, fertile soil, game, and limestone beds that would eventually yield raw materials for the National Road. Henry County supported just under 6,500 residents in 1830 and just over 15,000 in 1840. Thomas Hamm describes Henry County’s population as “mostly Quakers, mostly farmers, and mostly neither rich nor poor.” In his analysis of two monthly meetings in the county, Duck Creek and Spiceland, Hamm notes that:

these families were mobile—the average adult had lived in at least three other Quaker communities before arriving in Spiceland or Duck Creek; close to half had resided for a time in Ohio. Nearly all were landowners . . .

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<sup>41</sup> James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 61 (quote), 76, 95, 97.

<sup>42</sup> *History of Henry County, Indiana: Together with Sketches of its Cities, Villages, and Towns ... and Biographies of Representative Citizens: also a Condensed History of Indiana, Embracing Accounts of Pre-historic Races, Aborigines, Winnebago and Black Hawk wars, and a Brief Review of its Civil and Political History* (Chicago: Inter-State Pub. Co., 1884), 249-251; *The County of Henry, Indiana: Topography, History, Art Folio: Including Chronological Chart of General, National, State, and County History* (Richmond, IN: Rerick Brothers, 1893), 7-8, 13.

. nearly all adult men were farmers, along with a few craftsmen—carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and millers—who also farmed.<sup>43</sup>

Many in this large Quaker population left southern states to seek freedom-supporting communities.

Quakers in Indiana and throughout the United States provided an eager audience for the antislavery message because the majority of the Society of Friends membership had opposed slavery since the mid-eighteenth century. Maintenance of one of the basic Quaker tenets “that all people were equal in the sight of God” and “capable of receiving God’s Light” encouraged Friends to be antislavery.<sup>44</sup> In order to demonstrate their commitment to eliminating the system of human bondage in the United States all American yearly meetings mandated that no Quaker could own slaves and maintain membership in the Society of Friends by 1784.<sup>45</sup> Quakers became active in early antislavery organizations both in the north and the south.<sup>46</sup> In her analysis of the Philadelphia Antislavery Society, Jean Soderlund notes that early Quaker antislavery activism maintained a “gradualist, segregationist, and paternalistic approach” to the eradication of slavery.<sup>47</sup> Since Quakers composed the majority of antislavery activists until the 1820s, a similar attitude dominated the American antislavery movement until the 1830s.<sup>48</sup>

During the late 1820s and early 1830s, the antislavery movement in the United States changed in two major ways. First, the movement’s priority changed from gradual emancipation, in which slaves or their children would be manumitted after a

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<sup>43</sup> Hamm, et al., 123, 126.

<sup>44</sup> Soderlund, 17.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 35.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, *The Antislavery Movement in Henry County, Indiana* (New Castle, IN: Henry County Historical Society, 1987), 2.

<sup>47</sup> Soderlund, 185.

<sup>48</sup> Harrold, 17.

predetermined year or age, to immediatism, in which slavery would be eradicated immediately. The concept of immediate emancipation grew from early antislavery societies during the American Revolution. In 1824, Elizabeth Heydrick, penned one of the earliest immediatist publications, *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition*, a document published in the *Indiana Free Labor Advocate* even in the 1840s.<sup>49</sup> Initially antislavery societies believed moral suasion would effectively end the institution of slavery because the majority of early participants were Quakers. But as the debate over slavery intensified during the 1830s, some antislavery activists sought to bolster their argument for immediate abolition by supporting national legislation to end slavery or amending the United States Constitution. Abolitionists did not uniformly support governmental means to immediate abolition, however, because some believed slavery to be an issue for states to decide.

With the establishment of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) in 1833, the concepts of immediate emancipation and equality for black Americans became commonplace in the abolition debate.<sup>50</sup> As membership in the AASS grew through the 1830s, abolition and its implementation became points of debate that eventually divided the AASS. William Lloyd Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) believed the Constitution was a proslavery document and the dissolution of the Union was the only solution to eradicating the sin of slavery. Lewis Tappan's American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (A&FASS) continued to use moral suasion through churches to

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<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Heyrick, *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition, or, An Inquiry into the Shortest, Safest, and Most Effectual Means of Getting Rid of West Indian Slavery* (London: Knight and Bagster, 1824); *FLA*, 19 August 1847, 1, col. 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> Harrold, 33.

encourage antislavery. Although not innately political, Tappan and his followers supported the maintenance of the union.

About the same time, female abolitionists wanted increased participation and leadership opportunities for women in the antislavery movement, yet many male society members did not support the idea of women as antislavery leaders with men. The issues of female involvement in the leadership of antislavery societies with membership of both sexes, known as “the Woman Question” became the second major issue to confront the American antislavery movement during the 1830s.<sup>51</sup> On women’s issues, the AASS was more supportive of women's direct involvement in leadership, while the A&FASS was against women taking leadership roles.<sup>52</sup> Beyond their role within the antislavery movement, male society members also began to question the degree to which women should be publicly involved with activism. The intensity of this argument eventually caused many female antislavery societies to disband.<sup>53</sup>

In the late 1830s, antislavery societies began to organize in Indiana most likely due to the recent arrival of southern Quakers protesting slavery. The number of Indiana societies increased after Arnold Buffum, an abolitionist lecturer working for the AASS, arrived in 1839. Settling in Newport, Indiana (now Fountain City) Buffum organized antislavery conventions in Wayne and surrounding counties including the cities of Spiceland, Greensboro, and Raysville in Henry County. Increased agitation for immediate emancipation had already raised concern within the Indiana Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends. In June 1840, the Meeting for Sufferings issued an “Epistle of Advice” forbidding its members’ participation in antislavery organizations. Buffum’s

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>52</sup> Harrold, 35-36.

<sup>53</sup> Salerno, 121.



presence further enhanced the tension. Dismayed by his radical ideas on emancipation, the New England Friends disowned Buffum in 1840 and then sent defamatory letters to Indiana Quakers as he traveled to the Midwest.<sup>54</sup>

These warnings from the East, however, did not dampen the growing abolitionist spirit in East Central Indiana. In his memoirs, Levi Coffin, one of the most recognized operators on the Underground Railroad, describes Buffum's purpose in visiting Indiana as "[not attempting to] organize antislavery societies. His mission did not seem to be that work, but the endeavor to rouse an interest in the minds of Friends and others on behalf of the slave and prepare the way for more efficient action."<sup>55</sup> Regardless of his intentions, Indiana residents supporting abolition formed many local antislavery societies after Buffum's arrival, including several female organizations. Buffum remained active in the Indiana abolitionist movement for several years, lecturing and editing the *Protectionist*, an antislavery periodical published in New Garden Township, Indiana.<sup>56</sup>

Henry County established two antislavery organizations within the year. On 30 January 1841, the Henry County Anti-Slavery Society (HCASS) held its inaugural meeting including both men and women. Less than three months later on 3 April, 109 women signed the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society organizational constitution.<sup>57</sup> The majority of the women were Orthodox Quakers from families originally from North Carolina. As with the greater part of Indiana, antebellum Henry County housed rural farming communities so participation in social activism was a

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<sup>54</sup> Hamm, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* (Cincinnati: Robert Clark Company, 1898; reprint, New York: Arno Press and the *New York Times*, 1968), 227.

<sup>56</sup> Hamm, et al., 119; Marion Clinton Miller, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Indiana" (Ph. D. diss., University of Michigan, 1938), 77.

<sup>57</sup> The HCASS held its first meeting on 30 January 1841, *Philanthropist*, 5 May 1841, 1.

challenge in itself. HCFASS met every few months at a Quaker meeting house or private home. Each meeting included composing resolutions and other statements. Members served as speakers sharing HCFASS addresses and reports with the group. Other organizational activities included writing and sending petitions to state and national leaders, composing letters to political leaders whose actions they found in error, subscribing to antislavery periodicals, making clothing for former slaves residing in Indiana, speaking to and corresponding with other antislavery societies, and potentially aiding escaped former slaves. Throughout the life of the society, HCFASS members remained active abolitionists. Since the HCFASS formed under the influence of Arnold Buffum, their commitment to immediate emancipation is not surprising; however, support of abolition was risky for Indiana residents for two major reasons: Indiana's ambiguous position regarding slavery and the state's unwillingness to embrace its African American population.

Historically, Indiana was an atypical environment for abolitionists. Prior to becoming a state, the Northwest Territorial government continually debated the restrictions on slavery instituted by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Three years after the establishment of Indiana Territory, delegates appealed to Congress to suspend "for a Term of Ten Years" Article Six of the Ordinance, which outlawed slavery.<sup>58</sup> Initially, Congress blocked any proposed proslavery alterations to the Ordinance. In 1805, however, Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison, a native Virginian, allowed passage of a more subversive territorial act. Instead of suspending Article Six of the

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<sup>58</sup> "Petition of the Vincennes Convention," in Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Petitions and Papers* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Publications, 1894), 461.

Ordinance, the law introduced indentured servitude to Indiana Territory.<sup>59</sup> The conflict between pro- and antislavery factions of territorial government continued to flare periodically. The 1816 Indiana Constitution deemed slavery illegal and outlawed further indentured servitude. Unfortunately, these restrictions did not apply to people already indentured. Even though the Indiana Supreme Court ruled in 1821 that adults could not be held in indentured servitude, local government rarely enforced the ruling.

Many white Indiana residents opposed slavery yet viewed African Americans as unfit to live equally with white residents. This common belief manifested itself in support of the Colonization Movement. Pro-colonization Hoosiers would endorse an end to slavery only if such legislation required African Americans to emigrate to Africa or the Caribbean. Although introduced by four male slaves in Boston prior to the American Revolution, African Americans rarely supported colonization. Endorsement for the movement only increased among white Americans during the early 19th century, finally encouraging the American Colonization Society's formation in 1816.<sup>60</sup> In Indiana the popularity of the Colonization movement became a threat to emancipated slaves. Even though an official Indiana Colonization Society was not formed until 1829, the appeal of colonization legislation to Indiana residents encouraged the State General Assembly to pass an 1825 joint resolution that provided for gradual emancipation and colonization of indentured servants in Indiana. For emancipated African Americans thinking of living in Indiana, their place in the state became further limited in 1831 by the passage of a law

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<sup>59</sup> Gwendolyn J. Crenshaw, "*Bury Me in a Free Land*": *The Abolitionist Movement in Indiana, 1816-1865* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1986), 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> Harrold, 25, 108-109; Crenshaw, 13.

that required free blacks and mulattoes to provide a \$500 bond to guarantee they would not become charges of the state.<sup>61</sup>

As colonization gained popularity in 1830s Indiana, the national antislavery movement experienced a radical shift in ideology as immediate emancipation gained popularity. The zeal of these new abolitionists created an ever-widening gap between radical antislavery activists and more conservative antislavery supporters, such as Orthodox Quakers. Conflicts concerning abolition separated churches, friends, families, and antislavery societies across the United States to the point of causing national schisms within the Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Baptist denominations. Such church divisions resulted in “comeouter” sects, groups of antislavery Christians who left a recognized religious organization to form their own denominations. John R. McKivigan in his book *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* believes that “the comeouter sects attempted to establish uncompromised institutional bases from which to carry on the work of freeing the churches from their sins.”<sup>62</sup> This potential for division based on antislavery ideology became the second challenge to abolitionists in Indiana. One of the most profound examples of this rift occurred between the Indiana Society of Friends.

As previously mentioned the increase in abolitionist activity ignited serious concern among more conservative Indiana Quakers. Indiana abolitionist Quakers supported the Liberty Party and the free produce movement in addition to condemning colonization and black codes. Their political and economic ideology fostered suspicion of

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 8, 12.

<sup>62</sup> John R. McKivigan, “Abolitionists and the Comeouter Sects,” in *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 94.

the commercial connections between their conservative brethren and non-Quakers. On the other hand, non-abolitionist Quakers avoided the radical antislavery meetings for fear of damaging their religious reputations.<sup>63</sup> Conflict erupted on 1 October 1842 during a campaign visit by prominent Kentucky Whig politician Henry Clay to Richmond, Indiana. Clay experienced immense support in Indiana except from the abolitionists. Indiana abolitionists decided to express their outrage toward Clay for maintaining ownership of slaves and supporting colonization. Hiram Mendenhall, a member of the Indiana Yearly Meeting, presented a petition to Clay in Richmond before 15,000 onlookers, asking him to denounce slavery and colonization. Clay and his supporters were appalled. Later that day the executive committee of the Indiana Yearly Meeting expelled Mendenhall and seven others from meeting leadership.<sup>64</sup> After multiple conversations beginning on 11 October 1842, the abolitionist Quakers separated themselves into the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends during meetings held on February 6 and 7, 1843.<sup>65</sup> Of the estimated 25,000 members in the Indiana Yearly Meeting, only about 2,000 joined the Anti-Slavery Friends.<sup>66</sup> According to Quaker records and the HCFASS records, the division in the Indiana Yearly Meeting also motivated some members of the HCFASS to leave the society.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ryan Jordan, "The Indiana Separation of 1842 and the Limits of Quaker Anti-Slavery," *Quaker History* 89 (Spring 2000): 10; Hamm, *The Antislavery Movement*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Jordan, 2-3.

<sup>65</sup> Walter Edgerton, *A History of the Separation of the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends* (Cincinnati: Achilles Pugh, 1856), 61, 73-74.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965; reprint, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950), 165.

<sup>67</sup> Hamm, "Moral Choices," 127.

## CHAPTER ONE

### “The Theme Should Be Forever New”

The subject of slavery with the means of promoting the abolition thereof should be [an] exhaustless one to the least inventive mind either in speaking or writing; and to those engaged in the cause the theme should be forever new. HCFASS Record, 1 July 1842, p. 30.

In a July 1847 issue of the *Free Labor Advocate*,<sup>68</sup> editor Benjamin Staunton published a series of letters that adeptly illustrated the challenges women faced when expressing their opinions in antebellum America. Earlier that year, the *British Friend*<sup>69</sup> included a letter signed by over 10,000 women from Edinburgh, Scotland addressed “to the women of the United States.” The Scottish women condemned America’s continuance of slavery despite considering itself a Christian nation. “Women of America,” the Edinburgh authors pled, “shall slavery continue? It is for you to make answer. Yours is an influence not to be resisted.”<sup>70</sup> Inspired by the Scottish women’s appeal, the HCFASS wrote a response and requested publication of their letter to the Scottish women in a local Whig newspaper, *The Indiana Courier*, but *Courier* editor J.W. Grubbs refused to publish the address. He did, however, editorialize on the subject. Instead of acknowledging the arguments extended by either group of women, Grubbs instead reinforced his interpretation of state’s rights. Then he justified his refusal to publish the women’s letter by identifying all abolitionists as Liberty Party members, who

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<sup>68</sup> The *Free Labor Advocate* was published from 1841-1847 in New Garden, Indiana originally under the title *Ant-Slavery Chronicle*.

<sup>69</sup> *The British Friend* was published by the Society of Friends in Glasgow, Scotland from 1843 to 1889, also in London from 1877 to 1886; in Birkenhead from 1891 to 1901; in London from 1902 to 1913.

<sup>70</sup> *British Friend*, November 1846, 294, col. 1-2; 295, col. 1.

abandoned the Whig Party. Men's political activity not the women's opinions fueled his response.

Grubbs' hostility demonstrates the one of the major dilemmas for women abolitionists; they were political activists without political power. Maria Coffin (Recording Secretary) and Rebecca Edgerton (Vice President) composed a rebuttal to Grubbs' editorial chastising his proslavery interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. As to his association between the Liberty Party members and abolitionists, Edgerton and Coffin noted that "the women of Henry County have not set up themselves in politics, and if they had the women of Edinburgh have not, and hence we see no excuse according to [his] own theory, for [our letter] says not one word about politics."<sup>71</sup> Without publishing their second submission to the *Indiana Courier*, Grubbs inserted his response, which concludes "we have always been taught that the ladies, or at least one,--was a necessary article in every household whose sole duty it was to attend to *domestic* affairs; and that the lords of the soil were the proper persons to attend to the matters of *State* and *Nation*. If we are wrong, we hope our fair friends will impute it to the prejudice of education."<sup>72</sup> In their concluding response, Coffin and Edgerton criticize Grubbs' attacks as a diatribe against male abolitionists instead of as a justification for refusing to publish submissions from women abolitionists. Although the exchange was not fully published in the *Courier*, the *Free Labor Advocate* demonstrated its support for women activists by publishing the entire exchange. The exchange demonstrates the HCFASS members' ability to rise above limitations in antebellum America to pursue reform objectives through rhetorical means.

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<sup>71</sup> *FLA*, 1 July 1847, 1, col. 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

Rhetoric in speech and writing demonstrates the ability of the presenter to frame his or her argument clearly and engage the intended audience. Although often associated with the concept of “insincere or grandiloquent language,”<sup>73</sup> rhetoric encompasses all elements of successful communication. In the introduction to her documentary edition *Man Cannot Speak for Her: Key Texts of the Early Feminists*, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell writes that rhetoric is essential to social activism because:

In rhetoric, activists define their ideology, urge their demands upon outsiders, refute their opposition, maintain the morale of stalwarts, struggle to enliven familiar arguments, and attempt to keep their concerns high on the political agenda.<sup>74</sup>

Since the public sphere was taboo for women, community gatherings for females became a challenge. Men not only verbally ridiculed women who met publicly, but sometimes also physically abused them. During the 1838 meeting Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in Philadelphia’s Pennsylvania Hall, for example, an anti-abolition mob pummeled female delegates with stones and berated them with insults. After the conclusion of the meeting, the angry mob burned the building to the ground.<sup>75</sup> As a result of such intimidation, the written word became a more viable instrument of communication for antislavery women. By establishing organizational publications such as the *Liberty Bell*,<sup>76</sup> in addition to writing literature, tracts, and editorials, activist women publicly expressed their opinions. Illustrated by scholars such as Blanche Glassman Hersh and Jean Fagan Yellin, women helped to agitate the country to change. As their

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<sup>73</sup> Definition of “rhetoric,” *Webster’s New Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Federal Street Press, 2002), 1575.

<sup>74</sup> Campbell, ix.

<sup>75</sup> Salerno, 85-88.

<sup>76</sup> The *Liberty Bell*, published by the Boston Garrisonians, was one of several anniversary books that offered a platform for abolitionist writers, including women, and, as Julie Roy Jeffrey describes, “acquainted abolitionists with the names of significant figures and helped to make them beloved” (Jeffrey, 125).



voices became louder, women's forays into the public sphere became more acceptable. One of the most illustrative examples of this rise in women's activism is seen through their involvement with the abolitionist movement.

More than a vehicle to promote the eradication of slavery in the United States women's antislavery societies functioned as a springboard for women's future activism. Not only did they provide an understanding of the organizational structure needed to accomplish change, but these societies also exposed the limits of women's rights.

Feminist historian Blanche Glassman Hersh finds:

When abolitionist women demanded an equal role with men in antislavery work, the feminist gauntlet [was] thrown down. The consciousness of even the earliest feminist-abolitionist women was "women-defined" not "male-defined."<sup>77</sup>

Women's societies, especially those that supported abolition, realized that the basic human rights argument applied not only to enslaved Americans but also to others who were oppressed in American society including women themselves.

In considering the rhetoric of antebellum women, utilizing the documents of one American group may serve as an example for rhetorical technique as well as a source for identifying variations. Scholars have analyzed antislavery rhetoric; however, activist expression cannot be consolidated into a category based solely on its cause. Gender, ethnicity, and location are highly influential in establishing and expressing one's worldview. In order to assess these influences on the HCFASS, the documents chosen for this edition must be analyzed with multiple foci: first, how did perspectives of their world affect their opinions? Second, how effective was their ability to approach an audience?

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<sup>77</sup> Hersh, 4.

Finally, how successfully did they use rhetoric to express these principles and demonstrate their agency?

HCFASS members repeatedly expressed their opinions about the prevailing issues in antebellum America. Throughout the society's existence, members addressed topics from slavery and abolition to elections and political corruption. In order to investigate all of the topics found in their writings, creating subject groupings proved most effective. First and foremost, issues surrounding slavery took center stage in the HCFASS records. By expressing their commitment to the abolitionist stance in the articles of their constitution, these women opened themselves to potential ridicule. Yet, they defended their arguments demanding abolition with both political and ethical reasoning. Examples that follow will illustrate authors' hatred for the institution of slavery, their commitment to the free trade movement, their disgust for prejudice against African Americans, their disappointment in religious denominations that allowed slaveholders within their membership, their support for the education of free black peoples, and their encouragement of slaves to flee their bonds.

A second topic closely related to slavery is that of human rights, an argument that HCFASS extended from the innate rights of African Americans to those of women. Throughout their published writings, the HCFASS members continually referred to African Americans as citizens. In order to acknowledge the citizenship of African Americans, women needed to address the limitations of their own role in American society. The HCFASS authors expressed their right to be active in politics and even hinted at their desire for universal woman suffrage. Members also demanded that the educational system include women. These women realized that social restraint and the

very concept of the women's sphere must be eradicated, in order to accomplish these goals. Elements of the HCFASS records demonstrated some hesitancy regarding women stepping outside of their sphere, such as justifying their political commentary in several letters and demonstrating disgust for involvement in politics. Although such moments seem to deflate their argument for women's rights, the HCFASS authors successfully use the language of the women's sphere to demonstrate their ability to create rhetorically sound arguments.

Finally, HCFASS members also expressed many opinions on political issues including the role of the Constitution in immediate abolition and the shortcomings of congressional activities. From their societal Constitution to their final address encouraging Kentucky women to sway their husbands' influence on how slavery would be represented in the 1850 Kentucky Constitution, the society members maintained a political agenda. They adeptly walked that dangerous line, since politics eluded the women's sphere, through moral rhetoric and savvy use of language. The members were less subtle in their critiques of politicians, believing such criticism to be their moral right as women.

Despite potential social or religious ramifications, the HCFASS women expressed their commitment to abolition from their organization's beginning. The constitution clearly states that "the object of this Association shall be to circulate correct information relative to slavery, showing by its corrupting influence upon the nation its demoralizing effect upon the master as well as the slave, its degrading power over its downtrodden victims, and the duty and safety of immediate emancipation."<sup>78</sup> Again, the authors accepted their somewhat limited capacity in affecting change in American opinion by

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<sup>78</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 2, (Document 1, 102).

defining their goal as the distribution of literature. From a twenty-first century perspective, supplying activist literature seems a passive act for women who wanted to eradicate a national institution. On the other hand, HCFASS members distributed antislavery tracts to both men and women in order to encourage education for both sexes. By facilitating women's education members demonstrated their own agency in eradicating slavery and the potential for broader women's agency through education.

The word abolition also occurs in the first set of resolutions. At most meetings, the HCFASS appointed a committee to compose a set of resolutions, which were read, discussed, and adopted by attendees. These resolutions reiterated their abhorrence of slavery as well as initiated endeavors that would advance abolitionist ideas. For example, HCFASS leadership expected commitment to the abolition of slavery desiring that members "persevere therein till our lives or that system shall terminate."<sup>79</sup> In an 1842 address to the Society, executive committee representatives stressed their pledge to lifelong activism by warning members to beware of "feelings of indifference and apathy," as the initial enthusiasm for antislavery activism may wane with time.<sup>80</sup> This lifelong commitment to the cause is reinforced by the fact that based on the women who signed the society constitution, the ages of the HCFASS members range from girls as young as eleven year old Sarah Jane Macy and Sarah Edgerton to 58 year old Anna Wright. The 1842 annual report emphasized the need for mature members, and although few older women were members in 1842, the executive committee hoped that this

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>80</sup> HCFASSR, 1 July 1842, 31.

number would increase because they “are needed to council and direct the middle-aged to act in cooperation with these and the youth.”<sup>81</sup>

Beyond abolition itself, the members of the HCFASS supported the free produce movement, which allowed women to demonstrate their disgust for slavery and agency as women by purchasing only products made without slave labor. Women’s support of the free produce movement is logical because women controlled domestic purchases. Buying slave-labor free products was an enormous commitment and life-style change because free produce merchandise was very expensive. By mid-1842, the members of the HCFASS leadership expressed their commitment to the free produce movement by dropping subscriptions to two antislavery periodicals in order to subscribe instead to the *Free Labor Advocate*.<sup>82</sup> The Society of Friends generally supported the use of free labor products dependent on product availability. In addition to practicing what they preached, HCFASS members were willing to criticize other abolitionists who did not prioritize free labor. The HCFASS members condemned people who used slave-produced merchandise as no better than slaveholders. In an 1842 report, executive committee members lambasted merchants who stocked slave-produced merchandise, equating them with the biblical idol makers in Ephesus who criticized the apostle Paul for arguing against multiple gods.<sup>83</sup> An 1843 resolution declared, “those who purchase and consume the products of slavery, must be regarded as the principal supporters of the whole system.”<sup>84</sup> HCFASS members also criticized other antislavery activists who continued to purchase

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<sup>81</sup> HCFASSR, 22 August 1842, Annual Report, 41.

<sup>82</sup> HCFASSR, 22 August 1842, 39.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> *FLA*, 29 April 1843, 1, col. 3-4.

slave produce, believing “that no person can be a true abolitionist and at the same time freely purchase and consume slave grown productions.”<sup>85</sup>

Antebellum Americans dubbed women best suited to provide moral education to the family. For the HCFASS their interest in education extended beyond the family. Although little evidence exists that the women of HCFASS ever directly functioned as educators of former slaves and free people of color, they supported education for black Americans. Beginning with their constitution, which asserts “this Association shall aim to elevate the character of our colored population by promoting their moral and intellectual improvement,”<sup>86</sup> HCFASS members recognized the need to educate African Americans throughout their existence.

Framing African American education in the context of morality may be somewhat problematic since scholars are often critical of white abolitionists’ racial biases regarding the nature of people of color. When considered in the context of the HCFASS documents, this interpretation of sentiments about black individuals does not seem as pronounced. First, members saw the limitations of African Americans as a result of their circumstances or environment, not inherent limitations based upon intellect.<sup>87</sup> In their constitution the female abolitionists justified their initial statement on education by the need to eradicate prejudice against people of color and not because they viewed black people as lesser individuals. Second, HCFASS members associated the limitations of free blacks to their lower socio-economic standing. In the resolutions of the second HCFASS meeting, the members asserted the importance of assisting free black women by either “advice or pecuniary means as may be best calculated to advance them in education and

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<sup>85</sup> HCFASSR, 6 August 1844, 56.

<sup>86</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 2-3, (Document 1, 102).

<sup>87</sup> HCFASSR, 31 May 1845, 62.

usefulness.”<sup>88</sup> Offering them money recognized the ability of these African American women to be fiscally responsible if given the opportunity. Third, HCFASS members foresaw substantial roles in society for African Americans to play. In a later entry, authors emphasized that if given “the advantage of religious education” people of color could be good candidates as missionaries throughout the world.<sup>89</sup> The profound influence of Christianity on the American mindset during the nineteenth century led many Americans to view missionary work as extremely valuable. Thus in proposing such positions for black Americans, the society members recognized the morality of people of color.

Beyond supporting African American education, documents from the society strongly criticized the pervasive prejudice against black Americans. The HCFASS constitution defines people of color living in the United States as citizens; citizens prejudiced by a government that supported slavery. The society frequently used biblical references to support the equality of people of color, including Acts 17:26, which states that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”<sup>90</sup> HCFASS members adamantly supported African American equality. In an 1843 resolution, the five-member committee criticized prejudice based on skin color, stating, “that we do not believe any person who is so prejudiced against color as to refuse to eat, to walk or sit with colored persons can be a true Christian.”<sup>91</sup>

HCFASS members’ supported slaves seeking freedom, a dangerous opinion because assistance of runaway slaves was punishable by law. Noted in one of their

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<sup>88</sup> HCFASSR, 4 June 1841.

<sup>89</sup> HCFASSR, 31 May 1845.

<sup>90</sup> Acts 17.6, KJV.

<sup>91</sup> HCFASSR, 23 July 1843, 46.

entries, even women were imprisoned for giving assistance to black individuals running from slavery; however, such prison sentences did not intimidate HCFASS members.<sup>92</sup> During the 28 February 1846 meeting, the members discussed a proposed Kentucky bill that would allow that state's officials to arrest individuals aiding and abetting runaway slaves in any free state. Since the HCFASS women believed they fit this criterion, they declared themselves "ready to be confined in the jail and Penitentiary house of the commonwealth of the state of Kentucky, so soon as the legislature of that state shall issue a constitutional warrant for our seizure."<sup>93</sup>

The HCFASS's public encouragement of enslaved African Americans' to escape truly pushed the limit of female engagement in the public sphere and agency. Not only did HCFASS members send reports and addresses to the regional antislavery press, but they were also sent to non-abolitionist newspapers that could potentially expose their beliefs to a wider audience. Although publication of their work at a national level has yet to be found, these women risked the exposure. One of their boldest statements in favor of slaves seeking freedom was published in the *Indiana Courier* in 1848. The impact of the women abolitionists' sentiments was so strong that the publisher J.W. Grubbs prefaced their words with a personal disclaimer stating "we do not believe it right to hold out inducements to those persons held in slavery." Despite the disclaimer, Grubbs published the proceedings of the HCFASS meeting on page four of the 24 June 1848 edition. The Executive Committee did not mince words in expressing their commitment to slaves seeking freedom stating "we believe it to be right,--that it is the duty of all persons held as slaves, quietly to take their liberty whenever opportunity offers. We feel in duty bound

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<sup>92</sup> HCFASSR, 1 February 1845, 58.

<sup>93</sup> *FLA*, 18 March 1846, 4, col. 1.



to give “aid and comfort” to those fugitives who peaceably leave the land of whips and chains, and flee to a MONARCHY for protection, from Republican slavery.”<sup>94</sup>

From the beginning of the HCFASS, the members reiterated the importance of human rights for all Americans including African Americans and women. The HCFASS constitution justified rights for all peoples using both religious and governmental rationales. As a part of the resolutions written during the first meeting, the committee of five affirmed “that he who deprives [African Americans] of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is acting contrary to the commands of Him who created of one blood all the nations of the earth.”<sup>95</sup> Such wording successfully integrated their belief in Constitutional rights for all Americans with the Christian ethics apparent in antebellum America. HCFASS authors often combined elements of religion and law to justify human rights and women’s agency. In their first report from 1841, the Executive Committee defended immediate abolition by invoking both God and state:

Believing that all men were born equally free – that all nations of the earth are of the same blood – that the Universal Parent of all respects neither the person nor color of compassion and regard – that we should do unto all men as we could they should do unto us, and love our neighbor as ourselves – satisfied that we should not regard these important truths as mere speculative propositions, but that we should endeavor to make a practical application thereof in our conduct through life.<sup>96</sup>

This conjoining of governmental and religious rights demonstrates the women’s understanding of the need to appeal both spiritually and politically in order to propose constitutional abolition of slavery. A reiteration of human rights as a part of Constitutional law appears in resolutions crafted during an April 1842 meeting.

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<sup>94</sup> *Indiana Courier*, 24 June 1848, 1, col. 1 and 4, col. 1-2, (Document 4, 124).

<sup>95</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 5, (Document 1, 102).

<sup>96</sup> HCFASSR, 4 June 1841, 7.

Whereas the Government has for the last thirty years been so influenced and so controlled by slave-holding interests as almost entirely to exclude the passing of any measure of importance for the benefit of the Free States; and whereas, by the decision of the Supreme Court of the U. S. the liberty of free citizens are jeopardized and the constitutional rights of the States annulled, therefore

Resolve[d] - That such usurpations of political power and abridgement of Constitutional liberty if persisted in will eventually fan the latent spark and kindle the subterranean fires of disunion into unquenchable flame and has already made the wish for a dissolution, a venial one on the part of the free States.<sup>97</sup>

The foreshadowing of a civil war is mentioned several times throughout the society's records. Members never voiced support for such a separation because most of the membership was Quaker, and, therefore, anti-violence. Instead they warned that without governmental intervention, the human rights crisis caused by slavery could lead to war.

Defining rights as innate both spiritually and civically continued throughout the HCFASSR. In the 1846 annual report, during the war with Mexico, the Executive Committee juxtaposed war with slavery and peace with human rights:

In reflecting on the barbarous practice of resorting to arms to settle controversies between nations of men, all made of one blood, it appears to us indispens[a]bly necessary that all anti-slavery men and women should be thoroughly imbued with sentiments of peace, without which, we are firmly convinced, no one can consistently espouse the bondman's bleeding cause. For as it is impossible for slavery to exist without an unceasing warfare on the rights of man, so a sacred regard to his inalienable rights, naturally tends to promote the principles of peace.

By the June 1848 meeting, the executive committee specified the precedent for equal rights.

Where now is the spirit of "76" which declared taxation without representations to be unjust and oppressive,—that spirit which

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<sup>97</sup> HCFASSR, 7 April 1842, 29.

promulgated the doctrine that all men are created free and equal, endowed with inalienable rights, and capable of self government?<sup>98</sup>

Fighting for the rights of African Americans enlightened women of their own unequal state. From their first meeting, HCFASS members acknowledged the constrictions placed on women's equality, including their disenfranchisement "yet as free American women we claim the right of being heard on this subject, and that we should be under no other restraints than that of truth and justice in promoting our opinions concerning it."<sup>99</sup>

Repressive legal constraints on American females understandably expanded their fight for African American rights to women's rights. Women were disenfranchised and confined to marriages that converted each wife into "a *femme coverte*," writes historian Blanche Glassman Hersh, who must give "up her legal identity in marriage, as well as abandoning any claim to property or guardianship of her children in case of divorce or her husband's death."<sup>100</sup> Members extended these rights to all women, as reflected in their constitution where they invite "any female"<sup>101</sup> to become a member of the HCFASS. Their belief in rights went beyond participation in women's organizations. In an 1841 response to North Carolina Congressman Kenneth Rayner's 15 June 1841 senate speech, they argue:

As women of free republican America we believe the freedom of speech and the right of petition are sacredly guaranteed to us by our Government, and that liberty in this way to exert a moral influence is by the same authority and by the concurrent voice of nature and reason emphatically proclaimed to be our birthright, and that as intelligent and accountable beings it is our duty thus to act especially in regard to subjects of vital importance to the welfare of the country.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Indiana Courier*, 24 June 1848, 4, col. 1-2, (Document 4, 124).

<sup>99</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 6, (Document 1, 102).

<sup>100</sup> Hersh, 2.

<sup>101</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 4, (Document 1, 102).

<sup>102</sup> HCFASSR, 20 September 1841, 15, (Document 2, 109).

The HCFASS not only took a risk in declaring women's right to free speech, but they also reinforced their right to petition which contradicted many contemporary congressmen who considered only petitions signed by voters legitimate. In the same letter, the authors crafted a well-documented argument destroying Rayner's opinion that southern women would not participate in the antislavery movement due to their "modesty and propriety." The letter lists inhumane acts committed by female slaveholders in order to deconstruct the antebellum myth of femininity.

Members include the most illustrative demonstration of feminist sentiments in a letter to the men of Indiana. Published in the 22 December 1843 edition of the *Free Labor Advocate*, the HCFASS members eloquently incorporate their understanding of individual rights to expand the argument of human rights from slavery to women. The letter acknowledged the limited education available to most women, while simultaneously demonstrating their enterprising self-education. HCFASS members demanded more:

If you wish the nation to become wise and powerful, and to abound in good works, let more of your attention be directed to the education of females" because "such has been the system of female education that it has well nigh rendered us fit for naught else save the mere dredges and slaves of men, or only their playmates and toys.

Instead they wished to show men that woman "is possessed of faculties as susceptible of improvement as yourselves that she is as capable of being schooled in all that is high and holy, and endowed with capacities of appreciating that which lends to elevate & [e]nable the soul, as well as those who now claim to be her superiors."<sup>103</sup>

In addition, the ultimate agency in a democratic society must include the right to vote and actively participate in government. Without a doubt the members of HCFASS

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<sup>103</sup> *FLA*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 4-5 from a 2 December 1843 HCFASS meeting, (Document 3, 117).

desired universal suffrage, as demonstrated in an address to the men of the HCASS where they declared, “we would that we could aid you in sending men to our legislatures.”<sup>104</sup> Despite their legal limitations, they embraced the need for political action to eradicate slavery. “Our minds have become impressed with the great responsibility that rests upon us, both individually and collectively to do all we can, by legal and persuasive means.”<sup>105</sup> Because they embraced Constitutional change as the best means to eliminate slavery, political action was essential to the HCFASS members. From addresses and letters persuading men to vote for abolitionist candidates to petitions addressed to state, regional, and national political leaders, these women participated in grassroots politics because they understood that “as women of free republican America we believe the freedom of speech and the right of petition are sacredly guaranteed to us by our Government.”<sup>106</sup>

One of the best examples of their political awareness was in the previously mentioned 1843 letter to the men of Indiana. This letter illustrates the effort women made to educate themselves in history, politics, and rhetoric and thus became primed to join the public debate on political and social issues. In addition to quoting Alexander Pope, the authors of this letter chastised the Indiana government on its failures:

Where are now these beautiful canals which were promised should intersect the state in every direction? Have they been existing, and do they still exist only in the [brain] of some intriguing money speculator? Where are the hundreds and thousands of dollars, which we at the spinning wheel and loom, have toiled hard and long to assist our fathers, brothers and husbands in raising for the promotion of the work? Will you answer the question, or shall we listen for it in the hollow sound that is echoed back from the empty coffers of our bankrupt State?<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> HCFASSR, 1 July 1842, 35.

<sup>105</sup> HCFASSR, 4 June 1841, 9.

<sup>106</sup> HCFASSR, 20 September 1841, 16, (Document 2, 109).

<sup>107</sup> *FLA*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 3, (Document 3, 117).

Discussing governmental issues was in itself taboo for women, not to mention criticizing leaders in a public forum. If the December 1843 letter is compared to other HCFASS documents, the extreme tone of this letter might cause a reader to question whether it represents a personal agenda. However, if this were the case, finding that individual voice would be challenging. An HCFASS committee composed this letter, and unfortunately, as with most society documents sent for publication, the only names listed are the president and recording secretary.<sup>108</sup> According to the minutes of the December 1843 meeting, the attending members adopted the address to the men of Indiana before sending it to three antislavery newspapers; thus the group accepted the extreme and potentially scandalous tone of this letter.

Throughout the HCFASS record, the women continually voiced their knowledge about the political world. In addition to reading the *Congressional Globe*, the members of the HCFASS educated themselves about the annexation of Texas and Florida, the war with Mexico, and legislative issues in other states. In the last known HCFASS document, the authors appealed to the women of Kentucky that “though you have no voice in the councils of your state or the nation, you can have a powerful influence” on the subject of slavery during that state’s 1850 Constitutional Convention.<sup>109</sup> Instead of justifying their plea with the moral duty of women, the writers analyze the details of the proposed amendments. Henry Clay suggested that “the plan of emancipation must be slow, cautious and gradual in its operation; therefore, he thinks probably it will not be too hasty for all born after 1855 or 60 to be free.” to which the women quip “according to the same calculation, in all probability Kentucky would be a slave state as late as 1930 or 40. Talk

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<sup>108</sup> Maria Coffin was president and Drusilla Unthank was recording secretary.

<sup>109</sup> HCFASSR, 30 June 1849, 79, (Document 5, 129).

of making it a free state nearly a century hence!”<sup>110</sup> Regardless of their continual use of moral justifications for abolition, their collective voice is one of political action.

The HCFASS members also took issue with governmental corruption. Politicians publicly supporting a certain cause and then neglecting to commit their votes to it concerned these women. In an 1842 address to the men of the HCASS, the women expressed their desire to send legislators to Congress “who would irrespective of party or self interests legislate for our country, our whole country and nothing but our country.” Instead they found Congressmen and Senators to be “more partial to the forum than the committee room, more addicted to long speeches than the dispatch of business.”<sup>111</sup> During the war with Mexico, duplicitous actions continued to infect Congress. “We consider the conduct of those who acknowledged slavery to be a great moral and political evil,” resolved the members during an April 1848 meeting,

and yet vote for slaveholders, or pro-slavery men to fill important offices in the government, and consume the products of slavery (where free labor may be obtained) quite as inconsistent, and evil in its tendency, as that of those politicians who denounce the Mexican War as most unjust and wicked, and at the same time vote supplies of men and money for carrying it on.<sup>112</sup>

HCFASS women even accused specific legislators of playing politics on the subject of slavery. Henry Clay enraged abolitionists for his contradictory perspectives on slavery. As previously mentioned, the attempt by Indiana abolitionists to admonish him publicly for portraying himself as an antislavery politician, even though he owned slaves himself, incited the separation of the Indiana Yearly Meeting. In the letter to the women of Kentucky, HCFASS members noted that Clay was often called “the man of his age,”

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>111</sup> HCFASSR, 1 July 1842, 35.

<sup>112</sup> HCFASSR, 1 April 1848, 72.

even though he proposed archaic solutions to slavery. For the proposed amendments to the Kentucky Constitution in 1849, Clay supported the gradual abolition of slavery and colonization of freed black Americans in Africa. Prior to the deadline for manumission, Clay maintained that slaveholders should “have a right to sell, devise or remove [slaves] from the state and in the latter case without their offspring being entitled to the benefits of emancipation for which the system provides.” “And this is the philanthropy,” the HCFASS authors sneered, “of the ‘man of the age’.”<sup>113</sup>

Communicating the ideology of any one activist group must be contextualized in a contemporary perspective or its true impact is meaningless. With their first meeting in 1841, HCFASS joined a growing list of women’s societies that established themselves during the late 1830s and early 1840s. In her book, *Sister Societies*, Beth A. Salerno includes an extensive list of women’s societies across the United States.<sup>114</sup> Salerno found evidence of six women’s antislavery groups in Indiana in addition to HCFASS, three in Wayne County, one in Union County, and one in Hamilton County.<sup>115</sup> During its six-year publication, the *Free Labor Advocate* mentions eight Indiana female societies, while references to Indiana male societies are rare most likely because men favored political involvement. In addition to female antislavery societies, women appear in inserts about gender-inclusive county antislavery societies, free produce societies, and peace societies. Of all of the antislavery groups besides the HCFASS, only the Wayne County Female

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<sup>113</sup> HCFASSR, 30 June 1849, 81, (Document 5, 129). No extant copy of the published version was found.

<sup>114</sup> Salerno includes all of the female antislavery societies she encountered during her research; however, she clearly states that her lists are far from complete due to the difficulty in finding extant records and limited publication of FASS activities in some antislavery periodicals. Salerno lists two hundred thirty female antislavery societies. Salerno, 163-184. The 1 October 1842 edition of the *FLA* includes minutes from the Indiana Female Anti-slavery Society. According to these minutes the society was founded in 1841. Member names from HCFASS and WCFASS are included as committee members and officers. *FLA* includes the Constitution of the Cass County Female Anti-Slavery Society in its 17 October 1846 issue.

<sup>115</sup> Wayne County is directly west of Henry County, Union County is directly northwest of Henry County, and Hamilton County is directly north of Indianapolis.



Anti-Slavery Society (WCFASS) contributed multiple documents. From the constitutions, resolutions, and addresses published in the *Free Labor Advocate*, a regional comparison can be made. Comparing HCFASS to New England societies provides insight into similarities and differences according to region, class, and ideology. Juxtaposing HCFASS to regional societies demonstrates how HCFASS compare to their peers.

Two months prior to the formation of HCFASS, February 1841, women in Newport, Wayne County, Indiana established the Wayne County Female Anti-Slavery Society. Wayne County was somewhat more populated than Henry County in 1840, but maintained a rural, agricultural environment.<sup>116</sup> Wayne County differed in the fact that included two extremes in the antislavery debate, Richmond, the location of the Orthodox Indiana Yearly Meeting, and Newport, (now Fountain City), the home of abolitionist Levi Coffin. The *Philanthropist* published their constitutional preamble and resolutions. The first notable difference between HCFASS and WCFASS is the tones of their constitutional preambles. WCFASS specifically stressed the moral travesty of slavery and that “full, and correct information in relation to its injustice, its cruelties and complicated wickedness, is all that is necessary to induce the people to abolish this iniquitous institution.”<sup>117</sup> In fact, this group endorsed educating others about the moral evils of slavery through participation in antislavery societies as its sole transforming activity. The WCFASS reinforced that sentiment in “To the Professors of Christianity in the United States.” This eloquent address epitomizes to women’s literary abilities despite limited opportunities and education. A large portion of this document explains the history of

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<sup>116</sup> 1840 Census, *Indiana Gazetteer, or Topographical Dictionary of the State of Indiana* (Knightstown, IN: E. Chamberlain, 1850).

<sup>117</sup> *The Philanthropist*, 30 June 1841, 1 col. 3-4.

slavery and its uniquely cruel form in the United States, in addition to citing Deuteronomy 23:15, which forbids the return of escaped slaves to their masters. They recommend ending slavery through the efforts of Christian men and women spreading the word of the need for abolition.

It is by such means that all great and important reformations of abuses have been effected; for society can only act efficiently by means of individuals. . . Let the voice of justice and humanity be heard from every pulpit and gallery, and resound from the walls of every church and meeting place.<sup>118</sup>

Although WCFASS frequently mentioned the importance of education in swaying the American opinion of slavery, from its inception HCFASS members continually traversed beyond education to emphasize the need for constitutional change and the importance of women in persuading men to make the necessary electoral changes. This conviction propelled HCFASS to forms of action beyond those of most other women's societies. Their repeatedly professed belief in the female potential outside of the women's sphere eventually drew sharp criticism from other local antislavery supporters such as the editor of the *Indiana Courier*.

Not all societies in Indiana were as conservative as the WCFASS. Within the same county, the Newport Female Anti-Slavery Society voiced opinions similar to HCFASS. In her 1845 "Address to Females" presented to a female anti-slavery society in Newport, Indiana, Ann Reynolds cries "we ourselves suffer at the hand of oppression," being disenfranchised and restricted from public educational opportunities. Yet Reynolds recognized women's potential to influence voters' opinions and asked of her fellow abolitionists "let us exert that influence to induce all who have or may have the liberty of voting to spurn that false and impious philosophy, and endeavor to prevail on them the

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<sup>118</sup> *FLA*, 8 January 1842, 362.

vote on the side of liberty & right.”<sup>119</sup> The political nature of Reynold’s 1845 address demonstrates how the formation of the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Antislavery Friends in 1843 offered Quaker abolitionists more freedom to express their views.

The voices of other female Indiana societies give a less clear perspective of their views because they appear infrequently in print. Women in Cass County formed an antislavery society in 1846 and appear to be more conservative in their mission. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that Cass County did not host a Quaker monthly meeting.<sup>120</sup> As represented in their constitution, they claim their goal “to promote the abolition of Slavery, by moral and Christian efforts” and include the dissemination of antislavery literature and lectures as their main tactic.<sup>121</sup> On the other hand, the Westfield Female Antislavery Society in Hamilton County published a dynamic appeal “To the Voters of Indiana,” in which they ask the men of the state “will ye not then do your duty and give [black Americans] their rights as men and citizens of our professedly free state [?] We appeal to you to use your influence to cause a political change to take place that we would have devoted men to rule over us.”<sup>122</sup> Hamilton County hosted not only two Orthodox Monthly Meetings but also an Anti-Slavery Monthly meeting, potentially explaining the society’s liberal beliefs.<sup>123</sup>

Such beliefs illustrate the differences in expectations for accomplishing abolition even within proximate geographic areas. A reader must be realistic in interpreting such small representations of the opinion of female societies. By reading individual HCFASS documents, resolutions, or statements out of the context of the whole might lead one to

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<sup>119</sup> *FLA*, 22 March 1845, 1, col. 2-5.

<sup>120</sup> Heiss, xi.

<sup>121</sup> *FLA*, 17 October, 1846, 4, col. 4-5.

<sup>122</sup> *ASCFLA*, 8 July 1847, 2, col. 1-2.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, xi-xii.

believe that these women were also limiting themselves to a strictly moral crusade against slavery. Regardless of which society was committed to moral education and which to political action as the answer to slavery, the two perspectives competed and eventually led to a rift in the Indiana Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends.<sup>124</sup>

Although women's commitment to varying degrees of antislavery activism could seem at odds at times, in 1842 the WCFASS accepted the invitation of the HCFASS members "for holding a general convention of females at Economy on the 30th of 4th month next and appoint delegates to attend said meeting."<sup>125</sup> Although no evidence of an 30 April 1842 gathering exists, a meeting later that year of the Indiana Female Anti-Slavery Society included members from both the HCFASS and WCFASS. The two main points of this meeting were to illustrate the shortcomings of religious bodies that "manifest much hostility to antislavery society" and to commit themselves to purchase only free labor goods.<sup>126</sup> This uniting of somewhat ideologically differing minds was probably fueled by the impending schism in the IYM; however, no other published examples of the sentiments of the Indiana Female Anti-Slavery Society exist. This encounter reinforces the idea that the commitment of these women to the ultimate goal of abolition was more important than the specifics of how that goal was accomplished. The lack of similar meeting documentation is not surprising; once the focus of abolitionist men turned to politics, antislavery publications diminished their inclusion of women's efforts. Perhaps the Indiana women focused their attention on the Western Free Produce Association or the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society, both of which invited male and female members.

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<sup>124</sup> See pp. 28-29 for more on the IYM separation.

<sup>125</sup> *FLA*, 23 April 1842, 1, col. 3-5.

<sup>126</sup> *FLA*, 1 October 1842, 2, col. 3-4.

Comparing HCFASS to other local women's groups demonstrates the wide array of opinions on eradicating slavery among Indiana antislavery residents. When compared to regional and national societies, trends based on regional differences emerge. As stated earlier, most American antislavery women supported the free produce movement. Beth Salerno emphasizes that involvement in the free produce movement was a springboard for further activism because it could "fit into conventional female responsibilities or roles. By emphasizing the essentially moral nature of the battle against slavery, free-produce organizations helped to justify the formation of later female antislavery societies."<sup>127</sup> Elizabeth Chandler, well known for her poetry and column in the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, carried her support of abolition and free produce with her from Philadelphia to Michigan. In her personal correspondence Chandler mentions the difficulties in finding free produce in 1830s Michigan, often requesting her family to send her free labor goods. She was resourceful and found substitutes as seen in her "Honey Tea Cake" recipe included in the scholarly edition of her letters.<sup>128</sup> Even after local dry goods stores began carrying free labor merchandise, Chandler and her fellow free produce movement women apologized for the quality of items they sent to friends and family, but remained committed to the cause. "[Ann] wished me to apologize for the color of the ribband it being the best which we had in the store and she did not wish to go elsewhere to buy."<sup>129</sup>

Devotion to the free produce movement may have been the most universally embraced ideology within American female antislavery societies. In considering regional

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<sup>127</sup> Salerno, 17-18.

<sup>128</sup> Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, *Remember the Distance that Divides Us: The Family Letters of Philadelphia Quaker Abolitionist and Michigan Pioneer Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, 1830-1842*, ed. Marcia J. Heringa Mason (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 387.

<sup>129</sup> Chandler, 200.

comparisons, the differences in priorities of societies again begin to emerge. Several historians discuss antislavery activity in the Midwest although no specific societies are featured in their own publications.<sup>130</sup> However, some examples reinforce the connection between women and moral duty. In Jeffrey's discussion of women's motivation for committing to abolition, "ample evidence discloses those conscious, 'might and soul moving reasons,' as the women of Canton, Ohio, put it, that 'render it peculiarly incumbent on women to act in this cause.'"<sup>131</sup> But other Ohio women did not rely solely on their moral duty. Jeffery also mentions the president of the Cadiz Female Anti-Slavery Society in Ohio whose published article "annihilated" the pro-colonization speech of a local Presbyterian minister.<sup>132</sup> These examples reiterate the tendency of female antislavery societies to develop an ideological format unique to their geographical area and religious inclination.

When moving to an examination of national societies, the differences in approach by female abolitionists intensify. Societies on the east coast were strongly influenced by the demographics of their area. Female antislavery societies in Boston and Philadelphia included a diverse range of participants; leaders encouraged African American women to be involved. But just as the role of women and Christians as activists divided the AASS, many local women's antislavery groups found disputes regarding ideology impossible to overcome. Nancy A. Hewitt chronicles the dilemmas of organizing New York women in

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<sup>130</sup> Mary Van Vleck Garman, "Altered Tone of Expression: The Anti-slavery Rhetoric of Illinois Women, 1837-1847" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1989); McManus, Michael J., *Political Abolitionism in Wisconsin, 1840-1861* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1998); O'Dell, Richard F., "The Early Antislavery Movement in Ohio" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1948); Stephen Middleton, *Ohio and the Antislavery Activities of Attorney Salmon Portland Chase, 1830-1849* (New York: Garland Pub., 1990); Clayton Sumner Ellsworth, "Oberlin and the Anti-slavery Movement up to the Civil War" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1930); John R. McCarthy, "The Slavery Issue in Selected Colleges and Universities in Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana, 1840-1860" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1975).

<sup>131</sup> Jeffrey, 37.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 83. "Annihilated" is quoted from the works of lecturer Marius Robinson.

*Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872*. In Rochester, "women activists emerged in a community where the segregation of work and home, public and private life, and men's and women's spheres was incomplete," yet this environment proved to separate rather than bind women activists.

Three self-consciously competing networks of women activists followed three different paths . . . in each case, these distinctions separated women activists from each other more rigidly than distinctions in spheres separated them from male kith and kin.<sup>133</sup>

The Ladies New York City Anti-Slavery Society represents one of the specific paths taken by women who opposed division in national abolition activism. Amy Swerdlow investigated LNYCASS's seemingly antifeminist ideology in "Abolition's Conservative Sisters: The Ladies' New York City Anti-Slavery Societies, 1834-1840." Just as some women were realizing the abuse of their rights in the public sphere, others fought to maintain women's place outside of politics. Most women in the LNYCASS were from prosperous homes and attended mainly evangelical churches. But such class distinctions are only part of an explanation for their desire to avoid the public sphere. Swerdlow believes "the answer lies in the evangelical movement's high esteem for women as dispensers of morality, salvation and benevolence and the evangelical women's own identification with the needs of her men and her class." Such women were honored to have been bestowed the role of moral guardians. Ironically, according to Swerdlow, after the 1840 division in the AASS, no further record of the LNYCASS exists, so perhaps they, too, succumbed to the pressure of disparate ideology. In comparison to HCFASS, the LNYCASS demonstrates the importance role religious beliefs played in society opinion. As evangelicals, the conservative nature of the Second

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<sup>133</sup> Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 23.

Great Awakening directly influenced their antislavery ideology. HCFASS women, on the other hand, embraced their Quaker anti-slavery upbringing; yet found the need to surpass the conservative nature of the Orthodox Meeting to solicit political change.

The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society successfully maintained itself until the mid-1850s. Although several influential members became highly active in the burgeoning women's movement, the group, according to historian Jean R. Soderlund, was "ill-prepared to spearhead a new movement." Their ability to maintain themselves as an abolitionist force, however, may appear to contemporary readers as a step backwards. Throughout the 1830s the PFASS demonstrated its political commitment by canvassing petitions and encouraging steps to eliminate prejudice against Philadelphia's black community. After allowing the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery society to organize their meetings and experiencing the burning of Philadelphia Hall in 1838, the dynamic within the female society changed. Soderlund believes due to "more rigid ideological positions in the abolitionist movement, the society followed a more narrow path." This choice did not necessarily limit their influence. Despite their dwindling membership, "the Philadelphia leaders kept control of their organization and its ideology and at the same time raised significant sums of money, thereby solidifying their position within the larger abolitionist crusade."<sup>134</sup> PFASS provides an interesting comparison to HCFASS. Although geographically and socio-economically, the two locations could not be more different, they both illustrate the potential for abolitionist women to rise above outside influences, whether they be religion, society, or men, in order to pursue a politically minded abolitionist agenda within the public sphere.

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<sup>134</sup> Jean R. Soderlund, "The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. by Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 87.



Perhaps Indiana benefited from its burgeoning population during this period. Most of the women in HCFASS came to Indiana during the 1820s and 30s; thus the profound social distinctions found in the East had yet to establish themselves. The separation they encountered within the IYM was not based on class, according to Thomas Hamm. While investigating the demographics of two Henry County Quaker communities after the IYM separation, he found “that among these Friends, the decision to become an abolitionist was not a function of wealth or property, Anti-Slavery Friends were a cross section of their communities.”<sup>135</sup> Eventually, in 1857, the IYM healed the schism within its congregation. Other divisions over slavery throughout the country did not mend so easily, however, and likely became disadvantageous to the women’s movement.

One hundred and nine women in 1841 signed an abolitionist constitution when they established the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society. Despite warnings from religious leaders a year earlier, these women realized that their commitment to eradicate slavery extended beyond societal expectations. Through the next eight years they rallied men and women to engage in activity that demonstrated their disgust with slavery such as purchasing free labor produce, voting for abolitionist candidates, and embracing African Americans as equals. The divisions in religious and antislavery organizations in Henry County mirror other schisms throughout the U.S. as the debate on slavery intensified. HCFASS survived the challenges facing women’s societies in the 1840s only to quietly slip away after 1849. In her article “Moral Champions and Public Pathfinders,” Peggy Brase Seigel observes that some of these women followed “migration patterns that continually pushed west,” finding former HCFASS members in Kansas and Iowa in the

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<sup>135</sup> Hamm, “Moral Choices,” 154.

mid-1850s.<sup>136</sup> Some may have joined the Women's Rights Association of Indiana, but exactly which women made that transition is unknown since the only names included in the HCFASS after the first meeting are those of elected leaders and committee members. Regardless of where they went after the HCFASS disbanded, they carried with them the skills of organization and eloquence gained during the HCFASS.

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<sup>136</sup> Peggy Brase Seigel, "Moral Champions and Public Pathfinders: Antebellum Quaker Women in East central Indiana," *Quaker History* 81 (1992): 98.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “Appearing Before the Public in Their Own Defense”

When in the course of human events it occurs that the rights and privileges of Females in a civilized and professedly Christian nation are called in question, and the conduct of those who exercise such rights assailed in the Legislative halls, the entertaining of a decent self-respect as well as a high regard for those inestimable privileges is deemed a sufficient apology for their appearing before the public in their own defence. HCFASS Record, 20 September 1841, p. 16.

Women’s support of abolitionism in Antebellum America demonstrates their desire to become active participants in the contemporary political debate. The “Cult of True Womanhood” defined women’s place in antebellum society. “True women” according to historian Stanley Harrold “surpassed men in the Christian virtues of piety, sexual purity, domesticity, and submissiveness.”<sup>137</sup> Although their position within “True Womanhood,” provided them a more respectable situation than men, the cult of domesticity alienated women from the public sphere of influence.<sup>138</sup> Women activists recognized this precarious juxtaposition and thus found rhetorical means to mitigate their position. Identifying their role as moral guardians enabled them to construct logical arguments that connected women’s moral responsibility to their need to correct greater injustices in the world. Some female antislavery societies such as HCFASS successfully

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<sup>137</sup> Harrold, 41. Barbara Welter’s article “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860” was the first analytic investigation of this social phenomenon. She states, “authors who addressed themselves to the subject of women in the mid-nineteenth century used this phrase as frequently as writers on religion mentioned God. Neither group felt it necessary to define their favorite terms; they simply assumed—with some justification—that readers would intuitively understand exactly what they meant.” Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18(Summer 1966): 151.

<sup>138</sup> Jacqueline Bacon, 112-13.

intersected the language of morality and the rhetoric of politics to find a means to enter the public forum and demonstrate agency.

Jacqueline Bacon demonstrates the necessity of this juxtaposition in *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment, and Abolition* by positing that white female abolitionists “deployed traditional notions associated with True Womanhood in order to authorize their discourse in terms of the dominant group’s norms and assumptions.”<sup>139</sup> Using muted group theory, in which marginalized groups must re-encode their language in order to be understood by the dominant group, Bacon explains how and why white abolitionist women incorporated the language of their own oppression to validate their antislavery argument.<sup>140</sup> She finds many of the devices used by white abolitionist women problematic; however, because they take advantage of their white privilege while “ignoring the particular experiences of people of color.”<sup>141</sup> Bacon’s argument is incorrect when uniformly applied to all white abolitionist women especially since white female abolitionists did not all avoid or mitigate referencing specific experiences of slaves and free Black Americans. In fact, several reviewers of her book take issue with her narrowly limited focus on rhetoric without supplying a full historical context.<sup>142</sup> The difficulty in conducting theoretical analysis without providing the broader picture of women’s lives is that the focus of the study tends to analyze the women based upon one aspect of their lives; in the case of Bacon, this would be their marginalization

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 112-13.

<sup>140</sup> For more on muted group theory see Shirley Ardener, ed. *Defining Females: The Nature of Women in Society*. New York: Halsted Press, 1978.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 124, 133.

<sup>142</sup> For reviews of Bacon’s *Humblest* see Nina Baym, *American Historical Review* 108 (2003): 1453-1454; Kris Fresonke, *Journal of American History* 90 (2004): 1446; Margaret M. R. Kellow, *Journal of the Early Republic* 23(2003): 301-305; Alison M. Parker, *Journal of Southern History* 70(2004): 428-429.

by the dominant white male society.<sup>143</sup> If women were fighting against slavery because it defiled their accepted way of life, a lifestyle Bacon believes they presumed African Americans would embrace once freed, then her argument assumes that all women abolitionists believed free black women would parallel their domestic place in American society. This assumption is obviously precarious since some white abolitionists feared black integration.<sup>144</sup> In fact, according to Carol Berkin, the domestic control imbedded in early nineteenth-century social conventions empowered women to make decisions for their families, an opportunity rarely experienced by females during the eighteenth century.<sup>145</sup> Opening this realm to African American women meant giving them authority they previously lacked, an unacceptable social shift for many white women, even those who were abolitionists.

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell interprets antebellum women's rhetorical style as the underpinnings of the women's rights movement. Although Campbell approaches the specific elements of rhetoric in similar terms as Bacon does, she connects this "feminine style" to women's experiences as craftspersons. Women's education in the skills of domesticity was "craft-related" and thus "cannot be expressed in universal laws . . . such discourse, therefore," writes Campbell, "will be personal in tone, structured inductively, invite audience participation, address audience members as peers, and create identification with the experiences of the audience and those described by the

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<sup>143</sup> Nina Baym in her review makes a valid point that the white women Bacon assessed do not neatly fit into the same category of marginalization as African American men and women. This could be the reason for Bacon's harsher criticism of white women because she is skewing the historical context of women to make them fit into the marginalized situation of Antebellum African Americans.

<sup>144</sup> Harrold, 54-56.

<sup>145</sup> Carol Berkin, "It Was I Who Did It: Women and the American Revolution," presentation given the Teaching American History Annual Project Directors' Meeting, 18 October 2007, New Orleans, LA.

speaker.”<sup>146</sup> Through these tactics, antebellum women expanded their involvement in philanthropy to include activism against slavery and its corruption of American society. Where Bacon and Campbell illustrate how the general construction of “feminine style” allowed women to express themselves publicly in eastern women’s societies, I hope to extend this argument in demonstrating not only the use of “feminine style” within a women’s antislavery society outside of New England, but also, and more specifically, as directed to specific audiences. In comparison to Bacon’s strictly rhetorical analysis, I will explore the topics these women presented when writing to men and women and the tactics they used in arguing those topics.

In order to address an audience successfully, HCFASS members needed to define themselves. Occasionally, in addresses or letters directed to particular people or groups, the authors seem to succumb to societal convention. Justifying their advice to men and demonstrating their role in the public world are common inclusions, but the rhetorical example these women set throughout their writings illustrates a savvy ability to create the impression of supporting their arguments through moral reasoning, which was acceptable for women, while actually reinforcing their argument with political and historical justifications.

From the beginning of their prolific careers, HCFASS writers continually incorporated the subtle balance between women’s accepted perspective and their activist concerns. Their constitutional preamble, beginning “whereas among the causes of human wretchedness, suffering and moral degradation, slavery has stood preeminently conspicuous in these United States,” evokes a moral tone similar to the constitutions of many female antislavery societies. Interestingly their argument includes the context of

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<sup>146</sup> Campbell, 13.

morality but does not rely on morality for justification. By the end of the same paragraph the authors advance their argument by claiming that slavery “has rendered tenure by which we of the free states hold the enjoyment of those inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which lay at the very foundation of our Government, extremely frail and uncertain.”<sup>147</sup> This juxtaposition not only universalizes the responsibility for morality, but also demonstrates their belief in women’s equality with men as citizens, a radical idea for the time.

Alisse Portnoy in her book *Their Right to Speak: Women’s Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* praises women’s ability to recognize the need for governmental change in earlier petition appeals on behalf of American Indians and slaves, stating “this instance of early national political intervention also illustrates more broadly the ways people transcend what French philosopher Michel Foucault calls rules of discourse: who can speak on what topics under which circumstances.”<sup>148</sup> Although women’s antislavery arguments often begin with moral justification and then move to a constitutional or legislative one, the HCFASS writers demonstrate their willingness to place their support behind the need for constitutional change in the first set of resolutions:

Resolved – That it is our duty to endeavor by all reasonable means to persuade our fathers, husbands and brothers to make use of the their elective franchise to place men in office who will remove these evils by the introduction of righteous and just laws into the civil code of our country.<sup>149</sup>

As established in the comparisons with other female societies in Chapter One, the HCFASS boldly argued for abolition. Although these women were not physically

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<sup>147</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 1, (Document 1, 102).

<sup>148</sup> Portnoy, 55.

<sup>149</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 5, (Document 1, 102).

attacked, as were female abolitionists in Philadelphia, they were publicly criticized and often disowned by their religious community.

So why were these women willing to place themselves in such a difficult position? Acknowledging their limited influence on political action, these abolitionist women argued adamantly for equal rights not only as a means of universal suffrage but also as recognition of racial equality. Not only did acknowledging women's rights provide a means to suffrage, but it also, according to Campbell, gave women "inclusion in the cultural values proclaiming that individuals had inalienable rights because they were persons, that it was government's function to protect those rights, and that to do so, government had to rest on the consent of the governed, expressed through the ballot."<sup>150</sup> Regardless of their mindset or their future endeavors, the HCFASS members did their best to convince both men and women in the U.S. of need for abolition.

Although HCFASS members used many of the same rhetorical devices regardless of the audience, the format of each of their addresses demonstrated an insightful consciousness of their listeners and readers. Since they often intentionally directed addresses, memorials, and petitions to male, female, individual, or unidentified audiences, finding common ground to evaluate their understanding of audience is best reflected in gender. In order to best assess the ability of the HCFASS authors to write for a particular audience, this chapter compares and contrasts the society's addresses written directly to male with those to female readers. Within this comparison, analytical examples illustrate arguments used with particular audiences and how they then used specific rhetorical means to reach them.

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<sup>150</sup> Campbell, Vol. II, xi.



Antebellum women found themselves in a precarious position when they considered publicly voicing their opinion because few forums existed for such activity by women. Several religious organizations, such as the Society of Friends, incorporated democratic structures that allowed women more influence and voice within their religious world.<sup>151</sup> Beyond those few religious bodies, American society relegated the female voice to discussions with other women. The desire to convince an entire nation of the need for change forced abolitionist women to break the societal boundaries of the women's sphere. For the HCFASS, crossing into the public sphere propelled them into a world of political rhetoric in which they became fairly adept. Their first step in mastering public rhetoric was to admit the separation of women and men's roles in society.

Members of this society willingly exposed the limitations of women's sphere as they blatantly stated their views on rights, abolition, and politics. For example, arguments for women's education appear several times in HCFASS documents. In a December 1843 "Address to the Men of Indiana" they begin with a positive assumption about the possibilities for educating women:

"we are aware that we live in an age of improvement—an age in which light and knowledge are advancing with giant steps; and we feel comforted with the hope, that among the many improvements that are now going forward, the great importance of female education will not be overlooked."<sup>152</sup>

The positive tone of the letter quickly shifts as the members of the society decry their lack of education but nevertheless find it their "duty to emerge from that seclusion which an erroneous system of education has [illegible] upon us."

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<sup>151</sup> Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 24.

<sup>152</sup> HCFASSR, *Free Labor Advocate*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 4-5. From the 2 December 1843 HCFASS meeting, (Document 3, 117).

The strident tone of this letter is telling for several reasons. First, the authors demonstrate their belief that women are equally responsible for America's success by telling their male readers "if you wish the nation to become wise and powerful, and to abound in good works, let more of your attention be directed to the education of females." Second, in taking such a bold stand on the importance of women's education, their opinion does not simply address the inadequacies of the educational system, but publicly justifies equal rights for women. As these women continue to decry their forced state of ignorance, they demand that men "lift the veil of prejudice" through which they have previously viewed women and realize that women are "endowed with capacities of appreciating that which [t]ends to elevate and [e]nable the soul as well as those who now claim to be her superiors." The final component of their argument blames men for women's subordinate position because "such has been the system of female education that it has well nigh rendered us fit for naught else save the mere dredges and slaves of men or only their playmates and toys." Incorporating this strong metaphor in reference to the ways in which men perceive women would have been considered scandalous to many; yet, the *Free Labor Advocate* published this letter. These three perspectives on women illustrate arguments frequently included in their HCFASS's addresses to male audiences. Their arguments serve as starting points for investigating how HCFASS women used rhetoric to address these issues, and how their choices resonate in the context of the antislavery debate.

HCFASS frequently justified women's participation in American government as necessary for the success of the United States. Throughout their publicly addressed documents, these women present this point in two fashions: first, they reiterate their right

as citizens to influence politics; and second, they reinforce women's historical impact on governmental systems. HCFASS members not only demonstrated women's ability to recognize governmental problems that were leading to difficulties in the country but also connected themselves to providing a solution. Although Bacon does not cover any usage of American documents in her assessment of white women abolitionists, she reinforces that "as the Bible was an authoritative text of American religious tradition, the Declaration of Independence was often elevated in nineteenth-century rhetoric to a religious significance in mythologizing the founding of America, idealizing the creation of a completely new nation dedicated to liberty and equality."<sup>153</sup> In order to reinforce their role in the maintenance of a constitutionally sound country, HCFASS mirrored the structure of American governmental documents and referenced governmental figures and legislative actions to serve both as symbol and evidence against slavery.

One of the more obvious uses of historical documents comes in the letter to Congressman Kenneth Rayner of North Carolina. Beginning "when in the course of human events it occurs. . ." their deconstruction of Congressman Rayner's speech works because they reference the Declaration of Independence, the document that stands as the basis for the existence of the United States. In this fashion the women immediately demonstrate that they and Congressman Rayner are following the same constitutional rules, thus creating an even rhetorical playing field. As they continue their introduction, the authors also include additional language from the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights such as "freedom of speech," "right of petition," and "civilized nation."<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Bacon, 84–85.

<sup>154</sup> HCFASSR, 20 September 1841, 16, (Document 2, 109).

This language frames their argument in such a way that opposing it would be considered blasphemous for any American citizen, much less a legislator.

Another phrase used by the women and important to the judicial branch of the government is “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” In a 1 July 1842 letter to the men of the Henry County Anti-Slavery Society, the HCFASS members utilize this recognizable construction to convince their fellow abolitionists to vote for Liberty Party candidates; “we would that we could aid you in sending men to our legislatures who would irrespective of party or self interests legislate for our country, our whole country and nothing but our country.”<sup>155</sup> Use of this phrase structure not only demonstrates the women’s knowledge of the judicial tradition behind this oath, but the parallel structure of the words truth and country also calls into question the “truth” in the actions of many antebellum legislators. As mentioned in the previous chapter, HCFASS women often called attention to political corruption both at the state and national levels.

In order to solidify women’s essential role in the health of the county, the HCFASS members also provide examples of women from ancient history who capably influenced government by their actions. Initially the authors relied on biblical figures to justify the political strength of women. Women such as Miriam, a leader of ancient Israel, Deborah, a prophetess who delivered a nation from its enemies, and Esther, a queen who saved the Jews from destruction by petitioning her king, provide examples in which God supports women’s power. A contemporary interpretation might minimize the impact of utilizing biblical references because this justification would be expected of women. The HCFASS members most likely use these women as a means to demonstrate their belief that God supports the actions of women in maintaining a correctly functioning

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<sup>155</sup> HCFASSR, 1 July 1842, 35.

government. This connection to Christianity's approval of women also subtly deconstructs American society's use of Christian theology to justify women's subservient place. Beyond the biblical references, HCFASS authors also remind readers that

Rome was once saved by female virtue, by the interposition of Valaria, sister of the famous Valerius Poplicola; the women joining their efforts wrought upon the feelings and sensibilities of Rome's

inevitable enemy and ultimately [a]ffected that which all Rome's ministers of religion had failed to accomplish.<sup>156</sup>

The inclusion of a non-biblical reference is important. Female authors and speakers thus reiterated the importance of women in making social change in the United States.<sup>157</sup> Most authors prior to the HCFASS authors of this document, however, relied on biblical references to justify women's activism. Incorporating a non-biblical reference was bold, demonstrating not only the women's awareness of multiple levels of justification for their actions especially when appealing to men but also their familiarity with non-biblical texts and their self-education. In addition, using Roman examples emulates contemporary authors use of classical figures in celebration of America's new republic.

HCFASS members were not alone in making connections to women's rights. During the antebellum period, many women began to find their voice which influenced not only abolitionist and antislavery arguments but also lead them through a learning curve for defining their argument for women's rights. In her documentary edition, *Women's Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement 1830 – 1870*, Kathryn Kish Sklar reiterates that "the emergence of an autonomous women's rights movement from

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<sup>156</sup> HCFASSR, 20 September 1841, 18, (Document 2, 109). According to Roman mythology, Valeria, the sister of Valerina Publicola, encouraged Veturia, Marcius Coriolanus' mother, Volumnia, Coriolanus' mother, and other Roman matrons to go to his camp to convince him to halt his attacks on Rome, which he did. (Coriolanus had been impeached from his civic crown due to his unfair treatment of the commons after which he joined the Volscians to fight against Rome). William Smith, ed. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1867), 352-3, 1215.

<sup>157</sup> Campbell, 17.

the struggle against slavery was not inevitable,” citing the absence of a women’s movement in Britain despite intense antislavery activism among British women.<sup>158</sup> Sklar describes the importance of antislavery activists such as Angelina Grimké, Sarah Grimké, and William Lloyd Garrison in accelerating the move towards women’s rights; however, allusions to innate or constitutionally sanctioned rights for women in HCFASS documents demonstrates that the call for equality did not lie solely in the east.<sup>159</sup> The burgeoning awareness of such rights activism is reinforced through HCFASS members’ appeals to men. Two rights-related topics often incorporated into HCFASS documents are the need for women to be educated and the desire of women to be active in the political process. Their demand for education, previously mentioned in this chapter, appears several times in these documents.

HCFASS reinforced its commitment to women’s education by including the goal of “circulating correct information”<sup>160</sup> about abolition in its constitution and spending society money on antislavery tracts and newspapers that were meant to be shared with the members and others. The society members frequently supported assisting the education of African Americans in their writings. So the demand for women’s education in an 1843 address to the men of Indiana is not surprising. The irony of these women’s demand for education was a clear demonstration that they were literate, self-educated individuals. One device used to demonstrate this irony and convince men of women’s potential was to make allusions to American leaders and the governmental process, which demonstrated that they educated themselves regardless of formal educational opportunities. Such items not only serve as example but also prove that despite their supposed lack of education,

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<sup>158</sup> Sklar, 2.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 1 – 72.

<sup>160</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 2, (Document 1, 102).

these women are well aware of governmental and/or political history and thus informed, useful citizens.

Beyond awareness of congressmen who supported abolition such as Joshua R. Giddings and John Q. Adams, HCFASS members demonstrate their understanding of political process by sending petitions to Congress. Throughout their existence, they petitioned state and national officials to decline the admission of Florida as a slave state, repeal the bond law for African Americans entering Indiana and overturn a Kentucky law against “aiding, abetting, harboring, concealing, or assisting any slave, or slaves” belonging to residents of Kentucky.<sup>161</sup> On 22 August 1842, the society members assigned a committee to send a petition to Congress via Congressman Joshua R. Giddings on the annexation of Texas. Although the petition itself is yet to be found, one of the resolutions composed during that meeting gives a strong indication of the tone of the letter. HCFASS authors believed “the annexation of Texas into this Union is calculated to strengthen and perpetuate the system of slavery and will tend to build up the aristocracy of the south and break down the free states of the North.”<sup>162</sup> In addition to sending petitions to and voicing praise for current national leaders, the women drew upon iconic American leaders such as Benjamin Franklin to contextualize the nature of their argument. As part of the previously mentioned letter decrying women’s lack of educational opportunities, they continue to criticize men’s political missteps, even in the state government. After berating Indiana leaders for allowing the state to approach bankruptcy, the HCFASS members invoke Franklin,

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<sup>161</sup> HCFASSR, 22 July 1842, 42; HCFASSR, 12 November 1841, 24; *FLA*, 18 March 1846, 4, col. 1.

<sup>162</sup> HCFASSR, 22 July 1842, 42.

oh! Franklin! shade of the illustrious dead! wilt thou not visit this people, with an outpouring of thy spirit? and teach them how to use, and not abuse their means of rendering the people happy and comfortable?<sup>163</sup>

This reference to Franklin is one of three included in HCFASS documents. This inclusion illustrates not only their awareness of political history, but also their understanding of how influential Franklin was in the social religion of America.

An even bolder step by HCFASS authors in demanding rights for women was their desire for political influence through suffrage. Throughout these documents, the writers reiterate that females are denied suffrage, yet their tone and sentence structure demonstrates that the desire to vote is ever present. In their first address to men, the second paragraph begins “altho we are deprived of the privilege of advancing in a direct manner the establishing politically of universal justice” which mirrors their Constitution. These inclusions illuminate the mindset of the HCFASS. In one sense the women are reinforcing their mitigated position as women, which they often do in addresses to men as a justification for their public voice and, perhaps, to those opposed to women’s involvement in the public forum. However, the women also illustrate their political agency through several examples in the same address. First, the authors identify voting as a privilege, a word they previously used in association with women’s rights in the Congressman Rayner address. Later in the same address to the men of the HCASS, they state “we would that we could aid you in sending men to our legislatures who would irrespective of party or self interests legislate for our county;” this illustrates their desire to vote. Finally, and more subtly, they use parallel structure to compare their dilemma as “voteless” citizens with the men’s situation of limited power as abolitionists by reminding them

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<sup>163</sup> *FLA*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 5, (Document 3, 117).



altho' you may seem to stand as a poor despised class remember that there have been others who have been regarded by their countrymen as the destroyers of the healthful policy of the nation and have yet been found the advocates of that system of policy which if practically carried out would save the nation from ruin.<sup>164</sup>

In rallying the men thus, the HCFASS women almost seem to be rallying themselves as justified in their quest for political voice.

Despite being denied suffrage, authors of HCFASS documents reference the fact that women demonstrate their political agency by influencing men's votes. To justify their public demonstration for abolition, an 1843 report observes that non-abolitionist women who are politically significant as "female Whigs (if we may so call them) were not thought out of place when parading the country to promote the election of a slave holder." The other point of note in this statement is the fact that a political party is applied to these females. This is one of several instances where such a connection is made. During a letter to the editor J.W. Grubbs of the *Indiana Courier* criticizing him for superimposing conflicts between Whig and Liberty party members on the HCFASS and Edinburgh women, the authors juxtapose the fact that women are not members of political parties, yet they might be interested in the prospect in saying

for the women of Henry County have not set up for themselves in politics, and if they had the women of Edinburgh have not, and probably many of them have never even so much as heard of the two great conflicting political parties of our country, and hence we see no excuse according to this own theory, for refusing to publish that article, for it says not one word about politics.<sup>165</sup>

If the HCFASS authors are subtle or apologetic for these two references to women in politics, in their letter to Congressman Rayner, they are not. Again focusing on women

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<sup>164</sup> HCFASSR, 1 July 1842, 33.

<sup>165</sup> *FLA*, vol. 6 no. 36, 1 July 1847, 1, col. 1.

who are pro-slavery, they describe how southern women, who Rayner attributes with “modesty and propriety”

are much attached to slavery and for that cause and for that alone it is evident they will not adopt the course which has been taken by some of their sex at the North in pleading for the liberation of their brethren and sisters in bonds. That this is the fact we argue from the circumstance of the women of the two great political parties which are both completely devoted to slavery taking such an active part in the late electioneering campaign without a hint from him or any other person who is a stickler for either of those parties that Modesty or Propriety was, in that case, the least degree sacrificed.<sup>166</sup>

The challenge to such descriptions is, in this case, the negative connotation. Perhaps, use of this specific assignment may be justified in two ways. First, the writers of HCFASS documents often align politics with the negative behavior in men, so in this case the women’s involvement in politics aligns them with the debased sense of the politicking of men. Second, the women are not condemning the idea of women being a part of a political party, but that the women of the South are part of the wrong political party. If the women were petitioning for an antislavery party, such political action would be supported by HCFASS as demonstrated in their letter to the men of Indiana on 1 July 1842. This interpretation of political action initiates the next rhetorical argument used by the HCFASS authors, the fact that many problems in contemporary society are brought on by men.

Throughout the Rayner letter, the authors demonstrate Congressman Rayner’s attempts to compare Northern abolitionist women who petition Congress for an end to slavery to Southern women whose “modesty and propriety” would keep them from such

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<sup>166</sup> HCFASSR, 19.

political ventures. Near the end of the letter, however, is another example of an ironic layering of men's and women's assigned roles. Quoting Congressman Rayner:

That women have no business to be interfering where men are contending for empire and should never mingle in such political strifes as men are frequently contending for as observed we freely admit, but we claim the right to soothe and allay the stormy and angry passions of men, which is conceded to be within our proper sphere, and to these we may add those of an avaricious, inhuman, cruel and ambitious character and then we will take him at his word.<sup>167</sup>

In this sentence the women recognize that government/politics is the exclusive realm of men and, therefore, women should not participate. A closer reading illustrates that the authors are not necessarily withdrawing from all politics and government. In this case government is defined as “men contending for empire” which could be read as a connection to war, and for these women, the majority of them Quakers, war would be defined as sin. Politics is also presented conditionally, a “political strife” in the context of politicking, where the game of politics becomes more intriguing to participants than the national change they hope to make. Of course, women would not position themselves as aggressors either in war or in political confrontation. This reading intensifies the irony of this sentence. In contrast to imperialistic and politically confrontational men, the women humble themselves identifying their “proper sphere.” The effect of this parallel justifies the incredibly harsh words used to describe the congressman.

Moreover, to bolster the stratified gender spheres of antebellum America, men needed to acknowledge some of their own shortcomings in order to justify the need for women's moral leadership. One of these concessions was to define themselves as “violent, lustful, and competitive;” Campbell states, “[man's] place was public sphere,

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<sup>167</sup> *HCFASSR*, 20 August 1841, 22.

encompassing all that involved the mechanical, political and monetary.”<sup>168</sup> Even Congressman Rayner mentions the need for women to “soothe the angry passions of men.” As mentioned in the first chapter, the HCFASS authors often acknowledge governmental shortcomings and corruption due to men’s eagerness to argue for an issue on the congressional floor but less willing to reinforce their argument with their vote. Bacon claims antislavery women would not directly accuse men; however, HCFASS women are not afraid to assess governmental shortcomings and directly blame leaders at fault.<sup>169</sup> These judgments include not only men in the national government but also leadership at the state level. In the December 1843 address on woman’s education as an illustration of their self-education, Maria Coffin and Drusilla Unthank chastise Indiana’s government for speculating with funds borrowed for building canal infrastructure:

Where are now these beautiful canals which were promised should intersect the state in every direction? Have they been existing, and do they still exist only in the br[ai]n of some intriguing money speculator? Where are the hundreds and thousands of dollars, which we at the spinning wheel and loom, have toiled hard and long to assist our fathers, brothers and husbands in raising for the promotion of the work? Will you answer the question, or shall we listen for it in the hollow sound that is echoed back from the empty coffers of our bankrupt State?

Through this criticism, the women not only demonstrate the ways in which men’s politicking can lead to devastating results, but they also include women as part of the affected citizenship in this debacle. Although women are denied the right to vote, even shunned from the public sphere, men continually expected women to influence family and friends to gain their desired political outcome. As mentioned earlier, politicians in the

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<sup>168</sup> Campbell, vol. II, xi.

<sup>169</sup> Bacon, 151.

South relied on women to sway male family members to vote for pro-slavery candidates. In the Indiana example, women were actually encouraged to participate in fundraising for state infrastructure. Expecting constituents' support, their toil without any means of real influence, reiterates the subjugated position of women during the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In considering men as the standard bearers of social constructs, the Rayner letter demonstrates another example of rhetorical juxtaposition. Often when illustrating their opinion, the women will use a person's own words against him/herself. In the case of Rayner, in describing why women should not be involved in government, he states that "he would only say that those who knew him well knew [t]hat he would be the last man upon earth who would say anything against the Female portion of creation." Using this comment as a springboard, the women then capture Rayner's true spirit in condemning women's behavior as he defends the reason "why minister[s] were turned out and put into office by the Dutchess [sic] of Cleveland or Nell Gwin, the Revolution of Paris and all the horrid butcheries, disaster which resulted from it proceed mainly from the influence of women." The women then seal the irony in one statement: "He would be the last man upon earth who would say anything against the Female portion of creation."<sup>170</sup> Their acknowledgement of irony within another individual's writing confirms the level of self-education experienced by HCFASS women. Accentuating a statement that is misogynistic is one level of analysis; demonstrating the way in which that statement contradicts a previous utterance by the same person demonstrates an understanding of

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<sup>170</sup> HCFASS, 20 September 1841, 17, (Document 2, 109).

rhetoric that assisted in propelling antebellum women from “a little behind the scene in the great political drama”<sup>171</sup> closer to the main stage.

In addition to directing writing to male audiences, HCFASS women also addressed cohort females. HCFASS authors tailored their addresses and reports to women, as leaders read every document to society meeting attendees. Beyond the connection between the writers and their associate members, HCFASS authors addressed several documents to specific groups of women outside of the HCFASS. These documents demonstrate the deliberate use of specific techniques and topics to illustrate these women’s understanding of their audience. This analysis will consider documents specifically addressed to women and items presented during meetings but not submitted for publication. One of the most representative women-focused HCFASS writings is the last entry transcribed in their records, an address published in an 1849 edition of the *Cincinnati Weekly Herald*. In this document the HCFASS women appeal to the women living in the slave state Kentucky, as the state prepared to convene a Constitutional congress.<sup>172</sup> The opening of this correspondence perhaps best illustrates the main devices used by the authors to appeal to women:

Sisters: United by ties of nature as well as by those of national character in one common sisterhood we have ventured to approach you . . . the welfare of the country is of necessity of the same importance to you as to us; that your minds may be aroused and that every arm may be nerved to do its might, whatever lies in its power, to save our country from the righteous judgments of Heaven, for the measures of iniquity is surely fast being filled.

First, in every document directed to women, the writers evoke a sense of kinship with their readers. The words “sister” and “sisterhood” are frequently found in these addresses,

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<sup>171</sup> HCFASS, 1 July 1842, 34.

<sup>172</sup> No extant version of this issue of the *Cincinnati Weekly Herald* was found.

even to describe enslaved women. In contrast to commentary directed to men, this connection creates a strong emotional bond with their readers. HCFASS members may demonstrate a zealous commitment to activism or patriotism in their appeals to men, but the sense of an innate feminine connection colors writings to women with an affecting tone. A second example in this passage is an outward admission of women's moral responsibility for humanity. Not only are the authors appealing to their Kentucky sisters to support abolition, but they also invoke an understood responsibility "to save our country from the righteous judgments of Heaven." Issues of morality included in addresses to men, although few, are most frequently used to chastise men's behavior; in contrast their appeals to women provide an emotional trigger to catch the readers' attention and remind women of their role as moral leaders in America. Finally, as a means to demonstrate women's recent move into the public sphere, the HCFASS writers seek to inspire women's activism. Not surprisingly in women-focused documents, references to women's moral responsibility are not used as a justification for action as in documents aimed at men. Instead, HCFASS addresses to women assume their audience would agree that women's place as moral reformers in the public sphere is legitimate regardless of social mores.

In considering the bonds of womanhood, Jacqueline Bacon takes issue with appeals similar to those in HCFASS women-directed documents. She finds white female abolitionists often felt a kinship that permitted them "the authority to offer strong arguments against slavery in terms that emphasize concerns assumed to be natural and universal to women." Therefore, Bacon continues, female abolitionists assume that because they are connected to African American women "through the bonds of

femininity—they have particular authority to speak for female slaves.”<sup>173</sup> In other words, Bacon believes white female antislavery authors assumed their position as women allowed them to be a voice for enslaved women. Bacon’s most urgent concern with such assumed agency is that often their descriptions of slave stories are mitigated by their concern for feminine modesty or subjection to white norms in reinforcing feminine connections between African American women and white women.<sup>174</sup> Within the HCFASS documents that appeal to women, this sense of concern for the modesty of other white women does exist; at one point the authors even express the difficulty of describing images of slavery because they are “unpleasing”<sup>175</sup> to the reader, but these modifications for propriety’s sake cannot be taken out of context because they are often deliberately chosen as a device to appeal to a specific audience. In fact the term “unpleasing” appears after the authors describe several harsh aspects of slavery so its use becomes ironic instead of a rationale. In considering the framework of “white norms,” Bacon agrees with bell hooks’ analysis that “white women abolitionists’ professions of an essentialist sympathy with slaves does not challenge white power structure.”<sup>176</sup> Although at times examples from HCFASS documents do reinforce feminist interpretations of white women speaking on behalf of antislavery, such a generalization cannot be applied to these women collectively, especially since in all likelihood, at least one black woman, Sarah Fuller, signed the society constitution.<sup>177</sup> At the same time they used their position of true womanhood, part of the American power structure formulated by white men, to empower

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<sup>173</sup> Bacon, 121.

<sup>174</sup> Bacon, 119, 124.

<sup>175</sup> *FLA*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 4-5, (Document 3, 117).

<sup>176</sup> Bacon, 124.

<sup>177</sup> According to the 1840 Indiana Census, the only Fuller in Henry County at that time was Sarah Fuller, a free black woman between the ages of 35 and 55. The census also notes that she lived within proximity to several other families involved in antislavery activities, so in all likelihood, she was the Sarah Fuller who joined the original HCFASS.



their antislavery voice; they also decried prejudice and demanded constitutional change. The following examples demonstrate the complexity of women's antislavery ideology.

Even though the major female figures in the antislavery battle may have at times demurred to societal norms in expressing their attitudes toward slavery, individual groups illustrate that the desire for change beyond the eradication of slavery, i.e. women's rights, African American equality, and change through constitutional amendments, poised these women on the verge of demanding major societal change.

The first theme in documents addressed to women is a sense of universal feminine connection. Kinship between women weaves several emotionally gripping passages throughout these documents intended for female readers. In demonstrating the bonds of sisterhood, HCFASS writers evoke two aspects of connection they believe exist in most women's lives: their families and their responsibilities for other women. In considering examples of family, delicately constructed tableaux of free women and children are juxtaposed with the violent separation that occurred in many enslaved families such as this one from an early address to members of the HCFASS

Mothers when you watch with fond delight your little prattling offspring  
playing in all the sportiveness of infantile carelessness about you . . . Oh!  
Then remember the slave, the wretched and bereaved slave mother and her  
children torn from her by the unrelenting and unfeeling master.<sup>178</sup>

Such parallels are intended to elicit sympathy for slave women from the reader in addition to demonstrating the ways in which slavery destroys the family, the center of Antebellum American culture especially for women. While this may be defined as a "white norm," however, familial connections were the driving force for many slaves to escape oppression or earn freedom for themselves or family members so the universality

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<sup>178</sup> HCFASSR, 1 July 1842, 32.

of family holds some merit. In addition to evoking the family unit torn asunder in reference to slavery, the writers also include this image in their attempt to convince the women of Kentucky to oppose colonization:

Mothers! what would your feelings be, did you know that your children must be forever exiled from [t]he home of their fathers, and you left to wither in your chains?<sup>179</sup>

This statement not only evokes destruction of the family but also reinforces that most African American slaves by this time were born in the United States and deserved rights as citizens.

Although the authors most frequently address women as mothers, their appeal to sisters and daughters universalized the call for women's support. In an 1842 address to its members, the HCFASS executive committee uses the four female labels of kinship to engage every woman in their audience. Mothers, as mentioned earlier, are asked to remember the slave with "her children torn from her" and wives that an enslaved woman is "worse than widowed" when her family is separated by a slave auction. Sisters are asked to think of the "sister slave" who is denied the assistance of their "kind and careful" brothers. Finally, daughters are asked to remember the "orphaned slave" who is "compelled to drag out a miserable existence without one [kin] to wipe the falling tear or one friend to soothe the mind sickness or in death."<sup>180</sup> The human connection brought to this is important to note. Bacon fears, however, this is only a device to appeal to the white women's sense of propriety because "although the [slave] women's plight is briefly described, it serves to reveal not the horrors of slavery for African American women but

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<sup>179</sup> HCFASSR, 80

<sup>180</sup> HCFASSR, 1 July 1842, 32-33.

the damage to white women's natural feminine sensibilities."<sup>181</sup> This rhetorical tone may legitimately be the case in some female antislavery writing; however, in these HCFASS addresses the authors are not using the story to justify abolition based on its offence to women's propriety, but instead they ask their cohorts to "remember the slave" and the horrors of her life as a means to rejuvenate their antislavery activism.

In fact, the use of repetition in this passage is also rhetorical. After each new addressee, the authors reiterate, "remember the slave" or "think of the slave" building to the final "remember the slave – whether we are mothers, wives, sisters or daughters, let us all as christians [sic] remember the unenlightened and heathen slave."<sup>182</sup> This repetition illustrates another contradiction to Bacon's analysis of antislavery women's use of slave descriptions. By reiterating remembrance of the decrepit life of slaves, this passage maintains the narrative focus on the atrocities of slavery, not on the shame it brings to white society or its insult to feminine propriety.

These calls to mothers, daughters, or sisters present a different dynamic than any other general addresses or those written to men. Beyond being Americans, Christians, and abolitionists, the experience of being mothers, daughters, or sisters is universal among women. This collective bond holds the potential power of which both men and women were aware however limited the action of this power exists for women during the Antebellum era. For HCFASS members, this bond extended to African Americans as noted in the multiple references throughout their records to the equality of black

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<sup>181</sup> Bacon, 125-126.

<sup>182</sup> HCFASSR, 32-33. As grating as the use of "heathen" in this final sentence is to a modern audience, the climactic build through use of repetition and connection between mothers, wives, sisters, or daughters cannot be denied. In the traditional definition of the word, heathen refers to a person who is not Christian, Jewish, or Muslim. *The Cassell Dictionary of Word Histories*, London: Cassell, 1999, 276.

Americans and their inclusion of Sarah Fuller, an African American woman, in their membership.

Another arena in which women demonstrated this collective sisterhood was in taking responsibility for other women. Bacon fears that the agency ascribed to women in the battle against slavery is for white women only. Although Bacon does justify her opinion based on the specific texts she examines, this broad generalization must be contextualized. If only white women believed they had the power to make a difference, then black women would not have formed and participated in antislavery societies. Granted African American women of the time did have less political influence because their male counterparts could only vote in a few states, but this did not preclude their influence in some antislavery societies. Variations such as this beg a reader to consider the audience of a given document or speech in order to better understand the choices of language by antislavery societies.

Throughout their correspondence the HCFASS women justified sharing their opinions by connecting them to their responsibility for other women. They believed

That while we contemplate the awful fact that the system of slavery still exists, it degrades woman to the level of a brute, while at its bidding she is bartered as an article of merchandize, doomed to drag out her life in a state of heathenish darkness, deprived of the privilege of learning to read the Bible—robbed of every right—robbed as much as possible of the knowledge of her own degradation, we find ample apology for our interference; nay, more we find it our imperious duty to act energetically for her elevation and restoration to that high destiny, which in the order of a wise Providence she intended to enjoy. Whereas, according to the declaration of the founders of this Republic, ALL MEN are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among which are, LIFE, LIBERTY and the PURSUIT of HAPPINESS; and whereas those men and women (fugitives from slavery) who leave the sunny South for a cold Canadian clime, are only seeking LIBERTY, and pursuing their own happiness. Therefore, Resolved, That [who] molests them in their journey

thitherward, not only acts inhumanly, but violates the fundamental principles of our Government.<sup>183</sup>

The interesting aspect of this passage is that they illustrate their understanding of African Americans as citizens, their use of female slaves' misery as a justification to improve the lives of African Americans, and their support of slaves taking their freedom as being constitutionally justified.

One example of how the HCFASS members did not write just for themselves but rather to reiterate their sense of responsibility for women was a response to a letter from 10,000 women in Edinburgh, Scotland. The original Scottish letter, published in the *British Friend*, was a plea to the American women to work toward ending slavery. In their response, HCFASS authors highlighted their belief in mutual support between women. "We desire that you may from time to time give evidence of your zeal in this good work, by stirring up the minds of your sisters, not only in this country (where surely it is of all most needed) but also in the whole civilized world."<sup>184</sup> Beyond requesting support from other women, the authors reinforce their responsibility for the sake of all women by quoting the original letter's inclusion of a biblical passage from Mark decrying those religious leaders who care more for the benefits of leadership than the people they lead.<sup>185</sup> The Henry County women stated

We confess we have no confidence in that religion whose proselytes not only "devour widows' houses and [for] a pretence make long prayers," but who devour the widows *themselves*—widows too, which their own acts have made such by transporting to far

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<sup>183</sup> *Indiana Courier*, 24 June 1848, 4, col. 2, (Document 4, 124).

<sup>184</sup> *FLA*, 8 April 1847, 1, col. 1.

<sup>185</sup> Mark 12.38-40 KJV: And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, 39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: 40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

distant lands, the partners of their sorrows, from whence, during the reign of slavery, they have no hope of escape.<sup>186</sup>

Women's seemingly diminished position places them at a rhetorical advantage when arguing the faults of slavery. Not only are they in a society that supports slavery, but also a society where even Christian leadership supports making "widows" of individual women who are already virtually helpless in American society regardless of their enslavement.

The previous paragraph also illustrates the women's understanding of their responsibility to other women by describing the desolate situation of not just slaves in general, but those horrors uniquely experienced by enslaved women. "Still is the unprotected female exposed to the insults of the tyrannical master, still are the nearest and dearest ties of relationship and friendship torn asunder . . . shall we relax our hands so long as the cause which first induced to espouse its opposite remains? No, verily no!"<sup>187</sup> As previously mentioned, Bacon fears such connections are demonstrating the women's belief that only white women could act; however, this concern cannot be generally applied to HCFASS because each document is addressed to a specific audience and thus they adapt rhetoric accordingly. A contemporary reader should not assume the author's definition of only including white women, especially when they are appealing to a specific audience such as the women of Kentucky.

As with many female writers and speakers of the time, HCFASS members reinforced their role as moral leaders in American society. "Go ask the proprietors of

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<sup>186</sup> *FLA*, 8 April 1847, 1, col. 1-2.

<sup>187</sup> *HCFASSR*, 1 July 1842, 31.

benevolent institutions the world over, who have been the most untiring, zealous, friends of suffering humanity?”<sup>188</sup> they ask in an 1843 address to the men of Indiana. This perspective appears frequently throughout their writing and is reinforced in documents to women in two specific ways—first, by reinforcing the un-Christian nature of slavery and, second, by demonstrating their believed Christian duty as women to lead the moral charge. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell addresses in Volume 1 of *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, religious justification for women’s action was complicated because in American society it was generally believed that Christian ideology placed women in a diminished role and thus “the theological rationale was not only the most fundamental, but it also emerged earliest, and the religious authority on which it rested made it particularly difficult to refute.”<sup>189</sup> However, argues Bacon, “the notion that women are morally elevated over men paradoxically both classifies women condescendingly and affords them the opportunity to exert influence based on their moral authority.”<sup>190</sup> Despite Christian tenets seeming to work against them, HCFASS authors demonstrate how a deeper reading of the Bible supports their desire for moral reform. Comparing the United States’ use of slavery to a time when Christians were enslaved, the authors of the response letter to the women of Edinburgh illustrate that “our government is perverted to the support of a worse than Egyptian bondage” by quoting the Scottish women’s letter agreeing “we know that the national ‘standard of mortality is lowered, by cherishing such a system of impurity,’ and many amongst us have long deplored that the ‘Christianity of our country is prostrated to cover the heinousness of a sin in direct opposition to the law of God, love they neighbor

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<sup>188</sup> *FLA*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 3, (Document 3, 117).

<sup>189</sup> Campbell, Vol. 1, 37.

<sup>190</sup> Bacon, 116.

as thyself.”<sup>191</sup> As Jacqueline Bacon demonstrates in *The Humblest May Stand Forth*, “marginalized rhetors can draw on Christianity’s opposing tendencies toward submission and power, deference and authority”<sup>192</sup> to justify women’s desire to participate in abolitionist activities as a means of destroying the anti-Christian dynamic of slavery.

In their first address directed to women, an address to all of the members of the HCFASS, the committee composing the document reminds female readers, “let us all as [C]hristians remember the slave.” Such an assumed religious similarity may be problematic to present day readers; however, at that time, because of the influence of the Second Great Awakening, the majority of Americans would have claimed to be Christians and believe the United States to be a Christian country.<sup>193</sup> In an 1843 address to women, the authors “call forth the energies of every Christian of every denomination or profession to active exertions for the removal [of slavery].”<sup>194</sup> This call for an interdenominational activism illustrates these women’s belief in a moral through line in Christian thought that surpassed the biblical interpretation by each denomination, and the best means to utilize this universal Christian morality was to appeal to the women of the United States. Some contemporary scholars have criticized the connection between Christianity and the antislavery movement because they believe that Christian activists wanted to use their faith to convert the “heathen.” Frederick Douglass in an undated address presented another perspective of the role of Christianity in the lives of nineteenth-century African Americans. Douglass believed that accepting someone as a Christian was to “recognize him as a man, a child of God, an heir of heaven, redeemed by

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<sup>191</sup> *FLA*, 8 April 1847, 6, col. 1.

<sup>192</sup> Bacon, 117.

<sup>193</sup> Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 169.

<sup>194</sup> *FLA*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 4, (Document 3, 117).



the blood of Christ . . . one who according to the apostle Paul, must be treated no longer as a servant, but as a brother beloved.”<sup>195</sup> In other words, giving African Americans the opportunity to be Christians was affirming their humanity and essentially equality.

Douglass illustrates through this assessment the stakes involved for Christians to embrace the Black community into their fold; inviting African Americans into Christian churches may also be perceived as a radical act rather than one of a dominant culture attempting to demonstrate its authority.

Once the HCFASS women made their moral case to their female audiences, then they inspired them to act. From their first letter directed specifically to a female audience, which attempts to rejuvenate passion for the antislavery cause, to the final entry in the record, an appeal to the women of Kentucky to convince males to support abolition in their upcoming constitutional convention, the society members continually encourage antislavery action. In order to inspire members during the second year of the society’s existence, the business committee, including Hulda Wickersham, Druscilla Unthank, Maria Coffin, Eveline Evens, and Rebecca Edgerton, emphasize that “the subject of slavery together with the means of promoting the abolition thereof should be an exhaustless one to the least inventive mind either in speaking or writing; and to those engaged in the cause the theme should be forever new.” In this particular case, they also subtly justify their role as women activists, by entering the public realm through writing and speaking.

Such quotations demonstrate the inspirational tone of most of the letters to women; however, the authors do not allow their sisters to escape their obligation to rally

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<sup>195</sup> Frederick Douglass, "The Negro Problem," Address before the Bethel Literary and Historical Society of Washington, D. C. (Series: Speech, Article, and Book File---B: Frederick Douglass, Undated).

against the blight of slavery. The extant copy of the 1843 “Address to Females of Indiana and elsewhere” is unfortunately incomplete, yet the surviving words demonstrate the authors’ ability to move between the recognition of slavery’s immorality and the clarion call to act without needing to justify the action. “We feel bound therefore,” they write, “to admonish all who are aware of the enormous evil of Slavery[,] to be unceasing and untiring, in their efforts for its final overthrow.” This quotation demonstrates a principal difference between the rhetoric used in letters to men and those to women. With men, the HCFASS tend to be accusatory in their demand for action. “Will you again vote for those who will go to the halls of Legislation with a bridle on their tongues and a gag in their mouths?”<sup>196</sup> On the other hand, appeals to women inspire action through positive reinforcement and, as in the earlier mentioned fragmented address, provides advice for how to become active in the cause. “Does one inquire, what can females do, towards sundering the fetters of Slavery and oppression[?]” the authors intuit, considering the potential response of their readers. Although the next section is missing, the attitude of their answer is well represented by the last line of the entry concluding “and truly the home of the brave.” Obviously the “brave” references the bravery of activists working to eradicate slavery. Praise for potential activism demonstrates their understanding of the female audience’s perception of their role in American society. Since the choice to participate in abolitionist activities would take bold action by women, the authors believe that encouraging words will better inspire women to make that difficult choice.

HCFASS authors asked not only for participation in antislavery activities, but they encouraged women to become involved in the political process as well. In their appeal to the women of Kentucky, they propose “though you have no voice in the

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<sup>196</sup> *FLA*, 22 December 1843, 3, col. 4, (Document 3, 117).

councils of your state or the nation, yet you can have a powerful influence through the social circle, on those who have the government in their own hands, the sovereign people on whom must rest the happiness or misery of the country. We beg therefore that every word, every deed of yours shall tell that you are where women ever should be – on the side of feeling, of justice, and of your God.” This appeal mirrors an address to men in Indiana, but in approaching women, the role of morality and citizenship plays an equal role. The other difference between this appeal to political action and ones to men is that the authors do not feel the need to justify women’s political action to the women themselves.

By inspiring women to act, the members of the HCFASS were not unaware of the repercussions. In their response to the women of Edinburgh, they thank them for their support because “even to be a member of an Anti-Slavery Society is considered a reproach, and those who avow themselves abolitionists are treated as the very outcasts of society.”<sup>197</sup> For the women in Indiana, being ostracized as an abolitionist did not only mean verbal abuse from community leaders, but also meant separation from family after the division in the Indiana Yearly Meeting.<sup>198</sup> In an earlier entry, the women mention that the local abolitionist press had been damaged.<sup>199</sup> Even more dramatic was the response Frederick Douglass received when he visited Richmond, a city in Wayne County located directly to the east of Henry County. As they arrived to speak, Douglass and his fellow

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<sup>197</sup> *FLA*, 8 April 1847, 1, col. 1.

<sup>198</sup> Ruth Ketring Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1942); Hamm et al., “Two Indiana Communities,” 154.

<sup>199</sup> HCFASSR, 27 April 1844, 51.

abolitionists “were mobbed, and some of us had our good clothes spoiled by evil-smelling eggs” in addition to being lambasted in the press.<sup>200</sup>

The additional challenge to women often made by HCFASS members was to eliminate slave-produced products from their homes. In their 1847 letter to the women of Edinburgh, the assigned committee reiterates, “abstinence from articles produced by the unrequited labor of slaves, certainly becomes those who profess to do all in their power to hasten the day of emancipation.”<sup>201</sup> The Free Produce movement was a crucial part of activism for HCFASS even though finding slave labor-free products in the Midwest was challenging in the 1840s. Asking women to limit their buying power, especially since many of the families of HCFASS women lived in rural locations, was expecting an enormous commitment to the cause.<sup>202</sup> Despite the challenge, members claim in their 1847 letter to the women of Edinburgh “we are pleased to find the practice amongst this class, in our land, to some extent increasing.”<sup>203</sup> Appeals to avoid slave produced merchandise appear in the HCFASS addresses to women and society resolutions for women because making purchases for the home such as food and clothing was women’s responsibility, not men’s.

Finally, the members of the society understood the task ahead of them was not only challenging but might involve many years of active participation. To demonstrate their support for the cause, the authors, addressing the women of Edinburgh, commit themselves completely to abolition in saying “we shall not cease our exertions, unless released by the hand of Death.” Their undying commitment to abolition is not just a tool

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<sup>200</sup> Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass in Autobiographies* (New York: Library of America, 1994), 675; Crenshaw, 37.

<sup>201</sup> *FLA*, 8 April 1847, 1, col. 1.

<sup>202</sup> Hamm et al., “Two Indiana Quaker Communities,” 121.

<sup>203</sup> *FLA*, 8 April 1847, 1, col. 1.

to demonstrate American women's dedication to activism in communicating with Europeans. Instead, it begins in their first set of resolutions where they have "enlisted in the cause of the abolition of slavery from a conviction of duty, we intend to persevere therein till our lives or that system shall terminate."<sup>204</sup> Ironically, this professed life-long commitment was experienced by one of their most active members, Hulda Wickersham, who died unexpectedly due to illness at the age of 30 in 1845.

### **Conclusion**

The words of women who participated in antislavery societies provide ample evidence of the character of each antislavery society. Extant documents demonstrate each organization's unique connection to religion, perspectives on abolition, commitment to free labor produce, and understanding of the Constitution's role in slavery. Geographic location does not illuminate distinct differences between Eastern and Western societies; instead it reiterates the importance of local demographics to each society. For example, in New York, the upper class status of members encouraged a conservative, morally bound approach to antislavery activity. In Indiana, proximity to Friends meetings, especially Anti-Slavery Friends meetings, seem to indicate the political level of activism for a given women's society.

HCFASS was obviously influenced by its Quaker members, but the women's willingness to support political activism, publicly criticize state and national leaders, and demand women's rights illustrates a character that surpasses even Anti-Slavery Friends abolitionism. Their voice became their agency in order to educate Americans about the changes needed to better society. Without their ability to foresee the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and the Compromise of 1850, in their last entry, the women praise the

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<sup>204</sup> HCFASSR, 3 April 1841, 6, (Document 1, 102).

“rapid advances” of the abolitionist cause including the society respect for abolitionists and abolitionist publications, less frequent abuse and imprisonment of freed black Americans, and more antislavery politicians in Washington.<sup>205</sup> Despite limits, HCFASS members could claim agency in accomplishing these perceived improvements. Without taking credit for themselves, they encourage antislavery activists to “behold with knowledge the blessing of Heaven on their humble efforts in the good work!”<sup>206</sup>

The HCFASS successfully maintained itself in a slavery-friendly State through the rise of antislavery politics and a division within one of the major religious organizations supporting its members. Through newspaper publishing they found a springboard to the public sphere. Although very little evidence exists about their individual attitudes, the voices of independently thinking women ring throughout their documents. Bringing the language of antislavery activities to light in a historical context elucidates not only women’s use of rhetoric, but also their responses to the social forces afflicting them. This combination of perspectives is essential to consider when assessing the written or spoken word of previous eras.

Previous scholars have elucidated the experiences of female antislavery activities; however, more investigation into the activities of specific societies, especially in the Midwest, may enhance current understanding of the effect of antislavery and/or abolitionist activity at the local and state level. An assessment of a Midwestern society including individual demographic data could further illuminate potential influences for a given society. Such an undertaking would be substantial, since women are elusive in early nineteenth century records. Regardless of the work involved, finding these women

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<sup>205</sup> HCFASSR, 30 June 1849, 75-6, (Document 5, 129).

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 77.

who spoke publicly and actively sought change would provide another important piece to the tapestry of women's history.

In addition to work on antislavery societies, future researchers should consider trying to piece together more of the individual lives of Midwestern antislavery activists. Much has been written on the national leaders such as the Grimké sisters, Lucretia Mott, and Abby Foster. But what about the women who did not find ready access to the sisterhood of antislavery? The rural Midwest offered few options for travel, so antislavery society members relied on newspapers and pamphlets for information and one another for support. Discovering why women participated in these societies from an individual perspective may provide another level to the complicated motives of antislavery activism. Considering women who were born and raised in slave states also provides another lens for investigating Midwestern women of action. Regardless of specifics, more research completes the picture of women's antislavery activism. Women's history has exploded during the last forty years; however, the dearth of information on the everyday life of most women demonstrates the distance scholars have yet to go.

## **Editorial Method**

### *Description of source material*

The HCFASS records consist of the materials written during the organization's eight-year existence. Currently, the Indiana State Library maintains the collection.<sup>207</sup> Consisting of eighty-two typed pages, on slowly disintegrating acidic paper, the HCFASS records contain minutes, resolutions, addresses, reports, and letters. While the records were in the possession of Sarah Edgerton, an original member of the HCFASS, an unknown individual transcribed the original documents. Edgerton donated the transcript to Earlham College in 1922; the Indiana State Library acquired the transcript at an unknown date.

In addition to the transcript of the HCFASS records the Executive Committee Members submitted twelve documents including annual reports, meeting minutes, letters, and addresses for publication in regional newspapers without copies in the society's records. Of these additional publications, eight have been found. The *Louisville Examiner's* publisher references a ninth submission in a short editorial. Two other documents not listed as being sent for publication and one set of minutes not referenced in the records were published in the *Free Labor Advocate*. Documents found in newspapers and not in the HCFASS collection are referenced in the calendar. Parallel readings HCFASS entries and published texts from contemporary newspapers validate the authenticity of the HCFASS records.

### *Selection*

This selective edition includes five documents representative of the nineteenth-century women's abolitionist perspective. These items provide the basis of the analytical

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<sup>207</sup> The HCFASS collection is catalogued as S1672 in their manuscript division.



assessment in this thesis. The HCFASS constitution initiates the records and this edition. The documents include the organizational constitution composed at the first meeting on 3 April 1841. This document establishes the abolitionist mindset of the women and includes all 109 names of the original members. The second document included in this edition is a response to a speech given by Congressman Kenneth Rayner of North Carolina during the first session of the 27<sup>th</sup> Congress of the House of Representatives on 15 June 1841. The HCFASS demonstrate their command of rhetoric and level of education in this address approved by the HCFASS during a September 1841 meeting. The third document, composed at the 2 December 1843 meeting, is an “Address to the Men of Indiana.” This address is illustrative of the potential conflict between men and women in antislavery societies. The *Free Labor Advocate* published this document in its 23 December 1843 edition. The fourth document is the annual report composed during the 3 June 1848 meeting. Missing from the HCFASS transcription, the text is available in an *Indiana Courier* 24 June 1848 edition. This report illustrates the members’ intellectual involvement with politics and commitment to encouraging slaves to seek their freedom and aiding those that do. “To the Women of Kentucky,” a 30 June 1849 address composed during the last known meeting of the society implores these women to take action before the upcoming Kentucky constitutional convention. The HCFASS transcription of this document is from the *Cincinnati Weekly Herald* although an extant copy of the issue has yet to be found.

### *Transcription*

The unique condition of the HCFASS records provides both benefits and challenges to the editor. A typed transcript increases readability, thus decreasing the time

involved in deciphering hand writing and completing transcriptions. On the other hand, the twenty-first century transcriptionist must analyze the decisions of the original typist. Depending on the purpose of the first transcription, the need for a verbatim copy may not have been a priority. However, editorial marks appear in the transcription including inserted text, type-over letters, and corrected mistakes, proving some conscientiousness from the typist or an editor. For evaluating the procedures of the 1922 transcription several criteria determined decisions for this edition.

Spelling errors in the 1922 transcription seem to reflect errors the transcriber found in the original. One prime example is found in the spelling of proper names. The spelling of Phoebe vacillates between Phebe, Pheobe, and Phoebe. Even in the list of original members, which includes multiple Phoebes, both spellings, “Phebe” and “Pheobe,” occur. As the records continue, individual women’s names such as Phoebe Macy are continually misspelled. The randomness of these errors is more likely attributed to multiple recording secretaries for the society rather than the 1922 typist.

Contracted words are another demonstration of verbatim transcription. “Altho” appears frequently in the records. In “To the Henry County Anti-Slavery Society: To the men only,” the contraction appears both with an apostrophe and without. Readers who peruse only the previously mentioned document might attribute the missing apostrophe to an unintentional omission.

Another important editorial choice is observation of transcriptionist insertions. Most likely, the typist proofread the work and corrected her omissions. These corrections are subtle. Because the transcriptionist used a typewriter with large spaces between characters, she had space to insert letters or punctuation found missing during

proofreading. In the “Executive Committee Report” from the 22 August 1842 meeting, multiple examples of letters inserted as corrections occur. The transcriber, who originally typed “cooeration,” later inserted a “p” between the “o” and “e” to form “co~~o~~peration.” Another common method of correction was inserting the omitted letter before the rest of the word. In the same 1842 document, the word “hall” is corrected to “shall” by inserting the letter “s” before the “h.” Those who are familiar with the peculiarities of manual typewriters could easily attribute these overlapped letters to the keys becoming stuck together in the typewriter. However, close analysis reveals a noticeable difference between the intersected letters in corrected words and those attributable to typewriter errors. Small details, such as these, indicate a conscientious proofreader who probably corrected all of his/her errors.

As a consequence, the spelling in this edition remains exact. If a word is unintelligible due to the transcriber’s inability to read the word or a weakness in the extant copy, the word “illegible” in brackets is inserted. If a word in the typed transcription includes an end of line hyphenation, the hyphen is not included since it was the transcriptionist’s insertion. Any word or phrases included in the copy text that seem to be out of context will be footnoted. In the case of print errors in documents found only in newspapers, the text will be verbatim because it is the only original version of the text available and comparison between the text submitted to the press from the HCFASS and the version printed in the newspaper is not possible. Variations occurring in the newspaper versions of these documents will be noted in two cases. First, if the spelling differs from the transcribed records, and second, if sections of the transcribed document are omitted. These changes will be annotated within the footnotes.

### *Format of Presentation*

A brief introductory note precedes each document, consisting of the meeting date, location, authors, (if known), any necessary contextual information, especially when the complete minutes surrounding each document are not included, and a brief description of its rhetorical importance. The character spacing is adjusted to standard Times New Roman 12-point font, so page length does not correspond to the original transcript or the published format found in newspapers.

Following published documents is a source note. As with many early American newspapers, the publications' names frequently changed. Newspaper citations including editors and applicable publication information are included in footnotes.

### *Annotation*

The footnotes appear after each source note. General information concerning Henry County, Indiana, the HCFASS, Quakers, and abolition in Indiana are not duplicated from the preceding analytical text in the document's footnotes. Unusual historical or cultural references will be annotated. All quotations included in HCFASS documents are cited, if an accurate citation is available. If no source has been found for a quotation, its footnote will read "unknown." All reference titles are listed in a bibliography at the end of the edition.

### *Calendar of Other Documents*

A complete list of HCFASS documents is included in Appendix 3. The calendar includes the date of the meeting, when available, the location, and a brief summary. If any part of the minutes for that meeting were published, those citations are also included.

Documents that appeared only in publication are noted. Following the citation is a brief description of the content of each entry.

## Document 1

The HCFASS composed this Constitution and resolutions during their initial meeting on 3 April 1841 in Spiceland, Indiana. Although the women present elected a committee of five to write the preamble and constitution, and a separate committee of five to compose the resolutions, the authors' names are unknown. The style of this document emulates the American Anti-Slavery Society Constitution.<sup>208</sup>

Pursuant to notice a number of females of Henry County met at Spiceland on the 3d of 4th Month, 1841, for the purpose of forming an Anti-Slavery Association, whereupon Rebecca Edgerton was called to the chair, Hulda Wickersham appointed Secretary pro tem.

On motion a committee of five was appointed to prepare a preamble and constitution.

Whereas among the causes of human wretchedness, suffering and moral degradation, slavery has stood preeminently conspicuous in these United States, and as a cloud of moral corruption, gathering blackness and darkness, extending its portentous<sup>209</sup> appalling shade over the destinies of a large portion of our population and with its gloom has shrouded it in Heathen ignorance and mental darkness and has rendered tenure by which we of the free states hold the enjoyment of those inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which lay at the very foundation of our Government, extremely frail and uncertain. As the enemy of human rights has for a long time been fortifying itself in its entrenchments and multiplying its encroachments till it has so far gained the ascendancy, that without the aid of the Philanthropist and true Republican, but little remains now to be achieved before it can rule the entire nation with its iron rod.

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<sup>208</sup> American Anti-Slavery Society, *Platform of the American Anti-Slavery Society and its Auxiliaries* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1855), 3-4.

<sup>209</sup> The transcriber inserted an end of line hyphen between the letter "r" and "t."

And whereas in view of these enormous evils and the eminent dangers with which we are surrounded, as well as the inexpressible suffering, both mental and physical, of millions of our fellow citizens, we feel bound as Christian women to exert all the influence we may possess in changing the current of public sentiment and feeling and enlisting them on the side of humanity, justice and mercy, that the sovereign people of the nation may be induced to break off their sins by righteousness and their iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, so that the impending and awful calamity now visibly hanging over their heads may be averted, the Government and its Administration renovated, and the tranquility of the nation restored through the incorporation of the immutable principals of justice and equal rights in its laws and regulations.

Therefore to render our efforts more efficient, we have associated ourselves together under the title of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Association, to be governed by the following

Constitution.

Art. 1. The object of this Association shall be to circulate correct information relative to slavery, showing by its corrupting influence upon the nation its demoralizing effect upon the master as well as the slave, its degrading power over its downtrodden victims, and the duty and safety of immediate emancipation.

Art. 2. This Association shall aim to elevate the character of our colored population by promoting their moral and intellectual improvement and shall endeavor to eradicate that cruel prejudice so unfortunately entertained against them, which although the effect of slavery is now contributing largely to render that system more formidable.

Art. 3. The officers of this Association shall be President, Vice-President, Cor. and Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and Executive Committee.

Art. 4. The business of this Association shall be to devise and put in operation through its Executive Committee (or otherwise as it may deem proper) the best method of promoting its object as set forth in article first, and to raise funds by voluntary subscription for the support of the Institution.

Art. 5. The Executive Committee shall prepare and adjust the business of the Society between its meetings and carry into effect its measures and plans of operation, and shall have the power of filling vacancies that may occur in their own body during the recess of the Association and shall pay all expenses by a draft on the Treasurer.

Art. 6. The Treasurer shall hold all the funds of the Association subject to the order of the Executive Committee and shall annually present a dotached report of the state of the Treasury at the close of each year.

Art. 7. The officers of this Association shall be chosen annually or oftener if deemed expedient by the Association.

Art. 8. The Association shall meet once in three months or oftener as the case may require, at such time and place as may be thought expedient.

Art. 9. Any Female may become a member of this Association by signing its Constitution and conforming to its provisions.

Art. 10. This Constitution may be amended at any stated meeting of the Association by a vote of two-thirds of the members in attendance.



## Names of Members

Phebe Macy	Diana Iddings	Elizabeth Reynard
Dianna Edgerton	Anna H. Macy	Sarah Ann Gordon
Rachel H. Boon	Pheobe Willets	Louisa Antrim
Luzinna Macy	Charity Pitts	Sarah Edgerton
Rebecca Gordon	Ruth Willets	Susannah Jesop
Susannah Macy	Jane Ven Vleet	Mary Jesop
Anna Jones	Evaline Evans	Ruth Jesop
Rachel Gauze	Mary Edgerton	Caroline Wickersham
Aseneth Wickersham	Susan Taylor	Eliza Jane Davis
Elizabeth W. Moore	Millie M. Henshaw	Emeline Bennett
Susannah Wickersham	Ruth H. Johnson	Lydia Rose
Huldah Wickersham	Armelle Elliott	Marila Wright
Charity W. Kersey	Abigail Hinshaw	Mary Hiatt
Jemmina Wickersham	Mary C. James	Abigail Wright
Drusilla Unthank	Ruth Anah Saint	Harriet Allen
Sarah Fuller	Martha White	Catherine Wright
Nancy Macy	Clementine A. Smith	Grace Hasket
Edith Kersey	Sarah Jane Wickersham	Catherine C. Jessop
Mournen Jones	Mary Gunning	Rachel Hiatt
Sarah Jones	Anna Cook	Sarah Jane Macy
Rebecca Edgerton	Anna W. Cox	Catherine Macy
Mria Coffin	Annis Hinshaw	Jane Wilson
Phebe Pickering	Esther Wilson	Jane Presnall
Ruth Hinshaw	Lydia Jessop	Jane Munden
Anna Wickersham	Saray W. Lamb	Pleasant Presnall
Anna Wright	Rebecca Wilson	Catherine Presnall
Elizabeth Pitts	Mary Hiatt	Rebecca Darn
Elizabeth Ratliff	Mary Paxton	Mahalah Presnall
Susannah Symours	Eliza B. Feril	Mary P. Elliott
Anna Maria Brookshire	Nancy Ann Ellis	Eliza M. Wright
Mary C. Sheridan	Martha Gray	Ruth Rees
Sarah Ann Pickering	Catherine Ocheltree	Sarah Payne
Eliza Jane Pitts	Elizabeth Paxton	Anna Saunders
Mary Henshaw	Mary Paxton	Rebecca Wickersham
Rebecca Unthnak	Catherine O. Reynard	Elizabeth Wright
Hannah Henshaw	Rachel Reynard	Emily Presnall
		Margret A. Canady

On motion a committee of five was appointed to prepare business, who after a short absence, produced the following preamble and resolutions which were adopted:

Whereas we deeply deplore the existence of slavery in these United States and the consequent prejudice against the colored race in our own section of the country, and whereas among the various legislative enactments are those which have a direct tendency to increase and strengthen that prejudice thereby rendering the fetters of slavery more firm and secure, therefore

Resolved - That it is our duty to endeavor by all reasonable means to persuade our fathers, husbands and brothers to make use of their elective franchise to place men in office who will remove these evils by the introduction of righteous and just laws into the civil code of our country.

Resolved - That we consider ourselves bound by all the Gospel commands, to seek the happiness of the oppressed and degraded Africans as much as any other part of the human family; and that he who deprives them of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is acting contrary to the commands of Him who created of one blood all the nations of the earth to dwell in all the face thereof.

Resolved - That we cannot but deeply deplore the fact, that the continuance and prevalence of slavery are to be attributed in a great degree to the countenance afforded by Christian Churches especially in the western world which have not only withheld that public and emphatic testimony against the crime which it deserves, but have retained in their communion without- censure, those by whom it is perpetrated.

Resolved - That we consider the peculiar institutions which violate the divine law and basely trample on the rights of men, contain within themselves the elements of ruin and destruction of any nation or people that adopt them.

Resolved - That as slavery is undermining our civil and religious liberties and threatening the destruction of our country, that we consider it to be our duty as professing Christian Females to exert all the influence in our power to remove so great an evil.

Resolved - That having enlisted in the cause of the abolition of slavery from a conviction of duty, we intend to persevere therein till our lives or that system shall terminate.

Resolved - That tho' we are deprived of the privilege of suffrage, yet as free American women we claim the right of being heard on this subject, and that we should be under no other restraints than that of truth and justice in promoting our opinions concerning it.

Resolved - That the associations of ecclesiastical dignitaries constitute no valid ground for discouragement unless by showing a more excellent way they convince us of the erroneousness<sup>210</sup> and inefficiency of ours.

Resolved - That this association now enter into free subscription for the purpose of raising money for the purchase of anti-slavery tracts, which funds are to be placed in the hands of the Executive Committee.

Resolved - That the proceedings of this association be signed by the Secretary and forwarded to the editors of "Indiana Sun" and "Protectionist" for publication.

The following officers were than chosen:

President - Hulda Wickersham  
Vice-President - Druzilla Unthank  
Cor. Secretary - Elizabeth W. Moore  
Rec. Secretary - Rebecca Edgerton  
Treasurer - Susannah Wickersham  
Executive Committee - Phebe Macy  
Rachel Gause

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<sup>210</sup> The word is spelled with an end of line hyphen between the "n" and the "r".

Rebecca Gordon  
Charity W. Kersey  
Dianna Edgerton  
Asenath Wickersham  
Edith Kersey

On motion adjourned to meet at Greensborough on sixth day preceding the first  
7th day in the 6th month next at one o'clock P. M. 1841.

## Document 2

The HCFASS Executive Committee (Pheobe Macy, Rachel Gause, Rebecca Gordon, Charity Kersey, Dianna Edgerton, Asenath Wickersham, and Edith Kersey) composed this response to Congressman Kenneth Rayner on 20 September 1841 at the Friends Meeting House in Elm Grove, Indiana. In June of 1841, Congressman Rayner expressed his outrage at the attempt of certain congressmen to reshape the House rules to allow antislavery petitions. He expressed his discontent by explaining his beliefs on the government's role in decision making regarding slavery and women's role in antislavery petitions. The scribe for the House noted, "In [Congressman Rayner's] opinion, it always denoted a distempered state of the public mind, when women were to be seen taking part in political affairs."<sup>211</sup> His address was published in the Appendix to the Congressional Globe.<sup>212</sup> The authors sent a copy of their response to the *Philanthropist* and the *Protectionist*; the *Philanthropist* published the address.<sup>213</sup>

When in the course of human events it occurs that the rights and privileges of Females in a civilized and professedly Christian nation are called in question, and the conduct of those who exercise such rights assailed in the Legislative halls, the entertaining of a decent self-respect as well as a high regard for those inestimable privileges is deemed a sufficient apology for their appearing before the public in their own defence.

As women of free republican America we believe the freedom of speech and the right of petition are sacredly guaranteed to us by our Government, and that liberty in this way to exert a moral influence is by the same authority and by the concurrent voice of nature and reason emphatically proclaimed to be our birthright, and that as intelligent and accountable beings it is our duty thus to act especially in regard to subjects of vital importance to the welfare of the country.

We have been induced to make these observations by pursuing the "Appendix" to the "Congressional Globe" of the 15<sup>th</sup> of 6<sup>th</sup> Mo. last; the remarks of Kenith Rayner,

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<sup>211</sup> *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 27th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, June, 1841, pg. 49.

<sup>212</sup> *Appendix*, 46-49.

<sup>213</sup> *Philanthropist*, 27 October 1841, 1, col. 5-6.

a N. C. representative in Congress of the United States on the subject of Abolition Petitions, in the course of which our attention was particularly arrested by that part which alludes to the participation of Females in the Anti-Slavery enterprise. He observes, “and with regard to the interference of the gentler sex in this question of abolition, he would only say that those who knew him well knew what he would be the last man upon earth who would say anything against the Female portion of creation”. In order to place the position of the speaker properly before our readers, it will be necessary to bring some of his comments on the conduct of Females especially those showing what they have been up to in past time and place them by the side of the declaration. He says, “All the plans and intrigues which led to the elevation of Cromwell as Protector of England (and who he might say was one of the greatest scoundrels that ever lived) were managed and concerted at meeting for prayer in which women participated.

That sort of administration was there in the reign of Charles II. Why ministers were turned out and put into office by the Dutchess of Cleveland<sup>214</sup> or Nell Gwin, the Revolution of Paris and all the horrid butcheries, disaster which resulted from it, proceeded mainly from the influence of women.”

He would be the last man upon earth who would say anything against the Female portion of creation.

We dread what may be poured upon us by the rest of mankind if this be the case for women here are represented as the worst, the most dangerous part of creation. He could scarcely have delineated their character in a more hideous form. We discover

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<sup>214</sup> Barbara Villiers was the influential mistress of England’s Charles II. Some historians allege she influenced the dismissal of the King’s chancellor, Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon. Anne Commire, ed., *Women in World History*, Vol. 16. (Waterford, CT: Yorklin Publications, 2002), 36-40.

nothing in the whole of his remarks both in regard to past and present time which awards to women the honor of having done anything good what ever, except what is said in regard to the Females of the South whose “Modesty and Propriety” would prevent them from adopting the course which had been taken by their own sex at the North, and when we shall have shown what that modesty and sense of propriety which prevents them from adopting our course is capable of inducing them to do in their domestic circles it will be found that even this exception is no very enviable one. We shall not quarrel with them because we are not embraced in it. But it seems he could not call to mind any of the noble and virtuous deeds of those of our sex in olden time – no recollection of Miriam,<sup>215</sup> one of the associate leaders of ancient Israel, nor of Deborah,<sup>216</sup> the prophetess who judged that nation and delivered it from its enemies. His memory has failed him in regard to the important services rendered to the captive Jews by Esther the Queen in delivering them from their enemies thro’ her interposition with Ahasuerus,<sup>217</sup> the King; and also in regard to the remarkable manner in which Rome was once saved by female virtue, by the interposition of Valaria,<sup>218</sup> sister of the famous Valerius Poplicola,<sup>219</sup> the women joining their efforts wrought upon the feelings and sensibilities of Rome’s inevitable enemy (just as we desire to do by our petitions on those of negros) and ultimately effected that which all Rome’s ministers of religion had failed to accomplish. Nay none of these

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<sup>215</sup> Exodus 15.20 KJV.

<sup>216</sup> Judges 4.4 KJV.

<sup>217</sup> Ahasuerus, Esther 1.1 KJV.

<sup>218</sup> According to Roman mythology, Valeria, the sister of Valerina Publicola, encouraged Veturia, Marcus Coriolanus’ mother, Volumnia, Coriolanus’ mother, and other Roman matrons to go to his camp to convince him to halt his attacks on Rome, which he did. (Coriolanus had been impeached from his civic crown due to his unfair treatment of the commons after which he joined the Volscians to fight against Rome.) William Smith, ed. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1867), 352-3, 1215.

<sup>219</sup> Publius Valerius Publicola was an early Roman Consul and recognized by the American founding fathers for his role in establishing the Roman Republic and this commitment to republican government. Plutarch, “Poplicola,” in *Lives*, ed. A. H. Clough (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1888), 68-75.

circumstances and scores of others of a similar character could find a (vacuum) recognition in the mind of this devoted pioneer of Modesty and Propriety. We shall here present some specimens of the effect of the prevailing virtue of the Southern ladies alluded to by our North Carolina representative which seems to be the only virtuous conduct belonging to the females he could readily think of, and this appears to be indigenous to the South alone, and all are aware that women as well as men in that section of the Union are much attached to slavery and for that cause and for that alone it is evident they will not adopt the course which has been taken by some of their sex at the North in pleading for the liberation of their brethren and sisters in bonds. That this is the fact we argue from the circumstance of the women of the two great political parties which are both completely devoted to slavery taking such an active part in the late electioneering campaign without a hint from him or any other person who is a stickler for either of those parties that Modesty or Propriety was, in that case, the least degree sacrificed.

Our observation and statement of facts under this head will therefore unfold that in which he conceives Modesty and Propriety to consist.

Philemon Bliss, who resided in Florida during the years 1834-5 says “the ladies in chastizing their domestic servants generally use the cowhide. I have known some use shovel and tongs. It is however more common to send them to the driver to be whipped.”<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> The following testimonies appear in Theodore Weld’s *Slavery As it Is*, published by the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1839. Weld lists the dates and location of residence for all of the individuals mentioned.



Calvin H. Tate of Missouri gives the following account of the treatment of a sick slave who as soon as she had reached the house laid down upon the floor exhausted. The mistress asked her what the matter was. She made no reply. She asked again but received no answer. I'll see if I can't make you speak, so taking the tongs she heated them red hot and put them upon the bottoms of her feet, then upon her legs and body, finally in her rage upon her throat. This had the desired effect. The poor girl faintly whispered "Oh, Mistress don't, I am most gone," and expired.

The following is an account of some atrocities committed by Madame La Laurie in New Orleans in 1834. The "New Orleans Bee" says upon entering one of the apartments the most appalling spectacle met their eyes. Seven slaves more or less horribly mutilated were suspended by the neck with their limbs apparently stretched and torn from one extremity to the other. They had been confined for several months in the situation from which they had thus providentially been rescued, they had been merely kept in existence to prolong their sufferings, and to make them taste all that the most refined cruelty could inflict.

John Vance, a member of the Baptist Church, says in 1826, "I saw a woman by the name of Mallix flog her female slave with a horse whip so horribly that she was washed in salt and water for several days to keep her bruises from mortifying."

Charles Stewart Renshaw writing from Ky. says, "I was much shocked once to see a Presbyterian Elder's wife call a little slave up to kiss her feet. At first the boy hesitated but the commands being repeated in tones not to be misunderstood, he approached timidly knelt and kissed her foot."

Nancy Lowery of Kentucky speaking of the treatment of a Female slave named Piney. "I frequently saw Mrs. Buffner flog her with a broom, shovel or anything she could seize in her rage. She would knock her down and then kick and stamp upon her most unmercifully. Often Piney would try to shelter herself from the blows of her mistress by escaping under the bed from which the mistress would draw her by her feet then stamp and leap on her body until her breath would be gone. Often Piney would cry, 'O! Misse don't kill me', but Mrs. Buffner would beat and stamp upon her with all the venom of a Demon."

A man by the name of Calkins<sup>221</sup> who spent eleven winters in North Carolina between the years 1824-35 conversing with a waiting man a slave on the plantation where he resided who had just flogged a female slave says, "I asked him if he stripped her before whipping. He said yes he did not like to but was obliged to – that he was once ordered to whip a woman which he did without stripping her. She was examined on her return to the house by her mistress, who not seeing any marks sent for him and asked why he had not whipped her. When he replied that he had she asked him if he had made her take off her clothes. He said no. She then told him that when he whipped any more women he must make them strip as well as the men and flog them on their bare backs or he should be flogged himself.

But we forbare a further exposure of the numerous revolting indecent and cruel acts before us of even a more flagitious and disgraceful character, the bare recital of many of which would shock that true modesty and propriety which women abolitionists of the North are desirous to bring into repute and establish among the people.

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<sup>221</sup> The name is spelled Caulkins in Weld's *Slavery as it Is*.

Europe we trust has been disclosed to exhibit the refined taste of gentlemen in regard to Female decorum.

We would be no means insinuate that Southern women are all of this class for we doubt not there are many whose sense of propriety were it not on account of personal safety, would prompt them to join us in our efforts. Such we esteem as our beloved sisters, and earnestly hope that the time may soon arrive when they may, without endangering their lives, publicly espouse the cause.

That women have no business to be interfering where men are contending for empire and should never mingle in such political strifes as men are frequently contending for as observed we freely admit, but we claim the right to soothe and allay the stormy and angry passions of men, which is conceded to be within our proper sphere, and to these we may add those of an avaricious, inhuman, cruel and ambitious character and then we will take him at his word.

It is to change the type of these disorders for the better we desire the majesty of women to be employed and instead of joining with men in contending for empire we would that the dignity and work of her character might shed a mellowing and softening influence on the minds of those who are seeking and contending or the unjust and abominably wicked empire over the bodies and souls of others, which makes one man the property and places him under the absolute control of another.

Far be it, indeed, from women abolitionists, to incite men to plunge deeper and deeper still in an angry and violent controversy. But when violent men controvert the great principals in the delaration of American Independence, the principals of immutable justice which declare that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their

creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it is but our duty to give our influence to our brethren who are pleading for these fundamental principals, and consequently for the welfare of the whole American people. Where is the person of sane mind that will say that because violent and angry men oppose justice and equality therefore to plead for these is to plunge into violent and angry controversies. If this be the case then all Prophets, Prophetesses, Apostles and Divines are equally guilty of the same crime.

We glory in such accomplices. In conclusion as our declaimer politely recognizes the majesty of women and professes to occupy the most humble attitude before it. We shall in turn be very careful how we exercise that authority, but as we fully believe that to obey our orders in this particular will be to the utmost advantage of all parties concerned, therefore we command him and all others of a similar distortion to cease their violence and cruelty, undo the heavy burdens and let their afflicted and oppressed brethren and sisters go free.

### Document 3

At the 2 December 1843 meeting the executive committee composed two addresses, one to the “females of Indiana and elsewhere” and one to the men of Indiana. The address to men illustrates the potential conflict between men and women in antislavery societies. The purpose of the address to the men was two-fold, first, to chastise them for the limited educational opportunities for American women, and second, to accuse these men of betraying their country and God by not eradicating slavery. Although a copy of this address was not included in the society records, the minutes for the 2 December 1843 in Greensboro indicate the address was read to the members. Published in the *Free Labor Advocate* issue of 22 December 1843, this address was signed by Maria Coffin (President) and Drusilla A. Unthank (Secretary).

Address to the Men of Indiana, from the Henry County Female Anti Slavery Society

Men & brethren,

Believing as we do, that the christian's life is a scene of continual warfare against evil, we as women endeavoring to live a life conformable thereto, feel it our duty to emerge from that seclusion which an erroneous system of education has [illegible]<sup>222</sup> upon us, and to call your attention to some matters which we consider of vital importance, not only to yourselves, but to the whole nation.

Notwithstanding our opportunities for acquiring knowledge, have been extremely limited, yet we are aware that we live in an age of improvement—an age in which light and knowledge are advancing with giant steps; and we feel comforted with the hope, that among the many improvements that are now going forward, the great importance of female education will not be overlooked. We have heard our country called the Land of liberty—the home of the free; but be this as it may, we know that the smiles of Heaven beam upon us with [illegible]<sup>223</sup> radiance, unless our efforts are turned towards the glorifying of that great and good being, who thus showers down his blessings upon us.

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<sup>222</sup> This insertion appeared in the *FLA* edition.

<sup>223</sup> This insertion appeared in the *FLA* edition.

War, with all its harrowing train of evils no longer desolates our borders—the trump of the warrior, the clangor of arms and the roaring of cannon are no longer echoed from our vallies & mountains—the garments rolled in blood have passed away, and the sun of of peace has arisen and spread his bright radience over our nation's troubles, blessing us with all that could tend to make us a happy people. Considerations of this kind forbid that we should ever be unmindful of our duty, and a laudable ambition, an unyeilding perseverance in the path that leads to those hills on whose tops are unfading flowers and and from whence flow those fountains of pure and living waters of which only the truly good and virtuous are permitted to drink in what manner can the energies of a people be better employed than endeavoring to raise and ennoble all of God's intelligent creatures? If you wish the nation to become wise and powerful, and to abound in good works, let more of your attention be directed to the education of females. And in asking you to do so, we would that it were in our power to disperse the clouds which have so long shrowded her intellect in the drapery of the tomb; to lift the veil of prejudice through which you have been accustomed to view her mind & to show you that she is possessed of faculties as susceptible of improvement as yourselves, that as she is as capable of being schooled in all that is high and holy, and endowed with capacities of apreciating that which lends to elevate & onable the soul, as well as those who now claim to be her superiors. But so long have we been taught that our sphere of action and knowledge, should be limited to our firesides—and so long has the subject of female education been neglected that it would be a miracle indeed if we could claim equality in point of intellectual endowments, with those of our education monopolizing brethren.

Such has been the system of female education that it has well nigh rendered us fit for naught else save the mere dredges and slaves of men, or only their playmates and toys. Instead of being placed by the side of man from whence she was taken, there to share alike all the events of life, woman has been considered as a mere appendage to man; a something from whose intellect the “feast of reason and the flow, of the soul”<sup>224</sup> was never to be expected. But if you want instances of the intellectual endowments of females to convince you of their sound judgment in their application to the basi[ill]<sup>225</sup> of life when their rights have been recognized and their minds expanded by a proper system of education; you need to turn over but few pages of history to find that much has been accomplished under their superintending care. Go ask the proprietors of benevolent institutions the world over, who have been the most untiring, zealous, friends of suffering humanity! They will tell you that they have been women; & that the female sex still contribute more largely according to their means for their support than do those of the other sex Go search the Scriptures; for they are they that testify to the faithfulness & perseverance of the female sex when their minds have been endowed with the spirit of the humanity and love. They use they that testify of the ancients having their female lawgivers judges, & rulers.

They, testify of the wisdom of their consels, and the justness of their policy. Go search the pages of history, for they are they, that testify of the power and abilities of women to sway the scepter even over the wisest and most powerful nations of earth. They are they, that testify of their sagacity to discover, and prudence to direct some of the

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<sup>224</sup> Alexander Pope, “The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated,” *Imitations of Horace with an Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot and the Epilogue to the Satires*, John Butt, ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1939; reprint, Trowbridge, Wilshire, England: Redwood Press Limited, 1969), 17.

<sup>225</sup> Insertion made by *FLA*, most likely their intention to form the phrase “basil of life” as in “spice of life.”

most wholesome national laws that ever found their way to the statute books of kingdom or empires. They are they, that testify of the power of females to tranquilize and harmonize the troubles of kingdoms, and restore peace to them, when torn and rent assunder by intestine broils and commotions, that baffled the skill and judgment of those who ruled and reigned. And why cannot we now, have our Miriams, our Esters, our Huldahs, our Margarets, our Elizabeths, and a host of others, to assist in rolling on the great car of moral reform!<sup>226</sup> We ask you why we have not as bright stars to gem our western sky as ever shone in the eastern horizon? Why cannot a beacon fire be kindled up by the females of the western wilds, that will serve to light and invite, the geniuses of the eastern world from their pent up city garrets, to breathe the free unchained breezes that sweep over the wide and extensive forests, and broad praries. But before we say more on the subject of education, we will wait until we have acquired something more of that, which has justly been called the light of the soul,<sup>227</sup> and then perhaps we will be better qualified to arouse the sleeping energies of the state into something like affectionate action. You have not so entirely monopolized all light and knowledge, as to render us entirely blind to some of your blundering and unchristian-like state policy. Your wild and over- shot guesses have not passed unnoticed by even the *women* of your State. Where are now these beautiful canals which were promised should intersect the state in

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<sup>226</sup> Miriam is called a prophetess in Exodus 15.20 KJV; Ester was Queen of Persia; Esther 2.17 KJV; Huldah is called a prophetess in 2 Kings 22:14; the name Margaret is not used in the bible, so this reference could be to Queen Margaret I (Margrethe) of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden who ruled the country as regent when her young son was named king in 1375 and as Queen after his death in 1387. She is best known for unifying of the Nordic monarchies. *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schaus (New York, London: Routledge, 2006), 510; Elizabeth is the mother of John the Baptist whose conception is considered a miracle. Luke 1.5-60 KJV.

<sup>227</sup> The earliest found reference to education as the light of the soul is by Jewish scholar Philo of Alexandria's *Legum Allegoriae*, III, 167 in which he compares manna as sustenance in Exodus 16.4 KJV to knowledge enlightening ones soul. Philon D'Alexandrie, *Legum Allegoriae*, lib. III, eds. Roger Arnaldez, Jean Pouilloux, Claude Mondésert; trans. Claude Mondésert (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1962).



every direction?<sup>228</sup> Have they been existing, and do they still exist only in the brain of some intriguing money speculator? Where are the hundreds and thousands of dollars, which we at the spinning wheel and loom, have toiled hard and long to assist our fathers, brothers and husbands in raising for the promotion of the work? Will you answer the question, or shall we listen for it in the hollow sound that is echoed back from the empty coffers of our bankrupt State? Oh! Franklin!<sup>229</sup> shade of the illustrious dead! wilt thou not visit this people, with an outpouring of thy spirit? and teach them how to use, and not abuse, their means of rendering the people happy and comfortable? And the justness and christianity, of some laws that have found their way to the statute books of our state! Alas! we fear we are not sufficiently imbued with the spirit of forbearance and peace, to speak of them calmly and soberly. It fills our souls with bitterness and anguish, to think the free people of Indiana are governed by laws so diametrically opposed to the gospel of peace and love! Behold yon poor lacerated and houseless sister as she is flying from the blood hounds of the brutal pursuers, and calling on you to give her shelter from her tyrant master, behold her, unprotected, and suffering as she is, and then turn your eyes on the pages of your law books and read there to your shame the penalty annexed to the act, which the promptings of humanity urge you to do, and which the wild untutored savage of the wilderness would scorn to leave undone. Dare you turn away from the famishing strangers, and tell them that the laws of your state forbid your administering to their wants? Dare you do it, and disobey the commands of Almighty God, and hurl defiance at his everlasting mandates, for the mean and contemptible purpose of obeying the

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<sup>228</sup> The Federal Government allotted Indiana land for building a canal in 1827 on which work begun in 1832. Only two sections of the canal were completed due to "fraud, mismanagement, and an international economic crisis in the late 1830s." Andrew R. L. Clayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 284-285.

<sup>229</sup> Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790.

enactments of mortal man? Dare you trample on the laws, and tell the miserable wretch who may ask you for a morsel of bread to sustain famishing nature, that the laws of our state have fixed a penalty of hundreds of dollars to the commission of such an act! Dare you again assemble to worship Him who hath made of one blood all nations of the earth,<sup>230</sup> and no: be determined that so far as your influence can go, it shall never again be wanting in aiding the abrogation of such wicked laws?

Dare you again insult high Heaven with your impious prayers for the will of Him who rules and reigns there. to be done on earth as it is in that holy place, whilst you are giving your consent to the enslavement of the mother, the sister, or the brother of Christ your Redeemer? For he says that whosoever does the will of his Father<sup>231</sup> the same is his mother, his sister & brother. O! Christianity where is they blush! and judgment! thou hast fled to brutish beast, and men have lost their reason! Will you again vote for those who will go to the halls of Legislation with a bridle on their tongues and a gag in their mouths, concerning this matter? Dare you assemble again in commemoration of the liberty our fathers fought, and bled, and died for, there to send up your loud shouts & amens to the Declaration of freedom, and then turn around, and in longer and louder strains, give in your voices in favor of the “vilest system of slavery that ever saw the sun?” Consistency thou art a jewel!” “With one mouth praise we God, and curse men.”<sup>232</sup> Brethren, such things ought not to be. Surely we have reason to hope better things of you. We do hope

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<sup>230</sup> Acts 17.26 KJV, “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

<sup>231</sup> This may be a variation on Mathew 25.40 KJV, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

<sup>232</sup> Reverend John Wesley to William Wilberforce, 26 February 1791 in New England and New Hampshire Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *An Appeal on the Subject of Slavery* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1835), 18. John Bartlett defines “consistency is a jewel” as one of many popular sayings equating jewel with beneficial used since “the earliest times.” John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, 7th ed. (Boston:

and expect more consistency. Shall we be disappointed? We will place confidence in you, as a truth and justice loving people--that you will yet arise in one mighty phalanx, & disengage yourselves from all alliance with deeds of error and darkness. Surely you cannot consent to hold your peace much longer over the commission of such daring deeds of wickedness, as are daily and hourly being practised by the national consent of the people, and yourselves among the rest, upholding the crime by your silence on the subject.

Brethren, the subject is of importance, and requires sober and thoughtful investigation. Will you not endeavor to act, and to act efficiently? Your country, your State, and the happiness of your fellow beings, and your God, require of you action.

MARIA COFFIN President.

D. A. UNTHANK Sect.

Source note: *Free Labor Advocate*, 22 December 1843, p. 3, col. 4-5.

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Little, Brown, and Company, 1881), 663. James 3.9 KJV, "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."

#### Document 4

The following annual report and resolutions were composed by the Executive Committee, P. Macy, S. Wickersham, E. Wright, A. Wright, and E. Rogers, during the 3 June 1848 meeting at New Castle, Indiana. The HCFASSR include only a brief synopsis of the activities and elections held during the meeting. According to the 3 June 1848 HCFASSR entry, the following report was sent to C. V. Drygins, the editor of the Indiana Courier for publication. Drygins published the report in the Indiana Courier, 24 June 1848, pg. 4, col. 1-2, but prefaced its publication with a disclaimer on page one of the paper detailing his disagreements with the HCFASS report. This address propels the executive committee's self-assessment of the HCFASS in the beginning of the document to a national assessment framed in the juxtaposition of the United States government's failure to eradicate slavery and involvement in war with Mexico with the 1848 Revolution in France.

[BY REQUEST.]

The Executive Committee will be called for, we may state that during the past year, but little has been effected with which the association is not already familiar. This renders it needless to detail the proceedings, further than just to say measures have been taken to prepare clothing the coming year for fugitives from slavery. We shall therefore confine ourselves to a few brief remarks on the aspect of the A.S. enterprise in general, and in doing this we have no new ideas to advance, no new doctrine to promulgate. All that we can say has already been said, and that too, by abler tongues and pens than ours. Yet in this, as in all important reformations, "line upon line" and "precept upon precept"<sup>233</sup> are requisite, not only to arouse others to a sense of their duty, but also as a stimulus to the advocates of such reform. Happy should we be if our labors should have this effect, that they should assist in awakening the people of our country from the apathy which has so long prevailed on the subject of slavery,—an institution which has long disturbed the councils of this republic, and which as time advances, assumes a still more threatening

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<sup>233</sup> Isaiah 28.10 KJV.

aspect. Already it has involved our country in a disgraceful\* war<sup>234</sup>—accumulated a vast national debt—sacrificed thousands of lives—made scores of destitute widows and weeping orphans: all for the acquisition of more territory, over which to extend its unequalled miseries,

That the wail of the slave may be heard,  
Where the shouts of Freemen arose,  
That the heart broken captive may groan  
Till death brings relief to his woes,  
That the mother may thither be driven,  
Whose infant is torn from her breast,  
Consigned to the manstealer's mercy  
Like her to be sold as a beast.

Where now is the spirit of “76” which declared taxation without representations to be unjust and oppressive,<sup>235</sup>—that spirit which promulgated the doctrine that all men are created free and equal, endowed with inalienable rights, and capable of self government?<sup>236</sup> That under all manner of hardships and privations for the establishment of these doctrines, they pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors.<sup>237</sup> Alas! alas!! the children of those men who poured out their blood like water, to gain liberty for themselves and their posterity, are now among the foremost to declare American citizens, natives of this republic, totally incapable of self-control; and yet taxation of their property is strictly demanded. But we have no disposition to dwell altogether on the dark side of the picture.—There are even yet, some redeeming features in the aspect of the affairs of the nations. We look with gratitude on the conduct of a few members of Congress, and

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<sup>234</sup> Mexican American War, 1846-1848.

<sup>235</sup> The known history of this phrase in connection to the American Revolution can be found in Daniel A. Smith, *Tax Crusaders and the Politics of Direct Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 21-23.

<sup>236</sup> The United States *Declaration of Independence* reads “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” James Madison discusses the potential for self-government in *The Federalist* first published in 1788.

<sup>237</sup> In the Declaration of Independence the phrase reads “we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

especially that of John P. Hale.<sup>238</sup> To such A.S. sentiments the walls of the Senate Chamber have not, for many years resounded. Would that more such men might find seats there, who, like Hale, would be an ornament instead of a reproach, to an enlightened and liberty-loving people. We are aware that it requires a large share of firmness and moral courage to stand up to the work at all times, on all occasions, and all alone, amid the flattery of pretended friends, and taunts of open foes. Yet it is necessary, and we are indeed gratified that there is ONE member of the Senate in whom the lovers of liberty may safely confide. We would by no means overlook the manly course pursued by J.R. Giddings, Palfrey and Tuck,<sup>239</sup> in the House of Representatives, whose proceedings, so far as they have come to our knowledge, have indeed been honorable and praiseworthy. We fondly hope a brighter day in our national history is dawning. The spirit of true republicanism which is manifesting itself in the old world will assuredly put to the blush that sham Democracy which now prevails in this country. The expression of sympathy with the people of France by the Congress of these United States, and the subsequent celebration of that revolution<sup>240</sup> by the [peo]ple of the District of Columbia, must place Amer[i]can Republicans in a truly awkward situation. How can they sympathise with those revolutionists whose motto is “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” while they themselves

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<sup>238</sup> John Parker Hale served as a Congressional Representative for New Hampshire beginning in 1843 during which time he voted against the antislavery petition Gag Rule and the proposed annexation of Texas in 1844 to demonstrate his strong antislavery position. As a United States Senator he decried the Mexican War, chastised proslavery mobs, and proposed a bill to end slavery in the District of Columbia. Before 1850, he was also considered a presidential candidate for the Liberty Party, but eventually supported the Free Soil candidate Martin Van Buren. *American National Biography*, vol. 9, 7.

<sup>239</sup> Joshua Reed Giddings served as an Ohio congressman from 1838-1859. He campaigned against the Gag Rule, called for an end of slavery in the District of Columbia, and vehemently opposed the annexation of Texas and Mexican War. Giddings also attended Garrisonian meetings as a demonstration of his radical antislavery views. *American National Biography*, vol. 8, 946. Amos Tuck served as a Representative from New Hampshire from 1847-1852 during which he opposed the Mexican War and the extension of slavery into new territories. *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 19, 27-28. John Gorham Palfrey was a Unitarian minister who served as a member of Congress from 1847-1849. He was an abolitionist and work closely in Congress with Giddings, Tuck, and Hale. *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 14, 169.

<sup>240</sup> French Revolution of 1848.

hold three millions of their fellows in chains? Can they congratulate the people of France in their almost bloodless struggle for emancipation from Monarchical tyranny, and cheer them on in giving freedom to their slave population, while they are carrying on an aggressive and bloody war to strengthen and perpetuate the worst of tyranny, the institution of slavery, and enlarge its territory? No! let our Congressmen, at least legislate the shackles from the limbs of their slaves in the territory over which they possess exclusive jurisdiction. Let them prohibit the inter-state and coast-wise slave trade. Let them act as the illustrious Franklin declared he would do,—“go to the very verge of the Constitutional limits for the promotion of the abolition of slavery;”<sup>241</sup>—then might they with some consistency make public demonstration of sympathy with the French Revolution.

We believe it to be right,—that it is the duty of all persons held as slaves, quietly to take their liberty whenever opportunity offers. We feel in duty bound to give “aid and comfort” to those fugitives who peaceably leave the land of whips and chains, and flee to a MONARCHY for protection, from Republican slavery. We say to a Monarchy, for we may not say, to our own State because there is not an INCH of its soil on which the outcast is safe, except indeed it be, where the people are better than their laws.

Whereas, The doctrine is incontrovertible, that who so gives the motives to the commission of crime makes that crime his own, and as slave-holding is admitted to be a crime—an evil of immense magnitude, and as the people of the North furnish the north,

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<sup>241</sup> This quote is most likely an amalgamation of sentiments expressed in documents written by the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, but most closely aligns with a memorial composed by James Pemberton on 3 February 1790. Staff of the Benjamin Franklin Papers, Yale University, 6 October 2008, phone conversation.

furnish the motive to the slave-holders, by purchasing their ill-gotten gains to continue in the commission of this great evil. Therefore,

Resolved, That the citizens of the (so called) free States, are already responsible for the sin of slavery, and must suffer their proportionable penalty.

Resolved, That while we contemplate the awful fact that the system of slavery still exists, it degrades woman to the level of a brute, while at its bidding she is bartered as an article of merchandize, doomed to drag out her life in a state of heathenish darkness, deprived of the privilege of learning to read the Bible—robbed of every right—robbed as much as possible of the knowledge of her own degradation, we find ample apology for our interference; nay, more we find it our imperious duty to act energetically for her elevation and restoration to that high destiny, which in the order of a wise Providence she was intended to enjoy.

Whereas, according to the declaration of the founders of this Republic, ALL MEN are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among which are, LIFE, LIBERTY and the PURSUIT of HAPPINESS; and whereas those men and women (fugitives from slavery) who leave the sunny South for a cold Canadian clime, are only seeking LIBERTY, and pursuing their own happiness.<sup>242</sup> Therefore,

Resolved, That whose molests them in their journey thitherward, not only acts inhumanly, but violates the fundamental principles of our Government.

Source note: *Indiana Courier*, 24 June 1848, pg. 4, col. 1-2.

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<sup>242</sup> Slavery was outlawed in the British Empire in 1836.



## Document 5

The following address was read at the 30 June 1849 meeting held at Michael Wilson's home, the last known meeting of the HCFASS. The members implore the women of Kentucky to take action before the upcoming state constitutional convention. As an example of abolitionist perspectives, the HCFASS deconstructs the gradual emancipation proposal of Henry Clay. Society leaders directed this document to be forwarded for publication to the editor of the Cincinnati Weekly Globe and the Louisville Examiner. The text of this document was not included in the HCFASS records, however the last pages of the transcript include a transcription of the address signed by Maria Coffin (President) and Rebecca Edgerton (Secretary) and mentions publication in the Cincinnati Weekly Herald (same paper as the Globe). No extant copies of the Cincinnati Weekly Herald could be found. The Louisville Examiner did not publish the address but instead included a brief editorial explaining why the document was excluded.

### To the Women of Kentucky

Sisters: United by ties of nature as well as by those of national character in one common sisterhood, we have ventured to approach you, and to ask of you a hearing, on a subject which equally interests us all, and which, on being introduced to your attention, you will undoubtedly acknowledge to be the case. We mean the weal of the nation as regards the institution of slavery.

The welfare of the country is of necessity of the same importance to you as to us; and it is on this account that we address you; that your minds may be aroused and that every arm may be nerved to do its might, whatever lies in its power, to save our country from the righteous judgments of Heaven, for the measures of iniquity is surely fast being filled, when all the horrors of Babylonish destruction may (except in repent) be heaped on our guilty nation.

The beauty of our civil institutions is fast fading, and will fade until nourished by the true spirit of liberty, which first gave those institutions an existence, and which taught that all men are free and equal.

Though you have no voice in the councils of your state or the nation, yet you can have a powerful influence through the social circle, on those who have the government in their own hands, the sovereign people on whom must rest the happiness or misery of the country. We beg therefore that every word, every deed of yours shall tell that you are where women ever should be – on the side of feeling, of justice, and of your God.

The time for holding the convention of your state for amending the present constitution is near, when there will probably be several plans deliberated on, to get rid of slavery.<sup>243</sup> You must therefore know that now is the time for every effort to be made to arouse the public mind to a sense of the importance of the work; that when the convention shall assemble, it may take measures to atone for the wrongs inflicted on the wretched victims of slavery. We have already noticed one plan, which will undoubtedly be before the convention, that of your own Henry Clay, a proposition which is most certainly unworthy a man so often denominated “the man of the age”. He says, “It appears to me that three principals should regulate the establishment of a system of gradual emancipation. The first is that it should be slow in its operations, cautious and gradual, so as to occasion no convulsion, nor any rash or sudden disturbance in the existing habits of society. Second, as an indispensable condition, the emancipated slaves should be removed from the state, to some colony. Thirdly, the expenses of their transportation to such colony, including an outfit for six months after their arrival at it, should be defrayed by a fund to be raised from the labor of each freed slave.”<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Although antislavery proponents hoped the new constitution would eradicate or at least limit slavery, the 1850 Kentucky Constitution declared slave ownership an “absolute property right.” Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1997), 117.

<sup>244</sup> Henry Clay to Richard Pindell, 17 February 1849. Henry Clay, *The Papers of Henry Clay*, ed. Melba Porter Hay, vol. 10, *Candidate, Compromiser, Elder Statesman: January 1, 1844-June 29, 1852* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1991), 576. This letter was published in at least one Kentucky newspaper, the Frankfort *Commonwealth*, 13 March 1849.

According to the second proposition the slaves must be colonized, and according to the first, the plan of emancipation must be slow, cautious and gradual in its operation; therefore he thinks probably it will not be too hasty for all born after 1855 or 60 to be free. Just think of it, 34 to 39 years before a single slave would be free and then not free until they had banished themselves.

According to the same calculation, in all probability Kentucky would be a slave state as late as 1930 or 40. Talk of making it a free state nearly a century hence! Again he says "Colonization will be attended with the painful effect of the separation of the colonists from their parents, and in some instances, from their children, but from the latter it will only be temporary as they will follow and be again reunited."<sup>245</sup>

Mothers! what would your feelings be, did you know that your children must be forever exiled from the home of their fathers, and you left to wither in your chains, without even their mules, tho' slaves to cheer your last moments? Or what would your feelings were you the colonists? Your aged parents left behind forever and also your tender babes - the light and life of the domestic hearth - only with the hope of being reunited after a lapse of 20 or more years. Through the whole of the letter a sordid policy is to be seen as the ground work of the system after all his pretensions to philanthropy in the beginning. This plan is to rid the state of its slaves no matter by what means, so they are out of it. Hear him. "Until the announcement of the system I am endeavoring to sketch, I think, all the legal rights of the proprietors of slaves, in their fullest extent ought to remain unimpaired and unrestricted."<sup>246</sup> Consequently they would have a right to sell,

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid, 578.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, 577.

devise or remove them from the state and in the latter case without their offspring being entitled to the benefits of emancipation for which the system provides.”<sup>247</sup>

Thus by this proposition the master may hold his slaves in that state till within one day of the time the act would come into effect and then by removing them to a neighboring state can hold them forever. And this is the philanthropy of the “man of the age”.

Before giving countenance to such a system as the foregoing, think that all are children of one common Father, think of your selves a sisters of those whom you are dooming to exile for no crime, except being deprived of the rights given by God to every creature in his image, think of the ties of relationship thus rent, and of your accountability to your God, for the Savior declared "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these ye have done it unto me."<sup>248</sup>

MARIA COFFIN, President  
REBECCA EDGERTON, Secretary

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<sup>247</sup> This sentence is a continuation of the previous quotation.

<sup>248</sup> Mathew 25.40 KJV, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

**Appendix 1**  
**Membership List**

(Names are spelled as they appeared in the HCFASS records)

Antrim, Louisa  
Allen, Harriet  
Bennett, Emiline  
Boon, Rachel  
Brookshire, Anna M.  
Canady, Margret A.  
Coffin, Maria  
Cook, Anna  
Cox, Anna  
Cray, Martha  
Darno, Rebecca  
Davis, Eliza Jane  
Edgerton, Dianna  
Edgerton, Mary  
Edgerton, Rebecca  
Edgerton, Sarah  
Edwards, Elizabeth  
Elliott, Armell  
Elliott, Mary  
Ellis, Nancy  
Evans, Evaline  
Fuller, Sarah  
Gauze, Rachel  
Gordon, Rebecca  
Gordon, Sarah  
Gunning, Mary  
Hasket, Grace  
Henshaw, Hannah  
Henshaw, Mary  
Henshaw, Millie M.  
Hiatt, Mary  
Hiatt, Rachel  
Hinshaw, Annis  
Hinshaw, Hannah  
Iddings, Dianna  
James, Mary  
Jessop, Catherine  
Jessop, Lydia  
Jessop, Mary  
Jessop, Ruth  
Jessop, Susanna  
Johnson, Ruth

Jones, Anna  
Kersey, Charity  
Kersey, Edith  
Lamb, Saray  
Macy, Catherine  
Macy, Luzinna  
Macy, Nancy  
Macy, Phebe  
Macy, Sarah Jane  
Macy, Susannah  
Meril, Eliza B.  
Moore, Elizabeth  
Munden, Jane  
Ocheltree, Catherine  
Paxton, Elizabeth  
Paxton, Mary  
Paxton, Mary  
Payne, Sarah  
Pickering, Phebe  
Pickering, Sarah A.  
Pitts, Charity  
Pitts, Eliza Jane  
Pitts, Elizabeth  
Presnall, Catherine  
Presnall, Emily  
Presnall, Jane  
Presnall, Pleasant  
Ratliff, Elizabeth  
Rees, Ruth  
Reynard, Catherine  
Reynard, Rachel  
Rogers, Elizabeth  
Rose, Lydia  
Saint, Ruth Anah  
Saunders, Anna  
Sheridan, Mary  
Small, Hannah  
Smith, Clementine  
Symours, Susannah  
Taylor, Susan  
Unthank, Drusilla  
Unthank, Rebecca  
Van Vleet, Jane  
White, Martha  
Wickersham, Anna  
Wickersham, Asenath

Wickersham, Caroline  
Wickersham, Huldah  
Wickersham, Jemmima  
Wickersham, Rebecca  
Wickersham, Susannah  
Willits, Rebecca  
Willits, Ruth  
Wilson, Ester  
Wilson, Jane  
Wilson, Rebecca  
Wright, Abigail  
Wright, Anna  
Wright, Catherine  
Wright, Elizabeth  
Wright, Marila

## Appendix 2

### List of HCFASS Officers

Names in brackets are attributed by Thomas D. Hamm in *The Antislavery Movement in Henry County, Indiana*.

Date Elected	President	VP	Cor. Sec.	Rec. Sec.	Treasurer	Executive Committee
3 April 1841	H. Wickersham	D. Unthank	E.W. Moore	R. Edgerton	S. Wickersham	P. Macy
						R. Gause
						R. Gordon
						C.W. Kersey
						D. Edgerton
						A. Wickersham
						E. Kersey
12 Nov 1841	D. Edgerton	D. Iddings	(E. W. Moore)	S.A. Pickering	(E. Kersey)	A. H. Macy
						S. Wickersham
						H. Wickersham
						H. Hinshaw
						P. Macy
						D. Unthank
						R. Edgerton
22 August 1842	M. Coffin	D. Edgerton	R. Edgerton	S.A. Pickering	E. Kersey	H. Wickersham
						D. Unthank
						M. Hinshaw
						Eveline Evans
						S. Wickersham
						R.H. Boon
						C.W. Kersey
						P. Macy
23 July 1843	M. Coffin	D. Macy	D. Unthank	H. Hinshaw		A. Hinshaw
						R. Edgerton
						S. W. Lamborn
						P. Willits
						P. Macy
						A.H. Macy
29 June 1844	R. Edgerton		H. Hinshaw	H. Wickersham	D. Macy	A.H. Macy
						N. Macy
						S. Gordon
						M. Coffin
						M. Hinshaw
						E. B. Ferrel
						M. Paxton
						R. Raymond



**List of HCFASS Officers (Continued)**

Date Elected	President	VP	Cor. Sec.	Rec. Sec.	Treasurer	Executive Committee
n.d. (1847)	R. Darr	M. Coffin	R. Wickersham	R. Edgerton	S. Symons	P. Macy
						S. Wickersham
						E. Wright
						A. Wright
						E. Rogers
3 June 1848	M. Coffin	R. Darr	J. Wilson	R. Edgerton	S. Symons	D. Iddings
						C. Jessup
						J. Macy
						R. Wilson
						N. Macy
30 June 1849	P. Macy	P. Willits	S. Edgerton	R. Edgerton	H.J. Small	M. Hiatt
						M. Coffin
						E. M. Wright
						A. Hiatt
						R. Darr

### Appendix 3

#### Calendar of HCFASS Entries

(Names are spelled as they appeared in the HCFASS records)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1841</b>			
3 April Spiceland	Intro to HCFASS	H. Wickersham	1
	Constitution	Committee of five	2-4
	Minutes/Resolutions	Executive Committee	5-7
4 June Duck Creek Meeting House	Minutes/Resolutions	Committee of five	7-8
	Address	Executive Committee	9-12
6 July Caleb Wickersham home	Minutes/Resolution Address	Committee of four	13-14
20 September	Minutes/Resolutions	Committee of four	14-16, 24
	Document	Executive Committee	16-23
12 November Duck Creek Meeting House	Report	Executive Committee	24-25
	Resolutions	Committee of five	25-26, 27
	Report of the Treasurer	S. Wickersham	26
<b>1842</b>			
12 February Duck Creek Meeting House	Minutes/Resolutions	Committee of five	27-28
7 April New Lisbon	Minutes/Resolutions	Unknown	29-30
1 July Duck Creek Meeting House	Minutes/Resolutions	S. Wickersham	30, 37-38
	Address of the HCFASS to its members on exhortation to remember the slave	Executive Committee	30-33
	To the HCASS: Address to the men only	Executive Committee	33-37

**Calendar of HCFASS Entries (continued)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Page</b>
22 August Caleb Wickersham home in Flat Rock	Minutes/Resolutions	S. Wickersham, S. Taylor, R. Edgerton, C.W. Henry	38, 42-43
19 November Greensboro	Minutes/Resolutions	Committee of three	44
<b>1843</b>			
18 March Greensboro	Minutes/Resolutions	R. Edgerton, P. Macy, D. Unthank, R.H. Boon	44
17 June Elm Grove	Minutes	D. Unthank, R. Gause, P. Macy, M. White	45
23 July Knightstown	Minutes/Resolutions	D. Unthank, R. Edgerton, A.H. Macy, P. Macy, S.W. Lamborn	45-47, 49
	Report of the EC	Executive Committee	47-49
2 December Greensboro	Minutes/Resolutions	H. Wickersham, P. Macy, S.A. Pickering	49-51
<b>1844</b>			
27 April Mud Bridge	Minutes/Resolutions	Members assembled	51
29 June W. Edgerton	Minutes/Resolution	Unknown	52-53
	Report	Executive Committee	53-55
6 August Elm Grove	Minutes/Resolutions	C. Octreltree, N. Macy, A.H. Macy, S. Gordon, P. Hinshaw	55-56
<b>1845</b>			
25 January Greensboro	Minutes/Resolutions	M. Coffin, P. Willits, S. Gordon	56-58
31 May Ogden	Minutes/Resolutions	S.A. Pickering, P. Macy, E. Gordon, A. Elliot, Ruth Anah Paint	58-60
	Address to the slave holders of the South particularly to those of N. Carolina	Unknown	60-64
	Report	Executive Committee	64-66

**Calendar of HCFASS Entries (continued)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1846</b>			
25 July Greensboro	Minutes/Resolutions	Appointed Committee	66-68
<b>1847</b>			
3 March Parkhurst School	Minutes/Resolutions	Unknown	68-69
5 April Greensboro	Minutes	Unknown	69
n. d. Wesleyan Meeting House	Minutes	Unknown	69-70
7 December Greensboro	Minutes	Unknown	70-71
<b>1848</b>			
1 April Spiceland School	Minutes/Resolutions	Unknown	71-73
3 June Newcastle	Minutes/Resolutions	Unknown	73-74
<b>1849</b>			
30 June Michael Wilson's home	Minutes  Report	Unknown  Executive Committee	75, 78  75-78
[30 June] [Michael Wilson's home]	To the Women of Kentucky	Copied from printed version in the Cincinnati Weekly Herald	78-82

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