



Profiles in Leadership: Activists From the 19th Century

Materials:

- PowerPoint: **Profiles in Leadership: 19th Century Activists**
- Sojourner Truth
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sn8CUyvG2k>
- Ain't I A Woman, speech by Sojourner Truth at Women's Rights Convention, Akron, OH, 1851
- Nat Turner
<https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video; ylt=A2KLfSYQpX1glvUADnVXNyoA; ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Nj?p=nat+turner&fr=mcafee#id=5&vid=979c993a37fd3c03f5e9b6a3f67b1ce8&action=view>
- Nat Turner
<https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video; ylt=AwRj7Joh131g4m4AEDdXNyoA; ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Nj?p=nat+turner&fr=mcafee#id=23&vid=ea4806d00d5e5e9a4f3bccc3a81d1f77&action=view>
- Frederick Douglass
<https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video; ylt=A0geKeQK3X1g0Y0A.z5XNyoA; ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3BpdnM-?p=frederick+douglass&fr2=piv-web&fr=mcafee#id=1&vid=83e46eba43709c0443af0ae5a2da7ed5>
- Guiding Questions

Plan of Instruction:

1. **Introduction:** The activists of the 19th Century created resistance to gain freedom in every possible way either through individual acts or through slave insurrections. They fought their captors, ran away, organized rebellions, became preachers, were spies for the Union Army, organized schools, participated in the underground railroad, and used their voices to become great orators.

Throughout slavery, individual efforts were much more common than major rebellions. YAAHA chose eight activists that kept alive the hope of freedom and discontent of slavery.

2. **Lecture:**
 - a. **Slide 1: Introduction** (Read slide)



- b. **Slide 2: Sojourner Truth** (1797-1883) Sojourner was an illiterate slave born Isabella Baumfree in 1797 and escaped slavery in 1827. After she became a Christian, she felt that she must go forward and embark on a journey to preach the gospel and to speak against slavery and oppression. She changed her name to Sojourner Truth. Sojourner became an evangelist, a Garrison abolitionist, and a feminist for women's suffrage. She was a mystic who stood six feet tall and blessed with a booming voice that impressed Harriet Beecher Stowe.

In 1849, she began making speeches about women's suffrage. She delivered, extemporaneously, a speech on suffrage at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, ***Ain't I A Woman?***

- c. **Slide 3: Nat Turner** (1800-1831) The Turner Rebellion was one of the largest slave rebellions in American history. It took place in Southampton County, Virginia, with small farms rather than large plantations. Nat's rebellion played a vital role in the changes that occurred in the antebellum slave society. Nat was a slave preacher and something of a mystic. In the 1820s, he started seeing visions of black and white angels fighting in the sky. He believed God chose him to be the Moses of his people who would liberate them, gain his freedom.

In 1831, without a plan or clear objective, he gathered eighty slaves and launched his rebellion. Nat and the rebelling slaves moved from farm to farm, killing nearly all women and children in their path. At the time, most of the area's adult males were at a nearby religious revival.

By the time the militia curbed the rebellion, Nat and the rebelling slaves killed approximately sixty whites. Fear spread through the white population and white mobs turned on blacks who had played no part in the rebellion and murdered an estimated 200 blacks. Nat managed to escape, but authorities captured and executed him.

Virginia legislators considered abolishing slavery, but in a close vote, decided to retain slavery. The legislators continued to implement repressive policies against blacks and tightened the slave codes, which further limited the movement of blacks. They made it illegal for blacks to conduct religious services without the presence of a white person.



- d. **Slide 4: Mary Ellen Pleasant** (1814-1904) Pleasant was born on August 19, 1904, and there are many questions as to what her status was, free or slave? This uncertainty is caused by herself since she had many stories to share about her family history. At the age of eleven, she became an indentured servant to the Hussey-Gardner family, who were Quakers and abolitionists in Massachusetts. She met her first husband, an abolitionist, while working as an apprentice for a tailor in Boston. After four years of marriage, her husband died and left an estate worth tens of thousands of dollars. Pleasant continued to work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, which was hazardous work because if found, perpetrators would be subject to persecution and imprisonment under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

As a successful real estate magnate, she used her money to help as many people with transportation costs, housing and food on the Underground Railroad.

In 1892, Pleasant purchased a ranch in California and continued her work on the Underground Railroad in California. She was known as the “Harriet Tubman” of California.

- e. **Slide 5: Frederick Douglass** (1818-1895) Douglass was born into slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey and escaped at twenty years of age. He was perhaps the most influential black leader of the 19th Century. He was one of the greatest orators and writers of his time and achieved international fame as the voice of humanism and social justice.

Douglass was a propagandist for the Union Army and encouraged black troops to sign up for service. He welcomed the Civil War as a moral crusade against slavery and was a stalwart Republican.

- f. **Slide 6: Harriet Tubman** (1822-1913) Harriet was born a slave in Maryland. She escaped slavery and became an abolitionist. Tubman’s resistance to slavery continued during the Civil War when she worked with the Union government as a spy and scout.

She returned to the South nineteen times to lead her family and others to freedom by utilizing the Underground Railroad. As a result of her heroic actions as a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad during the 1850s, she became known as the “Black Moses,” who led three hundred slaves to independence. She never lost a fugitive, nor was she caught by bounty hunters. The reward for her capture eventually rose to forty thousand dollars. Forty thousand dollars in 1850 is equivalent in purchasing power to about \$1.315,682.05 in 2019.



- g. **Slide 7: Amanda Smith (1837-1915)** Amanda was born into slavery and lived in Pennsylvania after her father bought freedom for her family. She married James Smith, and after three years, her husband and children all died.

She committed entirely over to evangelism after a successfully preaching all summer to a white audience. She sailed to England and preached in England, India, and West Africa. Her work helped expand women's roles in the AME church.

She founded the Amanda Smith Orphanage and Industrial Home for Abandoned and Destitute Colored Children in Harvey, Illinois, in 1899. Amanda was involved with also connected to the founding of the NAACP.

- h. **Slide 8: Rosetta Douglass-Sprague 91839-1906)** Rosetta was the daughter of Frederick Douglass and a product of an excellent education. As a teacher and activist, she was a founding member of the National Association for Colored Women. She married ex-slave Nathan Sprague and they had seven children. Fredericka Douglass Sprague was an activist and a Philanthropist.
Rosetta was an activist for equal rights and an excellent writer on women's issues.

- i. **Slide 9: Ida B. Wells (1862-1931)** Ida was one of the most vocal anti-lynching advocates in the United States. She was born into slavery to James and Lizzie Wells. After her family was decreed free, her parents became active in the Republican Party during Reconstruction, thanks to the Emancipation Proclamation.

Her civil rights activism began in 1884 after she bought a first-class train ticket to Nashville on the ladies' car and was forcibly ordered to move to a car for blacks. She sued the railroad and won a \$500 settlement in the circuit court, but the Tennessee Supreme Court later overturned the decision.

After witnessing the lynchings of three grocery store owners, Wells researched other lynching and wrote about them. She identified lynching as a crime and demanded an end to the lynching of white and black Republicans. Prompted by the start of segregation in Tennessee, she began writing about other injustices in the South, which concerned race and politics.

By 1898, she brought her anti-lynching campaign to the White House, asking President William McKinley to make reforms. As part of her efforts, she led a protest in Washington D.C. Ida's courageous actions resulted in anti-lynching becoming a significant commitment for the NAACP, black women's clubs, and other civil rights organizations.



h. **Slide 10: Summary** (Read Slide)

3. Guiding Questions:

How did the Christian faith play a similar influence in the lives and motives of both Sojourner Truth and Nat Turner? How did their backgrounds differ? How did their actions affect the slave's life?

Why was the abolitionist's work so dangerous? What law made The Underground Railroad difficult?

What were the characteristics that made Frederick Douglass so successful in the abolitionists' work?

Why was Ida B. Wells so crucial as an anti-lynching advocate?



A Women's Rights Convention was held at a church in Akron, Ohio, in 1851. Frances Gage, a feminist activist, presided over the meeting. When Sojourner Truth was invited to address the meeting, many feminist leaders urged Ms. Gage not to allow her to speak, worrying that the speech would be about abolition and would derail the meeting. Ms. Gage responded, "*We shall see when the time comes,*" and did not prevent Sojourner Truth from speaking to the audience. The following is the 'Ain't I a Woman?' speech delivered by Sojourner Truth (in modern dialect), based on Ms. Gage's recollection and notes

Ain't I A Woman

"Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that between the Negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon.

But what's all this here talking about? That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?

Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman?

I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman?

I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say."

<http://slaverysite.com/hard%20to%20believe%20-%20but%20true!.htm>

