

EDUCATING ADULTS THROUGH DISTINCTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING:

LUCRETIA MOTT, QUAKER MINISTER

by

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ABSTRACT

Lucretia Coffin Mott, in an era filled with events the significance of which reverberates today, spoke publicly about issues of societal and ethical concern. This study focuses on her work as a nineteenth-century female Quaker minister who through public speaking educated adults about the following: abolition of slavery, rights of women, and peaceful ways to address injustice. Separate chapters explore each of these three vital issues.

Lucretia Mott ranks as a pioneer female public speaker. At a time that barred women's speaking in public, she spoke about significant issues. Her speaking admitted her to the company of American women who pioneered in speaking publicly. These endeavors to speak to "promiscuous" audiences, those comprised of adult males and females, also admitted her to the company of women who endured criticism, insults, and peril. Through a process of education, these women changed history and shaped culture.

Lucretia Mott's Quaker perspective, her way with spoken words, and her womanhood distinguished her work as an educator in public forums and settings that ranged from religious meetings to the lyceum and conventions called to consider issues of national import. What could have prepared this Quaker minister--active in public domains for more than fifty years--for a place among the pioneers who advocated and practiced the right of women to speak purposefully in public forums?

Lucretia Mott's commitment to the Society of Friends enabled her to be a pathfinder both in education and on important issues. Therefore, Chapter Two presents an exploration of Quaker history, spirituality, and practices to inform for purposes of historic educational analysis and interpretation. References in historical works to noteworthy innovations that originated from efforts by Quakers in American society and to successes in business sparked this inquiry.

This study examined her speeches to see how they reflected Quaker principles and practices and her work as a pioneer public speaker who educated about societal and ethical issues. The study concludes that her work was energized because she knew her history, she questioned her world and she lived her faith.

With love and joy I dedicate this work

to my dear children,

Jason R. Roslewicz and Elizabeth R. Roslewicz,

to my lovable daughter-in-law Brenda Vaden Roslewicz

and to my grandson, the delightful, inquisitive and endearing Dylan Rafferty Roslewicz.

I thank each of you--in your own distinctive ways--for teaching me to keep on learning.

May your lives continue to be energized by love, by learning, and by humor.

May you treasure your ancestors for their adventuresome, faithful spirits.

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A Note to Readers

The Society of Friends, Quakers, employed unique linguistic constructs and behavioral patterns to demonstrate and signify the complex, multifaceted religious dynamic through which they practiced and expressed their spirituality. Friends developed many idioms and gave common words distinctive meanings. Sufficient grasp of Friends' terminology seems essential. Accordingly, a glossary of Quaker terms and idioms acquired from multiple, reliable sources, accompanies this study.

Glossary terminology appears within the text in a different color tone, underlined, and is hyper-linked for on-line, Internet users. In each chapter, the first use of a glossary word will appear in the different color tone. Readers are encouraged to consult the glossary for clarification of Friends' representations of certain concepts expressed in words familiar to today's reader but used differently by Friends. For instance, as opportunities occurred, Lucretia Mott presented Quaker-based beliefs and practices to educate adults through sermons and speeches delivered extemporaneously in public arenas. The Quaker expression for such opportunities is "as the way opens." The word concern introduces another example. For Friends, a concern characterizes a call to do something in answer to insight from the Light within. ". The glossary contains sufficiently full explications of words and phrases used in distinct ways by Friends to ensure that non-Friends understand the intended meaning.

A Friendly Way to Speak

In accord with the Friends' practice, in this study Mott will be referred to simply as Lucretia Coffin or Lucretia Mott, as appropriate. The reasons for this are twofold. First, for clarity, because members of her marriage family are mentioned in this study. Secondly, to demonstrate Friends' practice of respect for each individual and in accord with "plain spoken" simplicity in language, only full names are used. In 1884, Lucretia Mott's granddaughter acknowledged that the Quaker usage of "full proper names can be monotonous... [but] must be ascribed to the usage among Friends, from which it was thought best not to deviate" {Mott 1884}. Thus, as the story unfolds, the researcher cites the principal person under investigation by her given name along with the appropriate surname, e.g. Lucretia Coffin or Lucretia Mott. Also in accord with Friends' belief in equality of persons and refusal to honor, through titles, one person over another, Friends will receive this form of Quaker address.

Quakers' Language Bespeaks Certain Perspectives

Quaker linguistic differences, moreover, suggest even greater distinctions. Notably, only the Society of Friends remains extant among the numerous religious sects founded in the turmoil of seventeenth-century England. English historian J. F. McGregor characterizes the Friends' continuation, which he credits to their organizational structure, as a "unique" accomplishment.¹

¹ {McGregor 1984: 122}; For further exploration of these times see works such as {McGregor 1984: 121-139; Reay & McGregor 1984; From Persecution to 1991a}.

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PREFACE

Catalysts for My Intellectual Curiosity about Lucretia Mott

Noteworthy innovations that originated from efforts by Quakers in American society² and successes in business³ referenced in historical works sparked this inquiry. These references stirred interest in light of their minor population status--at their most numerous, Friends constituted only 1% of the population in Colonial America {Stoneburner 1986: xv}--compared to their seemingly disproportionate influence on society. Dialogues with two historians of Quaker education⁴ led to study about educational aspects of Quaker history and spirituality⁵ and particularly the history of American Quaker women.⁶ Finally, from reading Margaret Hope Bacon's biography of Lucretia Coffin Mott {Bacon 1980}, a fascination emerged. Bacon once suggested that today many Quakers walk "in the lengthened shadow" of Lucretia Mott {Bacon 1992: 4}. Seemingly, her shadow fell upon the researcher, a non-Friend, and awakened intellectual curiosity about the context and content of her early learning, the educational experiences that prepared her to act, and her work as a woman who pioneered in the right to educate about societal issues by speaking in public forums. That curiosity resulted in this research endeavor.

² For instance see {Stubblefield & Keane 1994: 14-15, 71-72}.

³ See {Hatton 1993: 20-22}.

⁴ Personal telephone conversation with William Kashatus, III about nineteenth-century Quaker education and Lucretia Coffin Mott (Philadelphia, 7/ 3, 1995); e-mail exchange with Alson D. VanWagner about historical records of Nine-Partners Boarding School and Quaker education (11/9, 1997).

⁵ See Appendix A Researcher's Early Interest in the Friends for section headed Influential Literature.

⁶ Ibid.