

Document A: Revolutionary Foundations & Goals

Abigail Adams "Remember the Ladies" Letter 1776

In March 1776, Abigail Adams wrote this celebrated letter to husband John, who was serving as the Massachusetts representative to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Only weeks before, on March 17, the British had evacuated from Boston, a preliminary sign of the Revolutionary War's eventual success. This letter shows Abigail to be a woman of unusual boldness and insight, as she urges her husband to "remember the ladies" in an age when women were seen as strictly domestic.

Braintree March 31, 1776

Tho we felicitate ourselves, we sympathize with those who are trembling least the Lot of Boston should be theirs. But they cannot be in similar circumstances unless pusillanimity and cowardise should take possession of them. They have time and warning given them to see the Evil and shun it.-I long to hear that you have declared an independancy-and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would **Remember the Ladies**, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in immitation of the Supreem Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

Source:

Butterfield, L.H., editor. Adams Family Correspondence, vol.1: pp. 369-371. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963-1993.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/adams/filmmore/ps_ladies.html

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