

# Militant abolitionism in 1830s



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During the colonial era, Quakers Society of Friends had a difficult time convincing North American people that slaveholding was against Christian doctrines. However, the age of Enlightenment and the American Revolution led many Americans into fighting for slaves' rights. Northern states also started a gradual emancipation of their slaves. The federal government also prohibited slavery in the Northwestern Territories in 1787 and in 1808 banned trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, despite the abolition of slavery in these two areas, antislavery agitation dropped off due to the increasing profitability of southern slavery.

#### The birth of the Movement and its Activities

The modern American militant abolition movement began in the early 1830s as a result of religious revivalism popularly known as the Second Great Awakening. Abolitionists thought of slavery as a product of an individual sin by Revivalist tenets. These tenets believed that emancipation was the only price for repentance. Later on, abolitionists realized that slavery was receiving moral support with some racial prejudice. Immediately, the abolitionists lobbied to change the nation's racial discriminatory practices.

Abolitionists tried to reach and convert people during the 1830s. Founded in 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society recruited tens of thousands of members from all parts of America. The Abolitionists condemned slavery on moral grounds and pursued immediate emancipation of all slaves. National religious institutions and individual slaveholders, who were the chief targets, rejected the abolition appeals. Opponents went further to suppress antislavery agitation through enactments from the church and state.

African American activists joined the new campaign. Some, like Brown, had many records of public opposition to racial discrimination in the north and the colonization movement. Fugitive slaves, such as William Wells Brown and Fredrick Douglass, provided strong antislavery testimony. However, black abolitionists encountered patronizing views and attitudes from the white abolitionists. Hence, many turned to self-help and civil rights groups, while others concentrated on separatist projects.

Many women braved public disapproval and joined the abolitionist campaign. Women are known to be veterans of moral reform activities, and principles of religion and republican ideology inspired them. Like their African American counterparts, these women faced opposition within the movement. Women were first barred from the American Anti-slavery movements, but in response, they formed local organizations through which they channeled their concerns and sponsored antislavery events such as bazaars and picnics.

Due to the widespread rejection of the anti-slavery program, many abolitionists changed their moral persuasion strategy. Most of them led by William Lloyd Garrison abandoned their churches. According to Garrison, churches had become hopelessly corrupted by slavery. Women participated in American Anti-slavery society after 1840. Maria Weston and Lydia Maria were among the many women who served in the group's operations and main office duties.

Religious and political abolitionists also emerged in late 1830s. Non-Garrison abolitionists grouped in a new organization known as The American and

Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. The abolitionists lobbied religious institutions, and by 1840, they had an organized Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist antislavery movements. Political antislavery campaigns also intensified during this period. Abolitionists petitioned legislatures and interrogated political candidates on slavery-related issues.

### Antislavery Efforts before 1830

Abolitionist feelings were strong during the American Revolution and the upper south by 1820s. However, the abolitionist movement never coalesced into a militant crusade until 1830s. In the previous decade, before 1830, much of the north underwent social disruptions associated with the spread of commerce and manufacturing. Powerful evangelical religious groups arose to impact spiritual direction to the society. These preachers stressed the importance of ending sinful doings and practices and the responsibility of every individual in upholding God's will in the society. Lyman Beecher, Nathaniel Taylor, and other preachers, on what came to be called The Second Great Awakening, organized massive religious revivals in the 1820s. This came later to be the main impetus of the resurgence of abolitionism. By 1830s, William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore D. weld, Lewis Tappan, Arthur, and E. Wright had spiritually been nourished by revivalism and had taken up the cause for immediate emancipation

### Conclusion

The main objective of the abolitionists was to end racial discrimination, segregation, and immediate emancipation of slaves. The religious favor of the Second Great Awakening partly fuelled racial abolitionism. This prompted

many people to start advocating for immediate emancipation on religious grounds. As time went on, abolitionist ideas spread in northern churches. Politics of 1830s also contributed to the regional animosity between the South and the North, leading to a civil war.