

## Role of Women in United States

### **Introduction**

Adams Abigail was the wife of the second President of the United States of America. Abigail depicts the ideal woman that lived in the early nationalism stages of the United States. She's remembered as the Early First lady and the position she took on the fighting for women rights. In her works will propagating the women rights, she wrote a lot of letters to her husband. She was competent ion farm and financial management. From the content of the letters she wrote her husband one can judge that they lived happily as a family (Norton, 2001).

### **Role of women in early United States history- Abigail Adams**

#### **Birth of Abigail Smith (Abigail Adams), 1744**

Abigail Smith was born in November 1744. She was daughter to a gifted reader that owned a whole library. She happened to have been born at time that girls were discriminated against in terms of denial of formal education. The United States at that time was a British colony and so her home town Massachusetts was under the British authority. She and her two sisters developed the interest for reading and hence they spent most of their time in their father's library reading .Abigail's dad encouraged her to read and this pushed her esteem high that she started pursuing other fields such as Letter writing, hosting and even sewing. It was at this point that she gained a lot of interest in letter writing that in the later stages of her marriage, she used this talent to push for the women agenda through writings to her husband. Her confidence in pushing what other women had not done made her to be recognized as the revolutionized woman who could achieve that which others couldn't. The writings she did bring out a woman who was well versed with the nationhood struggle of the time even as America fought for its independence from the British.

#### **John and Abigail Marry, 1764**

John Adams was only 16 when she started visiting Abigail's home and it didn't take long for Abigail to discover that John to had the passion for reading. The attention that John gave to Abigail helped in bringing up the relationship and sooner they started exchanging letters during the times that they couldn't meet. They later married in 1764 and settled at the Johns farmhouse in the nearby Braintree. A year later they were blessed with a daughter they called Abigail but mostly they would prefer calling her by the nick name Nabby. It was after two tears from the birth of Nabby that they were blessed with a son they called Quincy Adams. In a span of eight years the couple had been eight children. Abigail was in the pan of ten years in marriage preoccupied with taking care of her children and the far4m.This was because the husband was busy dealing with national issues that involved fighting for the independence of the United States. The only time before America's independence that she moved out of the home was when Adams (her hubby) took her and the children to Boston as he participated in the workers' rights there.

#### **Children- 1765-1777**

The Adams had four children by the time John got into active politics. John's involvement in the continental congress made him to be so busy living his wife Abigail to run the family and the farm.

During the independence war she actually devoted himself to education of her children. With time they bore more children bringing the number to eight. It is out of this children that Quincy the second born became the sixth President of the United States.

## **ABIGAIL DURING ADAMS VICE- PRESIDENCY AND PRESIDENCY 1789-1801**

John Adams was Vice President for the United States from 1789-1797 and was President from 1797-1801. Abigail was more involved in the management of their home and did not spend much time even in the White House when the Husband became President. On the retirement of the husband, they lived out of the public life in Massachusetts. We are well able to learn about this great woman through the letters she wrote the husband. Abigail died just seven years before the Presidency of his son Quincy Adams (Singer, 2008).

### **The French Looming attack-1778**

Abigail and John Adams were not just husband and wife but were close friends, lovers and this complemented their duties from family matters to the Presidency of John Adams. The effect of Abigail was felt in Johns Presidency through the advice she gave the husband on several decisions that he made. Case in point is the looming attack of the United States by the French in 1798. She advised her husband who was President to Attack France. As much as this did not happen, the actions taken by President John Adams were much in one way or the other incorporating her views. This led to the formulation of Acts that provided that aliens who talk anything negative or one that is against the policies of the American President would be traced and prosecuted. Abigail went ahead and supported this though it didn't fully show what she had suggested but had partly dealt with the matter.

## **SERIES OF LETTERS-1774-1778**

### **Abigail's Letter May 7, 1776**

This role played made the Americans to give her the reference title "Her majesty." She fought for the change of laws to allow women to participate more in political affairs as is evident in her letter to John Adams of May 7, 1776 "But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken; and, notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims, we have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet."

The relationship between Abigail and John was always a warm one from the letters she used to write the husband. This was due to the fact that they bonded by Abigail helping with the domestic issues at home while at the same time playing the role of an advisor to John. John was always keen to listen to Abigail's advice which was mainly framed on the basis of the freedom of women. It is a fact that Abigail did not like the absence of her husband while on duty but she had to contend with this by having constant communication through letters. The letters they exchanged showed a lot of frankness and intimacy. Abigail could not take it lightly when she discovered that one was against the policies of the husband. She would therefore handle such people with a lot of resentment. She and her husband agreed on a number of issues one of the m is having the antislavery opinion. Adams

and Abigail took this as a backtracker on the fight for concrete democracy in the United States. This is even demonstrated when Abigail took in a black boy that had the zeal to pursue education.

### **Fight for the Legislative amendments 1776- March 31st 1776 Letter**

Abigail is today revered and remembered as the founder of the women rights activists in the United States. She directed the path that the women took to the independence of the nation and at the same time fought for the Legislative amendments that would see the rights of the women are protected. She fought for the education of the girl child and was herself on the forefront when she went in for the science classes while the husband was working in England. She accepted the fact that the only way that women can mentor their children to living fuller lives was through their acquisition of education. Her believe in education as an important tool for empowerment of women led her to write the letter to the husband which became famous in March 31st 1776 that actually persuades Adams to have women rights incorporated in the new laws; "I long to hear that you have declared an independency. 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 favorable 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 particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, 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 is 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 tide of master for the tenderer 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 (servants) of your sex; regard us then as being placed by Providence under your protection, and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness."

She coordinated other women in fighting for the revolution that concerned their rights through the support in formation of women organizations that facilitated collective bargaining. It is through this organization that the women from all over the country could be mobilizes to demand for their rights (Kleinberg, Boris, & Ruiz, 2007).

### **Women rights campaigns-March 1776 Letter**

The women rights campaign which she got involved in had included various grievances which she got from experience and from the public forums and round table meetings she held with them. She fought for the education of the women and the change in nature of roles of women as concerns household management. She argued that men and women working together on the domestic roles would produce better results. This is shown in her letter of March 1776; "Men of sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the (servants) of your sex; regard us then as being placed by Providence under your protection, and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power

only for our happiness." "We have only the name of masters, and rather than give up this, which would completely subject us to the despotism of the petticoat, I hope General Washington and all our brave heroes would fight."

She however respected the responsibilities that women must play at home. She never neglected this at any one point of her life both through her words and actions. This is what has made many to refer to her as the propagator of early feminism. As much as Abigail's fight for the rights of women in the United States did not bring wide changes, she left a great impact in the form of insight of what women can be given the chance that their rights are protected. This with time led to legislations that empowered women in many years to come (Wheeler, 2009).

### **Class enrolment-1784-Education for Empowerment of women**

Abigail is a show of the women in the American society that were able to focus beyond their shortcomings and hindrances. While many women of the time would consider their education background as a hindrance to laying out their demands publicly, she did not behave this way.

She in fact despite of her lack of competence in French tried to learn the basics that helped her cope with the society. She went ahead and decided to educate herself by taking science classes while in England with her husband in the 1780s. She studied topics which at the time were thought to be the domain of men such as Magnetism, Electricity and Hydrostatics. All along she lived a life of letter witting which became the most common way of giving her opinions and views. She wrote many letters to the husband in way of advice to the leadership of his husband and America as a whole. She even exchanged her views with great personalities such as Jefferson which actually singled her out as a woman with self confidence who had a lot of interest in the current affairs that took place those days (O'Connor, 2010).

### **Staying at home -John Adams Vice-Presidency-In Massachusetts**

Abigail spent most of her time in Massachusetts when her husband was Vice-President. It only took the persuasion of her husband for her to occasionally go to Philadelphia. In the footsteps of her predecessor, Martha Washington, she kept off the political public fare. As much as she shared Adams federalist position she did not take this to the podium but only to that role of an entertainer to the husband's political and social allies. She kind of demonstrates the kind of support that wives of public figures have today. This is seen when she defended the kind of staff that President John Adams picks while serving as President. She refers to them as, "truly American honorable and professional" Her writings are a depiction of a woman that was very concerned of the reputation of the Husband. Despite the constitutional order of the day that could not allow her to vote, she wielded natural powers which she used to urge a sizeable population to support her husband and the Republican Party.

### **Falling out with Jefferson 1800-1808**

As much as Abigail went above the limits of feminism that described the people of the time, she was very careful not to go overboard that would have been beyond the definition of feminism at the time. She was careful to the extent that she even never published anything using her name. Her views which she noted that went against the majority views she kept to herself. On political matters, she was careful in the sense that she did proper analysis of a political situation before making any step which ensured that she didn't go overboard. She was very careful to whatever she said. Whenever

she had given information or a statement that would kind of bring conflict, she would be very willing to retract her statement in order to ensure that everybody was peaceful. She was always on the side of her husband even when it came to her relations with the husband's friends. A case in point is when John Adams fell out with Jefferson; she decided to go underground on her relations with Jefferson until they started communicating with Adams again. She always stood by the husband to the extent that whenever they were in public functions she would shelve her personal views towards various issues and let those of the husband to prevail (Burt, 2001).

### **The Church at Quincy -1801-1818**

Abigail and John Adams participated actively on the church matters even after their change from public life. The couple fellowshipped with the Parish Church at Quincy even after the end of John's the pos-presidential term. They lived quietly in Braintree as they appreciated the fact that their son Quincy was gaining more prominence politically. It later happened that Quincy became the sixth President of the United States of America. She is today remembered for her life as the most liberated woman and a mother that participated in the building of the most prominent family. Her spiritual background is seen as a boost for her character and role in the society.

### **Abigail's Death, October 1818**

Abigail died of Typhoid fever in October 28, 1818 at the age of seventy three. This was one year before the end of her husband's Presidential term and seven years before her son Quincy became the sixth President of the United States.

### **Conclusion**

Abigail Adams accomplishments may have not have come through crusades but the lifestyles and her actions as the first lady of the United States left a lot to be learnt in the minds of many. She played a pivotal role in ensuring the girl child is given the formal education ending the gender based prejudice that had for many years left the women in the pit of illiteracy. She used her position as the wife of the second President of the United States in a shadowy way in pushing for the women agenda while at the same time performing her role as caring mother and wife. She is today gone in History as a mother and wife to the United States Presidents. The status of the liberal American woman today has taken decades to be where it is and Abigail Adams played a key role that had this long term implication.

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