

Maria Stewart

In the 1830's the movement of the slaves in the South was a movement in ideas as well as action; see Brent autobiography, Sojourner Truth. In the North, Maria Stewart in the same year as Nat Turner's revolt ~~1831~~ became the first Black woman to work for Black freedom publicly, and the first American woman to give a speech which is still in print. Here is her speech in Boston, Oct. 1831.

"O ye daughters of Africa, awake! awake! arise! no longer sleep nor slumber but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties. O ye daughters of Africa! what have ye done to immortalize your names beyond the grave? What examples have ye set before the rising generation? what foundation have ye laid for generations yet unborn?...

How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles? Until union, knowledge and love begin to flow among us? How long shall a mean set of men flatter us with their smiles, and enrich themselves with our hard earnings; their wives' fingers sparkling with rings and they themselves laughing at our folly?

Until we begin to promote and patronize each other."  
to get out of domestic employment, to  
She urges the Black women/build cooperative stores and other  
means to gain financial independence, and appeals to the men  
of America who have aided previous immigrants to "acknowledge Haiti."

In 1832 she addressed the newly formed African-American Female Intelligence Society of Boston. In the 1830s and '40s she spread David Walker's Appeal. She did not separate the call for freedom from the freedmen's problems of employment and rights of citizenship. She said; if God chose her, a woman, to speak out in public,

"Be no longer astonished." Garrison printed her speeches in the Liberator  
her book was published in 1879.  
for a year. / (From Black Women in 19th Century American Life, ed. by  
Bert James Loewenberg & Ruth Bogin, U. of Pa. Press, 1976, also see  
Litwak, North of Slavery.

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