

Making the World Better: The Struggle for Equality in 19th-Century America

Primary Source Documents With headnotes and discussion questions

Section I: What's in a Name?

- Survey: What's in a Name?
- Document 1: Legal Status of Married Women
- Document 2: Lucy Stone's Choice, 1855
- Interview: To Change or Not to Change
- Document 3: Lucy Stone's Choice, Revisited, 1924
- Document 4: Lucy Ston's Choice, Revisited on the World Wide Web

Section II: Experiencing, Observing, Naming Injustice

- Document 5: Sarah Remond's Desire for an Education
- Document 6: Sarah Remond's Struggle for an Education
- Document 7: Lucy Stone's Desire to Attend College
- Document 8: Lucy Stone's Struggle at College

Section III: Making plans/ Getting others involved/Taking Action/Facing the Consequences

- Document 9: Lucy Stone Overcomes Family Opposition
- Document 10: Lucy Stone Encounters an Angry Mob
- Document 11: Sarah Remond Challenges Segregation
- Document 12: Sarah Remond Becomes an Anti-Slavery Lecturer

Section IV: What's Left Undone? What Can Students Do to Make the World Better Today

Making the World Better: What's In a Name?

1. What is your full name? _____

2. Try and find out where your names came from.

First: _____

Middle: _____

Last: _____

3. Think about changing your first name.

A. Why might you want to change your first name?

B. Would anyone care if you changed your first name? Who? Why?

4. Think about people you know who are married. Did most of the women change their name when they got married? What about the men?

5. If you were a famous actor, athlete, musician or politician, would you change your name when you got married? Why or why not?

6. Of course, you might change your mind, but do you think you will keep your name when/if you decide to marry?

Yes _____ No _____ List the reasons for your answer.

Legal Status of Married Women

Under English Common Law, which was the basis for the early American legal system, single women enjoyed almost all of the same property rights as single men. Once a woman was married, she lost the right to control her earnings, sign a contract, transfer property. Everything a woman owned before marriage and any wages she earned after marriage became the property of her husband. She could not sue or be sued; she had no right to custody of her children in the rare event of a divorce. Most judges in early America relied on William Blackstone's Commentaries to interpret the Common Law.

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing...¹

QUESTIONS:

1. According to William Blackstone's *Commentaries*, which were widely used by colonial judges, who has the power to make decisions in a marriage?
2. Does the husband or the wife have greater rights under a doctrine that says they are "one person"?
3. What reasons might a woman have for wanting to change this system?

¹ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 1765-69.

Lucy Stone's Choice, 1855

In 1930, Lucy Stone's only child, Alice Stone Blackwell, published a biography of her mother. In it, she recounted a story that took place when her mother was in her final year at Oberlin College.

Some time during a recitation, a quotation was made from Montaigne, "Women are more sunk by marriage than men." When Lucy asked why, the professor fidgeted, physically and mentally, offering several minor reasons; then he said emphatically: "Women lose their names, and become identified with the husband's family; the wife's family is not as readily traceable in history as her husband's; the law gives her property into her husband's keeping, and she is little known to the business world."

The fact of a woman's losing her name, and in some sense her personality, in this way, dwelt in [Lucy's] mind. This led to her determination never to take her husband's name, at whatever disadvantage to herself. Lucy looked upon the loss of a woman's name at marriage as a symbol of the loss of her individuality. Not believing in the thing, she would not have the symbol. With her it was a matter of principle.

She consulted several eminent lawyers, among them the Honorable Salmon P. Chase, who was afterwards Chief Justice of the United States. All of them assured her that there was no law requiring a wife to take her husband's name; it was only a custom. So, with her husband's full approval, she determined to remain Lucy Stone.¹

When Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell were married in 1855, they signed a document in which they protested the system by which "the legal existence of the wife is suspended in marriage." Lucy promised to "love and honor" Henry, but they agreed she would omit the word "obey" from her vows. In a further break from tradition, she did not take his name, continuing to sign herself "Lucy Stone (Only)." However, she still lost the legal rights she had enjoyed as a single woman. In a letter to her friend Susan B. Anthony, she described how her status changed when she married.

Now I occupy a legal position in which I can not even draw in my own name the money I have earned, or make any contract, but am rated with fools, minors and madmen, and can not sign a legal document, and even the right to my own name [is] questioned.²

Lucy bitterly resented the fact that when she bought property with money she had earned from her lecturing, the law required the deed to be in her brother's name "as Trustee for Mrs. Lucy Stone Blackwell." One thing she could control was the publicity for her lectures. In 1856, she instructed an agent for the Anti-Slavery Society:

Never add Blackwell to my name. If a wife have any character, her own name is enough. No husband would take his wife's name. By the Golden Rule, she should not take his.³

Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass both spoke at the memorial service held for Stone during the 1894 Suffrage Convention. When Douglass referred to Stone as "Lucy Stone Blackwell," Susan B. Anthony felt she must correct him.

I wished to say to Mr. Douglass, when he said the name Blackwell that if Lucy Stone had been here and could have voiced her sentiments, she would have said that Lucy Stone is all her name. I remember well when she first came down as a bride to New York. William Lloyd Garrison was to introduce her to the audience and when he thought he must introduce her as Lucy Stone Blackwell, "No," she said, "my name is Lucy Stone still." He said, "but I must introduce you as Mrs. Lucy Stone Blackwell." Then said she, "If you insist upon introducing me in that way I shall not speak," and she gave Mr. Garrison to understand that she would not open her lips to the audience awaiting her unless he would introduce her as Lucy Stone as he always had done before.⁴

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Lucy's professor explain the quotation "Women are more sunk in marriage than men"?
2. Why did Lucy feel so strongly about keeping her own name when she married?
3. According to the lawyers she consulted, was it against the law for Stone to keep her name?
4. What was her husband's position on the issue?
5. How did her legal status change when she married?
6. How did Lucy explain the unfairness of making women change their names?
7. Why would William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, both strong supporters of the rights of women, have introduced Lucy Stone as Lucy Stone Blackwell?

1 Alice Stone Blackwell, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights*, 1930, page 171.

2 Lucy Stone to Susan B. Anthony, July 30, 1856, quoted in Andrea Moore Kerr, *Lucy Stone: Speaking out for Equality*, 1992, page 99.

3 Quoted in Kerr, *Lucy Stone*, page 91.

4 *Proceedings of the National American Woman Suffrage Association*, 1894, page 85.

Making the World Better:
What's In a Name: To Change or Not to Change

Male _____

Female _____

Year of Marriage _____

1. Did you change your last name when you got married? Why or why not?
2. What factors affected your decision? Was it a difficult decision to make?
3. Did anyone tell you that you made the wrong decision? If so, who? Why did they think it was wrong?
4. Do you think you would make the same decision if you were getting married today?

Lucy Stone's Choice, Revisited, 1924

In 1924, Marjorie Jarvis, a doctor employed by the U.S. government, married; like Lucy Stone 75 years before, she chose not to take her husband's name. The hospital insisted on changing the name on her paychecks anyway. Jarvis objected and asked the Comptroller General to review the decision. The New York Times reported on the controversy.

Can a married woman get her pay from Uncle Sam's cash box if she chooses to sign her own name – that is, her maiden name – to the payroll? She cannot. The name under which she went before she assumed the responsibilities of matrimony is lost to her so far as the Government is concerned. That has been made quite clear by the Controller General of the United States in his ruling in the case of Dr. Marjorie Manson Jarvis.

The Controller General carefully studied the law and looked up precedent and found that "by custom (according to the American and English Encyclopedia of Law) a woman at marriage loses her own surname and acquires that of her husband." His statement further shows that "marriage does not change the man's name, but it confers his surname upon the woman."

"All law writers," he concludes, "agree that marriage is a civil contract, and most law writers agree that it is more than a mere contract. So far as the legal status of man and wife is concerned, their relation is contractual, but marriage is an institution, and it can hardly be imagined of husbands, wives and children composing the same family bearing different names."

So far as the Controller General was concerned the incident was closed. But it was not closed for the National Woman's Party. Among their tenets may be found a short paragraph that holds: "that a woman shall no longer be required by law or custom to assume the name of her husband upon marriage, but shall have the same right as a man to retain her own name after marriage."

Mrs. Rose Fall Bres, President of the National Women Lawyers' Association, is interested in the situation that has arisen in Washington and is prepared to give her assistance in the fight. "We have two kinds of law," says Mrs. Bres, "the written and the unwritten. In my opinion, the Controller General based his decision on the unwritten. I know of no written law that upholds him."

It is not only the matter of payrolls that feminists have collided with Uncle Sam's stern mandates. When a married woman leaves the country she must travel on a passport bearing the name of the gentleman whom she has honored with her hand.¹

¹*New York Times*, September 28, 1924, page 12.

QUESTIONS:

1. What reasons did the Comptroller General give for ruling against Dr. Jarvis?
2. What was the National Woman's Party position on the issue?
3. What was the President of the National Women Lawyers' Association's opinion on the issue?
4. What happened to a woman's passport when she got married?
5. How was Marjorie Jarvis's situation like Lucy Stone's 75 years earlier? How was it different?

Lucy Stone's Choice, Revisited on the World Wide Web

In the early 1920s, a group of women and men formed an organization to promote a woman's right not to take her husband's name. Showing a sense of history, they called themselves the Lucy Stone League. After many years of decline, the League was rejuvenated in the late 1990s. On the League's webpage, people explain the choices they made.

- **After I was married and kept my name, I was thrown a lot of stupid criticisms about my decision – anything from "if I truly loved my husband, I would have taken his name" or that "I kept it because I wouldn't have to change my name back after the divorce," or "I was doing it only to go against the system." All of these comments angered me making me realize that women still are not completely free to choose and if they make a decision not to give up a part of themselves, they risk the feeling of shame.**
- **My husband and I were both clear that we wanted to share the same last name. We each wanted to keep some of our own name.**
- **I changed my name when I married in 1959 because I didn't even think I had a choice in the matter! I remember thinking that it was necessary because otherwise how would you decide what to name your children, and how could they cope with parents of different names? I was saddened because I liked my two-syllable surname better than my one-syllable spouse's surname. Incidentally, neither of my daughters has even considered changing her name!**
- **I thought that if my wife and I both changed our names, it would express what was going on in the marriage: the creation of something new that did not exist before; a new family; a pooling of interests. It seemed silly for one of us to change our name and not the other: that wouldn't express the union of equals that the marriage was about. We were lucky that our names happened to flow well enough together. It was an easy decision. I would do it again today.**
- **I grew up in a very gender-equal family, and never saw the need to change my name when I got married, so I was surprised at the backlash I experienced when I kept my maiden name after my marriage two years ago. A friend told me that she just wouldn't feel married if she didn't take her husband's name, my grandfather and my husband's grandmother informed me that my decision was morally wrong, and my in-laws felt that I was doing this to hurt them. When I told my husband of my decision to keep my name, he told me that he didn't think anybody should have to change their name, and that he had always hoped that his wife would want to keep her name.**
- **I have kept my name through two marriages. My first husband hated that. The second doesn't mind at all. My mother was appalled that I didn't change my name. My father was delighted. I kept my name because 1) that had always been my name and why should I change it to suit the vanity of some man? 2) my family's name meant something in my home state of Alabama and I was proud of my roots and 3) my birth name had a ring to it.**

- Although I am (and was) a staunch feminist, I struggled with the decision to take my husband's name when we married in 1973. I finally decided to take my husband's name for three reasons. First, my birth name is difficult to pronounce and spell. I coveted my husband's easy, four-letter last name. Second, I felt that I was making a choice between my father's name and my husband's. Finally, the city clerk in my hometown was very conservative. He didn't like the idea of women keeping their birth names, and he discouraged them by making the reversion seem like a complicated ordeal. As I had many new adjustments to make in my life at that time, his description of the process was enough to push me (a young and already overwhelmed newlywed) off the fence and onto the "take his name" side.
- I took my name with my husband's when we married, but only to "make things easier" legally and when dealing with businesses and such. HA-HA the joke was on me! I get so frustrated with mail and office people who completely disregard my hyphenated name, and address me by my husband's name. I get mail all the time to "Mr. and Mrs. X." I know that in the scheme of things, this is not a cosmically big deal, but I went through much decision-making to come to this point and to have it generally disregarded is very, very frustrating.
- I had a lot of parking tickets. I thought if I changed my name, the city would not be able to find me. I was right.
- My husband and I both changed our names when we got married. We hyphenated our names because we wanted to have a single family name. In lots of families we knew, the woman kept her name but the kids got the father's name, leaving the mother odd person out in her own family. If I were to do it again, I might consider the two of us keeping our names and giving the kids a hyphenated last name. Obviously hyphenating works in our case but when there are two very long names, this might not be a realistic option.
- When I went to the university where I was a graduate student and told them that I was now married and I was keeping my name, the elderly woman keeping the books looked at me and said, "Oh, a Lucy Stoner, huh?" It was as if Lucy had just left the room.¹

QUESTIONS:

1. What different factors influence an individual's decision whether or not to change his/her name at marriage? Make as long a list as you can.
2. What effect does this decision have on others?
3. How have these factors changed over time?
4. Why does tradition change more slowly than the law when it comes to name choice?

¹ Comments in the "Guestbook" on the Lucy Stone League webpage [www.lucystoneleague.org] and e-mail to author, used by permission.

Sarah Remond's Desire for an Education

After three years of anti-slavery lecturing in the U.S., Sarah Remond traveled to Great Britain in 1859. She spent the next ten years touring England, Ireland and Scotland, speaking and raising money for abolition, the Union cause, and later for the newly freed slaves. In 1861, she wrote a short autobiography, entitled "A Colored Lady Lecturer," which was published in an English women's magazine. She recalled her love of learning and the obstacles put in her way.

I was born at Salem, Massachusetts, the youngest but one of ten children of John and Nancy Remond. We were all trained to habits of industry. We were taught to knit and sew, and to cook every article of food placed upon the table. The most trifling affair was obliged to be well done. My mother's aim seemed to be to strengthen her children, not only for the trials and duties of life, but also to enable them to meet the terrible pressure which prejudice against color would force upon them. Her discipline taught us that to be black was no crime, but an accident of birth. Our home discipline was what we needed, but it did not – could not – fit us for the scorn and contempt which met us on every hand when face to face with the world, where we met a community who hated all who were identified with an enslaved race.

My strongest desire through life has been to be educated. We had from time to time been taught to read and write a little, but had received no regular instruction. Again and again my mother would endeavor to have us placed in some private school, but being colored we were refused. We soon knew the real reason, and the most bitter and indignant feelings were cherished by me against those who deprived me of the opportunity of gaining knowledge.

I found the most exquisite pleasure in reading. Although I had few leisure hours, I read more or less daily. Our home was constantly supplied with the best daily and weekly newspapers, and I could obtain from public libraries, and often from the private libraries of friends, some of the best English and American literature. These were resources of which even prejudice could not deprive me. A book once obtained, I could peruse it with pleasure and profit. Reading was the staple and never-failing resource.¹

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Sarah's mother teach her children to do everything well?
2. What did she teach them about being black?
3. Why did Sarah think white people hated black people?
4. How did she feel when she was refused admission to private school?
5. What did Sarah do with her free time? Why?

¹ "A Colored Lady Lecturer" in *English Woman's Journal*, Vol. VII, June, 1861.

Sarah Remond's Struggle for an Education

Sarah Remond's father John was a successful businessman, voter, taxpayer, and active member of the Salem community; but because his children were black, they were given an inferior education. Sarah Parker Remond and her sister attended the city's high school for girls only briefly before the school committee decided to exclude them. Sarah never forgot the pain and humiliation she felt.

My eldest brother had been admitted to one of the public schools in Salem, and at a much later period the three youngest children, including myself, were admitted to one of the public primary schools. All went on well for a time and the children generally treated us kindly, although we were very frequently made to feel that prejudice had taken root in their hearts. My sister and I remained in this school a very short time, passed the examination, and entered the high school for girls. We had been in this school a very short time, when we were informed that the school committee contemplated founding a school exclusively for colored children.

They intended to found a school for young and old, advanced pupils and those less advanced: boys and girls were all to occupy but one room. The many disadvantages can be seen at a glance. It did not matter to this committee, who merely reflected the public sentiment of the community, in what district a colored child might live; we must walk in the heat of the summer, and the cold of winter, to this one school. But more than all this, it was publicly branding us with degradation. The child of every foreigner could enter any public school, while the children of native-born parents were to be thus insulted and robbed of their personal rights.

My father waited upon the school committee, and most earnestly protested against their proposed plan. We still continued to attend the school, but felt much anxiety. One morning, about an hour before the usual time for dismissing pupils, the teacher informed us that we would no longer be permitted to attend the school, that he had received orders from the committee to give us this information, and added, "I wish to accompany you home, as I wish to converse with your parents upon the matter." Some of the pupils seemed indignant, and two expressed much sympathy. I had no words for any one; I only wept bitter tears, then, in a few minutes, I thought of the great injustice practised upon me, and longed for some power to help me to crush those who thus robbed me of my personal rights.

Years have elapsed since this occurred, but the memory of it is as fresh as ever in my mind. We had been expelled from the school on the sole ground of our complexion. The teacher walked home with us, held a long conversation with our parents, said he was pained by the course taken by the school committee, but added it was owing to the prejudice against color which existed in the community. He also said we were among his best pupils, for good lessons, punctuality, etc. Add to this the fact that my father was a tax-payer for years before I was born, and it will need no extra clear vision to perceive that American prejudice against free-born men and women is as deep-rooted as it is hateful and cruel.

Our parents decided we should not enter an inferior exclusive public school, and in a short time our whole family removed to Newport, Rhode Island. Here we met the same difficulty. The schools would not receive colored pupils. The spirit of prejudice was exceedingly bitter in Newport. A private school was established by a few of the more influential of the colored citizens, and for a time I was a pupil. Thus ended my school days, and the limited teaching I had.¹

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were Sarah and her sister sent home from the public high school?
2. What was the Salem school committee's plan for the education of black students?
3. How did Sarah feel about it?
4. Why did she object to the idea of "a school exclusively for colored children"?
5. What did the teacher do? Why?
6. What did her parents do? Why?
7. What happened when the family moved to Newport?

NOTE: The Remond family spent seven years living in Newport. When they returned to Salem in 1842, the city's black children – including two Remond grandchildren – still had no choice but to attend a segregated school, a school with 67 students and ONE teacher. Once again, Sarah's father John protested to the school committee; once again, it refused to allow black children to attend schools with white children. This time, he responded by helping to organize a year-long boycott of the segregated school. Finally in 1844, in response to the boycott, the Salem school committee voted to de-segregate the city's schools. It wasn't until 1850 that the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law ending segregation in all the state's public schools.

¹ "A Colored Lady Lecturer" in *English Woman's Journal*, Vol. VII, June, 1861.

Lucy Stone's Desire to Attend College

Lucy Stone never wrote an autobiography, but she shared her memories with her husband Henry Blackwell and her daughter Alice Stone Blackwell. Henry wrote down many of Lucy's stories, including this one about her passionate desire to go to college.

Lucy found the Bible used to justify the subjection of wives to husbands and of women to men. She rebelled with positive despair for she had been taught that God himself told to Eve "Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee." Then Lucy learned that the English Bible was only a translation and she resolved that she would go to college and study Hebrew and Greek and learn for herself whether the translation was correct.

Her brother Frank went to college at Marietta, Ohio. Her second brother Bowman was studying at Amherst [College] intending to become a minister. Her father helped them both to go. Lucy said, "I too will go to college and learn Greek." But the family all laughed her to scorn and said a girl can't learn Greek or go to college. Her father said not unkindly to her mother, "Is this child crazy?" Then in a fatherly way he took her aside and said to her, "Your mother learned to read and write and cipher. She can keep accord of her egg and butter money. What more does a girl need to learn?" And he refused to help her. Then she set to work to earn for herself. She picked berries and chestnuts and sold them to buy books. She taught district school for years and succeeded in controlling unruly boys who had thrown the previous teacher, a man, into a snow drift. Yet, she received only a fraction of [his] salary.¹

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Lucy Stone want to go to college?
2. What did her father think about the idea?
3. What was Lucy's response to her father's decision not to help her?
4. Why was she paid less than the male teacher she replaced?

¹ Henry Blackwell's handwritten reminiscence of Lucy Stone, Blackwell Family Papers, Library of Congress.

Lucy Stone's Struggle at College

As it came time for her to graduate from Oberlin College in the spring of 1847, Lucy Stone found herself in conflict with the faculty. She was one of a number of students chosen to write commencement addresses, but even at Oberlin women were not permitted to read their own essays. Lucy decided that she would not write a speech unless she was allowed to deliver it herself. She wrote home to her parents asking them to support her decision.

I must write to you about my affairs here, and then I want you to tell me honestly just whether you think I have done right. It has been the custom for the ladies who were appointed to write for the Commencement to have their essays read by Professor Thome. Some of them thought ladies ought to have the privilege of reading for themselves. Accordingly, I prepared a petition to the faculty asking that we might do so; but the petition was rejected, on the ground that it was improper for women to participate in public exercises with men. I came at once to the conclusion that I would not write.

I said to President Mahan that I wished to be excused. He said he thought that we ought to have the privilege of reading for ourselves; that he did all he could to get the consent of the faculty, but they were all against him.

Some members of the class who were particularly anxious that I should read, called on President Mahan. He said that he had just been speaking of the same thing to Mrs. Mahan; that he was very, very desirous that Miss Stone should read; that he thought she ought to and would represent the class well; that there had never been a student here who had gone through a course of study with whom he was better satisfied, etc., etc., etc. The matter has been before the faculty more than two weeks. I don't know what they will decide, but I certainly shall not write if I cannot read for myself. By so doing I would make a public acknowledgment of the rectitude of the principle which takes away from women their equal rights.

Now, don't you think I did right? Isn't it better that I should be true to my principles than to have the honor (?) of writing for Commencement what another must read for me? Not because I could not just as well read it for myself, but because I am a woman, and women must not speak in the church when men are on the same platform.¹

QUESTIONS:

1. What were Lucy Stone's reasons for refusing to write a commencement essay?
2. What did the woman students do to try and get the faculty to change its policy?
3. Why did the faculty reject the students' petition?
4. What was the college president's position on the issue?

¹ Alice Stone Blackwell, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights*, 1930, pp. 68-70.

Lucy Stone Overcomes Family Opposition

Lucy Stone's parents supported her decision not to write a commencement essay if she could not read it herself; she told them "it gave a kind of wholeness to the feeling to know that you agreed with me." She hoped they would also approve of her plan to become a public lecturer.

From Lucy's father, Francis

Now Miss Lucy, you will hear what Mother thinks about your Public Speaking. Mother said she had rather you would marry and have a pair [of] twin babies every year. She did not say how many years. Mother cannot bear to think of your Preaching or Lecturing. She thinks it is a wrong course for you to take, says if you go to Lecturing you will fix it so you can't keep school. Mother wants you should Teach, she thinks you would do the most good that way. You will want to know [my] mind. I don't know what to tell you. You know it will make much talk in our quarter of the World. You will do that which seems right in your own eyes. I suppose, to be honest, I like mother's plan better than yours. You are of age to [do] that which you think is your duty. Mother says she cannot find no place where Christ ever sent Women to Preach. We shall want to hear from you as soon as you get this, you will write what you think about Mother's plan.

From Lucy's mother, Hannah:

The Bible says, "Let your women keep silence." It is flying in the face of Providence!

From Lucy's brother, Frank:

If you think you have got brass enough, and can do more good by giving public lectures than any other way, I say go to it. But Mother doesn't like the idea.

Postscript added by Frank's wife:

Lucy, if there should be any probability of your changing your mind, I hope you will let Mother Stone know it the first thing, for she feels dreadfully about it. Mother wants you to think carefully of it, and see if you cannot do more good teaching than by lecturing. And if you think you must lecture, she wants to know if you don't think you could do more good by going from house to house...

From Lucy's brother, Bowman:

I believe Sarah [her sister] said in her last letter that if you intend lecturing she hoped you would not come into this State. I wish you to do what you think is your duty. If you violate your sense of duty to please your friends, you will lose more than you will gain.¹

Lucy Stone was disappointed that only her brothers supported her decision, but she did not change her mind. She wrote to her mother, explaining why she was determined to speak out.

From Lucy to her mother, Hannah:

I know, Mother, you feel badly and that you would prefer to have me take some other course, if I could in conscience. Yet, Mother, I know you too well to suppose that you would wish me to turn away from what I think is my duty. I surely would not be a public speaker if I sought a life of ease, for it will be a most laborious one; nor would I do it for the sake of honor, for I know that I shall be disesteemed, even hated, by some who are now my friends, or who profess to be. Neither would I do it if I sought wealth, because I could secure it with far more ease and worldly honor by being a teacher.

If I would be true to myself, true to my Heavenly Father, I must pursue that course of conduct which, to me, appears best calculated to promote the highest good of the world. If, while I hear the shriek of the slave mother robbed of her little ones, I do not open my mouth for the dumb, am I not guilty? Or should I go from house to house to do it, when I could tell so many more in less time, if they should be gathered in one place? You would not object or think it wrong, for a man to plead the cause of the suffering and the outcast; and surely the moral character of the act is not changed because it is done by a woman.

I expect to plead not for the slave only, but for suffering humanity everywhere. ESPECIALLY DO I MEAN TO LABOR FOR THE ELEVATION OF MY SEX. I only ask that you will not withhold your consent from my doing anything that I think is my duty to do.²

QUESTIONS:

1. What objections did the members of Lucy Stone's family have to her decision to become a public lecturer?
2. Which member of the family seemed to have the most influence over Lucy?
3. Why did she want to become a public lecturer?
4. What did she think the consequences would be?
5. What arguments did she use to persuade her mother to support her decision?

¹ Quoted in Alice Stone Blackwell, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights*, 1930, pp.64-65

² Lucy Stone to her mother, March 14, 1847, Blackwell Family Papers, Library of Congress.

Lucy Stone Encounters an Angry Mob

Lucy Stone began lecturing for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society at a time when abolitionists were regularly met by hostile, sometimes murderous, mobs. Her daughter Alice wrote that it took “physical as well as moral courage” for her mother to speak publicly against slavery.

Soon after Lucy began to speak for the society, a meeting held in a grove at Harwich [on Cape Cod] was broken up by a furious mob, who assaulted the speakers and wrecked the platform, “with demoniac screams and yells which were heard at the distance of more than a mile,” according to the report in the *Liberator*.

She used to put up her own posters, with a little paper of tacks, and a stone picked up from the street. Sometimes the boys followed her, hooting, and preparing to tear the posters down as soon as her back was turned. Then she would call them about her and hold a preliminary meeting there in the street, telling them what a bad thing slavery was, and how boys like themselves were sold on the auction block, till she got them all on her side, and they let her posters alone.

Once, in the winter, a pane of glass was taken out of the window behind her, the nozzle of a hose was put through, and she was suddenly deluged with cold water in the midst of her speech. She put on a shawl and went on with her lecture.

At an antislavery meeting held in the open air in a grove on Cape Cod, a mob gathered, looking ugly, and so evidently meaning mischief, that the speakers one by one got down from the platform and quietly slipped away through the crowd, till only Lucy Stone and Stephen Foster were left. Those two never feared the face of man. She said to him, “You had better run, Stephen; they are coming!” He answered, “But who will take care of you?” At that moment, the mob made a rush, and one of the ringleaders, a big man with a club in his hand, sprang up on the platform. Lucy turned to him and said, without hesitation, “This gentleman will take care of me.” It touched his feelings, and he declared that he would. Taking her upon one arm, and holding his club in the other hand, he started to march her out through the mob, who were roughly handling Mr. Foster, and such of the other speakers as they had been able to catch. On the way, she talked to him; and presently he mounted her on a stump, and stood by her with his club while she addressed the mob. She made them so ashamed of themselves that they not only desisted from further violence, but took up a collection of twenty dollars on the spot, to pay Mr. Foster for his coat, which they had torn in two from top to bottom, half of them hauling one way and half the other.¹

¹Alice Stone Blackwell, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights*, 1930, pp.75-80.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were abolitionists so unpopular?
2. How did Lucy Stone persuade the boys not to tear down her posters?
3. How did she convince the ringleader of the Cape Cod mob to protect her?
4. What do these stories tell you about what it takes to advocate an unpopular cause?

Sarah Remond Challenges Segregation

Sarah Remond had not yet begun speaking out publicly when she decided in 1853 to take action to help bring an end to racial discrimination. Along with her sister Caroline Remond Putnam and black abolitionist William C. Nell, she boldly challenged segregated seating in a popular Boston theater.

[They] presented their one dollar tickets to the doorkeeper at the Howard Athenaeum in Boston – having purchased tickets through an expressman – for seats in the “Family Circle” to hear Madame Henriette Sontag in the opera “Don Pasquale.” While quietly proceeding to their seats, they were stopped by Mr. A. Palmer, the manager of the house, who refused to let them take their seats. C.P. Philbrick, a police officer at the theater, was called and ordered the party out. They were told they could get their money back or take seats in the [segregated] gallery. They refused. Philbrick attempted to push Sarah down the stairs, tearing her dress and injuring her shoulder.

Sarah made a legal protest against this treatment, and Palmer and Philbrick were brought before the police court. The case was tried before Judge Russell. The lawyer Charles G. Davis appeared for Miss Remond. Shortly afterwards, Sarah Remond brought civil suit to recover damages against Palmer and Philbrick in the First District Court of Essex County. She agreed to accept a small sum on the condition that she and her friends should have tickets to the opera, for seats as good as those originally purchased on the night they were rejected.

The small award of \$500 did not defray the actual expenses incurred by Miss Remond and her sister. However, she discharged her claim against Palmer, for her object was not to make money from the suit but to vindicate a right. Justice Russell delivered an able opinion in the case, “fully sustaining the equal rights of our Colored citizens.”* The case was an important one and added one more milestone by a Remond (this time Sarah) to the liberty of colored people.¹

* Although Sarah won her case, the Howard Athenaeum and other theaters continued to restrict where black people could sit. It was not until 1865 that the Massachusetts legislature outlawed racial discrimination “in any public place of amusement, public conveyance, or public meeting in this commonwealth.”

¹ Dorothy Porter, “The Remonds of Salem, Massachusetts,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarium Society*, 1985, page 2.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why didn't Sarah and her friends purchase their tickets in person?
2. Why did Sarah and her friends refuse to leave the "Family Circle"?
3. What did Sarah hope to accomplish by bringing a lawsuit? Did she succeed?
4. Why did the Massachusetts legislature have to enact a law against segregated seating?

Sarah Remond Becomes an Anti-Slavery Lecturer

Sarah Remond gave credit to a number of people for helping her find her voice as an anti-slavery lecturer. She began with William Lloyd Garrison, who published the first issue of the Liberator on January 1, 1831.

Now a young man, a native of the State of Massachusetts, essentially a man of the people, demands the immediate emancipation of every slave as the right of the victim, and the duty of the master. His clarion voice is heard, and the nation wonders. What? the negro a man! The American people had never dreamed that the slaves had rights in common with themselves. They considered the colored race as so many beasts of burden. My mother hailed the advent of this young and noble apostle of liberty with enthusiasm, and among my earliest impressions is mingled the name of that now venerated friend of the oppressed William L. Garrison.

As years rolled on, I became more and more interested in every effort made in behalf of the enslaved. The germ of a glorious reform was now planted and had taken root; the American Anti-Slavery Society was founded. Auxiliary societies were formed in different localities of the Free States, and a nucleus formed, around which the friends of freedom have rallied. Although mobocracy and various kinds of persecution met them on every hand, all who had counted the cost, and were in earnest, still pursued their way, trusting in the justice of their cause.

My eldest brother Charles publicly advocated the cause of his enslaved countrymen, and from my earliest days, until I left the States, fifteen months since, I have attended the public meetings of the abolitionists. I am grateful beyond expression for the many influences which led me to become familiar with the principles and mode of action destined to completely upset that vile system of American chattel slavery.

In 1857 I was urged by a few friends to speak in public. A defective education, and a pro-slavery atmosphere, are not the best incentives for such a purpose. After much consideration and encouraged by one of the noblest women of my native State*, one who had made many sacrifices and spent the best years of her life in publicly advocating the cause of the slaves, I started on my first anti-slavery tour in company with my brother Charles. We traveled in the State of New York.

Upon the obstacles which met me after this determination I do not think it necessary to dwell. I was quite determined to persevere. From 1857 until within one week of my sailing for England on December 29th, 1858, from time to time, I continued to speak in public. I had an intense desire to visit England, that I might for a time enjoy freedom, and I hoped to serve the anti-slavery cause at the same time. ¹

*Worcester abolitionist Abby Kelley Foster

Sarah Parker Remond did not begin giving public lectures until 1857, when she was 33 years old. She was such an effective speaker that after a year and a half of touring New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania with her brother and other abolitionists (including Susan B. Anthony), she was invited to take the anti-slavery message to Great Britain. Shortly before her departure for England, she wrote to thank Abby Kelley Foster for her encouragement.

My only regret is that I did not sooner begin to do what little I might, in this particular field of labour. I feel almost sure I should never have made the attempt but for the words of encouragement I received from you. Although my heart was in the work, I felt that I was in need of a good English education. Every hour since I met you I have endeavored as far as possible to make up this loss. And when I consider that the only reason why I did not obtain what I so much desired was because I was the possessor of an unpopular complexion, it adds to my discomfort.²

QUESTIONS:

1. Who influenced Sarah Remond to become an abolitionist?
2. Why was Abby Kelley Foster's encouragement so important to her?
3. Why did Sarah Remond wait so long before becoming an anti-slavery lecturer?
4. Why did she want to go to England?

¹“Colored Lady Lecturer,” *English Woman's Journal*, pp. 273-74.

²Quoted in Dorothy Sterling, ed., *We Are Your Sisters*, 1984, page 176.

