

Black, Christian, and Feminist in Antebellum New England



Intersectional Inquiry—Research Across Difference

November 2, 2023

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The intellectual context for my work

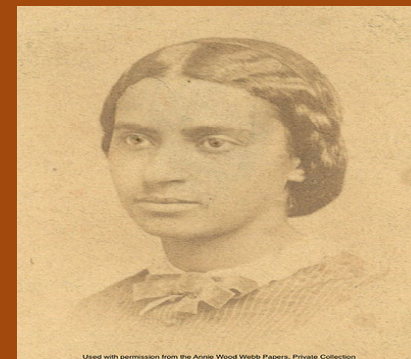
- 1970s Black feminist political organizing in Boston, Massachusetts and their concern about the “interlocking” systems of oppression they faced
- Womanist Christian social ethical thought that argues that Christian theology must begin with the particularity of Black women’s lived experiences to arrive at a universal truth
- Work on the history of abolition
- Work on religious history during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Historical Context

- My focus is Black Christian feminist women's experiences in antebellum New England.
- In United States history, the word antebellum refers to the years before the American Civil War (roughly 1815-1860).
- From the 1630s until the 1780s, English colonists visited the ports in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. They purchased all types of goods, including African people.
- As slavery was gradually abolished throughout the North, systems of racial inequality were not abolished with it.

Women of African descent respond

- New England women of African descent appropriated the Christian language and the promises of the Declaration of Independence to demand their rights.
- My work considers how and why their histories have been submerged and why it is important for us to resurrect their stories.



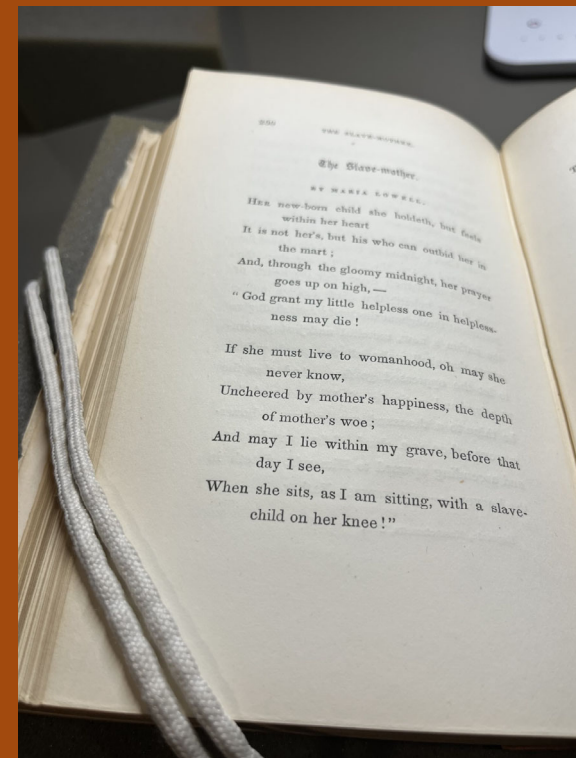


Reason, Truth Shall Make You Free (1839)
Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia

Two antebellum abolitionist depictions of women of African descent



Cruikshank, *The Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1792)
Courtesy of The British Museum



Maria Lowell, "The Slave Mother" (1846) from *The Liberty Bell*
Image taken by author, Boston Public Library

Self-Liberation

SALEM, November 8, 1832.

MR GARRISON—As you observed in your recent interesting address delivered in this town, that you had been informed there did not exist a single society among our color; this opportunity is improved to inform you of the existence of a Society which was probably unknown to your informant, and which was, as you will find by the inclosed, formed February 22, 1832; and there is also the remnant of a Female Society, formed 15 or 16 years since, which, if I am correctly informed, is about to be recruited. Although it is well known and regretted by many, that we have long, much too long, neglected the most brilliant treasures of which man can be possessed—among which are Religion, Union and Education—yet I hope we shall, by despatch and promptitude, make some amends for our protracted indolence. We regret that your visit was not longer, and feel that it is pardonable so to do, when we expect that you will soon leave your country and us to cross the broad Atlantic in our behalf; but the mist is somewhat dispelled by the pleasant anticipation of being favored with a visit from our interesting and interested friend Buffum, who well deserves our humble esteem.

Letter reprinted in *The Liberator* (November 17, 1832)

How Will We Live?