



Maria W. Stewart

1803-December 17, 1879

Maria's Life and Work

- Born Maria Miller, free, in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1803
- She was orphaned at age three and raised in a minister's household as an indentured servant.
 - Connecticut had begun gradual abolition in 1784, and fully abolished slavery in 1848. The 1834 “Black Law” severely curtailed Black education in the state.
- She married James W. Stewart on August 10, 1826. The ceremony was performed by the Reverend Thomas Paul, Black minister of the African Meeting House.
 - James was a veteran of the War of 1812 and an independent shipping agent. He died in 1829, leaving Maria a widow, and his executors denied her his estate.
- She experienced a religious conversion in 1830, when she vowed to become an advocate “for Africa, freedom, and God's cause.” She spoke and wrote publicly from 1830-1833.
 - Her works were printed in *The Liberator*, published by William Lloyd Garrison.
- She established schools and taught in Baltimore and Washington, D. C.
- She participated in founding St Mary's Episcopal Church, the first African American Protestant Episcopal Church in Washington, D. C., in 1867.
- She nursed in the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D. C., where she died.

Whom does Maria center in her figural reading?

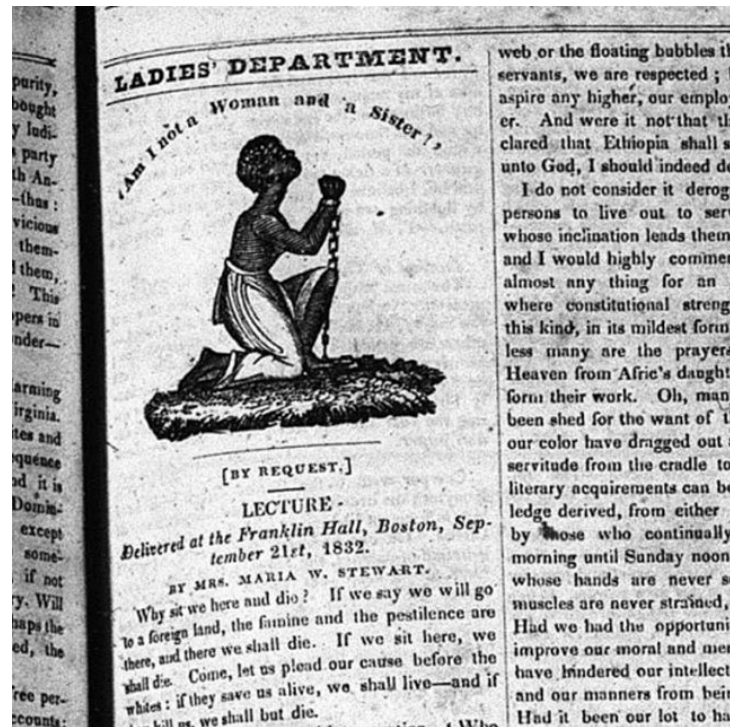
What fruits of the Spirit does she demonstrate?

**Excerpt from “Mrs. Stewart’s Farewell Address to Her Friends in the City of Boston,”
September 21, 1833**

What if I am a woman; is not the God of ancient times the God of these modern days? Did he not raise up Deborah to be a mother and a judge in Israel? Did not Queen Esther save the lives of the Jews? And Mary Magdalene first declare the resurrection of Christ from the dead? Come, said the woman of Samaria, and see a man that hath told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? St. Paul declared that it was a shame for a woman to speak in public, yet our great High Priest and Advocate did not condemn the woman for a more notorious offense than this; neither will he condemn this worthless worm. The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench till he send forth judgment unto victory. Did St. Paul but know of our wrongs and deprivations, I presume he would make no objection to our pleading in public for our rights.

Again: Holy women ministered unto Christ and the apostles; and women of refinement in all ages, more or less, have had a voice in moral, religious, and political subjects. Again: Why the Almighty hath imparted unto me the power of speaking thus I cannot tell. “And Jesus lifted up his voice and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Farewell! In a few short years from now we shall meet in those upper regions where parting will be no more. There we shall sing and shout, and shout and sing, and make Heaven’s high arches ring. There we shall range in rich pastures and partake of those living streams that never dry. O, blissful thought! Hatred and contention shall cease, and we shall join with redeemed millions in ascribing glory and honor and riches and power and blessing to the Lamb that was slain and to Him that sitteth upon the throne. No eye hath seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the joys that are prepared for them that love God. Thus far has my life been almost a life of complete disappointment. God has tried me as by fire. Well was I aware that if I contended boldly for his cause I must suffer. Yet I chose rather to suffer affliction with his people than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And I believe that the glorious declaration was about to be made applicable to me that was made to God’s ancient covenant people by the prophet: “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; say unto her that her warfare is accomplished, and that her iniquities are pardoned. I believe that a rich reward awaits me, if not in this world, in the world to come. O, blessed reflection. The bitterness of my soul has departed from those who endeavored to discourage and hinder me in my Christian progress: and I can now forgive my enemies, bless those who have hated me, and cheerfully pray for those who have despitefully used and persecuted me.



One of Maria's speeches printed in The Liberator, published by William Lloyd Garrison

For Further Reading

Carved in Ebony: Lessons from the Black Women Who Shape Us, Jasmine Holmes

The Portable Nineteenth-Century African American Women Writers, edited by Hollis Robbins and
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart, Maria W. Stewart

The Color of Compromise and How to Fight Racism, Jemar Tisby