

Document 6: A letter from Utah women to Hayes

Source: Part of a letter addressed to the wife of US President Rutherford B. Hayes, Lucy Webb Hayes, on November 8, 1878 written by a group of 200 women who gathered at the Congregational Church in Salt Lake City. Revised using ChatGPT for easier reading.

It has been more than 30 years since polygamy started in the area around the Great Salt Lake. During all this time, Congress has failed to make strong laws or enforce the ones they already have to stop this serious crime.... We believe that more of these illegal marriages happened last year than ever before in the history of the Mormon church.

Compared to everything else, polygamy has never been so wrong and harmful anywhere else in the world, not even among uncivilized people, as it is in Utah. It hurts both men and women, is bad for the children, and destroys the important family relationships that are the foundation of a good society. There are things so bad about this system that we can't even say or print them, and it makes polygamy look extremely inappropriate....

Almost all of our lawmakers are polygamists and Mormon leaders. They have used their power to protect polygamy with every law they can. They have also gotten rid of a law that protected the legal wife, making no difference between her and other women.

The Mormons are quickly moving into places like Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico, and Wyoming. They have a lot of power in two of these territories and are likely trying to gain more control in others.

We ask the Christian women of the United States to help us urge Congress to give courts the power to stop polygamy from spreading and to delay making Utah a state until this happens.

We also ask you to share this message and spread the word to make people understand how wrong polygamy is, especially because it unfairly hurts and shames women.

Original

It is more than 30 years since polygamy was planted on the shores of great Salt Lake. During these years, Congress has utterly failed to enact efficient or enforce existing laws for the abolition of this great crime, and we believe that more of these unlawful and unhallowed alliances have been consummated the past year than ever before in the history of the Mormon church. Considering all our surroundings legume has never taken such a degrading and debasing form, in any nation or among any people, above the condition of Barbarians, as in Utah. It is degrading to man and woman, a curse to children, and destructive to the sacred relation of family, upon which the civilization of nations depends, and there are things that cannot be repeated or printed that reduces the system to the lowest form of indecency. Our legislature is

composed almost entirely of polygamists and members of the Mormon priesthood, and they have thrown around polygamy every possible legislative safeguard in their power, and the right of dower has been abolished to break down the distinction between the lawful wife and concubine. The Mormons are rapidly extending their settlements into Arizona Idaho, New Mexico, and Wyoming. They have the balance of power in two territories and are without doubt, plotting for it in others. We call upon the Christian women of the United states to join us in urging Congress to empower its courts to arrest the further progress of this evil and to delay the admittance of Utah into statehood until this is accomplished; And we ask you to circulate and publish our appeal in order to arouse public sentiment, which should be against an abomination that peculiarly oppresses and stigmatizes woman.

Original found at

<https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2651780&page=2&q=1876+statehood>