

Excerpts from the Letters of Abigail Adams

We have too many high sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them.

-Letter to John Adams (1774)

I wish most sincerely there was not a slave in this province. It always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me — to fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have.

-Letter to John Adams (24 September 1774)

I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And by the way, in the the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

-Letter to John Adams (31 March 1776)

If you complain of neglect of Education in sons, what shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it? With regard to the Education of my own children, I find myself soon out of my depth, destitute and deficient in every part of Education.

I most sincerely wish that some more liberal plan might be laid and executed for the Benefit of the rising Generation, and that our new Constitution may be distinguished for encouraging Learning and Virtue. If we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women. The world perhaps would laugh at me and accuse me of vanity, But you I know have a mind too enlarged and liberal to disregard the Sentiment. If much depends as is allowed upon the early education of youth and the first principles which are instill'd take the deepest root, great benefit must arise from literary accomplishments in women.

Letter to John Adams (14 August 1776)

If we do not lay out ourselves in the service of mankind whom should we serve?

Letter to John Thaxter (29 September 1778)

These are times in which a genius would wish to live. It is not in the still calm of life, or in the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed. The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. Great necessities call out great virtues. When a mind is raised, and animated by the scenes that engage the heart, then those qualities which would otherwise lay dormant, wake into life and form the character of the hero and the statesman.

-Letter to John Quincy Adams (19 January 1780)