



Excerpt of Letter by Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776

Source: New York Historical Society <https://wams.nyhistory.org/building-a-new-nation/navigating-the-new-government/remember-the-ladies/>

Document Text

I long to hear that you have declared an independency — and by the way in 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 favorable 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.

That your sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your sex. Regard us then as beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

Summary

I can't wait until you declare independence from England. I guess you'll need to write a constitution for the new country. Please write better laws for women. Don't give men unlimited power over their wives. Men can be bullies, and women need to be able to protect themselves. If you don't write better laws for women, we'll have our own revolution. We won't submit to a government that does not let us have a say.

Everyone knows men are bullies, and that it is only good men who choose to treat their wives and daughters fairly. Why would you write laws that give men the power to treat women badly without consequences? Smart men hate that women are treated inferior to men. Instead, think of us as people that God wants you to protect, and use your power to give us better lives.