

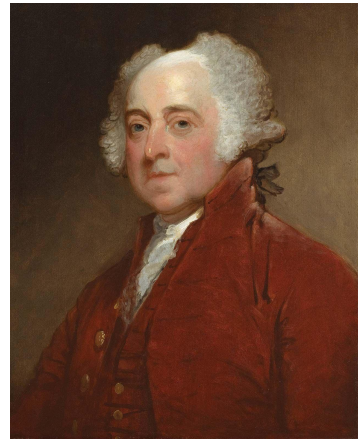
Document 4: *Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776*

The letters of John and Abigail Adams are important because they provide a unique glimpse into the lives and thoughts of two of America's most prominent Founders. John Adams (1735-1826) was the second President of the United States, and Abigail (1744-1818), his wife and most trusted confidante, was central to developing his thinking and viewpoints throughout his long career.



Their letters spanned over a period of several decades and covered a wide range of topics, including politics, family life, and personal beliefs. They were known for their eloquence, wit, and deep affection for one another, which is evident in their exchanges.

The letters are also important because they offer insights into the political and social climate of the time, as well as the challenges faced by early American families. They reveal the struggles and sacrifices made by those who fought for American independence, and they provide a window into the daily lives of individuals who helped shape the course of American history.



The letters between John and Abigail are also important because they showcase the role of women in the American Revolution and the founding of the United States. Abigail was a strong and intelligent woman who played an active role in her husband's political career and was an advocate for women's rights.

Abigail wrote a particularly famous letter to her husband on March 31, 1776, in which she urged him to "remember the ladies" as the Continental Congress drafted new laws for the newly formed United States. In her letter, Abigail expressed her concern that the Declaration of Independence would not provide any protections or rights for women.

Abigail's letter is considered to be one of the earliest calls for women's rights in America, and it demonstrates her deep understanding of the issues facing women of her time. She argued that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men and that their contributions to society should be recognized and valued.

Although John Adams responded with humor to his wife's letter, Abigail's words had a lasting impact on him and on the development of women's rights in America. Her letter is an

important historical document and a testament to the courage and vision of one of America's earliest advocates for women's rights. In this particular letter, she wrote:

I wish you would ever write me a letter half as long as I write you, and tell me, if you may, where your fleet are gone? What sort of defense Virginia can make against our common enemy? Whether it is so situated as to make an able defense? Are not the gentry lords and the common people vassals, are they not like the uncivilized natives Britain represents us to be? I hope their riflemen, who have shown themselves very savage and even bloodthirsty, are not a specimen of the generality of the people.

I am willing to allow the colony great merit for having produced a Washington but they have been shamefully duped by a Dunmore.¹¹

I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for liberty cannot be equally strong in the breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain that it is not founded upon that generous and Christian principle of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us....

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....

Adapted from: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/remember-the-ladies/> and <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/educational-magazines/abigail-adamss-letters-john-adams>

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