



Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England

Catherine Adams, Elizabeth H. Pleck

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They baked New England's Thanksgiving pies, preached their faith to crowds of worshippers, spied for the patriots during the Revolution, wrote that human bondage was a sin, and demanded reparations for slavery. Black women in colonial and revolutionary New England sought not only legal emancipation from slavery but defined freedom more broadly to include spiritual, familial, and economic dimensions.

Hidden behind the banner of achieving freedom was the assumption that freedom meant affirming black manhood. The struggle for freedom in New England was different for men than for women. Black men in colonial and revolutionary New England were struggling for freedom from slavery and for the right to patriarchal control of their own families. Women had more complicated desires, seeking protection and support in a male-headed household while also wanting personal liberty. Eventually women who were former slaves began to fight for dignity and respect for womanhood and access to schooling for black children.

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