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Uncompromising Spirits: The Entwined Careers of William Lloyd Garrison and Josephine Butler

William Lloyd Garrison and Josephine Butler changed the political structures in which their respective worlds operated. Separated by an ocean but not by commitment these two abolitionist/reformers used their lives to effect repeals of laws that enslaved individuals. Both employed similar strategies one of which was the use of their own newspapers. Garrison's *The Liberator* and Butler's *The Shield* spread the mission of their campaigns using the most effective tool of the day. Their life long commitment to liberty and justice was successful. Their actions and the resulting freedoms have remained even though their names are all but forgotten and they now, in the words of George Eliot "rest in unvisited tombs."¹

These two character sketches serve to highlight and connect the actions of these remarkable individuals.

William Lloyd Garrison

William Lloyd Garrison was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts on December 13, 1805. He was born into a poor family, and when he was still a young boy, his father abandoned them.² When Garrison was growing up, the antislavery movement was largely moderate. White and black antislavery activists generally worked in separate

¹ This quote is taken from the end of *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, a novel that was being written at the time Butler was active, and which is still considered the greatest novel of the 19th century.

² Stewart, James Brewer, *Abolitionist Politics and the Coming of the Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 92.

organizations. White antislavery activists generally believed that emancipation should be gradual and often opposed racial equality. The New York Manumission Society, one of the most prominent “antislavery” groups in the early United States, was led by John Jay. In addition to signing the U.S. Constitution fugitive slave clause and all, Jay continued the practice of buying slaves and freeing them, “at proper ages and when their faithful services shall have afforded a reasonable retribution.”³ Fellow society member, Alexander Hamilton, also signed the Constitution, as did Benjamin Franklin, a leading antislavery activist in Pennsylvania.^{4 5}

The Constitution included a clause mandating that fugitive slaves be returned to their masters. While Benjamin Rush, one of Franklin’s comrades in Pennsylvania’s antislavery movement, made the claim later echoed by abolitionists that slavery degraded blacks, he came to a different conclusion. Rather than favoring immediate emancipation, Rush warned that slaves, “are rendered unfit by their habits of vice (the offspring of slavery) for freedom.” Rush’s solution was to, “make their situation comfortable by good treatment” until slavery was ended in the future—how precisely enslavement could be consistent with good treatment was left unaddressed.⁶ While sometimes implying a belief in the inherent equality of blacks, Rush also claimed that black skin was an incurable form of leprosy. To keep this leprosy from spreading, it was necessary to avoid interracial

³ White, Shane, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 82.

⁴ Miller, John Chester, *Alexander Hamilton and the Growth of the New Nation* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1959), 122.

⁵ Khan, Lurey, *William Still and the Underground Railroad: Fugitive Slaves and Family Ties* (iUniverse, 2010), 18.

⁶ Brodsky, Alyn, *Benjamin Rush: Patriot and Physician* (London: Macmillan, 2004), 266.

marriage.⁷ With friends like these, it almost seemed as if African Americans needed no enemies.

William Lloyd Garrison initially began his career in this moderate reformist tradition. As a young man in the 1820s, Garrison called for gradual emancipation and “colonization.”⁸ Promoted by the American Colonization Society, colonization involved the settling of former slaves, voluntarily or involuntarily, in Africa. Eventually, however, largely influenced by free blacks such as James Forten^{9 10}, Garrison embraced radicalism. In 1831, he began a newspaper called *The Liberator*. In his first issue, Garrison wrote, “I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or to speak, or write, with moderation . . . I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch – AND I WILL BE HEARD. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.”¹¹ Garrison left no ambiguity. Slavery was a heinous crime that must end at once, everywhere in the country. While Garrison abhorred violence, he was incensed by the hypocrisy of praising white revolutionaries, such as the Founding Fathers, for taking up arms against oppression while opposing slave insurrections. “That all slaves of the South .

⁷ Aho, James and Kevin Aho, *Body Matters: A Phenomenology of Sickness, Disease, and Illness* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 56-57.

⁸ Calarco, Tom, *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2004), 31.

⁹ Calarco, 31-32.

¹⁰ Salley, Columbus, *The Black 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential African-Americans, Past and Present* (Citadel Press, 1999), 47.

¹¹ Garrison, William Lloyd, “To the Public—the *Liberator’s* First Editorial,” in *From Bondage to Liberation: Writings by and about Afro-Americans from 1700 to 1918*. Ed. Faith Berry (London: Continuum, 2006), 95.

.. ought to repudiate all carnal weapons, shed no blood, be obedient to their masters, wait for peaceful deliverance and abstain for all insurrectionary movements is everywhere taken for granted," Garrison pointed out, "because the victims are black . . . They are required by the Bible to put away all wrath, to submit to every conceivable outrage without resistance. None of their advocates may seek to inspire them to imitate the example of the Greeks, the Poles, the Hungarians, our revolutionary sires, for such teaching would evince a most un-Christian and blood-thirsty disposition."¹² Racial double standards were unacceptable to Garrison.

Samuel Joseph May, a Unitarian minister and fellow abolitionists wrote that he believed that for Garrison, "the cries of enslaved black men and black women sounded to him as if they came from brothers and sisters."¹³ It was a testament to both his ability to persuade people to accept his ideas and the irrefutable logic of immediate, universal emancipation that Garrison could influence and mentor not only younger individuals like Wendell Phillips¹⁴ and Frederick Douglass¹⁵ but also individuals that were older than him, such as May¹⁶ and Lydia Maria Child¹⁷. In

¹² Bellin, Joshua D., "Up to Heaven's Gate, Down to Earth's Dust," in *Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Casebook*. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 213.

¹³ Aptheker, Herbert, *Anti-Racism in U.S. History: The First Two Hundred Years* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), 135.

¹⁴ Stewart, James Brewer, *Wendell Phillips: Liberty's Hero* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 128.

¹⁵ Asante, Molefi Kete, *100 Greatest African Americans: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2002), 108.

¹⁶ May, Samuel Joseph, *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 17-19.

¹⁷ Kenschaft, Lori, *Lydia Maria Child: The Quest for Racial Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42-43.

1833, Garrison helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS).¹⁸ The society differed from previous antislavery organizations in the United States in two significant ways. In the first place, it called for immediate emancipation. In the second place, it was integrated, with African Americans welcome to join.¹⁹ One such prominent member was Charles Lenox Remond, who was among Garrison co-founders.²⁰ When William Elery Channing, an antislavery Unitarian minister of a more moderate stripe than May, stated that letting blacks join abolitionist societies had been a mistake, Garrison chided him.²¹

Garrison's vitriol did not merely extend to slaveholders. It also extended to any person or law he believed to be condoning the slavery in anyway. Because the Constitution allowed slavery, Garrison labeled it "a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell." In fact, he publicly burned a copy of the document.²² Believing the United States government to be a proslavery institution, Garrison refused to vote and urged abolitionists to work outside the political system.²³ When the

¹⁸ Schultz, Kevin, *America Unbound: A U.S. History Primer* (Stamford: Cengage, 2009), 173.

¹⁹ Muelder, Owen W., *Theodore Dwight Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), 32.

²⁰ Bacon, Jacqueline, *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment, and Abolition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 52.

²¹ Litwack, Leon F., *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 216.

²² Mayer, Henry, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 445.

²³ Cernett, William C., *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 26.

antislavery Free Soil Party was formed in 1848, Garrison was disgusted by its moderate policies, which he labeled, “white manism.”²⁴

Garrison’s distaste for the Free Soil Party was due in no small part to his belief in racial equality. “I deny the postulate, that God has made, by an irreversible decree, or any inherent qualities, one portion of the human race superior to another.”²⁵ A man who disagreed with Garrison once incredulously asked him if he believed that blacks, “possess the same faculties and capacities as the whites.” Garrison replied, “Certainly, sir.”²⁶ Garrison and his followers in the AASS successfully fought to legalize interracial marriage and integrate the railroads and public schools in Massachusetts.²⁷ While Garrison shied away from advising Americans at the present time to marry people of different races, due to the backlash they would receive²⁸, he saw interracial marriage as part of a future utopia free of racial oppression. “If He [God] has 'made of one blood all nations of me for to dwell on all the face of the earth,' then they are one species, and stand on a perfect equality: their marriage is neither unnatural nor repugnant to nature, but obviously proper and salutary; it being designed to unite people of different tribes and nations, and to break down those petty distinctions

²⁴ Sterngrass, Jon, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 80.

²⁵ Malcomson, Scott, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 330.

²⁶ Grimke, Archibald Henry, *William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1891), 79-80.

²⁷ Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 230.

²⁸ Karcher, Carolyn L., *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 179.

which are the effect of climate or locality of situation, and which lead to oppression, war, and division among mankind.”²⁹

While Garrison’s primary focus was ending slavery, he also stood up for other oppressed groups of people, such as women, Chinese immigrants³⁰, and Native Americans.³¹ When female abolitionists were forced to sit separately from the men at an 1840 abolitionist conference in London, an angry Garrison sat with the women.³² In an 1853 speech at the Woman’s Rights Association, he proclaimed, “I have been derisively called a ‘Woman’s Rights Man.’ I know no such distinction. I claim to be a Human Rights Man; and wherever there is a human being, I see God-given rights inherent in that being, whatever may be the sex or complexion.”³³ Late in life, he appeared before the Massachusetts State House to testify in support of women’s suffrage.³⁴

Garrison experienced much backlash for the ideas he promoted, to the point of his life being placed in danger. The state of Georgia offered a five thousand dollar reward for his arrest.³⁵ In 1835, Garrison was dragged through the streets of Boston with a rope around his waist.³⁶ When a young lawyer named Wendell Phillips, who would embrace both

²⁹ Weierman, Karen Woods, *One Nation, One Blood: Interracial Marriage in American Fiction, Scandal, and Law, 1820-1870* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 147.

³⁰ Mayer, *All on Fire*, 624.

³¹ Mayer, *All on Fire*, 616.

³² Petrulionis, Sandra Harbert, *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau’s Concord* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 26.

³³ Franklin, Margaret Ladd, *The Case for Woman Suffrage: A Bibliography* (New York: National College Equal Suffrage League, 1913), 60.

³⁴ Mayer, *All on Fire*, 624.

³⁵ Mayer, *All on Fire*, 122-123.

³⁶ Thomas, William David, *William Lloyd Garrison: A Radical Voice Against Slavery* (Saint Catherines: Crabtree Publishing Company, 2009), 34.

immediate emancipation and racial equality by the end of the decade, asked why the state militia was not called out to rescue Garrison, he was informed that most of the militia was part of the mob.³⁷ Garrison narrowly escaped death when the mayor and police intervened and took him to jail.³⁸

William Lloyd Garrison's basic principles of freedom and equality never changed, but his tactics did. When the Civil War broke out, he abandoned his previous position that the North should form a separate, antislavery republic³⁹ and instead supported the war as a method of freeing the slaves.⁴⁰ At first, he detested Abraham Lincoln, calling the president, "only a dwarf in mind," and lamenting that, "he has evidently not a drop of anti-slavery blood in his veins."⁴¹ When Lincoln proposed that former slaves be encouraged to immigrate to Central America, Garrison fumed, "President Lincoln may colonize himself if he choose, but it is an impertinent act, on his part, to propose getting rid of those who are as good as himself."⁴² The Emancipation Proclamation, however, helped convince Garrison that Lincoln was willing to make ending slavery a war aim. In 1864, despite his previous opposition to involvement in party politics, Garrison supported

³⁷ Thomas, Norman, *Great Dissenters* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 132.

³⁸ Thomas, *William Lloyd Garrison*, 34.

³⁹ Ladd, Barbara, *Nationalism and the Color Line in George W. Cable, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997), 13.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *William Lloyd Garrison*, 46.

⁴¹ Guelzo, Allen C., *Abraham Lincoln as a Man of Ideas* (Carbondale: SIU Press, 2009), 90.

⁴² Lind, Michael, *What Lincoln Believed: The Values and Convictions of America's Greatest President* (New York: Random House LLC, 2007), 202.

Lincoln.⁴³ This was controversial among abolitionists, with some, such as Wendell Phillips, feeling that Lincoln had proven unsympathetic to the plight of African Americans and that John C. Fremont, a former Union general that Lincoln had censured earlier in the war for trying to free slaves outside of the Confederacy⁴⁴, was a better choice for president.⁴⁵ When slavery was finally outlawed in 1865, Garrison faced further conflict with fellow abolitionists like Wendell Phillips. Garrison believed that while racial equality was vital, it would have to come gradually and that the fiery, uncompromising tactics of the abolitionists were unsuited for this new task.⁴⁶ Therefore, Garrison argued, the AASS should be disbanded.⁴⁷ Others, such as Phillips, insisted that the Society must continue to fight for civil rights.⁴⁸

Though Garrison left the AASS, it would be a mistake to believe that he stopped caring about the rights of African Americans. In 1874, he criticized *The Nation* for its “lack of sympathy with and evident contempt for the colored race.”⁴⁹ In 1877, when President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew federal troops from the South, essentially leaving the former slaves at the mercy of white supremacists, Garrison was outraged. He called the withdrawal of troops from the South a “policy of credulity, of weakness, of subserviency,

⁴³ White, Barbara A., *Visits With Lincoln: Abolitionists Meet the President at the White House* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), xv.

⁴⁴ Strom, Sharon Hartman, *Political Woman: Florence Luscomb and the Legacy of Radical Reform* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 34.

⁴⁵ Robertson, Stacey M., *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist, Male Feminist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 127).

⁴⁶ Mayer, *All on Fire*, 587-589.

⁴⁷ Barnes, L. Diane, *Frederick Douglass: Reformer and Statesman* (London: Routledge, 2013), 103.

⁴⁸ Barnes, *Frederick Douglass*, 104.

⁴⁹ McPherson, James M., *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 39.

of surrender.” It, “sustains might against right.”⁵⁰ In 1879 years later, Garrison passed away at the age of seventy-three. At his funeral, Garrison’s protégée-turned adversary-turned ally, Frederick Douglass, eulogized that, “it was the glory of this man that he could stand alone with the truth, and calmly await the result.”⁵¹

Josephine Butler

The recent PBS series, *Call the Midwife*, made popular the books of the late Jennifer Worth. Within the well-written and captivating volumes detailing this nurse’s career unfolds a story of one “Nancy.” Heartbreaking at best, it articulates the devastating effects of the Contagious Diseases Acts on the life of one innocent woman. Nancy’s story provides the context to introduce the name Josephine Butler, one of the most outstanding advocates of human rights. A champion of liberty she was also a supporter of the abolitionist’s movement and a stalwart Christian.

With her campaign extending on an international scale especially in Italy, France, Belgium and Switzerland, and its positive impact on society in a stratosphere unprecedented, it is unfortunate that her name is not as widely known in the 21st century as it was in the 19th. She is “well known in the anglophone context, as the leader of the Ladies’ National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts between 1869 and 1886.”⁵²

⁵⁰ McPherson, *Abolitionist Legacy*, 90.

⁵¹ Mayer, *All on Fire*, 630-631.

⁵² Anne Summers, “Introduction: the International Abolitionist Federation,” *Women’s History Review*, 17, no. 2 (2008): 149.

The Contagious Diseases Acts were a form of slavery; they abandoned the notion of habeas corpus from a select group; they placed judicial prerogatives in the hands of police and volunteers; they removed basic liberty from individuals, namely poor women and especially prostitute. Under this regulation, the Victorian double-standard of morality reached its zenith. These Acts, designed to rid prostitutes of infectious diseases, enforced the right to detain any woman who *might* be engaged in prostitution, subject her to examination whereupon found disease ridden to undergo medical treatment. Those who refused were locked up until they complied. Butler, through divine inspiration, “refused to countenance what she saw as an assumption that God had created a class of women solely for the use of profligate men, and further, that working-class women were created to minister to the sexual needs of gentlemen.”⁵³ Statistics show that the greatest number of prostitutes was used, not by the army or navy, the original instigators of the act, but by the upper classes.⁵⁴ In her lifelong commitment to repeal these acts, Butler found solace and inspiration in two main sources, God and the American abolitionist movement.

Josephine Grey Butler was a woman of strong religious conviction but she was not a traditional church-goer. “[She] was blessed by coming from a home imbued with the spirit of reform characteristic of the branches of the Greys of Northumberland. In these families women were well educated and fostered in self-confidence, moral and physical

⁵³ Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler*. (London: John Murray, 2001), 2.

⁵⁴ Millicent G. Fawcett, *Josephine Butler: Her Work and Principles and Their Meaning for the Twentieth Century*. (Warrington, England: Portrayer Publishers, 2002), 136.

courage, the ability to discern fundamental moral principles and then to work at putting such principles into practice. ⁵⁵

She was also impressed by her father's Christian faith which held strongly to freeing all from their burdens. ⁵⁶In 1852 she married John Butler, classics professor at Oxford who was later ordained to the Anglican priesthood. He would prove to be the helpmate of her life without whom she could not have carried forth her vigorous and extraordinarily taxing campaign. The significance of her religious conviction on her success cannot be overlooked.

Rod Garner in his book *Josephine Butler: A Guide to her Life, Faith and Social Action* captures unequivocally the ethos of Butler's spirituality and its impact on her work.

Garner, an Anglican priest, has an excellent personal context from which to evaluate this aspect of her personality including his work as a community activist. He is genuine when he writes of Butler that "her empathy with 'Christ's poor' was remarkable. ⁵⁷ She practiced what she preached by mirroring Christ, especially in her rock solid foundation in prayer. Dedicated to daily prayer on a practical level usually associated with saints in its intensity and constancy, she also used it as a mechanism for sustaining her conviction.

⁵⁵ Ann Loades, "Religious Motivation and the Abuse of Women: Some Reflections on the Concerns of Josephine Butler," in *Beating the Traffic: Josephine Butler and Anglican Social Action on Prostitution Today*, 2007, ed. Alison Milbank (Winchester: George Mann Publications, 2007), 106.

⁵⁶ Rod Garner, *Josephine Butler: A Guide to her Life, Faith and Social Action*. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2009), 1-2.

⁵⁷ Garner, *Josephine Butler*, 8.

Butler's convictions went to the heart of her survival. "She knew that she would perish if she ceased from prayer, and her persistence enabled other lives that had become withered to bloom again."⁵⁸ Garner relates to Butler's evaluation of her work as "deep, difficult and holy work"⁵⁹ drawing personal inspiration from her assessment. Her personal prayer life and her Christian faith were assets in acquiring support for the movement in Great Britain. On the Continent, they were not as positively associated.

"For Italy and France respectively, Butler's personal fusion of liberalism with Christianity was not easily reproduced in countries where a predominant Catholic Church was countered by a forceful current of anti-clericalism, and where an overarching 'nonconformist conscience' or "Republican morality" was either non-existent or too weak to support broad reforming coalitions."⁶⁰ Despite these set backs, Butler succeeded in Great Britain supported by her followers and her faith. An additional source of inspiration for her campaign was the American abolitionists.

Repealers were the moniker by which Butler's group was known. As "she drew inspiration from the American abolitionists ... her own followers eventually adopted the same epithet for their work in England."⁶¹ Especially she was influenced by the work of William Lloyd Garrison. She would so often use his "defiant declaration 'I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. I am in earnest – I will not equivocate –

⁵⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 42.

⁶⁰ Anne Summers, "Introduction: the International Abolitionist Federation," *Women's History Review*, 17, no. 2 (2008): 150.

⁶¹ Garner, Josephine Butler, 81.

and I will be heard' that it became her watchword.”⁶² Opposed to any kind of slavery, especially through her Biblical sense of justice, Butler also believed in truth and liberty. She made an excellent colleague for Garrison who became a strong supporter. Millicent Fawcett's 1927 book, *Josephine Butler: Her Work and Principles and Their Meaning for the Twentieth Century* relate the story of Garrison's overt support. In 1840 a group of American women came to London for the International Anti-Slavery Congress. They were not allowed to be seated by the British. In response Garrison refused to take a seat.⁶³ This courageous action on his part served not only to support the situation but fueled the home fires for American Suffragettes who claimed it provided the “first great impulse in the U.S.A. to the political enfranchisement of Women.”⁶⁴ His leadership and words served to inspire Butler's “abolitionist” as they effectively campaigned in Great Britain and Europe.

“Butler's campaigns awakened women all over Europe, from the 1870s onwards, to the horrors and hypocrisies of the sexual double standard.”⁶⁵ For many reasons her campaigns on the Continent were not as effective as in Great Britain. Why this was the case is the subject of scholarly debate. In 2008 the *Women's History Review* dedicated an entire issue to the topic of Josephine Butler and the International Abolitionist Federations. The five articles provide excellent research on the challenges and difficulties the movement faced in Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and Switzerland while drawing

⁶² Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler*, 116.

⁶³ Millicent Fawcett, *Josephine Butler*, 113.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Anne Summers, *Women's History Review*, 150.

conclusions based on success determined mainly by the position of women within the various cultural context of each country during the period.

Freedom and justice are forms of truth. Challenging institutions that threaten truth require belief that such truth can exist. In the persons of Butler and Garrison this sense of truth was shared. It was more than a passion; they shared a form of bravery and courage that only those who seek the truth can understand. Both set out on a pathway that became a vocation, a life long journey in which their health would suffer and their resolve would be tested repeatedly. They both understood what Garrison so eloquently put in words.

“When the necessary revolution in the mind of the people is completed, that in the institutions of the country will follow, as day follows night. The sacrifice of all worldly objects of ambition – may be well endured for the promotion of a cause, in the issues of which are involved the deliverance of the slave, the purification of the country, and the progress of the race.”⁶⁶ Butler and Garrison changed not only the minds of the people but institutions of political and cultural power.

William Lloyd Garrison and Josephine Butler were marked by a refusal to compromise with oppression. They did not pursue a moderate course of action to extreme problems. Rather, they risked great backlash by insisting that all people have their inalienable rights respected immediately, not some time in the future. And in both cases, they were vindicated within their lifetimes, at least to some degree. In 1852, Abraham Lincoln had condemned abolitionists for being willing to, “shiver into fragments the Union of these

⁶⁶ Fawcett, Josephine Butler, 118-119.

States; tear to tatters its now venerated constitution; and even burn the last copy of the Bible, rather than slavery should continue a single hour.” Twelve years later, Lincoln would throw his support behind immediate emancipation, the central goal of the abolitionist movement. Josephine Butler lived to see the Contagious Diseases Acts repealed in 1886. The radical, uncompromising spirit of Garrison and Butler is still needed today, in spite of all of the progress that has been made. Slavery is illegal under international law, but it still continues to plague humanity. Likewise, other forms of bigotry and persecution continue on, un-eradicated. If there is any hope of these injustices ever ceasing, the present generation must also be “harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice.”

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