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The Leadership of Ernestine Rose  
1848-1860

by

Joe Haley

FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES

SKIDMORE COLLEGE

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## **Abstract**

In my final project I will explore the leadership of Ernestine Rose in the context of contemporary transformational leadership theory. Although Rose was heavily involved in both woman's rights and social reform activities during her entire thirty-three year residence in the United States, I will focus on her woman's rights leadership initiatives between 1848-1860.

I will define transformational leadership and examine how it relates to a historical figure like Rose. I will also describe the status of the woman's rights movement and Rose's leadership within it. Finally, I will explore the relationship between Rose's leadership style and transformational leadership theory.

Within this examination, I will pursue questions like how did Rose lead? What was her leadership style? What obstacles did she face? Finally, to what extent was Ernestine Rose a transformational leader?

## Introduction

Between 1848-1860, critics and supporters alike acknowledged Ernestine Rose as one of the preeminent speakers of the era. After the 1854 New York State Woman's<sup>1</sup> Rights Convention held in Albany, New York, the Albany Transcript reported that among a strong group of woman speakers, "Mrs. Rose is the queen of the company"(Qtd. in Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, History of Woman Suffrage, Volume 1, hereafter, HWS 606). Her oratorical power cemented Rose as one of the most distinguished woman's rights leaders of the time. Susan B. Anthony recalled: "Those who sat with her on the platform in bygone days, well remember her matchless power as a speaker; and how safe we all felt while she had the floor"(HWS 100). Although these accolades signify Rose's speaking ability and importance to the Woman's Rights movement, she still remains "The most forgotten of the woman's rights activists"(Kolmerten, xvii). The gargantuan obstacles she faced, including religious, racial, and gender prejudice, perhaps helped cause her current obscurity. Rose's ability to overcome those barriers, in the midst of a dynamic social environment, warrants further exploration and she deserves heightened visibility.

In this paper, I will explore the extent to which Ernestine Rose was a transformational leader. I will define transformational leadership theory and describe its relevancy to a historical leader like Rose. I will explore the woman's rights movement in the United States between 1848-1860. I will analyze the leadership style of Ernestine Rose, focusing primarily on the 1850's. Finally, I will apply transformational leadership theory to Rose's leadership ability in a case study.

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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to the movement as "woman's rights" as women leaders did so in the nineteenth century.

## Transformational Leadership Theory

To what extent does Rose's leadership style relate to transformational leadership theory? Over the past several years, different theoretical leadership approaches evolved from one leading theory to another. Trait theory, behavioral theory, contingency theory, and situational theory represent principal examples of the output of that evolution. Recent leading theorists, however, support transformational leadership theory as a construct for analyzing leadership. Its integration of many evolving approaches provides a solid formula for understanding leadership in a historical context.

James MacGregor Burns, one of the early pioneers in devising the transformational leadership construct, defines what he called *transforming* leadership as "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (4). Bernard M. Bass in Yukl's Leadership in Organizations, another leading theorist, provides a slightly different view on what he calls *transformational* leadership. He claims that transformational leadership is more one-directional, where the leader alone represents initiates action. Bass writes, "The transformational leader has transformed followers into more highly motivated followers who provide extra effort to perform beyond expectations of leader and follower" (104). I will review Burns' approach as a foundation for transforming leadership. I will also discuss Bass' and other theories to explain the meaning of transformational leadership.

Burns' approach focuses on the interrelation between leader and follower. Burns suggests that transforming leaders understand that only followers can define their own true needs. Transforming leaders know that they must share their motives, values, and goals with those of their followers. This bond allows both leader and follower to raise their

ethical and moral aspirations. Transforming leaders have high expectations for their follower's outcomes. Burns writes that transforming leaders "ask followers for sacrifices rather than promising goods" (455). Transforming leadership is not transactional; it transcends above simple political or economic exchanges. Transforming leaders demand superior performance from followers and they get even more. According to Burns, the elevation of the consciousness of followers to seek higher social objectives such as liberty, peace, and justice is a necessary component of transformational leadership. Transforming leadership is not an end in itself, nor does it require steps to achieve it. It is an ongoing process, where leaders continue to modify their behavior to effectively meet either responsiveness or resistance from followers. Transforming leaders and followers constantly teach each other new ways to transcend their own self-interest.

Bass' original theory suggests that transformational leaders transform and motivate followers by increasing their awareness of expected outcomes, encouraging them to transcend their own goals for those of the organization, and activating follower's higher actualization needs (Leadership in Organizations). He suggests, unlike Burns, that transformational leaders exhibit both transformational and transactional behaviors, but not necessarily exclusive of each other. Transformational behaviors include exhibiting charisma, providing intellectual stimulation to followers, providing support to followers, and communicating an appealing vision to followers. Transactional behaviors include giving contingent awards and providing different leadership styles to increase motivation. (I.e. Leaders could increase their level of involvement with followers).

Both Bass's and Burns' approaches focus on elevating followers goals and transforming followers' expectations to higher orders. Burns' approach, however, limits

transforming leadership only to those leaders who can inspire the highest social outcomes, such as revolutionary movements. Bass' approach focuses on surpassing organizational expectations and elevating followers' needs. Both approaches require that transformational leaders must have the ability to overcome negative conditions and problems of their organizations or movements. Only Burns' approach, however, requires the actual achievement of quantum social change. Cuoto distinguishes the two approaches by offering conclusions to their applications. Since Burns' transforming leadership requires significant social change, it may be out of the grasp of everyday leaders. Since Bass' transformational leadership theory requires simply performance beyond expectations, it may be in the grasp of any leader.

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, other contemporary leadership scholars, define what they term a *transformative* leader as, "one that commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of change" (3). Their theory suggests that transformative leaders are able to create new leaders from followers. Leadership behaviors necessary for transformative leadership include providing a vision, acting as a role model, providing powerful communication, developing trust with followers, and continually learning.

The leadership model I will use for this paper will combine the three theoretical approaches. Because Rose engaged in leading a social movement, she fits the criteria set forth by Burns under his transforming leadership model. The criteria for arguing that Rose was a transformational leader requires analysis of the following behaviors:

- Provide an inspiring vision
- Develop trust with followers by acting as a role model
- Provide powerful communication
- Continually learn through leadership



The following results must be met under transformational leadership:

- Overcome negative conditions and problems within the leadership environment
- Commits followers to action
- Create new leaders from followers by elevating their goals and transforming their expectations to higher orders.
- Inspire the highest social outcomes and achieve quantum social change

This theoretical construct fits for both executive and historical leaders, but will be applied only in the context of history for the purposes of this paper. In fact, much of Burns' work originated on political leaders including Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, both of whom were thought to be the revolutionary leaders. The woman's rights movement, from 1848-1860, can very easily be seen as revolutionary based upon the social environment I will discuss. Therefore, analyzing Rose as a key leader of this movement under the transformational leadership theories set forth will provide insights to the proposed questions.

## The Woman's Rights Movement

Many agree that the first woman's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 serves as the appropriate origin of the woman's rights movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Frances Gage recalled: "It was the proceedings of the Convention, in 1848, at Seneca Falls, That first gave a direction to the efforts of the many women, who began to feel the degradation of their subject condition" (HWS 91).

Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Mary Ann McClintock put "their long-talked of resolution" of "holding a woman's convention into action" (HWS 68).<sup>2</sup> Friends since the 1840 anti-slavery convention in London, they called the meeting to order on July 19, 1848 issuing a "Declaration of Sentiments," modeled after the Declaration of Independence, demanding equal rights across several areas.

The leaders listed several grievances against man including, "He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise... He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead." Then they presented their resolutions as demands to their rights, such as, "It is the duty of the women in this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise... That woman is man's equal-was intended to be so by the Creator – and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such" (*Proceedings of the first woman's rights convention, Seneca Falls, New York, 1848*). The one hundred delegates adopted all of the resolutions, with suffrage as the only debated issue. Many thought that this demand was too radical and would set the movement up for ridicule by the public and press (HWS 70-74).

The delegates received mostly negative response from the press. The Mechanics Advocate wrote, "It requires no argument to prove that this convention is all wrong...every

true hearted female will instantly feel this is unwomanly.” But The Rochester Daily Advertiser provided a more positive report: “Let the women keep the ball moving, so bravely started.”<sup>2</sup> At the end of the proceedings, Elizabeth Cady Stanton charged the women at the convention to continue what they started, “We hope this convention will be followed by a series of conventions embracing every part of the country” (HWS 71).

This convention marked the beginning of an organized, collective movement for the enfranchisement of woman (Kolmerten 74). During the period between the first convention and the beginning of the Civil War, women leaders made miraculous strides in achieving their equality with men. In fact, Yuri Suhl calls the 1850’s a “Glorious decade of incessant growth and activity” for the woman’s rights movement and “How close were the victories that might have been theirs had not these revolutionary events [The Civil War] thrust themselves so precipitously upon them” (210).

### **Barriers for Women**

Women faced considerable obstacles in achieving their rights, such as public prejudice, male-designed law, the clergy, and woman’s unawareness of their own degradation. Horace Greeley, editor of The New York Tribune, reported that women were “enraged in a struggle, not only against numbers and power, and fashion and immemorial custom, but with the pulpit and the press actively and bitterly leading and spurring on their antagonists” (Sept 12, 1853, Qtd. In HWS 575).

From the beginning, women’s social and economic status was limited to the restrictions public opinion shackled them with. In the post-revolutionary period, men espoused high expectations for women. They required females to be “irreproachable in

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<sup>2</sup> They instead focused on anti-slavery activities up until the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 (Tyler 453).

conduct, tireless in the pursuit of domestic virtues, strong in religious faith, spotless in purity, and ignorant of the evils of the world about her (Tyler 424). Social tradition and men's prevailing expectations for women formed public opinion, which restricted woman's sphere to only domestic and religious duties. An editorial on the 1851 second national woman's rights convention in Worcester declared "A woman is nobody, a wife is everything. A pretty girl is equal to one thousand men, and a mother is, next to God, all-powerful. The [real] ladies...are resolved to maintain their rights as wives, belles, virgins, and mothers, and not as women" (Rochester Democrat Qtd. in HWS 803). This narrow perspective represented a significant barrier that women faced.<sup>4</sup>

Restrictive laws were another barrier women confronted in their crusade. In fact, Ernestine Rose declared at the third national woman's rights convention in Syracuse in 1852 that the "Legislative halls stands more in need of purification than the husbands at home...men are not responsible, but laws are" (*Proceedings of the national woman's rights convention*, Syracuse, 1852 Qtd. in The New York Herald, September 11, 1852). Further, Rose, in the New York state woman's rights convention in 1853, poked fun at the ridiculous nature of laws relating to women, specifically her right to make a will. She declared, "The law says that wills may be made by all persons, except idiots, lunatics, married women, and infants. Male infants ought to consider it quite an insult to be placed in the same category with married women" (*Proceedings of the New York State Woman's*

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<sup>3</sup> The New York Herald also reports, "The convention at Seneca Falls has appealed to the country" (Qtd. in HWS 71).

<sup>4</sup> Ernestine Rose often spoke of public opinion as a "Tyrant," that had "deep rooted, hoary-headed prejudices." She said that conquering public opinion "required far greater heroism than on the battlefield." (*Lecture on woman's rights at Cochituate Hall 1851*, 9, *Proceedings of the 1856 woman's rights convention in The Liberator*, December 5, 1855 *Proceedings of the 1851 woman's rights convention in The New York Herald*, October 18, 1851).

*Rights Convention, New York, 1853, 48*). The male-designed law classified women as total dependents, unfit to live or prosper by their own merits.

Religious leaders also discriminated against women, well before the formal movement began. The emotion behind both sides truly impeded the practical objectives of the movement and remained a huge barrier throughout the era. An extract from a “Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Massachusetts to the Churches under their care – 1837” reflects the clergy’s perspective on women. Among other decrees, it stated, “The power of the woman is her dependence...she can only teach in church schools...she cannot have protection if she is equal...modesty and delicacy is the charm of domestic life.” It should be noted, however, that several liberal clergymen, such as Reverend May supported the woman’s rights movement (HWS 76-83).

The clergy’s discriminative assault on women leaders intensified in the 1850’s as the woman’s rights movement grew. Elizabeth C. Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Frances Gage wrote of the “prejudice, wickedness, and violence woman was compelled to meet from all classes of men, especially the clergy, in those early days”(HWS 152). The clergy attacked women who spoke on their own behalf. Preachers argued that God expected women to be subservient (Eiseman 54). The pulpit claimed that the verses in the Bible substantiated woman’s inferiority.

Much to the dismay of woman’s activists, conservative preachers across all denominations participated actively in the woman’s rights conventions throughout the 1850’s. In the national convention in Syracuse in 1852, for example, Reverend Hatch disrupted the entire convention by turning the discussion from productive actions of pursuing rights to debating if the bible supported them. He claimed, “If women contended

with horses, they must expect to be betted on” (*Proceedings of the national woman’s rights convention*, Syracuse, 1852).

Compounding the religious discrimination was women’s predisposition to accept the clergy’s rhetoric. Elizabeth C. Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Frances Gage complained, “Women are usually more superstitious, more devoutly religious than men,” which made them more unaware of their own degraded position (50). Some women’s inability to recognize their own predicament represented perhaps the greatest obstacle women leaders faced. Ernestine Rose lamented how the 1837 New York woman’s rights petition drive women told her “I have rights enough, the gentleman will laugh at me” and Rose castigated “those who swim with the current – ignorant, with moral cowardice, which hinders the progress of the race”(Qtd. in Underwood 270-272).<sup>5</sup> Stanton, Anthony, and Gage commented on the poor results of the same petition drive: “The very few names they secured show the hopeless apathy and ignorance of the women as to their own rights. None but those who did that petition work in the early days...can ever know the hardships and humiliations that were endured” (HWS 38, 461). Even other women humiliated early petitioners with taunts and ridicule when visited. Stanton, Anthony, and Gage complained of the very “slumbering energies of woman,” which helped hold her in the distressed position (340). Of any obstacle, women’s inability to realize her horrific situation frustrated women crusaders most.

Many of the leading woman’s rights leaders often complained at conventions how women could not recognize their own horrid condition. Lucretia Mott, at the 1852 Pennsylvania state woman’s rights convention, decried “like those still more degraded by



personal bondage, she hugs her chains” (Qtd. in *HWS* 372). Rose used a similar analogy in one of her speeches at the 1852 national woman’s rights convention in Syracuse. She lamented that it was most “melancholy that women wore her chains so long that she did not only feel them, but she seemed to require them” (Proceedings in the *New York Herald*, September 11, 1852). Most telling of all is a statement from Reverend Longfellow at the national woman’s rights convention in New York in 1860, “Men are more willing to grant your rights than you are to claim them” (Qtd. in *New York Tribune*, May 11, 1860). The long history of prejudicial public opinion and male-designed laws helped make women numb to their pains. Even the men, who instilled those pains, were more aware of their condition.<sup>6</sup>

### **Conventions**

Between 1848-1860, women utilized different strategies in pursuing their goal of equal rights. They petitioned state legislatures, presented lectures, circulated pamphlets, wrote articles published in magazines and held county, state, and national woman’s rights conventions. While all of these initiatives assisted greatly in their cause, the woman’s rights conventions perhaps proved the most powerful by creating a collective voice of shared ideas that educated the public, created solidarity, called for visibility from the press, and organized the movement. Ernestine Rose spoke of the importance of conventions at the 1860 national woman’s rights convention in New York: “Thought is first required, then

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<sup>5</sup> Women often asked woman’s rights leaders “Why do you want more women’s rights? Haven’t you not already enough?” (*Proceedings of the National woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860). This question infuriated many of the leaders, such as Rose.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that the women leaders did have some support to overcome these barriers. Some, like the factors inherent in the social environment – openness to change, class changes, and the rise of the frontier has been mentioned. Others, like the support from wealthy philanthropists, should also be mentioned. People like, James Mott, Wendell Phillips, Thomas Higginson, William Channing, and Gerrit Smith all supported the movement emotionally, intellectually, and financially (Tyler, 450). Others thought it easier for American

the expression of it, and that leads to action, and action based upon thought is action that never needs to be reversed; it is lasting and profitable, and produces the desired effect”(*Proceedings of the National woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860). In other words, conventions facilitated the process of moving thoughts into action. In fact, Kolmerten writes, “Without the agitation of conventions, the legislators felt they could do whatever they wished without impunity”(227). At the conventions, women could voice the injustices that they endured.

Conventions provided a platform for women leaders to be heard and the public and press became very interested in what they had to say. From Seneca Falls in 1848 until the start of the Civil War, national woman’s rights conventions occurred every year except 1849 and 1857 (**See Appendix A for list of national conventions with officers and locations**). The national conventions represented the focus and highlight of the woman’s rights movement in the 1850’s. Each year, they mobilized key resources, strategies, and public support. In almost every case, prominent press representatives covered the events and provided both objective and subjective editorials on their results. State conventions, usually to a lesser extent, also gave women a forum for finding their voice.<sup>7</sup>

At these conventions, women leaders could break free from male subjugation.

Important leaders stood bravely before their peers and foes alike, demanding the

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women to attain their rights where there was “so much more liberty than in Europe” (New York Herald, September 10, 1852).

<sup>7</sup> After the Seneca Falls convention, state conventions across almost every northern state including, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York “sprang up as if by magic.” They all had similar calls and resolutions showing that “all were moved by like influences.” Leaders like Frances Gage, Tracy Cutler, and Caroline Severance led in Ohio, a “fertile land for woman’s rights,” Clarina Nichols led in Kansas, Lucy Stone and Paulina Wright Davis led in Massachusetts, the “fertile land of liberty,” the Grimke sisters and Lucretia Mott led in Pennsylvania, the “anti-slavery state,” Ernestine Rose, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Antoinette Brown led in New York, and many others in less active woman’s rights states (HWS 89).



enfranchisement of woman. In these leaders, their followers found awareness, self-confidence, hope, and determination. After the Seneca Falls convention, Emily Collins wrote a letter to Elizabeth Cady Stanton proclaiming, “But not until that meeting at Seneca Falls in 1848, of the pioneers in the cause, gave this feeling of unrest form and voice, did I take action” (Qtd. in HWS 88). These women leaders at the conventions inspired action, regardless of what their male opponents thought of their crusade. At the 1854 New York State woman’s rights convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton addressed the Albany Assembly, “You say that the mass of women...do not make this demand; it comes from a few sour, disappointed old maids and childless women. You are mistaken; the mass speak through us” (Qtd. in HWS 604).

Indeed, the mass did speak through these few, incredible leaders and, for the most part, in one of the numerous national or state conventions. Whereas the male-dominated anti-slavery and temperance conventions drowned women’s voices, the woman’s rights conventions raised them to unprecedented octaves.

### **The Press**

Prejudiced public opinion represented a substantial barrier to the women leaders in achieving their goals. Because the public saw much of its news through the lens of a newspaper or magazine, it is important to understand the dynamics of how the press affected the woman’s rights movement. At the 1853 New York State woman’s rights convention, William Lloyd Garrison, a preeminent anti-slavery activist and social reformist, explained the prodigious influence the press had on the public: “The press of this country represented the status of public opinion, the symbol of the moral and intellectual

condition of the nation” (New York Tribune, September 7, 1853).<sup>8</sup> The leading papers in the United States were based mainly in the New York market. Men with substantial ability edited all of them. The New York Tribune, edited by Horace Greeley, exuded an independent and fearless view. Woman’s rights leaders saw Greeley as a liberal leader who often attended and supported the woman’s rights functions. He was “One of the most popular men in the nation, his word almost law to the people, his journal was ever true to women” (HWS 126, 452). Greeley stated in an early convention, “I recognize most thoroughly the right of woman to choose her own sphere... Woman alone can, in the present state of the controversy, speak effectively for woman” (Tyler 452).

Woman’s rights leaders considered The New York Herald, edited by Gordon Bennett, “the opposition” of reform groups, including the woman’s rights movement. Bennett attended many woman’s rights functions and derided them and their women leaders with sarcastic and libelous editorials. He called them “Woman’s wrong conventions,” and diminutized their chief objectives (HWS 546, 556): “The grand object of elevating the whole female sex is the right to wear breeches...they propose the right to go a courting...to command the army...to wear mustaches...and to sing basso as well as soprano”(New York Herald, October 19, 1851). Even Bennett, however, acknowledged some of their successes, calling the 1852 national woman’s rights convention in Syracuse “more superior to Whig meetings – a thousand times the enthusiasm and sincerity...they may have been deprived of all other rights, (but) they have not been tongue-tied” (New York Herald, September 10, 1852).

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<sup>8</sup> Garrison lambasted the American Press, calling them the most “diabolical” voice because they have the largest circulation. (New York Tribune, September 7, 1853)

These papers wielded substantial power over the public by shaping the news to meet their own needs and beliefs. At the New York state woman's rights convention in 1853, William Lloyd Garrison criticized the "New York Times, The Express, and The Herald – the reports [on the first day proceedings] were made in the most brutal, cowardly, and devilish spirit" (New York Tribune, September 7, 1853). At the 1856 national woman's rights convention in New York, Wendell Phillips, a leading woman's rights activist, declared "We live in a government where the New York Herald and the New York Tribune were more really the governing power than Franklin Pierce" (The Liberator, Dec 5, 1856). The power that these papers had on public opinion, then, is undeniable. Of course several other newspapers covered the woman's rights movement, but these two provide a representative microcosm of the others across the country. The public of the 1850's relied on distinguished editors for information and much of what is known today about the woman's rights movement is seen through the lenses of these colorful and mostly subjective newspaper editors.

## Ernestine Rose

### Growing up

Ernestine Louise Sigismund Potowski was born January 13, 1810 in Piotrkow, Poland, the only daughter of a rabbi. She called herself a “Rebel at the age of 5,” questioning everything from religion to science (Suhl 8). Ernestine’s father told her that little girls should not ask questions, which made her question him and others more than typical little girls in that era. By the age of fourteen Ernestine referred to herself a heretic who “proclaimed as utterly false the notion that woman was inferior to man and insisted on equality for both sexes” (Suhl 10). At the age of sixteen, her mother died, leaving her father with the challenge of dealing with a rebellious daughter. As many other Polish fathers did during that time, he found a much older potential husband for Ernestine, whom she did not know and thus did not love. She immediately objected to the pre-arranged marriage. The potential bridegroom refused to return the already-contracted dowry, and Ernestine brought the case to the Regional Tribunal Courts to resolve, a rare occurrence not only for a woman, but also a Jewish sixteen-year-old. Suhl describes Ernestine’s legal fight as revolutionary for the era: “The honorable judges were apparently so impressed with the argument presented by this young pleader for justice that they gave her a favorable decision” by endorsing her claim to her inheritance. “It was for the right to ownership that she fought, and won” (15). Ernestine’s battle on her own behalf foreshadowed the war for equality for women that she fought years later.

At seventeen, Ernestine left Poland for Germany never to return to her homeland again. Kolmerten describes her departure as an escape from a religious father and a new stepmother’s temper (7). After two years in Germany, “She was a much-traveled, well-

informed young lady with an easy cosmopolitan manner...(and) had become highly proficient in the German language”(Suhl 24). Ernestine’s fierce independence and confidence helped her to succeed in an environment that restricted not only women, but also those of the Jewish faith. She traveled across Europe between 1829-1830 to countries like Holland and France and finally ended up in London, England. In London, Rose met Robert Owen, “The foremost social reformer of the day” who “found in Ernestine a young dedicated disciple and fiery advocate of his principles; and Ernestine, standing at the crossroads of her life, found in Owenism a social philosophy that gave her both a program and direction” (Suhl 28).<sup>9</sup> She learned of his experiment in New Lanark<sup>10</sup> and involved herself in the many other social reform activities throughout her six-year stay in England. Ernestine’s passion heightened not only for social reform, but also for love. She married William Ella Rose, a silversmith and jeweler, who would become the foundation of support throughout the next several years. William Rose shared his wife’s devotion to the cause of human happiness, and in 1836, they decided it was time to move where the opportunity for it was most fertile, the United States (Kolmerten 17-20).

### **Rose’s Early Human Rights Activities 1836-1848**

On her arrival to America in 1836, she and William moved into a small apartment in New York City. William began work as a silversmith and Rose attempted to sell cologne water to fund their early reform involvement. (Suhl 73). They purposely did not have children during the first few years in America so that they could get more involved in the reform movement. It was Rose, however, that ventured out most. She participated in free-thought societies and conventions, petitioned for woman’s rights, lead Thomas Paine

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<sup>9</sup> Owenism claimed that society, not humans, were responsible for social evils

celebrations, participated in a New York utopian experiment, and gave lectures on several different topics across New York State.

Rose's reform activism started with her involvement in freethinking groups such as the Society of Moral Philanthropists led by Benjamin Offen.<sup>11</sup> This society held weekly lectures on such topics as socialism, religion, and free thought at Tammany Hall in New York City.<sup>12</sup> Rose, in the midst of other New York freethinkers such as Abner Kneeland and Gilbert Vale, began speaking at least once a month for this society during the late 1830's and early 1840's on topics such as socialism and the "concomitant evils of capitalism" (Kolmerten 33-34). This group formed the "circle of friends and acquaintances which Ernestine moved in during her early period in this country" (Suhl 68). It is within this group that Rose not only developed her English and speaking ability, but also developed her social reform philosophies. The press branded the societies' members "infidels" who as "unbelievers" attempted to unglue society and religion.<sup>13</sup> The free-thought leaders continued to be described this way throughout the 1840's.

Following the lead of her freethinking idol, Frances Wright, Rose engaged immediately in woman's rights activities. Wright was a profound influence on Rose in her early years in America. Like Rose, Wright was a foreigner who faced considerable persecution because of her heritage and beliefs. Wright was one of the first women to speak out in America for women's rights. Although talented, she like Rose remained

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<sup>10</sup> At New Lanark, Scotland, Robert Owen instituted his first socialistic community experiment. It was considered a successful venture by most.

<sup>11</sup> Offen was the "guiding spirit" of the Moral Philanthropists, whose "pointed logic, unsparing wit, and telling humor" influenced not only the growing audiences but also Ernestine Rose (Suhl 66). As Rose's notoriety increased, the press often raved about her same qualities.

<sup>12</sup> The Society of the Moral Philanthropists continued to grow and attract large audiences until the financial panic of 1837 caused them to abridge their activities. It did resume for several years, but never to the heights of 1836-1837.



relatively obscure to the general populous during the 1830's. Rose first met Wright in New York City when they lectured together at freethinking events. (Kolmerten 33-35). At the 1860 national woman's rights convention, Rose spoke at length on the contributions that "Fanny" Wright provided to the woman's rights movement:

Frances Wright was the first woman in this country who spoke on the equality of the sexes...She was subjected to public odium, slander, and persecution...Oh! She had her reward...knowing that she had done her duty; the reward springing from the consciousness of right, of endeavoring to benefit unborn generations ...It has been her glory, it is the glory of her memory (*Proceedings of the woman's rights convention*, New York, 1860, 8).

Rose went on to explain how she continued the leadership of the woman's rights movement initiated by Wright. She explained, "After her, in 1837, the subject of woman's rights was again taken hold of – aye, taken hold of by woman...and she began to sow the seeds for the future growth, the fruits of which we now begin to enjoy"

(*Proceedings of the woman's rights convention*, New York, 1860, 8). Rose identified herself as the first disciple of Wright, spreading the courageous message she had initiated.

In 1836, Rose petitioned women of New York to support a woman's property rights bill introduced by Judge Thomas Hertell.<sup>14</sup> He was one of the first men to understand men's despotic hold on women's rights and actively pursue legislative solutions. The bill proposed that married woman should be able to keep the property they brought with them before marriage, a right that women did not enjoy (Kolmerten 30-31). Although Rose did not know Hertell personally, she espoused his beliefs, and as with Wright, spread the message he had initiated. In a letter to Susan B. Anthony in 1872, she recalled:

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<sup>15</sup> Suhl writes that in the 1830's "infidel was a busy epithet, an ugly stigma capable of inflicting serious damage to the reputation of its victim" (68).

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Hertell was a reformist lawyer who "had spent a lifetime arguing for a variety of rights" (Kolmerten 31). He, perhaps, was one of the leading fathers of woman's rights by boldly promoting bills

After a good deal of trouble I obtained five signatures...Woman at that time had not learned to know that she had any rights except those that man in his generosity allowed her; both have learned something since that time which they will never forget (Qtd. in HWS 99).

Although Hertell and other lawmakers amended the bill throughout the next several years, they kept his original theme and demands relatively intact. In Hertell's Argument in the House of the State of New York in 1837 he reinforced "that its primary *principle* is to preserve to *married women* the title, possession, and control of their estate...*after as before* marriage" (Hertell 6). His language inspired Rose to support the campaign and gain support from the people. While Rose did not exert any influence on the bill's language, her selfless leadership surely helped its passage.<sup>15</sup>

In 1840, Paulina Wright, who had been working independently on petitions for the bill, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton joined forces with Rose, which was "the beginning of a life-long association as founders and leaders of the woman's rights movement" (Suhl, 59). Both Paulina Wright and Stanton had started their own efforts for women's rights prior to their first meeting in 1840 with Rose. Although they occasionally worked together, Rose preferred to operate on her own. In fact, although Stanton collaborated with Rose throughout the 1840's and 1850's, she never mentioned Rose in any of her letters to Anthony. (Kolmerten, 133). Although their relationship was somewhat strained, they still worked together up until the initiation of the Civil War in their courageous verbal assaults on the New York legislature. Woman's rights enthusiasts and men opponents alike

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deemed radical. As early as the 1820's he argued for social change in areas such as temperance, religion, and woman's rights.

<sup>15</sup> In this address to the legislature in 1837, Hertell fought passionately for women's rights. He argued that the existing law originated out of the dark ages and was a result of a feudal government. Hertell also implied that women's rights were guaranteed to them inherently from the declaration of Independence, surely an influence on Rose's later speeches using the same argument (7,8,15).



recognized Rose as a pre-eminent speaker as a result of these presentations to the legislature.

Rose, along with her cohorts, continued sending petitions with increasing numbers of signatures until finally, in 1848, the legislature enacted a Revised Version of the bill into law. In a letter to Anthony in 1872, Rose wrote, “But no sooner did it become legal than all the women said, “Oh! That is right! We ought always to have had that” (Qtd. in HWS 99). Rose’s work on the Marriage Woman’s Property Act embodied her early success in securing her own property from her first bridegroom as a teen in Poland. She declared, “Agitate! Agitate! Ought to be the motto of every reformer. Agitation is the opposite of stagnation – the one is life, the other is death” (Qtd. in Suhl 65).

After the passage of the Married Woman’s Property Act in 1848, Rose Stanton, and other leaders continued their assault on the New York State Assembly throughout the 1850’s. On each occasion, they listed their grievances and demands for equality before the Senators in Albany. Rose became known as a key speaker during those barrages, noted for her eloquence, wit, and intellectual capacity. For example, on a Saturday evening hearing before the New York Assembly Committee on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1854, Rose argued, “Women never had a chance to prove what she might be” and refuted questions from committee members “in a characteristic manner, and greatly to the entertainment of the audience” (The Liberator, March 9, 1855).

Kolmerten suggests that during the early 1840’s Rose remained out of the public eye occasionally because of pregnancies and childbirth. If indeed, Rose had children, none survived past infancy (39). Throughout the early 1840’s, however, Rose continued to get involved in social reform activities.

In 1845, the Society for Moral Philanthropists held an “Infidel Convention” to discuss and promote social reform. Suhl writes, “Never before had so many of the persecuted, the vilified, the misunderstood been assembled under one roof. For the moment at least the loneliness of isolation fell away from them and they were intoxicated with the strength of their numbers” (83). Many of the free-thought leaders attended. The New York Herald wrote, “Seated by our side was the venerable Robert Owen, and the highly accomplished, talented, and intellectually beautiful Mrs. Rose” (May 5, 1845). Rose and Owen both spoke on human rights and “universal freedom of opinion.”<sup>16</sup> Gordon Bennett, the editor of the New York Herald, wrote of the event,

When the ultras in religion and philosophy of all shades and complexions, and motives are thus allowed full play, they come out and show themselves. Their inconsiderable strength and their inconceivable folly are at once apparent. But besides, and better still, the public mind is kept awake and stimulated to activity (New York Herald, May 5, 1845).

Although in 1845 the free-thought movement still experienced considerable public rebuttal, it and its leaders had made some inroads in “waking” the public mind.

At the Rutland Free Convention in 1858, held in Rutland, Vermont Ernestine Rose served as one of the Vice Presidents. She and other leaders argued on topics such as spiritualism, marriage, maternity and woman’s rights, slavery, and the bible. Rose proclaimed, “This being a free convention...composed of free men and women, and as we have no pope to govern us...duty to vote...to give us their voice” (*Proceedings of the Rutland Free Convention*, 1858, 8-10). At the Hartford Bible Convention in 1853 Rose and other free-thought leaders received an incredible amount of criticism. The leaders of the convention discussed the Bible and God’s will and how they applied to reform movements

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<sup>16</sup> For much of the meeting, the attendees debated the name of the society. Many, including Rose and Owen did not want to be called infidels. Rose declared “Infidel does not belong to us” but then later changed her

such as woman's rights. The opposition created an incredible amount of disruption throughout the convention just for the mere fact that the participants were questioning religious doctrine. In fact, critics called this an "Infidel Convention" where "These men and women with black blasphemy on their polluted lips, and red venom at their rankling hearts, launched out their terrible attack on the Bible (The Liberator, June 17, 1853). These free-thought conventions unfortunately helped give Rose a reputation as an infidel which served as one of her greatest obstacles as a woman's rights leader.

Rose participated in other social reform activities before she focused almost solely on woman's rights. She often spoke at Thomas Paine celebrations, where freethinkers such as Benjamin Offen, "Celebrated Enlightenment like values, values that formed the intellectual underpinning of the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence." Participants in these celebrations honored the life and values of Thomas Paine, to them, the father of American democracy and reform. Much of the mainstream public and press saw these events as radical. Throughout the 1840's, "Ernestine became more and more a presence" in the growing popularity of the Paine commemorations by "joining the men during the talks and standing toasts." She was "not content to just listen to the speeches" and soon provided talks "in a style of argument and eloquence seldom equaled" (Kolmerten 40-43). At these celebrations Rose argued that the demand for woman's rights was based on the Declaration of Independence. These commemorations also improved her ability to speak in public amongst supporting friends and increased her confidence in the face of opposition, both useful in her future woman's rights activities.

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opinion and supported the name (New York Herald, May 5, 1845). The convention finally compromised with a new name, "The Infidel Society for the Promotion of Mental Liberty" (Suhl 87-88).

Rose also lectured on several topics, including anti-slavery, woman's rights, and religion in several different locations throughout her early years in America. In a letter to Susan B. Anthony in 1872, she wrote, "I can mention from memory the principal places I have spoken. In the winter of 1836 and '37, I spoke in New York, and for some years after I lectured in almost every city in the state." Rose went on to list the many states she spoke in between 1836-1847 including, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and South Carolina (Qtd. in HWS 99).<sup>17</sup> These lectures helped build confidence in her own ability and also established her as somewhat of a celebrity not only to freethinkers, but also the general public. One Michigan woman, for example, claimed the question of woman's suffrage began with Rose's lecture there in 1846 (Suhl 82). In a letter to Anthony in 1872, Rose reminisced, "A stranger and alone, I went from place to place...and in spite of my heresies I had always good audiences, attentive listeners, and was well received wherever I went" (Qtd. in HWS 99). It could also be argued that her heretical views and exotic style attracted large audiences not to see her talents, but to be entertained by an oddity. Rose continued her lonely reform activities throughout her thirty-six year residence in America.

As a result of her Owenite background and her participation in free-thought societies and conventions, her fellow freethinkers persuaded Rose to join and support the Skaneateles utopian community in the early 1840's. Kolmerten writes, "The socialism of an intentional community, created so that members could benefit from each other rather than compete with each other, was necessary, the Owenites postulated, for women and men to find a new moral world in communities of equality" (43-44). Skaneateles was a

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<sup>17</sup> Suhl gives an account of Rose's visit to South Carolina in 1847 where she was "almost tarred and feathered" for speaking out against slavery in a conversation with a native (90-92).

Owenite community as opposed to Fourierist, the other leading type of utopian community in the “decade of community building 1840’s” (Kolmerten 45). Suhl differentiates the two communities, “Owenites believed in the abolition of individual property rights and in the benefits mankind derived from industrialization and scientific knowledge. Fourierists, on the other hand, clung to individual property rights and viewed industrialism as a great evil” (Suhl 76). Skaneateles, then, represented a culmination of Rose’s social possibilities. If she could help the community thrive, she could realize her social improvement objectives by proving harmony between men and women was possible in the right conditions.

Although she never resided in the community, Rose supported it vehemently for three years through lectures at Skaneateles and across the country as the “Community’s roving ambassador” (Suhl 80). She, along with others such as William Lloyd Garrison and Ralph Emerson, spoke in numerous New England locations on “Social Reform in general, and about Skaneateles specifically” (Kolmerten 47). Rose’s experience with utopian socialism gave her a broad base of knowledge and experience on reform possibilities that she later used in her woman’s rights leadership positions. Despite her efforts, however, the Skaneateles experiment eventually failed in May of 1846. She learned that even in the most fertile open social environments, tremendous challenges still needed to be overcome to realize tangible gains.

Rose’s multitude of reformist activities between 1836-1848 helped shape her beliefs, values, and identity as an activist in the woman’s rights movement. More importantly, her many early efforts helped “create a political and cultural climate that accepted women as part of the reformist agenda” (Kolmerten 40). She had gained an



impressive amount of public visibility that would help her conquer the incredible obstacles that stood in the way of her leadership.

Although Ernestine Rose considered herself a social reformer in many areas, it is her leadership role in the woman's rights movement that offers the best opportunity to analyze her leadership style.<sup>18</sup> Her leadership in this movement produced the greatest results of any of her activities. In fact, Rose's recent biographer, Carol Kolmerten, writes that Ernestine Rose "helped create the woman's rights movement, a movement that would help change the course of her adopted nation" (70).

### **Obstacles to Leadership**

Rose's language barrier, public prejudice against her, and the "coldness" she received from other leaders were some of the personal obstacles that she faced in her quest for woman's rights. These obstacles, compounded with those all woman's rights leaders faced, such the disapproval from clergy and some women's inability to admit to the reality of their own degradation, challenged Rose throughout her efforts in the woman's rights movement during the 1850's.

Although she had learned English quickly, the language barrier still represented one of the earliest obstacles that Rose faced in her quest for woman's rights. It is astonishing that Rose became known as a preeminent speaker using her third language. She perhaps had to work harder than other leaders in preparing for her delivery of speeches so that she could communicate in the most powerful manner. Newspapers often criticized her ability to speak the native language by mocking her dialect in their convention summaries. The New York Herald, for example, wrote of her manner of speaking at the

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<sup>18</sup> Lee Freidman writes, "It is to her leadership in the woman's rights movement, and for her labor in that field, [among others] that she owes her claim to a place in our history" (252).

infidel convention in 1845, “More truth as has been spoke here dan can be found in de united libraries of de world” (May 6, 1845). Gordon Bennett exploited her accent by purposely typing “dan” instead of “than” and “de” instead of “the.” Reporting on the New York State woman’s rights convention in 1853, Bennett wrote that “Mrs. Ernestine Rose, a Polish Lady, who is well known to our readers...delivered one of her customary onslaughts upon the English language” (New York Herald, September 7, 1853). Bennett’s tactics were typical of woman’s rights critics of the era where they focused on delivery instead of content in order to avoid the reality of the message. As Rose spoke more frequently, however, her English improved and so did the press reviews she received. The more liberal, The Liberator, showered her with praise for a lecture she gave at the Music Hall in New York City in 1855. Garrison wrote, “Mrs. Rose is one of the most natural, dignified, intelligent, and effective speakers, and for one born and educated in Poland, speaks our language with astonishing precision and accuracy” (December 1, 1855). Rose learned quickly and overcame this substantial barrier with courage and perseverance.

Another barrier to overcome was public and press prejudice against her freethinking views. Rose’s early courageous confrontations with religious leaders along with her involvement in the liberal, free-thought associations gave her a negative reputation with much of the press and public. She also called herself an atheist, which heightened the prejudice against her. In a speech entitled “Defense of Atheism,” she proclaimed that “Truth is omnipotent...man made God, not God made man...Ignorance is the stepmother of superstition” (In Gaylor 73). Her opponents not only called her an “infidel” but also a “female devil” and seized upon any chance to deride her in public or in the papers (Kolmerten 36). At the Hartford Bible Convention in 1853, for example,

William Lloyd Garrison, a like-minded radical, recounted the crowd reaction to Rose: “Mrs. Rose now presented herself, and the storm which had been brewing, burst like an avalanche upon her head. Groaning, hissing, stamping, barking, crowing...were most liberally lavished upon her, but she bore it bravely” (The Liberator, June 17, 1853). The Boston Bee gave a derogatory account of Rose’s presence, “Worse and more melancholy than all, was Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose, of New York, her heart saturated with the fiery liquid of infidelity, and her tongue uttering sentiments too shocking to repeat” (Qtd. In The Liberator, June 17, 1853). Rose learned to remain calm and use her wit and satire to get her through the storms of opposition she endured throughout her efforts in advancing woman’s rights in the 1850’s. The hostility she met never discouraged her efforts. Rose proclaimed in 1846, “No true soul will ever be deterred from the performance of a duty by any criticism” (Qtd. in Eisman 51).

Rose’s opponents also attacked her Jewish and foreign heritage. After the New York State woman’s rights convention and presentation to the legislature in 1854, The Albany Register called Rose an “Exotic agitator” and a “Polish propagandist” with “A train of followers, like a great Kite with a very long trail” (Qtd. in HWS, 609). Sometimes, simply because of her “exotic” heritage, people revealed their biases, unwilling to hear her arguments. The New York Tribune, for example, usually more positively receptive to Rose’s speeches, could not support her views on a uniquely American issue, slavery. Regarding her speech at the Rutland Free Convention in 1858, Greeley wrote, “Mrs. Rose spoke on slavery...but said nothing new...or at all interesting” (January 29, 1858). In addition, Rose faced anti-immigrant prejudices as the number of immigrants increased in the 1840’s and 1850’s.



The final challenge Rose faced in her attempts at effective leadership came from those closest to her, some of the other woman's rights leaders who sometimes exhibited their own anti-foreign views directly in the face of Rose. According to Kolmerten, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's anti-immigrant speeches in the mid 1860's "suggest that...she probably harbored unconscious biases against foreigners and, perhaps, Jews that may have rendered Rose's words and deeds invisible to her" (133). Lucy Stone also gave somewhat scathing remarks against foreigners several times during her speaking career. At the third national woman's rights convention in Syracuse in 1852, for example, Stone classified foreigners as social outcasts: "A foreigner who cannot speak the language has more rights than woman...and a foreigner, Negro, and drunkard can vote, but woman can't" (New York Herald, September 10, 1852). Stone's remarks, albeit somewhat truthful, still hurt Rose who sat right next to her on the platform. Stone also confronted Rose on few occasions on the speaker's platform regarding the content of Rose's speeches. At the New York State woman's rights convention in 1853, for example, she questioned Rose's knowledge of the law. Stone interrupted Rose in the middle of her speech saying, "Just one word. I think Mrs. Rose is a little mistaken; I wish to correct her by saying," Rose immediately interrupted Stone and refuted her objection. Stone recoiled saying, "I was not paying close attention, and must have been mistaken." (*Proceedings of the New York State woman's rights convention*, New York, 1853, 64). This interlude represents one of several confrontations that Rose had on the stage with her peers.

Some like this one, her peers instigated, but others Rose instigated on her own. She thoroughly enjoyed "intellectual sparring" with any opposition to defend her own ideas on woman's rights. Rose's combative personality made her thrive on confrontation and

debate so that the “truth could emerge.” Kolmerten writes, “Rose’s strategies must have seemed contentious to her female colleagues who had been raised under America’s cult of True Womanhood – raised to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic” (67). Most of her fellow leaders saw her as an outsider who did not fit the mold of woman’s rights leaders and consequently acted very coolly to her. Rose’s sarcastic wit, atheist and Jewish background, and lifelong urge to argue “separated her irrevocably, from the other women who were to be her colleagues throughout the 1850’s and 1860’s” (Kolmerten 68). On a social level, the other women did not treat her as part of the established core of leaders. Rose rarely stayed at their homes when traveling, and she rarely invited them to her own home. This social separation made Rose “a loner” in a world of gargantuan obstacles that faced her and her peers. Kolmerten writes, “Rose was not, and never would be, part of the ‘us.’ Rose’s refusal to adopt pious versions of her rational ideas and her uncompromising vision of truth would keep her from being one of the ‘us’”(68,78). Kolmerten asserts, “Rose remained semantically and spatially isolated from the other women, who were often friends and sisters with each other but not with her” (78).

Susan B. Anthony stood as the only leader Rose became relatively close to. In her diary, Anthony recounted how Rose’s separation made her distrustful of her peers; “it seemed to me that she [Rose] could not ascribe pure motives to any of our reformers.” Rose had told Anthony that “I have suffered, as one after another I have seen those whom I had trusted, betray falsity of motive as I have been compelled to place one after another on the list of panderers to public favor.” Rose also voiced her frustration of how she was perceived by other leaders. She told Anthony, “No one knows how I have suffered from not being understood” (Qtd. in Kolmerten 152-154). Indeed, Rose had reason not to trust

her peers and they did misunderstand her, with the exception of Anthony. For example, according to Annie Gaylor, a contemporary author on religion, Anthony squelched an attempt by other women leaders to block Rose from presiding at the National woman's rights convention in Philadelphia, 1854. During the preparation for the event, some other leaders objected to Rose being named as the President of the convention. They thought her atheist background and combative communication style were too radical for a leadership position (67-8). The separation and prejudice Rose received from her peers and opposition made her leadership lonely throughout the 1850's.

## **Rose's Leadership Style**

Between 1848 and 1860, Ernestine Rose exhibited a pragmatic and bold leadership style that was uniquely her own. Lee Friedman, in Pilgrims in a New Land writes, "Rose was a practical idealist, constructive and keen-minded, eloquent, handsome, witty, and reckless...Almost from its beginning she won a position of leadership in the woman's rights movement" (258). I will categorize her leadership style by assigning six different general labels: consistent messenger, stubborn pragmatist, direct communicator, bold leader, worldly visionary, and flexible strategist. Finally, I will explore Rose's leadership amongst her peers to understand how the "key influential leadership" style affected her own leadership.

### **Consistent Messenger**

Throughout the 1850's, Rose provided a consistent message to her followers. She believed it her duty to educate them to the wrongs that they suffered. Rose followed the lead of her peers at Seneca Falls by equating woman's rights to the demands in the Declaration of Independence. In 1850, at the first national woman's right convention in Worcester, Rose claimed the Declaration of Independence guaranteed co-equality for both man and woman. She asked, "Why, in the name of common sense, is she not equal in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" Rose continued, "if woman ever touched the sword, it would be to sheathe it in its scabbard forever" (New York Tribune, October 24, 1850).

In 1851, Rose provided a similar argument at the second national woman's rights convention in Worcester declaring that "there is another declaration contained in that document upon which this republic is based; namely, that taxation without representation

is tyranny, but woman is taxed.” Woman’s interests are not represented yet she has to pay for the inequality. Rose added that the Declaration of Independence secured the rights that lawmakers provided the American populous. Unfortunately laws that man created, such as the fugitive slave law, degraded the human race. She gave another example of woman’s position under the law by recounting a decision of a recent New York judge: One man was convicted for stealing a pair of boots, another for assault and battery of his wife, “the former was imprisoned, while the latter was let off with a reprimand” (New York Herald, October 16, 1851).

In 1852, at the third national woman’s rights convention in Syracuse, Rose continued her consistent message, referencing the Declaration of Independence to assure human rights based on laws of humanity. She explained the folly of using scripture to justify rights, “Mere differences of opinion and differences of interpretation not self-evident truths – everyone claiming to grasp the truth, but none having it” (The Liberator, October 8, 1852). She vehemently objected to the Bible as the authority to substantiate anyone’s rights. Rose claims perfect freedom for everyone, declaring, “Let principles stand or fall on their own merits...not the Bible’s...when the people of Boston turned their harbor into a teapot, there were plenty to quote scripture to prove them wrong” (New York Herald, September 10, 1852). Gordon Bennett’s review of the event is telling of Rose’s ability. He wrote, “The majority of women are flimsy, flippant, and superficial. If Lucretia Mott, Oakes-Smith, Paulina Wright Davis, Lucy Stone, and Ernestine Rose, particularly the latter, are exceptions, they but confirm the rule” (Qtd. in The Liberator, October 15, 1852).

In 1854, presiding over the fourth national woman's rights convention in Philadelphia, Rose continued to spread her message of educating men and women on the need for equality substantiated by laws of humanity, not of religion. Rose again argued that the Declaration of Independence assured women of her rights and again complained of taxation without representation: "Woman ought to have a voice...to enact the laws that she is taxed for." Rose continued using one of her favorite phrases, "I claim rights on the broad ground of human rights," not just woman's (Qtd. in HWS 376). She fought for all people's rights, not just her own, telling her followers, "Humanity knows no distinction" (New York Tribune, October 19, 1854). The participants lavished Rose with praise for her leadership at the convention and passed a resolution to acknowledge her, "Thanks of this convention are due... to Ernestine Rose for the courtesy, impartiality, and dignity with which she presided over its proceedings" (Qtd. in HWS 385).

Rose continued communicating these themes throughout the 1850's, demanding human rights based on the laws of humanity and nature. For example, in 1856 at the seventh national woman's rights convention in New York she held that "The Declaration of Independence knew no sex," "women's claims were based on humanity," and the convention based its action "not merely upon woman's rights, but by human rights" (The Liberator, December 5, 1956). In 1858 at the eighth national woman's rights convention in New York, she went so far as to encourage men to vote on resolutions along with the women, since it was a "Human rights convention" (New York Herald, May 1, 1858). In 1860, at the tenth national woman's rights convention in New York, Rose persuaded her followers to appreciate the benefits of a new bill to further women's property rights. She said, "Advantages of such a law will not be for woman alone; for the woman's rights



movement lies deeper than a movement of one sex – it is in the human rights movement” (*Proceedings of the national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860, 52). The New York Tribune wrote, “Mrs. Rose was repeatedly applauded” and received many cheers (May 11, 1860).

Rose, like her hero Fanny Wright, fought for the broad basis of human rights throughout her woman’s rights leadership. Sarah Underwood writes, “freedom and equality for all was the broad basis of her creed, she was too all-embracing to be hampered by prejudices of others” (269). Rose herself, in a 1872 letter to Susan B. Anthony, reminisced about her woman’s rights activities: “I used my humble powers to the uttermost, and raised my voice in behalf of Human Rights in general and the elevation and rights of woman in particular, all of my life” (Qtd. in HWS 98).

### **Stubborn Pragmatist**

Ernestine Rose was an intellectually brilliant speaker whose pragmatic arguments inspired women followers, while her stubbornness limited her credibility with them. This dichotomy would never be reconciled throughout her woman’s rights leadership. Kolmerten writes, “She resisted any authority save the authority of ‘reason’ and ‘common sense’ (97). Rose often appealed to her audience’s common sense by questioning them during her oratories. In 1850, at the first national woman’s rights convention in Worcester, Rose “made another of her effective and eloquent speeches,” and asked, “Who has heard of the Pilgrim *Mothers*? Did they not endure as many perils and encounter as many hardships...as the Pilgrim fathers? Yet they are hardly remembered” (New York Tribune, October 25, 1850). In 1851, at the second national woman’s rights convention in Worcester, Rose compared man to woman and asked,

In what was woman inferior to man? Not in (M)orals, for bad as she is she is better than man – not in intellect, as such women as DeStael, Martineau, and others proved. Was it physical force? If so, the ox and the elephant were the superior of man (New York Herald, October 18, 1851).

Rose asked poignant, relevant questions and then answered them with her passionate sarcastic arguments, persuading her audience to accept her message. Later in the convention, she asked, “Does man provide for a wife?” Rose answers, “He keeps her, and so he does a favorite horse” (Qtd. in HWS 238).

There is perhaps no better example of Rose’s passionate pragmatism than her explanation of how the law treats men and women differently. In 1853, at the fourth national woman’s rights convention in Cleveland, she questioned:

Why if a woman commits a fault, too often from ignorance, from inexperience, from poverty, because of degradation...why such a being – not having her mind developed...of being accustomed to looking up to man as her superior...as her master...be cast out of the pale of humanity, while HE who committed the crime...who is endowed with superior advantages of experience and education...I ask if the victim is cast out of the pale of society, shall the despoiler go free?” The question was answered by a thunder of NO! NO! NO! From all parts of the house. Rose resumed, “And yet he does go Free! (Qtd. in HWS 145)

Rose, referring to any crime in general, brought her audience in with a pragmatic anecdote that appealed to their logical beliefs. She then appealed to their emotions with a passionate answer and an obvious response. The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported, “Ernestine L. Rose is the master-spirit of the convention...She spoke with great animation. The impression made by her address was favorable both to the speaker and the cause” (Qtd. in HWS 145).

Rose also used her question and answer oratorical style with her opponents. In a letter to the national woman’s rights convention in 1853, John Wattles, a woman’s rights enthusiast, wrote how she treated her opponents; “Ernestine Rose is eloquent, pungent, clear-sighted; before her thought, oppression recoils like demons before the armies of light, shrieking for help, and crying, ‘torment us not’” (Qtd. in Underwood 279). She could make



her opposition cringe. Her 1854 address to the Albany State legislature is a good example. Rose questioned the senators with similar common sense rhetoric about the law and its injustice to women. She also invited them to ask questions of her stance. Rose's indisputable arguments, as the Albany Register reported, made "The honorable senators quill beneath the trial...there was a terrible silence...the committee had silently dissolved – surrendered" (Qtd. in HWS 607). William Lloyd Garrison raved about Rose's effect on the New York State senators. He wrote Rose's speech was "a most noble and powerful effort. I never saw an audience more absorbed in their attention, more hearty in their applause, more subdued in times in their feelings, more carried onward and upward by the exalted sentiments of a speaker" (The Liberator, February 24, 1854).

Rose used this logical, direct approach throughout the rest of the 1850's on behalf of woman's rights. Many times, she used analogies to simplify her arguments for her listeners. In 1858 at the eighth national woman's rights convention in New York, she likened women to little boys who were forbidden to go in the water until they learned to swim (New York Herald, May 14, 1858). Rose's analogy made it easy for her audience to see the need for educating women. In 1860, at the tenth national woman's rights convention in New York, she compared the woman's rights movement to a farmer plowing land: "Not only the physical, but the social soil is waiting for the plow, wielded by woman's heart and head. If we were not to break up the soil, it could not be plowed; if we were not to sew the seed, the fruit would not grow" (*Proceedings of the tenth national woman's rights convention*, New York, 1860). Her simple analogies helped her audience understand what they needed to do to assist in the cause.

Some people criticized Rose for her supposed lack of intellectual prowess. In the New York State woman's rights convention in 1853, Mr. Elliott, a frequent attendee of woman's rights conventions, stood and declared, "Ernestine Rose gave us a new version of the law, and said much about spinning wheels and spoons, but no arguments" (New York Tribune, September 7, 1853).

The occasional narrow nature of her passionate arguments limited her ability to adapt to the needs her followers and the movement. At the 1853 New York State convention, the women leaders raised the question of organizing a national woman's rights society to mobilize collective support behind the movement. Rose, along with many others like Paulina Wright Davis strongly opposed the suggestion, declaring, "Organizations are like Chinese bandages. In political, moral, and religious bodies, they had hindered the growth of man. If you have a permanent organization, you cannot be free." William Lloyd Garrison wrote that Rose "was decidedly opposed to organization. She was born into a sect, she had cut herself loose from it, and she knew what it cost her...she prized it too highly ever to put herself in the same shackles again" (The Liberator, October 8, 1852). Rose's heritage posed a uniquely different barrier by helping create her inflexible nature. This stubbornness limited Rose's leadership ability and that of the core group of women leaders. In fact, Kolmerten writes, "Fearing the Chinese bandages of a tightly knit organization may have cost Rose and her colleagues a half century of voter's rights" (99).

Rose exhibited that same type of dogmatic stance throughout the 1850's in her woman's rights activities. She often claimed her position on a subject was the only one. In 1860, at the tenth national woman's rights convention in New York, she gave one of her favorite sayings, "We take what you are prepared to give us, then claim the rest. That is

the only position for a reformer to take.” Rose was not bashful about her directness, “Whatever my sentiments may be, good, bad, or indifferent, I express them, and they are known” (*Proceedings of the national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860). Rose claimed at the eighth national convention in New York in 1858, “Submission to wrong was wrong itself, and opposition to wrong was right itself” (New York Herald, May 14, 1858). Rose was tenacious in fighting for right – her right. Where her strength in pragmatic thought helped her, her hold on the righteousness of it hurt her. Kolmerten writes, “Rose was outspoken, dedicated to the cause of equal rights for all, and uncompromising...perhaps this absolutism, which seems both ennobling and maddeningly inflexible, is one of the reasons Rose remained an outsider within a group of women where many close friendships flourished”(58, 118).

### **Direct Communicator**

Rose exhibited an incredible degree of directness in all of her leadership activities between 1848 and 1860. Not only was she an eloquent orator who employed sophisticated savvy and wit, but also enjoyed interactive communication with her peers and opposition. Rose’s eloquent, frank, and comedic style of speaking established credibility and trust with her audience, while her argumentative style diminished how they viewed their leader.

Rose’s oratorical power was her greatest strength. Her use of wit helped to overcome the prejudicial barriers that stood before her and changed many of her listeners’ notions about her exotic nature. Her ability to make the audience laugh helped create an informal bond between her and her listeners that allowed them to warm up to her. In 1851, at the second national woman’s rights convention in Worcester, Rose scoffed at men’s creation of a limited woman’s sphere: “Where was a girl permitted to expand her strength

in the open breezes of heaven? Man makes her bleach her face when it's too full of life and makes her afraid to talk to a leg on a table" (New York Herald, October 18, 1851).

Rose's humor allowed herself and women to laugh at themselves and their position while they fought to improve it. In 1852, at the third national woman's rights convention in Syracuse, Rose poked fun at women who opposed the movement: "I have never met a man who did not agree with the woman's rights in principal. Ask a woman why she is opposed to woman's rights reform and she says, 'men do not like it'" (New York Herald, September 12, 1852). At the New York State woman's rights convention in 1853, she quipped: "Is not this an insult to a male infant to be placed in the same category as a married woman (New York Tribune, September 8, 1853)? In 1858, at the ninth national woman's rights convention in New York, Rose jested about the degraded status of woman's education in the late 1840's. She said, "Arithmetic was deemed superfluous, for what indeed, had a woman to count? Her children she could count on her fingers (*Proceedings of the ninth national woman's rights convention*, New York, 1859)! During most of the 1850's, Rose invoked an unparalleled amount of humor in her speeches and lectures.

Rose's humor oratorical power connected her to not only her followers, but also the press and her opponents. After her speech at the 1860 tenth national woman's rights convention in New York, The New York Tribune wrote, "Rose gave a humorous and well-received review" on woman's status and "Mrs. Rose was repeatedly applauded" (May 11, 1860). At almost every convention Rose spoke at throughout the era, the press, whether supportive or opposed, gave her rave reviews on her humor and speaking ability. The

press used “eloquence” most frequently to describe Rose’s speaking styles.<sup>19</sup> Susan B. Anthony recalled that Rose “had a rich musical voice, with just enough of foreign accent and idiom to add to the charm of her oratory...She was pointed, logical and impassioned...(and) touched the deepest emotions of the human soul” (HWS 100).

Rose’s passion for direct communication, however, spawned an augmentative style that angered and annoyed some fellow leaders and disenchanted some supporters of the woman’s rights movement. Kolmerten writes that Rose had a “combative personality” and was “devoted to the idea of debate” (67). She spoke more confidently on stage than the other women orators of the day. According to Kolmerten, “Where Lucretia Mott’s Quaker simplicity and gentle demeanor and Antoinette Brown’s obvious piety rendered them more palatable to the public, Rose’s outspokenness often doomed her to opprobrium” (117).

Rose disagreed with many of her own peers on stage. Although Lucy Stone provoked the conflict with Rose at the New York State woman’s rights convention in 1853, Rose enjoyed it and reveled in her ability to return the argument. The two sparred again in 1856 at the national woman’s rights convention in New York. They argued over the interpretation of property law, this time with Stone having the last word (The Liberator, December 5, 1856). In 1860, at the tenth national woman’s rights convention in New York, Rose refuted several of the leaders in her speeches. For example, she sarcastically scoffed at Antoinette Brown’s views on marriage and divorce:

The Rev. Mrs. Blackwell gave us quite a sermon on what woman ought to be, what she ought to do, and what marriage ought to be; an excellent sermon in its proper place, but not when the important question of divorce law is under question (*Proceedings of the national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860, 81).

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<sup>19</sup> In almost all of the proceedings of the conventions, editorial comments such as “laughter,” “cheers,” “loud cheers,” “thunders of applause,” “peal after peal of laughter,” and “great laughter,” shower praise on her tremendous ability to speak. See proceedings from every convention in the bibliography and the parenthetical references at the end of Rose’s thoughts and speeches.



This example is typical of many of Rose's extemporaneous remarks refuting the views of previous speakers at conventions. Her argumentative style could not keep her from confronting any idea or issue she did not agree with.<sup>20</sup>

Rose's confrontational style also produced positive results when she challenged the opposition. At the fifth national woman's rights convention in Philadelphia, Rose challenged men to debate with women: "We ask men to meet us, in the spirit of inquiry...face to face...and advance arguments, if they can convince us that we are not included in the great Declaration of Independence" (Qtd. in HWS 378). Rose stood as one of the few who dared to make such a bold statement. After the Albany hearings in 1855, the Albany Register reported that Rose "Answered the men's questions in her characteristic manner – entertaining the entire audience" (February 17, 1855). Overall, Rose's unorthodox communication style not only captivated and entertained her supporters, opponents, and sometimes her peers, but also deepened the rift between her and some other leaders because it compounded their already negative perspective on Rose.

### **Bold Leadership**

Rose's early independence gave her courage to take on almost any challenge. Analogous to the Owenite principles, with which she was familiar, she urged all parties in the woman's rights movement to be bold with her. Most importantly, she based her commitment on the premise that taking action was essential to make change happen.

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<sup>20</sup> Interestingly enough, Rose's confrontational style with her peers motivated Rose to attain the last word in several of their discussions in the conventions of the era. Several examples exist where either the resolution on hand was adopted or the meeting adjourned after Rose's remarks. (*Third national woman's rights convention*, Syracuse, 1852, *New York State national woman's rights convention*, New York, 1853, and *eighth national woman's rights convention*, New York, 1858, among others).



Rose thrived in the midst of adversity and opposition. The New York State woman's rights convention in 1853 exemplifies her bravery. Raucous opponents of the woman's rights movement at this convention made it the most riddled of any with disruptions. Scarcely a woman could utter a word without hearing hisses and rebukes. At the climax of the uproar, the aging Quaker, Lucretia Mott, gave up her role as the presiding chair. Rose boldly stepped forward to take the President's position and addressed what little was left of the convention participants. She used her powerful voice to bellow for the police as the mob's volatility reached unprecedented levels, "The mayor and the police promised to keep order, and I call upon them to keep their promise" (*Proceedings of the New York State woman's rights convention*, New York, 1853). This type of leadership made women like Susan B. Anthony feel "safe" when Rose led. They looked to Rose to take charge when they were challenged with difficult circumstances and she gladly accepted her role.

Rose exhibited unflinching courage throughout her woman's rights efforts in the 1850's. At the fourth national woman's rights convention in Cleveland in 1853, after defending the women that Reverend Nevin had slandered in his interruption, Rose proclaimed "I throw back the slander uttered... I love to vindicate the rights of those who are not present to defend themselves" (Qtd. in *HWS* 141).<sup>21</sup> Rose, perhaps, stood as the only leader who had the audacity to rise and fight with such vigor. She let the world know that women would not let down if their rights were granted. In Rose's address at Cochituate Hall in 1851, she claimed, "If rights were granted (to woman)...in every step she would carry a humanizing influence" (13). Rose's self-assurance and bold statements

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<sup>21</sup> Reverend Nevin had made "licentious" remarks, putting down women in France who tried to organize a woman's rights movement there.

made her listeners believe women would cherish their newfound rights and work to make the world better. In New York, at the national woman's rights convention in 1856, she declared,

Women are more brave than soldiers...to stand before the cannon's mouth...requires no great heroism...but to face the fire...of a prejudiced public opinion...requires a heroism that the world has never yet recognized (Qtd. in HWS 663).

Rose both exhibited and demanded courage in the fight for woman's rights; she prescribed courage-induced action as her medicine for revolutionary reform.

Not only did Rose take considerable action in the form of speaking, petitioning, traveling, and writing throughout her career, but, more importantly, she asked her followers to take action with her. Just before her own death, Rose wrote a family member, "For Action only is life...and I have lived" (Qtd. in Eisman 64). Ernestine Rose urged others to participate in the great crusade. At the third national woman's rights convention in Syracuse in 1852, Rose presented an analogy of women as sick patients: "The business of women reformers, like surgeons, (is) to cut deep to the cure...Must not wait quiet till man grants her rights. As well might a slave in the south wait till his master sets him free" (New York Herald, September 12, 1852). Immediate, bold action was the only means to secure rights.

Rose challenged her followers to have strength and courage and also appealed to her male opponents. At the seventh national woman's rights convention in 1856, she said, "A mother cannot give what she does not possess; weakness cannot impart strength" (Qtd. in HWS 661). At the New York State woman's rights convention in 1853, she said, "It requires a courage beyond what woman can now possess to take part of the woman against the villain" (Qtd. in HWS 133). The "taking part" portion represents the most important

aspect of her plea. Group solidarity represented the only way women could achieve victory for their cause.

By 1860, Ernestine Rose realized that without the full support of women, equality of rights would not be possible. At the national convention in that year, she made several impassioned pleas to women in the audience: “A stagnant atmosphere and stagnant waters can only be purified by agitation... We need to create a public opinion in favor of the right” (*Proceedings of the national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860, 3-10). Rose begged women to persevere and to get involved in petitions drives, conventions, lectures, and public support, all in the face of adversity. She acknowledged their progress, as she often did, then appealed to the woman’s duties:

We have yet duties to perform. Freedom, my friends, does not come from the clouds, like a meteor; it does not bloom in one night; it does not come without great efforts and great sacrifice; and all those who love liberty, have to labor for it (*Proceedings of the national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860, 57).

Rose always spoke truthfully and directly to her audience about what sacrifices lay before them. At the New York State woman’s rights convention in 1853, she said, “To reclaim woman’s position in society, we must expect to meet with opposition on every side” (New York Herald, September 7, 1853). By managing their expectations, Rose established credibility and demonstrated strength as a leader. Her bold, direct and dynamic leadership not only changed the opinions of her opponents, but also, received the support of other woman’s rights movement participants. Once she had their support, she mobilized them to achieve a vision.

### **Prolific Visionary**

Rose's Owenite principles and her human, not woman, rights focus made her more open to not blaming man for woman's degraded status. Her diverse, foreign background gave her a global and intellectual base to provide the most prolific vision.

At the third national woman's rights convention in Syracuse in 1852, Rose exhibited her maturity in how she observed woman's plight. She said, "Woman is enslaved from the era to the grave...man is indispensable to a woman's happiness as a woman is to his...the sexes should unite" (New York Tribune, September 10, 1852). Rose pioneered looking at the situation from a higher perspective. Later in the convention, she continued with the same theme, asserting the difference between the male and female mind is not consequential. Rose argued that men should not want inequality, since with it, their wives and daughters would be degraded. She likened the two sexes together explaining, "The same sun of freedom that warms the heart of man can warm the heart of woman" (New York Herald, September 12, 1852).

In 1853, at the fourth national woman's rights convention in Cleveland, Rose discussed the importance of seeing the bigger picture; "We do not deal with exceptions, but with general principles. We do not fight men – we fight bad principles. Justice and truth must prevail" (Qtd. in HWS 144). Rose continued with this stance until the mid 1850's, then changed entirely, which I will discuss later.

Rose communicated a higher vision for success of the movement to her followers from the very beginning. Tyler writes Rose is "Handsome and cultivated, an able speaker with great dignity and quick wit, she became one of the most valuable suffragist lecturers... cosmopolitan in attitude, she brought a broader vision into the American

movement” (457). In 1850, at the first national woman’s rights convention in Worcester, she explained how the equalization of rights would benefit the entire world (New York Tribune, October 24, 1850). Her worldly background encouraged Rose to connect the American woman’s rights movement with world’s and she often spoke of other countries’ success or failures.<sup>22</sup>

At her Address at Cochituate Hall in 1851, Rose discussed the global ramifications of the great movement:

The love of liberty has convulsed the nations like the mighty throws of an earthquake. Woman is rising...her voice...has been carried as it were on the wings of lightning to all parts of Europe...so that it can help a race towards a happier, higher, and nobler destiny (4,20).

It was not just an American movement, but a global one, which if achieved, would benefit humankind.

At the New York State woman’s rights convention in 1854, Rose proclaimed,

These are not demands of the moment – they are demands of the age...The world will endure after us, and future generations will look back at this meeting with knowledge that a great onward step was her taken in the cause of human progress (Qtd. in HWS 606).

The Albany Transcript praised her ability, “Mrs. Rose was the sole speaker...met with profound attention and frequent and prolonged applause” (Qtd. in HWS 606). She often spoke on how the vision must be realized. At her speech on “*Rights of Women*” at the Broadway Tabernacle on January 9, 1854 she stated, “Woman rights in this country is now the great cause of the age...one which must and will succeed.”

In 1860, at the tenth national woman’s rights convention in New York, she spoke on the global nature of the movement. Rose declared, “Our movement is cosmopolitan. It

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<sup>22</sup> For Rose on the worldly nature of the movement, see the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> national woman’s rights conventions.

claims the rights of woman wherever woman exists” (*Proceedings of the tenth national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860, 10).

As Rose developed her leadership and her vision, she began attaching the word “revolutionary” to her rhetoric to heighten follower awareness and participation in the movement. In 1859 at the ninth national woman’s rights convention in New York, for example, she declared, “To gain this great boon, (equal rights) revolutions have succeeded revolutions” (*Proceedings of the ninth national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1859). From Rose’s perspective, the complete upheaval of social norms constituted a revolution.

By 1860, Rose culminated her vision into a prolific, inspiring, and achievable goal for all of society: “The advantages are infinite that would result from having woman in every place she is capable of filling, not only to herself but to society at large”

(*Proceedings of the tenth national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860, 10).

Later in the convention, she congratulated the ladies on a recent law that guaranteed them the “rightful owners” of their children. Rose explained that these accomplishments are “not just trifles – life itself depends on them” (48). To inspire more participation behind the vision, she related the achievement of her vision to life itself. This shift created a heightened awareness and increased participation from her followers.

### **Adaptability**

Throughout 1848-1860, Rose’s strategies and philosophies evolved, and with them so did her leadership. While much of her style, such as her pragmatism, stubbornness, focus on human rights, and bold leadership, remained constant, other aspects changed, which reflected her ability to adapt to circumstances.



A shift in Ernestine Rose's perception of accountability for woman's position represented one of these changes. Instead of blaming circumstance, she began to blame man for the debased status of women. This represented a marked shift in ideology and practice as she began to verbally attack man in the late 1850's conventions. At the ninth national woman's rights convention in New York, 1858 for example, Rose blasted man: "Men could boast of but one Shakespeare and Newton more than women, and the reason why they had this advantage was because they had crushed the genius in women. How many women geniuses are now in their graves" (New York Herald, May 14, 1858)? Perhaps some of her fellow peers had made an impression on her after so many years or maybe she just became more vindictive in her quest for equal rights. At the tenth national woman's rights convention in New York in 1860, Rose claimed:

If man is foolish enough to marry a doll instead of a woman...the fault is his...Man has created the image of what woman should be. You wanted her a doll and she has become one...and if you want to blame anyone, blame yourselves (*Proceedings*, 50).

Rose still held to some of her more Owenite product of environment theories, but did start to embrace more of a mainstream approach by attacking man as the root of woman's evils. This shift, although representative of her adaptability, limited the effect of her leadership by casting women as victims, not citizens.

Securing the support of her women followers through improved education and increased independence reflected a more positive transformation in Rose's leadership. It became more and more clear to Rose that in order to achieve the revolutionary changes the woman's rights leaders sought, they needed the masses behind them. Just changing the opposition could not produce the desired results. If they could mobilize the women who

“had rights enough” to realize they didn’t have any rights, quantum change would prove possible.

Rose discussed the need for education for women for several years, but began to focus more on it as her leadership progressed. In her speech on the “*Rights of Women*,” Rose urged the elevation of women because it would have the greatest impact on children. She said, “Noble women will be the mothers of noble men” (January 9, 1854). She manipulated the men to appreciate education for women by placing the subject in their masculine perspective. At 1854 at the fifth national woman’s rights convention in Philadelphia, Rose charged women directly to demand the chance at higher education. She urged the higher cultivation for women by participating in higher education (*The Liberator*, December 12, 1855). As a result of her maturing leadership, some began to take notice. William Lloyd Garrison edited that convention and wrote, “Her short addresses showed wide experience, and a more highly cultivated mind, perhaps, than any of the other ladies possessed” (*The Liberator*, November 3, 1854). Rose realized that if a woman could be totally independent to protect herself and provide for herself, she could then be free to follow her heart in the woman’s rights movement. She charged the men to “educate woman...to respect herself...to protect herself...if you grant us this, you grant all” (*Proceedings of the ninth national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1859). This right became the most important to achieve for Rose.

Rose believed moral and intellectual education for women would secure their independence and rights. In New York, at the tenth national woman’s rights convention in 1860, Rose again culminated her explosive, mature leadership in a series of her most powerful speeches. Rose continued her theme that women needed to protect themselves to

become free: “Woman alone must protect herself or she will never be free.” Rose continued, “Educate woman, enable her to promote her independence...A gold band is more efficacious than an iron law... A union of interest helps to preserve a union of hearts” (*Proceedings of the tenth national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860, 52, 81).

Rose’s desire for a gold band instead of an iron law reflects her tremendous shift in strategy. Without women’s personal independence, they could never achieve their collective independence. Her adaptability, for the most part, made her a better leader.

### **Group Leadership**

Because Rose was not the singular leader of the woman’s rights movement, but rather, an integral component of the woman’s rights leadership, it is important to understand how the leadership group fared when assessing Rose’s successes and failures. Although a multitude of other leaders existed to make up this “key influential leadership group,” I believe a few select women made up the core of the movement, at least for the period covered 1848-1860. For an overview of other key women’s leadership styles for perspective on Rose’s capabilities please see **Appendix B**.

A singular body represents a fitting analogy for this formidable group, although they did not always act as one. If Ernestine represented the voice, Lucretia Mott symbolized the soul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton depicted the brain, Susan B. Anthony exemplified the brawn, and Lucy Stone portrayed the heart. This core, without question, engaged in the highest level of involvement in the conventions, petitions, lectures, and writings throughout the era. **Appendix C** shows the number and type of positions they held at the national woman’s rights conventions, which reflects their high level of activity at these important events. The trembling masses of women followers in the audience

looked for leaders to stand on the platform and inspire their cause. This core group of women courageously accepted leadership positions in the face of a heckling opposition amid a grotesquely prejudicial social environment. The number and degree of leadership positions in the important national conventions, then, constitutes a formidable argument behind them as the “key influential leadership” during that era.

These five women’s leadership styles vary in many ways, but compare in others. While all believed in public agitation and encouraged their women followers to take action, some did not participate in the key areas of the movement. For example, Stanton attended only two national conventions during this period. She was, nonetheless, nationally known and regarded as one of the most important and influential of the leaders. While women like Rose, Stanton, and Stone were pragmatic thinkers and eloquent, passionate speakers, the others were more traditional thinkers and more demure orators. With their passion, however, came their argumentative inflexibility. Rose and Stanton could articulate inspiring visions for their followers, while the others provided sometimes-constrictive messages. All six, without question, possessed formidable courage to face and overcome the obstacles that stood in the way of their cause.

During the period reviewed, these five women remained at the center of the action. Whether it was leading a petition drive, presiding over a convention, leading the business committee at a convention, circulating a tract, or addressing the state legislature, these names continue to show up again, and again. Stanton, Anthony, and Gage reported that on the platform, Rose, Anthony, Mott, and Stone, among others, were more remarkable than “could be found in any European court” (HWS 411). On that magical stage, they represented the governing court, making a better world for the whole human race. At the

New York State woman's rights convention in 1853, Rose, Mott, Stone, and Davis were selected to be on the committee to the rest of the world (HWS 570). Emma Coe, another woman's rights leader, called Rose, Davis, Stone, Mott, and Gage "triumphant answers to the sneering opposition" (New York Tribune, January 3, 1854). In 1860, Stanton, Rose, Anthony, Lydia Mott, and Martha Wright collectively issued an "Appeal to the Women of New York." They together wrote, "If women rose together, rights would be assured...we now demand the ballot, trial by a jury of our peers, and equal rights to earnings" (3-4). As a collective group, they recognized the need for collectivization and referred to women rising in a revolution. "Although they stomped on the "Chinese bandages" of organization in 1852, they subconsciously organized behind this revolutionary movement in 1860, just before the war. Timing surely stopped the momentum.

While this group did not consider itself the "key influential leadership," they provided a representative microcosm of the woman's rights total leadership. With this construct, some generalizations on the success of their endeavors can be made to better understand their leadership style and role, and Rose's in particular, according to transformational leadership theory.

### Ernestine Rose – A Transforming Leader?

Rose possessed the majority of behaviors necessary and achieved three of the four required results under the transformational leadership model provided. The criteria for arguing that Rose was a transformational leader requires analysis of the following behaviors:

- Provide an inspiring vision
- Develop trust with followers by acting as a role model
- Provide powerful communication
- Continually learn through leadership

She indeed often provided her audience of woman's rights advocates with a prolific vision, the first necessary behavior under the transformational leadership construct. Rose often explained how the world could be changed with full equality, which inspired her followers to believe in the crusade. Rose's uncanny intuition and worldly experience helped her see the future and communicate her vision of it with eloquent pleas. In 1858, she refers to herself as a prophet, "He who can be fully appreciated in his own age and generation, proves conclusively that he cannot be far in advance of the society he lives in" (Qtd. in Kolmerten 199). Rose's visions endured, but maybe too far ahead of her followers and society.<sup>23</sup>

Ernestine Rose's wide array of abilities made her a role model and allowed her to establish varying degrees of trust with her followers. Horace Seaver, editor of the Boston Investigator, wrote of her courage and leadership, "Mrs. Rose, standing thus at the front rank of a great movement" (Qtd. in Kolmerten, 164). Rose's courage to stand at the front of the crusade, amid a torrent of ridicule and prejudice, made her a trustworthy role model for peers and followers alike. Unfortunately, women exhibited such admiration and trust



for Rose, they sometimes followed blindly behind her ideals, which diminished how the opposition viewed them. In 1854, The Albany Register wrote, for example, “The great body of people regard Mrs. Rose and her followers as making themselves simply ridiculous” (Qtd. in HWS 609). Rose’s unique ability to use wit and honesty in her speeches also developed trust within her followers. Her humor and directness touched her follower’s hearts and allowed them to connect with Rose and believe in her vision.

Rose’s oratorical eloquence indeed met the requirement of providing powerful communication under the transformational leadership theory model. Her powerful voice and incredible speaking ability helped her form a bond with her followers. Rose truly became the voice of the movement throughout the 1850’s. Only Lucy Stone rivaled her otherwise unparalleled eloquence. Her honest, direct style of communication helped remove any doubt in her followers of the crusade’s intentions. In fact, Kolmerten writes, “This fearless rationality-speaking straight, acting as if errors in thinking could be eradicated if only reasonable people would put their minds to it-is one of Rose’s greatest legacies to us” (87). Unfortunately, because she possessed and communicated some radical views, her powerful communication also alienated many followers, which limited her transformational leadership ability. Underwood writes, “There can be little doubt...[had Rose] been content to conceal from the public her real views...she would today occupy a far higher position in public favor” (266). So while her communication ability helped her leadership, her inability to alter what she communicated for her audience hurt it.

Rose’s ability to learn represented one of her weaker transformational leadership behavior. She did possess some adaptive learning abilities such as changing her views and

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<sup>23</sup> Kolmerten even calls Rose an “International leader in the burgeoning woman’s rights movement” (184).

beliefs regarding the cause of women's condition and focusing on the independence of followers. Mostly, however, her inability to be flexible and learn and adapt as circumstances changed limited her leadership ability. Kolmerten writes, "Rose's greatest virtue and greatest flaw [was] her inability to compromise her ideals" (153). Rose's absolutism and irrevocable hold to her own beliefs not only made her followers question her values, but also greatly limited her relationships with her peers. Stanton and Rose, for example, although the "two most brilliant and forceful orators of the movement," never became close because of both women's strong-minded nature (Kolmerten 133-34). Had Rose been able to learn and adapt better, she could have cultivated stronger relationships with her followers and peers, thereby making her a better transformational leader.

The following results must be met under transformational leadership in the construct provided:

- Overcome negative conditions and problems within the leadership environment
- Commits followers to action
- Create new leaders from followers by elevating their goals and transforming their expectations to higher orders.
- Inspire the highest social outcomes and achieve quantum social change

Rose overcame a tremendous amount of adversity within the leadership environment to realize formidable results, a necessary achievement for transformational leaders. She fearlessly overcame prejudice from the press, the opposition, and her peers amid a dynamic social environment. Underwood writes, "Ernestine Rose...steadily...has bravely faced all this contempt and coldness...even from friends" to succeed in leading the woman's rights movement (269). Because of her different foreign and religious heritage, Rose faced the most prejudice of any woman's rights leader, and overcame it with the most valiant efforts and fruitful results. Friedman writes Ernestine Rose "has accomplished for

the elevation of her sex and the amelioration of social conditions, a work which can be ascribed to few women of our time” (259).

Rose also employed fantastic measures, such as dramatic oratory, to commit her followers into action. In her speech at Cochituate Hall in 1851, Rose said, “We have a crusade before us...to defend against the invaders of liberty, wear armor of charity, carry the banner of truth, and never turn back until we have conquered” (19-20). Rose made revolutionary declarations and inspiring challenges to make women act for woman’s rights. Emily Collins wrote to Susan B. Anthony, “When I read the lectures of Ernestine Rose and Margaret Fuller...I realized that I stood not alone, how my heart bounded with joy,” and afterwards she formed a local woman’s rights society (Qtd. in HWS 89). Rose helped incite action out of her followers, and in this case, turned followers into leaders, another necessary result for transformational leaders.

Rose converted many people not only from opposition into followers but also from followers into leaders of the woman’s rights movement. The Farmers Advocate wrote, “How many converts she made to her faith would of course be impossible to tell...she is one of the best speakers we have ever heard” (Qtd. in Kolmerten, 166). Rose sought and attained the support of even the greatest opponents of the movement. In 1854, The Boston Investigator relates how in just two years time Rose had helped secure a substantial mass of influential followers such as lawyers, professors, and ministers, “all attentively listening to the eloquent and logical statements of a Mrs. Rose” (Qtd. in Kolmerten 163). Not only did Rose’s efforts actually convert followers into leaders, but her work also formed an environment for it so that momentum could perpetuate its success. Underwood writes, “By 1856...Ernestine Rose had done much of the hard pioneer work, which made reforms

practicable and attractive” (273). By creating a fertile environment for reform, she helped incite women and men to lead the woman’s rights movement.

Inspiring the highest social outcomes and achievement of quantum social change represents the last component of transformational leadership. Although Rose made a direct impact on achieving the highest social outcomes; they cannot be attributed to her efforts alone. She, for example, fought sometimes solely to secure the property rights for New York women that they achieved in 1848, but many others contributed to this outcome. Rose could also be seen as the leader of the influential leadership group during that era but did not stand as the only leader. Even her peers recognized Rose’s leadership status during that era. Martha Wright for example, thought the national convention in 1856 without Rose would be a failure. After Rose missed a New York State convention in Saratoga Springs, Lucy Stone wrote, “we waded through the four sessions as best we could without her [Rose]” (Qtd. in Kolmerten 182, 211). Also, because Rose did not individually lead the movement, her ability to cause this outcome cannot be solely attributed to her leadership ability. Rather, the ability of the key influential leadership of to secure quantum social change can more appropriately be measured to gauge Rose’s and the group’s transformational leadership ability. Therefore, by assessing the key influential group, with Rose at the forefront, conclusions can be drawn on Rose and the group’s transformational leadership ability under the achievement of social change criteria.

This key influential group, amidst a throng of other leaders and supporters, did accomplish quantum social change between 1848 and 1860 by substantially altering public opinion on woman’s rights and securing new laws that protected them, thereby entirely changing the social fabric of the United States. The women faced a torrential storm of

ridicule from the very beginning and overcame it by winning the support of even the intolerant opposition that shunned them. In 1850, at the first national woman's rights convention in Worcester, Henry Wright wrote to the leaders on his own change in opinion and how the "woman question...became a subject of inspiration" to him (The Liberator, November 15, 1850).<sup>24</sup> In 1851, after the second national woman's rights convention in Worcester, even a conservative paper like the New York Christian Inquirer reported, "We confess ourselves to be much surprised by the prevailing good sense [of the women leaders]...it was the most important meeting since the Mayflower" (Qtd. in HWS 293). The leaders began to change the wicked public opinion that shackled them in a social caste for centuries. In 1852, after the third national woman's rights convention in Syracuse, the Daily Journal reported of the "Intellectual feast spread by beauty and genius, may have turned our brains" (Qtd. in HWS 543).

By 1853, some men began to alter their positions on their perception of woman's rights and made their feelings public. At the New York State woman's rights convention in 1853, for example, male opponents of the woman's rights movements like Mr. Booth and Mr. Snodgrass stood up and proclaimed the conversion of their beliefs. Mr. Booth says, "It is high time that something should be done to equalize the position of men and women" (New York Tribune, September 7, 1853). At the same convention, Mr. Pray says, "In 1851 no one yielded the pen more frequent than I against this cause and the ladies who advocate it...I now believe the cause is a good one" (New York Tribune, September 8, 1853).

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<sup>24</sup> Stanton, Anthony, and Gage also report that the first national woman's rights convention also started changing public opinion over the Atlantic. They write, "One of the grand results of this convention was the thought roused in England" (225).



By 1860, many men, in particular, converted to supporters. At the national woman's rights convention in New York, Ernestine Rose declared, "Many prodigious men now side with woman's rights" (*Proceedings*, 12). Eisman writes that even "prominent men in the 1860's began speaking out to support woman's rights" (58). As these adamant opposers became fervent supporters, the social environment began to unwind and the woman's sphere enlarged. Rose basked in their glory in her speech at the 1860 national woman's rights convention in New York. She told how they accomplished their objective by enlightening the public mind, but there was still work to be done. Rose said, "Whatever remains to be acquired will be easily obtained, compared with that which has already been secured" (*Proceedings* 7-9).

The key woman leader's influence on public opinion continued throughout the 1850's and even started to make inroads on lawmakers. After the 1854 New York State woman's rights convention in Albany, The Liberator reported, "The convention was ably conducted, produced a good impression, and cannot but have much influence on the public mind" (February 24, 1854). After the leaders of the convention addressed the Albany Assembly, the select committee displayed signs of seeing the vision that the women set forth. The committee later wrote, "The matters submitted by them are...subject to ridicule and jest...many thoughts laughed at today as wild vagaries, are tomorrow recorded as developed principles" (Qtd. in HWS 612). The women's efforts changed the perception of their objectives from hallucinatory to visionary. Even male lawmakers began to acquiesce to woman's logic and heroic leadership.

Some courageous early lawmakers, such as Judge Hertell, supported woman's rights even before 1848, which helped them achieve an elevated legal status during the



reviewed period. Hertell's efforts, along with Rose, Stanton, and others secured the New York married woman's property rights act of 1848. This law ensured that married women could keep property they owned prior to and during marriage. Suhl writes, "The passage of the Married Woman's Property Bill represented a significant victory in the emerging struggle for women's rights" (64). This law signified the first legal step that women secured in the long fight for total equality. It sent ripples across the country with other states following suit throughout the 1850's, and ultimately changed how society viewed woman's legal rights. The key influential group along with others fought arduously for other legal rights up until 1860 when the women secured another gigantic victory. The New York Senate passed another bill securing to women the right to their wages and the equal guardianship of their children (HWS 98).<sup>25</sup> The passage of these two New York Laws reflects the total change in the social landscape, not only in New York, but also across America. These women truly revolutionized how the public, and more importantly the law, saw them. Within that short twelve year time period, the key influential group helped recreate woman's identity in the face of a prejudicial populace. Their leadership transformed society and their followers to expect higher outcomes – and they achieved them.<sup>26</sup>

Women did not secure suffrage, their highest objective, during that time period but came close. In fact by 1860, many women leaders and men alike believed they could achieve immediate suffrage. In the *1860 Appeal to Women of New York*, Stanton, Rose,

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<sup>25</sup> On this law, Rose comments, "I thank our legislature...passed one righteous bill among such a number of unrighteous ones...congratulate you [women] that you have actually become the rightful owners and possessors of your children" (*Proceedings of the 1860 National Woman's Rights Convention*, 47).

<sup>26</sup> In the *1860 Appeal to Women of New York*, the New York woman's rights committee reported on many of the other successes outside of the law that woman had achieved. Example included some churches now supporting woman's rights, a woman's college being opened, and employment opportunities were expanded (2).

Wright, Anthony, and Mott wrote that suffrage “will surely be granted” (2). The change in public opinion and the recent laws passed made women feel the momentum had ebbed and their ultimate goal stood very close. Male woman’s rights leaders also believed their recent accomplishments paved the way for their final objective. At the 1860 national woman’s rights convention in New York, Wendell Phillips boldly declared, “In two to three years more, woman might in this state be allowed to VOTE” (New York Herald, May 16, 1860)! The women’s prolific leadership expanded their social sphere so that a revolutionary goal like suffrage held in instant balance. Some lawmakers even thought that the women would secure their voting privileges by 1860. At the 1860 national woman’s rights convention in New York, Susan B. Anthony tells how Senator Colvin thought, “an amendment [for woman suffrage] might be carried with proper effort”(New York Tribune, May 11, 1860).

This amendment would not be secured for another sixty years. Many believed the start of the Civil War halted the tremendous momentum that ebbed by 1860. In her report on the 1861 Ohio State woman’s rights convention, Elizabeth Jones, a woman’s rights leader, wrote, “The sudden commencement of open hostilities between the North and the South, precluded all possibility of further legislation in our behalf” (Qtd. in HWS 170). As with other states, Ohio secured substantial rights leading up to 1860, with suffrage standing as key remaining goal. Stanton, Anthony, and Gage wrote, “The great conflict between the North and South turned the thoughts of women from the consideration of their own rights, to the life of the nation” (HWS 170). Women substituted agitation with patriotism and worked just as vehemently as they did in their woman’s right efforts to support their countrymen. Grand circumstance victimized the woman’s heroic efforts. The fact that

some momentum still existed after the war reflects how committed they were to suffrage before it. According to Underwood, by 1870 many leaders such as Rose thought suffrage was still immediately possible. He writes, “The prospect looks bright that she may live to see the dearest wish of her heart accomplished – the complete enfranchisement of her sex” (279).

Two other elements hindered this key influential group’s ability to achieve suffrage during the period covered. The women’s decision not to organize hindered their collective power. Rose, Wright, Mott and others believed organization would squash creative stimulation. Ironically enough, where the women organized the most, like at national woman’s rights conventions and state petition drives, they achieved the most. By the late 1860’s, women leaders finally began to understand the value in formalized collectivization instead of only coordination.

Many also believed the women made a painful mistake by tackling the divorce issue in 1860. Had they focused on more conservative issues, the women leaders may not have alienated so much of the public. Kolmerten writes that the women leaders lost the support of their mainstream male supporters and halted their momentum in 1860 “when their ranks began to splinter on the issue of divorce” (223). The decision to raise the issue infuriated many conservative woman leaders, which started the rift that would ultimately widen after the Civil War. These two issues weighed heavily not only in the movement’s inability to achieve suffrage before the war, but by creating a widening philosophical gap that split support when they needed organization most. That split perhaps represented the greatest cause for the extenuation of their battle for suffrage.

Even without achieving suffrage, the key influential leadership did achieve quantum social change by revolutionizing public opinion and securing important legislation that dramatically changed the social landscape. Ernestine Rose, at the head of this group, then met the final result necessary component of transformational leadership. For the most part, she exhibited leadership behavior and achieved the results necessary under the transformational leadership construct provided. Rose possessed the potential to be even a far greater transformational leader. Her stubborn hold on her own beliefs restricted her leadership ability and indirectly impaired the group's leadership ability. Rose's radical, sometimes dogmatic views along with others such as Stanton limited the collective progress they could have achieved. In both the divorce issue and the organization question, Rose led the charge that ultimately hurt the movement. Had she challenged her peers to organize earlier and resist the urge to tackle the divorce question, they may have achieved suffrage in the early 1860's, which may have lifted Rose out of obscurity. But the uncontrollable grand conflict would have still stopped their progress and quelled the growing, heroic movement.

Even with her imperfections, Rose still stood as a transformational leader. Her weaknesses can be more than offset by the challenges she had to overcome. Rose, more than any other leader between 1848 and 1860, endured the most prejudice in her leadership efforts. Not only did she encounter the same opposition as other leaders, such as male-dominated public opinion, press, and law but also faced her own personal challenges such as the language barrier and prejudice against her religious and foreign heritage. Although the reform mania of the period helped her ability to lead, religious and immigrant intolerance greatly hindered Rose's ability to succeed. She did, however, succeed by

overcoming these substantial obstacles with her oratorical eloquence, incredible work ethic, prolific vision, and inspiring courage. These behaviors helped her followers take action and created new leaders from her followers. At the head of the key influential leadership group, Rose and her peers transformed the woman's sphere and revolutionized the social environment forever.

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## Appendix A – National Woman’s Rights Conventions

| Year | Place            | President            | Vice Presidents   | Business Committee  | Other Leadership Position   |
|------|------------------|----------------------|---|---|---|
| 1850 | Worcester, MA    | Paulina Wright Davis | W. Channing<br>Sarah Tyndale  | Ernestine Rose, W.L. Garrison, Lucy Stone, Mary Johnson<br>Harriet Hunt, Lucretia Mott<br>W. Channing, E. Capron<br>Abby Price, W. Fish, S. May<br>Suzan Sisan, Anna Parsons<br>F. Douglas  | H. Darlington<br>J. Hathaway  |
| 1851 | Worcester, MA    | Paulina Wright Davis | A.G. Weld<br>W. Channing<br>S. May<br>Clarina Nichols<br>Lucretia Mott  | Ernestine Rose, W. Channing, W.L. Garrison, Abby Kelly Foster, Lucy Stone   |   |
| 1852 | Syracuse, NY     | Lucretia Mott        | Elizabeth Oakes Smith<br>Paulina Wright Davis<br>G. Smith<br>Clarina Nichols<br>Sarah Miller<br>Caroline Severance                                    | Ernestine Rose, S. Miller, Harriet Hunt, Paulina Wright Davis, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Lucy Stone, Caroline Severance, Jane E. Jones, James Mott, Elizabeth Phillips, Pliny Sexton, B. Jones | Susan B. Anthony, Martha Wright, S. May, Lydia Fowler – secretaries   |
| 1853 | Cleveland, OH    | Frances Gage         | Antoinette Brown<br>Lucretia Mott<br>Caroline Severance<br>J. Barker<br>Emily Robinson<br>Mary Birdsall<br>Sibyl Lawrence<br>C. Wood<br>Amy Post      | Ernestine Rose, J. Mott, Lucy Stone, W.L. Garrison, Abby Kelly Foster, Mary Corner, C.C. Burleigh, Martha Tilden, J. Wattles  | Martha Wright, Caroline Stanton – secretaries, T.C. severance – treasurer, Susan B. Anthony, etc. – Finance Committee |
| 1854 | Philadelphia, PA | Ernestine Rose       | Lucretia Mott,<br>Frances Gage<br>T. Higginson<br>Martha Wright<br>T. Garrett<br>H. Cutler<br>R. Purvis<br>J. Wattles<br>Marenda Randall<br>G. Sunter | Lucy Stone, W.L. Garrison, M. Townsend, M. Wilson, H. Darlington, S. Pugh, Lydia Mott, Mary Grew  | H. Darlington, etc. – secretary, Susan B. Anthony, etc. – Finance   |
| 1855 | Cincinnati, OH   | Martha Wright        | Ernestine Rose<br>James Mott<br>Frances Gage<br>H. Cutler<br>E. Robinson<br>E. Cochran<br>Paulina Wright Davis  | Lucretia Mott, J. Griffing, A. Swift, J. Barker, Lucy Stone, H. Blackwell   |   |
| 1856 | New York, NY     | Lucy Stone           | Lucretia Mott<br>Elizabeth Jones  | Ernestine Rose, Susan B. Anthony, Wendell Phillips,   | W. Phillips – treasurer,  |



|      |                 |                  |   |  |   |
|------|-----------------|------------------|---|--|---|
|      |                 |                  | T. Higginson<br>Corneila Moore<br>Bronson Alcott<br>Sarah Hallock   | James Mott, Mariana<br>Johnson, T. Higginson, W.<br>Green  | Susan B.<br>Anthony –<br>finance              |
| 1858 | New York,<br>NY | Susan B. Anthony | “Several” not found   | Ernestine Rose, Lucy Stone,<br>Elizabeth Cady Stanton,<br>Susan B. Anthony, Frances<br>Gage, C. Severance, T.<br>Higginson, S. May   | Martha Wright<br>– Secretary                  |
| 1859 | New York,<br>NY | Susan B. Anthony | Lucretia Mott<br>Ernestine Rose<br>Antoinette Brown   | Ernestine Rose, Elizabeth<br>Cady Stanton, W. Phillips,<br>C. Dall, Martha Wright, C.<br>Severance, T. Higginson,<br>Susan B. Anthony,<br>Antoinette Brown – to<br>memorialize legislature | Martha Wright<br>– Secretary                  |
| 1860 | New York,<br>NY | Martha Wright    | A. Gibbons<br>W. Phillips<br>A. Fairbanks<br>Antoinette Brown<br>R. Purvis<br>T. Garrett<br>E. Johns<br>G. Stebbins | Ernestine Rose (Head of)   | Susan B.<br>Anthony –<br>Finance (Head<br>of) |

\*Above information is compiled from *The New York Herald*, *The New York Tribune*, *The Liberator*, *Proceedings of Woman’s Rights Conventions*, and the History of Woman Suffrage, Volume 1.

\*\*This information is NOT complete, there are a few leaders omitted based upon what information was found.

## Appendix B

### Key Influential Leaders

#### Lucretia Mott

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote in HWS on Mott, “In every reform, she stood in the forefront of the battle” (424). Mott, the “soul” of the woman’s rights movement, began her leadership activities on the anti-slavery platform fighting for the freedom of slaves. Her Quaker principles impelled her to battle for all those who suffered not just women. Like Rose, Mott fought for human rights and several times led the “human rights conventions.” She too, focused on the general principles of the cause, not the details (*Proceedings of the New York State woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1853). Early on, Mott often substantiated woman’s claims with God’s will. In 1853, she said, “God would bring about reforms in his own time...Jesus was an agitator,” and he would help to make reforms possible (*Third national woman’s rights convention*, New York Herald, September 12, 1852).<sup>1</sup>

Lucretia Mott expected bravery from her followers, and far earlier than Ernestine Rose, learned that the success of the movement depended upon the masses of women becoming engaged in the movement. As early as 1849, she promoted women’s bold independence, which would allow them to follow the movement. In her “Discourse on Women,” she declared, “I would charge you to water the undying bud,” of independence and with it, “your self-respect would increase”(10-20). Her political dexterity enabled her to sell independence even as an advancement for men because with it, came higher

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<sup>1</sup> As early as 1854, however, Mott changed her way of thinking and started blaming the clergy for the ills of woman’s degraded status, while still believing in religion. At the fifth national woman’s rights convention in Cleveland, she says, “It is not Christianity, but priest-craft that has subjected woman as we find her” (Qtd. in HWS 380).

levels of modesty and humility. In Worcester, after the first national woman's rights convention in 1850, The New York Tribune called Mott, "The Great Ajax of sisterhood...hard as iron," who with "powerful remarks," boldly demanded rights for her fellow women (Qtd. in The Liberator, November 15, 1850). At the New York State woman's right convention in 1853, she charged them to be brave in the face of ridicule, be ready for prejudice, and to fight off their fears (*Proceedings*, 16). Fittingly enough, it was at that tumultuous convention where they needed it most. Unfortunately, however, Mott failed to show them the way stepping down from her post as President. Still however, her stalwart courage attracted a large group of followers. Stanton wrote, "The amount of will, force, and intelligent power in her small body was enough to direct a small universe"(HWS 428).

Mott spoke in more of a "motherly" language than Rose did, often recognizing the progress of the movement and thanking her sisters for participating in the grand cause. After the uproar at the first night of the 1853 New York State woman's rights convention, Mott told the women she was "proud of the moral courage of the women who unflinchingly stood up to the rowdies...and they displayed self-reliance in the truth and justice of our cause"(*Proceedings of the New York State woman's rights convention*, New York, 1853, 54 and New York Herald, September 8, 1853).<sup>2</sup> Often praising her followers and the movement helped the people trust Mott and build the confidence in the cause. She used a demure and subdued speaking style with occasional impassioned interjections. Stanton wrote Mott was "modest and assuming and has none of the personal airs of

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<sup>2</sup> In 1859, she spoke at length about the advancement of the cause and her moral sense of people becoming more elevated; thus woman could become free. Mott listed the many successful outcomes they had achieved, like the YMCA's request for woman's cooperation in its endeavors. (*Proceedings of the ninth national woman's rights convention*, New York, 1858).

leadership” but quietly leads. Rarely did Mott use sarcasm and wit as Rose did to entrench her listeners, but her vast experience, noble reputation and her overall piety made her a popular orator and leader.

### **Lucy Stone**

Stone, the heart of this group of women, possessed perhaps the most similar leadership style to Rose. She, like Rose, established herself as one of the most popular female orators of the era. In 1854, after the fifth woman’s rights convention in Philadelphia, The Liberator showered her with praise. “Among women, Lucy Stone has been, of course, the observed of all observers...the public fastens upon this little person as being (what she really is) the heart and soul of this crusade” (November 3, 1854).

Stone began her activities in Temperance movement. There, she learned how to speak with true eloquence, a word often bestowed upon her.<sup>3</sup> She proved herself to be one of the most active leaders, attending almost every convention available and always raising her passionate voice behind the cause that was dear to her. After the third woman’s rights convention in 1852, The New York Herald reported that “Lucy Stone annihilated the men,” with persuasive arguments and fiery charges (September 10, 1852). Her passion for the woman’s crusade inspired followers to believe in her and the movement. Stone focused this passion into logical, pragmatic persuasive arguments. In the New York State woman’s rights convention in 1853 for example, she answered the opposition, one by one with clear concise answers. She finished with a question, “Would man have women oppress him as he oppresses her?”(New York Tribune, September 8,

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<sup>3</sup> See the New York Herald editions on New York State woman’s rights convention, 1853, the fourth national woman’s rights convention, Cleveland, 1853, and the third national woman’s rights convention, Syracuse, 1852, among others for praise such as “a favorite with her audience,” “made an impressive address,” “made an eloquent speech,” and “true eloquence.”

1853). Stone possessed a pragmatic and argumentative style very similar to that of Rose. In fact, she often said, “The question of woman’s rights is a practical one”(Qtd. in HWS 163). She tried to simplify the question into terms that people could understand.

Like Rose, however, her passion created a limited perspective, and many times made her argumentative with her peers. In addition to her arguments with Rose, she also challenged women such as Davis. At the New York State woman’s rights convention in 1853, she disagreed entirely with Davis’ demure and passive stance on appeasing men. Stone says woman “must not wait for men to give [her rights] she must take them” (*Proceedings*, 34). She often refuted speakers, such as Susan B. Anthony, William Garrison and Thomas Higginson at the conventions.<sup>4</sup> Stone’s aggressive nature pushed her to confront any idea she did not agree with and perhaps limited her leadership ability.<sup>5</sup> So like Rose, her steadfast, stubborn beliefs restricted her leadership potential.

Like Lucretia Mott and Ernestine Rose, Lucy Stone used her passion to encourage bold action and follower involvement.<sup>6</sup> In 1852, at the third national woman’s rights convention in Syracuse, she said, “We can’t take rights silently – they must be struggled for first.” Towards the end of the convention, she urges the women to “give head to what you heard and learn to depend on yourselves”(New York Herald, September 10, 1852). Lucy Stone, like Lucretia Mott and Ernestine Rose, realized the power in creating a base of independent followers. Stone also tried to enlist the participation of her followers by creating enthusiasm in the progress they had achieved. In many of her speeches she provided intricate detail to the progress that was made in the crusade for equal rights.

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<sup>4</sup> See the New York State woman’s rights convention in 1853, and the seventh national woman’s rights convention in 1856, and fifth national woman’s rights convention in Philadelphia for examples.

<sup>5</sup> Stone, like Rose, also fervently believed that organizations limited productive potential and did not support the organization of women until after the civil war.

Unlike Rose, Stone was not a visionary leader. She usually spoke directly from the heart and tackled questions of today, not tomorrow. Stone followed her heart fervently and confronted anyone who stood in her way, including men.<sup>7</sup> While Stone's heart-felt, passionate, and eloquent speeches inspired her followers to believe in her mission, that same passion limited her mental openness and her long-term vision.

### **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**

Although Stanton did not directly participate in most of the conventions throughout the 1850's, her fiery letters, the communication of her ideals through Susan B. Anthony, and her limited direct involvement in petitions and conventions made her leadership felt by many. Her considerable writing and planning ability helped her lead the movement well past the 1850's and ultimately achieve suffrage in 1920.

Stanton represented perhaps the boldest of all women leaders, shocking the world as the first woman to call for suffrage in 1848 at Seneca Falls (Gaylor, 103). Stanton possessed and communicated more radical views than most of the other leaders, even Rose. In a letter to the first national woman's rights convention in 1851 in Worcester, she boldly declared, "No one denies our right to the elective franchise...there is no harmony without freedom...no happiness with subordination" (New York Tribune, October 24, 1850). Like Rose and Stone, Stanton had difficulty in conceding middle ground. Any question was either just or evil, and she fought for the just. Even in the few conventions Stanton actually attended, her strong-minded boldness made triumphant

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<sup>6</sup> See The Liberator, December 5, 1856 reporting on the seventh national woman's rights movement in New York, 1856 for another example.

<sup>7</sup> After the tumult of the 1853 New York State woman's rights convention, she did verbalize some visionary potential: "I know the day will come when the very men who are here tonight will feel shame...men of future time will disbelieve the scene of this night as men now feel it hard to believe the tales of Salem witchcraft"(New York Tribune, September 8, 1853)



impressions on her followers and opposition. Stanton clearly emerged as a powerful leader that accepted responsibility of her role. In an address to the Albany Assembly in 1860, she said, “I stand before you the rightful representative of woman” (Qtd. in HWS 683). Her address to the 1854 Albany legislature perhaps depicts her most memorable and powerful speech. Stanton courageously told the men before her, “The tyrant, custom, has been summoned before the bar of common-sense” (Qtd. in HWS 595). Her message had subliminal meanings. Since man created customs in their own image, then man is the tyrant. Stanton sarcastically depicts women as “common sense” who are not represented under the law.

Her writings and her incredible speeches reflected her cultured upbringing and intellectual prowess. Stanton’s intelligence also helped her craft her message to manipulate her opposition. Often, she employed appealing to men’s righteousness to make her point. At the same address to the Albany Assembly, she said, “WE ask for all that you have asked yourselves in the progress of your development” (Qtd. in HWS 604). Stanton made man look at the mirror to question himself in the face of the degradation he bestowed upon women. She used these measures for the good of the movement, not to improve her own public image.

Stanton, like Stone and Rose, did not fear confrontation, and in fact, welcomed it. She ignored her fears to take bold steps, but unfortunately did not always recognize the ramifications of her actions.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps her radicalism not only slowed the movement in a

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<sup>8</sup> Stanton also became the first woman to raise the divorce question at a Convention. At the tenth national woman’s rights convention in New York, she claimed that men’s abuse against his child and wife should be vindicated by divorce. This claim created a firestorm of opposition throughout the convention because the public overwhelmingly saw marriage as the last sacred union, insulated from the multitude of reform targets. Stanton proclaims, “The best interests of the state and the nation cry out against thousands of terrible marriages” (*Proceedings of the tenth national woman’s rights convention*, New York, 1860). She

critical time, but also helped to widen the rift between followers as the movement picked up steam again after the Civil War. Most recognize Stanton as an inspirational leader, but unfortunately her message, often in the form of letters, lost its luster before her followers received it. In 1854, during the fifth national woman's rights convention in Philadelphia, for example, the proceedings mention "Judge Dugdale read several letters, which, as usual seemed something of a bore to the audience"(Qtd. in HWS 833).

No discussion on Stanton can be complete without exploring her combined leadership with her friend and disciple, Susan B. Anthony. Tyler writes these "Two names stand out beyond all others...had a remarkable friendship" (458). Much of their leadership activities can be considered a result of their mutual collaboration. Stanton reminisced, "our speeches may be considered the united product of our two brains"(HWS 459). A mutual friend of the two women writes, "Mrs. Stanton is fine writer, but a poor executant, Miss Anthony is a thorough manager, but a poor writer," so together they formed a stronger leadership. The friend continues, "These two women...were diligent forgers of projectiles from fireworks to thunderbolts" (HWS, 456). According to Tyler, they did have their rifts. Stanton's decision to have seven children thereby staying at home instead of participating in the conventions infuriated Anthony. She constantly encouraged Anthony to venture out with her, but she acquiesced only occasionally. They represented perhaps the only two to write or speak about the planning of the initiatives behind their crusade. Stanton wrote, "Night after night we plotted and planned the coming agitation...by which woman might be recognized and her rights secured" (HWS 459). They gathered people like Davis, Mott, Gage, Brown, to come to their "councils of

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also lambasted Greeley's and Brown's points on marriage. Stanton sarcastically scoffs at Greeley, "If married to the Herald, Mr. Bennett would have wanted a divorce" (New York Tribune, May 11, 1860).

war,” where they discussed tactics. Their collective actions formed a powerful bond of leadership that would last for almost seventy years.

### **Susan B. Anthony**

Stanton raved about Anthony’s “Courage and executive ability...[she was] the Napoleon of our struggle” (HWS 456). Anthony indeed represented the brawn behind the woman’s crusade. She was single, tenacious, intelligent, and above all a hard worker. Anthony began her reform activities in temperance and eventually became drawn to the woman’s movement in 1850 by Stanton (Gaylor 191). She held several leadership positions in the woman’s rights conventions, but her arduous petition work depicted her greatest contribution to the crusade. In fact, at the 1854 New York State woman’s rights convention, the Albany Assembly appointed Anthony as the “General Agent” of the committee to consider the rights of women. She worked to take the information to the people and report back progress. Anthony, along with Rose and Gage, “thoroughly canvassed the state and bombarded the legislature every year until the war,” ultimately securing the civil rights for married women in 1860” (HWS 619).

Not until the mid 1850’s did Anthony begin to find her voice in the large woman’s rights conventions. Like Mott and Rose, Anthony became an ambassador to her followers constantly communicating its progress across the country. In 1854, at the fifth national woman’s rights convention in Philadelphia, for example, she relayed the successful status of women’s petition work across the country. Stanton explained how the petitioners had finally earned the respect of the women they met (New York Herald, October 24, 1854). In 1860, at the tenth national woman’s rights convention in New

York, she described the improvement in public opinion to build confidence in her followers (*Proceedings*, 1).

Anthony also used the theme of continued progress to incite action and involvement into her followers. Like Rose, she often declared, “Who would be free must strike themselves a blow” (HWS 385). Initiating action in her followers by advocating the circulation of tracts, petitioning the legislatures, and speaking out in general perhaps represented her greatest quality (New York Herald, October 24, 1854).<sup>9</sup> Action represented all, and with it, came independence. She also challenged the opposition to act upon the righteousness of the cause. In 1860, at the tenth national woman’s rights convention in New York, she declared, “It is the duty of men to stand aside and let women grow up unrestrained” (New York Tribune, May 11, 1860).

Anthony’s relentless perseverance and commitment to the crusade made her the preeminent leader of the leadership group. While she did not possess the speaking skills of Stone or Rose, she inspired followers just the same by her relentless work ethic and never-ending actions of getting the word to the people and encouraging them to take action with her.

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<sup>9</sup> While Anthony could appreciate the need for a voice, she focused more on action. In the eighth national woman’s rights convention in 1858, she continued the independence for women theme started by Davis and Mott then picked up by Rose. Anthony explained it was women’s “duty” to ascend themselves, for mothers to strengthen daughters, and for women to find work (New York Herald, May 14, 1858).

### Appendix C – Leadership Positions Held in National Conventions 1848-1860

| <b>Leader</b>          | <b>President</b> | <b>Vice President</b> | <b>Business Committee*</b> | <b>Other Leadership</b> | <b>Total Positions</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Ernestine Rose         | 1                | 2                     | 8                          |                         | 11                     |
| Susan B. Anthony       | 2                |                       | 3                          | 5                       | 10                     |
| Martha Wright          | 2                | 1                     | 1                          | 4                       | 8                      |
| Lucretia Mott          | 1                | 5                     | 2                          |                         | 8                      |
| Lucy Stone             | 1                |                       | 7                          |                         | 8                      |
| Paulina Wright Davis   | 2                | 2                     | 1                          |                         | 5                      |
| Elizabeth Cady Stanton |                  |                       | 2                          |                         | 2                      |

\*Business Committee numbers could be understated for everyone except Rose because the 1860 Convention did not list committee members.