



The World Turned Upside Down

The Urgency of Our Activism
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Session Objectives

- Some historical context of women and activism in the United States.
- Importance of **collective** (not individual) movement building to interrupt and call out injustices.
- Danger in participating in **“Oppression Olympics,”** and the importance of fighting for all causes.
- Places and spaces of activism, and how we engage in **effective activism** and **collective building**.



A song from the musical Hamilton, also referencing the English ballad and the upheaval of the American Revolution.



"The world turned upside down" is a metaphorical phrase that describes a state of upheaval, chaos, or complete disruption of the normal order. It signifies a transformative event that disrupts established norms, social structures, or the accepted way of life.

In the political realm, "the world turned upside down" can symbolize the transformative power of revolution

It can also be used to describe significant social or cultural shifts that disrupt traditional norms and values



**“No man is good enough
to govern any woman
without her consent.”**

— Susan B. Anthony

**Men, their rights,
and nothing more;
women, their rights,
and nothing less.**

Susan B. Anthony

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Historical Context: What is Sankofa?

- Philosophical concept from the Akan people of Ghana.
- Symbolized by a mythical bird looking backward while moving forward.
- Represents the importance of learning from the past to inform and build a better future.
- Emphasizes remembering history and heritage to make positive progress.



The Sankofa Bird reminds us that we must continue to move forward as we remember our past. And at the same time we plant a seed for the future generations that come after us.



Abigail Adams (1744-1818)

- Women's property rights
- Women's educational rights
- Early slavery abolitionist





Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906)

- Women's Suffrage Movement
- Voting rights for women
- Anti-slavery Abolitionist
- Worked with Harriett Tubman



Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784)

- Slave brought from Senegal/Gambia.
- Was sold and brought to Boston.
- Wheatley's educated her.
- At 14, wrote her first poem, to what is now Harvard.
- Used poetry as a platform of resistance.

I had reasoned this out in my mind,
there was one of two things
I had a right to, **liberty or death;**
if I could not have one,
I would have the other.

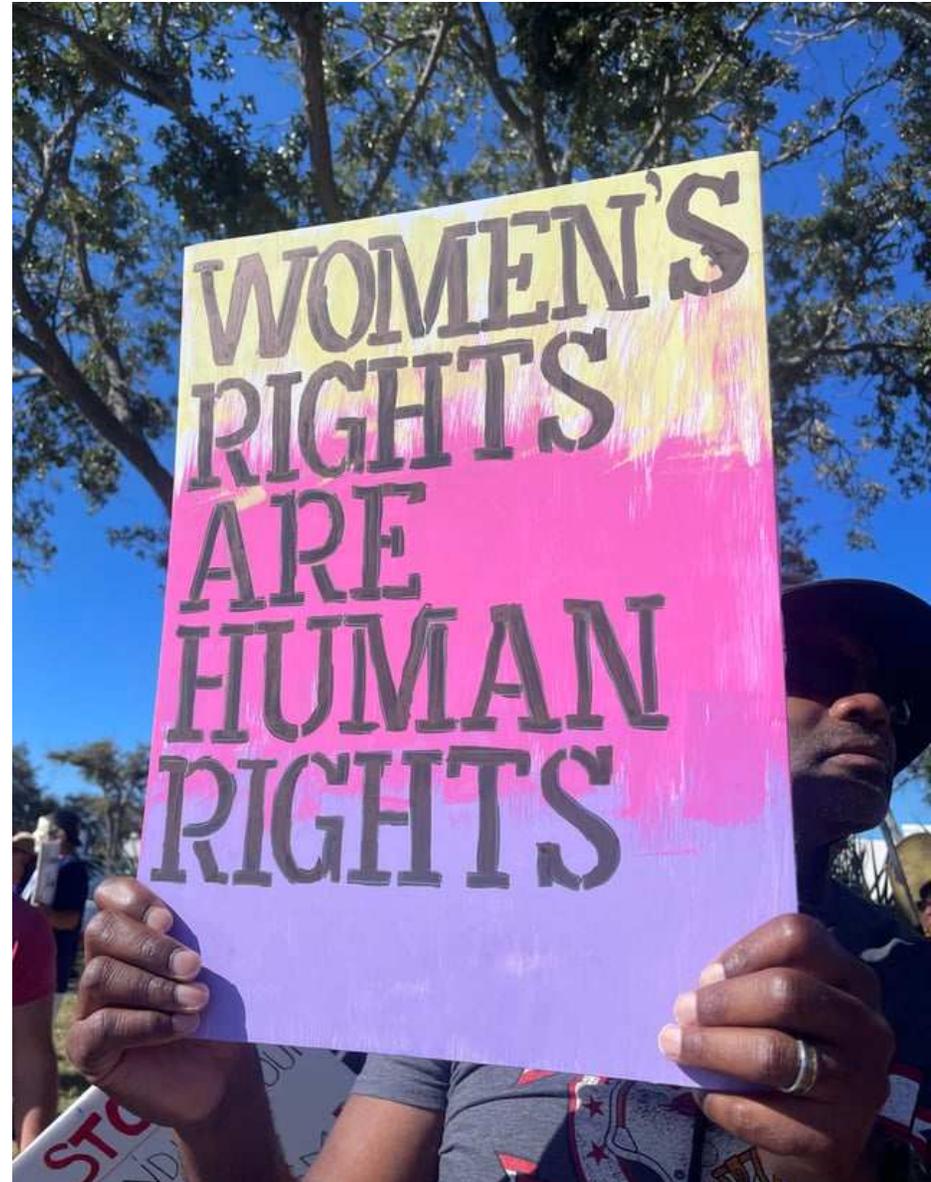
– *Harriet Tubman*



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Collective Movement Building

- **Focus on shared power:** Building collective power is central, enabling people to exercise their power for social change.
- **Relationship-based:** Cultivating trust and strong relationships among participants is crucial for speed and effectiveness.
- **Structural change:** Movement building aims to create lasting structural change beyond individual organizations or campaigns.
- **Collaborative solutions:** It involves collectively building solutions based on the needs and interests of involved parties, which can lead to innovative outcomes.
- **Addressing root causes:** Organizers propose solutions to the root causes of social problems, such as injustice, inequality, and lack of human rights.
- **Non-hierarchical structures:** Many movements adopt non-hierarchical, collaborative models that encourage shared learning and support.
- **Focus on well-being:** Recent approaches integrate a focus on individual and collective well-being into organizing, recognizing its political importance.





We need to stop playing Privilege or Oppression Olympics because we'll never get anywhere until we find more effective ways of talking through difference. We should be able to say, "This is my truth," and have that truth stand without a hundred clamoring voices shouting, giving the impression that multiple truths cannot coexist.

— *RuPaul (Gay)* —

ALOUETTE



Effective Activism & Collective Building

- Relies on creating strong community ties, strategic planning, and intentional effort to achieve long-term change.
- Strategies
 - Building broad coalitions
 - Fostering a culture of care
 - Creating clear, manageable objectives to sustain momentum and build power.
- Contrasts with individual, short-term activism by focusing on building the enduring collective power of a community through relationships, shared goals, and support systems.



Building Effective Coalitions and Communities

- **Form broad alliances**
- **Prioritize community care**
- **Foster internal support**
- **Encourage diverse skill sets**





Strategic Planning and Action

- **Focus on long-term power:**
- Shift from temporary bursts of action to intentionally building long-term, collective power through sustained organizing.
- **Break down goals:**
- Divide large objectives into smaller, manageable steps. For each step, identify your targets, tactics, and how you will measure progress.
- **Create intentionality:**
- Organize with intention to build enduring power, rather than relying on individual charisma or reactive activism, as seen in historical examples
- **Amplify your impact:**
- Recognize that collective action multiplies resources, voices, and influence, making large-scale impacts achievable that are impossible for individuals acting alone.

Sustaining Momentum

- Provide opportunities for action
- Build trust and alliances
- Create stable conditions for collective life



If you hear the dogs, keep going.
If you see the torches in the woods,
keep going. If there's shouting after you,
keep going. **Don't ever stop.**
Keep going. **If you want a taste
of freedom, keep going.**

– *Harriet Tubman*

AZ QUOTES





