

Articulating Rights: Nineteenth-century American Women on Race, Reform, and the State

Alison M. Parker

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In this original study of six notable reformers, Alison Parker skillfully illuminates the connections between the gradual transformation of reform strategies over the course of the 19th century and the political ideas of the reformers themselves. Parker argues that American women's political thought evolved from an emphasis on reform through moral suasion and local control into an endorsement of expanded federal power and a strong central state. This book reveals Fanny Wright, Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké Weld, Frances Watkins Harper, Frances Willard, and Mary Church Terrell to be political thinkers who were engaged in reconceptualizing the relationship between the state and its citizens.

Collectively and individually, black women made a significant contribution to the shift toward an activist central state by strongly supporting a federal government with expanded authority to protect and enforce civil rights. Offering profiles of two black reformers, Parker explores the complex role that race played in the political thought and strategies in both black and white women reformers. Paying particular attention to the ways in which women's ideas about the state and citizenship factored into their struggles for racial and sexual equality, Parker illuminates the wide-ranging and creative ways in which they engaged in politics. For scholars interested in 19th-century women, race, or reform in American history, this significant study offers a fresh take on these vital topics.



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