

Speaking While Female: 75 Extraordinary Speeches by American Women

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Speaking While Female compiles the powerful words of seventy-five American women who addressed human rights issues with conviction in their times.

The speeches collected in Dana Rubin's *Speaking While Female* cover weighty issues including statehood and gender equality.

Generations' worth of women's words are gathered in this book, which begins with Anne Hutchinson's heresy trial in 1637 and ends with Bina Venkataraman's 2021 commencement speech. Each entry is contextualized with background information on the speaker and her place in history, and each address reveals its speaker's eager hope to effect change. With contributions from Angelina Grimké, Ida B. Wells, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, and Mary Fisher, and from dancers, activists, and artists alike, these speeches demonstrate the power of women's voices throughout history.

As an ode to the beauty of empowerment, these speeches communicate leadership, pain, and hope for a better future. In their inclusivity, they represent a different version of history than what's taught in most schools. They build upon one another, suggesting that without Jane Johnson's testimony of her escape from slavery, we could not have Michelle Obama's honest remembrance that slaves built the White House. And they recognize that each speaker was a product of her time and faced period struggles, including internal rifts in the suffrage movement and racism among early feminists, who focused most on the rights of middle- and upper-class white women.

Margaret Sanger is included, but so is the fact that she was a eugenicist, even as she played a role in the legalization of birth control. But the speeches from women not as often included in history books distinguish this work best, as when Aurora Lucero-White Lea discusses fighting for the incorporation of the Spanish language into New Mexico's education system, mentioning the fact that the Spanish language was brought to the Americas from conquistadors.

The book also celebrates the historical effects of each speech and the future it contributed to, even if the speaker was not always aware of those changes. It notes that while Susan B. Anthony died before women in the United States were allowed the right to vote, Selena Sloan Butler lived to see the end of Georgia's chain gangs and the beginning of the civil rights movement. The result is an expansive reference text that proffers nuanced understandings of the worlds in which women live.

Covering almost four hundred years of North American history, *Speaking While Female* compiles the powerful words of seventy-five American women who addressed human rights issues with conviction in their times.

ADDISSYN HOUSE (March 7, 2023)

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