

Mary Ann-Shadd Cary: The First to Do It

Resisting oppression and doing what was necessary.

By: Gbenga Adebija.



First Glimpse

Born in Delaware 1823, a slave state, and to parents who dedicated their lives to abolitionism (helping slaves escape to free states), Mary Ann-Shadd Cary was exposed to injustice, racism and discrimination from a young age. At her young age, Shadd and her family helped people escape slavery through the [underground railroad system](#). This is what I first learned about her and is why I picked her as my inspiration before seeing that she did any PR or media work. Now I am thinking about all the media work she did later on in life. How did she juggle all of these together?

Let's dive into it.

More Research/Media Work

When I looked into her, sources said that she was [American Canadian](#). I thought, how? I did more research. She had to move to Canada after a new law was passed that would compromise her and her family for [helping slaves escape](#).

While she was now safe, it didn't mean she had to stop. She didn't.

In Canada was where she did her media work, she became a teacher, opened a school (for black and white children), and she published Canada's first antislavery newspaper, "[The Provincial Freeman](#)." Doing so, she became the first black, female newspaper editor in American history. This ran for four years. Unfortunately, financial struggles caused it to end. I wonder how it would have done today with the issues of now. She also wrote for newspapers "National Era" and "The People's Advocate."



She got her law degree at SIXTY. From HOWARD.

Reading about this legend makes me feel like I need to do more in my life.

Wise words

A quote from her when asked what can be done to improve the life of African Americans:

“We should do more and talk less.”

In today’s society, we still need to heed to this. We have seen riots, protests, banners, flags and posters all advocating for many serious issues going on in the country but barely any change. Especially in the African American community. There needs to be more togetherness and more action. We can complain all we want to, but words, with nothing to back them up, is nothing.

Social Activism

As mentioned before, she helped slaves get freedom. Later on in her life, she also fought for women’s right to vote, joining the [National Women’s Suffrage Association](#). Eventually, she became the first African-American woman to vote in a national election.

As I keep learning about her, I keep seeing “the first...” or “the only...”, she was actually out here putting in work. I think she knew that if she kept on setting these groundbreaking milestones, it would be more and more uncommon as more women would do it.

She was right.

We still have a long way to go, which is sad as her work was done over a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, the work is being done slowly. Should we heed her words to talk less and do more, we will get the society that we so desire.

About the Author



Gbenga Adebija is a public relations specialist in Denton Texas and is graduating with a degree in Journalism with a minor in Business in May 2023. He enjoys writing and learning about history. Gbenga wants to pursue a career in Digital Marketing after college.

Sources:

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