

## Lesson 20: Learn a Little Politics

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“Don't interfere with anything in the Constitution. That must be maintained, for it is the only safeguard of our liberties.” Abraham Lincoln, (American, 16th President of the United States, 1809 –1865)

### General Tubman

I remember the first time I met John Brown. Frederick Douglass brought him to meet me in St Catharines, which is in Ontario, Canada. He walked in, gave me a salute, and said, “The first I see is General Tubman, the second is General Tubman, and the third is General Tubman.”

That made me smile. I couldn't believe that this white man I'd heard about that hated slavery as much as me came to talk to me. Not only that, the great John Brown called me General Tubman. Well, that was something to remember.

John Brown took me to abolitionist meetings at the home of Wendell Phillips, (a rich lawyer) in Boston. He introduced me as one of the best and bravest persons on this continent. He said, “General Tubman can lead an army as well as any military man that ever lived.” He even called me a “brave man.” To have a white man put me up as an equal to any man, black or white almost brought me to tears.

After John Brown started taking me to these meetings, I went back time and time again, sometimes without him. When I spoke to those white men, they listened to me like the soldiers listened to a general. They respected me, and I respected them.

I found out later that these meetings were to help John Brown plan his raid at Harpers Ferry. John Brown wanted me to bring as many colored men as I could to help him fight for our freedom.

I was doing all I could to bring men together to fight under John Brown, but my health wasn't too good around that time.

When he and his men made their attack, I was at home sick.

After the Harpers Ferry raid where John got caught and killed, I knew I had to keep on talking to powerful people and fighting against slavery by speaking out, and getting ready to go to war.

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John Brown had introduced me to some men called the Secret Six. They were all abolitionists, but to be the most helpful, they had to keep their own feelings about slavery from the public. I can tell you their names now, since all that was years ago. They were John Brown's good friend Mr. George Luther Stearns a powerful businessman, a doctor, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, two preachers, Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Rev. Theodore Parker, and Franklin Sanborn, who was a professor.

We mostly met at the home of a very rich man, Mr. Gerrit Smith. I got to listen in and give my own thoughts on some very secret discussions.

There were lots of words they said that I didn't understand. So, I asked plenty of questions and they explained things to me. Gerrit Smith said words like, "My rights all spring from an infinitely nobler source, from the favor and grace of God. Truth and mercy require the exertion, never the suppression of man's noble rights and powers. Our political and constitutional rights, so called, are but the natural and inherent rights of man, asserted, carried out, and secured by modes of human contrivance." (Brainyquotes)

After he explained all that in simple words, I liked what he said. In my own words, it is just what the Lord told me years ago I had the right to my freedom or death.

**Lesson Learned: Respect earns respect; Politics is people and power. Know the names of the powerful people and study their politics.**

Harriet Tubman did what she was compassionate about. When you show your compassion, people respect what you do.

Others with similar beliefs and causes will be drawn to you.

People who work together have power.

Synergy is a great word. It means working together to get greater Results than working alone. This is what politics is about, people using their power by working together to influence the government affairs.

Get involved and make a difference.

### **Learn a Little Politics**

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. What issues or causes concern you?
2. How can you work with others to strengthen your power to make change on what you are concerned about?