

RETHINKING EDUCATION:
ANTHONY BENEZET AND THE QUAKERS

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ABSTRACT

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Megan Elizabeth Garland

Examining the education practices in early America provides a glimpse into the structure of colonial society as a whole. More specifically, the education system sheds light on how traditionally marginalized groups gained improved opportunities within society. This thesis examines the education of three key groups of people: women, Africans, and Native Americans. More specifically, this thesis traces the increase in educational opportunities made available to each of these groups in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. With the Quakers at the forefront, traditionally marginalized people began to receive improved educational opportunities. Writings from a Quaker central to education reform, Anthony Benezet, are examined in order to show how the Quakers in eighteenth-century Philadelphia created a unique system of educational inclusivity. Benezet was an early abolitionist and educator who played a significant role in the education of women and minorities in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Benezet and the Quakers reimagined education by providing quality educations to less-fortunate groups of people. Their work served as an example of how women and minorities were capable of high-level academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

“I have sometimes very much doubted, whether I had any service at all in the creation, except serving self; but if I have any, it is the education of children.”¹ Upon leaving the school for girls that he helped create, Anthony Benezet (1713-1787) expressed his regrets of leaving the classroom and soon returned to the school. Anthony Benezet dedicated his life to providing quality education to children in need and was still an active teacher at the time of his death. Benezet was no ordinary school teacher. He made it his life’s mission to provide traditionally uneducated children, such as women and minorities, with education of equal academic rigor as white male children. As a Quaker in Philadelphia, Benezet helped his local community rethink the education system in their city. This thesis examines both the positive and the negative aspects of Benezet’s career as an educator and writer. Benezet made great strides towards a more equal education system for *all* students, but his was only the first step in making a more inclusive education system in the United States.

Education is a vital aspect of human development and serves as a window into the values of a society. Examining the educational opportunities available to certain demographics provides valuable insight into the values of a community. Education provides gateways within societies, which can result in increased opportunities. The education system in the United States shifted numerous times before it became more equal with laws prohibiting discrimination and, at least under the law, gave all children access to quality educations. The changes in educational opportunities for women and minority children came as a result of small-scale shifts at the local community level. This thesis examines one education movement within British colonial America: the Quakers, and specifically Anthony Benezet, in eighteenth-century Philadelphia.

¹ Letter from Anthony Benezet to John Smith, December 9th, 1757, quoted in Brookes, 39.

The Quakers in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania were a community that valued education. Rather than providing educational opportunities to white male children alone, the Quakers pushed for the education of women and minorities in their community. A notable Quaker educator, Anthony Benezet, was instrumental in bringing education reform to eighteenth-century Philadelphia. Benezet's actions throughout his life show his desire to bring education to groups of people who had fewer opportunities than wealthy white men. With his help, two schools, one for girls and one for black children, were created. These schools were among the earliest of their kind in the colonies and provided traditionally uneducated children with formal educations. Benezet's schools were designed to prove that girls and African Americans were capable of intellectual achievements, and he provided them with equal opportunities for education as was available to their wealthy male peers. For example, the Quakers formed a committee in 1770 to determine how to create a school for black children. The committee's minutes were well documented, and the committee specifically stated that they hoped their efforts would be seen by others throughout the colonies, and that they too would give the African Americans in their communities a chance to prove their intellectual capabilities.² The Quakers knew that they were on the cutting edge of minority education, and they hoped that their school would show others what black children were capable of.

Benezet also advocated for the education and improved treatment of Native Americans. Benezet published *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent* in 1784. This publication urged for the improved treatment of Native Americans, and Benezet argued that the Native Americans could not be blamed for their negative

² *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (December, 25, 1773), 38. Haverford College Quaker and Special Collections. HC.PhM.P455.07a.003.

actions against the European settlers because the settlers were the aggressors.³ Benezet did advocate for the improved treatment of Native Americans, but his views were also euro-centric and focused primarily on assimilation and Christianization efforts. This work challenges the way that Benezet is held in high regard among secondary literature for his work with Native Americans. While Benezet and the Quakers did advocate for improved treatment of Native Americans, their assimilation and Christianization views created limits to their outreach efforts.

This thesis examines the rise in educational opportunities available to women and minorities in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. The eighteenth-century education reform in Quaker society provides an early example of a social group challenging traditionally held views and practices. The status quo can only be changed if people challenge it, which the Quakers successfully did. By showing that women and minorities were capable of advanced learning, the Quakers challenged the standards of the educational system within the United States.

Although the Quakers were instrumental in developing educational opportunities in their community for women and minorities, their work was not without limitations. Secondary literature on Anthony Benezet describes his work for Native Americans in an overwhelmingly positive light, often praising him for speaking out against injustices for the group. However, his work focused heavily on Christianization and assimilation efforts. As a religious community, the educational endeavors of the Quakers were moved by their religious beliefs. As a result, the education of Native Americans particularly was centered around assimilation and Christianization attempts, while women and African Americans were offered more opportunities for advancement academically. Religion was central to the instruction of women and African Americans, but it is more apparent with the education of Native Americans. A reason for this

³ Anthony Benezet, *Some Observations on the Situation, Disposition, and Character of the Indian Natives of This Continent* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by Joseph Cruikshank, in Market-Street, 1784), 116.

stark difference between Native American education and the education of other groups may stem from their position in early America. European women settled the colonies with men, so their cultures were heavily intertwined, so there may not have been a “need” to change their views to match the views of the settlers. African Americans were brought directly from Africa to the Americas during the slave trade, so they were put in a new region and forced to adapt to the environment around them. As a result, when the Quakers began to offer educational opportunities, the African Americans were already largely familiar with the culture of the colonists. However, Native Americans were not brought to a new location. Instead, they had their own communities prior to Europeans entering their regions. As a result, when the Quakers offered the Native Americans education opportunities, they directly entered Native American territory and sought to change their culture.

Although the Quakers were limited by their religion and assimilation efforts towards Native Americans, they did attempt to challenge the standards and values of early America. As a small group, they changed their educational system to include a greater number of children and showed what women and minorities were capable of if given the opportunity. While the Quakers were only one group within the colonies pushing for education opportunities for all, they did serve as an example of what was possible for women and minorities academically. By rethinking the colonial education system, the Quakers, with Anthony Benezet at the forefront, created a more inclusive system of education within eighteenth-century Quaker Philadelphia.

Education in The Colonies

Formal education developed slowly in colonial America, and the first settlers opted to educate their children at home rather than create established school systems, with Plymouth and

Jamestown serving as two examples.⁴ However, as colonies became more settled, the method of education shifted. One of the earliest attempts to regulate education in the colonies was the Old Deluder Act of 1647, which laid out educational goals in Massachusetts. The act reads in part:

It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures... it is therefore ordered by this Court and Authoritie therof; That every Township in this Jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty Housholders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read... And it is further ordered, that where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred Families or Housholders, they shall set up a Grammar-School, the Masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the Universitie. And if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year then everie such town shall pay five pounds per annum to the next such School, till they shall perform this Order.⁵

The Old Deluder Act of 1647 stressed the importance of teaching children religion and emphasized that spreading and teaching religion was a primary reason for establishing schools in the colonies. The act also described the importance of teaching reading and writing to children. However, the language of this act suggests that the children that needed education were assumed to be male. By using male pronouns when describing children, the Old Deluder Act reveals the gender inequality in colonial education practices. While the Old Deluder Act shows an effort to increase education in Massachusetts, it still failed to mention women and minorities.

There was not a regulated school system in early America. Instead, rural schools emerge within communities, and these schools varied from area to area as a reflection of differing values and cultures throughout early America.⁶ Parents had heavy involvement with their children's educations in rural schools, such as choosing the textbooks, curriculum, and even the teacher of

⁴ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experiences 1607-1783* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), 15.

⁵ "The Old Deluder Act," 1647, <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/ob/deludersatan.pdf>.

⁶ Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of The Republic: Common Schools and American Society 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 17.

their children.⁷ Church charity schools were also used to provide children with education, and Philadelphia had approximately twelve by 1810, with the Quakers establishing various schools for underprivileged groups in their communities.⁸ With an informal school system, children in early America relied on their communities to provide them with educational opportunities.

Literacy rates are a valuable tool in determining the level of education available within early America. Kenneth A. Lockridge's book *Literacy in Colonial New England* uses data such as signatures to determine literacy rates. Lockridge concluded that there was a rise in literacy rates occurring during the eighteenth century. This rise in literacy rates could be attributed to a greater need for men to read during the American Revolution to decipher key issues while voting.⁹ Literacy rates and education for men specifically were increasing during the eighteenth century due to an increase of people living within cities, resulting in higher access to schools.¹⁰ As a result of increased education, "The raw data from Chester and Lancaster Counties in Pennsylvania show a male literacy of 70% for the generation dying in the 1730s."¹¹ Literacy rates for women were improving around the same time. Lockridge concluded that "Only a third of the women who died before 1670 could sign their names, whereas nearly 45% of the women who died throughout the rest of the colonial and early national eras left signatures on their wills."¹² Lockridge attributed the shift in the ability for women to sign their names to increased educational opportunities beginning in the late seventeenth century.¹³ The literacy rate was

⁷ Kaestle, 22.

⁸ Kaestle, 31, 38.

⁹ Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England: An Enquiry into the Social Context of Literacy in the Early American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1974), 37.

¹⁰ Lockridge, 66-67.

¹¹ Lockridge, 74.

¹² Lockridge, 38.

¹³ Lockridge, 38.

growing for both men and women beginning in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century.

With an unregulated education system in Early America, local communities were responsible for establishing education practices for their children. Literacy rates in early America reflect the trend of education becoming more widely available within established cities. The diversity in early American education allowed groups like the Quakers to establish their own education system within their communities to provide educational opportunities to all children.

The Quakers in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia

The Quaker religion was started by George Fox and first took root in England during the seventeenth century. By 1660 Quakerism was a major religion within England, and its influence even stretched to Ireland.¹⁴ Quakers, often called Friends, focused on spirituality as a group and did not have a religious hierarchy found in other religions.¹⁵ Quakers worked as more of a community rather than following a strict religious system. Therefore, while Quakerism is a religion, it was also a tight-knit community and lifestyle. The Quakers were a unique religious group. They interpreted some parts of the Bible literally, which resulted in them wearing plain clothing and refused to fight in wars. They also did not have designated spiritual leaders, such as priests; instead, they believed that anyone could speak about their religion and have access to God.¹⁶ The Quakers were a unique religious community in early America, which resulted in some tension with the rest of the colonists.

Quakers were not welcomed into the New World initially. Thirty-three Quakers who moved to Massachusetts were pushed out of the colony with threats of harm and even death if they ever

¹⁴ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 18.

¹⁵ Hamm, 21.

¹⁶ Hamm, 21.

returned.¹⁷ However, notable Quaker William Penn helped his religious community when he received a royal grant for the colony of Pennsylvania in 1681, and “Not surprisingly, he framed it according to Quaker principles, making it the first society in the world to be so established.”¹⁸ The Quakers were forward thinkers in many respects, especially education, which further separated the practices within Pennsylvania from the rest of the colonies.

The American Revolution shaped Philadelphia during the eighteenth century, and the Quakers were affected greatly by the war. Throughout the American Revolution, the religious group in Philadelphia stayed closely connected to Quakers in Britain.¹⁹ As the political nature of the colonies became increasingly important, leading up to and during the American Revolution, the Quakers’ unwillingness to participate led to increased distrust towards the group. The Quakers were unwilling to make changes to their beliefs and culture to conform to the new values and politics resulting from the American Revolution.²⁰ During the American Revolution, the Quakers were forced to sign a loyalty oath, and those who did not sign the oath were exiled to Virginia because they were deemed too dangerous to the new country.²¹ The Quakers refused to change their beliefs even during a major war, which resulted in some of them being sent into exile to avoid potential uprisings against the new United States. During the revolution, the Quakers remained a tight-knit community that refused to change their beliefs, and the connectivity of the religious group further solidified their importance as a unique community in Philadelphia.

¹⁷ Hamm, 23.

¹⁸ Hamm, 27.

¹⁹ Arthur J. Mekeel, *The Relation of The Quakers to The American Revolution* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), 113.

²⁰ Sydney V. James, “The Impact of the American Revolution on Quaker’s Ideas about Their Sect,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1962): 376.

²¹ Robert F. Oaks, “Philadelphians in Exile: The Problem of Loyalty During the American Revolution,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 96, no. 3 (1972): 305, 306.

The American Revolution heavily impacted Philadelphia. The tensions and instability within the city may have been a factor allowing for education reform. Gary B. Nash's *The Unknown American Revolution* outlines the struggles within Philadelphia at the time of the revolution. Tensions grew between the British colonists and the Native Americans outside of Philadelphia, resulting in the frontiersmen calling themselves the "Paxton Boys" murdering Native Americans outside of the city.²² The Quakers responded to this by publishing pamphlets against "the unjustifiable murder of Christianized Indians."²³ As a result of the murder of Christianized Native Americans outside of Philadelphia, the Quakers, along with Benjamin Franklin, protested to have Pennsylvania put under a royal charter, which resulted in further political tensions within Philadelphia.²⁴ The political climate of Philadelphia also included the abolition movement. Leading up to the American Revolution, the Quakers in Philadelphia were heavily focused on abolition. Benjamin Lay, a Quaker in Philadelphia, led an extreme life, including creating his own clothing to avoid slave labor and sometimes living in a cave near his home to show the importance of abolition.²⁵ While Quakers such as Anthony Benezet and John Woolman focused more on their writings to appeal to the public concerning abolition.²⁶ Leading up to the American Revolution, Philadelphia was a city filled with political tensions and pushes from the Quakers to treat Native Americans and African Americans with kindness. The unique political and cultural climate of Philadelphia at the time of the American Revolution paved the way for unique educational reforms within the city. The Quakers were able to provide quality education for

²² Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 26

²³ Nash, 26.

²⁴ Nash, 27.

²⁵ Nash, 39.

²⁶ Nash, 41.

minorities in Philadelphia because they had long been advocating for different minority groups within the city.

The eighteenth century witnessed an increase in population within Philadelphia, though the exact population within the city is debated among historians. One estimation is that the white population in Philadelphia grew from 5,317 people in 1720 to 61,728 in 1800, while the black population in the city grew from 623 in 1720 to 6,083 in 1800.²⁷ Other historians offer different estimates. Gary B. Nash and Billy G. Smith lay out the difficulty in discovering the exact population of Philadelphia in their article “The Population of Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia.” They discussed how different variables were used to estimate the population, such as the number of houses and “taxable inhabitants.”²⁸ Despite the disagreement regarding the city’s exact population, Nash and Smith state that “There is a general agreement that in the period after 1760 the city entered an era of extraordinarily rapid growth.”²⁹ While the exact number of people in Philadelphia during the eighteenth century is still debated, it is widely accepted that the population did increase rapidly during that time. Although the overall population increased in Philadelphia, the number of Quakers declined within the city during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Historian Robert F. Oaks pulled reports from *The History of Pennsylvania* written between 1797 and 1798 by a “Quaker Historian” named Robert Proud to trace the shift in the population of Quakers within Philadelphia after the American Revolution.³⁰ This book estimated that Quakers made up only one-seventh of the total population of Philadelphia but that the Quakers were still “Esteemed among the wealthiest, and most substantial of the

²⁷ Susan E. Klepp, “Seasoning and Society: Racial Differences in Mortality in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (1994), 476.

²⁸ Gary B. Nash and Billy G. Smith, “The Population of Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of history and Biography* 99, no. 3 (1975), 362-364.

²⁹ Nash and Smith, 367.

³⁰ Oaks, 298.

inhabitants.”³¹ Although the number of Quakers diminished while the number of people in the city increased, the Quakers still had a major influence in the city during the eighteenth century.

The Quakers were among the earliest groups who advocated for increased educational opportunities for all children. In this sense, the Quaker education movement in Philadelphia stood alone as an example to the rest of the colonies of the intellectual capabilities of women and minorities. This thesis examines the push for the education of women and minority groups, such as African Americans and Native Americans, to show how they gained more educational opportunities in Colonial America, specifically within the Pennsylvania Quaker community in the late eighteenth century. The Quakers in eighteenth-century Philadelphia worked together to provide children in their communities with quality educations. From creating committees to discuss how to create a school for black children to offering girls enrollment in their schools, the Quakers provided more opportunities for traditionally uneducated children. While the Quakers’ education reform was locally centered, and there is no concrete evidence of their schools impacting the rest of the colonies, they do offer a unique perspective on education in early America.

Anthony Benezet was central in the push for education reform within the Quaker community. Benezet was born in 1713 in France and fled with his Huguenot family to London, where they joined the Quakers and then moved to Philadelphia when he was 18.³² As a Quaker in Philadelphia, Benezet focused his life on educating the youth of his community. He also advocated for equal treatment of minority groups such as Africans and Native Americans. One of

³¹ Robert Proud, *History of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1797-1798), II, 339-340. Quoted in Robert F. Oaks, “Philadelphians in Exile: The Problem of Loyalty During the American Revolution,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 96, no. 3 (1972): 299.

³² Irv A. Brendlinger, *To Be Silent... Would Be Criminal: Antislavery Influence and Writings of Anthony Benezet*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2006), 9.

Benezet's key strategies in his publications relating to minority groups was to highlight their humanity. By emphasizing the humanity and cultures of African Americans and Native Americans, Benezet showed that minority groups had robust cultures prior to large-scale European contact, yet he still showed his European biases by describing some of them as "more uncivilized and barbarous than others, as in the case in all other countries."³³ Benezet believed that some regions of Africa were less civilized than others, but he believed that African civilizations could be improved or "cultured." Benezet even compared the state of Africa in the eighteenth century to the state of Europe before technological advancement by describing Europeans as "formerly as savage and barbarous as the natives of Africa."³⁴ He still believed the Africans deserved kind treatment and were capable of "improvement," but his European mindset caused him to view African societies as inferior to European societies. Benezet was an avid writer, but he also spent much of his life as an educator. Benezet was central to the creation of a school for girls and a school for black children in Philadelphia and believed in providing quality educations to as many children as possible. As a key player in the shift of education within the Quaker community, Benezet serves as a connection between the changing views regarding the educations of women, African Americans, and Native Americans.

The general education practices in the colonies were complex and varied from region to region, but this thesis will examine the education system in Philadelphia specifically. With the Quakers' heavy focus on education, the city became the home of progressive educational endeavors. Rethinking the traditional system of education allowed the Quakers in Philadelphia to

³³ Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*, 1766-1767, in David L. Crosby ed., *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: An Annotated Critical Edition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 93.

³⁴ Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, 1771, in David L. Crosby ed., *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: An Annotated Critical Edition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 149.

provide quality education to those who wanted it, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. In the cases of women and African Americans, the Quakers were forward-thinking in providing them educations that mirrored the curriculums received by their white male counterparts. However, Native Americans received less-enlightened thinking methods of education, with assimilation and religion at the forefront of missionary efforts. Although flawed in some respects, the Quakers still aimed to shift the educational focus in their community towards one that was more inclusive.

Rise In Women's Education

Much like the general education system in the American colonies, the education of women varied greatly across regions and reflected numerous factors, such as social status and location. Social status played a major role in the educational opportunities available to women within the colonies. The ways in which different social groups obtained education also varied greatly. Different standards also existed between southern colonies and northern colonies, with northern colonies having more opportunities for education.³⁵

In general, girls in the American colonies, prior to the late eighteenth century, obtained their education differently than boys did regardless of geographic regions. The educational differences were apparent in the literacy rates of women in the eighteenth century. Parkerson and Parkerson state that “on the eve of the American Revolution, while some women could read, very few were able to write and many could neither read or write.”³⁶ This evidence suggests that the female role in the colonies was primarily a domestic one learned at home by mirroring adult female family members. Girls did not typically learn to read or write. The educational standards

³⁵ Kaestle, 28.

³⁶ Donald Hugh Parkerson and Jo Ann Parkerson, *Transitions in American Education: A Social History of Teaching* (New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001), 62.

for women in the colonies stemmed from Britain, where the education of upper-class women was centered “on genteel skills like embroidery, dancing, and painting.”³⁷ These skills were central for women’s “education” and were meant to show women’s refinement and ability as reputable wives. The same perceptions applied to upper-class women in the colonies.

The education available to women in the colonies also varied depending on social status. For women of lower or middling social status, the primary method of learning took place within the home. Girls of lower social status gained their education by mirroring their adult female family members. Parkerson and Parkerson describe the education of girls of lower or middling class families by stating, “Young artisan or farm girls...learned their domestic skills in the crowded cabin or kitchen garden, watching and imitating mother, aunt, and grandmother. For these children, the family was the center of their educational experience.”³⁸ Beyond these practical skills, academic skills such as reading and writing were not seen as essential for girls of lower social status.

Upper-class women had better opportunities for education in the colonies. However, prior to the eighteenth century, much like the lower class women, their education also included domestic skills that taught them how to perform household tasks expected from them later in life. Historian Sarah E. Fatherly focuses on the shift in women’s education in colonial Philadelphia from household skills to more academic abilities. Her focus is on the rise of the presence of British “prescriptive” publications in the Philadelphia area. Fatherly describes the prescriptive writers by stating, “Traditionally, upper-class female education in Britain emphasized ornamental studies, focusing on genteel skills like embroidery, dancing, and painting. The

³⁷ Sarah E. Fatherly, “‘The Sweet Recourse of Reason’: Elite Women’s Education in Colonial Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 128, no. 3 (2004): 235.

³⁸ Parkerson and Parkerson, 32.

problem with this model of education, prescriptive authors argued, was that it had reared generations of women who lacked basic skills like spelling and arithmetic.”³⁹ These prescriptive authors that Fatherly discusses were accredited for writing books that advised women on how to learn and that reading, writing, and arithmetic were not reserved for men. Upper-class Philadelphia women used the readings to differentiate themselves from women of lower classes and to gain elite status in the 1700s.⁴⁰ Fatherly argues that this form of educational material led Philadelphia women to seek out better educations in order to solidify their elite status. By using the prescriptive texts, the upper-class women in Philadelphia were able to stray away from household skills and immerse themselves in academic subjects such as math and English. By separating themselves from the lower classes, the wealthier women in Philadelphia maintained their status through academia that was not available to girls of lower classes.⁴¹ While this was a step towards better female education, Prescriptive texts were only available to upper-class women who could read, which created an educational gap within the female population. The increased opportunities for women, sparked by prescriptive texts, found its way into schools, specifically in Pennsylvania with Anthony Benezet, where teachers began to increase education for women, including the introduction of Greek and Latin into the curriculum for females.⁴²

During the eighteenth century, women began to gain more educational skills that focused on academics rather than domestic tasks. The rise of education for women is reflected in the ability of nearly 45% of women to sign their names on their Wills during this period, as compared to only one-third of women signing their names prior to 1670.⁴³ In the New England

³⁹ Fatherly, 235.

⁴⁰ Fatherly, 235.

⁴¹ Fatherly, 235.

⁴² Fatherly, 252.

⁴³ Lockridge, 38.

colonies, the late eighteenth century marked a period when girls were more widely permitted to attend public schools.⁴⁴ Exceptions applied, but this period showed a general shift in education for women, though each colony differed as to whether or not girls were allowed to go to school with boys or not at all. In their study regarding the changes in American Education, Parkerson and Parkerson outline the differences in education for females between some of the northern colonies. In their work, they state, “for the most part however, girls routinely were prohibited from attending New England schools until the end of the 1700s.”⁴⁵ One example given by Parkerson and Parkerson was that girls were not allowed to attend public schools in Boston until 1789, and they were unable to go to school year-round until 1828.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, in Pennsylvania, girls were permitted to attend schools very early in the colony’s development.⁴⁷ A small shift in female education occurred in the eighteenth century. Elementary schools in the northern colonies were admitting girls at the end of the century, although their education was not always equal.⁴⁸ Therefore, in the eighteenth century, girls were attending school and receiving comparable education to boys more than they had previously received.

This thesis focuses specifically on the role that Anthony Benezet and the Quaker community of Philadelphia played in the progressive reform of women’s education that took place in the eighteenth century. Benezet was a key figure in the advancement of female education in Philadelphia and was instrumental in the founding of a school for girls in 1754. This school does not appear to have had any stipulations in regard to the social status of the girls who

⁴⁴ Kaestle, 28.

Parkerson and Parkerson, 69.

These two books agree that the late 1700s marked the period for girls to be admitted to schools in the northern area of the colonies such as New England.

⁴⁵ Parkerson and Parkerson, 69.

⁴⁶ Parkerson and Parkerson, 69.

⁴⁷ Parkerson and Parkerson, 69.

⁴⁸ Kaestle, 28.

attended the school. Much of Benezet's life was dedicated to helping children of all backgrounds, so it is unlikely that the school had limitations on who could attend. For example, at the Girls' School, Benezet taught a girl who was deaf and also a boy from the Caribbean. While the girl's social standing is not evident, the boy seems to have been from a higher class family because he arrived at school in nice clothes but had to change to better fit in with the other students and Benezet himself.⁴⁹ While the girls' school was designed to provide female students with quality educations, a boy was admitted to the school as well. The inclusion of a boy into the girls' school demonstrates Benezet's emphasis on inclusion. A boy from the Caribbean, who was described as "a gentleman of fortune" by a fellow student, was sent all the way to Philadelphia to be taught by Benezet despite it being at a school for girls where he "seemed quite content to be at a school among girls."⁵⁰

The girls' school curriculum was focused on academic skills rather than domestic tasks. The girls learned to write proper essays on predetermined topics. A student of Benezet, Deborah Logan, shared her experience at the girls' school. She described how Benezet corrected the girls' work before they recopied their revised essays.⁵¹ This level of revision shows that the girls were learning how to write and how to revise their work to make it stronger. Although the school for girls did offer female students with increased educational opportunities, Benezet described that there were some skills that girls did not require, such as decimal fractions, square roots, and measuring.⁵² Benezet and the Quakers were open to providing girls with increased educational opportunities, but they also suggested that females were not expected to learn quite as much as

⁴⁹ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca 1825, quoted in Brookes, 468.

⁵⁰ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca 1825, quoted in Brookes, 468.

⁵¹ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca. 1825, quoted in Brookes, 41 & 467.

⁵² Letter from Anthony Benezet to George Dillwyn, 4 August, 1779, Haverford College, manuscript collection 852, Quakers and Slavery, Haverford College Quaker and Special Collections.

their male counterparts. Though the Quakers' work did not result in fully equal education opportunities for women, they did push for a more inclusive system and argued that women had comparable intellectual capabilities to men. The Quakers were part of a small shift occurring in the eighteenth century to allow more girls to attend school.

African Americans: Abolition and Education

Race was another factor that impacted the level of education that was available to certain groups of people in early America. African Americans were among the groups of people in early America who rarely received proper education, and the Quakers in Philadelphia sought to change this. The Quakers also spoke out against slavery and were largely supportive of the abolitionist movement. Anthony Benezet was an avid abolitionist publisher, which tied into his efforts of providing black children quality educations in his community.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade reached its peak in the middle of the eighteenth century, with approximately 75,000 slaves entering the Americas each year.⁵³ Throughout the duration of the trade, approximately 10 million slaves entered the Americas, though only about half a million were sent to the United States.⁵⁴ Slavery in the British colonies, which later became the United States, made up a small percentage of the total number of slaves that came to the Americas. Although the percentage of slaves entering the British mainland colonies was lower than elsewhere in the Americas, slavery still strongly affected the region. Within the British colonies in North America, slavery existed in every state, but the northern states tended to have more domestic and urban slaves while the south focused on obtaining labor for their crop production.⁵⁵ The two significant locations for slave labor in the British mainland colonies were in the

⁵³ Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xvi.

⁵⁴ Klein, 47.

⁵⁵ Klein, 44-45.

Chesapeake Bay region and the southern colonies of Georgia and South Carolina.⁵⁶ The center of this study, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was not a major slave society, though slavery still existed.

The population of African Americans fluctuated in Philadelphia during the American Revolution. Because there exists no census for early Philadelphia, it is difficult to estimate the black population of the city. Through the middle of the century, the majority of blacks in Philadelphia were slaves; for example, in 1723, the population in Philadelphia was approximately 6,500, with 650 being black, and by the middle of the century, the population was about 13,000 with about 1,000 of that total being black.⁵⁷ During the first half of the eighteenth century, the majority of African Americans in Philadelphia were slaves, but that changed during the latter half of the century.⁵⁸ During the American Revolution, the overall black population in Philadelphia declined. However, after the war, between 1780 and 1790, the African American population doubled from 1,000 to 2,000, with less than one percent of the African Americans in the city enslaved.⁵⁹ As a result, “The city had the first large free black community in the colonies.”⁶⁰ The shift in the black community within Philadelphia during the eighteenth century resulted in a large free community, which sparked efforts by the Quakers, with Benezet at the forefront, to help African Americans thrive in Philadelphia. The increase in the population of free African Americans at the end of the eighteenth century is likely due to the 1780 Gradual Abolition Act. This act was “the first extensive abolition legislation in the western

⁵⁶ Klein, 44.

⁵⁷ John C. Van Horne, “The Education of African Americans in Benjamin Franklin’s Philadelphia,” from *“The Good Education of Youth”: Worlds of Learning in The Age of Franklin*, ed. John H. Pollack, (Oak Knoll Press/ University of Pennsylvania Libraries, 2009), 73.

⁵⁸ Van Horne, 73.

⁵⁹ Van Horne, 73.

⁶⁰ Van Horne, 73.

hemisphere,”⁶¹ and it was designed to slowly abolish slavery in Pennsylvania. The following excerpt outlines the primary goal of the act:

Be it enacted and it is hereby enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met and by the Authority of the same, That all Persons, as well Negroes, and Mulattos, as others, who shall be born within this State, from and after the Passing of this Act, shall not be deemed and considered as Servants for Life or Slaves; and that all Servitude for Life or Slavery of Children in Consequence of the Slavery of their Mothers, in the Case of all Children born within this State from and after the passing of this Act as aforesaid, shall be, an hereby is, utterly taken away, extinguished and for ever abolished.⁶²

The issue of slaves being enslaved for life was challenged in this document. While slavery did not end all at once, the act gave time frames as to when slaves needed to be freed. The act included certain ages at which slaves needed to be freed depending on their status at the time of the act. While this act did not abolish slavery entirely, it was the first legal effort in the states to abolish slavery and perhaps shows the influence Quakers had on Pennsylvania.

Due to the low percentage of slaves in Philadelphia, the city was a society with slaves rather than a slave society. The terms “society with slaves” and “slave society” are widely used to differentiate the dependence of a certain region on the institution of slavery and the likelihood of a slave eventually being freed.⁶³ Historian Ira Berlin elaborates on the concept of slave societies and societies with slaves in his book *Generations of Captivity*. Societies with slaves are areas where slavery was not driven by money, such as on plantations. As a result, societies with slaves offered more opportunities for African Americans, “and the line between slave and free

⁶¹ “Gradual Abolition act of 1780,” *George Washington’s Mount Vernon*, <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/gradual-abolition-act-of-1780/#:~:text=The%20Gradual%20Abolition%20Act%20of,without%20making%20slavery%20immediately%20ill%20egal>.

⁶² “An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery – March 1, 1780,” *Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission*, <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/documents/1776-1865/abolition-slavery.html>.

⁶³ Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: a History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6.

could be remarkably fluid.”⁶⁴ On the other hand, there were slave societies. This term is used for societies that relied heavily on slave labor, and “slavery stood at the center of economic production.”⁶⁵ Since Philadelphia was a society with slaves, the community was less dependent on slavery for economic purposes and was more likely to support an abolitionist group such as the Quakers.

The abolition movement emerged as “organized antislavery” by the end of the eighteenth century.⁶⁶ The Quakers were a significant group that advocated for the end of slavery within Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, was not a firm abolitionist, but he did support the kinder treatment of both African Americans and Native Americans.⁶⁷ The concept of treating others with kindness was a foundational idea for the Quaker Society of Friends in Philadelphia. Recognized as the first document expressing opposition to slavery published by a religious group in the British colonies, the “Germantown Friends’ Protest Against Slavery, 1688” marked the beginning of the public Quaker abolition movement.⁶⁸ This document made compelling arguments and stances held by the Quakers concerning the inhumane practice of slavery. The protest urged Christians to not own slaves and asserted that the color of a person’s skin was not a determining factor for how they should be treated.⁶⁹ The Quakers laid out their views of slavery within the protest to urge others to distance themselves from the slave trade.

⁶⁴ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: a History of African-American Slaves*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 8.

⁶⁵ Berlin, 9.

⁶⁶ Drescher, x.

⁶⁷ Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2016), 13.

⁶⁸ “Germantown Quaker Petition Against Slavery,” *National Park Service*.
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/quakerpetition.htm>

⁶⁹ “Germantown Friends’ Protest Against Slavery, 1688”, *Library of Congress*,
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.14000200/?st=text>.

In addition to the Germantown Petition, Pennsylvania housed anti-slavery organizations such as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society was an influential group that began in 1775 under the name “Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage.”⁷⁰ After the American Revolution, in 1784, Anthony Benezet urged the society to regroup.⁷¹ The society renamed itself in 1787 as the “Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of Free Negroes, Unlawfully Held in Bondage.”⁷² The president of the society at that time was Benjamin Franklin. The Constitution laid out the group’s goal of abolition, including the requirements for membership, which prohibited members from owning slaves.⁷³ With Benjamin Franklin, a notable member of early America, this society and Constitution demonstrated the importance of abolitionism in Pennsylvania.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade ended in 1808 when the United States and Britain both passed laws banning the slave trade.⁷⁴ Although the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was prohibited, slaves’ freedom came slowly throughout the following century as the domestic slave trade continued within the United States. Domestic trade continued and expanded, to meet the demand of the south’s plantation slave societies. The domestic slave trade, known as the Second Middle Passage, resulted in millions of slaves being sold throughout the South to support the demand for new slave labor.⁷⁵ Even though the Trans-Atlantic slave trade ended, slavery was still a major concern in the early nineteenth century. While the American Revolution offered some

⁷⁰ Paul J. Polgar, *Standard-Bearers of Equality: America’s First Abolition Movement* (Williamsburg, Virginia: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 52.

⁷¹ Polgar, 52.

⁷² Polgar, 53.

⁷³ “The Constitution of the Pennsylvania Society, for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.” April, 23, 1787, Swarthmore College, Sw09-A0010620, 7.

⁷⁴ Sinha, 103.

⁷⁵ Berlin, 131.

opportunities for the enslaved as they joined in both the Continental Army and the British Army, and while some opportunities for freedom existed, full freedom for African Americans in the United States did not come until the post-Civil War when the 13th amendment was ratified in 1865, which officially made slavery within the United States illegal.⁷⁶

The eighteenth century marked a period of educational reform in Philadelphia for its free African American population. Several individuals and organizations worked to create a more equal education system in Philadelphia to help its free black community succeed in life outside of slavery. Three individuals in Philadelphia had plans to open schools for black people, but their efforts did not come to fruition. Samuel Keimer, a printer from London, planned to create a school for the black population in Philadelphia so they could learn how to read in order to read the Bible.⁷⁷ Keimer created an advertisement in 1723 for his school, but it is not known whether or not the school ever began due to “virtually no surviving evidence of Keimer’s educational venture.”⁷⁸ In 1740 George Whitefield, an “English revivalist preacher,” had high hopes of creating a location for educating African Americans in Philadelphia. He bought a large plot of land, which he named Nazareth, where he planned to create a school for African Americans and to resettle Moravians from Georgia, but similar to Keimer’s plan, the school was never created.⁷⁹ Records also suggest Robert Bolton showed intent to integrate his school of dance in 1740 in Pennsylvania, but similar to the other proposals to teach black students, there is no evidence that Bolton ever fulfilled his proposal of integrating his school.⁸⁰ Although records are limited, there were some attempts and intentions to teach black students.

⁷⁶ Drescher, 125.

⁷⁷ Van Horne, 74-76.

⁷⁸ Van Horne, 75-76.

⁷⁹ Van Horne, 77.

⁸⁰ Van Horne, 78-79.

Organizations within Philadelphia worked to improve the opportunities available to the free black population in the region and help them gain improved educational opportunities. But it was the Pennsylvania Abolition Society that made the first concrete steps toward addressing the education of the Black community. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society founded the Committee for Improving the Conditions of the Free Blacks in 1789 to create schools for free black students.⁸¹ These efforts reveal a public desire in the eighteenth century to improve the conditions of the free black population in Philadelphia. With a large free black population in the city by the mid to late eighteenth century, the founding of abolition was beneficial to the increased opportunities to the minority population in Philadelphia.

One of the earliest and most successful groups to provide education to the African population in Philadelphia was the Quaker Society of Friends. The Quakers in Philadelphia created a committee in 1770 to determine the best course of action for providing the black population in the city with educational opportunities. Anthony Benezet was a central figure in this committee. He attended most of the meetings during his lifetime. The Quakers kept excellent minutes throughout the meetings labeled “Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating Africans and their descendants.”⁸² The school that resulted from the committee’s meetings in 1770, called the Negro School, provided quality education to black children in Philadelphia. Benezet taught at the Negro School from 1782 until his death in 1784.⁸³ He was an advocate for African American education, and through the establishment of the Negro School,

⁸¹ Polgar, 139.

⁸² *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.*

⁸³ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (May 8, 1784), 48, 68.

the Quakers hoped to show others throughout the colonies that black students were as capable as white students of achieving academic success if given the proper opportunities.⁸⁴

While the Quakers were advocates for the abolition movement, they still exhibited viewpoints that limited their ability to provide truly equal educational opportunities to African Americans. Anthony Benezet argued that the African continent had cultures prior to European contact, but he also describes that these cultures varied throughout the region, and some areas had more advanced cultures while others were more “barbarous.”⁸⁵ By describing that some regions in Africa were “barbarous,” Benezet asserts that not all of Africa was equal in his mind. He also described that Africans were capable of improvement through Christianization efforts, which suggests that the education of African Americans may have been dependent on their conversion to Quakerism. Specifically, Benezet discusses that bringing Christianity to Africa would help Africans improve their society in the same way that Europeans did.⁸⁶ By tying Christianity to a sense of betterment for African Americans, Benezet displayed his limitation of centering African American education around religion.

Native American Education: Assimilation and Christianization

Native Americans were another non-European group of people that the colonists began to provide education. However, Native American education in early America was traditionally seen as a way to Christianize and “improve” the lives of Native communities. The idea of “improvement” was placed upon the Native Americans by the European colonists. The aim of Native American education in the colonies was based largely on imposing European culture and

⁸⁴ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (December, 25, 1773), 38.

The minutes explicitly stated that the Quakers were hopeful that surrounding areas would use their methods of teaching African Americans to provide more education to the group.

⁸⁵ Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*, 1766-1767, 93.

⁸⁶ Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, 149.

beliefs onto Native Americans. Margaret Connell Szasz's book *Indian Education in The American Colonies, 1607-1783*, focuses on various ways in which Native Americans were educated in Colonial America and how that education was designed to change their cultures. In describing the way the colonists viewed education for Native Americans, Szasz states, "Schoolmasters reasoned that if these youth could be taught to read and write, to cipher, to comprehend the Bible, and to change their ways accordingly, they might teach their own people to do likewise."⁸⁷ Szasz views the movement to educate Native Americans as being rooted in a desire to fundamentally change the Native American's ways of life. While the colonial schoolmasters might have viewed their actions as bettering the Native American communities, their motives were rooted in a desire to change the Native Americans to better align with European views.

Szasz described Native American education prior to European contact to show the ways in which Native American communities educated their children. Szasz argues that Native American education, pre-contact, focused on "survival training," "Knowledge of cultural Heritage," and "Spiritual Awareness."⁸⁸ In other words, Native American children did not lack education. However, their education did not look the same as European education. Native American children learned what was important to them and their communities as they grew up. Likewise, European children learned what was valuable to their culture. Both cultures provided their children with educations based on cultural standards. The colonization period of North America resulted in a clash of cultures on many levels, including education.

⁸⁷ Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 4.

⁸⁸ Szasz, 12-15.

While the Quakers proved to be instrumental in the education of minority groups in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, they were not exempt from seeking to differentiate themselves from Native Americans. Like other European colonists, the Quakers found themselves focused on religion as a way to change the cultures of the Native Americans who inhabited North America before they arrived. As a religious organization, the Quakers were heavily involved in bringing religion into most of their endeavors, and education was no exception. The Quakers went about educating Native Americans in a variety of ways. Some Native American children were sent to Quaker schools, with Quaker children, and others were educated by Quakers living in Native American communities.⁸⁹ The Federal government took an assimilation approach to educating Native Americans, and the Quakers were willing participants in this movement.⁹⁰ Similar to other groups, the Quakers fell into the general method of trying to change the Native American's ways of life to better assimilate them to the European lifestyle and culture. The Quakers pushed their views on the Native Americans, including their views of gender roles. While the Quakers were advocating for women to have increased educational opportunities, they were entering Native American communities and pushing gender divides on the indigenous population. The boys were taught agriculture, building techniques, and academic skills, while the girls focused more on domestic skills such as spinning and soap making.⁹¹ Although the Quakers were implementing these gender divides into Native American communities, Quaker schools like Benezet's girl's school were providing female students with academic skills such as reading and

⁸⁹ Barbara Heather and Marianne O. Nielsen, "Quaker ideology, colonialism and American Indian education," *Culture and Religion* 14, no. 3 (2013): 293.

⁹⁰ Heather and Nielsen, 293.

⁹¹ Heather and Nielson, 296-297.

Karim M. Tiro, "'We Wish to Do You Good': The Quaker Mission to the Oneida Nation, 1790-1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26 (2006): 368.

writing. The Quaker's approach to Native American education contradicted their own educational practices for girls in their own community.

While the Quaker's motives might have had the well-being of the Native Americans in mind, their actions were to change the cultures of their local Native American tribes. Anthony Benezet, while not an educator of Native Americans himself, wrote about his opinions on Native Americans. His 1784 publication, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, described his views on Native Americans. Throughout his publication, Benezet argued that the Native Americans were kind people and deserved improved treatment. However, his religious standing as a Quaker also made clear that he urged the teaching of Christianity to the Native Americans in order to make them fit into the culture of the colonists. Benezet largely followed the same beliefs as others in the eighteenth century that Native Americans should accept Christianity and assimilate to a different culture. Anthony Benezet and the Quakers made strides in challenging the education system for women and African Americans, but their views on Native American education followed the generally accepted beliefs of Anglo superiority.

Methods and Historiography

Education in the colonies grew very slowly from a system designed exclusively for wealthy white male students to one that included minorities and women. Although this thesis focuses on the rise in education in eighteenth-century Philadelphia, the Quakers in Philadelphia were ahead of their time, and other regions did not allow adequate access to school until much later. The eighteenth century saw a rise in educational endeavors, and schools became more widely available to children in the early nineteenth century.⁹² But as Parkerson and Parkerson in

⁹² Parkerson and Parkerson, 40
Kaestle, 62.

Transitions in American Education note, “As the common schools blossomed during the 1800s and provided an education for hundreds of thousands of white children, African Americans, enslaved or free, often did without.”⁹³ Therefore, the Quakers in eighteenth-century Philadelphia do not fall into the traditional historiography of colonial education. In many cases, they are an outlier. They were an example of a group of people doing what they believed was right rather than following the values of surrounding colonies.

Although there were small attempts to provide black children with educations, the Quakers were among the most notable with Anthony Benezet’s Negro School in Philadelphia as well as other Quaker schools, including Rhode Island, Boston, and New York.⁹⁴ The movement towards a more inclusive education system began with small localized schools.

This thesis utilized several primary sources such as minutes from Quaker meetings, letters, and publications by notable Quaker Anthony Benezet. Together, these sources provide valuable context to the way in which Quakers viewed the educational system within the colonies, and sources written by Quakers show first-hand the educational shift in Philadelphia.

Anthony Benezet’s writings form the core of primary sources for this thesis. Benezet was an avid writer, and much of his writing related to education. His other writings promoted abolition and equal treatment of minority populations, such as African Americans and Native Americans. Additionally, Benezet was instrumental in bringing educational opportunities to each of these groups. Therefore, his writings provide a basis for explaining the shift in educational opportunities available to women, Africans, and Native Americans in Quaker Philadelphia.

⁹³ Parkerson and Parkerson, 40.

⁹⁴ Parkerson and Parkerson, 79-80.

The Quakers were among the earliest to provide education to minorities, although there were other sporadic attempts to educate minorities around the same time including a French immigrant, Alias Neau who taught slaves in his home in the early 1700s.

In addition to abolitionist writings, Anthony Benezet wrote books for children that introduced basic grammar lessons. These books include *A First Book For Children*,⁹⁵ published in 1778, and *The Pennsylvania spelling-book, or Youth's friendly instructor and monitor*,⁹⁶ published in 1782. These books were designed to give children access to basic educational concepts without necessarily having to be in school. By writing books that children could read, even if not in school, Benezet showed his dedication to making education more widely available in his community.

A specific source that is valuable in the shift in education for African Americans is the *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*.⁹⁷ This minute book is located in the Haverford College Quaker and Special Collections. These minutes from the committee formed in 1770 are used here to determine how the Quakers created a successful school for a distinct minority group in Philadelphia. They provide an extremely valuable resource for tracing the development of African American education. The book is a collection of minutes from Quaker meetings that were called to create a school for black children in Philadelphia. Anthony Benezet attended these meetings, which further shows his direct involvement with educational reform in the colonies. The minutes provide valuable information from the creation of the school to the content that was taught within the Negro School that the committee created.

⁹⁵ Anthony Benezet, *A First Book For Children* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by J. Crukshank, 1778).

⁹⁶ Anthony Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book or Youth's Friendly Instructor and Monitor* Third-Edition (Providence, Rhode-Island: Printed by Bennett Wheeler for Caleb Greene, 1782).

⁹⁷ *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (October 11, 1770), 11-12.

Anthony Benezet wrote less about women's education and lacked a full publication on the subject matter as he did with African Americans and Native Americans. Despite the lack of sources from Anthony Benezet on the issue of female education, a letter from one of his students provides valuable insight into the Girl's School that he taught at. Deborah Logan was a student of Anthony Benezet when he taught at the Girl's School. Logan laid out a detailed description of her experience at the school. Her account provides valuable information regarding the structure of the school. Within her letter, she described an example of the curriculum and how the girls would write a paper and have Benezet correct it. The girls would then revise their work accordingly.⁹⁸ This process of revision shows that the girls were held to high standards in their writing. Her letter is also written in a professional and academically correct manner, which demonstrates how the school helped her develop her writing skills to use later in life. In addition to her account of the curriculum at the Girl's School, throughout her letter, Logan described her admiration for her teacher. Not only was Benezet a teacher to Deborah Logan, but he was also a role model and someone that she admired.

Although Anthony Benezet did publish one piece on native education in 1784, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, Native American education did not stray from the status-quo of assimilation. Therefore, the Quakers followed the general narrative of Native American education rather than standing out for their progressive achievements like they did with women and African American education. Nonetheless, secondary literature on Anthony Benezet is overwhelmingly positive concerning his goal of providing education to anyone who needed it in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania.

⁹⁸ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, 1825, quoted in Brookes.

Historians examining Anthony Benezet's life tend to focus on the significant aspects of his life. Whether the focus is on what influenced him, how he got his information, or how he directed his printed materials at various audiences, historians have tended to examine specific aspects of Benezet's life rather than combine all of his life's work into a complete narrative. Benezet lived a multidimensional life as he was an educator, an abolitionist, a historian, and a Quaker. Authors of secondary material concerning Anthony Benezet typically choose a few elements of his life around which they focus their research. Whether the historians look at his educational or abolitionist legacy, or if they look at his religious or historical contributions, historians agree that Anthony Benezet left a lasting imprint on the eighteenth-century abolition movement in America and Europe.

Maurice Jackson is a historian who focused on Benezet's life. Jackson's 2009 book *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism*, and his 1999 article "The Social and Intellectual Origins of Anthony Benezet's Antislavery Radicalism" focus on the abolitionist dimension of Benezet's life. Jackson's article argues that Benezet got his abolitionist inspiration from the Enlightenment and further influenced the abolitionist movement in this way.⁹⁹ *Let This Voice Be Heard* focuses on the work that Benezet did throughout his life towards improving the lives of Africans. One central theme of Jackson's book is how Benezet reached out to multiple groups of people in his abolitionist writings to create a transatlantic effort, including America, England, and France, to stop the slave trade.¹⁰⁰

Numerous other books and articles depict various aspects of Benezet's life, though they typically focus on only one aspect of Benezet's very diverse pursuits. Some of the key articles

⁹⁹ Maurice Jackson, "The Social and Intellectual Origins of Anthony Benezet's Antislavery Radicalism," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 66 (1999): 91.

¹⁰⁰ Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), xiv.

include Irv A. Brendlinger's 2006 book, *To Be Silent... Would Be Criminal: Antislavery Influence and Writings of Anthony Benezet*, Nancy Slocum Hornick's 1975 article "Anthony Benezet and the Africans' School: Toward a Theory of Full Equality," and Jonathan D. Sassi's 2011 article "With a Little Help from the Friends: The Quaker and Tactical Contexts of Anthony Benezet's Abolitionist Publishing." Each of these sources focuses on one aspect of Benezet's life, such as publishing or education. This thesis, however, attempts to synthesize several sources to provide a more robust narrative of Benezet's many accomplishments.

George S. Brookes' 1937 book *Friend Anthony Benezet* focuses on Anthony Benezet's life as a whole, including his work with women, Africans, and Native Americans. One key aspect of this book is the inclusion of letters written by, to, and about Anthony. These primary sources provided a starting point for this research. While this book is valuable in understanding the logistics and timeline of Benezet's career, it is biased and praises Benezet in all aspects of his life. Benezet did accomplish many great things and helped to shift the educational system of his community, but he also fell short in regards to Native American education by focusing primarily on assimilation and Christianization. Brookes' book does not highlight this issue, which is likely a reflection of the time in which he published the book. With increased examination into Benezet's life, it is clear that he approached Native American education with religious motives. Although Benezet deserves praise in his work with women and Africans, he still attempted to place European culture onto social groups that had complex cultures of their own. Secondary sources describe Benezet's kindness to all people, including Native Americans. The work that Benezet did for the education of various minority groups is undoubtedly noteworthy and deserving of attention. However, his focus on the assimilation of Native Americans to European religions and culture should be addressed more thoroughly when analyzing Benezet's life.

Intended Purpose

The Quaker's actions regarding education during the eighteenth century show their ability to think beyond traditional views of education. In Philadelphia, the Quakers established schools for women and African Americans that challenged societal views that the two groups were not capable of the same levels of intellectual thought as white male children. In their efforts to rethink the structure of early American education, the Quakers showed an alternative to traditional methods of education.

In an effort to show how the Quakers restructured and rethought education during the eighteenth century, this thesis follows the increased educational opportunities for three groups traditionally denied formal education: women, African Americans, and Native Americans. Women and African Americans saw an increase in educational opportunities while living in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. Anthony Benezet was instrumental in bringing new educational opportunities to women and African Americans. The third group examined, Native Americans, did not see the same level of educational reform as women and African Americans. While Anthony Benezet, and other Quakers, advocated for peaceful relations with indigenous people, their education followed a path of Christianization motives and attempts to Europeanize the group.

This thesis is not intended to be a complete history of the education of minorities in colonial America; rather, it provides an example of one group of people, the Quakers, and their desire to provide equal educational opportunities to women and minorities. The work of Anthony Benezet is central to the contents of this thesis. Benezet's writings on the issue of education are the primary sources for this thesis, along with documentation concerning the curriculum of the

schools at which he taught. Examining the life of one individual and his work for traditionally marginalized groups serves to show the impact one individual had on their community.

This thesis uses secondary literature and primary sources to expand on and challenge preexisting historiography on Anthony Benezet and colonial education. Specifically, it relies on primary sources related to the curriculum and structure of the Girls' School and Negro School that Benezet was instrumental in establishing and running. These sources elaborate on the structure of the schools he supported, in comparison with education for women and Africans in early America as a whole. Many secondary sources focus on just one aspect of Anthony Benezet's life. Instead of focusing solely on Benezet's impact on abolition or on education, this thesis combines several aspects of Benezet's life to highlight educational change. Comparing Benezet's schools to the education system as a whole for women and minorities shows the uniqueness of Benezet's approach. In addition, this thesis challenges the way Benezet is often held in high regard in secondary literature for his work with Native Americans. Although Benezet did advocate for the education of Native Americans, the Quaker community as a whole, including Benezet, focused a significant amount of their efforts on Christianizing the Native Americans rather than bringing them quality educations. By seeking to change the ways Native Americans lived, Benezet fell into the general view held by the government of assimilating and Christianizing natives.¹⁰¹ By highlighting Benezet's successes and his flaws, this thesis shows how Benezet broke social barriers in some respects yet followed established social views in others.

By examining early efforts to restructure the education system in early America, this thesis shows the moments in which women and minorities gained improved educational

¹⁰¹ Barbara Heather and Marianne O. Nielsen, 293.

opportunities. Although the efforts made by the Quakers were only the beginning of education reform to provide *all* children with quality education, it was a notable first step. The Quakers in eighteenth-century Philadelphia represent a unique community in early America where educational standards were challenges, and a more inclusive system was created.

CHAPTER I

ANTHONY BENEZET: ABOLITIONIST AND EDUCATOR

Anthony Benezet (1713-1784) was one of the most influential Quakers in the eighteenth-century movement to provide better educational opportunities to women and minority groups. Benezet developed a reputation for his kindness. He centered his life around improving the conditions for those less fortunate than himself by providing them with educational opportunities. During the eighteenth century, Benezet published numerous documents showing the injustices suffered by minority groups in the British American colonies. These groups included both African Americans and Native Americans. For example, Anthony Benezet published numerous abolitionist writings that highlighted African American cultures before they became slaves in the Americas. To further his commitment towards helping less fortunate groups, Benezet taught at and helped create both a school for girls and a school for black children in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These schools provided these children with quality educations. Through his roles as an abolitionist and an educator, Anthony Benezet paved the way for a more inclusive society in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania.

Benezet's compassion for living creatures was not limited to people. He was also a vegetarian due to his respect for animals. In the book, *Memoirs of The Life of Anthony Benezet*, published in 1817, thirty-one years after Benezet's death to commemorate his life, Roberts Vaux wrote, "The sympathies of his nature extended to everything that was susceptible of feeling, in so much that he avoided the use of animal food during several of the last years of his life."¹⁰²

¹⁰² Roberts Vaux, *Memoirs of The Life of Anthony Benezet* (Philadelphia: Merritt, Printer, 1817), 142. Roberts Vaux was an education activist whose organization, the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Public Economy, helped pass the Philadelphia school law of 1818 to create a public school system in Philadelphia. Joseph J. McCadden, "Roberts Vaux and His Associates in The Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Public Schools," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 3, no. 1, (January 1936): 15.

Benezet's most remarkable characteristic was his kindness. Even after his death, Benezet was regarded highly for his compassion and caring nature towards all living creatures.

Anthony Benezet was not a native of Philadelphia, where the bulk of his career took place. Benezet was born in France in 1713 into a Huguenot family. His family fled from persecution when he was only two years old and then settled in London, England, where they joined a Quaker community. This contact with the Quakers marked the beginning of Anthony Benezet's involvement with the Quakers. When Anthony Benezet was eighteen, his family moved to Philadelphia, where he became involved with the Quakers in America.¹⁰³ Anthony Benezet became a leading member of the Quaker Society of Friends in the Philadelphia area. He attended meetings and published documents that expressed his devotion to the religion and quickly became one of the most outspoken Quakers on issues of injustices. Anthony Benezet made it his mission to educate and advocate for the less-fortunate in eighteenth-century America.

Anthony Benezet's abolitionist writing used his unique style of humanizing the African population to show that they deserved kindness and respect. His publications aimed to highlight Africans' cultural characteristics prior to being enslaved. By highlighting the structure of African culture and showing the atrocities of the European slave trade, Benezet made compelling arguments for a complete end to slavery. While other Quakers also called for complete abolition during the eighteenth century, Benezet's ability to humanize Africans in his publications made him one of the most influential early abolitionists in the American Colonies.

In his writings, Benezet used first-hand accounts of people who visited Africa. He believed that first-hand accounts of Africa humanized the African population by showing their societal structures and values prior to European contact. Benezet's publication *A Short Account*

¹⁰³ Brendlinger, 9.

of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes, published in 1762, pulled from the English, French, and Dutch in Guinea to provide eyewitness accounts of African “To confute these false representations.”¹⁰⁴ Benezet relied on travel narratives in his writing to show how Africans behaved prior to being brought to America in bondage. The narratives were written from European perspectives, which created biases, yet Benezet used these travel narratives to appeal to his readers and to start conversations about African cultures.

In *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes*, Benezet used these first-hand accounts to contradict the belief “that the Negroes are generally a stupid, savage people, whose situation in their own country is necessitous and unhappy, which has induced many to believe that the bringing them from their native land is rather a kindness than an injury.”¹⁰⁵ Instead, Benezet showed “that the *Negroes* are generally a sensible, humane, and sociable people, and that their capacity is as good and as capable of improvement as that of the whites.”¹⁰⁶ One of Benezet’s central themes was that the Africans lived a fulfilling life before European contact. As stated, Benezet believed that African Americans had mental capabilities greater than they were given credit for. In addition, in his work, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, published in 1771, Benezet stated, “Hence it appears they might have lived happy if not disturbed by the Europeans.”¹⁰⁷ The fact that African Americans had a fulfilling life in their home country and that they were not “saved” by the European slave trade was central to Anthony Benezet’s abolition writing. By showing that African Americans had complex societies and values prior to being forced into slavery, Benezet made an argument for their freedom.

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Benezet, *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes*, 1762, in Crosby, David L. *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: an Annotated Critical edition* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 30.

¹⁰⁵ Benezet, 30.

¹⁰⁶ Benezet, *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes*, 30.

¹⁰⁷ Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, 119.

Besides merely showing that African Americans had a culture and lifestyle of their own before being sold into slavery, Benezet sought to show them as human beings who deserved to be treated with compassion and respect. In his document “An Epistle of Caution and Advice Concerning the Buying and Keeping of Slaves” in 1754, Benezet stated, “many of these poor creatures are stolen away, parents from children and children from parents, and others who were in good circumstances in their native country, inhumanly torn from what they esteemed a happy situation and compelled to toil in a state of slavery, too often extremely cruel!”¹⁰⁸ By highlighting the humanity of African Americans, Benezet showed a more personal analysis of how cruel the slave trade was for the inhabitants of Africa. Humanizing African Americans was a crucial step to ending the transatlantic slave trade, and Benezet showed them as humans who deserved kindness rather than as property to be bought and sold.

Benezet’s desire to help minority groups extended beyond the African American community. He also advocated that Native Americans should receive better treatment and improved opportunities. In the same way that he advocated for African Americans, Benezet strove to show the true nature of the Native Americans prior to European contact. An important view held by Benezet was that the Native Americans, just like black slaves, lived fulfilling lives before being disturbed by European settlers. In his work, *Some Observations on the Situation, Disposition, and Character of the Indian Natives of This Continent*, published in 1784, Benezet stated, “Some writers have represented Indians as naturally ferocious, treacherous, and ungrateful, and endeavoured to establish this character of them...but no conclusion of their original character should be drawn from instances in which they have been provoked, to a degree

¹⁰⁸ Anthony Benezet, “An Epistle of Caution and Advice, etc. From our Yearly Meeting for the Provinces of Pennsylvania and New Jerseys, Held at Burlington by Adjournments From the 14th Day of the Ninth Month, 1754, to the 19th of the same inclusive,” in Crosby, David L. *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: an Annotated Critical edition* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 8-9.

of fury and vengeance, by unjust and cruel treatment from European Aggressors.”¹⁰⁹ Through his writing, Benezet showed that the Native Americans should not be judged based on accounts written by Europeans who had encroached on the natives’ land. By shifting the blame of poor relations onto the Europeans rather than the natives, Benezet demonstrated that the Native Americans were reacting to a negative situation. Therefore, the Native Americans, in Benezet’s opinion, were not to blame for the poor relationships between the two groups. Similar to his publications on African Americans, Benezet’s work concerning Native Americans showed a humane side to the group and argued that the European settlers were central to the conflicts between the two groups. His writings on Native Americans attempted to help create a positive narrative that showed them as human beings who deserved equal treatment and opportunities. Anthony Benezet’s work for African Americans and Native Americans was designed to humanize traditionally marginalized groups in colonial America’s imagination. Benezet’s approach was unique for the eighteenth century, but Benezet was committed to the idea that the color of someone’s skin was not a deciding factor of humanity.

While Benezet did focus on treating Native Americans with kindness, his religious biases are exposed in his writings. As a Quaker, religion was central to Benezet’s approach to education. However, in the case of Native Americans, his religious biases are more pronounced. Throughout *Some Observations on the Situation, Disposition, and Character of the Indian Natives of This Continent*, Benezet described the importance of bringing religion to the Native Americans.¹¹⁰ As a result, Benezet’s views on Native American education fell in line with

¹⁰⁹ Benezet, *Some Observations on the Situation, Disposition, and Character of the Indian Natives of This Continent*, 116.

¹¹⁰ Benezet’s mission to bring religion to the Native Americans contradicts his upbringing. He was born into a Huguenot family that fled from religious persecution before joining the Quakers. However, as a Quaker, he tried to do a similar thing by putting religion at the forefront of his educational endeavors with the Native Americans. Brendlinger, 9.

European views that education for Native Americans should focus on assimilation instead of simply reading and writing.¹¹¹ Although Benezet advocated for the kind treatment of Native Americans, his views on their education did not stray from the status quo.

The central way in which Anthony Benezet supported minorities and women was through education. Benezet focused his energy on educating those who were often excluded from traditional education due to the nature of the educational system in colonial America. Benezet believed that everyone deserved an education regardless of gender, race, or social status. He attributed the differences within society to the differences in educational opportunities that were available to each group. Benezet stated, “it is evident, that the natural disposition of the Indians has generally been to shew kindness to the Europeans, in their early settlements; and that their mental powers are equally with our own capable of improvement; that the apparent difference in them, as well as in the Black People and us, arises principally from the advantages of our education, and maner of life.”¹¹² In his writings, Benezet showed that African Americans and Native Americans were not given the same educational opportunities as Europeans in the Americas and argued that the circumstances should change. By highlighting the inequalities between the education provided to white children and minority children, Benezet highlighted his mission to close the educational gap between the two groups.

In order to provide better home education for children who may have been unable to attend school, Benezet published two educational textbooks to teach basic skills to students. In 1778 he published *A First Book for Children*, which included the alphabet and lists of simple words for children to learn at home.¹¹³ The book also included religious writing and Bible verses.

¹¹¹ Szasz, 4.

¹¹² Benezet, *Some Observations on the Situation, Disposition, and Character of the Indian Natives of This Continent*, 113.

¹¹³ Benezet, *A First Book For Children*.

A First Book for Children connected Anthony Benezet's desire for all children to receive a proper education with his Quaker background by spreading knowledge of both basic educational material and religious text. In 1782 Benezet published *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book* to further assist in at-home education. Benezet himself described the book as "an early PLAN, for exciting the Attention, and facilitating the Instruction of Children and others, in Spelling and Reading... More particularly calculated for the Use of Parents', Gaurdians and others, remote from Schools; in the private Tuition of their Children..."¹¹⁴ This book was designed for students to use at home to form a more extensive understanding of educational material. By giving parents the tools necessary to help their children, Benezet made education more attainable to a broader group of children. Benezet also made clear in the preface of this book that the purpose was to provide education to children, not to gain profits on the publication. He stated, "My design in this publication, being to render the instruction of youth as early as possible, without the least view of pecuniary advantage to myself."¹¹⁵ Benezet's goal in the publication of this book for children was on the education of the youth and providing quality educational material to a wide audience of children. *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book* contained a much more extensive list of words to learn than what was provided in *A First Book for Children*. *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book* also included Biblical lessons for students. A history section was included in the book titled "A Short Account of the Progress and Effects of the PLAGUE, the last Time it Spread in the City of LONDON."¹¹⁶ This section described an event in history to help students practice reading and comprehension as well as to provide a history lesson. The book also included poems and stories. *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book* was designed to help students learn the basics of reading and

¹¹⁴ Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, title page.

¹¹⁵ Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, 104.

writing and to provide them with opportunities to practice those skills with the inclusion of passages and poems. By creating educational textbooks that were available to children, Benezet made education a more feasible option for students who may not have had the ability to attend schools in the colonies.

Anthony Benezet's career as an educator was divided between several different schools. He began his career in a fairly traditional school setting and taught at the William Penn Charter School from 1742 to 1754, which was open to the poor from the beginning of its creation.¹¹⁷ At this school, Benezet offered a more gentle method of teaching than what was common at the time. Historian George S Brookes described Benezet's teaching style as "The Gentle Schoolmaster" and as "a believer in loving-kindness, practising gentleness and love at a time when school discipline was exceedingly severe."¹¹⁸ Brookes described that punishment, such as whipping and flogging in schools, was not uncommon during the eighteenth century.¹¹⁹ However, according to Brookes, Benezet strayed away from traditional physical punishments in his classrooms, which resulted in his characterization as a compassionate educator.¹²⁰ Brookes provided an example of two students bringing a mouse into Benezet's classroom with a note about how the mouse had stolen some cheese. Instead of punishing the boys, he used it as an opportunity to praise the boys for putting the mouse in confinement rather than killing it for stealing cheese.¹²¹ It is common for descriptions of Anthony Benezet to be centered around his kindness and genuine desire to educate children. He stayed at the William Penn Charter School

¹¹⁷ George S. Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, (Philadelphia: Oxford University Press, 1937), 33.

¹¹⁸ Brookes, 31.

¹¹⁹ Brookes, 31.

¹²⁰ Brookes, 33.

¹²¹ Brookes, 34.

for twelve years before leaving in 1754 to pursue less traditional means of providing quality education to the youth of Pennsylvania.¹²²

When he left the William Penn Charter School, Benezet shifted his focus to providing quality education to girls. With insufficient educational opportunities available to girls, Benezet filled the educational gap. The school was established with the help of the Quaker Society of Friends in 1754 in Philadelphia, with encouragement from Benezet. Benezet resigned from his position at the school after his first year, allegedly due to poor health.¹²³ The exact reason for Benezet's retirement from a school in which he was instrumental in creating is unclear. Although he resigned after his first year, it was not long before Benezet returned to the school. After expressing deep regret for leaving the school, and a desire to return, Benezet secured a position at the school when another teacher left in 1757.¹²⁴ In his transition back to teaching, Anthony Benezet continued his mission of providing improved educational opportunities for girls.¹²⁵ The school provided female students with an advanced education, which drew in girls from wealthy families. In a reflection on the life of Benezet, Roberts Vaux described that Benezet "soon found himself entrusted with the education of the daughters of the most affluent and respectable inhabitants of the city."¹²⁶ As such, Benezet focused on making sure that the girls at his school received quality educations. Benezet continued teaching at the girls' school for nine years until he retired in 1766, in part due to poor health. Another factor in his retirement was his increased focus on teaching African American children.

¹²² Brookes, 37.

¹²³ Brookes, 38-39.

¹²⁴ Brookes, 39-40.

¹²⁵ Brookes, 38-40.

¹²⁶ Vaux, 7.

Anthony Benezet's final achievement in challenging the traditional educational practices in colonial America was his dedication to teaching African American children. Benezet began by teaching black children in his home as early as 1750, while he was still teaching at the William and Penn Charter School. Then, "In 1784, the thirty-five pupil institution, known informally as "Benezet's School," was the only one in Philadelphia for black students."¹²⁷ He created the first public school for black children in his community. Anthony Benezet's devotion to the education of black students was an extension of his abolitionist goals. Given the fact that abolition was not yet achieved in America when he opened his school for black children, Benezet was an extremely progressive individual in his community. He aimed to both end the slave trade entirely and to provide adequate education to the African Americans who were wrongfully enslaved in the Americas. Benezet truly believed in the capabilities of African-American students and devoted the latter part of his life to helping them advance intellectually.

Anthony Benezet died on May 3, 1784, in Philadelphia at seventy-one years old. Benezet's funeral was a testament to how many people he touched throughout his lifetime. Robert Vaux provided the following description of Benezet's funeral: "At the interment of his remains, in Friends' burial ground, which took place two days after his death, the greatest concourse of people that had ever been witnessed on such an occasion in Philadelphia, was present; being a collection of all ranks and professions among the inhabitants; thus manifesting the universal esteem in which he was held."¹²⁸ Not only was there a large attendance for Anthony Benezet's funeral, but it was also a diverse group of people. Vaux continued: "Among others who paid that last tribute of respect, were many hundred black people, testifying by their

¹²⁷ Nancy Slocum Hornick, "Anthony Benezet and the Africans' School: Toward a Theory of Full Equality," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 99, no. 4 (1975): 399, 414.

¹²⁸ Vaux, 134.

attendance, and by their tears, the grateful sense they entertained of his pious efforts in their behalf.”¹²⁹ Anthony Benezet’s tireless efforts to touch the lives of the youth of Philadelphia showed clearly during his funeral. With many African Americans in attendance to honor him, Benezet’s impact on the black community was shown on the day of his funeral.

Even after his death, people continued to remember Anthony Benezet and the achievements he made in his life for those less fortunate. Roberts Vaux’s *Memoirs of The Life of Anthony Benezet* compiled a collection of letters written to and from Benezet with additional information included concerning his life. This publication came as an effort to showcase the life of Benezet and to show his contributions to his community. Vaux emphasizes Benezet’s kindness and impact on those he taught by stating: “This mode of treatment, produced a correspondent respect and regard from his scholars, in whose hearts was deeply implanted the strongest attachment to their preceptor and friend, which, in those who have descended to the grave, was extinguished only with their lives; and that still glowing in the bosoms of the few who survive, can cease only with the termination of all human affections.”¹³⁰ Due to Benezet’s kind nature, his students carried an affection for him until their deaths, according to Vaux. Anthony Benezet influenced the lives of countless people in the different schools at which he taught. In addition to his legacy as an educator, his abolitionist papers continued to inspire generations of abolitionists.

Anthony Benezet had a lasting impact on his community and on early American society as a whole. The immediate impact that Benezet had on his community was evident. His kindness and compassionate nature to all living creatures, regardless of gender, race, or social status, allowed him to provide opportunities for people who were often considered “lesser” than

¹²⁹ Vaux, 134.

¹³⁰ Vaux, 16.

wealthy white men. The broader impact of Anthony Benezet's involvement in the educational reform in the eighteenth century was to increase educational opportunities available to minorities and women. Later chapters will assess the impact and importance of the educational reforms Benezet was a part of and led in Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER II

ANTHONY BENEZET'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE RISE OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

The education of women within the British colonies in North America varied significantly based on numerous factors. Social status was a key indicator of how much and what type of education women received in the American colonies. Lower and middle-class girls typically did not receive a formal education. Instead, lower-class girls gained their education primarily through observations made within their homes.¹³¹ By watching their female family members do the household tasks that they would be expected to perform in adulthood, such as cooking and sewing, young girls learned in an informal setting.¹³² This informal training prepared women for their role within a household but did not provide them with any academic opportunities. On the other hand, girls belonging to upper-class families in the eighteenth century often had some education but focused more on refinement. However, their education was typically not in a classroom setting. Upper-class women traditionally focused on domestic skills, such as “embroidery, dancing, and painting.”¹³³ However, in the eighteenth century, upper-class women in Philadelphia gained access to the writings of British prescriptive authors, who suggested ways for women to solidify their social status through academia.¹³⁴ These books strayed away from traditional domestic skills and focused more on academic material. These prescriptive writers focused on teaching girls “reason and rationality.”¹³⁵ As education for

¹³¹ Parkerson and Parkerson, 32.

¹³² Parkerson & Parkerson, 32.

¹³³ Fatherly, 235.

¹³⁴ Fatherly, 235.

¹³⁵ Fatherly, 236.

women began to shift to more academic subjects, such as reading and writing, some schools began incorporating more scholarly subjects for women.¹³⁶

As a result of the shift in educational material, some educators, such as Anthony Benezet, also began including more scholarly lessons for girls that strayed away from traditionally feminine household tasks. In his instruction, Benezet even included academic subjects much more advanced than reading and writing. For example, he went beyond teaching girls basic academic skills and incorporated Greek and Latin into his curriculum.¹³⁷ Throughout his career as an educator to girls, Benezet showed that girls needed access to quality education by showing their academic capabilities. As the curriculum for girls began to shift, educators like Anthony Benezet proved that girls were capable of achieving advanced academic knowledge in school settings.

As a member of the Quaker Society of Friends in Philadelphia, Anthony Benezet worked with the religious group on education-related matters. As Pennsylvania was established by the Quakers, the colony differed from some of its neighboring colonies in several ways. One key difference between the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania and the northern colonies was education. Each colony differed from whether or not girls were allowed to go to school with boys or were unable to attend school altogether. While most colonies prohibited girls from attending school until the end of the eighteenth century, Pennsylvania allowed girls to go to school from very early in the development of the colony.¹³⁸ Thomas Budd, a Quaker focused on Pennsylvania education, laid out an education plan for Pennsylvania in 1685 that included the instruction of all children in the colony, including both boys and girls. According to Budd's plan, both boys and

¹³⁶ Fatherly, 252.

¹³⁷ Fatherly, 252.

¹³⁸ Parkerson and Parkerson, 69.

girls were taught to read and write, but the boys learned more trade skills while the girls learned domestic skills such as knitting and sewing.¹³⁹ In other words, the basics of educational material were the same, but he suggested that each gender should receive specialized instruction based on their role in society. While women still learned domestic skills, the addition of teaching girls to read and write was an advancement from other northern colonies that were debating on whether or not to even allow girls in school. Budd's plan was laid out in 1685, which was roughly a century before Pennsylvania's neighboring colonies or states began allowing girls to attend public schools. Unlike their neighbors, the Quakers were not opposed to women in their education system. In Quakerism, women were believed to hold equal spiritual power as men, resulting in women spreading Quaker beliefs.¹⁴⁰ The belief of women as equals in their religion resulted in women being included in the Quaker education system. Although at first education for females heavily focused on domestic skills, Anthony Benezet took the education of females more seriously as he tried to provide them with quality educations not dependent on domestic skills.

Anthony Benezet strongly believed that girls deserved a quality education. One of the ways in which he advocated for the education of *all* children was through his writings. In 1782, Benezet published a book for children to use at home titled *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book or Youth's Friendly Instructor and Monitor*. In this educational book for children, Benezet emphasized the importance of providing educational opportunities for girls. Instead of focusing on the traditional method of educating girls based on lifestyle skills, Benezet provided a more academic education to girls who read his book. His purpose was to lead girls away from an

¹³⁹ Thomas Budd, *Good Order Established* (1685), quoted in Thomas Woody, *Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania* (New York City, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1920) 36-37.

¹⁴⁰ Hamm, 19.

education centered around clothing and vanity to more practical skills such as reading and writing. Within his book, he stressed the importance of educating women based on academic material:

It is also much to be lamented that our daughters, whose education is of the utmost importance to human life, should be so much indulged in a fondness for themselves, a love of dress and a desire of being the object of admiration: And after all this we complain of the pernicious effects which pride and covetousness have in the world, we wonder to see grown persons actuated and governed by such pernicious principles, not considering how much they were encouraged in their youth to form their actions and industry upon the same principles.¹⁴¹

In this statement in *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, Anthony Benezet showed his dedication to teaching girls. He argued against teaching young girls to focus on the way they dressed and presented themselves. Rather, he claimed, that this form of education, focusing on vain or superficial subjects such as clothing, led young girls down a negative path. However, Benezet did not blame the women for the way they presented themselves. Instead, he suggested that they were taught, at a young age, to value such things. Because girls traditionally received educations centered around domestic skills, they grew up without a formal academic education. Their lifestyle as adults focused on “feminine” skills that they learned as children. Benezet did not attempt to shame women for the education that they received. Instead, he advocated for a progressive change in the educational experience available to girls in Pennsylvania.

Anthony Benezet attempted to challenge the traditional style of education provided to women and even stated in the preface of his 1782 book, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, that female’s “education is of the utmost importance to human life.”¹⁴² Not only did he believe it was important to educate women on more academic subjects, he saw it as a necessity. By using the words “human life,” Benezet suggested that education for women was important for society as a

¹⁴¹ Anthony Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, 5.

¹⁴² Anthony Benezet, *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*, 5.

whole, not just the female population. By calling out the importance of quality education for women in the preface of the book, he showed that this book was not just designed for boys to read. By presenting a book designed for both boys and girls, Benezet put the two genders on an even playing field. *The Pennsylvania Spelling-Book* provided children with the basics of academic knowledge at home, including spelling words, Biblical lessons, and a history lesson on the Plague in London. This book made education more attainable for students outside of traditional school settings. Even girls who were not able to attend public schools could gain knowledge from Benezet's book. While it is not known how many children had access to this book or how big of an impact it had on Benezet's community, his attempt to bring educational material to children's homes, including girls, shows his dedication to providing quality education to all children.

Anthony Benezet's stance on women's education is clear in his *Pennsylvania Spelling-Book*. But, Benezet's actions spoke even louder than his words. In fact, Benezet, along with the Quaker Society of Friends in Philadelphia, was instrumental in the founding of a school for girls due to women being held spiritually equal in their society. According to George S. Brookes, the girl's school that Benezet helped established was "in all probability the first public school exclusively for girls in America."¹⁴³ While it is unclear whether or not this was the first-ever school established for women in America, it certainly made an impact on the local community.

The Quaker Society of Friends ran the girl's school, but Benezet was a major advocate for its creation. The following quote lays out his request for establishing a school for girls.

Anthony Benezet now attending & informing the Board that as he is much solicited to keep a morning school for teaching girls Reading, Writing, Arithmetick and English Grammar, after some conversation agreed that if he will decline engaging Business which the Board may judge likely to take off his attention to the School...¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Brookes, 37.

¹⁴⁴ "25th day of the 4th mo. 1754," Minutes quoted in Brookes, 38.

According to minutes, when Benezet proposed the idea of a girl's school to the Society of Friends, he was willing to give up his other endeavors to help secure quality educations for his students. Benezet began teaching as soon as it opened in 1754, and during his first year, Benezet taught 30 students for an annual salary of 80 pounds and was to collect 40 shillings per student.¹⁴⁵

The curriculum at the girl's school was an advancement from girls learning household tasks from their family members. While he included advanced academic curriculum in his efforts to teach girls, the curriculum he used for boys and girls did differ in some ways. The girls he taught were not expected to learn as much as the boys. In a letter written by Benezet, he described his instruction methods with his students:

Thou will also observe that from the beginning at Addition, I endeavour to make my pupils labour easy; that they may understand & take pleasure in what they do is my aim; but where they are oppressed with large sum in high figures it has the contrary effect & its with reluctance they engage it. My mode of teaching is something different to Boys, these must be make acquainted with more table than the girls such as long, land, figured &c &c measure; & some other Rules unnecessary to these ... In teaching boys I add the square and cube roots, Decimal Fractions, & if time will allow Mensuration.¹⁴⁶

According to Benezet, some things differed between the instruction of boys and girls, but the basics stayed the same. In general, it appears that boys were expected to be more advanced in their math skills. Benezet did not provide a reason for why girls did not need to learn more advanced math like the boys, but he did state that it was unnecessary for the girls to learn certain things, such as advanced math. Perhaps because the society of colonial America was still centered around women learning domestic skills, learning advanced math was not a necessity in

¹⁴⁵ "25th day of the 4th mo. 1754," Minutes quoted in Brookes, 37-38.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Anthony Benezet to George Dillwn, 4 August, 1779, Haverford College, manuscript collection 852, Quakers and Slavery, Haverford College Quaker and Special Collections.

the daily lives of the girls that Benezet instructed, like reading and writing might have been. Nonetheless, Benezet did show an attempt to teach girls math at a basic level.

The curriculum of the girl's school was comprised of advanced lessons designed to teach students a wide array of skills. Benezet did not focus solely on teaching his students to read and write in English; he also included the basics of languages such as Latin and French.¹⁴⁷ Deborah Logan, a student at the girl's school, wrote an account of Benezet's teaching method and character to honor him after his death.

I was for many years one of his scholars, and have often thought, that even in this age of improvement, many of the regulations of his school might be adopted to advantage; of which the following practice is a specimen. One day of the week we wrote what we called "Exercises," for which purpose papers of a suitable size were distributed to us neatly marked down the margins on either side with the foot of a compass, at the distance we were to rule the lines; when this was performed he gave out the subject on which we were to write, in sentences, which was again repeated when all had got through the first given, and so continued until the piece was finished. We then severally presented our papers and stood by him whilst he corrected the spelling and pointing; and we afterwards wrote it out fair in our copy books.¹⁴⁸

In her account, Deborah Logan provided valuable insight into the daily curriculum of the girl's school. Logan's account shows that Benezet focused on writing at least one day a week. The students in Benezet's classroom were expected to write a paper on a given topic, and then Benezet corrected it for the students to take notes on and learn from in the future. The use of multiple drafts and revisions is a best practice used today and shows the advanced level of his teaching ability. Not only were the girls expected to learn to write, but they were also corrected by their teacher to ensure they became good writers. Benezet's rigorous lessons show his dedication towards teaching regardless of the students' gender.

¹⁴⁷ Brookes, 40.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca. 1825, quoted in Brookes, 41 & 467.

In her account, Deborah Logan also focused on her fondness of her school teacher. She included a variety of different memories of Anthony Benezet and his kindness as a school teacher and as a human being. In relation to his character, Deborah Logan stated, “In the Society of Friends his influence was deservedly very great and his example in moderation, humility, and the contempt of riches, well worthy of imitation. For his mind was wholly unpolluted by avarice, and he used to say that wealth did not agree with our profession...”¹⁴⁹ Deborah Logan provided insight into Benezet’s character as a human being and as a member of the Quaker Society of Friends. According to her, Benezet believed that wealth did not matter. Logan suggested that Benezet’s focus was truly on making a difference in children’s lives, not the money that he earned as an educator. The Quaker religion was heavily focused on being moved by God in daily actions, so much of Logan’s account of Benezet not needing money to accomplish his mission of education might be explained by the values held by the Quakers.¹⁵⁰ The accounts provided by Deborah Logan also revealed that Benezet was friends with her mother. One such memory involved Benezet having his own space in her families’ garden because his own home did not have enough space for him to grow his own food.¹⁵¹ Deborah Logan’s mother and Anthony Benezet were close friends, which may have affected the way Deborah Logan viewed her teacher, but her accounts of the classroom setting are nonetheless valuable. Her letter revealed a student indebted to her school teacher for showing her kindness and compassion throughout her studies both inside and outside of the classroom.

Due to the advanced material taught, the girl’s school was well-accredited and attracted a variety of scholars. The school attracted girls from wealthy families and Benezet “soon found

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca. 1825, quoted in Brookes, 147.

¹⁵⁰ Hamm, 30.

¹⁵¹ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca. 1825, quoted in Brookes, 468.

himself entrusted with the education of the daughters of the most affluent and respectable inhabitants of the city.”¹⁵² Benezet’s instruction was favored among the upper-class families in Philadelphia. Although the school was frequented by girls of wealthy families, Benezet’s instruction was not reserved for the upper-class families of Philadelphia. Benezet also taught a student who had a disability. The student’s disability is unclear, as she was described as “a female who was deaf and dumb.”¹⁵³ Unfortunately, in his account of the deaf student, Vaux did not elaborate on her background. He simply included her as an example to show the diversity of students under Benezet’s care and to help his goal of portraying Benezet in a positive light. Vaux observed that “She acquired, during two years under his tuition, such instruction as enabled her to enjoy an intercourse with society, which had been previously denied to her.”¹⁵⁴ Roberts Vaux used this example to show Benezet’s inclusivity and that he taught a student who may not have gained an education elsewhere. This example also serves to show that Benezet did not discriminate against girls with disabilities. Benezet’s school was not an exclusive place reserved for the most affluent citizens in the region. Instead, he also accepted students who might not have had opportunities elsewhere. The Quakers were strong advocates for providing quality educations to all students, so it is unlikely that there were strict restrictions on those who were permitted to attend the Girl’s School.

The Girl’s School was also so well acclaimed that a boy attended the school. Deborah Logan recalled a boy who was sent to the school. Logan’s understanding of the boy was that his family in the West Indies sent their son to be educated in the colonies at Benezet’s girl’s school.¹⁵⁵ The following is Logan’s description of when the boy arrived:

¹⁵² Vaux, 7.

¹⁵³ Vaux, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Vaux, 10.

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca 1825, quoted in Brookes, 467.

As his character had become known for philanthropy, and the just views he entertained against oppression and wickedness of every kind, a gentleman of fortune who resided (I understood) in the West Indies, sent his son at a very early age, over to him to be educated in principles like his own. The little fellow was brought to the Christian philosopher decked in his gay summer-island suit, and, report said, with a little sword by his side. However that might have been, when he was my school fellow he was far otherwise attired, in a drab coloured cotton-velvet, of the same material and cut as the clothes worn by the Master himself; and whether there was a natural insensibility to appearances, or that the disposition for finery had been overcome, not the most remote indication of discontent at the circumstances was ever apparent, but the pupil seemed quite content to be at school among the girls...¹⁵⁶

The fact that a boy was sent all the way from the Caribbean to Pennsylvania is significant in understanding the acclaim that Benezet's Girl's School had. Not only did the boy travel a long distance to attend the school, but it was also a school designed for girls. The ability of Benezet to accept a boy shows his flexibility as an instructor. The admission of a boy also shows that this school was not exclusively for wealthy women because some exceptions could be made. Logan made a point to describe the boy's fine attire and the fact that he changed clothes to fit in better at the school. With this information, it is evident that Benezet's school was not an elite school that was reserved for wealthy women. Instead, even his own attire was informal, according to Logan's description. The diversity in the girl's school shows Benezet's desire to help all students. The example of a boy from the Caribbean attending the Girl's School further shows that the high-level curriculum that was taught to girls at the school was also suitable for a male.

The girl's school that Benezet taught at revealed a unique desire for someone to provide quality education to the girls in Colonial America. Anthony Benezet showed compassion and kindness to the girls he taught. The memoirs written after his death demonstrate how he was regarded positively by his peers and students. Deborah Logan's letter shows that as her school teacher Benezet left lasting impressions in her life not only as a teacher but as a friend. Roberts

¹⁵⁶ Letter from Deborah Logan to Roberts Vaux, ca 1825, quoted in Brookes, 468.

Vaux's *Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet* adds to his reputation, and as a friend of Benezet's, Vaux wanted to share with the rest of the world his kindness and influence on his community. While these sources do display biases, as both of the authors were close to Benezet during his lifetime, they also provide insight into the impact Benezet had on the female population in Philadelphia. Deborah Logan's journal highlighted the rigorous ways in which Benezet taught his students. Benezet truly cared for the students of whose educations he was entrusted. His work for underprivileged populations officially began at the girl's school, but he continued to help other in-need groups throughout his life.

Benezet initially taught at the girl's school for one year before retiring due to poor health.¹⁵⁷ The health issue was not specified, although George S. Brookes describes Benezet's resignation by stating, "his physical strength was not able to stand the test of this new and important undertaking."¹⁵⁸ The reason for Benezet leaving the school he helped create after only teaching there for one year is unclear. Benezet did not stop working after he retired, which makes the situation that much more peculiar. After Benezet retired from the girl's school, he switched between different jobs such as a public school overseer and a manager of the Philadelphia Public Hospital.¹⁵⁹ Regardless of whatever caused him to resign, he did decide to return to the girl's school. Shortly after his resignation, Benezet was disappointed in leaving the girl's school and dissatisfied with the non-teaching roles he occupied.¹⁶⁰ In a letter written at the end of 1757, Anthony Benezet showed his regret for leaving the girl's school by stating, "for I quit the school with some rebuke, and have ever since had a secret uneasiness about it. I have sometimes very much doubted, whether I had any service at all in the creation, except serving self; but if I have

¹⁵⁷ Brookes, 38.

¹⁵⁸ Brookes, 38.

¹⁵⁹ Brookes, 38.

¹⁶⁰ Brookes 38.

any, it is the education of children.”¹⁶¹ Upon leaving the school, Benezet felt that he had made a mistake by leaving the school that he helped create. Anthony Benezet made it clear that his true passion was the education of all children, and his life’s work centered around providing quality education to all children. When he left his teaching position, he quickly realized that he wanted to return to what he was passionate about, educating the youth of his community.

Benezet’s opportunity to return to teaching came in 1757 after a two-year absence from the girl’s school. When a teacher at the girl’s school resigned in 1757, Ann Thornton, Anthony Benezet filled her spot and resumed his position of teaching girls at the school.¹⁶² Upon resuming his position, he was paid 20 pounds per year by the Society of Friends and 30 shillings per year by the student’s families for working six half days a week.¹⁶³ Benezet remained at the girl’s school for nine years until 1766, when he retired, again allegedly due to poor health.¹⁶⁴ In total, Benezet taught at the school for girls for ten years before retiring in 1766. Throughout his decade at the girl’s school, he remained passionate about providing quality education to girls who might not gain the same form of academic instruction elsewhere. In a society unsure of where girls belonged in the education system, Benezet showed that girls did belong in a classroom setting and were able to learn the same basic concepts as boys.

At the time of his retirement from the girl’s school, Benezet was 53 years old and had devoted much of his life to providing quality education to girls. His retirement from the girl’s school was reportedly due to poor health, but some historians now believe it was because of his devotion to teaching African Americans.¹⁶⁵ Reports show he retired due to poor health, but when

¹⁶¹ Letter from Anthony Benezet to John Smith, December 9th, 1757, quoted in Brookes, 39.

¹⁶² Brookes, 40.

¹⁶³ *William Penn Charter School Records*, 28th 10th mo. 1757, quoted in Brookes, 40.

¹⁶⁴ Brookes, 42.

¹⁶⁵ Brookes, 43.

he left the girl's school, he turned his attention to educating the free black population in Philadelphia, which led to the theory that he may have left the girls school in order to focus his attention solely on the education of African children in his community.¹⁶⁶ Perhaps Benezet believed that he had succeeded in promoting the education of women, and once the school he helped create and run was successful, he turned to another group in the area that also struggled to gain educational opportunities. Benezet dedicated his life to improving educational opportunities for as many underprivileged groups as possible, starting with girls.

Anthony Benezet's girl's school highlights the shift of education for women from more domestic skills to more academic skills in the late eighteenth century. While educational opportunities were scarce for women prior to the American Revolution, at the turn of the century, numerous schools and colleges had emerged throughout the nation for both boys and girls.¹⁶⁷ The rise in educational opportunities for women at the beginning of the nineteenth century allowed women to gain a more formal education than previously possible. Domestic skills previously taught to women were less important, and "newly independent Americans considered these arts an important complement."¹⁶⁸ Therefore, girls gained educations based on academic skills with the arts as additions to their academic endeavors.

The girl's school, founded in 1754 with the help of Anthony Benezet, was well ahead of its time. Benezet provided girls with a quality education in a time when society generally did not support the education of girls. While neighboring colonies were hesitant to include women in their schools, the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania took strides in providing girls with an education comparable to their male counterparts. Eighteenth-century Pennsylvania is an

¹⁶⁶ Brookes, 43.

¹⁶⁷ Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand & Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 67-68

¹⁶⁸ Kelley, *Learning to Stand & Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic*, 69.

incredibly valuable time period in assessing the roots of an equal education system in the United States. The new rise in providing girls with academic skills, not just focused on domestic household tasks, was the first of many steps in securing quality educations for all women in America. The eighteenth-century Quaker society in Pennsylvania, with Benezet leading the way, proved that girls were capable and deserving of the same academic credentials as boys. The movement towards a more equal education system has its roots in individual people, like Benezet, selflessly helping groups of people gain educations in unsupportive societies.

CHAPTER III

ANTHONY BENEZET'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION AND THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the eighteenth century marked a period of radical reform in the education system in an effort to include the free black population. With less than one percent of the black population in Philadelphia enslaved, the city was considered a society with slaves rather than a slave society, which increased the likelihood of policies such as an educational reform for black students in the late eighteenth century.¹⁶⁹ Societies with slaves are those where the economic stability of the region does not drive slavery. In these areas, slaves had more opportunities as opposed to slave societies where slavery was a fundamental aspect of the region.¹⁷⁰ The ratio of free to enslaved blacks made Philadelphia an ideal location to open schools for black students. Several individuals and organizations worked to provide education to the free black community within Philadelphia, although many were unsuccessful in establishing their schools. Both Samuel Keimer and George Whitefield proposed establishing schools for black students, but it is undetermined if these schools ever opened.¹⁷¹ One of the earliest groups to succeed in providing quality education to the free black population in Philadelphia was the Quaker Society of Friends. The Quakers worked to provide quality education to African American students. In 1770 the Quakers Society of Friends in Philadelphia formed a committee to discuss how to begin including black students in the city's education system. The committee eventually formed a school that they called the Negro School, although some historians call it the African's School. This school helped provide quality education to black children, which was

¹⁶⁹ Klein, 44.

Van Horne, 73.

¹⁷⁰ Berlin, 8-9.

¹⁷¹ Van Horne, 75-77.

previously unavailable to the group. With slavery still a significant issue in the colonies, African American children's education was not a major concern for most regions. However, the Quaker Society of Friends in Philadelphia was determined to show black students' intellectual capabilities through education. The Quakers in Philadelphia filled a gap in the education system by creating a school for black students and formed a committee to ensure that the school ran smoothly. By creating the Negro School, the Quakers showed their determination to provide all children with quality education, despite their ethnicity or race.

The Quakers were key players in the early abolitionist movement in the British colonies and were among the earliest advocates for the end of slavery. The founder of Quakerism, George Fox, advocated for the improved treatment of minority groups, though he was not wholly an abolitionist.¹⁷² While Fox was not an active proponent of ending slavery altogether, his stance of promoting the kind treatment of African Americans was used by future Quakers to push for the complete end to slavery.¹⁷³ With the founder of Quakerism showing a desire to treat minority groups in the colonies humanely, George Fox laid the groundwork for the Quaker religion to become more open and accepting towards minority groups and to seek to help them with their endeavors, including education.

In Pennsylvania, the Quakers were among the earliest groups in the colonies to speak out against slavery in publications. Recognized as the first document expressing opposition to slavery published by a religious group in the British colonies, the "Germantown Friends' Protest Against Slavery" in 1688 marked the beginning of the public Quaker abolition movement.¹⁷⁴ It was also "the first American document of its kind that made a plea for equal human rights for

¹⁷² Sinha, 12.

¹⁷³ Sinha, 13.

¹⁷⁴ "Germantown Quaker Petition Against Slavery," *National Park Service*.

everyone.”¹⁷⁵ The protest was signed by four men, Garret henderich, derick up de graeff, Francis daniell Pastorius, and Abraham up Den graef and outlined their views on slavery. The document makes compelling arguments for the end of slavery, including the stance that Africans were not inferior to white Europeans.

Yea, rather is it worse for them, which say they are Christians; for we hear that ye most part of such negers are brought hither against their will and consent, and that many of them are stolen. Now, tho they are black, we can not conceive there is more liberty to have them slaves, as it is to have other white ones. There is a saying, that we shall doe to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are.¹⁷⁶

The protest made clear that Christians should not partake in the buying and selling of slaves and removed the issue of race when determining the value of another person. The argument laid out in the protest was that Africans deserved the same treatment that white Europeans received because skin color was not a determining factor of who deserved liberty. By removing the notion of race as an indicator of status, the Germantown protest laid out the argument that all races were deserving of kindness.

As the first religious group in the British colonies to publicly stand against slavery, the Quakers led the charge for an equal society for minority groups. The Quakers were outspoken about their opposition to slavery. The Quakers were a notable group of abolitionists resulting in the assessment that “Not all Quakers were antislavery, but most abolitionists in the British Colonies were Quakers.”¹⁷⁷ The Quakers were not the only opponents of slavery. Rhode Island unsuccessfully tried to ban slavery in 1652, and Mennonites in Delaware Bay had banned slavery

¹⁷⁵ “Germantown Quaker Petition Against Slavery,” *National Park Service*.

¹⁷⁶ “Germantown Friends’ Protest Against Slavery, 1688”, *Library of Congress*, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.14000200/?st=text>.

¹⁷⁷ Sinha, 12.

by 1663.¹⁷⁸ However, the impact that Quakers had on the abolitionist movement expanded the rights of free blacks, such as the ability to attend school.

The Quakers provided quality education to the youth in their communities, including black children. A committee was formed in 1770 to help the Quakers decide how to tackle the issue of educating black children in Philadelphia. The committee kept a detailed record of their meetings, labeled “Minutes of the Committe’s [sic] appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating Africans and their descendants.” Anthony Benezet was regularly in attendance at these meetings and also served the school to ensure that it ran smoothly and that the students progressed in their studies. His observations became daily visits by the end of 1773.¹⁷⁹ In addition, for the final two years of his life, Benezet served as the teacher of the Negro School in his own home.¹⁸⁰ Through the committee formed in 1770, the Quakers in Philadelphia showed their dedication to black children’s education in their community.

Before teaching at the Negro School, Anthony Benezet spent a considerable amount of his life advocating for the end of slavery and for Africans in the British colonies to be treated humanely in all aspects of life. Benezet published numerous documents that advocated for the end of slavery, and his publications centered on Christian ideas to argue that slavery was morally wrong. He also attempted to show the true nature of Africans in their native countries. Through his publications, Benezet also advocated for the equal treatment of Africans and showed that they were capable of upward mobility if given a chance.

¹⁷⁸ Sinha, 12.

¹⁷⁹ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants*. (December 25, 1773), 36-37.

¹⁸⁰ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants*. (March 20, 1782 – May 8, 1784), 62-74.

Anthony Benezet's abolitionist writings' unique aspect was his inclusion of travel narratives to prove his point that African Americans had communities in Africa before being enslaved. By painting a positive view of Africa in his publications, Benezet showed that Africans were no different from Europeans. Various historians point to this unique nature of Benezet's publications and to his method of gathering sources. Instead of simply saying that slavery was wrong, Benezet provided documentation of specific aspects of the slave trade and reports about the African continent.

Maurice Jackson, a historian who has focused on Anthony Benezet, highlighted the ways in which Benezet used sources in his writings. In his article, "The Social and Intellectual Origins of Anthony Benezet's Antislavery Radicalism," published in 1999, Jackson argued that Benezet's use of sources was a new strategy for abolitionists in the colonies. He described that Benezet was the first abolitionist to use travel narratives and sources from people involved in the slave trade, including people who experienced slave ship transportation of Africans, to prove his claims about slavery.¹⁸¹ Jackson did acknowledge that Benezet hand-selected his sources to fit his narrative and omitted parts of travel literature that did not line up with his goals.¹⁸² According to Jackson, one reason for omitting parts of his sources was his fear of uprisings. Benezet omitted sections of other peoples' writings if they mentioned uprisings, such as parts of Hutcheson's *Systems of Moral Philosophy* because he did not personally believe that violence was the answer to ending slavery.¹⁸³ Although Benezet omitted things that did not fit his goal of ending slavery peacefully, he did try to show the negative nature of the slave trade through the eyes of people who witnessed it first-hand.

¹⁸¹ Jackson, "The Social and Intellectual Origins of Anthony Benezet's Antislavery Radicalism," 96.

¹⁸² Jackson, "The Social and Intellectual Origins of Anthony Benezet's Antislavery Radicalism," 100.

¹⁸³ Jackson, "The Social and Intellectual Origins of Anthony Benezet's Antislavery Radicalism," 100.

Another important part of Benezet's writing is that it was published and available to numerous people to read. In the 2011 article, "With a Little Help from the Friends: The Quaker and Tactical Contexts of Anthony Benezet's Abolitionist Publishing," Jonathan D. Sassi focused on the importance that printing had on Benezet's success and how the audiences Benezet reached impacted his success. One of the most crucial aspects of Benezet's career, according to Sassi, was that he was able to publish his works and disseminate his views against the slave trade. Sassi also focused on the importance of Benezet reaching out to people on both sides of the Atlantic. This broad reach allowed Benezet to influence a greater number of people with his publications. Benezet's *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies* "became Benezet's most widely disseminated work in his lifetime, with at least four thousand copies printed in America and another fifteen hundred printed in England" although it did not result in a large-scale change of the slave trade.¹⁸⁴ The widespread and transatlantic nature of Benezet's antislavery writings suggests that he had an impact on the eighteenth-century abolition movement both in North America and in Britain.¹⁸⁵

Benezet published two documents that highlighted the character of Africans pre-enslavement. The first of these documents was *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes* in 1762, and the second was *Some Historical Account of Guinea* in 1771. Both documents aimed to show Europeans and American colonists that Africa was not a place lacking in culture and diversity.

¹⁸⁴ David L. Crosby ed., *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: An Annotated Critical Edition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 112.

¹⁸⁵ Crosby, 2.

Although his works were reprinted heavily within his lifetime and shortly after his death in 1784, by 1788 his works were no longer being readily reprinted

In *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes* Anthony Benezet used reports from English, French, and Dutch travelers in Guinea to show the nature of the Africans in their home country.¹⁸⁶ These first-hand reports allowed him to appeal to his audience by describing Africans as victims, taken from their homes to support the slave trade. However, the sources are biased as Benezet wanted to portray the African slave trade negatively and African culture positively; therefore, his sources were carefully selected to suit his narrative. While his sources may not have depicted an accurate image of the African continent, they did aid Benezet in describing the negative impacts of buying and selling of African Americans.

In describing the horrible conditions of the slave trade, Benezet explained why the enslaved African Americans did not actively complain about the conditions they endured. In *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes*, Benezet argued why slaves did not speak out against their horrific conditions.

And if they seldom complain of the unjust and cruel usage they have received in being forced from their native country, *etc.* it is not to be wondered at; as it is a considerable time after their arrival among us before they can speak our language, and by the time they are able to express themselves they cannot but observe from the behavior of the whites that little or no notice would be taken of their complaints; yet let any person brought from their native land, and he shall hear such relations as, if not lost to the common feeling of humanity, will sensibly affect his heart.¹⁸⁷

Benezet concluded that African Americans who first came to the colonies were not immediately fluent in English and that by the time they were able to speak English, they knew that resistance could be fatal. Benezet used this publication to appeal to Christians to not partake in the practice of buying and selling African slaves even if the slaves did not speak out against their own conditions due to language barriers and fears.

¹⁸⁶ Anthony Benezet, *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes*, 1762 in David L. Crosby ed., *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: An Annotated Critical Edition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁸⁷ Benezet, *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes*, 68.

Benezet's later publication *Some Historical Account of Guinea* followed the same pattern as *A Short Account of That Part of Africa Inhabited by the Negroes*. Again Benezet used travel narratives to show the culture of Guinea, where the slave trade was prominent. While Benezet opposed the slave trade, he favored spreading Christianity to Africa. As a Quaker, his religious views were made clear in his publications. In relation to bringing Christianity to Africa, Benezet stated:

If instead of making slaves of the Negroes, the nations who assume the name and character of Christians would use their endeavors to make the nations of Africa acquainted with the nature of the Christian religion, to give them a better sense of the true use of the blessings of life, the more beneficial arts and customs by degrees be introduced among them; this care probably would produce the same effect upon them which it has had on the inhabitants of Europe, formerly as savage and barbarous as the natives of Africa.¹⁸⁸

While Benezet wanted slavery to end, he still considered some parts of Africa as less civilized than the European nations. He argued that if the Africans were introduced to Christianity, then they would become as advanced as Europeans. While Benezet did not agree with every aspect of Africa, such as religion, he argued they still did not deserve to be enslaved. In addition, he also acknowledged that Europeans were not always as advanced as they were in the eighteenth century and that Africans could also reach the same level of advancement as Europeans. By expressing the view of advancement, Benezet showed that he believed the African Continent was capable of advancing in the ways that Europe did. While Benezet had his clear biases as both a Christian and a European, he still believed that the African population was capable of learning and that they did not deserve to be slaves, which challenged the societal standards in the Americas in the eighteenth century.

In addition to his publications that attempted to show Africa in a positive manner, Benezet published numerous documents that expressed his concerns as a Christian about the slave trade.

¹⁸⁸ Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, 149.

Three of Benezet's published documents revealed the slave trade's inhumane nature, but his main goal was to reach out to Christians and demonstrate how the slave trade went against Christian beliefs and therefore needed to be abolished. The following excerpt from Benezet's *Observations on the Enslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes* is an example of the religious focus of his publications:

What is already said, will I hope be sufficient to prevent any considerate Christian from being, in any degree, defiled with the gain so full of horrors, and so palpably inconsistent with the gospel of our blessed Lord and savior Jesus Christ, which breaths nothing but love and goodwill to all men of every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

Under the Mosaic Law man-stealing was the only theft punishable by death. It is thus expressed in Exodus 21:16. *He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.*¹⁸⁹

Benezet used the Bible to convince Christians that the act of buying and selling humans went against the teachings of the Bible. Further, Benezet included a Bible verse describing the punishment for kidnapping and selling people. By using the verse, Benezet connected the slave trade to religion directly. Christianity was central to his writings. As a member of the Quaker Society of Friends in Philadelphia, Benezet's primary loyalty was to his religion, and his writings heavily reflect that.

Another point that Benezet made in his anti-slavery writings was the irony of the slave trade after the American Revolution. As the colonies became an independent nation, separate from Great Britain, Benezet pointed out the inconsistency of slavery with the views held by the colonists. In his publications, *Observations on Slavery* in 1778 and *Short Observations on Slavery* in 1783, Benezet pointed out the inconsistencies with freedom and liberty when applied to the colonists, but not to the individuals they enslaved. Both of these documents show

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Benezet, *Observations on the Enslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes*, 1795-1760, in David L. Crosby ed., *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: An Annotated Critical Edition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 20.

Benezet's view of ending slaveholding altogether in the United States, and he used Revolutionary Ideology to aid his argument.

In both *Observations on Slavery* and *Short Observations on Slavery*, Benezet quoted sections of the Declaration of Independence and related them to the issue of slavery. The purpose of bringing in quotes from the Declaration of Independence was to highlight the hypocrisy of the Revolutionary War. The colonists had fought for freedom from Great Britain yet still kept African Americans in slavery. In *Observations on Slavery*, Benezet stated,

Perhaps nothing will so sensibly teach us to feel for the affliction of the oppressed Africans as that ourselves partake of the same cup of distress we have so long been instrumental in causing them to drink.¹⁹⁰

The “cup of distress” was Benezet's way of comparing the feelings of oppression that the colonists had at the hands of the British to the issue of African Americans suffering at the hands of the colonists. Benezet's *Short Observations on Slavery* continued to relate the issue of slavery to the revolutionary rhetoric, which included referencing the Declaration of Independence and the revolution in general.

It is a very afflictive consideration that, notwithstanding the rights and liberties of mankind have been so much the object of public notice, yet the same corrupt principles still maintain their power in the minds of most slave holders. Indeed, nothing can more clearly and positively militate against the slavery of the Negroes than the several declarations lately published with so great an appearance of solemnity through all the colonies.¹⁹¹

Benezet continued by directly quoting excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, such as “all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights...”¹⁹² By relating his argument to the relevant issues with the American Revolution, Benezet used

¹⁹⁰ Anthony Benezet, *Observations on Slavery*, 1778, in David L. Crosby ed., *The Complete Antislavery Writings of Anthony Benezet 1754-1783: An Annotated Critical Edition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 223.

¹⁹¹ Anthony Benezet, *Observations on Slavery*, 222.

¹⁹² Anthony Benezet, *Observations on Slavery*, 222.

Revolutionary rhetoric to prove his points. The goal of all Benezet's abolitionist writings was to convince the general public that slavery was inhumane and needed to end. By bringing in the ideology of the American Revolution, Benezet turned the idea of freedom around and applied the same concepts to African Americans held in slavery.

In his abolitionist writings, Benezet made numerous observations on slavery; in addition, Benezet used his writings to warn about the institution of slavery in Britain and the American colonies. In 1754 Benezet made an address to the Quaker Society of Friends to express his concerns over slavery. In his address, he used religious motivators to express his concerns as a Christian about slavery. Benezet urged Christian slaveholders to consider their involvement in the institution of slavery. The following excerpt was Benezet's warning to Christian slaveholders:

And we likewise earnestly recommend to all who have *slaves* to be careful to come up in the performance of their duty towards them, and to be particularly watchful over their own hearts; it being by sorrowful experience remarkable that custom and familiarity with evil of any kind hath a tendency to bias the judgement and deprave the mind. And it's obvious that the future welfare of those poor *slaves*, who are now in bondage, is generally too much disregarded by those who keep them.¹⁹³

Benezet was concerned for the future of slaves, as well as how they were treated in slavery. The address shows that Benezet was advocating for the abolitionist agenda to his fellow Quakers. Benezet used whatever platforms were available to advocate for abolition.

In Benezet's *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*, he described Africa's size and how its inhabitants had varying cultures in different regions, including some "more uncivilized and barbarous than others, as in the case in all other countries."¹⁹⁴ While Benezet's statement suggests that he viewed some regions of Africa as "uncivilized," he

¹⁹³ Benezet, "An Epistle of Caution and Advice," 9.

¹⁹⁴ Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*, 1766-1767, 93.

explained how cultures varied throughout other countries as well. Specifically, Benezet focuses on how civilized Guinea was and how humane its inhabitants were.¹⁹⁵ As such, Benezet called upon the British to stop their participation in the slave trade if they were genuinely good people:

Britons boast themselves to be generous, humane people, who have a true sense of the importance of liberty; but is this a true character whilst that barbarous, savage slave trade, with all its attendant horrors, receives countenance and protection from the legislature, whereby so many thousands of lives are yearly sacrificed?¹⁹⁶

Benezet reversed the popular view of Africans as barbarous people. Instead the goal of Benezet's writings was to show that the Africans were not barbarous and uncivilized people. Rather, those who enslaved Africans were the true problem. Therefore, by showing that the slave trade made the British the uncivilized group, Benezet used the European's arguments against themselves to denounce slavery.

Not only did Benezet write about ending the slave trade, but he also posed plans to deal with the issue of a newly freed population within the colonies. He saw the challenge of having a large population of people freed all at once, but he did provide a plan on how to introduce African Americans into American society. The following excerpt lays out his vision of ending slavery:

For the furtherance of which, the following proposals are offered to consideration: that all further importation of slaves be absolutely prohibited; and as to those born among us, after serving so long as may appear to be equitable, let them by law be declared free. Let every one thus set free be enrolled in the county courts, and be obliged to be a resident during a certain number of years within the said county under the care of the overseers of the poor... they would be obliged to act the more circumspectly, and make proper use of their liberty, and their children would have an opportunity of obtaining such instructions as are necessary to the common occasions of life. And thus both parents and children might gradually become useful members of the community. And further, where the nature of the country would permit, as certainly the uncultivated condition of our southern and most western colonies easily would, suppose a small tract of land were assigned to every Negro family, and the obliged to live upon and improve it (when not

¹⁹⁵ Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*, 93.

¹⁹⁶ Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*, 106.

hired out to work for the white people). This would encourage them to exert their abilities and become industrious subjects.¹⁹⁷

Benezet's had plans in place for when slaves were finally set free. In his view, if each black family received a small piece of land, then they would be in a position to become useful members of society. Benezet's forward-thinking nature shows his true dedication to the abolition movement. He had a plan laid out for the future of the movement and planned for future challenges that would arise in the lives of freed people.

Overall, Anthony Benezet's abolitionist writings were unique because they used first-hand accounts of the slave trade to show the horrors of it. His writings were also published so that the general public could read his arguments against the trade. With wide-scale publications and compelling language, Benezet appealed directly to the public to gather support. By sharing his opinions and views of slavery as a Christian, Benezet attempted to appeal to the general population to show that slavery was un-Christian and that African Americans were human beings capable of advancement and deserving of humane treatment.

Another way in which Anthony Benezet advocated for African Americans in early America was through the promotion of education. The Quaker Society of Friends focused on providing quality education to a wide array of students, including African American children, and Anthony Benezet was central to this push. In 1770 the Friends of Philadelphia began having meetings to determine how to best provide quality education to the African American population in the city. The minutes of these meetings provide valuable information concerning the creation of the Negro School and of Benezet's role in it.

Even before most Quakers advocated for African American education, Benezet took the matter into his own hands. He taught black children in his home long before the Negro School

¹⁹⁷ Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, 182.

opened. In his book *Friend Anthony Benezet*, George S. Brookes highlights that “Anthony Benezet was also the first noted school teacher of poor Negro children in America.”¹⁹⁸ In 1750, Benezet opened his home to provide black children with an education that he was concerned they lacked elsewhere.¹⁹⁹ Brookes depicted Benezet in an extremely positive light for teaching black students in his home. Brookes also stated that Benezet was the one who suggested that a committee be formed in 1770 to address African Education.²⁰⁰ The education of the black community in Philadelphia was central to Benezet’s life’s work.

The meetings of the committee “to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants” beginning in 1770 intended to create a school for African American children in Philadelphia. The first page of the minutes laid out the exact purpose for the creation of the committee.

The proposal made last month for the promotion of a School for the Instruction of negro Children, coming now under consideration and the sentiments of Friends being expressed in approbation thereof, after mature deliberation, the following friends are desired to meet together, and to consider further of the most suitable manner of putting forward this intent...²⁰¹

The names of 22 people followed the intent of the creation of the school showing the people involved in the development of a means to educate black children in Philadelphia. Anthony Benezet’s name is included in that list of supporters of African education. The Quakers formed the committee in 1770 to gather ideas and create a plan to provide education to a traditionally uneducated group in the eighteenth century.

¹⁹⁸ Brookes, 45.

¹⁹⁹ Brookes, 45.

²⁰⁰ Brookes, 47.

²⁰¹ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (February 23, 1770), 1.

As the minutes continued, a plan was formed to open a school to provide instruction to black children in Philadelphia. The decision was made to have one master and potentially one mistress if it was thought necessary, “to teach Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.”²⁰² The school was also to be monitored closely by the committee that created it. The minutes stated that the committee was required to visit the school at least once a month to ensure everything was running smoothly.²⁰³ The committee was invested in the success of the School and in the enrolled students. Moles Patterson²⁰⁴, a previous school-master and “well approved of by Friends in this City” was the first teacher of this school and was paid eighty pounds a year to teach no more than 40 students at a time for six months. Under his instruction, the school was set to open in June of 1770.²⁰⁵ However, Patterson’s salary was an issue, and the committee stated that it “was higher than we should have agreed to.”²⁰⁶ Moles Patterson found a higher paying employment offer in November 1773, and his wife, Anne Patterson, became his successor. Anne Patterson agreed to teach at the school for fifty pounds a year until a replacement master could be found.²⁰⁷ The minutes describe Anne’s instruction positively, and they even requested that another woman take the lead in the school, but she was unavailable.²⁰⁸ The willingness, and

²⁰² *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (March 30, 1770), 3-4.

²⁰³ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (March 30, 1770), 4.

²⁰⁴ The written minutes book appears to read “Moles Patterson.” However, Patterson is called “Moses Patterson” in Thomas Woody, *Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania* (New York City, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1920), 241 and “Moles Patterson” in Nancy Slocum Hornick, “Anthony Benezet and the Africans’ School: Toward a Theory of Full Equality,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 99, no.4 (October, 1975), 407.

²⁰⁵ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (May, 28th, 1770), 8, 30.

²⁰⁶ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (December 25, 1773), 31.

²⁰⁷ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (December 25, 1773), 35.

²⁰⁸ *Minutes of the Committe’s appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African’s and their Descendants.* (December 25, 1773), 35-36.

desire, to have a female school-master of the Negro School further highlights the Quaker's inclusiveness.

The committee minutes laid out the rules for attendance and restrictions of enrollment numbers. For example, the minutes stated that no child under six would be admitted to the school.²⁰⁹ Therefore, this school was designed for elementary-aged children and older. In addition to being a school for a wide array of ages, gender inclusion was not an issue for the Negro School. The school was not exclusively for boys; in fact, girls were admitted upon the school's first opening. On June 28, 1770, the minutes reported that the parents of 22 black children, 11 boys and 11 girls, attended the meeting and enrolled their children in the school.²¹⁰ Not only were girls permitted to attend the school, but they also made up half of the initial enrollment. The admittance of girls to the Negro School further illustrates the Quakers' willingness to provide quality education to all groups of people.

The attendance of the school included a mixture of students from different backgrounds. For example, some of the entries in the minutes used the word "master." On October 11, 1770, Moles Patterson was instructed to keep "a list of all the scholars under his care; noting those whose Masters are to pay for their schooling."²¹¹ As previously noted, eighteenth-century Philadelphia was a society with slaves rather than a slave society. This points to a society more willing to provide resources for the black population in their communities. In Philadelphia, it seems that slaves were permitted to enter this school if their masters paid their required

²⁰⁹ *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (October, 11, 1770), 11.

²¹⁰ *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (May 28th, 1770), 8.

²¹¹ *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (October 11, 1770), 11-12.

admittance fee. The minutes also describe outreach to parents and masters to have their children attend more regularly:

...it is therefore agreed, that the Parents, or Masters of all of them should be visited, and endeavours used to engage them to enjoin the children to attend more diligently, but as it is not probable that so many will attend this Winter Season as the Master is capable of teaching; it is agreed that ... [illegible] will be expedient to admit ten or twelve poor white children, to be taught in the school...²¹²

The distinction between the words “parents” and “Masters” suggests that some of these students were slaves or in another service position, although it is not specified. If slaves were permitted to attend the Negro School, it would reinforce that Philadelphia was a society with slaves, who might even have access to education, rather than a slave society fully dependent on slave labor.

The diversity of students in the school also included race. This school, while being called the Negro School, was not exclusive to black students. Poor white students were also admitted into the school by 1775. On January 3, 1775, it was decided that 10 to 12 poor white children would be enrolled in the school.²¹³ While the primary reason for the establishment of the Negro School was to provide education to the free black population in Philadelphia, the school did not discriminate in their admittance of students to this school; it appears that as long as children were in need of an education, the Quakers were willing to provide it.

Throughout the duration of the school, the committee kept close assessments on the progress of the students. The committee members frequently visited the Negro School to ensure the students were progressing appropriately and that everything in the school was running smoothly. From a meeting log on December 26, 1770, the committee commented on the progress of students in the Negro School under the instruction of Moles Patterson.

²¹² *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants.* (January 3, 1775), 48.

²¹³ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants.* (January 3, 1775), 48.

After examining and hearing all the children, in the school, we find most of them have improved in their Learning... From the list produced by Moles Patterson, it appears there are 48 Scholars, of whom one is a Cipherer; 13 are Writers; 2 Readers, 16 Spellers 13 in their Letters; and the other 3 no account is given.²¹⁴

The students in the Negro School appear to have been learning very quickly, as the above report was given just six months after the school's establishment. The students' continued improvement further showed that black students were capable of achieving an education. The minutes of December 25, 1773 added:

...And as we have had the frequent opportunities, thro' the course of this Service, of observing their capacity, for Learning, to be equal to other children, we are confirmed in our apprehensions, that it is our Duty and true Intent, as men + Christians, to promote + Support this School, and hope that in other places, a concern of the same kind will be raised, as the good effects of our care become more known and observed.²¹⁵

In addition to providing educational opportunities for black students, the Quakers showed that black students were just as capable of gaining an education as their white counterparts. The statement also suggested, given the success in Philadelphia, that the same opportunities should be given to black students elsewhere. The Quakers were a group focused heavily on the abolition movement, and one of the ways that they tried to show the capabilities of African Americans was through education. The Quakers in Philadelphia created an example of a successful school for black children.

The Negro School continued providing education to African American students through different instructors, and Anthony Benezet became one of them. Benezet was an active member of the committee who attended numerous meetings and made frequent checks, starting daily in

²¹⁴ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants.* (December 26, 1770), 13.

²¹⁵ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants.* (December, 25, 1773), 38.

1773, on the students in the classroom to make sure they were progressing in their studies.²¹⁶ His involvement eventually resulted in him teaching at the school himself. As stated in the minutes:

Anthony Benezet now attends and renews his offer of taking the school under his care, which after some conference, is accepted of, and he is left at Liberty to open it about the Beginning of next Month at his own House.²¹⁷

Benezet took over the school at his own request. As an active member of the committee, he knew how the school was run, and he wanted it to continue. At age 69, Benezet still had a strong desire to provide educational opportunities to black students. Under Benezet, the school was moved into his home rather than the schoolhouse. By this point, Benezet had already retired from his previous profession of teaching at the girl's school. Therefore, the shift to his home likely had to do with his health and age, which were the reasons for his retirement from the girl's school.²¹⁸ Benezet continued to house the Negro School at his home for two years until he died in 1784 at age 81.²¹⁹

Anthony Benezet continued to ensure the success of the Negro School even after his death in 1784. His Will and final actions provided necessary funding and support to the school he was instrumental in establishing. Anthony Benezet's Will left his estate to his wife until she passed, and then it was to be passed on to the Negro School.²²⁰ The money and property that Benezet left to the school helped in the future success of the education of African Americans in Philadelphia. Benezet also laid out his recommended successor for the school after his death in a

²¹⁶ *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants.* (December 25, 1773), 36-37.

²¹⁷ *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants.* (March 20, 1782), 48.

²¹⁸ Brookes, 42.

²¹⁹ *Minutes of the Committee's appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants.* (May 8, 1784), 68..

²²⁰ Hornick, 414.

letter written before he passed. On the day Benezet died, the 1770 Committee included his letter in their minutes. The letter reads:

My friend Joseph Clark having frequently observed to me his Desire, in case of my inability of continuing ye care of ye Negro School, of succeeding me in that Service, notwithstanding he now has a more advantageous School, by the Desire of doing Good to the black People, makes him over-look these pecuniary Advantages – I much wish the Overseers of the School would take his Desire under their peculiar notice, and give him such so Encouragement as may be proper, it being a Matter of the greatest Consequence to that School, that the master be a Person who makes it a principle to do his Duty – His Wife, a prudent sensible Woman, joins him in the Concern.²²¹

Before his death, Benezet laid out whom he believed the Negro School's next teacher should be. The letter indicates that he was prepared before his death to help the Negro School succeed. By laying out a plan for the school's future, Benezet further shows his desire for the Negro School's success. Even in his final years of life, Benezet worked towards providing black children with better opportunities than were typically available to them during the eighteenth century.

Nancy Slocum Hornick's "Anthony Benezet and the Africans' School: Toward a Theory of Full Equality" describes the specifics of how the school benefited from Benezet's Will. Although the amount that Benezet left to the school is disputed by historians, Hornick believes it is likely between 700 to 2,000 pounds. According to Hornick, the money left behind by Benezet, and the funding for the school that he was able to secure prior to his death, allowed the school to make expansions such as adding a second story to the school, which allowed the division to be made between older and younger children.²²² Hornick added, "This division by age marked the beginning of secondary-level education for the black males of Philadelphia."²²³ Because the school expanded in size, the students were divided between ages. This establishment of a

²²¹ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (May 8, 1784), 68-69.

²²² Hornick, 414.

²²³ Hornick, 414.

secondary education program for African Americans in Philadelphia reflects the lasting impact that Anthony Benezet had on his community. Benezet's work to provide quality educations to those in need extended well past his death due to the continued support he provided to the Negro School.

Both his funeral and what was published about him after he died revealed how his community viewed his life's work of providing opportunities to those less fortunate than himself through education. His funeral was attended by many people in the community of varying races. Roberts Vaux described the events of Benezet's funeral:

At the interment of his remains, in Friends' burial ground, which took place two days after his death, the greatest concourse of people that had ever been witnessed on such an occasion in Philadelphia, was present, being a collection of all ranks and professions among the inhabitants, thus manifesting the universal esteem in which he was held. Among others who paid that last tribute of respect, were many hundred black people, testifying by their attendance, and by their tears, the grateful-sense they entertained of his pious efforts in their behalf.²²⁴

Vaux was a friend of Benezet's, and his *Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet* was designed to pay tribute to Benezet. Therefore, his statements such as "the greatest concourse of people that had ever been witnessed on such an occasion in Philadelphia" may be an overstatement designed to illicit positive views of Benezet. However, the wide array of people in attendance is plausible. Benezet spent the majority of his life advocating for underprivileged groups. It would come as no surprise that these groups attended his funeral and felt strong emotions throughout it.

Newspaper articles following Benezet's death further highlight the impact he had on his local community. In an article published shortly after Benezet's death, *The Freeman's Journal or the North American Intelligencer* published the following statements concerning the life of Anthony Benezet:

²²⁴ Vaux, 134.

His catholicism in religion his universal philanthropy, his unwearied acts of benevolence, endeared him to all who knew him. He was kind without reserve; courteous without deceit, and charitable without ostentation....²²⁵

The article went on to describe how Benezet donated his estate to the education of black children. The article shows an enthusiastic depiction of Anthony Benezet's life in black children's education in Philadelphia and that Benezet was well admired throughout his community as an educator of black children.

The Quakers in Philadelphia did a significant amount of work for the African Americans in their city as well as the rest of the colonies. By paving the way for abolition in the colonies, the Quakers were influential in advocating for the end of slavery. The Quakers were an outspoken group against the slave trade, which made them instrumental in the eighteenth-century Abolition movement as a whole. By citing religious reasons for abolishing the slave trade, the Quakers appealed to Christians to step away from the trade. The Quakers continued by creating the committee to the oversight and care of the School for Educating Africans and their descendants in 1770. The committee meetings resulted in the creation of the Negro School for black children who previously lacked access to public educations. The Quakers in the British mainland colonies were the leaders in the abolition movement and the educational reform movement for African Americans in early America.

Anthony Benezet was perhaps the most influential Quaker in abolitionist endeavors in the eighteenth century. Benezet's anti-slavery writings showed a devotion to exposing the logistics of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By using travel narratives to expose the atrocities of the trade and to highlight African civility, Benezet appealed to the general public to reconsider their roles in the slave trade. Benezet believed that Africans were not inferior to Europeans helped them

²²⁵ R. Patterson, "Philadelphia, May 5," *The Freeman's Journal or the North American Intelligencer* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) May 5, 1784, 3.

gain an education to prove their intellectual capabilities. Anthony Benezet's publications and his involvement in the establishment and operation of the Negro School were instrumental in changing the societal standards of the black population in the British mainland colonies. Benezet's determination to provide the black students in his community with quality educations demonstrated his willingness to go against societal standards to provide better opportunities to an underprivileged group. The Quaker Society of Friends in Philadelphia also showed their care towards the city's black population by venturing into the uncharted territory of African American education. The Quakers, with Benezet at the forefront, transformed Philadelphia into a more inclusive society for the large free black community within the city. By believing in an underprivileged population's abilities, Benezet and other Quakers worked to reform the society in which they lived.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUAKER APPROACH TO NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION

Unlike his focus on female and African American education, Anthony Benezet was not greatly involved with any specific school designed to teach Native Americans. However, Benezet still advocated for educating Native Americans and echoed the Quaker belief of using education to improve upon the conditions of Native Americans to bring them closer to Christianity. Although problematic by modern standards, Benezet sought to use education as a gateway to social inclusion. With the education of women and African Americans, Benezet sought to give the groups access into society through education, but it was not centered around changing their cultures and values as was the case with Native Americans. Benezet also published *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent* to highlight the importance of treating Native Americans kindly, but Christianity was also a primary focus in his writings. This chapter shows the role played by the Quaker community in the education of Native Americans in the American North American British colonies.

Native Americans did not lack education within their communities prior to European contact. Education within indigenous communities centered around life skills rather than the skills common in European education: reading, writing, and arithmetic. Historian Margaret Connell Szasz described pre-contact Native American education as consisting of three core concepts: “economic skills, knowledge of cultural heritage, and spiritual awareness.”²²⁶ Survival training included the acquisition of food sources. Children in Native American communities learned to hunt with bows and arrows and how to grow food, such as corn.²²⁷ Another important

²²⁶ Szasz, 11.

²²⁷ Szasz, 12.

category of native education pre-European contact was cultural heritage knowledge. Storytelling was an important way for native groups to pass on their history to new generations without using written sources.²²⁸ The stories often included moral lessons for the children of the community, which enforced morals and values in the form of education.²²⁹ The third category of native education that Szasz focused on was spiritual awareness. Religion varied between different native tribes, but it was a central aspect of the education of the youth.²³⁰ Therefore, the Native Americans did not lack a system of education prior to European contact. Although the various native groups educated their children as they saw fit within their communities, European settlers used their own educational expectations and standards to influence the native groups.

The primary goal in the education of Native Americans in Colonial America was to change the Native American culture to reflect the culture of the European colonists. The Europeans who settled North America met native groups who inhabited the region. The two groups had conflicting cultures, and education was a tool used by the Europeans to make Native Americans conform to European educational and cultural standards.²³¹

By no means did Native Americans lack educational foundations in their own communities. The educational methods used by Native Americans differed significantly from the European education systems. Native Americans focused on teaching their children skills that

²²⁸ Szasz, 12.

²²⁹ Szasz, 13.

²³⁰ Szasz, 16.

²³¹ Szasz, 4.

Different groups of settlers viewed the Native Americans in different ways. Kupperman describes that the English settlers were using the Native Americans to learn more about themselves while also shaping the indigenous views and culture to align more closely with their own

Cañizares-Esguerra compares the Puritan and Spanish settlers in the new world. Both groups' views were centered around religion, and the author describes their perspective of Native Americans as demonic, and the Great Awakening in the mid-eighteenth century lead to conversion efforts in the colonies.

Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians & English: Facing Off in Early America* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 2000), 40.

Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 2006), 88, 213.

they would need in life, but some of these lessons, such as survival skills, did not necessarily align with the European educational system.²³² Therefore, the different groups of settlers, including the Quakers, who offered educational opportunities for Native Americans, were also motivated by goals of cultural change.

The way that Quakers treated and viewed Native Americans is in line with the concept of the “Noble Savage.” The “Noble Savage” term emerged in English literature in 1609 after Marc Lescarbot wrote *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, which was translated into English in the same year.²³³ ²³⁴Ter Ellingson’s book *The Myth of the Noble Savage* examines and elaborates on Lescarbot’s writings. Ellingson describes how Lescarbot depicted Native Americans as living as the Europeans did prior to civilization advancements, such as books and laws, which contradicted the idea that Europeans and Native Americans were entirely different from each other.²³⁵ By showing that Native Americans exhibited qualities similar to past European civilizations, Lescarbot created a bridge between the two groups. Ellingson describes the general theme of Lescarbot’s “Noble Savage” by stating, “every assertion of their virtues is balanced by an enumeration of their vices, which is in turn counterbalanced by a reminder of the equal vices of Europeans.”²³⁶ Therefore, the Native Americans were described as not entirely savage but also not completely equal to Europeans. Although the idea of Native Americans having some “noble” qualities was a step in the right direction, it not enough for Native Americans to be treated equally in colonial American society. In order to gain truly equal opportunities in Colonial

²³² Szasz, 12.

²³³ Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 21.

²³⁴ Lescot was inspired by others who wrote about the positive nature of Native Americans despite the native culture being so drastically different from their own. One of these writers was Jean de Lery, who highlighted the noble qualities of natives in Brazil.

Ellingson, 390.

²³⁵ Ellingson, 26.

²³⁶ Ellingson, 29.

America, Native American cultures and lifestyles needed to be fully accepted, but that was not the case.

The Quakers, specifically Anthony Benezet, articulated similar views to that of “Noble Savage” literature. The Quakers focused primarily on trying to Christianize and assimilate the Native Americans through education and missions. Although Benezet did point out the positive attributes of Native Americans in his writings, he stressed the importance of introducing them to Christian religions and European culture. The concept that Native Americans had some positive attributes but needed further improvement to align with European standards is a reflection of “Noble Savage” ideas held in the colonies even in the decade following Lescarbot’s publication. European settlers in the Americas began to use education as a tool to bridge a cultural gap between the Native Americans and themselves. Rather than learning native practices, the Europeans sought to change the Native Americans.

The overarching goal of the colonists was to make native groups align with European culture and values. The education of Native Americans throughout the American colonies varied tremendously. Margaret Connell Szasz analyzed the trends of Native American education throughout the colonies. While she identified differences in the number of Native American schools by region, she concludes that the goals of the schools were mostly the same. The New England area was more likely to open schools for Native Americans, while southern colonies had fewer schools for the natives.²³⁷ The regional differences in Native American education reflect a trend examined throughout this study of northern regions of the American colonies providing more educational opportunities to children in general. Although there were more schools in the north for native children, Szasz concluded that the schools were not designed to help the native

²³⁷ Szasz, 5.

students learn basic academic skills. Instead, the goal was “the need to Christianize and civilize the natives.”²³⁸ The education of Native Americans in the American colonies differed significantly from that of women and African Americans. While women and African Americans were taught religion in school, they also received lessons in many other subjects. On the other hand, documents describing Native American education demonstrate an overarching theme of Christian religion rather than of personal improvement based on academic skills.

As the Federal government stressed the importance of Native American assimilation, the Quakers participated by going to Native American territory to teach indigenous people European skills.²³⁹ The missions into the Native American territories all shared a common theme where Quakers thought that they were genuinely benefiting the indigenous people by teaching them European lifestyle skills and religion. The various Native American tribes had mixed feelings concerning the Quakers’ help. However, the Quakers did feel as if they were helping the native groups by creating missions and schools in their territories.

One of the key educational endeavors that the Quakers undertook was to the Oneida Nation in 1796. Karim M. Tiro’s article “ ‘We Wish to Do You Good’: The Quaker Mission to the Oneida Nation, 1790-1840” outlines the experiences of the Quakers who went to Oneida territory to bring Europeanized culture to the region. The article described that the Quakers tried to introduce agriculture and other European systems to the Oneidas but showed little care for the Oneida culture or language, which only widened the divide between the two groups.²⁴⁰ The Quakers taught the Oneida various European-centered skills. For example, at the end of 1796, the Quakers opened an English school, and they also taught the Oneida about European building

²³⁸ Szasz, 5.

²³⁹ Heather and Nielsen, 293.

²⁴⁰ Tiro, 364.

techniques.²⁴¹ Two women who were apart of the Quaker mission taught the Oneida girls how to spin and knit, which disrupted the gender roles in the Oneida culture and imposed more European standards for how women should spend their time.²⁴² The Quakers left the Oneida territory to “the more promising prospects at the Seneca mission begun in 1798.”²⁴³ The Oneida reportedly wanted the Quakers to stay, and letters detailed their fear that other colonists would move into their territory to take it, which proved to be true.²⁴⁴ While the Quakers imposed on the Oneida Nation and tried to spread their religion, they were non-violent in their approach. Although the Quakers focused on religion and in civilizing the Oneida, they showed genuine care for the people living there, and they wanted them to learn European skills in order to better themselves by European standards.

The Quakers moved to Seneca territory in the late eighteenth century to bring European ideas to the native tribe. The Quakers actually entered Seneca territory because of a request from a Seneca leader, Cornplanter, to have Quaker teachers come to the territory in 1789, and in 1799 the Quakers established a school.²⁴⁵ At the request of Seneca leadership, the Quakers moved into their territory. This is an example of the Native Americans welcoming, at least in part, the quaker missions. In 1816, Quaker Joseph Elkinton began teaching at the reservation. Elkinton taught boys basic skills such as reading, writing, and math and also included religion into the curriculum at Tunesassa.²⁴⁶ As such, this school focused on a European-centered curriculum rather than the skills that Native Americans found most useful in their culture.

²⁴¹ Tiro, 365.

²⁴² Tiro, 367.

²⁴³ Tiro, 371.

²⁴⁴ Tiro, 371.

²⁴⁵ Heather and Nielsen, 294.

²⁴⁶ Heather and Nielsen, 296.

With their push for assimilating the Native Americans, European settlers pushed their gender roles onto the natives. Barbra Heather and Marianne O. Nielsen describe that “While Quakers at Oneida and Tunesassa did teach both boys and girls literacy skills and sent several Indian children on to post-secondary education, most of their efforts were directed towards manual labour for the boys and domestic skills for the girls, both of which continued to disregard Seneca culture.”²⁴⁷ The boys were taught traditional school subjects like how to read, write, and do mathematics and also agricultural skills, while the girls were taught how to make soap and spin and weave clothes.²⁴⁸ The Quakers forced their gender divides on the natives, and Karim M. Tiro described that “The Quaker’s insistence on realigning Oneida gender roles posed the single greatest obstacle to the achievement of their goals.”²⁴⁹ The Quakers’ missions went directly against the preexisting structure of Native American societies. By highlighting gender divides held by European colonists, the Quakers imposed their culture on the Native Americans that they were trying to educate. The Quakers believed that they were helping by establishing missions in Native American territory, but they were mostly disrupting the way of life that the Native Americans had prior to European contact.

The Quakers proved through their missions that they were on the same side as the federal government in terms of educating the Native Americans. Their main focus was on bringing European culture and Christian religion to Native Americans in order to civilize them. The schools that were established within Native American territories were designed to teach indigenous people European educational standards. Yet, the Quakers failed to take native cultures and beliefs into account throughout their efforts. By teaching agriculture to the men and

²⁴⁷ Heather and Nielsen, 297.

²⁴⁸ Heather and Nielson, 296-297.

Tiro, 368.

²⁴⁹ Tiro, 367

needlework to the women, the Quakers imposed European gender roles on the different tribes.²⁵⁰ Instead of reforming educational standards in the same way that they did with women and African Americans, the Quakers followed the method of trying to change Native American culture to fit European and Christian standards.

Anthony Benezet offered his own opinions on the education of native populations. Many of his views reflected the same views of the Quaker community. He published one book describing the treatment of Native Americans. Within this book, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, Benezet focused on improving the conditions of the Native Americans within the colonies through Christian education and improved relationships between natives and Europeans. Benezet reflected the religious views of the Quaker community as they applied to the education of Native Americans. Although Benezet did not participate in Native American education directly, he did use his publication to advocate for improved treatment of natives.

However, unlike his work for women and African Americans, Benezet was not an active member in providing education to Native Americans. Instead, Benezet focused on showing that the Native Americans deserved improved treatments, which was similar to his numerous abolitionist writings. Benezet published many anti-slavery documents, but only one of his publications focused on the Native Americans. Although he was not a prolific writer on Native American issues, he did echo the Quaker views of bringing Christian religion to indigenous people.

While he advocated for the improved treatment of the Native Americans, his primary focus was the introduction of Christianity to the Native Americans to make them conform to

²⁵⁰ Tiro, 367.

European culture. Benezet laid out his motives for writing this document upfront, and the following excerpt served as a warning to the reader:

Be not offended therefore if the Indian is represented as a rational being as well as ourselves, if having an immortal soul, capable of receiving the resining influence of our holy religion, it is that he may be allowed to dwell in safety, and rejoice in the opportunity, which a return of peace, may afford to instruct him in the knowledge of the true God.²⁵¹

Anthony Benezet laid out that the purpose of this writing was to show that the Native Americans were not as different from the European settlers as was commonly thought. This approach was similar to the way Benezet showed that African Americans were human beings capable of learning and achieving success within Colonial America.

In describing the character of the Native Americans, Benezet used accounts from early European settlers to show the kind nature of the Natives. Much like with his anti-slavery writings, Benezet blamed the Europeans for the way in which they are treated by the Native Americans. In the following excerpt, Benezet placed the blame of the poor relationship between the two groups on the European settlers:

Some writers have represented Indians as naturally ferocious, treacherous, and ungrateful, and endeavored to establish this character of them, from some particular transaction which hath happened on special occasions: but no conclusion of their original character should be drawn from instances in which they have been provoked, to a degree of fury and vengeance, by unjust and cruel treatment from European aggressors, of which most histories of the first settlements on this continent furnish instances, and which writers have endeavored to colour and vindicate, by reprobating the character of those poor people.²⁵²

When writing about African Americans and Native Americans, Benezet showed the Europeans as the aggressors. Benezet, however, attempted to show the group as victims of European intrusion. Benezet made an important note that accounts of Native American cultures written by

²⁵¹ Benezet, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, iv.

²⁵² Benezet, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, 8.

colonists had biases and may not have been accurate sources for the character of indigenous people. This warning reveals Benezet's desire to provide more positive depictions of Native American cultures.

In order to create a more positive public view of Native Americans, Benezet gave a specific example of the disposition of the natives in the colonies. The following excerpt described how Native Americans, specifically in his region, were kind to the settlers:

The people of Pennsylvania and New Jerseys, as has been already noted, have had full opportunity to experience the good disposition and kindness of the Indians, so long as they were treated with justice and humanity, as particularly appears from the many striking instances of probity, gratitude and beneficences, on record, at the time when the disparity of their numbers was so great, that they might have easily destroyed the settlers, had they been so minded.²⁵³

Benezet argued that the Native Americans in the New England region had been potentially capable of forcing the Europeans to leave in the early days of settlement, but they had not done so, which was his argument for their kind disposition. Benezet's statement suggests that the Native Americans were capable of living among the Europeans and kind enough to not drive them away, but the Europeans became the aggressors.

Within *Some observations on the situation*, Benezet argued that the Native Americans were not inferior to Europeans, but their situation was significantly different from the European settlers.

From these publications as well as from the remembrance of some yet living, it is evident, that the natural disposition of the Indians has generally been to shew kindness to the Europeans, in their early settlements; and that their mental powers are equally with our own capable of improvement; that the apparent difference in them, as well as in the Black People and us, arises principally from the advantages of our education, and manner of life.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Benezet, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, 39-40.

²⁵⁴ Benezet, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, 7-8.

Anthony Benezet's primary career focus was as an educator. Therefore, he viewed education as a way to improve the conditions of Native Americans. Although Benezet advocated for the improved treatments of Native Americans, he also supported the assimilation of Native Americans by suggesting that the way for the Native Americans to improve their conditions was to gain a traditional education and be introduced to the Christian religion.

Anthony Benezet's religious motives as a Quaker are made clear throughout *Some observations on the situation*, yet his work for women and African Americans did not appear to revolve around religion as much as his views on Native American education. This may be because the women and African Americans he was teaching were already Christian and already blended into European society. Throughout his publication, Benezet described the importance of introducing Christianity to Native Americans. He went as far as to state:

That this change of heart is the sure effect of the coming of Christ's kingdom, was evidenced in many of those Indians, whose case is here represented; who, by yielding to the operations of Divine Grace, were brought to an entire reformation of mind and manners. That savage ferocity, with all those dazzling notions of honour, to be gained from the destruction of mankind, so natural to the fallen sons of Adam, have gradually melted away in these Indians, into a frame of meekness, humility and love, which supported them in that lamb-like submission, under that remarkable succession of trials and afflictions which was permitted to attend them; whereby many of them are at length put beyond the reach of enmity.²⁵⁵

Benezet described Native Americans as savage prior to converting to Christianity. He even described that the wars fought between the settlers and Native Americans rarely involved a Native American who had genuinely committed to the Christian religion.²⁵⁶ These statements are peculiar because his life was devoted to providing quality education to as many children as possible. While he urged for the education of Native Americans, he seemed to discredit the lives

²⁵⁵ Benezet, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, 36-37.

²⁵⁶ Benezet, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, 38.

of Native Americans who were not Christianized and assimilated into European colonist's culture. Benezet's views echo the general views of the eighteenth century that Native Americans should blend with the settlers. The clash of cultures between the Europeans and Native Americans during the eighteenth century is made more apparent by a man who dedicated his life to helping children gain quality educations regardless of traditionally accepted societal standards.

While Benezet's writings show how he viewed Native Americans on a fundamental level, secondary sources on his relationship with neighboring tribes show how he put his views into action. Donald Brooks Kelley described Benezet's caring nature in his 1982 journal article " 'A Tender Regard to the Whole Creation': Anthony Benezet and the Emergence of an Eighteenth-Century Quaker Ecology." Kelley's main focus is how compassionate Benezet was for others. Kelley pointed out that Benezet used education in an effort to help Native Americans and black children and that he viewed education as the main difference in opportunity between minority children and white children.²⁵⁷ Although Benezet believed that education was necessary for the advancement of minorities in society, he approached his education from European standards of Christianization and Assimilation.

While the educational aspects of Benezet's writing are important, his own relationships with Native Americans are also valuable. Papunhank, "the Munsee religious leader," visited Philadelphia in 1760 and shared his religious views that were similar to those held by the Quakers.²⁵⁸ Papunhank was open to Christianity, and "many Quakers came to believe that he had acquired their beliefs and practices spontaneously, through the direct intervention of God, when

²⁵⁷ Donald Brooks Kelley, "'A Tender Regard to the Whole Creation': Anthony Benezet and the Emergence of an Eighteenth-Century Quaker Ecology," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 106, no. 1 (1982): 75.

²⁵⁸ Geoffrey Plank, "Quaker Reform and Evangelization in the Eighteenth Century," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 59, no. 2, (2014): 181.

alone in the wood."²⁵⁹ The Quaker's belief in God intervening in Papunhank's religious beliefs shows how important the Quakers thought religion was. By converting to Quaker beliefs, Papunhank took steps to blend into European society. Anthony Benezet was directly involved in Papunhank's visit to Pennsylvania; In fact, "[Benezet] hosted Papunhank in his home and did more than any other Quaker to publicize Papunhank's visits to Philadelphia."²⁶⁰ Benezet welcomed Papunkank when other people in Colonial America might not have due to negative feelings towards Native Americans. Although Benezet welcomed Papunhank into his home, it is important to note that Papunhank made his new Christian religious views known and was supportive of the Quaker's religion. If Papunhank was not willing to accept Quakerism, it is possible that his visit to Philadelphia may have gone differently.

Benezet's writings reveal his views of the Native American population. Benezet's position as a Quaker influenced his style of writing, which included many references to bringing Christianity to the Native Americans. While it does appear that Benezet had good intentions in advocating for bringing European religions to Native Americans, he did show a desire to change the culture of the Native Americans. Instead of being an example against social standards like he was for the education of women and African Americans, Benezet largely fit into the general view of assimilating Native Americans held by European settlers.

The issue of Native American education did not follow the same positive trend that education for women and African Americans did in Quaker territory in the eighteenth century. While the Quakers infused religion into all of their endeavors, the case of Native American education showed an increase in religious endeavors. The primary goal of Native American education was focused on assimilation. While women's education and African American

²⁵⁹ Plank, 181.

²⁶⁰ Plank, 185.

education also centered around providing access to greater opportunities in society, they appear much less religiously biased. In the case of African Americans, they were brought from Africa against their will, so the Quakers, specifically Benezet, sought to find a place for them within the European colonists' society. Likewise, women in the colonies either came from Europe or were born in the colonies. These women also needed access to education to have better opportunities within their societies. Native Americans were in a unique place in colonial America. Native American tribes were present on the land of the new colonies long before Europeans arrived. Therefore, Native Americans were not born into or brought to European territory. Instead, the European settlers took the Native American's land and attempted to assimilate them to their own culture. Native Americans were in a unique situation, which led to the process of assimilation. The Quakers followed the traditional views of assimilating the Native Americans to Christian European views instead of supporting neighboring tribes in retaining their own distinct cultures and religions.

Overall, Native American education was primarily an assimilation process. The Quakers in Pennsylvania were among those who used education to push European religion and culture on the Native Americans, who had their own religions and cultures. While Native American education in the colonies did not follow an educational reform similar to women and African American education, the case of indigenous education is valuable. While their approaches are problematic by modern standards, in the eighteenth century, the Quakers believed that they were doing good by encouraging Christianity among indigenous people. While there was a clash of cultures between the Native Americans and European settlers, Anthony Benezet's writings on indigenous people stressed the importance of peace between the two groups. Benezet did not view the Native Americans as dangerous people. Instead, he encouraged education to help

provide opportunities for Native Americans in a European system. Eighteenth-century Native American education sheds light on the values held by the Quakers and what they deemed as important to succeeding in their society.

CONCLUSION

Anthony Benezet, and the Quakers in Philadelphia as a whole, proved the intellectual capabilities of traditionally uneducated groups of people by providing them with increased educational opportunities. The Quakers proved their determination to provide all children with quality education by opening a school for girls and a school for black children during the eighteenth century. These two schools were a result of the Quakers providing increased educational opportunities to children in their community. Anthony Benezet was a valuable force in the creation and running of both the Girl's School and the Negro School. These two schools highlight that Benezet and the Quakers were open to allowing all children access to education. A limitation in Benezet's educational goal was his focus on religion. When discussing Native Americans, Benezet focused heavily on his desire to bring Christianity to indigenous people. While the Quakers were instrumental in bringing education reform to Philadelphia in the eighteenth century, they might have been fueled more by their religion than by what was in the best interests of their students. Religious motives may have limited the Quakers' outreach to students and the material that they were taught.

Anthony Benezet's publications reveal, from his own perspective, the importance of increased access to education and improved treatment of all people. Benezet was an avid writer, and he documented his views on racial tensions in the colonies. Benezet's abolitionist writings are valuable in showing the shifting perspective of slavery and race during the eighteenth century. By using travel narratives and accounts of African society, Benezet showed that Africans possessed advanced cultures and civilizations. Humanizing African Americans was Benezet's key strategy to help his audience realize the horrors of the slave trade.

Benezet also wrote about Native Americans and how they deserved kind treatment instead of hostility. Benezet's book *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent* detailed the kind nature of the Native Americans, but it also focused on converting indigenous people to Christianity. While religion is present in all of Benezet's writings, when writing about Native Americans, religion was more prevalent. While Benezet did not allude to why he focused more heavily on Native American Christianization than he did with women and children, it may be that the African Americans and women that he taught were already Christians, and therefore he did not feel the need to center his efforts around Christianization. However, it may also be because he felt like the indigenous culture was more removed from Europeans than Africans and women. Native American education, while important to Benezet and the Quakers, followed a different trend than African American and women's education by focusing more on assimilation and Christianization attempts than traditional education.

Through the examination of a variety of sources, the eighteenth century in Philadelphia can be viewed as a period of educational advancements. The Quaker Society of Friends in Philadelphia put education at the forefront of their mission. By providing education to women and minorities, they proved that intellectual capacity was not based on gender or race. The minutes regarding the formation of the Negro School directly reveal the Quakers' goal for proving African American's intellect. The minutes describe the success of the Negro School, and the minutes even state that the Quakers who helped establish the school hoped that the school could serve as an example of what African American children were capable of if given a chance.²⁶¹ Benezet's publications also provided written evidence of the Quakers' positive views

²⁶¹ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (December, 25, 1773), 38.

of women and minorities. Secondary sources also support the Quaker's desire to help children gain adequate educations. The Quakers went above and beyond what was expected from early schools to ensure that a wide range of students received quality educations. The Quakers left behind detailed evidence of how they achieved educational advancements for women and minorities in eighteenth-century Philadelphia.

The eighteenth century marked a period of educational reform for women in early America, especially in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Traditionally, girls of lower social statuses in the colonies relied on their education at home by their family members, teaching them basic household skills such as cooking and needlework.²⁶² Upper-class girls had more educational opportunities, although those were typically focused on refinement rather than formal education. Change in what girls were taught was, in part, due to British prescriptive writers. The British prescriptive writers during the eighteenth century endorsed upper-class girls in Philadelphia to obtain access to education by reading.²⁶³ The prescriptive writers emphasized the importance of teaching girls "reason and rationality" rather than focusing heavily on household tasks.²⁶⁴ The move from educations centered around traditional household tasks to ones more focused on intellectual thought sparked a shift in the educational opportunities for women.

In the case of women's education, Anthony Benezet proved that women deserved quality educations that no longer focused solely on household tasks. Benezet went further than the prescriptive writers and pushed for the education of women of all social statuses. Benezet was instrumental in creating a school for girls in Philadelphia, which opened in 1754, with Benezet teaching 30 students.²⁶⁵ His time at the Girl's School was short-lived, as he left the school after

²⁶² Parkerson & Parkerson, 32.

²⁶³ Fatherly, 235.

²⁶⁴ Fatherly, 236.

²⁶⁵ "25th day of the 4th mo. 1754," Minutes quoted in Brookes, 38.

only teaching for a year; however, Benezet showed regret for leaving the school, and in 1757 he went back to teaching at the school he helped create.²⁶⁶ Benezet's deep regret for leaving the Girls' School further shows his commitment to the education of women in his community.

Throughout the duration of his time teaching girls, Benezet showed that they had the same intellectual capabilities as their male counterparts. Benezet's dedication to teaching girls was valuable in proving that women deserved comparable educations to boys. Deborah Logan, a student under Anthony Benezet at the Girl's School, detailed the academic curriculum at the school and showed they received an education comparable to those of boys. Benezet's expectations demonstrate his dedication to moving beyond teaching girls only household skills. He held the girls to high standards in his school and expected them to develop academic skills such as reading and writing, which were likely not available to them beyond Benezet's instruction.

Benezet wrote prolifically about the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and pushed for the end of slavery. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade resulted in roughly 10 million slaves entering the Americas, with about half a million of those Africans entering the United States throughout the duration of the trade.²⁶⁷ By the end of the eighteenth century in Philadelphia, only about one percent of the estimated 2,000 black population was enslaved, which resulted in a large free-black population.²⁶⁸ As a result, Philadelphia emerged as a city with a large free black population in the eighteenth century. The Quakers were supporters of the abolitionist movement, and Anthony Benezet published numerous documents outlining the horrible nature of the slave

²⁶⁶ Brookes, 40.

²⁶⁷ Klein, 47.

²⁶⁸ Van Horne, 73.

trade and called for an end to slavery. As a result of their abolitionist beliefs, the Quakers created a community that rejected slavery.

As a result of the large free black community in the city, the Quakers strove to provide education to African Americans in their community. Anthony Benezet was among the most influential people in creating educational opportunities for the black population in Philadelphia. Benezet taught black children in his own home as early as 1750, and his commitment to providing black children with quality educations resulted in a committee that was started in 1770 to discuss the possibilities of creating a school for black children.²⁶⁹ The minutes of this committee outline the creation of a school for black children in Philadelphia. The Negro School, as it was called, was instrumental in bringing education to African Americans in Philadelphia and in proving that black students were capable of achieving higher levels of education than previously believed. One of the main goals through the founding of the Negro School was to prove that African American children were capable of academic achievements.²⁷⁰ The Quakers provided educational reform within Philadelphia to provide black children with increased educational opportunities.

Native Americans in the colonies were subject to the colonists' efforts to impose Christianity and European culture on their communities. The term "Noble Savage" reflected the idea that Native Americans lived similarly to how the Europeans lived prior to technological advancements, which made them not entirely different from the European colonists.²⁷¹ The term "Noble Savage" put the Native Americans in a position of not being entirely uncivilized but also not equal to Europeans. "Noble Savage" ideas suggested that Native Americans were capable of

²⁶⁹ Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, 45, 47.

²⁷⁰ *Minutes of the Committee appointed by the Three Monthly Meetings of Friends of Philadelphia to the Oversight and care of the School for Educating African's and their Descendants*. (December 25, 1773), 38.

²⁷¹ Ellingson, 26.

learning as Europeans learned throughout history to develop more advanced technology. As a result, the colonists pushed their beliefs and cultures on the Native Americans with little regard to the preexisting native cultures of the regions that they settled. By showing little regard for Native American culture, the colonists used education as a means of assimilating indigenous people to European culture and introducing them to Christianity.

The Quakers advocated for increased educational opportunities for women and African Americans that challenged the accepted beliefs concerning the intellectual capabilities of these two groups. However, rather than challenging the accepted educational approaches concerning Native Americans, the Quakers emphasized making Native Americans fit into the colonists' European-like society.

Anthony Benezet wrote about Native Americans and urged for improved treatments of indigenous people. However, his writings were heavily focused on bringing Christianity to Native Americans and echoed the "noble savage" ideology. His writing on Native Americans focused on Christianizing Native Americans, and he went as far as to describe that no wars were fought with converted Native Americans.²⁷² By highlighting the importance of converting Native Americans, Benezet's own Quaker biases are exposed as he imposed his European beliefs on the indigenous people living in his region. Although the Quakers supported peaceful relations with Native Americans, they did not pursue the same level of progressive educational reform that they showed with women and African Americans.

By utilizing primary documentation from the eighteenth century, including Anthony Benezet's publications, letters, and minutes from the Society of Friends meetings, this thesis revealed the ways in which the Quakers in Philadelphia changed the educational system within

²⁷² Benezet, *Some observations on the situation, disposition, and character of the Indian natives of this continent*, 38.

their community. Although religiously biased, the Quakers were a peaceful group who wanted to improve in their community. By challenging social standards for the treatment of African Americans and Native Americans, the Quakers put forth progressive ideologies concerning the value of human life regardless of racial backgrounds. The Quakers also challenged the educational system of their time by allowing women and African Americans to gain education on an equal level as white male children.

The Quaker's ability to successfully challenge and change Philadelphia's educational standards is significant because it shows an isolated attempt by a small group of people to improve their community. Educational reform resulted from isolated incidents that slowly changed the system of education in colonial America to include women and African Americans. While the issue of Native American education is problematic due to Christianization and assimilation attempts, it still provides valuable insight into the Quaker community. The Quakers were a religious group, so bringing religion to native Americans is not surprising. However, they did follow the widely accepted method of providing education to Native Americans rather than attempting to change the standards as they did with women and African Americans.

Anthony Benezet and the Quakers in Pennsylvania proved their desire for all children to have quality educations throughout the eighteenth century. The Quakers worked to ensure that even women and minority groups had proper educations. Anthony Benezet headed the effort for education for women and African Americans, but he did not do it alone. The Quakers proved that working together was the most effective way to provide minorities with proper education. By creating schools and discussing education in monthly meetings, the Society of Friends in Philadelphia succeeded in opening schools for women and African Americans in their city. While the Quakers, with Anthony Benezet in leadership roles, were instrumental in the education

reform for women and African Americans in the eighteenth century, Native American education did not see the same reform efforts. Instead, the Quakers followed the general concept of bringing Christianity and European ideals to the Native Americans in their region. While the Quakers of the eighteenth century were ahead of their times on certain key issues such as abolition and women's intellectual capabilities, they held the same general concept that Native Americans needed to find Christianity in order to fit into European society.

The Quakers in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania provide valuable insight into the educational practices of Colonial America. While education in the colonies focused primarily on educating wealthy white male children, the Quakers proved that other groups could obtain similar levels of education. Anthony Benezet was a major advocate for the intellectual capabilities of women and minorities. He believed that all children needed access to proper education, as reflected in his desire to open a school for girls and African Americans. These two schools, along with the writings and publications of Anthony Benezet, shed light on the Quaker community. The Quakers were among the first to offer educational opportunities for women and minorities, and their efforts in the eighteenth-century marked a turning point in the opportunities available to traditionally uneducated people. Anthony Benezet and the Quakers in Philadelphia proved that a person's intellectual capabilities were not based on gender or race.

The Quakers' push for educational reform within their own community was a starting point for increased educational opportunities throughout America. Although the shift to inclusive education was a long road, the Quakers were among the first to realize the intellectual potential of minorities and women. Not only did the Quakers recognize the potential of all children regardless of race or gender, but they also acted on their beliefs by creating schools to provide these individuals with quality educations that were not previously available to them. The

Quakers were long ahead of their time with their educational endeavors, and they did not instantly spark a shift towards a more inclusive education system in early America. However, the Quakers were a unique community that proved it was possible to challenge societal values to bring increased opportunities to those in need.

Minority groups had to fight beyond the eighteenth century to secure their access to equal education. Legal rights to education did not come until nearly 200 years later, in 1964, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act. This act guaranteed minorities with improved conditions and rights under the law, including the prohibition of segregation in schools based on “race, color, religion, or national origin.”²⁷³ 194 years passed between the establishment of the Quaker Negro School and the passage of this act, reflecting the long road for minorities to secure equal opportunities under the law. The Quakers were key players in the movement as they began the battle for equal educational opportunities.

The road to an equal education system between men and women did not come until the passage of Title IX in 1972 that eliminated discrimination in Federally funded schools in the United States.²⁷⁴ During the 218 years between the founding of the Society of Friends girl’s school in 1754 to 1972, when Title IX was passed, girls continued to gain quality education despite many obstacles along the way. Although not a direct link to modern education reform for women, the Quakers took the first step of including women in their schools.

During the eighteenth century, the Quakers, with Anthony Benezet in a leading role, proved that women and minorities had intellectual capability comparable to white men. By establishing schools for their instruction, the Quakers created a forward-thinking community. In

²⁷³ “Transcript of Civil Rights Act (1964),” *Our Documents*, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=97&page=transcript>.

²⁷⁴ “Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972,” *The United States Department of Justice*, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix-education-amendments-1972>.

order to understand how minorities and women eventually gained equal education, at least under the law, in the twentieth century, it is important to examine how far these groups came and how long it took for their full inclusion in schools. The eighteenth century marked a turning point in education reform in Philadelphia, and by rethinking education, Anthony Benezet and the Quakers established a community that fostered inclusivity through education.

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