**Video Transcription**

**Video Transcription Text**

I feel I am something of a novice upon this platform. Born of a race whose inheritance has been outrage and wrong. Most of my life had been spent in battling against those wrongs. But I did not feel as keenly as others that I had these rights, in common with other women, which are now demanded.

About two years ago I stood within the shadows of my home. A great sorrow had fallen upon my life. My husband had died suddenly, leaving me a widow, with four children. I tried to keep my children together but my husband died in debt; and before he had been in his grave three months, the administrator had swept the very milk crocks and washtubs from my hands. I was a farmer’s wife and made butter for the market. But what could I do, when they had swept all away?

Had I died instead of my husband, how different would have been the result! By this time he would have had another wife, it is likely; and no administrator would have gone into his house, broken up his home, and

**Summary**

I am new to the fight for suffrage. I have spent most of my life battling racial oppression. Until recently I did not feel that I had much in common with white women who are demanding equal rights.

Two years ago my husband died suddenly. I was left alone with four children. I tried to take care of my children, but my husband left debts to be paid. The debt collector sold all my butter-making tools to pay them. What could I do for money when my work tools had been taken?

If I had died instead of my husband, things would have been different. He would probably have remarried. No debt collector would have taken his things to repay his debts. [Harper is referring to the law of coverture,

sold his bed, and taken away his means of support.

under which a husband legally owned his wife’s property. If a woman died, the assumption was that her husband would work to pay off debts, and the family’s belongings would not be seized.

I say, then, that justice is not fulfilled so long as woman is unequal before the law. We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the negro. You pressed him down for two centuries; and in so doing you crippled the moral strength and paralyzed the spiritual energies of the white men of the country. When the hands of the Black were fettered, white men were deprived of the liberty of speech and the freedom of the press. Society cannot afford to neglect the enlightenment of any class of its members.

This country will never have justice as long as women are unequal. We are all one people, and society cannot oppress the weakest in society without damaging everyone. You tried to oppress Black people. You oppressed them for two hundred years. By doing so, you hurt the spiritual energy of white men in this country. When Black people were enslaved, white men were not allowed to thrive either and were deprived of their own rights. Society should not neglect anyone, because it is detrimental to all.

I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life. I do not believe that white women are dewdrops exhaled from the skies. I think, that like men, they can be divided into three classes: the good, the bad, and the indifferent. The good will vote according to their convictions and principles; the bad as

I do not think that giving women the ballot to vote is going to immediately fix all wrongs. I do not think white women can fix everything. I think, like men, white women can be divided into three groups: the good, the bad, and the uncaring. The good will vote in support of their own ideals, the bad will be controlled by prejudice.
dictated by prejudice or malice; and the indifferent will vote on the strongest side of the question, the winning party.

You white women speak here of rights and I speak of wrongs. I, as a colored woman, have had in this country an education which has made me feel as if I were in the situation of Ishmael, my hand against every man and every man’s hand against me. Let me go tomorrow morning and take my seat in one of your streetcars—I do not know that they will do it in New York, but they will in Philadelphia—and the conductor will put his hand and stop the car rather than let me ride.

In advocating the cause of the colored man, since the Dred Scott decision, I have sometimes said I thought the nation had touched bottom. But let me tell you there is a depth of infamy lower than that. It is when the nation, standing upon the threshold of a great peril, reached out to its hands a feebler race, and asked that the race help it, and when the peril was over, said “You are good enough for soldiers but not good enough for citizens.”

I have been fighting for racial justice for nearly ten years, since the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision. I’ve sometimes thought this country had hit rock bottom. But I was wrong. We asked Black men to fight in the Civil War to save this nation. But after the war, we told them they were good enough to die for the country but not good enough to vote.

There is a Black woman people call Moses [Harriet Tubman]. She earned that nickname by helping hundreds of Black people self-emancipate. When I

We have a woman in our country who has received the name of Moses, not by lying about it, but by acting it out. A woman who has gone down to the

White women speak of rights and I speak of wrongs. I, as a Black woman, have always felt alone. I must fight every person for equal rights, and every person will try to keep me down. If I tried to get on a streetcar tomorrow, the conductor would not let me on. Maybe they would in New York, but not in Philadelphia.
Egypt of slavery and brought out hundreds of our people into liberty. The last time I saw that woman, her hands were swollen. That woman, who was brave enough and secretive enough to act as a scout for the American Army, had her hands swollen from the conflict with a brutal conductor who undertook to eject her from her place. That woman, whose courage and bravery won a recognition from our army and from every Black man in this country, is excluded from every thoroughfare of travel. So talk of giving women the ballot box. Go on! It is a normal school and the white women of this country need it. While there exists this brutal element in society which tramples upon the feeble and treads down the weak, I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America.