

REFORMER AND EARLY FEMINIST, ERNESTINE ROSE

Learn with the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History

Have you ever shared an unpopular opinion?

How did you feel about it?

Nervous? Excited? Proud? Scared?

Ernestine Rose (1810-1892) spent her life sharing unpopular opinions. She was one of the first people to speak out about women's rights, like being able to vote or own property. The daughter of a Polish rabbi, she traveled across Europe and the United States to search for the life she knew she deserved, instead of the life that men wanted her to have. But wherever she went, she found that only men were discussing women's rights. If a woman tried to get up on stage at a meeting, men would laugh and even throw things at her! **But Ernestine Rose got up on stage anyway.**

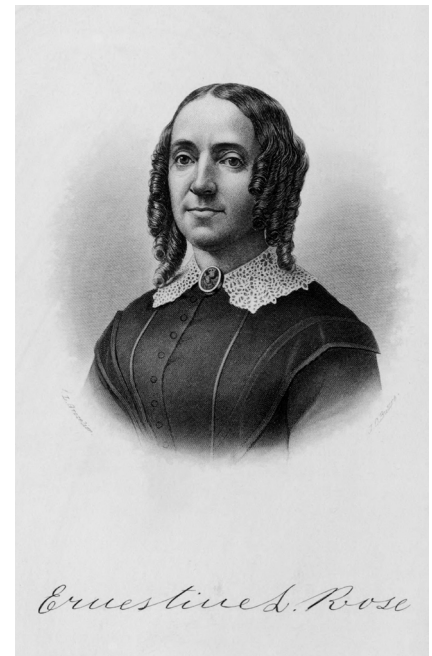
In an 1856 letter, Rose wrote:

If, in expressing my opinions, I have been severe alike on friend and foe, it is because in principle I know no compromise, I expect no reward, I fear no opposition—but with an earnest desire my aim has been steadily directed onward and upward.

- Which does Rose consider to be more important, her opinions or her friendships?
- Why is Rose so forceful in sharing her opinions?
- Is there an opinion or issue you feel this strongly about?

Celebrating 100 Years of Suffrage

2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment ensuring women's right to vote. Imagine what it was like for the women of that era to be denied a voice in politics among other rights. Visit our virtual installation sharing some of these stories at the link: <https://www.theweitzman.org/exhibitions/suffrage-100/>.



Ernestine Rose, 1887
S. B. Anthony, Rochester, NY

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We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

While today we might easily agree with Rose's opinions, they were very controversial in the mid-1800s. She caused a lot of drama by sticking to her beliefs. But, as she continued to speak at meetings, the public slowly became accustomed to the idea of a woman giving a speech about women's rights. She made it a little bit easier for later suffragists, like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Rose wrote this in 1860 about Frances Wright, one of the few women to speak publicly about women's rights before Rose:

It was a Herculean task... she received... slander, abuse, and persecution—yet her agitation shook the time-hardened crust of conservatism and prepared the soil for the plough...

- What is “a Herculean task”?
- Why does Rose describe Wright's activism like that?
- What does it mean to shake the “crust of conservatism” and to “[prepare] the soil for the plough”? What do you think will grow from this metaphorical soil?
- What's an issue that's important to you? Who taught you about this issue? Who has “prepared the soil” before you? Who are you preparing the soil for?

Postcard Project

REACH OUT TO A FRIEND ABOUT SOMEONE WHO HAS SUPPORTED YOU

Write a postcard to a friend and tell them about someone who has “prepared the soil” before you. Consider answering these questions:

- What is an issue you care about and why is it important?
- How did the person you're describing prepare the soil for others?
- What did you learn from this person?
- How will you prepare the soil for others in the future?

**MAKE SURE TO SHARE YOUR
INSPIRING PERSON WITH US
TOO! TAG US @WeitzmanMuseum
AND #HistoryAtHome!**