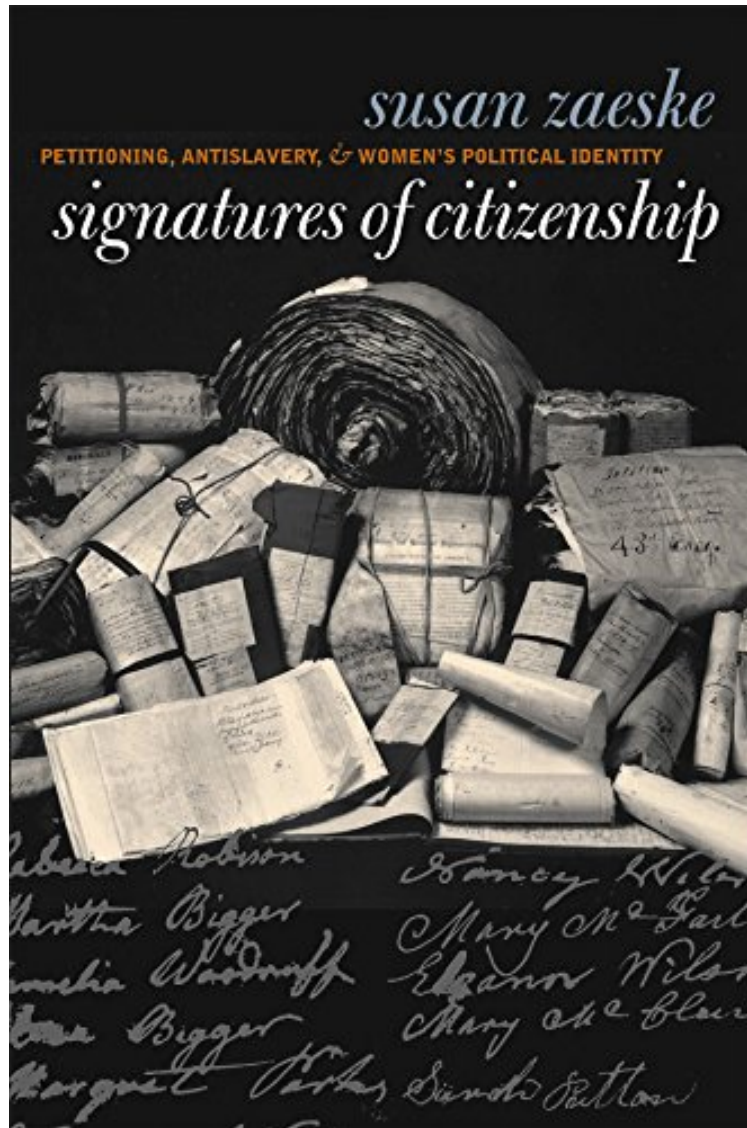


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Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity

Susan Zaeske

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Susan Zaeske : Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity:

In this comprehensive history of women's antislavery petitions addressed to Congress, Susan Zaeske argues that by petitioning, women not only contributed significantly to the movement to abolish slavery but also made important strides toward securing their own rights and transforming their own political identity. By analyzing the language of women's antislavery petitions, speeches calling women to petition, congressional debates, and public reaction to women's petitions from 1831 to 1865, Zaeske reconstructs and interprets debates over the meaning of female citizenship. At the beginning of their political campaign in 1835 women tended to disavow the political nature of their petitioning, but by the 1840s they routinely asserted women's right to make political demands of their representatives. This rhetorical change, from a tone of humility to one of insistence, reflected an ongoing transformation in the political identity of petition signers, as they came to view themselves not as subjects but as citizens. Having encouraged women's involvement in national politics, women's antislavery petitioning created an appetite for further political participation that spurred countless women after the Civil War and during the first decades of the twentieth century to promote causes such as temperance, anti-lynching laws, and woman suffrage.

Zaeske's analysis of the way petitions shaped women's identities as citizens and raised their feminist consciousness is a splendid contribution to historical scholarship. (Gerda Lerner, University of Wisconsin-Madison) A subtle and original analysis of women's antislavery petitioning to Congress that both historians and rhetoricians should consider essential reading. (Lori D. Ginzberg, author of "Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States") [Zaeske's] analysis of the way petitions shaped women's identities as citizens and raised their feminist consciousness is a splendid contribution to historical scholarship. (Gerda Lerner, University of Wisconsin-Madison) Invaluable to scholars of political culture. . . . Elucidates new aspects of women's political consciousness in the nineteenth century." -- "Historian" [An] incisive examination." -- "National Women's Studies Association Journal" Based on her careful reading of women's petitions, Susan Zaeske brilliantly illuminates the transforming impact of women on nineteenth-century politics. Her analysis of the way petitions shaped women's identities as citizens and raised their feminist consciousness is a splendid contribution to historical scholarship.--Gerda Lerner, University of Wisconsin-Madison [An] incisive examination.--National Women's Studies Association Journal Zaeske's book gives us the richest and most detailed look yet at women's involvement in the petition campaign. . . . Free Hearts and Free Homes is an important book that is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of antislavery politics and gender issues.--Register of the Kentucky Historical Society Comprehensive. . . . This is a solid contribution and should be an essential read for anyone interested in ideas of citizenship and history.--Journal of Church and State An admirable study of a significant activity in the history of 19th century reform movements.--Civil War Book A compelling portrait of the anti-slavery petition campaigns of the nineteenth century and their impact on women's political identities. Zaeske convincingly demonstrates that women's participation in the petition drives both contributed to the success of abolition and transformed women's political identity from one rooted in localities and religious duty to one of national citizenship and natural rights.--Civil War History Build[s] on the insights of pioneering historians . . . while also adding significantly to the findings of recent historians.--Journal of American History Invaluable to scholars of political culture. . . . Elucidates new aspects of women's political consciousness in the nineteenth century.--Historian Signatures of Citizenship combines Susan Zaeske's considerable analytical gifts with a thorough excavation of both new and old sources. The result is a subtle and original analysis of women's antislavery petitioning to Congress that both historians and rhetoricians should consider essential reading.--Lori D. Ginzberg, Penn State University Accessible and compelling. . . . This book is a must-read for all scholars of early America.--Journal of the Early Republic About the Author Susan Zaeske is associate professor of rhetoric at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.