Richardson, Anna and Ellen Richardson

(b. c. 1806; d. 1892) and (b. 1808; d. 26 April 1896), British reformers and antislavery activists.

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- <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.44990>
- **Published in print:** 06 April 2006
- **Published online:** 01 December 2006

A version of this article originally appeared in *The Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619–1895*.

Anna H. (Atkins) Richardson, a periodicals editor, and Ellen Richardson, an educator, were sisters-in-law (Anna married Ellen's brother Henry in 1833). Both women were born into middle-class Quaker families, Ellen in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Anna in Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, England. The two women were responsible for fundraising and for initiating proceedings to purchase the freedom of Frederick Douglass in 1846 as well as that of William Wells Brown in 1854.

Like many active women reformers of her generation, Ellen Richardson never married. In the 1820s and 1830s she supported the cause of West Indian slaves and worked vigorously on several antislavery issues, particularly the plight of fugitive American slaves fleeing to Britain. Charles Lenox Remond, an American antislavery activist, was a guest at the Richardson house during his visit to Britain in 1841.

Ellen's primary philanthropic and professional interest, however, was the education of working-class girls in and around Newcastle. Four years after leaving Ackworth School, where she received her education, she took over the management of the Royal Jubilee School for girls, where she remained until the school's closing in 1884. Under Richardson's supervision the school gradually became a training ground for young teachers who subsequently took up posts in the colliery towns around Newcastle. In 1860, in addition to her extant duties at the Royal Jubilee School, she was requested to organize and superintend Saint Mary's School. Her philanthropic interests extended beyond Newcastle to the welfare of the fishing families of Cullercoats, a resort she had visited with her family since her childhood. There, with her cousin Ann Richardson Foster, she established an infant's school, providing care for the children of working mothers.

A committed member of the Society of Friends, Ellen briefly held the post of elder but withdrew from the office because of increasing deafness. Her publications include "An Address to Teachers on Temperance Instruction" and *Principles of Training*; she was also responsible for the reprinting of the "National Peace Anthem" for use in schools. She retained a lifelong interest in education and corresponded with the Liberal W. E. Forster concerning secular education as a means of protecting nonconformity with the established church. Ellen Richardson died at the age of eighty-seven.

Anna Richardson was a key figure in the British antislavery and peace movements, campaigning at the national level and producing periodicals. With her husband, Henry, she was active in the abolitionist movement beginning in 1830, and she also pursued other interests, including the Bible Society, which supplied affordable Bibles, prison visiting, and temperance. In 1846 Anna founded the Ladies Free Produce Association, which boycotted goods produced using slave labor. From 1847 she issued a newsletter, "Monthly Illustrations of American Slavery," providing up-to-date information to nearly a hundred newspaper editors.

Anna was also actively involved in the Local Olive Leaf Circle, a network of peace groups linked to the antislavery League of Universal Brotherhood. In 1850 she invited Henry Highland Garnet, a former slave, leading abolitionist, and agent of the free-produce movement, to Britain to promote women's involvement in the peace movement. As a result of Garnet's efforts, twenty-six free-labor associations were formed to campaign for the boycott of American slave-produced cotton in Britain. By the 1850s she was considered a national leader of the free-produce movement and with her husband launched a periodical for that movement, the *Slave*, in January 1851. Richardson remained editor of the *Slave* until 1855, when her husband's ill health forced her to resign; however, she continued to promote the free-produce movement until 1860.

The Richardsons met Douglass again in 1860 on his second visit to Britain following John Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry. They met him for the last time in 1886, when he visited Britain with his new wife Helen Pitts on his last tour of Europe and North Africa.

See also [Antislavery Movement](#); [Brown, John](#); [Brown, William Wells](#); [Caribbean](#); [Douglass, Frederick](#); [Garnet, Henry Highland](#); [Harpers Ferry Raid](#); [Reform](#); [Remond, Charles Lenox](#); [Society of Friends \(Quakers\)](#); and [Temperance](#).

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