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**Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin**

[**August 31**](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/born-on-august-31)**,** [**1842**](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/born-1842)**-**[**March 13**](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/died-on-march-13)**,** [**1924**](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/died-1924)

Women's Rights Activist, Civil Rights Activist

[Boston](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/birth-city-boston), [Massachusetts](http://www.biography.com/people/groups/born-in-massachusetts)

Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin was an American community leader and women's rights activist who focused particularly on issues affecting African-American women.

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**quotes**

“All over America there is to be found a large and growing class of earnest, intelligent, progressive colored women ... many of them warped and cramped for lack of opportunity, not only to do more but to be more.”

“Too long have we been silent under unjust and unholy charges; we cannot expect to have them removed until we disprove them through ourselves.”

“We are justified in believing that the success of this movement for equality of the sexes means more progress toward equality of the races.”

—Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin

**Synopsis**

Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on August 31, 1842.

Married George Ruffin in 1858

Women's New Era Club and the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association.

**Early Life**

In 1858, Josephine married George L. Ruffin, a pioneering African American lawyer. George was one of the first African Americans to graduate from Harvard Law School. He also became one of the state's first black judges. Josephine and George had five children together—four of them lived to adulthood. The couple was active in the abolitionist movement and counted such activists as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass among their friends.

**Leading Social Activist**

In 1879, Ruffin created the Boston Kansas Relief Association. The organization was dedicated to helping African Americans settle in Kansas..

She became the editor of *The Woman's Era*, a newspaper devoted to the needs and concerns of African American women.

In 1894, Ruffin formed the Women's New Era Club of Boston and served as its first president.

She also brought together several African-American women's groups for the First National Conference of Colored Women in 1895.

The following year, the National Federation of Afro-American Women, the Woman's Era Clubs of Boston and the Colored Women's League of Washington, D.C., merged to become the National Association of Colored Women.

Ruffin was also active in the women's suffrage and the temperance movements.

She was member of the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association

Massachusetts Moral Education Association.

In 1900, the organizers for the General Federation of Women's Clubs would not allow her to attend as a representative of an African-American women's group.

Ruffin broke with fellow activist Booker T. Washington when he didn't challenge the organizers of the federal convention on their discriminatory practices.