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Angelina Grimké, *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States* *(1837)*

BELOVED SISTERS:

. . .The women of the North have high and holy duties to perform in the work of emancipation - duties to themselves, to the suffering slave, to the slaveholder, to the church, to their country, and to the world at large, and, above all to their God. Duties, which if not performed now, may never be performed at all....

Every citizen should feel an intense interest in the political concerns of the country, because the honor, happiness, and well being of every class, are bound up in its politics, government and laws. Are we aliens because we are women? Are we bereft of citizenship because we are the *mothers, wives,*and *daughters*of a mighty, people? Have *women*no country—no interest stakes in public weal—no liabilities in common peril—no partnership in a nation's guilt and shame? Has *woman*no home nor household altars, nor endearing ties of kindred, nor sway with man, nor power at a mercy seat, nor voice to cheer, nor hand to raise the drooping, and to bind the broken? ...

It is gravely urged that as it is a *political subject, women*have no con­cernment with it, this doctrine of the North is a sycophantic response to the declaration of a Southern representative, that women have no right to send up petitions to Congress. We know, dear sisters, that the open and the secret enemies of freedom in our country have dreaded our in­fluence, and therefore have reprobated our interference, and in order to blind us to our responsibilities, have thrown dust into our eyes, well knowing that if the organ of vision is only clear, the whole body, the mov­ing and acting faculties will become full of light, and will soon be thrown into powerful action. Some, who pretend to be very jealous for the honor of our sex, and are very anxious that *we*should scrupulously maintain the dignity and delicacy of female propriety, continually urge this objec­tion to female effort We grant that it is a political, as well as a moral sub­ject: does this exonerate women from their duties as subjects of the gov­ernment, as members of the great human family? Have women never wisely and laudably exercised political responsibilities? ...

And, dear sisters, in a country where women are degraded and bru­talized, and where their exposed persons bleed under the lash—where they are sold in the shambles of "negro brokers"- robbed of their hard earnings-torn from their husbands, and forcibly plundered of their virtue and their offspring; surely, in such a country, it is very natural that *women*should wish to know "the reason *why"-*especially when these outrages of blood and nameless horror are practised in violation of the principles of our national Bill of Rights and the Preamble of our Consti­tution. We do not, then, and cannot concede the position, that because this is a *political subject*women ought to fold their hands in idleness, and close their eyes and ears to the "horrible things" that are practised in our land. The denial of our duty to act, is a bold denial of our right to act, and if we have no right to act, then may *we*well be termed "the white slaves of the North"-for, like our brethren in bonds, we must seal our lips in silence and despair. ... *All moral beings have essentially the same rights and the same duties,*whether they be male or female....

Multitudes of Northern women are daily making use of the products of slave labor. They are clothing themselves and their families in the cot­ton, and eating the rice and the sugar, which they well know has cost the slave his unrequited toil, his blood and his tears; and if the maxim in law be founded in justice and truth, that "the receiver is *as bad*as the thief," how much *greater*the condemnation of those, who, not merely receive the stolen products of the slave's labor, but *voluntarily*purchase them, and *continually appropriate them to their own use....*

Much may be done, too, by sympathizing with our oppressed colored sisters, who are suffering in our very midst Extend to them the right hand of fellowship on the broad principles of humanity and Chris­tianity-treat them as *equals-visit*them as equals-invite them to cooperate with you in Anti-Slavery and Temperance, and Moral reform Societies-in Maternal Associations, and Prayer Meetings, and Read­ing Companies.... Opportunities frequently occur in travelling, and in other public situations, when your countenance, your influence, and your hand, might shield a sister from contempt and insult, and procure for her comfortable accommodations.... Multitudes of instances will continually occur in which you will have the opportunity of identifying yourselves with this injured class of our fellow beings; embrace these opportunities at all times and in all places.... In this way, and in this way alone, will you be enabled to subdue that deep-rooted prejudice which is doing the work of oppression in the Free States to a most dreadful extent.