

Angelina Grimké, *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States*
(1838)

In a country where women are degraded and brutalized, and where their exposed persons bleed under the lash - where they are sold by "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 know "the reason *why*" - especially when these outrages of blood and nameless horror are practiced 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 practiced 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...

Slavery exerts a most deadly influence over the morals of our country, not only over that portion of it where it actually exists as a "domestic institution".... Can crime be fashionable and common in one part of the Union and unrebuked by the other, without corrupting the very heart's blood of the nation, and lowering the standard of morality everywhere?

Because in the slaveholding States colored men are plundered and kept in abject ignorance, are treated with disdain and scorn, so here, too, in profound deference to the South, we refuse to eat, or drive, or walk, or associate, or open our institutions of learning, or even our zoological gardens to people of color, unless they visit them in the capacity of *servants*, in humble attendance upon the Anglo-American. Who ever heard of a more wicked absurdity in a Republican country?

Have Northern women, then, nothing to do with slavery, when its demoralizing influence is polluting their domestic circles? Nothing to do with slavery when Northern women are chained and driven like criminals, and incarcerated in the great prison-house of the South? Nothing to do with slavery?...

We have addressed you more as moral and responsible beings, than in the distinctive character of women; we have appealed to you on the broad ground of *human rights* and human responsibilities, rather than on that of your peculiar duties as women. We have pursued this course designedly, because, in order to prove that you have any duties to perform, it is necessary first to establish the principle of moral being, for all our rights and all our duties grow out of that principle. *All moral beings have essentially the same rights and the same duties*, whether they be male or female. ...