

From “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South”

Angelina Grimke Weld (1805-1879), the daughter of a wealthy South Carolina slaveholder, was an avid abolitionist. As you read this excerpt from an antislavery pamphlet that Weld wrote, think about why she aims her appeal at Southern women.

It is because I feel a deep and tender interest in your present and eternal welfare that I am willing thus publicly to address you. Some of you have loved me as a relative, and some have felt bound to me in Christian sympathy, and Gospel fellowship; and even when compelled by a strong sense of duty, to break those outward bonds of union which bound us together as members of the same community; and members of the same religious denomination, you were generous enough to give me credit, for sincerity as a Christian, though you believed I had been most strangely deceived. I thanked you then for your kindness, and I ask you now; for the sake of former confidence, and former friendship, to read the following pages in the spirit of calm investigation and fervent prayer. It is because you have known me, that I write thus unto you....

I appeal to you, my friends, as mothers; Are you willing to enslave *your* children? You start back with horror and indignation at such a question. But why; if slavery, is *no wrong* to those upon whom it is imposed? why, if as has often been said, slaves are happier than their masters, free from the cares and perplexities of providing for themselves and their families? *why* not place *your children* in the way of being supported without your having the trouble to provide for them, or the), for themselves? Do you not perceive that as soon as this golden rule of action is applied to *yourselves* that you involuntarily shrink from the test; as soon as your actions are weighed in this balance of the sanctuary that you *are found wanting*? Try yourselves by another of the divine precepts, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Can we love a man as we love *ourselves* if we do, and continue to do unto him, what we would not wish any one to do to us?...

But perhaps you will be ready to query,, why appeal to *women* on this subject? We do not make the laws which perpetuate slavery. *No* legislative power is vested in *us*; *we* can do nothing to overthrow the system, even if we wished to do so. To this I reply, I know you do not make the laws, but I also know that *you are the wives and mothers, the sisters and daughters, of those who do*; and if you really, suppose you can do nothing to overthrow slavery; you are greatly mistaken. You can do much in every, way: four things I will name. 1st. You can read on this subject. 2d. You can pray over this subject. 3d. You can speak on this subject. 4th. You can act on this subject....

The women of the South can overthrow this horrible system of oppression and cruelty, licentiousness and wrong. Such appeals to your legislatures would be irresistible, for there is something in the heart of man which *will bend under moral suasion*. There is a swift witness for truth in his bosom, which *will respond to truth* when it is uttered with calmness and dignity. If you could obtain but six signatures to such a petition in only one state, I would say; send up that petition, and be not in the least discouraged by the scoffs and jeers of the heartless, or the resolution of the house to lay it on the table. It will be a great thing if the subject can be introduced into your legislatures in any way, even by *women, and they will* be the most likely to introduce it there in the best possible manner, as a matter of *morals and religion*, not of expediency or politics

from Angelina Grimke Weld, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South" (New York, 1836). Reprinted in Gaff Parker, ed., *The Oven Birds: American Women on Womanhood, 1820-1920* (New York)