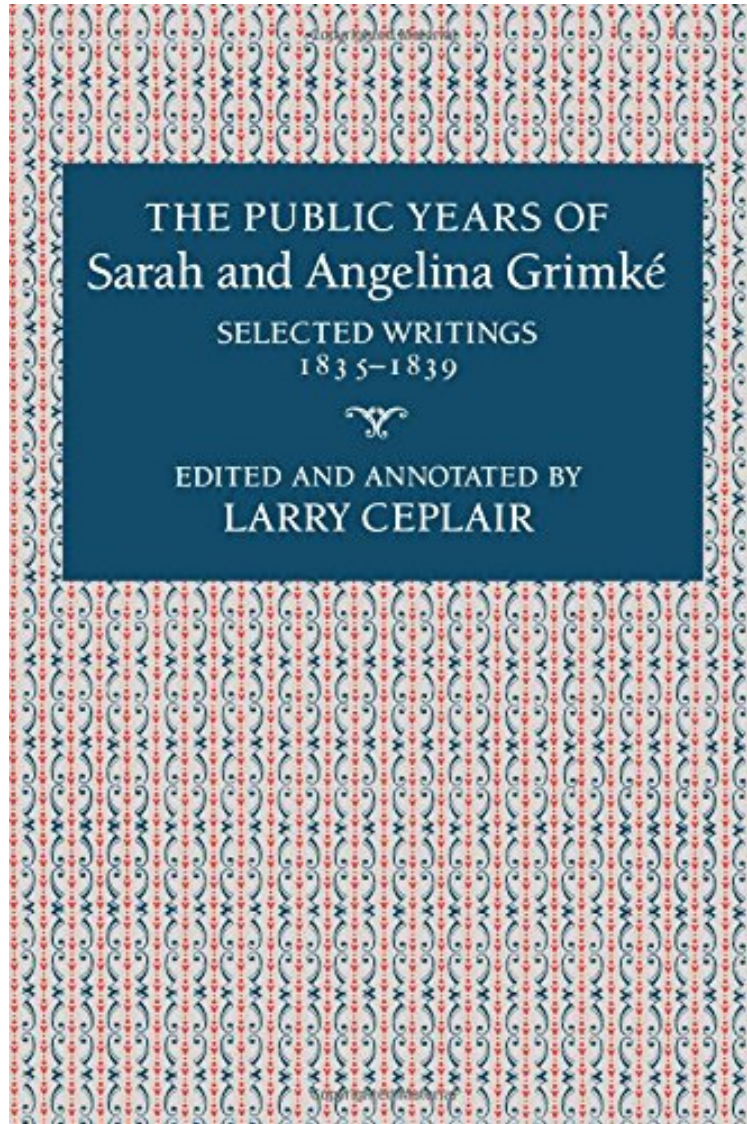


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The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimke

Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké
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Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké : The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimke before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimke:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Chelsea Grieve Great resource 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Prophetic words By FrKurt Messick Angelina and Sarah Grimke were born into a large, Southern, slaveholding family. They were, according to Ceplair's essay, the first women of a slaveholding family to speak in favour of Abolition. From the letters and other documents of the sisters, it is apparent that this was not the

general family view, and the sisters confided in at least one other sibling that when they were old enough, they would leave the South. Indeed, after having left the South, the mayor of Charleston warned the Grimkes' mother that they should not presume to return to the city, given their active campaigning in the Abolitionist cause. From their early days, the sisters had determined spirits. Angelina refused to be confirmed in their family church (Episcopal), and eventually married without clergy present; by this time Angelina had become a Quaker, but was expelled for marrying outside the faith, and her sister Sarah was expelled for attending the wedding. Southern women, according to Ceplair, were not trained or expected to be radical feminists or courageous heroines. The sisters, sometimes serving as each other's only support, set out on a public campaign for Abolition, and not only for Abolition, but for immediate Abolition. Angelina did not credit herself, and certainly not her family, for her awakening to the Abolitionist cause, but rather quoting the Bible, declared that 'it was the Lord's doing, and marvellous in mine eyes.' The 'public years' of the Grimke sisters were few in number - their very active period is only four years as collected here; the Grimke sisters remained teachers, occasional letter writers and attended some public events after this time, but the period from 1835-1839 is the pivot period in their prophetic ministry, and this is the time Ceplair focusses upon in the documents and narrative. The Grimke sisters were Abolitionists who pressed for immediate action, often alienating supporters and opposition alike in their adamant demand for action. The Grimkes used the Bible in a new way - slaves were often taught the injunctions about 'slaves, obey your masters'; however, Angelina Grimke found that the Bible made no distinction between the races, and that all human beings were created in the image of God, and none were given a natural lordship or dominion over any other. The sisters saw slavery as being criminal, and an ongoing crime at that, that must be stopped. Angelina likened slavery to kidnapping, only worse. The action and witness of the Grimke sisters came from their recognition that the wrongs being perpetrated were against human beings, and not as simple abuses of property. She was distressed at the treatment of slaves, often with outlandish justifications. One story recounted here is the Grimkes' reaction to hearing of a slave child's death - the concern for the child, or her parents' distress, was of no concern to the Southern slave owner, who was only concerned at his loss of property. This kind of mistreatment made the urgency all the more real. 'I have never seen a happy slave,' Angelina said, recounting her experiences that were contrary to the various justifications of slavery being used against Abolitionists. The Grimke sisters saw slavery as an injustice, and more importantly, an injustice that was being tolerated by the community. They could not be silently complicit. Daring to take on entire communities, the Grimke sisters embodied a prophetic spirit similar to that found in the eighth-century prophets of the biblical text. There is an element of being called, rather than choosing themselves, by a power beyond themselves as individuals. They had a recognition of the humanity of the oppressed, the divine spark in all people, the image of God in every woman, man and child regardless of race, religion, or any other division. There is courage, and there is hope, even in the fact of the righteous anger the letters and speeches contain. Thus, women's rights are prominent issues as are racial justice issues for the Grimke sisters. Ceplair develops a narrative history supported by excerpts (and often whole texts) from letters, diary entries, speeches, and other materials the Grimke sisters produced during their prophetic period. Ceplair explores items such as the Abolitionist movement and the Women's Rights movement to give context to the documents. While this public prophetic ministry was short for Sarah and Angelina Grimke, as Ceplair notes, they achieved more in their few years than all but a few women and men did in their entire lifetimes. Ceplair does not speculate as to why their public ministry of this sort stopped; this is not the important issue - what the sisters did, said, and achieved was and remains the example to follow. This is an important text, well-edited and well-documented, with words that remain powerful to this day.

Sarah Moore Grimke and Angelina Emily Grimke were the first women in America coming from a southern slave-holding family to speak publicly on behalf of the abolition of slavery. This book contains a collection of eloquent political writings. It includes an introduction situating the Grimkes' in an historical and political context.

About the Author Larry Ceplair holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin and teaches history at Santa Monica College. He has coauthored *The Inquisition in Hollywood* and authored *Under the Shadow of War*, published by Columbia University Press.