**Angelina Grimké Weld's speech at Pennsylvania Hall**

**Introduction - A Description of the Creation and Destruction of Pennsylvania Hall**

**A grand structure that was once called one of the most "splendid buildings in the city," Pennsylvania Hall was built to provide a place for discussing "the evils of slavery." The building was opened on the morning of May 14, 1838 -- a Monday. On Thursday evening, after four days of dedication ceremonies and abolition-related meetings, the building was burned to the ground by an angry mob.

It was precisely because abolitionists had such a difficult time finding places to hold their meetings that the hall was built. A joint-stock company was formed to finance the construction. Two thousand people bought shares in the company that sold for $20 apiece. Those who could not afford to buy shares donated materials and labor. Forty thousand dollars was raised to construct the building.**

**As soon as it opened, poster were put up around Philadelphia that called upon "citizens who entertain a proper respect for the right of property," to "interfere, forcibly if they must, and prevent the violation [of the right of property in the Constitution of the United States], heretofore held sacred."

Despite these poster and the growing crowd outside of the hall, the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women met. Men began to gather around the building, "prowling about the doors, examining the gas-pipes, and talking in an 'incendiary' manner to groups which they collected around them in the street." Later in the day they became more unruly, and during the evening's meeting, while William Lloyd Garrison was introducing Maria W. Chapman to an audience of over 3,000, a mob broke into the building, shouting. The mob soon left, only to disrupt the meeting from outside. Rocks came crashing in through the windows while Chapman spoke; the shouting from outside overwhelmed her voice. Angelina Grimké Weld next took the podium. Several times during the meeting the audience rose to leave, but refusing to be stopped by the loud and disruptive mob, Weld continued her speech and convinced the audience to stay. To show their solidarity and to protect the black people who had attended, whites and blacks walked out of the hall arm in arm. They were still met by a barrage of insults and rocks.

The mob returned on the following day. The Mayor requested that the meeting be restricted to white people only, but the abolitionists refused. The building's managers, fearing that the mob posed a threat, handed the keys over to the mayor. After locking the doors the mayor announced to the crowd that the remaining meetings had been cancelled. The crowd cheered as he walked away and soon after broke into the building, destroying the interior and setting fires. The mayor returned with the police, but by now the mob was out of control. Firefighters arrived at the scene but sprayed only the structures that surrounded Pennsylvania Hall. When one unit tried spraying the new building, its men became the target of the other units' hoses. With no one working to save Pennsylvania Hall, it was soon completely destroyed.

The riotous mob continued to strike over the following days, setting a shelter for black orphans on fire and damaging a black church. An official report blamed the abolitionists for the riots, claiming that they incited violence by upsetting the citizens of Philadelphia with their views and for encouraging "race mixing."**

Source -

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2938.html>

Website  - The Africans in America
[PBS Onli](http://www.pbs.org/)ne, WGBH Educational Foundation, 1998/1999

**Excerpt from Angekina Grimke Weld's speech at Philadelphia Hall 17 May 1838**

Men, brethren and fathers -- mothers, daughters and sisters, what came ye out for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? Is it curiosity merely, or a deep sympathy with the perishing slave, that has brought this large audience together? [A yell from the mob without the building.]

Those voices [outside] ought to awaken and call out our warmest sympathies. Deluded beings! "they know not what they do." They know not that they are undermining their own rights and their own happiness, [in both this world and in heaven].

 Do you ask, "what has the North to do with slavery?" Hear it -- hear it. Those voices without tell us that the spirit of slavery is *here*, and has been roused to wrath by our abolition speeches and conventions: . . . . Do you ask, then, "what has the North to do?" I answer, cast out first the spirit of slavery from your own hearts, and then lend your aid to convert the South. Each one present has a work to do, be his or her situation what it may, however limited their means, or insignificant their supposed influence. The great men of this country will not do this work;. . . . [God} hath chosen . . . the weak to overcome the mighty.

As a Southerner I feel that it is my duty to stand up here to-night and bear testimony against slavery. I have seen it -- I have seen it. I know it has horrors that can never be described. I was brought up under its wing: I witnessed for many years its demoralizing influences, and its destructiveness to human happiness. It is admitted by some that the slave is not happy under the *worst* forms of slavery. But I have *never* seen a happy slave . . . . [Just then stones were thrown at the windows, -- a great noise without, and commotion within.]

What is a mob? What would the breaking of every window be? What would the leveling of this Hall be? Any evidence that we are wrong, or that slavery is a good and wholesome institution? What if the mob should now burst in upon us, break up our meeting and commit violence upon our persons -- would this be anything compared with what the slaves endure? No, no: and we do not remember them "as bound with them," if we shrink in the time of peril, or feel unwilling to sacrifice ourselves, if need be, for their sake. [Great noise.] I thank the Lord that [those outside have] life left enough to feel the truth, even though they rage at it . . . .

[Another outbreak of mobocratic spirit, and some confusion in the house.]

 . . . I feel that all this disturbance is but an evidence that our efforts are the best that could have been adopted, or else the friends of slavery would not care for what we say and do. The South know what we do. I am thankful that they are reached by our efforts.

Many times have I wept in the land of my birth, over the system of slavery. I knew of none who sympathized in my feelings -- I was unaware that any efforts were made to deliver the oppressed -- no voice in the wilderness was heard calling on the people to repent and do works meet for repentance -- and my heart sickened within me. Oh, how should I have rejoiced to know that such efforts as these were being made.

I only wonder that I had such feelings. I wonder when I reflect under what influence I was brought up that my heart is not harder than the nether millstone. But in the midst of temptation I was preserved, and my sympathy grew warmer, and my hatred of slavery more inveterate, until at last I have exiled myself from my native land because I could no longer endure to hear the wailing of the slave.

 I fled to the land of Penn; for here, thought I, sympathy for the slave will surely be found. But I found it not. The people were kind and hospitable, but the slave had no place in their thoughts. Whenever questions were put to me as to his condition, I felt that they were dictated by an idle curiosity, rather than by that deep feeling which would lead to effort for his rescue. I therefore shut up my grief in my own heart. I remembered that I was a Carolinian, from a state which framed this iniquity by law. I knew that throughout [South Carolina] was continual suffering, on the one part, and continual brutality and sin on the other. Every Southern breeze wafted to me the discordant tones of weeping and wailing, shrieks and groans, mingled with prayers and blasphemous curses. I thought there was no hope; that the wicked would go on in his wickedness, until he had destroyed both himself and his country. My heart sunk within me at the abominations in the midst of which I had been born and educated. What will it avail, cried I in bitterness of spirit, to expose to the gaze of strangers the horrors and pollutions of slavery, when there is no ear to hear nor heart to feel and pray for the slave.

 . . . . But how different do I feel now! Animated with hope, nay, with an assurance of the triumph of liberty and good will to man, I will lift up my voice like a trumpet, and show [the people of the North] their sins of omission towards the slave, and what they can do towards affecting Southern mind, and overthrowing Southern oppression.

We may talk of occupying neutral ground, but on this subject, in its present attitude, there is no such thing as neutral ground. He that is not for us is against us, . . . . If you are on what you suppose to be neutral ground, the South look upon you as on the side of the oppressor. And do you wish to work, even indirectly, in favor of slavery -- that curse of nations ? God swept Egypt with the besom of destruction, and punished Judea also with a sore punishment, because of slavery . . . . [Shoutings, stones thrown against the windows, &c.]

There is nothing to be feared from those who would stop our mouths, but they themselves should fear and tremble. The current is even now setting fast against them. If the arm of the North had not caused the Bastile of slavery to totter to its foundation, you would not hear those cries. A few years ago, and the South felt secure, and with a contemptuous sneer asked, "Who are the abolitionists? The abolitionists are nothing?" . . . . [Mob again disturbed the meeting.]

We often hear the question asked, "What shall we do?" Here is an opportunity for doing something now. Every man and every woman present may do something by showing that we fear not a mob, and, in the midst of threats open our mouths for [those who cannot speak] . . . .

To work as we should in this cause, we must know what Slavery is. Let me urge you then to buy the books which have been written on this subject and read them, and then lend them to your neighbors . . . . aid in scattering "the living coals of truth" upon the naked heart of this nation, -- in circulating appeals to the sympathies of Christians in behalf of the suffering slave. But, it is said by some, our "books and papers do not speak the truth." Why, then, do Southerners not contradict what we say? They cannot. Moreover the South has commanded us to be silent; and what greater evidence of the truth of our publications could be desired?

Women of Philadelphia! allow me as a Southern woman, with much attachment to the land of my birth, to entreat you to come up to this work. Especially let me urge you to petition. *Men* may settle this and other questions at the ballot-box, but you have no such right; it is only through petitions that you can reach the Legislature. It is therefore peculiarly *your* duty to petition. Do you say, "It does no good?" The South already turns pale at the number of petitions sent . . . . This fact has called the attention of the South to the subject . . . . Men who hold the rod over slaves, rule in the councils of the nation: and they deny our right to petition and to remonstrate against abuses of our sex and of our kind. We have these rights, however, from our God . . . .

It was remarked in England that women did much to abolish Slavery in her colonies . . . . They presented one petition to the Queen that was two miles and a quarter long . . . . When the women of these States send up to Congress such a petition, our legislators will arise as did those of England, and say, "When all the maids and matrons of the land are knocking at our doors we must legislate." Let the zeal and love, the faith and works of our English sisters quicken ours -- that while the slaves continue to suffer, and when they shout deliverance, we may feel the satisfaction of *having done what we could.*

**Source -**

**Published in the book -**

***History of Pennsylvania Hall which was Destroyed by a Mob on the 17th of May*, *1838*
Negro Universities Press, New York, 1969.**