



SLAVERY AND ABOLITION IN THE FOUNDING ERA



Black and White Voices



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COMPILED AND EDITED BY

JAMES G. BASKER
NICOLE A. SEARY

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

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COVER ILLUSTRATIONS (clockwise from top left)

Rev. Lemuel Haynes, AM, undated engraving. (Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D.

Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.)

Phillis Wheatley, frontispiece from Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, London, 1773. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC06154.)

Mrs. Perez Morton [Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton], Gilbert Stuart, ca. 1802, oil on canvas. (Juliana Cheney Edwards Collection, 39.681. Photograph © 2021 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

Rt. Rev. Richard Allen from *Distinguished Colored Men*, A. Muller, New York, 1883. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.)

James Forten, unidentified artist, ca. 1818, watercolor. (Leon Gardiner Collection 151. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)

Colonel David Humphreys, Gilbert Stuart, ca. 1808–1810, oil on wood. (Yale University Art Gallery.)

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INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges faced by teachers seeking to use literary and historical texts in their classes is the apparent dearth of literature about slavery before the mid-1800s. The focus on such works as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* (1845), even on the writings of William Lloyd Garrison and the anti-slavery poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier from the 1830s on, has left many people (including textbook publishers) with the impression that there was little attention to slavery in published writings before about 1820. The present booklet, *Slavery and Abolition in the Founding Era: Black and White Voices*, brings together long-forgotten writings from this period, including twenty-five texts in different genres by more than nineteen different writers, spanning the forty-five year period from the 1770s to the end of the War of 1812.

The material in this book challenges many of the assumptions that students, and readers in general, tend to hold, beginning with the idea that there was in the Founding Era an almost universal approval, or at least acceptance, of racial slavery. Instead, the writings show, opposition to slavery was surprisingly widespread. Every single one of the writers included here was vehemently and publicly anti-slavery. And these were not isolated, marginal voices. They include the Boston society matron Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton, a president of Yale College, Timothy Dwight, and a former member of George Washington's staff during the Revolutionary War, David Humphreys, as well as many prominent leaders of the African American community.

A second surprise is the number of Black writers included here. At a time when the overwhelming majority of African Americans were deprived of even a rudimentary education, we find several eloquent, impassioned writers asserting their voices in the larger culture. Thirteen of the writers in this volume are Black, ranging from

ministers and community leaders such as Lemuel Haynes, Richard Allen, and Peter Williams, Jr., to struggling individuals such as "Itaniko," a formerly enslaved man writing while incarcerated in a New Jersey prison. Another dramatic example is George White, a self-emancipated Black man who didn't become literate until age 42 but went on to publish his writings and minister to a vibrant congregation of evangelical Christians in New York City. Most powerful of all, perhaps, are the poems of Jupiter Hammon and Phillis Wheatley, the first two African Americans to achieve celebrity for their writings and from whom the whole tradition of African American literature can be said to descend.

Almost every text has a surprising story behind it or offers an unusual perspective on American history. Phillis Wheatley's 1775 poem in honor of George Washington, for example, was long thought to have first been published in the April 1776 *Pennsylvania Magazine*, a logical placement given the widespread support for abolition in that state. But in fact, the poem was actually first published on the front page of the *Virginia Gazette* in the issue for March 30, 1776, which raises new questions. Was this an attempt to blunt the British Governor Dunmore's appeal to Virginia slaves to desert their masters and come fight on the British side? Why else would a slaveholding colony's leading newspaper feature a poem written by a young Black woman? What was the impact of Wheatley's poem on George Washington, and did it change his thinking about racial equality?

A scathing poetic commentary by Thomas Moore, a visitor from Europe, reminds us of how hypocritical American slavery could seem to foreigners arriving to observe the experiment in republican government first hand. Moore conjures up images that capture the ugly incongruities of freedom-loving Americans who nonetheless practice slavery and exploit the Black people in

their power. Alluding to Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, Moore describes a man who “woos some black Aspasia’s grace, / And dreams of freedom in his slave’s embrace.” Moore was an early example of a long line of foreign visitors who would find slavery a glaring flaw in the American system during the nineteenth century, including Alexis de Tocqueville, Charles Dickens, and Frances Trollope.

More heartening, but to many readers equally surprising, is the group of writers—Lemuel Haynes, Joel Barlow, Timothy Dwight, David Humphreys, and James Forten—representing the first generation of self-consciously American writers who, even as they were fighting the War for Independence, already saw slavery as anathema to America’s future. In 1775–1776, while serving as a soldier in the American army, Lemuel Haynes was already writing poems and essays on the theme of liberty in America. In 1778, with the Revolutionary War still raging, Barlow predicted that once America achieved its freedom, “Afric’s unhappy children, now no more / Shall feel the cruel chains they felt before.” Dwight, another Revolutionary War veteran and longtime president of Yale, wrote against slavery with passionate intensity. In 1801, in referring to the recent slave rebellion in Virginia, Dwight prophesied that “soon or late the hour will come, / Mark’d with Virginia’s dreadful doom.” Similarly Colonel David Humphreys, who served as Washington’s aide-de-camp for much of the war, denounced slavery in the new American nation: “Heav’ns! Still must men, like beasts, be bought and sold, / The charities of life exchang’d for gold!” In his efforts to secure Black equality, African American Revolutionary War veteran James Forten appealed to the rights enshrined in what he called “that glorious fabrick of collected wisdom, our noble Constitution.”

In the final section of this book comes yet another surprise: Black voices raised in celebration, year after year, beginning in 1808, to commemorate the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Though too little remembered

today, the writings of Peter Williams Jr., William Hamilton, Russell Parrott, and others give us insight into that historic breakthrough, and into the lives and communities of ordinary African Americans, free and enslaved, in the early 1800s. Their hopefulness, and subsequent disappointment, leave us with nagging historical questions about how such a great step forward as the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade could have been followed by decades of inertia, and then regression, in the pursuit of an end to slavery itself. Does history always move in fits and starts? Ultimately, with the coming of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the progress of freedom was too powerful to be halted even by formidable political and economic barriers. But the process was prolonged and painful.

Taken together, the assemblage of material in this book deepens our understanding of the history of slavery and the African American experience from the eve of the American Revolution through the end of the War of 1812. Teachers will pick out individual texts to use with particular lessons and perhaps place copies in the hands of their students to facilitate close reading, while students will pursue material for research papers and perhaps also find ideas for creative writing projects in fiction, biography, song, and screenplay writing. Illustrations reproduced from original sources are included to provide a visual accompaniment, along with a chronology to establish historical context and a bibliography of recommended books and websites to enable readers to pursue the subject further. The overarching effect, I hope, will be to open new angles of vision and to make audible the voices of forgotten heroes from the Founding Era. This will help us understand more fully the legacies of the Founding and their implications for Americans today.

James G. Basker

Richard Gilder Professor of Literary History,
Barnard College, Columbia University
President, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of
American History

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J.G.B. and N.A.S.

A CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY AND ABOLITION

1430s–1490s

Origins of modern slave trade: Portuguese explore West Africa and begin importing slaves into Spain, Portugal, and the Canary Islands.

1492

Columbus's voyage to America opens the way to transatlantic slave trade. Spanish and Portuguese traders begin carrying enslaved Africans to the New World in the early 1500s.

1562

Sir John Hawkins makes first of three voyages carrying enslaved people from West Africa to Hispaniola, but Queen Elizabeth disapproves and there are no more English slave trading ventures until 1603.

1602

Dutch East India Company begins carrying enslaved Africans to present-day South Africa and Indonesia.

1619

Dutch slave trader sells enslaved Africans to colonists in Jamestown, Virginia.

1625

England settles Barbados and in the 1640s begins sugar production using slave labor.

1641

Massachusetts becomes first North American colony to give statutory recognition to slavery, followed by Connecticut, 1650; Virginia, 1661; Maryland, 1663; New York and New Jersey, 1664; South Carolina, 1682; Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, 1700; North Carolina, 1715; Georgia, 1750.

1663

England charts the Company of Royal Adventurers (renamed Royal African Company in 1672) whose African trade includes gold, ivory, and slaves.

1664

England acquires New Netherland and New Amsterdam from the Dutch, renaming them New York.

1688

First formal petition against slavery in English America is presented by Mennonites in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

1712

Slave insurrection in New York City, 8 Whites and 25 Blacks are killed.

1713

Britain wins the Asiento contract as part of the Treaty of Utrecht, gaining the exclusive right to supply slaves to the Spanish colonies and beginning a rapid escalation of the British slave trade.

1738/9

After decades of insurrection and guerrilla warfare, British sign treaty with Jamaican maroons recognizing their independence in exchange for maroons' alliance with the British.

1739

Stono slave revolt in South Carolina, 30 Whites and 44 Blacks are killed.

1750

The thirteen colonies' population estimated at 1,170,000, of which 20 percent are Black people.

1758

Philadelphia Quakers condemn ownership of slaves by their members.

1759

Pennsylvanian Anthony Benezet publishes the first of his many pamphlets against slavery.

1761

Jupiter Hammon becomes the first published African American writer.

1770

Phillis Wheatley publishes short poem on the "Boston Massacre," mentioning Crispus Attucks's death.

Quakers establish the "Africans' School" in Philadelphia.

1772

Somerset decision in London means enslaved people have de facto freedom when they land in England. Colonial newspapers cover it widely and caution slave owners about traveling to England.

1773

Phillis Wheatley travels to England, publishes her landmark *Poems on Various Subjects*, and negotiates her freedom in exchange for agreeing to return to Boston.

First freedom petition submitted by a group of Massachusetts Blacks to the state legislature.

1775

As American Revolution breaks out, Governor Dunmore in Virginia offers freedom to enslaved people held by American rebels who come over and fight on British side.

Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery is founded (then suspended until 1783).

Phillis Wheatley writes a poem of tribute to George Washington.

African American Revolutionary War soldier Lemuel Haynes writes his poem, "The Battle of Lexington."

1776

Declaration of Independence: first draft denounces slave trade, but the passage is deleted from the final text.

Lemuel Haynes writes essay on slavery and liberty, circulated in manuscript.

1777

Vermont becomes first state to abolish slavery, followed by Pennsylvania in 1780 and Massachusetts in 1783; gradual emancipation laws are passed between 1784 and 1804 in Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.

In Boston, first civil rights petition submitted by African Americans to cite the Declaration of Independence.

1778

Jupiter Hammon writes a poem in honor of Phillis Wheatley, the first public acknowledgement of one Black writer by another.

Revolutionary War soldier Joel Barlow reads a poem at Yale commencement envisioning a future America without slavery.

1782

Anonymous Black writer from South Carolina becomes the first person ever to identify himself in print as "An African American."

1783

With American independence established, British fleet departs with 3000 formerly enslaved people, bound for resettlement in Nova Scotia, London, and eventually Sierra Leone.

1787

British Abolition Society formed in London under the leadership of William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, and others.

US Constitution drafted, allowing slavery in states that decide to continue it, counting Black slaves as 3/5 of a person in calculating representation, enacting the fugitive slave clause, and postponing congressional action to end the slave trade until at least 1807.

1789

Wilberforce introduces bill in British Parliament to abolish the slave trade; bill is debated and postponed.

1791

Slave insurrections in French colony of Saint Domingue begin the Haitian Revolution, which would end after Toussaint L'Ouverture is captured and taken to France in 1802, followed by the defeat of Napoleon's army and the independence of Haiti as the first Black republic in 1804.

African American scientist and writer Benjamin Banneker publishes his anti-slavery letter to Thomas Jefferson and the first of his six almanacs.

1792

Wilberforce's abolition bill defeated in Parliament.

Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton publishes "The African Chief," an influential anti-slavery poem.

1794

African American Methodist Richard Allen founds the A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia.

First national convention of abolitionists, representing six states, in Philadelphia. Conventions continue annually until 1806.

The French Republic abolishes slavery.

1795

African American Peter Williams, Sr., founds African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the first Black church in New York.

1797

First African American petition to the US Congress.

1799

George Washington dies, and is eulogized by African American church leader Richard Allen.

1800

Prosser's Rebellion in Richmond, Virginia results in the execution of Gabriel Prosser and 35 other African Americans.

US population is 5,305,925, of whom 19 percent are African American, including 893,041 enslaved people and 108,395 free Blacks.

1801

Jefferson elected to first of two terms as US president; during second term he signs bill abolishing the transatlantic slave trade effective 1808.

1802

Napoleon restores slavery and slave trade in French colonies.

Allegations surface of Thomas Jefferson's sexual involvement with the enslaved woman Sally Hemings.

1803	1833
Louisiana Purchase doubles size of the United States. Fifteen states will enter the union from the Louisiana territory.	British Parliament ends slavery in the British colonies. American abolitionists commemorate British abolition with annual ceremonies.
The efficiency of the cotton gin and the fertile soil of the southern states fuel rapid growth in both the cotton trade and southern political power over the next 60 years.	1839
1808	A slave rebellion aboard the <i>Amistad</i> leads to a Supreme Court case decided against the slave traders in 1841.
Britain and America ban the transatlantic slave trade on January 1; Black communities commemorate with annual celebrations.	1845
The US domestic slave trade grows as enslaved men, women, and children are sold south from depleted tobacco lands to profitable cotton plantations.	Frederick Douglass publishes his <i>Narrative</i> , then makes his celebrated journey to Britain.
1810	1848
African American educator John Teasman founds the New York Society for Mutual Relief.	France abolishes slavery throughout its colonies.
1812–1814	1850
The War of 1812: The British invite American slaves to flee and fight on their side.	Congress passes Fugitive Slave Act, effectively preventing northern states from prohibiting slavery within their borders and forcing them to cooperate in delivering up runaway (“fugitive”) slaves.
Patriotic African American ship captain Paul Cuffee uses privateers to harass the British Navy and supply American ports.	Under pressure from Britain, Brazil ends transatlantic slave trade.
1813	1852
African American businessman James Forten publishes <i>Letters from a Man of Colour</i> to defend Black civil rights.	Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> .
1814	1857
The Dutch officially end slave trade (but retain slavery in their colonies until 1863).	<i>Dred Scott</i> decision allows slaveholders to practice slavery in free states, and deprives Black people, free and enslaved, of any constitutional rights.
1815	1859
The Congress of Vienna denounces international slave trade, but France and especially Portugal revive and pursue overseas slave trading for decades to come.	John Brown leads armed abolitionist raid on Harpers Ferry arsenal.
1820	1861–1865
Missouri Compromise, in a clear victory for the South, establishes precedent of balancing the admission of slave and free states to the US.	American Civil War, the bloodiest conflict in US history, leaving an estimated 750,000 soldiers dead.
1829	1862
David Walker publishes his <i>Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World</i> .	With congressional support, Abraham Lincoln abolishes slavery in the District of Columbia.
1831	1863
William Lloyd Garrison begins the abolitionist newspaper <i>The Liberator</i> .	President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation frees slaves in rebellious Confederate states and invites Black men to fight in the Union Army. Eventually almost 200,000 will fight for the Union cause.
	1865
	Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution abolishes slavery.

Section I

Black Voices at the Time of the American Revolution

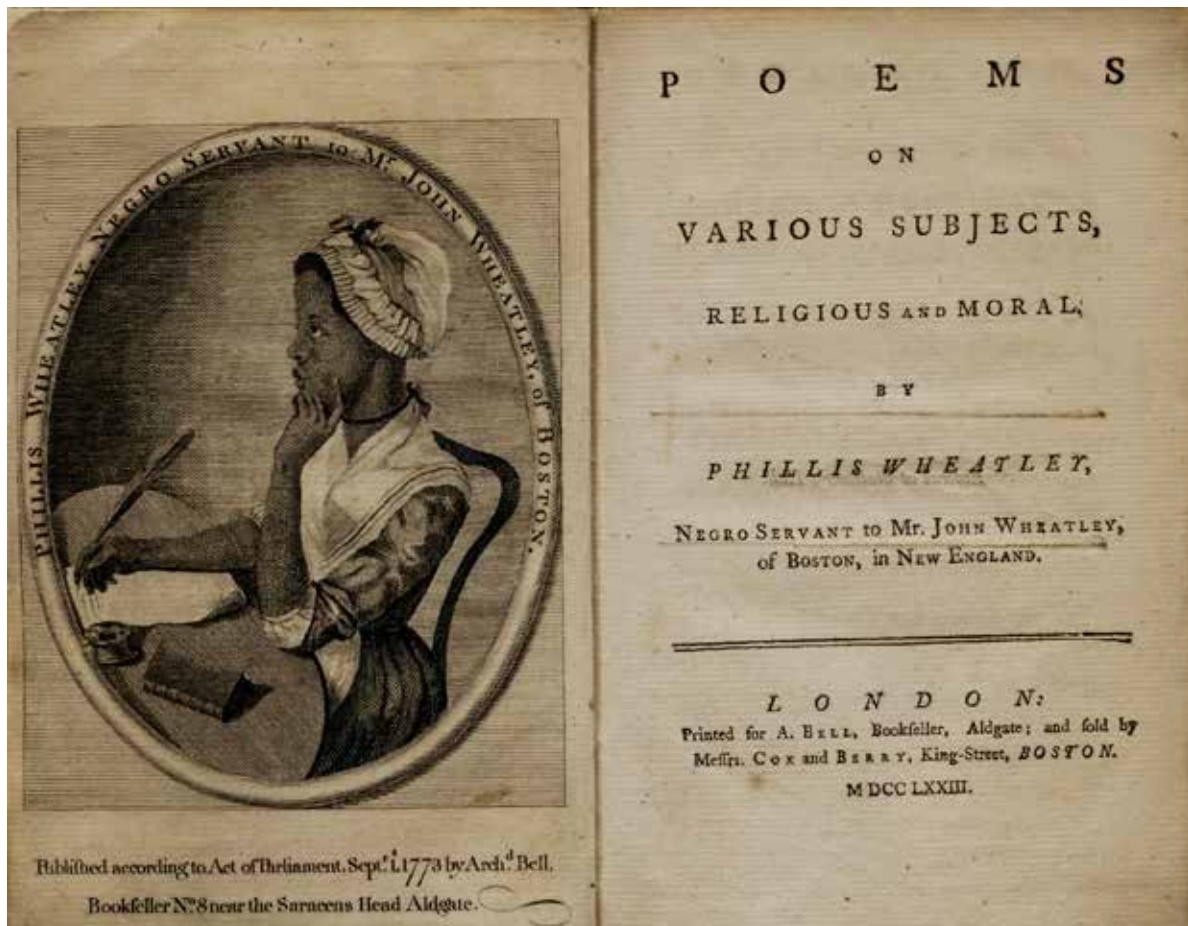


"The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King-Street." Engraving by Paul Revere, 1770.
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01868.

From the outset, Black people were present in the Revolutionary struggle. Here Crispus Attucks, an African American, one of the first casualties in the "Massacre," lies dying in the lower left corner. This is one of two surviving hand-colored prints that depict Attucks as a Black man.

Introduction: Black Voices at the Time of the American Revolution

As the following writings demonstrate, African Americans were present and increasingly visible at the time of the American Revolution. Enslaved people had been carried to the Americas, via the brutal “middle passage,” since the early 1500s by Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French, English, and other European traders. By the 1770s, there were enslaved Black men, women, and children everywhere in the New World, from North America through the Caribbean, to the tip of South America. As the independence movement broke out in the thirteen North American colonies, some African Americans embraced ideas of freedom that were in the air. Meanwhile, both British and American military leaders sought to enlist Black people on their side. By the war’s end in 1783, several thousand escaped slaves had taken refuge with the British forces, while more than 5000 Black people, both free and enslaved, had fought on the American side. The writers in this section give voice to the political views and aspirations, as well as the inner lives, of representative African Americans during this turbulent period.



*Phillis Wheatley, Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, 1773. Frontispiece engraving.
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC06154.*

Wheatley's first book was printed in London, where her publishers were at pains to prove the identity of such an extraordinary author. Wheatley is deliberately depicted in a servant's costume, but with the apparatus of a writer—quill, inkstand, book, and paper.

Phillis Wheatley (ca. 1753–1784)

In the context of slavery in English literature, Wheatley is the most important figure of the eighteenth century. Having risen to canonical status only in the late twentieth century, her works now widely republished, Wheatley had humble origins. Born in Africa, she was captured and sold into slavery as a child, and then purchased by John Wheatley of Boston. Her genius impressed her owners, who arranged for her to be educated by private tutors in several subjects, including history, theology, and Latin. So brilliant that she began to publish serious poems as a young teenager, Wheatley became a sensation in Boston society. Her fame spread to England when she traveled to London to publish her *Poems on Various Subjects* in 1773. She took the literary and social scene by storm, enjoying tributes from nobility, literati, and the press. Her later life declined into sadness. Manumitted by the Wheatleys, she endured a difficult marriage, before dying in 1784, scarcely aged thirty. Her poetic oeuvre is the cornerstone of the African American literary tradition, as well as a major force in the broader history of America.

In 1770, the events that Paul Revere taught Americans to remember as “the Boston Massacre” moved Wheatley to write a poem to protest the loss of American life, including Crispus Attucks, the first person of color to die in the escalating conflict. She sent the short poem to a local newspaper, the *Boston Evening-Post*, which published it anonymously on March 12, 1770. Later, she titled the poem “On the Affray in King’s Street, on the Evening of the 5th of March,” and included it in an ad listing the contents of her forthcoming book of poetry in late 1772. But because her book was eventually published in London, and the poem was critical of British soldiers, she apparently decided to omit it. The book was published without it, and the poem disappeared.

Untitled lines on the Boston Massacre (1770)

With Fire enwrap, surcharg’d with sudden Death,
Lo, the pois’d Tube convolves it’s fatal Breath!
The flying Ball with heav’n-directed Force,
Rids the free Spirit of it’s fallen Corse.

Well fated Shades! let no unmanly Tear
From Pity’s Eye, distain your honour’d Bier:
Lost to their View, surviving Friends may mourn,
Yet o’er thy Pile shall Flames celestial burn;
Long as in *Freedom’s* Cause the Wise contend,
Dear to your Country shall your Fame extend;
While to the World, the letter’d *Stone* shall tell,
How *Caldwell*, *Attucks*, *Gray*, and *Mav’rick* fell.

The story of Wheatley's poetic tribute to Washington marks an important moment in American history. Wheatley, who supported the cause of American independence, had fled to Providence with other patriots when the British occupied Boston in 1775. Inspired by news of Washington's appointment as commander of the American forces, Wheatley sent the general the following poem of tribute. Flattered and grateful, Washington responded with a warm and complimentary letter to "Miss Phillis." But this was private correspondence. The real significance lies in how the poem came to be published. Long thought to have first appeared in the abolition-friendly *Pennsylvania Magazine* (April 1776), the poem actually was first printed in the March 30, 1776 issue of the *Virginia Gazette*. Washington apparently meant to show his fellow Virginians a formerly enslaved person who was not only literate, but loyal to the American cause—an astute political tactic at a time when Virginia was wracked with fear of a major slave insurrection, incited by Governor Dunmore's call for enslaved people to come fight on the British side.

"To His Excellency General Washington" (1775)

The following LETTER and VERSES were written by the famous Phillis Wheatley, the African Poetess, and presented to his Excellency Gen. Washington.

SIR,

I Have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress. Your generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in, I am,

Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant,
PHILLIS WHEATLEY

*Providence, Oct. 26, 1775.
 His Excellency Gen. Washington.*

Celestial choir! enthron'd in realms of light,
 Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
 While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
 She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.
 See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,
 And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!
 See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light
 Involved in sorrows and veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
 Olive and laurel binds her golden hair:
 Wherever shines this native of the skies,
 Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.

Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates
 How pour her armies through a thousand gates:
 As when Eolus heaven's fair face deforms,
 Enwrap'd in tempest and a night of storms;
 Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,
 The refluant surges beat the sounding shore;
 Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,
 Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.
 In bright array they seek the work of war,
 Where high unfurl'd the ensign waves in air.
 Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
 Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.
 Thee, first in place and honours,—we demand
 The grace and glory of thy martial band.
 Fam'd for thy valour, for thy virtues more,
 Hear every tongue thy guardian aid implore!

One century scarce perform'd its destin'd round,
 When Gallic powers Columbia's fury found;
 And so may you, whoever dares disgrace
 The land of freedom's heaven-defended race!
 Fix'd are the eyes of nations on the scales,
 For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.
 Anon Britannia droops the pensive head,
 While round increase the rising hills of dead.
 Ah! cruel blindness to Columbia's state!
 Lament thy thirst of boundless power too late.

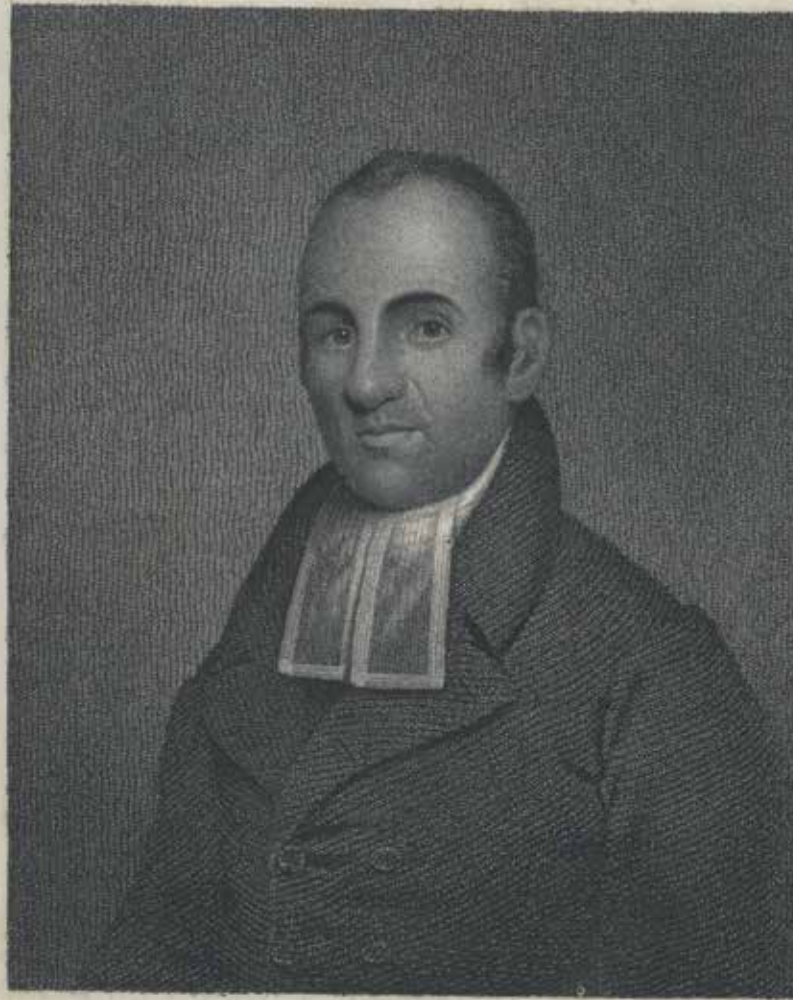
Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
 Thy ev'ry action let the goddess guide.
 A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
 With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! be thine.

Wheatley's political writing in support of the American Revolution continued over the course of the war. Her elegy "On the Death of General [David] Wooster" in 1778 celebrated an American hero who died in battle, while it also served as an expression of condolence to his widow, Mary Wooster, whom Phillis knew as a friend and supporter. Mary and her late husband David were opponents of slavery, which Wheatley acknowledged in the poem by having the spirit of Wooster speak from beyond the grave to criticize America for maintaining slavery while fighting for freedom. Wheatley demonstrated that it was possible to be both pro-American and anti-slavery.

"On the Death of General Wooster" (1778)

From this the muse rich consolation draws
He nobly perish'd in his Country's cause
His Country's Cause that ever fir'd his mind
Where martial flames, and Christian virtues
 join'd.
How shall my pen his warlike deeds proclaim
Or paint them fairer on the list of Fame—
Enough great Cheif—now wrapt in shades
 around
Thy grateful Country shall thy praise resound—
Tho' not with mortals' empty praise elate
That vainest vapour to th' immortal State
Inly serene the expiring hero lies
And thus (while heav'nward roll his swimming
 eyes)
Permit, great power while yet my fleeting
 breath
And Spirits wander to the verge of Death—
Permit me yet to paint fair freedom's charms
For her the Continent shines bright in arms
By thy high will, celestial prize she came—
For her we combat on the feild of fame

Without her presence vice maintains full sway
And social love and virtue wing their way
O still propitious be thy guardian care
And lead Columbia thro' the toils of war.
With thine own hand conduct them and defend
And bring the dreadful contest to an end—
For ever grateful let them live to thee
And keep them ever virtuous, brave, and free—
But how, presumptuous shall we hope to find
Divine acceptance with th' Almighty mind—
While yet (O deed ungenerous!) they disgrace
And hold in bondage Afric's blameless race?
Let virtue reign—And thou accord our prayers
Be victory our's, and generous freedom theirs.
The hero pray'd—the wond'ring spirit fled
And sought the unknown regions of the dead—
Tis thine fair partner of his life, to find
His virtuous path and follow close behind—
A little moment steals him from thy sight
He waits thy coming to the realms of light
Freed from his labours in the ethereal skies
Where in succession endless pleasures rise!—



REV. LEMUEL HAYNES, A.M.

Sincerely yours
Lemuel Haynes

Rev. Lemuel Haynes. Undated engraving. Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Lemuel Haynes is shown wearing formal minister's bands, indicative of the profession he later pursued with distinction after his service in the Revolutionary War.

Lemuel Haynes (1753–1833)

Abandoned as an infant by his African father and White mother, Haynes was raised as a servant in the house of Deacon David Rose in Granville, Massachusetts. Educated in the local school and at home by the minister and his wife, Haynes grew up to be a bookish and devout man. A patriotic American, he joined the local militia when he turned twenty-one in 1774, and went on to see action in various battles, including the siege of Boston and Ethan Allen's assault on Ticonderoga. Afterward he pursued a long career as a preacher in Vermont, publishing an account of his ministry in 1820.

The poem below was written and circulated in manuscript in the weeks after the Battle of Lexington, but, for reasons one can only surmise, was not published until 1985 when the text resurfaced. Haynes's patriotic ardor is comparable to Phillis Wheatley's. Like her, he publicly praised George Washington in print. Both writers are remarkable for their commitment to the American cause even as they and other Black people were denied the liberty and full equality it promised. Notably, Haynes does not allude to the subject of African slavery in this ballad, but by the war's end he had come to feel strongly enough to draft a treatise "On the Illegality of Slave-keeping" (it too remained unpublished until the 1980s).

from "The Battle of Lexington" (1775)

. . . The Nineteenth Day of April last
We ever shall retain
As monumental of the past
Most bloody shocking Scene

Then Tyrants fill'd with horrid Rage
A fatal Journey went
& Unmolested to engage
And slay the innocent . . .

At *Lexington* they did appear
Array'd in hostile Form
And tho our Friends were peacefull there
Yet on them fell the Storm

Eight most unhappy Victims fell
Into the Arms of Death
Unpitied by those Tribes of Hell
Who curs'd them with their Breath

The Savage Band still march along
For *Concord* they were bound
While Oaths & Curses from their Tongue
Accent with hellish Sound

To prosecute their fell Desire
At *Concord* they unite
Two Sons of Freedom there expire
By their tyrannic Spite

Thus did our Friends endure their Rage
Without a murm'ring Word
Till die they must or else engage
And join with one Accord

Such Pity did their Breath inspire
That long they bore the Rod
And with Reluctance they conspire
To shed the human Blood

But Pity could no longer sway
Tho' 't is a pow'rfull Band
For Liberty now bleeding lay
And calld them to withstand

The Awfull Conflict now begun
To rage with furious Pride
And Blood in great Effusion run
From many a wounded Side

For Liberty, each Freeman Strives
As its a Gift of God
And for it willing yield their Lives
And Seal it with their Blood

Thrice happy they who thus resign
Into the peacefull Grave
Much better there, in Death Confin'd
Than a Surviving Slave

This Motto may adorn their Tombs,
(Let tyrants come and view)
*"We rather seek these silent Rooms
Than live as Slaves to You"*

In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION,

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF

The United STATES of America,

In General Congress Assembled.

WHEN in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires, that they should declare the Causes which impel them to the Separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Manner, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly we have suffered them to remain for a long Time, but when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies, and such is now the Necessity, which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great Britain, is a History of repeated Injuries and Oppressions, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid View.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome & necessary for the public Good.

He has refused to assent to Laws by which a great Number of important Acts, which have passed in the Legislature, have been suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inalienable from them, and fundamental in a free State.

He has called together legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of harassing them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.

He has refused to assent to Laws by which the most wholesome and necessary Measures of the Legislature have been suspended, and he has refused to assent to Laws by which the most wholesome and necessary Measures of the Legislature have been suspended, and he has refused to assent to Laws by which the most wholesome and necessary Measures of the Legislature have been suspended.

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Signed by ORDER and In BEHALF of the CONGRESS,

JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

Attest,
CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

CHARLES THOMSON, Printed by PETER TIMOTHY.

The Declaration of Independence, 1776. Printed by Peter Timothy, Charleston, South Carolina.
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC00959.

As much as the Declaration of Independence asserted the rights of the American colonists, it also inspired Black men and women to claim those same rights for themselves. The petition on the facing page was the first of many to cite the Declaration ("a natural and unalienable right to . . . freedom") in claiming civil rights for African Americans.

Lancaster Hill, Peter Bess, Brister Slenser, Prince Hall, et al. (fl. 1777)

Lancaster Hill and his fellow petitioners were leaders in the Black community of Boston in the 1770s. In this petition that they presented to the Massachusetts legislature, they became the first African Americans to publicly cite the Declaration of Independence (“unalienable right to . . . freedom”) as a basis for their own claim to equal rights. Thus it could be said that the civil rights movement in America actually began January 13, 1777, and was inspired by the ideals of the Declaration. Partly because of petitions like this, slavery had ended in Massachusetts by 1783.

“The Petition of a Great Number of Negroes Who Are Detained in a State of Slavery,” January 13, 1777

To the Honorable Council & House of
Representatives for the State of Massachusetts-
Bay in General Court assembled January 13th
1777—

The Petition of a great number of Negroes who
are detained in a state of Slavery in the Bowels
of a free & Christian Country Humbly Shewing—

That your Petitioners apprehend that they have,
in common with all other Men, a natural and
unalienable right to that freedom, which the
great Parent of the Universe hath bestowed
equally on all Mankind, & which they have
never forfeited by any compact or agreement
whatever—But they were unjustly dragged,
by the cruel hand of Power, from their dearest
friends, and some of them even torn from
the embraces of their tender Parents—from a
populous, pleasant and plentiful Country—&
in Violation of the Laws of Nature & of Nation
& in defiance of all the tender feelings of
humanity, brought hither to be sold like Beasts
of Burthen, & like them condemned to slavery
for Life—Among a People professing the mild
Religion of Jesus—A People not insensible of
the sweets of rational freedom—Nor without
spirit to resent the unjust endeavors of
others to reduce them to a State of Bondage
& Subjection—Your Honors need not to be
informed that a Life of Slavery, like that of your
petitioners, deprived of every social privilege,
of every thing requisite to render Life even
tolerable, is far worse than Non-Existence—
In imitation of the laudable example of the

good People of these States, your Petitioners
have long & patiently waited the event of
Petition after Petition by them presented to
the Legislative Body of this State, & can not
but with grief reflect that their success has
been but too similar—They can not but express
their astonishment, that it has never been
considered, that every principle from which
America has acted in the course of her unhappy
difficulties with Great-Britain, pleads stronger
than a thousand arguments in favor of your
Petitioners—They therefore humbly beseech
your Honors, to give this Petition its due
weight and consideration, & cause an Act of
the Legislature to be passed, whereby they may
be restored to the enjoyment of that freedom
which is the natural right of all Men—& their
Children (who were born in this Land of Liberty)
may not be held as Slaves after they arrive
at the age of twenty one years—So may the
Inhabitants of this State (no longer chargeable
with the inconsistency of acting, themselves, the
part which they condemn & oppose in others)
be prospered in their present glorious struggles
for liberty; & have those blessings secured to
them by Heaven, of which benevolent minds
can not wish to deprive their fellow Men.

And your Petitioners, as in Duty Bound shall
ever pray.

Lancaster Hill
Peter Bess
Brister Slenser
Prince Hall

Jack Pierpont
Nero Funelo
Newport Sumner
Job Look

Jupiter Hammon (1711–ca. 1800)

The first published African American poet, Jupiter Hammon was an enslaved man who belonged to the Lloyd family of Queens Village, Long Island (now Lloyd Harbor, NY). His poetry celebrates his deep Christian faith, which, given his status as a slave owned by Christians, is surprising to many modern readers. The issue of slavery rarely surfaces in his verse, except as background. In 1786, however, he treated the topic in his *Address to the Negroes of the State of New York*, in which he shows a willingness to bear slavery for now but expresses his hope for eventual emancipation.

Hammon's poem to Phillis Wheatley marks a major moment in American history: the public self-conscious identification of one African American writer with another, his poem in dialogue with hers, on the issues of slavery, freedom, and salvation. In particular, stanzas two, four, and five take up the theme of her most famous poem, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" ("Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land"). The marginal citations from the Bible, much like those found in sermons and other religious texts, serve as a gloss on the poem and provide a parallel body of readings that deepen and extend his message.

"An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatl[e]y, Ethiopian Poetess, in Boston, who came from Africa at eight years of age, and soon became acquainted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (1778)

Miss WHEATL[E]Y; pray give leave to express as follows:

1. O Come you pious youth! adore The wisdom of thy God, In bringing thee from distant shore, To learn his holy word.	<i>Eccles[iastes]. xii.</i>	7. The blessed Jesus, who came down, Unvail'd his sacred face, To cleanse the soul of every wound, And give repenting grace.	<i>Rom[ans]. v,21.</i>
2. Thou mightst been left behind, Amidst a dark abode; God's tender mercy still combin'd, Thou hast the holy word.	<i>Psal[ms]. cxxxv,2,3.</i>	8. That we poor sinners may obtain The pardon of our sin; Dear blessed Jesus now constrain, And bring us flocking in.	<i>Psal[m]. xxxiv,6,7,8.</i>
3. Fair wisdom's ways are paths of peace, And they that walk therein, Shall reap the joys that never cease, And Christ shall be their king.	<i>Psal[m]. i.1,2. Prov[erbs]. iii,7.</i>	9. Come you, Phillis, now aspire, And seek the living God, So step by step thou mayst go higher, Till perfect in the word.	<i>Matth[ew]. vii,7,8.</i>
4. God's tender mercy brought thee here, Tost o'er the raging main; In Christian faith thou hast a share, Worth all the gold of Spain.	<i>Psal[m]. ciii,1,3,4.</i>	10. While thousands mov'd to distant shore, And others left behind, The blessed Jesus still adore, Implant this in thy mind.	<i>Psal[m]. lxxxix,1.</i>
5. While thousands tossed by the sea, And others settled down, God's tender mercy set thee free From dangers still unknown.	<i>Death.</i>	11. Thou hast left the heathen shore, Thro' mercy of the Lord, Among the heathen live no more, Come magnify thy God.	<i>Psal[m]. xxxiv,1,2,3.</i>
6. That thou a pattern still might be, To youth of Boston town, The blessed Jesus set thee free, From every sinful wound.	<i>2 Cor[inthians]. v,10.</i>	12. I pray the living God may be, The shepherd of thy soul; His tender mercies still are free, His mysteries to unfold.	<i>Psal[m]. lxxx,1,2,3.</i>

13.
Thou, Phillis, when thou hunger hast,
Or pantest for thy God; *Psalm. xiii, 1, 2, 3.*
Jesus Christ is thy relief,
Thou hast the holy word.

14.
The bounteous mercies of the Lord,
Are hid beyond the sky, *Psalm. xvi, 10, 11.*
And holy souls that love his word,
Shall taste them when they die.

15.
These bounteous mercies are from God,
The merits of his Son; *Psalm. xxxiv, 15.*
The humble soul that loves his word,
He chooses for his own.

16.
Come, dear Phillis, be advis'd,
To drink Samaria's flood: *John iv, 13, 14.*
There nothing is that shall suffice,
But Christ's redeeming blood.

17.
While thousands muse with earthly toys,
And range about the street, *Matth. vi, 33.*
Dear Phillis, seek for heaven's joys,
Where we do hope to meet.

18.
When God shall send his summons down,
And number saints together, *Psalm. cxvi, 15.*
Best angels chant, (triumphant sound)
Come live with me for ever.

19.
The humble soul shall fly to God,
And leave the things of time, *Matth. v, 3, 8.*
Start forth as 'twere at the first word,
To taste things more divine.

20.
Behold! the soul shall waft away,
Whene'er we come to die, *1 Cor. xv, 51, 52, 53.*
And leave its cottage made of clay,
In twinkling of an eye.

21.
Now glory be to the Most High,
United praises given, *Psalm. cl, 6.*
By all on earth incessantly,
And all the host of heav'n.

In the following excerpts from a poetic dialogue that runs to thirty stanzas, Hammon raises a dangerous topic: the power relations between master and servant/slave. While carefully affirming the servant's obedience, the poem subtly undermines the unconditional authority the master asserts in the opening lines ("follow me / According to thy place"). The servant finds several ways to say that he will obey the master so long as the master himself serves the God they both worship. For all its reverence, the poem remains essentially a quiet act of resistance by the servant and a lesson in humility for the master.

from "A Dialogue; Entitled, The Kind Master and Dutiful Servant" (1782)

Master.
Come my servant, follow me,
According to thy place;
And surely God will be with thee,
And send the heav'nly grace.

Servant.
Dear Master, I will follow thee,
According to thy word,
And pray that God may be with me,
And save thee in the Lord.

Master.
My Servant, lovely is the Lord,
And blest those servants be,
That truly love his holy word,
And thus will follow me.

Servant.
Dear Master, that's my whole delight,
Thy pleasure for to do;
As far as grace and truth's in sight,
Thus far I'll surely go.

(Continued)

Master.

Come my servant, follow me,
According to thy place;
And surely God will be with thee,
And send the heav'nly grace.

Servant.

Dear Master, I will follow thee,
According to thy word,
And pray that God may be with me,
And save thee in the Lord.

Master.

My Servant, lovely is the Lord,
And blest those servants be,
That truly love his holy word,
And thus will follow me.

Servant.

Dear Master, that's my whole delight,
Thy pleasure for to do;
As far as grace and truth's in sight,
Thus far I'll surely go.

Master.

My Servant, grace proceeds from God,
And truth should be with thee;
Whence e'er you find it in his word,
Thus far come follow me.

Servant.

Dear Master, now without controul,
I quickly follow thee;
And pray that God would bless thy soul,
His heav'nly place to see.

Master.

My Servant, Heaven is high above,
Yea, higher than the sky:
I pray that God would grant his love,
Come follow me thereby.

Servant.

Dear Master, now I'll follow thee,
And trust upon the Lord;
The only safety that I see,
Is Jesus's holy word.

Master.

My Servant, follow Jesus now,
Our great victorious King;
Who governs all both high and low,
And searches things within.

Servant.

Dear Master I will follow thee,
When praying to our King;
It is the Lamb I plainly see,
Invites the sinner in.

Master.

My Servant, we are sinners all,
But follow after grace;
I pray that God would bless thy soul,
And fill thy heart with grace.

Servant.

Dear Master I shall follow then,
The voice of my great King;
As standing on some distant land,
Inviting sinners in. . . .

Master.

We pray that God would give us grace,
And make us humble too;
Let ev'ry nation seek for peace,
And virtue make a show.

Servant.

Then we shall see the happy day,
That virtue is in power;
Each holy act shall have its sway,
Extend from shore to shore. . . .

Servant.

Thus the Dialogue shall end,
Strive to obey the word;
When ev'ry nation act like friends,
Shall be the sons of God.

Believe me now my Christian friends,
Believe your friend call'd HAMMON:
You cannot to your God attend,
And serve the God of Mammon. . . .

Section II

The Founding Generation and the Ideal of Freedom for All

January 9th 1784

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This is to certify that the bearer hereof Romeo
Smith is a freeman, and has served three
years in the Army of the United States of America.
Any person going to attempting to circumvent
or trepan him as a slave will incur the
severest ^{penalty} ~~penalties~~ of the Law and the
indignation of Heaven.

Given at West Point
This 9th January 1784
Henry Knox

Henry Knox, Certification of Romeo Smith as a free man, January 9, 1784.
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC02437.02929.

General Henry Knox wished to protect the freedom of this Black veteran of the American Revolution who served under him, and issued this strongly worded pass: "This is to certify that the bearer hereof Romeo Smith is a freeman, and has served three years in the Army of the United States of America. Any person attempting to circumvent or trepan him as a slave will incur the severest penalty of the Law and the indignation of Heaven."

Introduction: The Founding Generation and the Ideal of Freedom for All

The American victory in the Revolutionary War and the effort to unite the thirteen states under one federal constitution led to a conflict between the ideals of equality stated in the Declaration of Independence and the demands of some Americans to retain slavery. Advocates of abolition argued that slavery was inhumane and inconsistent with the values of a free society, while slaveholders and their allies held that slavery was sanctioned by tradition and respect for property rights. The outcome was a Constitution that never mentioned slavery by name but nonetheless allowed the institution to continue. As northern states began to abolish slavery (Vermont in 1777, Pennsylvania in 1780, Massachusetts in 1783, etc.), the hope was that the institution would wither away. It proved a false hope. The dilemma of a free society that practiced slavery would plague the nation for more than seventy-five years. The writers in this section embraced and carried forward the ideals of freedom generated in the Founding Era, in an attempt to convince the fledgling nation as a whole to eradicate slavery.

Joel Barlow (1754–1812)

A Connecticut farm boy who went to Yale and later served in the American Revolution, Barlow pursued a varied career in law, business, and diplomacy (including seventeen years in England, France, and Algiers), through all of which his first desire was to be a major American poet. He died in Poland amidst the Franco-Russian war, on a failed diplomatic mission to settle a treaty with Napoleon.

The first passage below is from a poem he delivered at the Yale commencement exercises in July 1778. Predicting American victory soon (the Revolutionary War was then in its fourth year), Barlow calls for an end to slavery as an essential element of the new nation that Washington and his troops were fighting to establish.

from *The Prospect of Peace* (1778)

No grasping lord shall grind the neighbouring poor,
Starve numerous vassals to increase his store;
No cringing slave shall at his presence bend,
Shrink at his frown, and at his nod attend;
Afric's unhappy children, now no more
Shall feel the cruel chains they felt before,
But every State in this just mean agree,
To bless mankind, and let th'oppressed free.
Then, rapt in transport, each exulting slave
Shall taste that Boon which God and nature gave,
And, fir'd with virtue, join the common cause,
Protect our freedom and enjoy our laws.

In this, the magnum opus of his career, composed, published in successive versions, and revised from 1779 to 1807, Barlow set himself up as the Homeric bard and prophet of America. Amidst more than 7000 lines of rhyming couplets in its final version, Barlow saw the contradictions of a professing free nation countenancing slavery. Here, using the voice of "Atlas" (the mythological guardian of Africa), Barlow attacks American hypocrisy and points to the recent capture and enslavement of Americans by Algerians in the Mediterranean as just retribution. The final 20 lines of this excerpt revert to the voice of the poem's main speaker, who warns Americans not to fall back into European feudalism or burden their posterity with the poisonous inheritance of slavery.

from Book VIII of *The Columbiad* (1807)

Thy proud sons, a strange ungenerous race,
Enslave my tribes, and each fair world disgrace,
Provoke wide vengeance on their lawless land,
The bolt ill placed in thy forbearing hand.—
Enslave my tribes! then boast their cantons free,
Preach faith and justice, bend the sainted knee,
Invite all men their liberty to share,

Seek public peace, defy the assaults of war,
Plant, reap, consume, enjoy their fearless toil,
Tame their wild floods to fatten still their soil,
Enrich all nations with their nurturing store
And rake with venturous fluke each wondering shore.—
Enslave my tribes! what, half mankind imban,
Then read, expound, enforce the rights of man!

Prove plain and clear how nature's hand of old
 Cast all men equal in her human mold!
 Their fibres, feelings, reasoning powers the same,
 Like wants await them, like desires inflame.
 Thro former times with learned book they tread,
 Revise past ages and rejudge the dead,
 Write, speak, avenge, for ancient sufferings feel,
 Impale each tyrant on their pens of steel,
 Declare how freemen can a world create,
 And slaves and masters ruin every state.—
 Enslave my tribes! and think, with dumb disdain,
 To scape this arm and prove my vengeance vain!
 But look! methinks beneath my foot I ken
 A few chain'd things that seem no longer men;
 Thy sons perchance! whom Barbary's coast can tell
 The sweets of that loved scourge they wield so well.
 Link'd in a line, beneath the driver's goad,
 See how they stagger with their lifted load;
 The shoulder'd rock, just wrencht from off my hill
 And wet with drops their straining orbs distil,
 Galls, grinds them sore, along the rampart led,
 And the chain clanking counts the steps they tread.
 By night close bolted in the bagnio's gloom,
 Think how they ponder on their dreadful doom,
 Recal the tender sire, the weeping bride,
 The home, far sunder'd by a waste of tide,
 Brood all the ties that once endear'd them there,
 But now, strung stronger, edge their keen despair.
 Till here a fouler fiend arrests their pace:
 Plague, with his burning breath and bloated face,
 With saffron eyes that thro the dungeon shine,
 And the black tumors bursting from the groin,
 Stalks o'er the slave . . .

Nor shall these pangs atone the nation's crime;
 Far heavier vengeance, in the march of time,
 Attends them still; if still they dare debase
 And hold inthrall'd the millions of my race;
 A vengeance that shall shake the world's deep frame,
 That heaven abhors and hell might shrink to name.
 Nature, long outraged, delves the crusted sphere
 And molds the mining mischief dark and drear;
 Europa too the penal shock shall find,
 The rude soul-selling monsters of mankind. . . .

Ah, would you not be slaves, with lords and kings,
 Then be not masters; there the danger springs. . . .

Mark modern Europe with her feudal codes,
 Serfs, villains, vassals, nobles, kings and gods,
 All slaves of different grades, corrupt and curst
 With high and low, for senseless rank athirst,
 Wage endless wars; not fighting to be free,
 But *cujum pecus*, whose base herd they'll be.

Too much of Europe, here transplanted o'er,
 Nursed feudal feelings on your tented shore,
 Brought sable serfs from Afric, call'd it gain,
 And urged your sires to forge the fatal chain.
 But now, the tents o'erturn'd, the war dogs fled,
 Now fearless Freedom rears at last her head
 Matcht with celestial Peace,—my friends, beware
 To shade the splendors of so bright a pair;
 Complete their triumph, fix their firm abode,
 Purge all privations from your liberal code,
 Restore their souls to men, give earth repose,
 And save your sons from slavery, wars and woes.



Mrs. Perez Morton [*Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton*]. Oil on canvas. Gilbert Stuart, ca. 1802. *Juliana Cheney Edwards Collection*, 39.681. Photograph ©2021 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

This elegant portrait by Gilbert Stuart testifies to Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton's upper-class status. Yet for all her wealth, Morton was an ardent opponent of slavery.

Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton (1759–1846)

Daughter of the wealthy and cultured Apthorp family of Boston, Sarah Morton combined intellect, social position, and literary talent. Even as she moved in the highest circles of New England society, her poetic writings earned her the reputation of America's leading female poet, "the American Sappho." Over the decades, her verse appeared in the *Massachusetts Magazine*, the *New York Magazine*, and the *Tablet*, earning the praise of Thomas Paine and other prominent Americans.

The poem below remained popular through the nineteenth century. The great anti-slavery writer John Greenleaf Whittier proclaimed "The African Chief" his favorite poem. Blending a ballad stanza with historic argument, Morton links the righteousness of the anti-slavery fight to a series of heroic struggles for freedom, from Leonidas's Spartans in antiquity to Paoli's Corsicans and Washington's Americans in the eighteenth century.

"The African Chief" (1792)

See how the black ship cleaves the main, High bounding o'er the dark blue wave, Remurmuring with the groans of pain, Deep freighted with the princely slave!	When erst <i>Messenia's</i> sons oppressed, Flew desperate to the sanguine field, With iron clothed each injured breast, And saw the cruel Spartan yield.
Did all the Gods of Afric sleep, Forgetful of their guardian love, When the white tyrants of the deep, Betrayed him in the palmy grove.	Did not the soul to heaven allied, With the proud heart as greatly swell, As when the <i>Roman Decius</i> died, Or when the <i>Grecian victim</i> fell.
A Chief of <i>Gambia's</i> golden shore, Whose arm the band of warriors led, Or more — the lord of generous power, By whom the foodless poor were fed.	Do later deeds quick rapture raise, The boon <i>Batavia's William</i> won, <i>Paoli's</i> time-enduring praise, Or the yet greater <i>Washington</i> !
Does not the voice of reason cry, "Claim the first right that nature gave, From the red scourge of bondage fly, Nor deign to live a burdened slave."	If these exalt thy sacred zeal, To hate oppression's mad controul, For bleeding <i>Afric</i> learn to feel, Whose Chieftan claimed a kindred soul.
Has not his suffering offspring clung, Desponding round his fettered knee; On his worn shoulder, weeping hung, And urged one effort to be free!	Ah, mourn the last disastrous hour, Lift the full eye of bootless grief, While victory treads the sultry shore, And tears from hope the captive Chief.
His wife by nameless wrongs subdued, His bosom's friend to death resigned; The flinty path-way drenched in blood; He saw with cold and phrenzied mind.	While the hard race of <i>pallid hue</i> , Unpracticed in the power to feel, Resign him to the murderous crew, The horrors of the quivering wheel.
Strong in despair, then sought the plain, To heaven was raised his steadfast eye, Resolved to burst the crushing chain, Or mid the battle's blast to die.	Let sorrow bathe each blushing cheek, Bend piteous o'er the tortured slave, Whose wrongs compassion cannot speak, Whose only refuge was the grave.
First of his race, he led the band, Guardless of danger, hurling round, Till by his red avenging hand, Full many a despot stained the ground.	



*"Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, 1st Bishop of the African M. E. Church,"
from Distinguished Colored Men, lithograph published by A. Muller, New York, 1883.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.*

Born enslaved in Delaware, Richard Allen became a leader of the Black community in Philadelphia and founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Richard Allen (1760–1831)

Richard Allen was a self-emancipated Black man who became a religious leader and founder of the A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia in the 1790s. Modern readers might be surprised to see a congregation of Black people mourning the death of George Washington, an American hero but also a Virginia slaveowner. But Washington's last will and testament, which received wide publicity, mandated the emancipation, education, and support of the enslaved people he owned. In this eulogy delivered two weeks after Washington's death, Allen lauds Washington for his message to posterity and the example it sets for others.

Eulogy for George Washington Delivered to the Congregation of Philadelphia's African Methodist Episcopal Church, December 29, 1799

At this time it may not be improper to speak a little on the late mournful event—an event in which we participate in common with the feelings of a grateful people—an event which causes “the land to mourn” in a season of festivity. Our father and friend is taken from us—he whom the nations honoured is “seen of men no more.”

We, my friends, have peculiar cause to bemoan our loss. To us he has been the sympathising friend and tender father. He has watched over us, and viewed our degraded and afflicted state with compassion and pity—his heart was not insensible to our sufferings. He whose wisdom the nations revered thought we had a right to liberty. Unbiased by the popular opinion of the state in which is the memorable Mount Vernon—he dared to do his duty, and wipe off the only stain with which man could ever reproach him.

And it is now said by an authority on which I rely, that he who ventured his life in battles, whose “head was covered” in that day, and whose shield the “Lord of hosts” was, did not fight for that liberty which he desired to withhold from others—the bread of oppression was not sweet to his taste, and he “let the oppressed go free”—he “undid every burden”—he provided lands and comfortable accommodations for them when he kept this “acceptable fast to the Lord”—that those who had been slaves might rejoice in the day of their deliverance.

If he who broke the yoke of British burdens “from off the neck of the people” of this land, and was hailed his country's deliverer, by what name shall we call him who secretly and almost unknown emancipated his “bondmen and bondwomen”—

became to them a father, and gave them an inheritance!

Deeds like these are not common. He did not let his “right hand know what his left hand did”—but he who “sees in secret will openly reward” such acts of beneficence.

The name of Washington will live when the sculptured marble and statue of bronze shall be crumbled into dust—for it is the decree of the eternal God that “the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, but the memorial of the wicked shall rot.”

It is not often necessary, and it is seldom that occasion requires recommending the observance of the laws of the land to you, but at this time it becomes a duty; for you cannot honour those who have loved you and been your benefactors more than by taking their council and advice.

And here let me intreat you always to bear in mind the affectionate farewell advice of the great Washington—“to love your country—to obey its laws—to seek its peace—and to keep yourselves from attachment to any foreign nation.”

Your observance of these short and comprehensive expressions will make you good citizens—and greatly promote the cause of the oppressed and shew to the world that you hold dear the name of George Washington.

May a double portion of his spirit rest on all the officers of the government in the United States, and all that say my Father, my Father—the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof, which is the whole of the American people.

Timothy Dwight (1752–1817)

A mong the most accomplished Americans of his era, Timothy Dwight was a scholar, theologian, teacher, pastor, academic leader, and public servant. He served as a military chaplain during the Revolutionary War, held the presidency of Yale for twenty-one years (1795–1816), rose to prominence as a founding member of the Hartford-based “Connecticut Wits,” and produced some of the most important poetry of the first decades of the American republic. In the wake of the 1800 Virginia slave insurrection known as Gabriel’s Rebellion and of Thomas Jefferson’s election to the presidency, the Federalist Dwight saw slavery as the gravest danger for America’s future. In this excerpt from a mocking tribute (and warning) to Jefferson’s home state of Virginia, Dwight might be seen to distantly foretell the outcome of the Civil War.

from “Triumph of Democracy” (1801)

Proceed great state — thy arts renew,
With double zeal thy course pursue,
Call on thy sister states t’ obey,
And boldly grasp at sovereign sway —
Then pause — remember ere too late,
The tale of St. Domingo’s fate,
Though Gabriel dies, a host remain
Oppress’d with slavery’s galling chain,
And soon or late the hour will come,
Mark’d with Virginia’s dreadful doom.

David Humphreys (1752–1818)

A Revolutionary War officer who served as aide-de-camp to George Washington, David Humphreys afterward pursued a career as diplomat, farmer, and writer. A member of the Connecticut Wits in the 1780s, Humphreys also produced a series of poems consciously written as national literature on behalf of America. As with Timothy Dwight, Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton, and others, Humphreys's patriotic pride informed and energized his opposition to slavery.

Coming from an ex-soldier and public official, the emotional tones of this poem are remarkable. In language evocative of the New Testament ("Their bleeding bosoms bathe with oil and wine / Bind up their wounds"), Humphreys suggestively conflates the suffering of slaves with that of Christ. The abolition of slavery thus becomes, for Christians, not just a national necessity, but a sacred duty.

from "A Poem on the Industry of the United States of America" (1804)

Thy sap, more sweet than Hybla's honey, flows,
Health for the heart-sick—cure of slavery's
 woes—
Then, as th' unfailing source, balsamic, runs,
Dispense that cordial, hope, for Afric's sons!

Oh, could my song impressive horror bring,
Of conscious guilt th'insufferable sting;
From eyes untaught to weep the tear should
 start,
And mercy melt the long obdur'd of heart.
See naked negroes rear the sugar'd reeds!
Behold! their flesh beneath their driver bleeds!
And hear their heart-heav'd groans! then say,
 how good,
How sweet, the dainties drugg'd with human
 blood!

Though night's dark shades o'ercast th' ill-
 favour'd race,
Nor transient flushes change the vacant face;
Though nature ne'er transforms their wooly hair
To golden ringlets, elegantly fair!
Yet has not God infus'd immortal powers,
The same their organs and their souls as ours?
Are they not made to ruminate the sky?

Or must they perish like the beasts that die?
Perish the thought that men's high worth
 impairs,
SONS OF OMNIPOTENCE, AND GLORY'S HEIRS!

Come, ye who love the human race divine,
Their bleeding bosoms bathe with oil and wine,
Bind up their wounds—then bless the dulcet
 tree,
Whose substituted sweets one slave may
 free. . . .

Thou, slavery, (maledictions blast thy name!)
Fell scourge of mortals, reason's foulest shame!
Fly, fiend infernal! To thy Stygian shore,
And let thy deeds defile my song no more.

Heav'ns! Still must men, like beasts, be bought
 and sold,
The charities of life exchange'd for gold!
Husbands from wives, from parents children
 torn,
In quivering fear, with grief exquisite, mourn!
No, soon shall commence, better understood,
With happier freight promote the mutual good.



*James Forten. Watercolor. Unidentified artist, ca. 1818.
Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Leon Gardiner Collection 151.*

Born free in Philadelphia, Forten served aboard a privateer in the American Revolution and after the war prospered as a businessman and a leading abolitionist.

James Forten (1766–1842)

Born into a family of free Blacks in Philadelphia, James Forten was both a Revolutionary War hero and an American success story. As a teenager he enlisted aboard an American privateer and was captured by the British, but declined an invitation to enter the service of a British officer and instead went with his fellow Americans into one of the notorious prison ships anchored in New York. After the war, he built a very successful sail-making business, acquired extensive real estate holdings, and became one of the most influential citizens in Philadelphia. In 1813, when the Pennsylvania legislature was considering a bill that would radically curtail the rights of Black people, Forten was moved to write the following impassioned essay. His words, and those of others, had effect, and the bill was voted down.

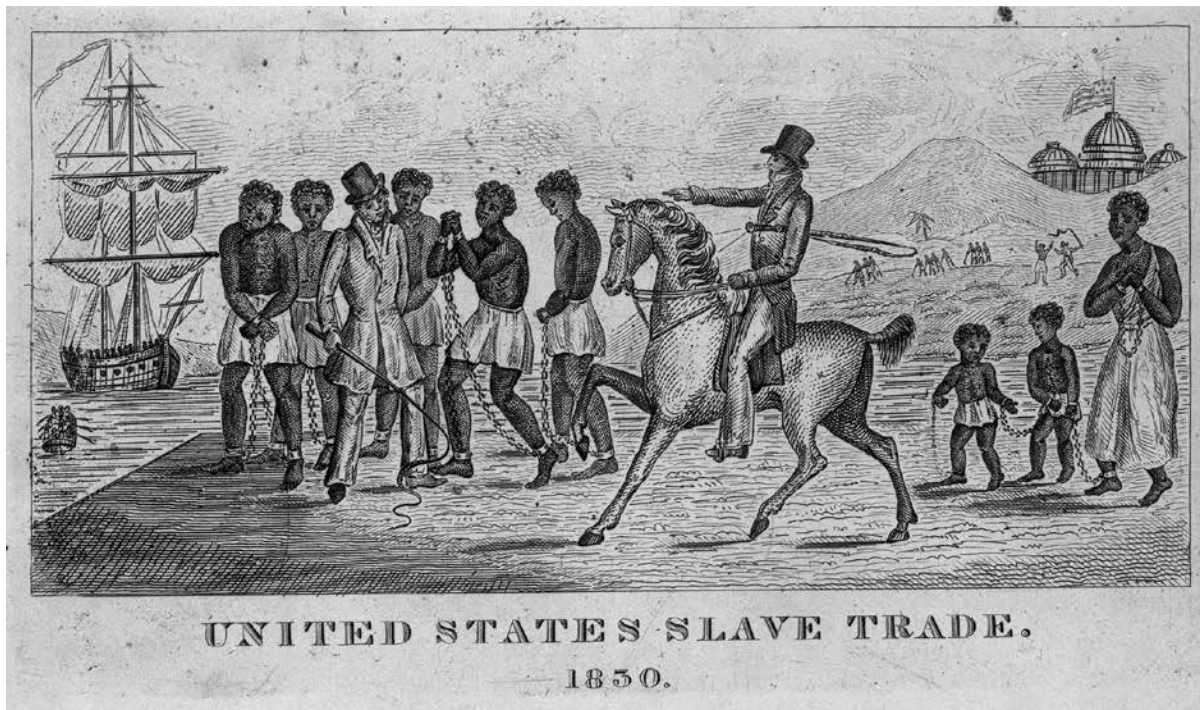
from Letter I, Letters from a Man of Colour, on a Late Bill before the Senate of Pennsylvania (1813)

We hold this truth to be self-evident, that God created all men equal, and is one of the most prominent features in the Declaration of Independence, and in that glorious fabrick of collected wisdom, our noble Constitution. This idea embraces the Indian and the European, the Savage and the Saint, the Peruvian and the Laplander, the white Man and the African, and whatever measures are adopted subversive of this inestimable privilege, are in direct violation of the letter and spirit of our Constitution, and become subject to the animadversion of all, particularly those who are deeply interested in the measure.

These thoughts were suggested by the promulgation of a late bill, before the Senate of Pennsylvania, to prevent the emigration of people of colour into this state. It was not passed into a law at this session and must in consequence lay over until the next, before when we sincerely hope, the white men, whom we should look upon as our protectors, will have become convinced of the inhumanity and impolicy of such a measure, and forbear to deprive us of those inestimable treasures, Liberty and Independence. This is almost the only state in the Union wherein the African race have justly boasted of rational liberty and the protection of the laws, and shall it now be said they have been deprived of that liberty, and publickly exposed for sale to the highest bidder? Shall colonial inhumanity that has marked many of us with shameful stripes, become the practice of the people of Pennsylvania, while Mercy stands weeping at the miserable spectacle? People of

Pennsylvania, descendants of the immortal Penn, doom us not to the unhappy fate of thousands of our countrymen in the Southern States and the West Indies; despise the traffick in blood, and the blessing of the African will for ever be around you. Many of us are men of property, for the security of which, we have hitherto looked to the laws of our blessed state, but should this become a law, our property is jeopardized, since the same power which can expose to sale an unfortunate fellow creature, can wrest from him those estates, which years of honest industry have accumulated. Where shall the poor African look for protection, should the people of Pennsylvania consent to oppress him? We grant there are a number of worthless men belonging to our colour, but there are laws of sufficient rigour for their punishment, if properly and duly enforced. We wish not to screen the guilty from punishment, but with the guilty do not permit the innocent to suffer. . . . Punish the guilty man of colour to the utmost limit of the laws, but sell him not to slavery! . . . By selling him you do not make him better, but commit a wrong, without benefitting the object of it or society at large. Many of our ancestors were brought here more than one hundred years ago; many of our fathers, many of ourselves, have fought and bled for the Independence of our country. Do not then expose us to sale. Let not the spirit of the father behold the son robbed of that Liberty which he died to establish. . . .

A MAN OF COLOUR.

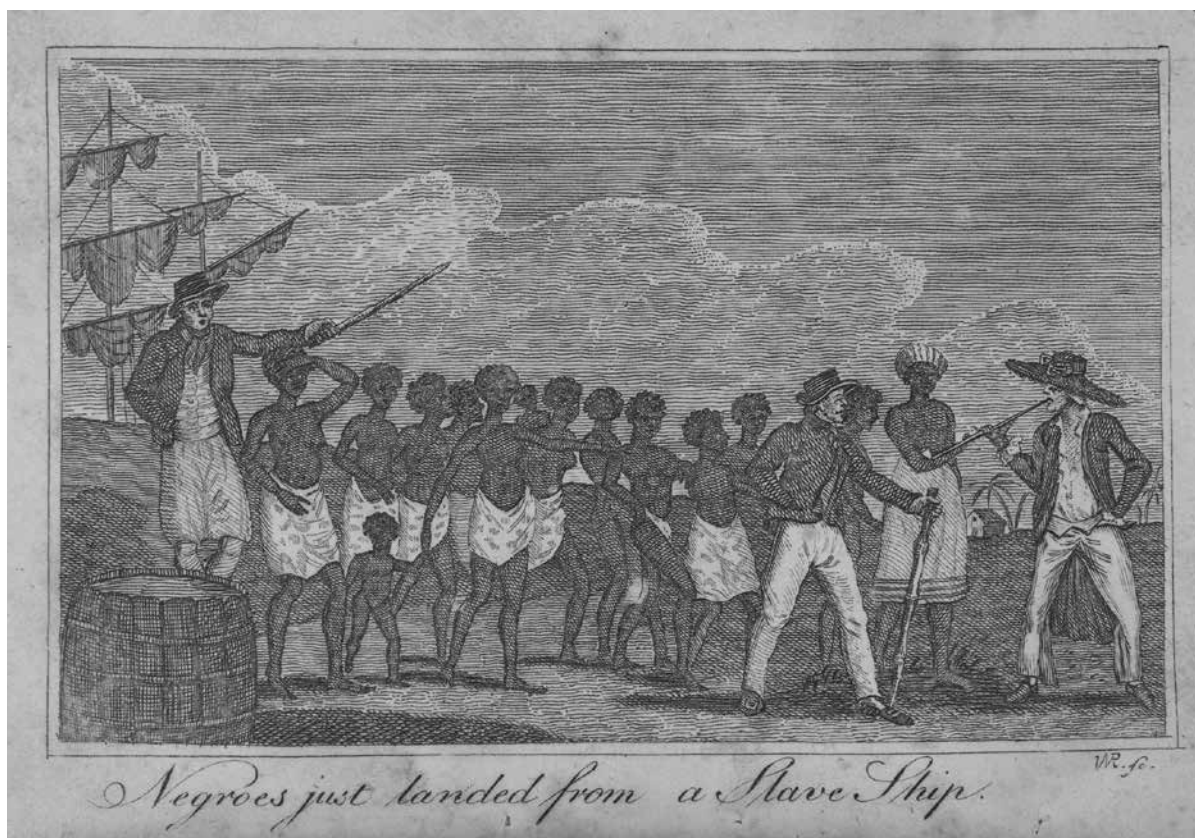


"United States Slave Trade." Print, 1830. The New-York Historical Society.

The US Capitol in the upper right of this anti-slavery print expresses the artist's disgust that slavery should persist in a nation founded on principles of freedom. The figures suggest the tragic breakup of a family: the father (left) sold down river, the mother and children (right) shackled and bereft.

Section III

The Unrealized Promise of Freedom: Slavery and the Ongoing Abolitionist Struggle



*"Negroes just landed from a Slave Ship." Engraving in A General Description of the People of Africa.
Rev. J. Goldsmith [pseud.]. Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner, 1810.
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.*

This engraving is from an 1810 American schoolbook, printed in Philadelphia. The transatlantic slave trade had been outlawed in 1808, but the image of slaves being unloaded from a ship illustrates the horrors of the infamous Middle Passage for schoolchildren in the nineteenth century.

Introduction: The Unrealized Promise of Freedom

For African Americans and their anti-slavery allies the early years of the Republic failed to fulfill their ideals of freedom. Hundreds of thousands of people remained in bondage, and for them freedom remained an unrealized promise. Although some northern states began the process of ending slavery and the Northwest Ordinance (1787) banned slavery in the area that would become the states of Ohio (1803), Indiana (1816), and Illinois (1818), the institution would persist and even grow in other parts of the nation. Kentucky (1792) and Tennessee (1796) were admitted as slave states, and after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 the prospect of several more slave states joining the union became a pressing reality.

The authors in this section, all of them writing between the mid-1790s and 1806, include an anonymous Vermonter, four African American petitioners to Congress, one Black man writing from jail in New Jersey, and a foreign visitor from Ireland. From their various perspectives, all of them express a disappointment in the continued denial of freedom to so many African Americans in the new nation. Their angry commentaries provide both an indirect tribute to the power of the ideals generated by the American Founding, and a foreshadowing of the bitter differences over slavery that were to wrack America in the 1850s and 1860s.

THIRTY DOLLARS REWARD.

RAN away, on the 22d of August last, a *handsome Negro Lad*,
named

A R C H,

A B O U T twenty years of age---the property of the Subscriber---of a yellow complexion, talks sensible and artful, but if close examined is apt to tremble; he is rather under the size of a man, active-made, with small legs, and has a ridge, or scar on the back of his neck. He had on and took with him, a new Russia-sheeting shirt, an old Irish linen, and an old country linen ditto, a pair of old black everlasting breeches, a pair of oznabrig trousers, and an old hat, though he probably will part from his cloaths, and procure others if an opportunity offers.

I live in Maryland, near Frederick-Town, and will pay the above Reward, if the said fellow be taken Sixty miles, or any further distance from home; or a *Half Dollar* per mile, for any distance under, in case he be secured in any goal, so that I get him again; and if brought home reasonable charges, by.

IGNATIUS DAVIS.

Frederick-County, September 7, 1791.

Frederick-Town; Printed by JOHN WINTER.

*"Thirty Dollars Reward . . . handsome Negro Lad, named Arch." Broadside, 1791.
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC03157.*

This broadside advertising a runaway from Fredericktown, Maryland, testifies to the horrible conditions suffered by African Americans, and the desperate acts to which they were driven, while slavery remained legal in the United States.

Anonymous ["L.B.C." of Arlington, Bennington County, Vermont]

Though the identity of this poet remains unknown, the citizens of Vermont had a long history of being anti-slavery. In 1777 they passed the first state constitution to prohibit slavery. In L.B.C.'s powerfully eloquent poem, the author mounts a methodical, reasoned argument for abolition based on the contradiction between America's founding principles and its tolerance of slavery. Most remarkable are his defense of slave insurrections then raging in the Caribbean, as they had been for decades, and his vivid invocation (reminiscent of Macbeth's "seas incarnadine") of an Atlantic Ocean "crimsoned" by the "gore" of millions of enslaved people transported over it.

from "Reflections on the Slavery of the Negroes, Addressed to the Conscience of Every American Citizen" (1796)

We broke our fetters, yet enchain our kind.
We boast and glory in our liberty,
And in our sweet equality rejoice,
And joy that we be so supremely blest,
In wealth, peace, safety, wise, and virtuous laws;
Yet, fifty myriads of our kindred kind,
The hapless children of rich Afric's shores,
Groan round our land, in base captivity,
And weep, and sigh, bound in Columbia's chains.
Alas! our boasted justice how absurd!
We exercise our reason but by halves:
We make a mockery of sacred truth,
To which we feign our hearts so much adhere.
The shafts we aim at tyrants and their crews,
Again rebound, and sorely wound ourselves.
The murd'rous sons of savage, curst Algiers,
Who seize, distress, enslave, and plunge in woes,
Bound in vile chains, our hapless brothers dear,
We execrate, enrag'd and fraught with ire:
But we reflect not, that for ONE of ours,
In Afric groaning, HOSTS of Afric's sons,
Than beasts worse us'd, Columbians hold enslav'd.
Why thus so partial? why so blindly judge?
Why suffer passion reason to controul?
Why suffer lust of wealth, and venal pride,
To suffocate, triumphant, thus our virtue?
Why hope we justice, whilst unjust ourselves?
Sweet liberty, enamour'd of our souls,
From one of us if snatch'd, our bosoms blaze,
We're anger, pity, wrath, and feeling all.
But, for those thousands of poor purchas'd slaves,
Debas'd, insulted, victims to our power,
Who, toiling, bleed and sweat t'enlarge our store,
We feel no pity, and we breathe no sigh.

Let us be just, beneficent, and fair,
And deal with all, as we would be dealt by;
Nor from *our* colour dare to deem ourselves
The *only* men who're worthy to be free.
Was liberty the right of whites alone,
How *few* were free compar'd to mankind all;
And if *own'd* only by the *major* part,
Then whites should toil the slaves of sable men. . . .
The fierce revolt of Afric's tortur'd tribes.
Which now wide range around Carribean isles,
Our half reflecting minds too quick condemn.
Were we in dire captivity and chains,
Opprest, degraded, as they've been for ages,
We would revolt, had we the means and pow'r,
And deal destruction to our tyrant foes,
Strowing our way with carcasses and blood,
And deem it justice, reason, noblest virtue.
Whips, chains, swords, so long in tyrants' hands,
Are now destroying—Is this more than just?
If blacks are cruel, vengeful, and unfeeling,
And deal to Christians terrors, sword, and fire,
As they now strive to break their galling yokes—
Do they not act from Christian precedent:—
Wrote, round the globe ten thousand times, in blood?
Were sable men to pour on Christian lands
Each bitter woe, that human rage could cause,
Such as fam'd Titius' death to Judah's tribes,
What human soul could prove them aught unjust,
Or, that Europeans did not merit all?
"O shocking! horrid!" Some, perhaps, exclaim:
But pause, good reader—and reflective muse—
What myriads, annual, of each age and sex,
For twelve score years, have been from Afric torn,
Torn from each joy that men could taste or lose,

And doom'd to every anguish men could feel—:
What equal numbers, prematurely fell,
Destroy'd and butcher'd by innumerable means,
Yet unoffending, in their own defence:—
What ruin, havoc, and devouring flames,
Hath rag'd for centuries thro' that hapless land;—
What miseries keen, astonishing, and vast,
Complex and countless, and yet undeserv'd—
Hath mourning Afric's suffer'ing tribes endur'd—
Yea—such endur'd as mortal can't depict,
The task requires a far superior pow'r.
Now—by whom caus'd, and wrought these horrors all,
These pungent, stern, and unutterable woes,—
This havoc of humanity and man,—
Which reign'd o'er Afric's various tongues & climes,
Thro' such a vast revolving lapse of years?
But, why demand we? Do we not well know
The savage authors of these direful deeds?—
And, are they not—O! truth disgraceful! Christians?
They Christians? Yea—so call'd, but truly fiends! . . .

Could we appeal to thee, O, thou Atlantic!
Thou could'st support our charge; for, thou didst bear
Our captive millions o'er thy boisterous waves,
In gloomy, floating prisons, bound in chains,
And round invested by ferocious crews,
The vicious dregs of tyrant Europe's slaves:
And oft our gore hath crimson'd thy green serge,
Pour'd copious from our purple tort'ring wounds:
And thousands, while transporting o'er thy tide,
Did in thy liquid bosom find their tombs;
By hunger, sickness, thirst, and pains destroy'd,
By sorrows, griefs, ill usage, and despair.
Bear witness to our woes, ye virtuous men . . .
Who, in a venal, hostile, vicious world,
Have spoke and wrote the friends of Afric's tribes.
In spite of tyrants, wits, and learned fools,
And hosts of haughty, selfish impious foes,
You've nobly dar'd t'assert the rights of men,
And spread humanity and reason round.

Jupiter Nicholson, Jacob Nicholson, Job Albert, and Thomas Pritchett (fl. 1797)

The four signers of this petition were fugitives from North Carolina writing in Philadelphia, each of them with a harrowing personal story. They had all been freed in North Carolina and then, because of new legislation, were subject to re-enslavement and were being pursued by slave catchers. They turned to the federal government for relief and protection, and thus this petition became the first ever presented to the US Congress by African Americans. Congress received the petition but allowed it to die, and the nation thus lost an early opportunity to promote racial justice.

"The Petition and Representation of [Four] Free Men," January 23, 1797

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled, the Petition and Representation of the undernamed Free Men, respectfully sheweth

That, being of African descent, late inhabitants and natives of North Carolina, to you only, under God, can we apply with any hope of effect, for redress of our grievances, having been compelled to leave the State wherein we had a right of residence, as freemen liberated under the hand and seal of humane and conscientious masters, the validity of which act of justice, in restoring us to our native right of freedom, was confirmed by judgment of the Superior Court of North Carolina, wherein it was brought to trial; yet, not long after this decision, a law of that State was enacted, under which men of cruel disposition, and void of just principle, received countenance and authority in violently seizing, imprisoning, and selling into slavery, such as had been so emancipated; whereby we were reduced to the necessity of separating from some of our nearest and most tender connexions, and of seeking refuge in such parts of the Union where more regard is paid to the public declaration in favor of liberty and the common right of man, several hundreds, under our circumstances, having in consequence of the said law, been hunted day and night, like beasts of the forest, by armed men with dogs, and made a prey of as free and lawful plunder. Among others thus exposed, I Jupiter Nicholson, of Perquimons county, North-Carolina, after being set free by my master, Thomas Nicholson, and having been about two years employed as a seaman in the service of

Zachary Nickson, on coming on shore, was pursued by men with dog and arms; but was favoured to escape by night to Virginia, with my wife, who was manumit[t]ed by Gabriel Cosand, where I resided about four years in the town of Portsmouth, chiefly employed in sawing boards and scantling; from thence I removed with my wife to Philadelphia, where I have been employed at times by water, working along shore, or sawing wood. I left behind me a father and mother, who were manumitted by Thomas Nicholson and Zachary Nickson; they have been since taken up with a beloved brother, and sold into cruel bondage.

I Jacob Nicholson, also of North Carolina, being set free by my master, Joseph Nicholson, but continuing to live with him till being pursued day and night I was obliged to leave my abode, sleep in the woods, and stacks in the fields, &c. to escape the hands of violent men, who, induced by the profit afforded them by law, followed this course as a business; at length by night I made my escape, leaving a mother, one child and two brothers, to see whom I dare not return.

I Job Albert, manumitted by Benjamin Albertson, who was my careful guardian to protect me from being afterwards taken and sold, providing me with a house to accommodate me and my wife, who was liberated by William Robertson; but we were night and day hunted by men armed with guns, swords and pistols, accompanied with mastiff dogs; from whose violence being one night apprehensive of immediate danger, I left my dwelling locked and barred and fastened with a chain, lying at some distance from it, while my

wife was by my kind master locked up under his roof; I heard them break into my house, where not finding their prey, they got but a small booty, a handkerchief of about a dollar value, and some provisions; but not long after I was discovered and seized by Alexander Stafford, William Stafford and Thomas Creesy, who were armed with guns and clubs: after binding me with my hands behind me, and a rope round my arms and body, they took me about four miles to Hartford prison, where I lay four weeks, suffering much for want of provision; from thence, with the assistance of a fellow-prisoner, a white man, I made my escape, and for three dollars was conveyed with my wife by a humane person, in a covered waggon by night, to Virginia, where, in the neighborhood of Portsmouth, I continued unmolested about four years, being chiefly engaged in sawing boards and [p]lank. On being advised to move northward, I came with my wife to Philadelphia, where I have laboured for a livelihood upwards of two years, in summer mostly along shore in vessels and stores, and sawing wood in the winter—My mother was set free by Phineas Nickson, my sister by John Trueblood, and both taken up and sold into slavery, myself deprived of the consolation of seeing them, without being exposed to the like grievous oppression.

I Thomas Pritchett was set free by my master, Thomas Pritchett, who furnished me with land to raise provisions for my use, where I built myself a house, cleared a sufficient spot of woodland to produce ten bushels of corn, and the second year about fifteen, the third, had as much planted as I suppose would have produced thirty bushels; this I was obliged to leave about one month before it was fit for gathering, being threatened by Holland Lockwood, who married my said master's widow, that if I would not come and serve him, he would apprehend me, and send me to the West-Indies; Enoch Ralph also threatening to send me to gaol, and sell me for the good of the country: being thus in jeopardy, I left my little farm with my small stock and utensils, and my corn standing, and escaped by night into Virginia, where shipping myself for Boston, I was through

stress of weather landed in New-York, where I served as a waiter seventeen months; but my mind being distressed on account of the situation of my wife and children, I returned to Norfolk in Virginia, with a hope of at least seeing them, if I could not obtain their freedom; but finding I was advertised in the newspaper, twenty dollars the reward for apprehending me, my dangerous situation obliged me to leave Virginia, disappointed of seeing my wife and children, coming to Philadelphia, where I resided in the employment of a waiter upwards of two years.

In addition to the hardship of our own case, as above set forth, we believe ourselves warranted, on the present occasion, in offering to your consideration the singular case of a fellow black now confined in the gaol of this city, under sanction of the act of general government, called the Fugitive Law, as it appears to us a flagrant proof how far human beings, merely on account of colour and complexion, are through prevailing prejudice out-lawed and excluded from common justice and common humanity, by the operation of such partial laws, in support of habits and customs cruelly oppressive. This man, having been many years past manumitted by his master in North-Carolina, was under the authority of the aforementioned law of that state, sold again into slavery, and, after having served his purchaser upwards of six years, made his escape to Philadelphia, where he has resided eleven years, having a wife and four children; and by an agent of the Carolina claimer, has been lately apprehended and committed to prison, his said claimer, soon after the man's escaping from him, having advertised him, offering a reward of ten silver dollars to any person that would bring him back, or five times that sum to any person that would make due proof of his being killed, and no questions asked by whom.

We beseech your impartial attention to our hard condition, not only with respect to our personal sufferings as freemen, but as a class of that people who, distinguished by colour, are therefore, with a degrading partiality, considered by many, even of those in eminent station, as unentitled to that

public justice and protection which is the great object of government. We indulge not a hope, or presume to ask for the interposition of your honourable body, beyond the extent of your constitutional power or influence, yet are willing to believe your serious, disinterested and candid consideration of the premises, under the benign impressions of equity and mercy, producing upright exertion of what is in your power, may not be without some salutary effect, but for our relief as a people, and toward the removal of obstructions to public order and well being.

If notwithstanding all that has been publicly avowed as essential principles respecting the extent of human right to freedom; notwithstanding we have had that right restored to us, so far as was in the power of those by whom we were held as slaves, we cannot claim the privilege of representation in your councils, yet trust we may address you as fellow-men, who, under God, the sovereign Ruler of the Universe, are intrusted with the distribution of justice, for the terror of evil-doers, the encouragement and protection of the innocent, not doubting that you are men of liberal minds, susceptible of benevolent feelings and clear conception of rectitude, to a catholic extent, who can admit that black people (servile as their condition generally is throughout this Continent) have natural affections, social and domestic attachments and sensibilities; and that, therefore, we may hope for a share in your sympathetic attention while we represent that the unconstitutional bondage in which multitudes

of our fellows in complexion are held, is to us a subject sorrowfully affecting; for we cannot conceive their condition (more especially those who have been emancipated, and tasted the sweets of liberty, and again reduced to slavery by kidnappers and man-stealers) to be less afflicting or deplorable than the situation of citizens of the United States, captivated and enslaved through the unrighteous policy prevalent in Algiers—

We are far from considering all those who retain slaves as wilful oppressors, being well assured that numbers in the state from whence we are exiles, hold their slaves in bondage not of choice, but possessing them by inheritance, feel their minds burthened under the slavish restraint of legal impediments to doing that justice which they are convinced is due to fellow rationals.—May we not be allowed to consider this stretch of power, morally and politically, a governmental defect, if not a direct violation of the declared fundamental principles of the constitution; and finally, is not some remedy for an evil of such magnitude highly worthy of the deep enquiry and unfeigned zeal of the supreme legislative body of [a] free and enlightened people? Submitting our cause to God, and humbly craving your best aid and influence, as you may be favoured and directed by that wisdom which is from above, wherewith that you may be eminently dignified and rendered more conspicuously, in the view of nations, a blessing to the people you represent, is the sincere prayer of your petitioners.

Anonymous (“A Person Confined in the State-Prison”)

The author of this ballad identifies himself in a remarkable way: as “Itaniko,” an enslaved African, now an inmate in a New Jersey prison. The poem was published in a volume entitled *The Prisoner: or, A Collection of Poetical Pieces, Written by a Person Confined in the State-Prison* (Trenton, NJ, 1802). Itaniko never discloses the reason for his incarceration. But he does tell his life’s story, from capture in Africa and the Middle Passage to field labor in America, including his dramatic suicide attempt aboard the slave ship. Nothing else is known, and the rest of Itaniko’s story remains a mystery.

“The African Slave” (1802)

YE SONS OF COLUMBIA, who taste every blessing
That Liberty, Plenty, and Peace can bestow,
Give ear to my story, and think how distressing!
Ah! hear the sad tale of an African’s woe:
Tho’ guiltless my life was, without provocation
I was torn from my country, companions, and nation,
And doom’d to the toils of a life’s Mancipation;
Ah! such the hard fate is of *Itaniko*.

One morn, I my juvenile gambols was playing,
No ill did I bode, for no fear did I know,
As thro’ the palm-forest, thus carelessly straying,
A prey I was seiz’d by the steel-hearted foe:
Who dragg’d me on board, where in fetters they
bound me,
While pale-visag’d hell-hounds in horror surround me
I plung’d in the deep hoping death would have
found me,
They snatch’d from the billows poor *Itaniko*.

My father! I utter’d in wild exclamation,
When life’s crimson current a while ceas’d to flow:
Awake, O my Country! in just indignation,
The swift-feather’d vengeance elance from the bow!
In vain were all efforts their power to vanquish,
What language can picture my heart-rending
anguish!
In cold galling chains for my freedom to languish!
Oh! such the hard fate is of *Itaniko*.

On board of our ship there arose a dire faction,
I let my curs’d fiends the conspiracy know;
But mark the reward of this life-saving action,
Altho’ I befriend them no pity they show;
For when on the shores of Columbia we landed,
The caitiffs I sav’d with what infamy branded!
The christian’s base gold was the boon they
demanded,
And sold as a slave was poor *Itaniko*.

You boast of your Freedom—your mild
Constitution
See tears undissembled for Liberty flow!
Unmov’d can you witness such cruel delusion,
Who feel in your bosoms Philanthropy glow?
Were we not by the same common Parent created?
Why then for the hue of my race am I hated?
Why, faultless, to mis’ry and chains am I fated?
Ah! why is thus wretched poor *Itaniko*?

Each morn to fresh toils I awake broken-hearted
The blood-streaming lash & the sweat-reeking hoe;
By Country, by Hope, by all Pleasure deserted,
A victim, alas! to unspeakable woe:
O, GOD Of Columbia! behold with compassion,
The Cruelties, Insults, and Wrongs of my nation,
And blast, by thy justice, that Tyrant-Oppression,
That holds from his country poor *Itaniko*!

Thomas Moore (1779–1852)

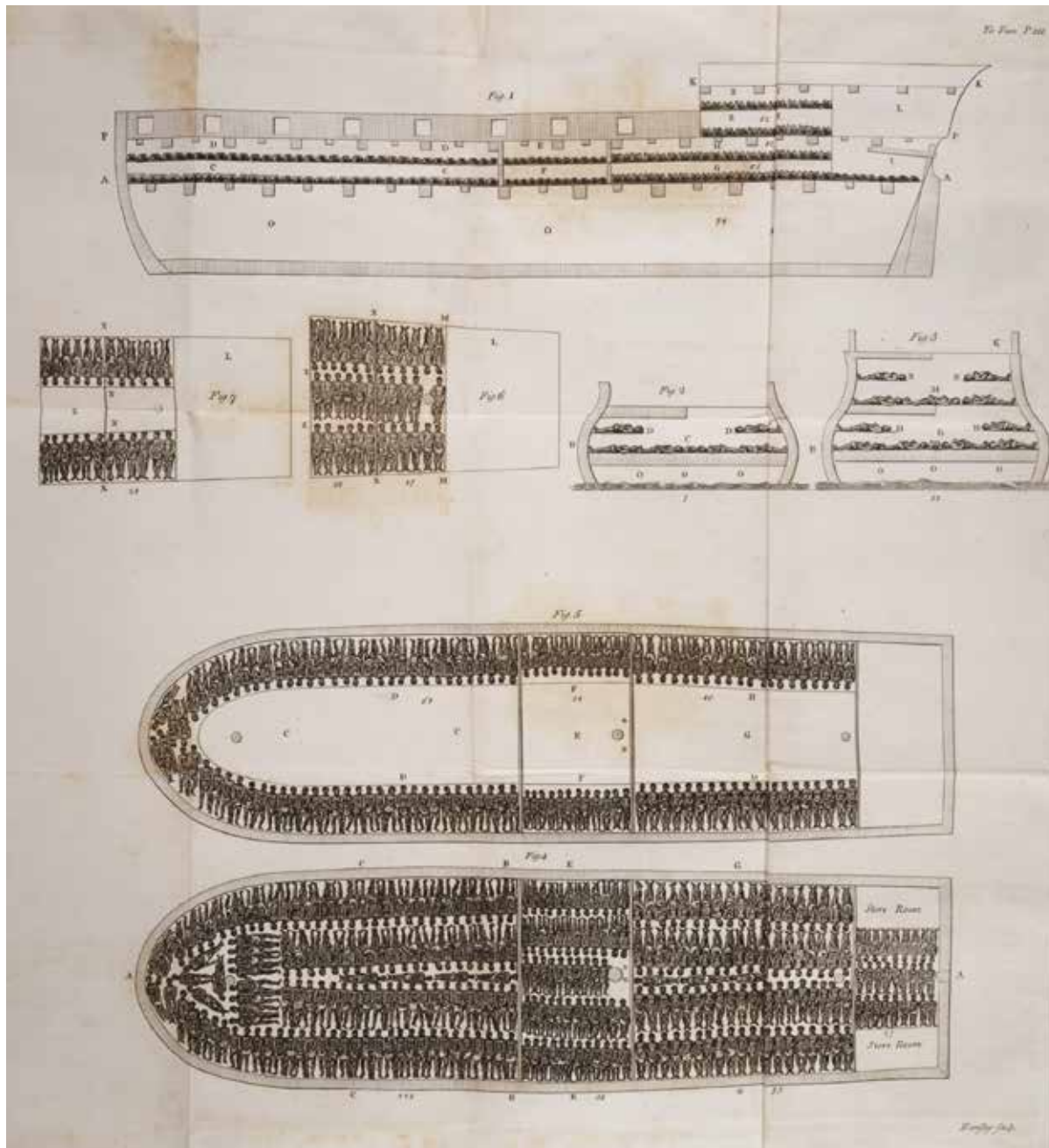
Here we present a foreign visitor with a strong perspective on America. An Irish poet whose popularity made him one of the leading writers of his time, Moore was a Roman Catholic educated at that bastion of the Protestant elite, Trinity College, Dublin. Though he was based in England, the following poem was inspired by an eight-month visit to America in 1804. As with many foreign visitors, especially liberals like himself who admired American democracy, Moore was struck by the incongruity of slavery in the land of freedom.

In this poem addressed to a friend back in Britain, Moore satirizes what he regards as the pretensions of Americans who, even as their new capital city was emerging from the swamps along the Potomac, imagined it a second Rome. Although he was introduced to President Jefferson and reported being impressed, here Moore slyly ridicules Jefferson for his sexual involvement with the enslaved Sally Hemings (“Aspasia”) and the pall it casts over Jefferson’s reputation as a champion of freedom.

from “Epistle VII. To Thomas Hume, Esq. M.D. From the City of Washington” (1806)

‘Tis evening now; the heats and cares of day
In twilight dews are calmly wept away.
The lover now, beneath the western star,
Sighs through the medium of his sweet segar,
And fills the ears of some consenting she
With puffs and vows, with smoke and constancy!
The weary statesman for repose hath fled
From halls of council to his negro’s shed,
Where blest he woos some black Aspasia’s grace,
And dreams of freedom in his slave’s embrace!

In fancy now, beneath the twilight gloom,
Come, let me lead thee o’er this modern Rome,
Where tribunes rule, where dusky Davi bow,
And what was Goose-Creek once is Tiber now!—
This fam’d metropolis, where fancy sees
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees;
Which travelling fools and gazetteers adorn
With shrines unbuilt and heroes yet unborn,
Though nought but wood and [Jefferson] they see,
Where streets should run and sages *ought* to be!

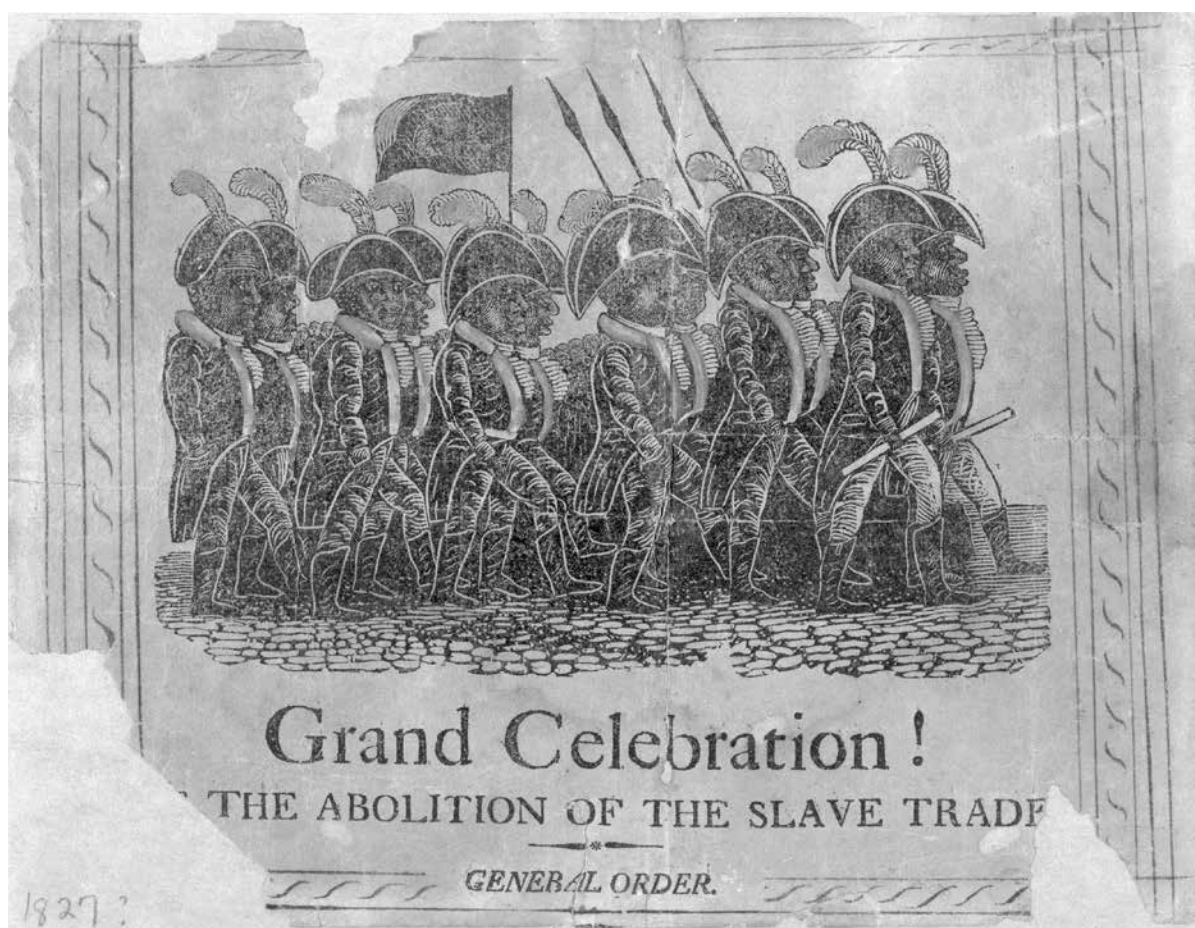


*"Description of a Slave Ship" from Thomas Clarkson, The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-trade by the British Parliament. London, 1808.
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC05965.*

This horrifying image of enslaved people packed into the lower decks of a slave ship circulated widely in the English-speaking world and moved many viewers to understand the miserable conditions aboard transatlantic slave ships.

Section IV

The Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1807–1808: New Dawn or False Hope?



*"Grand Celebration! The Abolition of the Slave Trade." Broadside. Boston, 1817.
The New-York Historical Society.*

The abolition of the slave trade in 1808 led to annual celebrations in many African American communities. This broadside from 1817 depicts a parade in Boston, Massachusetts, celebrating the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade on January 1, 1808.

Introduction: The Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1807–1808

In 1807 both Britain and America passed legislation to abolish the transatlantic slave trade on January 1, 1808. In the United States, ironically, it was President Thomas Jefferson, himself a slaveholder, who signed the bill into law. This meant that beginning in 1808, no British or American ships or merchants could participate in the transatlantic slave trade, under penalty of law, though slavery itself and the domestic trade in enslaved people continued to be legal across much of the country. Still, many regarded this measure hopefully, as a breakthrough event and the first step toward the abolition of slavery nationwide. Thus the texts in this section, all of them by African Americans writing between 1808 and 1814, are primarily upbeat and celebratory. The writings also testify to the growing strength of African American communities, which tended to be organized around educated, energetic, and committed men and women, often church leaders. This tradition has extended down to modern times, as symbolized by such historic figures as the Christian ministers Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesse Jackson, and Raphael Warnock, among many others. For all the efforts of the writers in this section, and despite the progress of abolitionism across the northern states, slavery continued elsewhere in the nation and deepened its importance in the country's economy. Within a decade, by the time of the bitter fight over admitting slave states that led to the Missouri Compromise of 1819–1820, it was clear that the hopes raised in 1808 would not be fulfilled for many years to come.



*Peter Williams, Sr. (1750–1823). Unidentified artist.
Oil on canvas, ca. 1810. The New-York Historical Society.*

Peter Williams, Sr., the father of the poet whose work is opposite, was born enslaved. Once free, he succeeded as a tobacco merchant and helped found the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in New York. As a leader in the African American community, he played a major role in organizing the events celebrated in these poems by his son and contemporaries.

Peter Williams, Jr. (ca. 1780–1840)

Son of an enslaved man who fought in the American Revolution, Peter Williams, Jr., became the first Black Episcopalian priest and a leader in the American abolitionist movement. Based in New York City, he established St. Philip's African Church in 1819, helped found the first African American newspaper (*Freedom's Journal*) in 1827, and supported the Phoenix Society to promote Black education in 1833. He preached, wrote, and occasionally stirred controversy. In 1834, amidst White backlash at abolitionists and rumors that Williams had performed interracial marriages, rioters burned his church and he was forced to resign from the board of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. Though he supported African colonization projects and refugee communities in Canada, Williams continued to hope that eventually America would include Black people as equals.

These two hymns were published in a pamphlet with William Hamilton's *Address to the New York African Society, for Mutual Relief, delivered in the Universalist Church, January 2, 1809*, and were sung during the service held to celebrate the first anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. In the first hymn, for all his gratitude, Williams focuses his listeners on the larger political message: "All men are free by right / Of Nature's laws."

HYMN I (1809)

To the Eternal Lord, By saints on earth ador'd And saints above. Let us glad honors rear, In strains of praise and pray'r His glorious name declare, The God of Love.	In diff'rent parts of earth Thou called the Humane forth, Our rights to plead, Our griefs to mitigate, And to improve our state, An object truly great, Noble indeed.
When the oppressor's hands Bound us in iron bands Thou didst appear. Thou saw our weeping eyes, And list'ning to our cries, In mercy didst arise, Our hearts to cheer.	Thou didst their labours bless, And gave them great success, In Freedom's cause. They prov'd to every sight By truth's unerring light, <i>All men are free</i> by right Of Nature's laws.
Thou did'st the trade o'erthrow, The source of boundless woe, The world's disgrace, Which ravag'd Afric's coast, Enslaved its greatest boast, A happy num'rous host, A harmless race.	They to insure our bliss, Taught us that happiness Is from above. That it is only found On this terrestrial ground, Where virtuous acts abound, And Mutu'l Love.



Men and women who won their freedom in the Founding Era (from top left): **Absalom Jones** bought his own freedom in Delaware (By Raphaelle Peale, 1810. Delaware Art Museum.); **James Armistead Lafayette** was freed in 1787 for Revolutionary War service (By John B. Martin, 1824. The Valentine.); **Yarrow Mamout**, a Muslim, purchased his own freedom in Maryland in 1796, age 60 (By Charles Willson Peale, 1819. Philadelphia Museum of Art.); **Elizabeth Freeman** brought a freedom suit in Massachusetts in 1781 that effectively ended slavery in that state (By Susan Anne Livingston Ridley Sedgwick, 1811. Massachusetts Historical Society.); **William Lee** was with George Washington throughout the American Revolution and was freed in his will (By John Trumbull, 1780. The Metropolitan Museum.); **Prince Whipple**, in a detail from the painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, was granted his freedom after the Revolution (By Emanuel Leutze, 1851. The Metropolitan Museum.); **Pierre Toussaint** was emancipated in New York in 1807 and later purchased the freedom of his wife, **Juliette Noel Toussaint** (By Anthony Meucci, ca. 1825. The New-York Historical Society.)

In the second hymn, in terms that foreshadow the self-sufficiency ethos of African American nationalist movements, Williams focuses on the closeness and mutual support within the Black community.

HYMN II (1809)

The Sov'reign ruler of the skies
To bless the human kind,
Implanted in the breast of man,
A sympathetic mind.
Hence we, participating woe
Each other's griefs alloy,
And by reciprocating bliss
We swell the tide of joy.

Instructed thus by Nature's God,
The good and great first cause;
We find that Fellowship and Love
Stand high in Nature's Laws.
As brethren are to brethren near,
So let us be combin'd:
Knit by the bonds of Mutu'l Love
In social compact joined.

With unremitting tender care,
Let us the sick attend;
Defend from want the fatherless,
And prove the Widow's friend.
So shall we cheer affliction's night,
And soothe the fiercest grief;
So shall we ease the aching heart,
By MUTUAL RELIEF.

William Hamilton (1773–1836)

William Hamilton was a free Black New Yorker who made his living as a carpenter but devoted himself to writing and activism on behalf of the Black community from the 1790s well into the 1830s. He produced hymns and orations, and, with Peter Williams, Sr., founded the New York African Society for Mutual Relief in 1808. The hymns below were composed and set to music by Hamilton, and were sung during commemorative services on the second anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade at the African Church in New York, January 1, 1810.

HYMN I (1810)

Great God, what wonders have been wrought, For us by thy almighty hand, In cutting off the trade which brought Direful confusion in our land.	Parents from children oft were torn, Relations from relations near; And doom'd forever thence to mourn The loss of friends by nature dear.
Its cruel power with dreadful sway, On Afric's peaceful, happy shore, Spread war, confusion and dismay, And drench'd its fields with human gore.	But in supreme, unbounded love, Thou did'st behold their suff'ring plight, And from thy splendid courts above Asserted injur'd Afric's right.
Those dwellings where true happiness, Did long and constantly reside, Were robb'd of peace, content, and bliss, And every pleasing hope beside.	Thy powerful arm the host restrain Which ravag'd wide its golden shore; And crowns its spicy, fertile plains, With peace and happiness once more.
Those knit by soft conjugal love, Were sever'd by a barb'rous stroke; And doom'd in distant climes to prove A tyrant's cruel galling yoke.	Let ev'ry heart then join to bless And glorify thy holy name, Let every tongue thy love confess, And shout aloud thy matchless name.

Hamilton's tone of unreserved celebration in these hymns is a reflection of the hopefulness inspired by the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808. But his view changed. In the decades that followed, the growth of the slave-based economy in the South and the ascendancy of the slave power in American politics would move Hamilton to fight for civil rights up to his death in 1836.

HYMN II (1810)

Now let a burst of sacred joy, And unmingled delight, Ascend the hill of God our king, Who doeth all things right.	No more shall foul oppression's arm, From your once peaceful shore, Drag your defenceless, harmless sons To slavery no more.
Now let the sons of Africa, In loudest strains rejoice; God is our king, his loudest praise Sing forth with cheerful voice.	God is our king, let all rejoice, The SLAVE TRADE is no more; God is our king, let Afric's sons His matchless name adore.
No more can avarice, that foul fiend, To human peace a foe; Thy sons, O Africa, beguile, And liberty o'erthrow.	

George White (1764–1836)

George White was born in Virginia, separated from his enslaved mother by the age of one, and, after a succession of masters in Virginia and Maryland, was manumitted in the early 1780s. He made his way north, settling for three years in New Jersey and then finally in New York, where he became a Methodist preacher. From 1795 he was involved in founding a separate African Methodist church and in the factional wrangles that ensued. Though he did not become literate until the age of forty-two, he published a narrative of his life in 1810, which includes this elegy for an enslaved woman and fellow Christian, Mary Henery, who died in New York in October 1809, aged only nineteen. White explained in his narrative that “God had made me instrumental in the awakening and conversion of this young sister, and being present at her death, her parents requested me to preach her funeral sermon [which] I shall here insert; with an Elegy.” Free of any political or sociological self-consciousness, the poem offers a direct insight into the emotional and spiritual life of an African American family and their minister in the early 1800s.

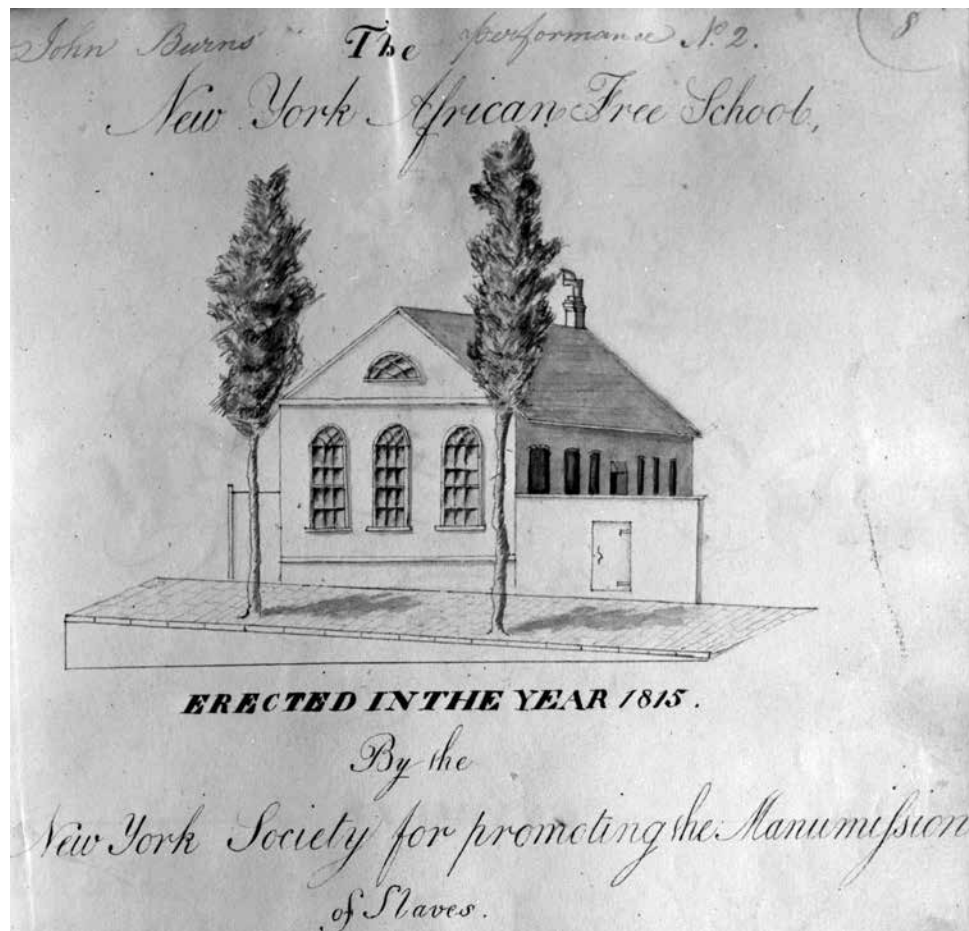
Untitled poem (1810)

How wond’rous are thy ways, Almighty God!
Deep are thy councils; and severe thy rod!
Thy chast’ning hand, what mortal man can stay?
Or who can turn thy tenderness away?

Our friend is gone, but let us not repine:
The gem was ravish’d by the hand divine.
Call’d to adorn the dear Redeemer’s crown,
And add new honours to Immanuel’s throne.

Her virtue lives; and ever live it must;
Although her flesh lies slumb’ring in the dust.
Wipe off the tear, suppress the swelling sigh;
For she that lives in Christ can never die.

Grieve not, ye parents, give your sighing o’er:
The deep felt cause will soon be felt no more.
Your daughter lives in pleasures ever new,
On Zion’s hill, where she looks out for you.



*Page reproduced from the African Free School Records, 1817–1832.
The New-York Historical Society.*

Established in 1787 by John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and other anti-slavery New Yorkers, the African Free School became a pillar of the Black community. Among its leaders in the early years was John Teasman (see facing page). The drawing of the school was made by one of its African American pupils, apparently the "John Burns" identified upper left.

John Teasman (1754–1815)

Originally from New Jersey, John Teasman was a leader in the Black community of New York City, principal of the African Free School from 1799 to 1809, and founder of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief in 1810. A patriotic citizen, he helped organize groups to build fortifications to defend New York City during the War of 1812. In the text below, Teasman addresses the Society for Mutual Relief, calling them a “band of brothers” and celebrating not only the founding of their society but the recent abolition of slavery by New York State (in 1799) and his sense of the growing recognition of Black equality.

***from An Address Delivered in the African Episcopal Church, on the
25th March, 1811, before the New-York African Society for Mutual Relief,
Being the First Anniversary of Its Incorporation***

The conduct of this state toward you, my brethren, is declarative of its good opinion and tender regard for you, and merits your warmest thanks.

Having carefully investigated the subject, and finding your genius not to be an inferior being, it became the more anxious in your favour.

Viewing the sacrifices and miseries occasioned by the slave trade and slavery—sacrifices and miseries which, if they were brought full to view, would be enough to soften adamant itself, and cause barbarous cruelty to shudder and turn pale.

Conceiving how hard it must be to be dragged from our native land, from every thing near and dear, from a land flowing with milk and honey, into a strange land, there to be degraded and sorely oppressed.

Concluding perhaps from what you have done by the light of your day-star, that when your sun of science, who is on his way from Nadir, shall arrive at his zenith, you will exhibit exploits equal to any.

Knowing slavery to be an evil, and that voluntary service is preferable to servile, this state resolved to rid itself of the evil, take a part in the glorious cause of African prosperity, and render itself an essential service, by giving freedom and encouragement to manly powers.

It arose, decreed, and stretched forth its arm for the destruction of slavery in itself; and as far as its power extended, to prohibit the importation and exportation of slaves. And when the way was properly prepared, took you into social citizenship, gave you a charter, placed you on a level with other civil societies of the state, and rendered your body politic. You are now qualified to hold property, sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded.

In co-operation with the state in this great work of extending your liberties, the manumission powers were very active. . . .

Here we must not forget the ingenious and heroic exploits of the standing committee of the Manumission Society, in the diminution of slavery and oppression, and in the establishment of freedom and prosperity. Nor must we forget the achievements of the other committees; especially we must not, we cannot forget the happy success of the trustees of the African school, in the illumination of our minds. Nor must we forget to hold in lasting esteem and dignity, the great feats of the high officers of that most excellent institution. . . .

On this occasion then, think not my brethren, that all the pleasing emotions of joy and gratitude are confined to you; this state rejoices with you; the manumission powers rejoice with you . . . And where is the soul that is so lost to justice, humanity, and every fine feeling, as not to rejoice and give thanks to see oppression taking its departure, and man enjoying the rights of man? To see this goodly cluster, well adorned, the fruits of those just and humane exertions, and of your strugglings?

My brethren, having rendered to the United States some service in the rearing of their standard; and seeing the happy effect which information has on community, and the destitute situation of my brethren in this respect, I became desirous of being useful, by endeavouring to diffuse information among you. . . .

You will do yourselves essential service—Justify the favorable conduct of this state toward you; and furnish a powerful argument for the

(Continued)

vindication of the cause of the nation of which you are a part.

Perhaps the other states seeing the comfort which this state enjoys on account of its new arrangement with you, may be induced to do likewise, until there shall not be a breathe of slavery to contaminate the atmosphere, and poison the civil, religious and political health of the Union—Until there shall not be a breath of slavery to contaminate the atmosphere, and poison the civil, religious and political health

of the world.—Then will earth burst forth, and Heaven mingle high sounding joy.

My brethren, be united as a band of brothers; be zealous in the noble cause in which you are embarked. Accumulate wealth; get wisdom, and you will be powerful, persevering, respectable, and useful. Be kind and affectionate one toward another, watch over each other for good . . . Do honor to your charter; do honor to your state; do honor to yourselves.

Russell Parrott (1791–1824)

A protege and ally of James Forten, Russell Parrott had a short but productive career in the Black community in Philadelphia. A lay reader at the African American St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Parrott was often called on to deliver the public address for the annual commemoration of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade on January 1. He spoke and wrote frequently against slavery and racial inequality, and as a member of the African Literary Society supported education for all African Americans. During the War of 1812 he helped mobilize Black Philadelphians to build fortifications against the British. He vigorously supported the efforts of Forten and others to defy the American Colonization Society's program to relocate American Blacks in Africa. Parrott died of tuberculosis at age 33, leaving his wife Sarah and two young children. In the text below, his hatred of slavery, his patriotic fervor, and his optimism about the future are all on display.

from An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Delivered on the First of January, 1814

The abolition of the slave trade is one of the greatest events that mark the present age. It was a sacrifice that virtue compelled avarice to make, at the shrine of justice, as her first oblation. And, when to this is added the emancipation of those already in bondage, the triumph of philanthropy will be complete; when man shall no longer be stigmatized by the name of slave, and heaven's first, best gift, be universally enjoyed. That freedom is the natural inheritance of man, is a truth that neither sophistry nor interest can shake; and the being that exists from under her benign rays, can neither be exhilarated by the influence of learning, nor warmed into a proper knowledge of himself, by religion.

If the security of a country should rest within her bosom, then it is necessary that each citizen should be a freeman.

Pennsylvania, first in virtue, first in patriotism, to the wisdom of thy councils, and the firmness of thy magistrates, we are indebted for the privileges we now enjoy. By this act of justice, you have secured to yourself a band of citizens who will not forsake you in the hour of danger, whose bosoms are ready to be bared in your service, and whose blood will cheerfully flow in your defense. May you ever remain the sanctuary of liberty, and may your sacred portals never be polluted by the violators of the rights of man.

That we are faithful to our country, we have abundantly proved: where her Hull, her Decatur, and her Bainbridge, fought and conquered,

the black bore his part, stimulated by the pure love of country, which neither contempt nor persecution can eradicate from his generous heart. With a jewel of such inestimable value within her bosom, the cheering smiles of that country should not be withheld by narrow-minded prejudice.

Abolition! already are thy blessings diffusing themselves; already Africa experiences its blessed effects; confidence is again restored between man and man; whole villages are no longer depopulated, to glut that insatiable monster, avarice; mild religion begins to unfold her heavenly truth, through this former land of paganism and error—and over the ruins of the altars that idolatry had reared, the sacred temple points its spire towards heaven. Civilization, with her attending handmaids, agriculture and industry, infuses cheerfulness over the face of nature, and inspires the husbandman with gratitude and joy.

Liberty! thou exhilarating soother of human hearts, may the presence, like the sun, illuminate every soil, and brighten every countenance; may thy animating smiles enliven the humble dwelling of the Negro of Africa, as well as the courts and cottages of more favoured climes; may neither the tide of time obliterate, nor the combination of avarice, inhumanity, and injustice, be ever able to eradicate from the human breast, this heaven-born truth, that man was formed for the enjoyments of thy influence, and that without thee, creation is a cheerless blank.

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