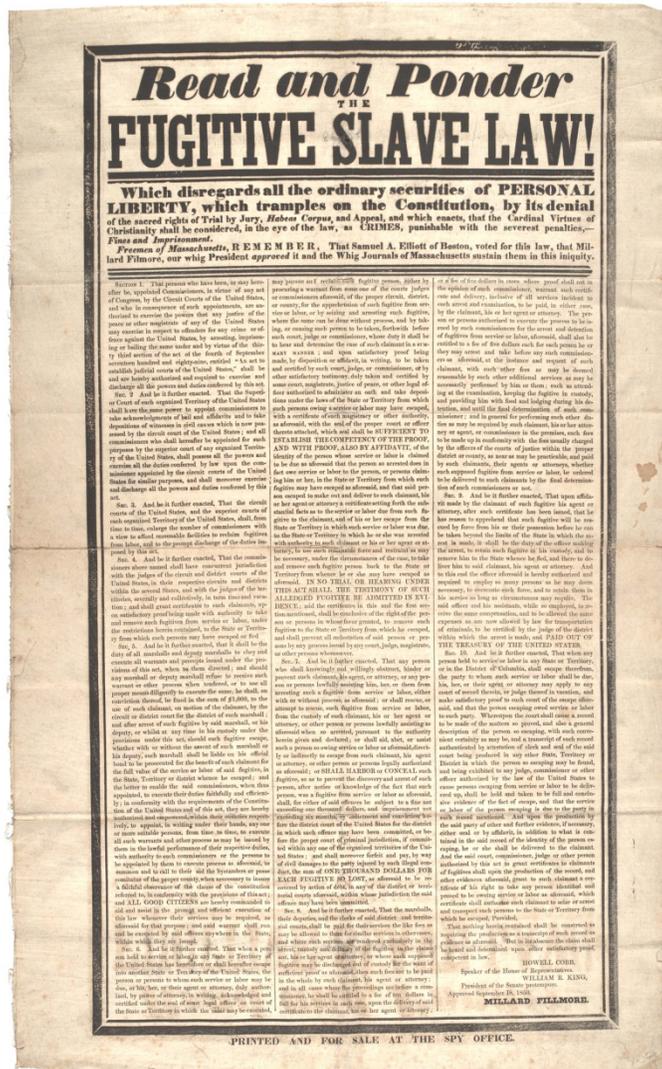


Document 1: "Read and Ponder the Fugitive Slave Law!" Broadside, 1850. GLC 1862

Introduction

The most divisive element of the Compromise of 1850 was the Fugitive Slave Law, which permitted any escaped slave to be seized and returned solely on an affidavit of anyone claiming to be his or her owner. The law also stripped fugitive slaves of the right to a jury trial and the right to testify in their own defense, in addition to ensnaring many free blacks wrongfully.

Image

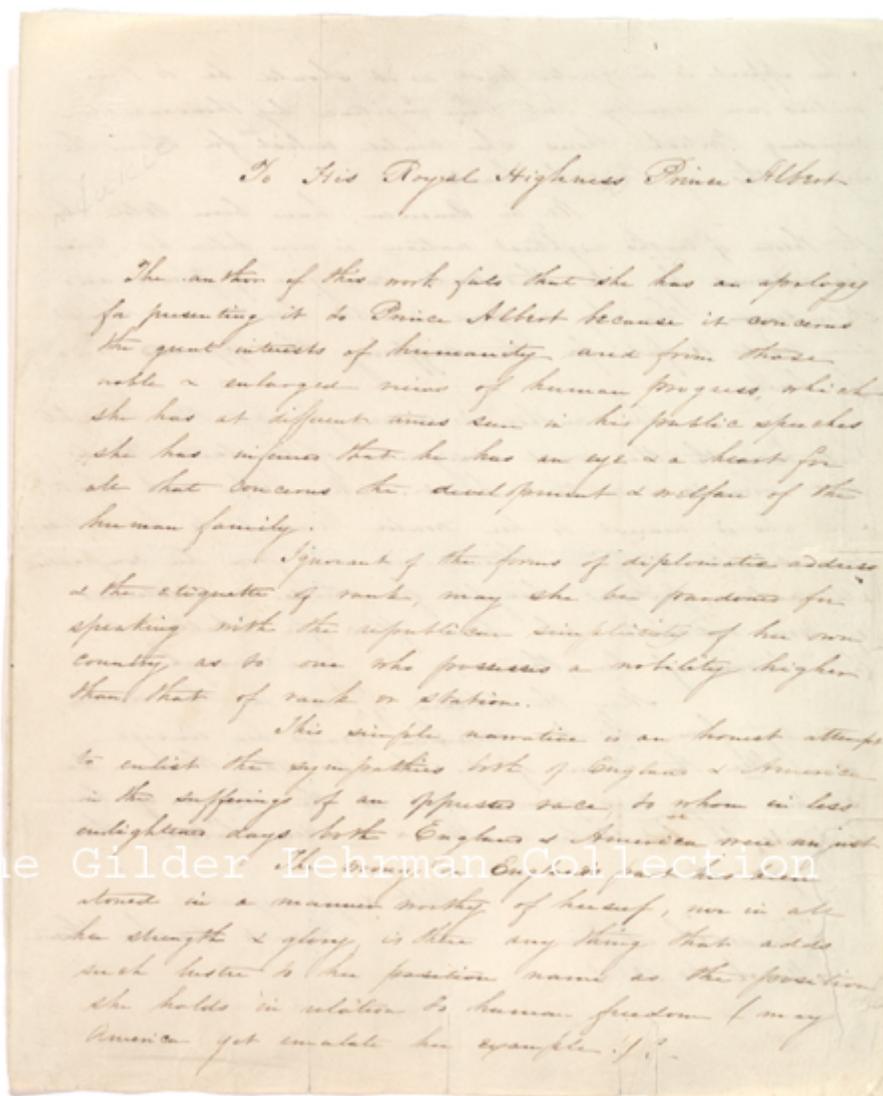


Document 2: Harriet Beecher Stowe to Prince Albert and Queen Victoria,
March 20, 1852. GLC 1585

Introduction

On *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* first day of publication, Harriet Beecher Stowe sent a copy to the British royal family. Slavery had been abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833, and Stowe holds up Britain as a model for Americans.

Image



Transcript

Harriet Beecher Stowe to Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, March 20, 1852. GLC 1585

To His Royal Highness Prince Albert

The author of this work feels that she has an apology for presenting it to Prince Albert because it concerns the great interests of humanity and from those noble & enlarged views of human progress, which she has at different times seen in his public speeches she has inferred that he has an eye & a heart for all that concerns the development and welfare of the human family.

Ignorant of the forms of diplomatic address & the etiquette of rank, may she be pardoned for speaking with the republican simplicity of her own country as to one who possesses a nobility higher than that of rank or station.

This simple narrative is an honest attempt to enlist the sympathies both of England & America in the sufferings of an oppressed race, to whom in less enlightened days both English and America were unjust.

The wrong on England's part has been atoned in a manner worthy of herself, nor in all her strength & glory, is there any thing that adds such lustre to her [struck: position] name as the position she holds in relation to human freedom (may America yet emulate her example!) [2]

The appeal is in greater part as it should be to the writer's own country, but when fugitives by thousands are crowding British shores she would enlist for them the sympathy of British hearts.

We, in America, have been told that the throne of Earth's mightiest nation is now filled by One less adorned by all this world can give of power and splendour, than by a good & noble heart -- a heart ever ready to feel for the suffering the oppressed and the lowly.

The author is encouraged by the thought that beneath the royal insignia of England throbs that woman's & mother's heart. May she ask that He who is nearest to her would present to her notice this simple story. Should it win from her compassionate nature, pitying thoughts for those multitudes of poor outcasts who have fled for shelter to the shadow of her throne. -- it were enough.

May the blessing of [inserted above: God] rest on the noble country from which America draws her lineage, & on Her the Queen of it. Tho all other thrones be shaken may hers[,] founded deep in the hearts of her subjects, be established to Her & to Her children, thro all generations

With deep respect

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Brunswick, Maine

March 20, 1852.

Document 3: Abraham Lincoln, fragment of draft, "House Divided" speech, ca. December 1857. GLC 2533

Introduction

In this fragment, Abraham Lincoln offers an early formulation of the ideas that he would advance in his speech accepting the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate in 1858. Invoking the famous biblical words, "A house divided against itself cannot stand," he argued that there was a conspiracy to make slavery lawful "in all the States, old as well as new -- North as well as South."

Image

Why, Kansas is neither the whole, nor a
bit of the real question—
"A house divided against itself can not
stand"
I believe this government can not endure
permanently, half slave, and half free—
I expressed this belief a year ago, and
subsequent developments have but confirmed me.
I do not expect the Union to be dissolved
now. I do not expect the house to fall; but
I do expect it will cease to be divided— It
will become all one thing, or all the other. Either
the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread
of it, and put it in course of ultimate extinction; or
its advocates will push it forward till it shall be
conceded alike to slave and free, old as well
as new— Do you doubt it? Study the Dred Scott
decision, and then see, how little, even now, remains
to be done—
That decision may be reduced to three points—
The first is, that a negro can not be a citizen—
That point is made in order to deprive the negro
in every possible event, of the benefit of that provis-
ion of the U. S. Constitution which declares that:
"The citizens of each state shall be entitled to
all privileges and immunities of citizens in the
several states."
The second point is, that the U. S. Constitution pro-
tects slavery, as property, in all the U. S. territories, and
that neither congress, nor the people of the territories,
nor any other power, can prohibit it, at any time prior
to the formation of state constitutions—
This point is made, in order that the territories may
safely be filled up with slaves, before the formation of
state constitutions, and thereby to embarrass the free states

Transcript

Abraham Lincoln, fragment of draft, "House Divided" speech, ca. December 1857. GLC 2533

Why, Kansas is neither the whole, nor a tithe of the real question. "A house divided against itself can not stand"

I believe this government can not endure permanently half slave, and half free.

I expressed this belief a year ago; and subsequent developments have but confirmed me.

I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and put it in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawfull in all the states, old, as well as new. Do you doubt it? Study the Dred Scott decision, and then see, how little, even now, remains to be done.

That decision may be reduced to three points. The first is, that a negro can not be a citizen. That point is made in order to deprive the negro in every possible event, of the benefit of that provision of the U. S. Constitution which declares that: "The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all previleges [sic] and immunities of citizens in the several States."

The second point is, that the U. S. constitution protects slavery, as property, in all the U. S. territories, and that neither congress, nor the people of the territories, nor any other power, can prohibit it, at any time prior to the formation of State constitutions.

This point is made, in order that the territories may safely be filled up with slaves, before the formation of State constitutions, and thereby to embarrass the free state (sentiment, and enhance the chances of slave constitutions being adopted.)

(The third point decided is that the voluntary bringing of Dred Scott into Illinois by his master, and holding him here a long time as a slave, did not operate his emancipation -- did not make him free.)

Notes: Basler 2: 452-453, from the Nicolay-Hay edition of Lincoln's works with minor variations in paragraphing, emphases, capitalization and spelling, and expanded abbreviations. The portion in angled brackets comes from the same source. Basler dates this speech "[c. May 18 1858]" based upon the Alton Weekly Courier report of the May 20th. Nicolay-Hay dates the speech to "[October 1, 1858?]" which is too late since Lincoln delivered a later form of this "House Divided" speech at the Republican State Convention, June 16 of that year (Basler 2: 461-2 and 464). Current dating is based upon Don E. Fehrenbacher's hypothesis that this speech responds to Stephen A. Douglas's speech in the Senate of 1857 Dec. 9 (Prelude to Greatness, chap. 4).