

THE AMERICAN YAWP READER

A Documentary Companion to the
American Yawp

Volume I

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Introduction



Civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. 1965. Via [Library of Congress](#).

Primary sources are the raw materials of history: written accounts, physical objects, and visual material allow historians to build narratives and construct arguments. Letters, diaries, written publications, laws, artwork, buildings, skeletal remains, environmental data, and even oral histories can all provide the first-hand evidence that historians need to make convincing arguments about the past and to properly evaluate the historical arguments made by others. Historians work primary sources into secondary and even tertiary sources: the books and textbooks assigned to students. They all rely, one way or another, on primary sources.

Students of history must know how to analyze and critically evaluate primary sources, for primary sources can distort as much as they reveal. The voice of slaves, for instance, can be drowned out by the letters and journals of slaveholders. We can produce more honest histories by interrogating our sources, asking questions such as, Who created this source? Who was their audience? How might their beliefs and perspectives have influenced their understanding? In the case of slavery, for instance, a critical eye is often needed to read between the lines and uncover forgotten histories hidden within the materials available to us. Historians must make the most of the sources they have. But while some eras and some topics lack abundant primary sources, others have almost too many, often more than any single historian can read and analyze. Under such conditions it can be tempting to cherry pick sources and create a narrative of one's own choosing, but good historians must read widely and maintain an open but critical mind to discover patterns and produce historical insights.

Just as historians must approach their sources with a critical eye, so too must they be aware of their own preconceptions and biases—their own place in history. “The past is a foreign country,” novelist L.P. Hartley wrote, “they do things differently there.” We must be critical of ourselves. We cannot expect individuals in the past to know what we know or to behave as we behave. They had their own ideas and their own dreams. They viewed the world differently than we do. So if we are to understand the past, we must begin by recognizing the present. The more we study the past, the more we come to understand ourselves.

Learning to ask good questions is an important historical skill, yet we will often not know which questions to ask until we have steeped ourselves in primary sources. You may already

have questions in mind as you read and evaluate the sources in this reader, but you should also pay attention to any thoughts, emotions, and historical questions that they may provoke. History is a conversation between the past and present, and, by reading the following sources and thinking critically about them, we hope that you will bring bring your own curiosity and creativity to the conversation.

1. Indigenous America

Introduction

Europeans called the Americas “The New World.” But for the millions of Native Americans they encountered, it was anything but. Human beings have lived here for over ten millennia. American history begins with them, the first Americans. But where does their story begin? Native Americans passed stories through the millennia that tell of their creation and values. The arrival of Europeans and resulting Columbian Exchange united two worlds and ten-thousand years of history. Both sides of the world transformed. And neither would ever again be the same. These sources explore the contours of Native American life and the conflicts that resulted from the arrival of Europeans.

Native American Creation Stories

These two Native American creation stories are among thousands of accounts for the origins of the world. The Salinian and Cherokee, from what we now call California and the American southeast respectively, both exhibit the common Native American tendency to locate spiritual power in the natural world. For both Native Americans and Europeans, the collision of two continents challenged old ideas and created new ones as well.

Salinan Indian Creation Story

When the world was finished, there were as yet no people, but the Bald Eagle was the chief of the animals. He saw the world was incomplete and decided to make some human beings. So he took some clay and modeled the figure of a man and laid him on the ground. At first he was very small but grew rapidly until he reached normal size. But as yet he had no life; he was still asleep. Then the Bald Eagle stood and admired his work. "It is impossible," said he, "that he should be left alone; he must have a mate." So he pulled out a feather and laid it beside the sleeping man. Then he left them and went off a short distance, for he knew that a woman was being formed from the feather. But the man was still asleep and did not know what was happening. When the Bald Eagle decided that the woman was about completed, he returned, awoke the man by flapping his wings over him and flew away.

The man opened his eyes and stared at the woman. "What does this mean?" he asked. "I thought I was alone!" Then the Bald Eagle returned and said with a smile, "I see you have a mate! Have you had intercourse with her?" "No," replied the man, for he and the woman knew nothing about each other. Then the Bald Eagle called to Coyote who happened to be going by and said to him, "Do you see that woman?" Try her first!" Coyote was quite willing and complied, but immediately afterwards lay down and died. The Bald Eagle went away and left Coyote dead, but presently returned and revived him. "How did it work?" said the Bald Eagle. "Pretty well, but it nearly kills a man!" replied Coyote. "Will you try it again?" said the Bald Eagle. Coyote agreed, and tried again, and this time survived. Then the Bald Eagle turned to the man and said, "She is all right now; you and she are to live together."

John Alden Mason, *The Ethnology of the Salinan Indians* (Berkeley: 1912), 191-192.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Cherokee creation story

The earth is a great island floating in a sea of water, and suspended at each of the four cardinal points by a cord hanging down from the sky vault, which is of solid rock. When the

world grows old and worn out, the people will die and the cords will break and let the earth sink down into the ocean, and all will be water again. The Indians are afraid of this.

When all was water, the animals were above in Gälûñ'lätî, beyond the arch; but it was very much crowded, and they were wanting more room. They wondered what was below the water, and at last Dâyuni'sî, "Beaver's Grandchild," the little Water-beetle, offered to go and see if it could learn. It darted in every direction over the surface of the water, but could find no firm place to rest. Then it dived to the bottom and came up with some soft mud, which began to grow and spread on every side until it became the island which we call the earth. It was afterward fastened to the sky with four cords, but no one remembers who did this.

At first the earth was flat and very soft and wet. The animals were anxious to get down, and sent out different birds to see if it was yet dry, but they found no place to alight and came back again to Gälûñ'lätî. At last it seemed to be time, and they sent out the Buzzard and told him to go and make ready for them. This was the Great Buzzard, the father of all the buzzards we see now. He flew all over the earth, low down near the ground, and it was still soft. When he reached the Cherokee country, he was very tired, and his wings began to flap and strike the ground, and wherever they struck the earth there was a valley, and where they turned up again there was a mountain. When the animals above saw this, they were afraid that the whole world would be mountains, so they called him back, but the Cherokee country remains full of mountains to this day.

When the earth was dry and the animals came down, it was still dark, so they got the sun and set it in a track to go every day across the island from east to west, just overhead. It was too hot this way, and T'siska'gîfî, the Red Crawfish, had his shell scorched a bright red, so that his meat was spoiled; and the Cherokee do not eat it. The conjurers put the sun another hand-breadth higher in the air, but it was still too hot. They raised it another time, and another, until it was seven handbreadths high and just under the sky arch. Then it was right, and they left it so. This is why the conjurers call the highest place Gûlkwâ'gine Dî'gälûñ'lätîyûñ', "the seventh height," because it is seven hand-breadths above the earth. Every day the sun goes along under this arch, and returns at night on the upper side to the starting place.

There is another world under this, and it is like ours in everything—animals, plants, and people—save that the seasons are different. The streams that come down from the mountains are the trails by which we reach this underworld, and the springs at their heads are the doorways by which we enter, it, but to do this one must fast and, go to water and have one of the underground people for a guide. We know that the seasons in the underworld are different from ours, because the water in the springs is always warmer in winter and cooler in summer than the outer air.

When the animals and plants were first made—we do not know by whom—they were told to watch and keep awake for seven nights, just as young men now fast and keep awake when they pray to their medicine. They tried to do this, and nearly all were awake through the first night, but the next night several dropped off to sleep, and the third night others were asleep, and then others, until, on the seventh night, of all the animals only the owl, the panther, and

one or two more were still awake. To these were given the power to see and to go about in the dark, and to make prey of the birds and animals which must sleep at night. Of the trees only the cedar, the pine, the spruce, the holly, and the laurel were awake to the end, and to them it was given to be always green and to be greatest for medicine, but to the others it was said: "Because you have not endured to the end you shall lose your hair every winter."

Men came after the animals and plants. At first there were only a brother and sister until he struck her with a fish and told her to multiply, and so it was. In seven days a child was born to her, and thereafter every seven days another, and they increased very fast until there was danger that the world could not keep them. Then it was made that a woman should have only one child in a year, and it has been so ever since.

W. Powell, *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1897-1898, Part I* (Washington: 1900), 239-240.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Journal of Christopher Columbus, 1492

First encounters between Europeans and Native Americans were dramatic events. In this account we see the assumptions and intentions of Christopher Columbus, as he immediately began assessing the potential of these people to serve European economic interests. He also predicted easy success for missionaries seeking to convert these people to Christianity.

Thursday, October 11

...Presently many inhabitants of the island assembled. What follows is in the actual words of the Admiral in his book of the first navigation and discovery of the Indies. "I," he says, " that we might form great friendship, for I knew that they were a people who could be more easily freed and converted to our holy faith by love than by force, gave to some of them red caps, and glass beads to put round their necks, and many other things of little value, which gave them great pleasure, and made them so much our friends that it was a marvel to see. They afterwards came to the ship's boats where we were, swimming and bringing us parrots, cotton threads in skeins, darts, and many other things; and we exchanged them for other things that we gave them, such as glass beads and small bells. In fine, they took all, and gave what they had with good will. It appeared to me to be a race of people very poor in everything. They go as naked as when their mothers bore them, and so do the women, although I did not see more than one young girl. All I saw were youths, none more than thirty years of age. They are very well made, with very handsome bodies, and very good countenances. Their hair is short and coarse, almost like the hairs of a horse's tail. They wear the hairs brought down to the eyebrows, except a few locks behind, which they wear long and never cut. They paint themselves black, and they are the color of the Canarians, neither black nor white. Some paint themselves white, others red, and others of what color they find. Some paint their faces, others the whole body, some only round the eyes, others only on the nose. They neither carry nor know anything of arms, for I showed them swords, and they took them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance. They have no iron, their darts being wands without iron, some of them having a fish's tooth at the end, and others being pointed in various ways. They are all of fair stature and size, with good laces, and well made. I saw some with marks of wounds on their bodies, and I made signs to ask what it was, and they gave me to understand that people from other adjacent islands came with the intention of seizing them, and that they defended themselves. I believed, and still believe, that they come here from the mainland to take them prisoners. They should be good servants and intelligent, for I observed that they quickly took in what was said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, as it appeared to me that they had no religion, our Lord being pleased, will take hence, at the time of my departure, six natives for your Highnesses that they may learn to speak. I saw no beast of any kind except parrots, on this island." The above is in the words of the admiral....

..As soon as dawn broke many of these people came to the beach, all youths, as I have said, and all of good stature, a very handsome people. Their hair is not curly, but loose and coarse,

like horse hair. In all the forehead is broad, more so than in any other people I have hitherto seen. Their eyes are very beautiful and not small, and themselves far from black, but the color of the Canarians. Nor should anything else be expected, as this island is in a line east and west from the island of Hierro in the Canaries. Their legs are very straight, all in one line, and no belly, but very well formed. They came to the ship in small canoes, made out of the trunk of a tree like a long boat, and all of one piece, and wonderfully worked, considering the country. They are large, some of them holding 40 to 45 men, others smaller, and some only large enough to hold one man. They are propelled with a paddle like a baker's shovel, and go at a marvelous rate. If the canoe capsizes they all promptly begin to swim, and to bale it out with calabashes that they take with them. They brought skeins of cotton thread, parrots, darts, and other small things, which it would be tedious to recount, and they give all in exchange for anything that may be given to them. I was attentive, and took trouble to ascertain if there was gold. I saw that some of them had a small piece fastened in a hole they have in the nose, and by signs I was able to make out that to the south, or going from the island to the south, there was a king who had great cups full, and who possessed a great quantity. I tried to get them to go there, but afterwards I saw that they had no inclination. I resolved to wait until to-morrow in the afternoon and then to depart, shaping a course to the S.W.

Sunday, October 14

...These people are very simple as regards the use of arms, as your Highnesses will see from the seven that I caused to be taken, to bring home and learn our language and return; unless your Highnesses should order them all to be brought to Castile, or to be kept as captives on the same island; for with fifty men they can all be subjugated and made to do what is required of them...

Sunday, November 4

...At sunrise the Admiral again went away- in the boat, and landed to hunt the birds he had seen the day before. After a time, Martin Alonso Pinzon came to him with two pieces of cinnamon, and said that a Portuguese, who was one of his crew, had seen an Indian carrying two very large bundles of it; but he had not bartered for it, because of the penalty imposed by the Admiral on anyone who bartered. He further said that this Indian carried some brown things like nutmegs. The master of the Pinta said that he had found the cinnamon trees. The Admiral went to the place, and found that they were not cinnamon trees. The Admiral showed the Indians some specimens of cinnamon and pepper he had brought from Castillo, and they knew it, and said, by signs, that there was plenty in the vicinity, pointing to the S.E. He also showed them gold and pearls, on which certain old men said that there an infinite quantity in a place called Holito} and that the people wore it on their necks, ears, arms, and legs, as well as pearls. He further understood them to say that there were great ships and much merchandise, all to the S.K. He also understood that, far away, there were men with one eye, and others with dogs' noses who were cannibals, and that when they captured an enemy they beheaded him and drank his blood...

The Journal of Christopher Columbus (During His First Voyage), and Documents Relating to the Voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real, Clements R. Markham, ed. and trans. (London: 1893), 37-68.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

An Aztec account of the Spanish attack

This source aggregates a number of early written reports by Aztec authors describing the destruction of Tenochtitlan at the hands of a coalition of Spanish and Indigenous armies. This collection of sources was assembled by Miguel Leon Portilla, a Mexican anthropologist.

When Montezuma had given necklaces to each one, Cortés asked him: “Are you Montezuma? Are you the king? Is it true that you are the king Montezuma?”

And the king said: “Yes, I am Montezuma.” Then he stood up to welcome Cortés; he came forward, bowed his head low and addressed him in these words: “Our lord, you are weary. The journey has tired you, but now you have arrived on the earth. You have come to your city, Mexico. You have come here to sit on your throne, to sit under its canopy.

“The kings who have gone before, your representatives, guarded it and preserved it for your coming. The kings Itzcoatl, Montezuma the Elder, Axayacatl, Tizoc and Ahuitzol ruled for you in the City of Mexico. The people were protected by their swords and sheltered by their shields.

“Do the kings know the destiny of those they left behind, their posterity? If only they are watching! If only they can see what I see!

No, it is not a dream. I am not walking in my sleep. I am not seeing you in my dreams.... I have seen you at last! I have met you face to face! I was in agony for five days, for ten days, with my eyes fixed on the Region of the Mystery. And now you have come out of the clouds and mists to sit on your throne again.

This was foretold by the kings who governed your city, and now it has taken place. You have come back to us; you have come down from the sky. Rest now, and take possession of your royal houses. Welcome to your land, my lords!”

When Montezuma had finished, La Malinche translated his address into Spanish so that the Captain could understand it. Cortés replied in his strange and savage tongue, speaking first to La Malinche: “Tell Montezuma that we are his friends. There is nothing to fear. We have wanted to see him for a long time, and now we have seen his face and heard his words. Tell him that we love him well and that our hearts are contented.”

Then he said to Montezuma: “We have come to your house in Mexico as friends. There is nothing to fear.”

La Malinche translated this speech and the Spaniards grasped Montezuma’s hands and patted his back to show their affection for him....

During this time, the people asked Montezuma how they should celebrate their god’s fiesta. He said: “Dress him in all his finery, in all his sacred ornaments.”

During this same time, The Sun commanded that Montezuma and Itzcohuatzin, the military chief of Tlatelolco, be made prisoners. The Spaniards hanged a chief from Acolhuacan named Nezahualquentzin. They also murdered the king of Nauhtla, Cohualpopocatzin, by wounding him with arrows and then burning him alive.

For this reason, our warriors were on guard at the Eagle Gate. The sentries from Tenochtitlan stood at one side of the gate, and the sentries from Tlatelolco at the other. But messengers came to tell them to dress the figure of Huitzilopochtli. They left their posts and went to dress him in his sacred finery: his ornaments and his paper clothing.

When this had been done, the celebrants began to sing their songs. That is how they celebrated the first day of the fiesta. On the second day they began to sing again, but without warning they were all put to death. The dancers and singers were completely unarmed. They brought only their embroidered cloaks, their turquoises, their lip plugs, their necklaces, their clusters of heron feathers, their trinkets made of deer hooves. Those who played the drums, the old men, had brought their gourds of snuff and their timbrels.

The Spaniards attacked the musicians first, slashing at their hands and faces until they had killed all of them. The singers-and even the spectators- were also killed. This slaughter in the Sacred Patio went on for three hours. Then the Spaniards burst into the rooms of the temple to kill the others: those who were carrying water, or bringing fodder for the horses, or grinding meal, or sweeping, or standing watch over this work.

The king Montezuma, who was accompanied by Itzcohuatzin and by those who had brought food for the Spaniards, protested: "Our lords, that is enough! What are you doing? These people are not carrying shields or macanas. Our lords, they are completely unarmed!"

The Sun had treacherously murdered our people on the twentieth day after the captain left for the coast. We allowed the Captain to return to the city in peace. But on the following day we attacked him with all our might, and that was the beginning of the war.

Miguel LeonPortilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 6466, 129131.

[Available through the Internet History Sourcebooks Project.](#)

Bartolomé de Las Casas Describes the Exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, 1542

Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish Dominican priest, wrote directly to the King of Spain hoping for new laws to prevent the brutal exploitation of Native Americans. Las Casas's writings quickly spread around Europe and were used as humanitarian justification for other European nations to challenge Spain's colonial empire with their own schemes of conquest and colonization.

Now this infinite multitude of Men are by the Creation of God innocently simple, altogether void of and averse to all manner of Craft, Subtlety and Malice, and most Obedient and Loyal Subjects to their Native Sovereigns; and behave themselves very patiently, submissively and quietly towards the Spaniards, to whom they are subservient and subject; so that finally they live without the least thirst after revenge, laying aside all litigiousness, Commotion and hatred...

The natives are capable of Morality or Goodness and very apt to receive the principles of Catholic Religion; nor are they averse to Civility and good Manners.... I myself have heard the Spaniards themselves (who dare not assume the Confidence to deny the good Nature in them) declare, that there was nothing wanting in them for the acquisition of eternal grace, but the sole Knowledge and Understanding of the Deity....

The Spaniards first assaulted the innocent Sheep, so qualified by the Almighty, like most cruel tigers, wolves, and lions, hunger-starved, studying nothing, for the space of Forty Years, after their first landing, but the Massacre of these Wretches, whom they have so inhumanely and barbarously butchered and harassed with several kinds of Torments, never before known, or heard (of which you shall have some account in the following Discourse) that of Three Millions of Persons, which lived in Hispaniola itself, there is at present but the inconsiderable remnant of scarce Three Hundred. Nay the Isle of Cuba, which extends as far, as Valladolid in Spain is distant from Rome, lies now uncultivated, like a Desert, and entombed in its own Ruins. You may also find the Isles of St. John, and Jamaica, both large and fruitful places, unpeopled and desolate. The Lucayan Islands on the North Side, adjacent to Hispaniola and Cuba, which are Sixty in number, or thereabout, together with those, vulgarly known by the name of the Gigantic Isles, and others, the most infertile whereof, exceeds the Royal Garden of Seville in fruitfulness, a most Healthful and pleasant Climate, is now laid waste and uninhabited; and whereas, when the Spaniards first arrived here, about Five Hundred Thousand Men dwelt in it, they are now cut off, some by slaughter, and others ravished away by Force and Violence, to work in the Mines of Hispaniola, which was destitute of Native Inhabitants: For a certain Vessel, sailing to this Isle, to the end, that the Harvest being over (some good Christian, moved with Piety and Pity, undertook this dangerous Voyage, to convert Souls to Christianity) the remaining gleanings might be gathered up, there were only found Eleven Persons, which I saw with my own Eyes. There are other Islands Thirty in number, and upward bordering upon the Isle of St. John, totally

unpeopled; all which are above Two Thousand miles in length, and yet remain without Inhabitants, Native, or People.

As to the firm land, we are certainly satisfied, and assured, that the Spaniards by their barbarous and execrable Actions have absolutely depopulated Ten Kingdoms, of greater extent than all Spain, together with the Kingdoms of Aragon and Portugal, that is to say, above One Thousand Miles, which now lye waste and desolate, and are absolutely ruined, when as formerly no other Country whatsoever was more populous. Nay we dare boldly affirm, that during the Forty Years space, wherein they exercised their sanguinary and detestable Tyranny in these Regions, above Twelve Millions (computing Men, Women, and Children) have undeservedly perished; nor do I conceive that I should deviate from the Truth by saying that above Fifty Millions in all paid their last Debt to Nature.

Those that arrived at these Islands from the remotest parts of Spain, and who pride themselves in the Name of Christians, steered Two courses principally, in order to the Extirpation, and Exterminating of this People from the face of the Earth. The first whereof was raising an unjust, bloody, cruel War. The other, by putting them to death, who hitherto, thirsted after their Liberty, or designed (which the most Potent, Strenuous and Magnanimous Spirits intended) to recover their pristine Freedom, and shake off the Shackles of so injurious a Captivity: For they being taken off in War, none but Women and Children were permitted to enjoy the benefit of that Country-Air...

Now the ultimate end and scope that incited the Spaniards to endeavor the Extirpation and Desolation of this People, was Gold only...

Finally, in one word, their Ambition and Avarice, than which the heart of Man never entertained greater, and the vast Wealth of those Regions; the Humility and Patience of the Inhabitants (which made their approach to these Lands more easy) did much promote the business: Whom they so despicably contemned, that they treated them (I speak of things which I was an Eye Witness of, without the least fallacy) not as Beasts, which I cordially wished they would, but as the most abject dung and filth of the Earth; and so solicitous they were of their Life and Soul, that the above-mentioned number of People died without understanding the true Faith or Sacraments. And this also is as really true that the _Spaniards_ never received any injury from the Indians, but that they rather revered them as Persons descended from Heaven, until that they were compelled to take up Arms, provoked thereunto by repeated Injuries, violent Torments, and unjust Butcheries.

Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies...* (Project Gutenberg EBook: 2007), 9-16.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Thomas Morton Reflects on Native Americans in New England, 1637

Thomas Morton both admired and condemned aspects of Native American culture. In his descriptions, we can find not only information about the people he is describing but also a window into the concerns of Englishmen like Morton who could use descriptions of Native Americans as a means of criticizing English culture.

“... the hand of God fell heavily upon them, with such a mortal stroke that they died on heaps as they lay in their houses... And the bones and skulls upon the several places of their habitations made such a spectacle after my coming into those parts...”

“The natives of New England are accustomed to build them houses much like the wild Irish; they gather poles in the woods and put the great end of them in the ground, placing them in form of a circle or circumference, and pending the tops of them in form of like an arch, they bind them together with the bark of walnut trees, which is wondrous tough, so that they make the same round on the top for the smoke of their fire to ascend and pass through; these they cover with mats, some made of reeds and some of long flags or sedge, fine sewed together with needles made of the splinter bones of a crane’s leg...”

“... they are willing that any one shall eat with them. Nay, if any one shall come into their houses and there fall asleep, when they see him disposed to lie down, they will spread a mat for him of their own accord... If he sleep until their meat be dished up, they will set a wooden bowl of meat by him that slept and wake him saying “Cattup keene Meckin,” that is, if you be hungry, there is meat for you, where if you will eat you may. Such is their humanity.”

“They use not to winter and summer in one place, for that would be a reason to make fuel scarce; but, after the manner of the gentry in civilized natives, remove for their pleasures, sometimes to their hunting places... and sometimes to their fishing places... and at the spring, when fish comes in plentifully, they have meetings from several places, where they exercise themselves in gaming and playing of juggling tricks and all manner of revels...”

“The Indians in these parts do make their apparel of the skins of several sorts of beasts, and commonly of those that do frequent those parts where they do live; yet some of them, for variety, have the skins of such beasts that frequent the parts of their neighbors, which they purchase of them by commerce and trade.”

“Their women have shoes and stockings to wear likewise when they please, such as the men have, but the mantle they use to cover their nakedness with is much longer than that which they men use; for, as the men have one deer skin, the women have two sewed together at the full length, and it is so large that it trails after them like a great ladies train.”

“their infants are born with hair on their heads, and are of a complexion white as our nation; but their mothers in their infancy make a bath of walnut leaves, husks of walnuts, and such things as will stain their skin forever, wherein they dip and wash them to make them tawny...”

“... the younger are always obedient unto the elder people, and at their commands in every respect without grumbling, in all counsels... the younger men’s opinion shall be heard, but the old men’s opinion and counsel embraced and followed... The consideration of these things, me thinks, should reduce some of our irregular young people of civilized nations, when this story shall come to their knowledge, to better manners, and make them ashamed of their former error in this kind, and to become hereafter more dutiful...”

“... some correspondence they have with the Devil out of all doubt, as by some of their actions, in which they glory, is manifested... A neighbor of mine that had entertained a savage into his service, to be his factor for the beaver trade among his countrymen, delivered unto him diverse parcels of commodities for for them to trade with...

“Powahs, who are usually sent for when any person is sick and ill at ease to recover them, for which they receive rewards as do our surgeons and physicians; and they do make a trade of it, and boast of their skill when they come. One amongst the rest did undertake to cure an Englishman of a swelling of his hand for a parcel of biscuit, which being delivered him he took the party grieved into the woods aside from company, and with the help of the devil (as may be conjectured), quickly recovered him of that swelling, and sent him about his work again.”

“Although these people have not the use of navigation, whereby we may traffic as other nations, that are civilized, use to do, yet do they barter for such commodities as they have, and have a kind of beads, instead of money, to buy withal such things as they want, which they call Wampampeak, and it is of two sorts, the one is white, the other is of a violet color”

“I have observed that the savages have the sense of seeing so far beyond any of our nation, that one would almost believe they had intelligence of the devil sometimes when they have told us of a ship at sea, which they have seen sooner by one hour, yea, two hours sail, than any English man that stood by of purpose to look out, their sight is so excellent.”

“The savages are accustomed to set fire to the country in all places where they come and to burn it twice a year, at the spring and in the fall of the lease. The reason that moves them to do so is because it would otherwise be so overgrown with under-weeds that it would be all a coppice wood and the people would not be able in any wise to pass through the country out of a beaten path.”

“A gentleman and a traveler, that had been in the parts of New England for a time, when he returned again, in his discourse of the country, wondered (as he said) that the natives of the land lived so purely in so rich a country like to our beggars in England... If our beggars of England should, with so much ease as they, furnish themselves with food at all seasons,

there would be so many starved in the streets, neither would so many jails be stuffed, or gallows furnished with poor wretches as I have seen.”

“They love not to be encumbered with many utensils and although every proprietor knows his own, yet all things (so long as they will last) are used in common among them; a biscuit cake given to one, that breaks it equally into so many parts as there are persons in his company and distributes it.

“According to human reason, guided only by the light of nature, these people lead the more happy and freer life, being void of care, which torments the minds of many Christians: They are not delighted in baubles, but in useful things.”

Thomas Morton, *The New English Canaan* (Boston: 1883), 132-177.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

The story of the Virgin of Guadalupe

Cuaubtlatoatzin was one of the first Aztec men to convert to Christianity after the Spanish invasion. Renamed as Juan Diego, he soon thereafter reported an appearance of the Virgin Mary called the Virgin of Guadalupe. This apparition became an important symbol for a new native Christianity. These excerpts are translated from an account first published in Nahuatl by Luis Lasso de la Vega in 1649.

On a Saturday just before dawn, [Juan Diego] was on his way to pursue divine worship and to engage in his own errands. As he reached the base of the hill known as Tepeyac*, came the break of day, and he heard singing atop the hill, resembling singing of varied beautiful birds....

He then heard a voice from above the mount saying to him: "Juanito, Juan Dieguito." Then he ventured and went to where he was called. He was not frightened in the least; on the contrary, overjoyed.

Then he climbed the hill, to see from where he was being called. When he reached the summit, he saw a Lady, who was standing there and told him to come hither. Approaching her presence, he marveled greatly at her superhuman grandeur; her garments were shining like the sun; the cliff where she rested her feet, pierced with glitter, resembling an anklet of precious stones, and the earth sparkled like the rainbow. The mezquites, nopales, and other different weeds, which grow there, appeared like emeralds, their foliage like turquoise, and their branches and thorns glistened like gold. He bowed before her and heard her word, tender and courteous, like someone who charms and esteems you highly.

She said: "Juanito, the most humble of my sons, where are you going?" He replied: "My Lady, I have to reach your church in Mexico, Tlatilolco*, to pursue things divine, taught and given to us by our priests, delegates of Our Lord."

She then spoke to him: "Know and understand well, you the most humble of my son, that I am the ever virgin Holy Mary, Mother of the True God for whom we live, of the Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and the earth.

"I wish that a temple be erected here quickly, so I may therein exhibit and give all my love, compassion, help, and protection, because I am your merciful mother, to you, and to all the inhabitants on this land and all the rest who love me, invoke and confide in me; listen there to their lamentations, and remedy all their miseries, afflictions and sorrows....

Then he descended to go to comply with the errand, and went by the avenue which runs directly into Mexico City.

.. the bishop did not give credence and said that he could not do what Juan had asked based only on his request. In addition, a sign was necessary, so that he could be believed that he was sent by the true Lady from heaven...

...when Juan Diego was to carry a sign so he could be believed, he failed to return, because, when he reached his home, his uncle, named Juan Bernardino, had become sick, and was gravely ill...

On Tuesday, before dawn, Juan Diego came from his home to Tlatilolco to summon a priest... Then he rounded the hill, going around, so he could not be seen by her who sees well everywhere. He saw her descend from the top of the hill and was looking toward where they previously met.

She approached him at the side of the hill and said to him: "What's there, my son? Where are you going?" .. [He replied], "Know that a servant of yours is very sick, my uncle. He has contracted the plague, and is near death..."

After hearing Juan Diego speak, the Most Holy Virgin answered: "Hear me and understand well, my son the least, that nothing should frighten or grieve you. Let not your heart be disturbed. Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish. Am I not here, who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not happily within my fold? What else do you wish? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything. Do not be afflicted by the illness of your uncle, who will not die now of it. be assured that he is now cured." (And then his uncle was cured, as it was later learned.)

When Juan Diego heard these words from the Lady from heaven, he was greatly consoled. He was happy. He begged to be excused to be off to see the bishop, to take him the sign or proof, so that he might be believed. The Lady from heaven ordered to climb to the top of the hill, where they previously met. She told him: "Climb, my son the least, to the top of the hill; there where you saw me and I gave you orders, you will find different flowers. Cut them, gather them, assemble them, then come and bring them before my presence."

...He immediately went down the hill and brought the different roses which he had cut to the Lady from heaven, who, as she saw them, took them with her hand and again placed them back in the tilma, saying: "My son, this diversity of roses is the proof and the sign which you will take to the bishop. You will tell him in my name that he will see in them my wish and that he will have to comply to it. You are my ambassador, most worthy of all confidence..."

... the bishop realized that Juan Diego was carrying the proof, to confirm what the Indian requested. Immediately he ordered Juan Diego's admission. As he entered, Juan Diego knelt before him, as he was accustomed to do, and again related what he had seen and admired, also the message...

He unfolded his white cloth, where he had the flowers; and when they scattered on the floor, all the different varieties of rosas de Castilla, suddenly there appeared the drawing of the precious Image of the ever-virgin Holy Mary, Mother of God, in the manner as she is today kept in the temple at Tepeyacac, which is named Guadalupe...

As Juan Diego pointed out the spot where the lady from heaven wanted her temple built, he begged to be excused. He wished to go home to see his uncle Juan Bernardino...

As they arrived, they saw that his uncle was very happy and nothing ailed him. He was greatly amazed to see his nephew so accompanied and honored, asking the reason of such honors conferred upon him. His nephew answered that when he went to summon a priest to hear his confession and to absolve him, the Lady from heaven appeared to him at Tepeyacac, telling him not to be afflicted, that his uncle was well, for which he was greatly consoled, and she sent him to Mexico, to see the bishop, to build her a house in Tepeyacac.

Then the uncle manifested that it was true that on that occasion he became well and that he had seen her in the same manner as she had appeared to his nephew, knowing through her that she had sent him to Mexico to see the bishop. Also, the Lady told him that when he would go to see the bishop, to reveal to him what he had seen and to explain the miraculous manner in which she had cured him, and that she would properly be named, and known as the blessed Image, the ever-virgin Holy Mary of Guadalupe.

These excerpts are translated from an account first published in Nahuatl by Luis Lasso de la Vega in 1649. Luis Laso de la Vega, *Huei tlamabuiçoltica* (1649)

[Available from the University of Houston, Clear Lake](#)

Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca Travels through North America, 1542

Spanish explorer, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, traveled across the Gulf South, from Florida to Mexico. As he traveled, Cabeza de Vaca developed a reputation as a faith healer. In his account he claimed several instances of performing miracles, illustrating his spiritual beliefs as well as offering a rare, if perhaps unreliable, glimpse at the life of Native Americans in the area.

... At sunset we came in sight of the lodges, and two crossbow shots before reaching them met four Indians waiting for us, and they received us well. We told them in the language of the *Mariames* that we had come to see them. They appeared to be pleased with our company and took us to their homes. They lodged Dorantes and the negro at the house of a medicine man and me and Castillo at that of another. These Indians speak another language and are called *Anavares*. . . . Forthwith they offered us many tunas [cactus fruit], because they had heard of us and of how we cured and of the miracles Our Lord worked through us. . . .

On the night we arrived there some Indians came to Castillo complaining that their heads felt very sore and begging him for relief. As soon as he had made the sign of the cross over them and recommended them to God, at that very moment the Indians said that all the pain was gone. They went back to their abodes and brought us many tunas and a piece of venison, something we did not know any more what it was, and as the news spread that same night there came many other sick people for him to cure, and each brought a piece of venison, and so many there were that we did not know where to store the meat. We thanked God for His daily increasing mercy and kindness, and after they were all well they began to dance and celebrate and feast until sunrise of the day following.

They celebrated our coming for three days, at the end of which we asked them about the land further on, the people and the food that there might be obtained. They replied there were plenty of tunas all through that country, but that the season was over and nobody there, because all had gone to their abodes after gathering tunas; also that the country was very cold and very few hides in it. Hearing this, and as winter and cold weather were setting in, we determined to spend it with those Indians. Five days after our arrival they left to get more tunas at a place where people of a different nation and language lived, and having travelled five days, suffering greatly from hunger, as on the way there were neither tunas nor any kind of fruit, we came to a river, where we pitched our lodges. . . .

Early the next day many Indians came and brought five people who were paralyzed and very ill, and they came for Castillo to cure them. Every one of the patients offered him his bow and arrows, which he accepted, and by sunset he made the sign of the cross over each of the sick, recommending them to God, Our Lord, and we all prayed to Him as well as we could to restore them to health. And He, seeing there was no other way of getting those people to help us so that we might be saved from our miserable existence, had mercy upon us, and in

the morning all woke up well and hearty and went away in such good health as if they never had had any ailment whatever. This caused them great admiration and moved us to thanks to Our Lord and to greater faith in His goodness and the hope that He would save us, guiding us to where we could serve Him. For myself I may say that I always had full faith in His mercy and in that He would liberate me from captivity, and always told my companions so.

When the Indians had gone and taken along those recently cured, we removed to others that were eating tunas also, called *Cultalchuches* and *Malicones*, which speak a different language, and with them were others, called *Coayos* and *Susolas*, and on another side those called *Atayos*, who were at war with the *Susolas*, and exchanging arrow shots with them every day.

Nothing was talked about in this whole country but of the wonderful cures which God, Our Lord, performed through us, and so they came from many places to be cured, and after having been with us two days some Indians of the *Susolas* begged Castillo to go and attend to a man who had been wounded, as well as to others that were sick and among whom, they said, was one on the point of death. Castillo was very timid, especially in difficult and dangerous cases, and always afraid that his sins might interfere and prevent the cures from being effective. Therefore the Indians told me to go and perform the cure. They liked me, remembering that I had relieved them while they were out gathering nuts, for which they had given us nuts and hides. This had happened at the time I was coming to join the Christians. So I had to go, and Dorantes and Estevanico went with me.

When I came close to their ranches I saw that the dying man we had been called to cure was dead, for there were many people around him weeping and his lodge was torn down, which is a sign that the owner has died. I found the Indian with eyes up turned, without pulse and with all the marks of lifelessness. At least so it seemed to me, and Dorantes said the same. I removed a mat with which he was covered, and as best I could prayed to Our Lord to restore his health, as well as that of all the others who might be in need of it, and after having made the sign of the cross and breathed on him many times they brought his bow and presented it to me, and a basket of ground tunas, and took me to many others who were suffering from vertigo. They gave me two more baskets of tunas, which I left to the Indians that had come with us. Then we returned to our quarters.

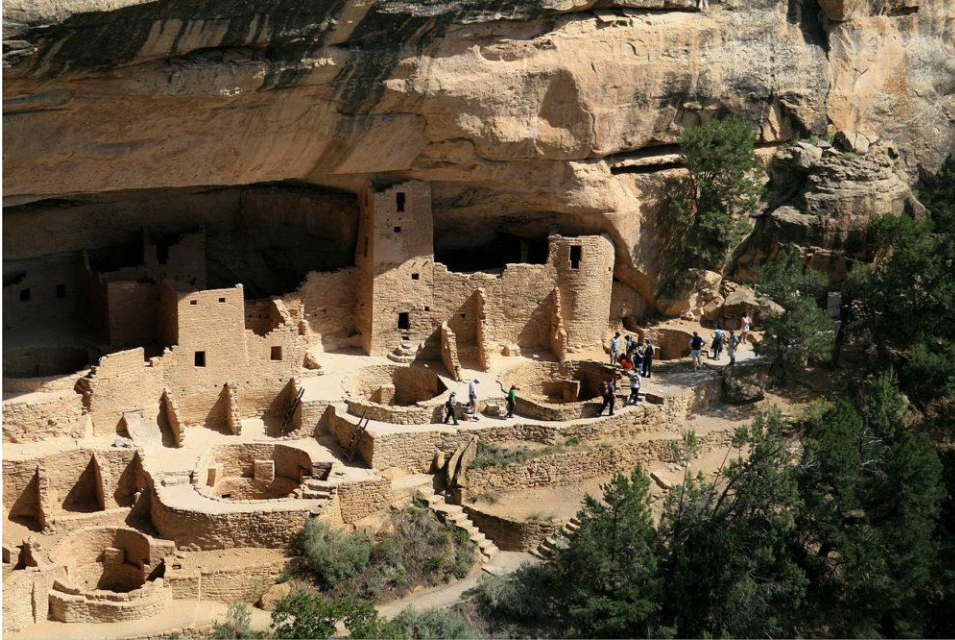
Our Indians to whom I had given the tunas remained there, and at night returned telling, that the dead man whom I attended to in their presence had resuscitated, rising from his bed, had walked about, eaten and talked to them, and that all those treated by me were well and in very good spirits. This caused great surprise and awe, and all over the land nothing else was spoken of. All who heard it came to us that we might cure them and bless their children, and when the Indians in our company (who were the *Cultalchuches*) had to return to their country, before parting they offered us all the tunas they had for their journey, not keeping a single one, and gave us flint stones as long as one and a-half palms, with which they cut and that are greatly prized among them. They begged us to remember them and pray to God to keep them always healthy, which we promised to do, and so they left, the happiest people upon earth, having given us the very best they had.

We remained with the *Avavares* Indians for eight months, according to our reckoning of the moons. During that time they came for us from many places and said that verily we were children of the sun. Until then Dorantes and the negro had not made any cures, but we found ourselves so pressed by the Indians coming from all sides, that all of us had to become medicine men. I was the most daring and reckless of all in undertaking cures. We never treated anyone that did not afterwards say he was well, and they had such confidence in our skill as to believe that none of them would die as long as we were among them.

Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and his companions from Florida to the Pacific, 1528-1536*, Fanny Bandelier, trans. Ad. F. Bandelier, ed. (New York: 1922), 99-108

[Available through HathiTrust](#)

Cliff Palace



Andreas F. Borbert, "Mesa Verde National Park Cliff Palace" via [Wikimedia](#).

Native peoples in the Southwest began constructing these highly defensible cliff dwellings in 1190 CE and continued expanding and refurbishing them until 1260 CE before abandoning them around 1300 CE. Changing climatic conditions resulted in an increased competition for resources that led some groups to ally with their neighbors for both protection and subsistence. The circular rooms in the foreground were called kivas and had ceremonial and religious importance for the inhabitants. Cliff Palace had 23 kivas and 150 rooms housing a population of approximately 100 people; the number of rooms and large population has led scholars to believe that this complex may have been the center of a larger polity that included surrounding communities.

Casta Painting



Unknown artist, "Las Castas," Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlan, Mexico, via [Wikimedia](#).

The elaborate Sistema de Castas revealed one of the less-discussed effects of Spanish conquest: sexual liaisons and their progeny. Casta paintings illustrated the varying degrees of intermixture between colonial subjects, defining them for Spanish officials. Race was less fixed in the Spanish colonies, as some individuals, through legal action or colonial service, "changed" their race in the colonial records. Though this particular image does not, some casta paintings attributed particular behaviors to different groups, demonstrating how class and race were intertwined.

2. Colliding Cultures

Introduction

The Columbian Exchange transformed both sides of the Atlantic with dramatically disparate results. New diseases wiped out entire civilizations in the Americas, while newly imported nutrient-rich foodstuffs enabled a European population boom. Spain benefited most immediately as the wealth of the Aztec and Incan Empires strengthened the Spanish monarchy. Spain used its new riches to gain an advantage over other European nations. But this advantage was soon contested. Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England all raced to the New World, eager to match the gains of the Spanish. Native peoples greeted the new visitors with responses ranging from welcome cooperation to aggressive violence, but the ravages of disease and the possibility of new trading relationships enabled Europeans to create settlements all along the western rim of the Atlantic world. New empires would emerge from these tenuous beginnings, and by the end of the seventeenth century, Spain would lose its privileged position to its rivals. An age of colonization had begun and, with it, a great collision of cultures commenced. These sources chronicle the European challenges to Spain's colonial dominance and the collisions between Europeans and Native Americans.

Richard Hakluyt Makes the Case for English Colonization, 1584

Richard Hakluyt used this document to persuade Queen Elizabeth I to devote more money and energy into encouraging English colonization. In twenty-one chapters, summarized here, Hakluyt emphasized the many benefits that England would receive by creating colonies in the Americas.

A particular discourse concerning the great necessity and manifold commodities that are like to grow to this Realm of England by the Western discoveries lately attempted, Written In the year 1584 by Richard Hakluyt of Oxford at the request and direction of the right worshipful Mr. Walter Raleigh now Knight, before the coming home of his Two Barks: and is divided into xxi chapters, the Titles whereof follow in the next leaf.

1. That this western discoverie will be greatly for the enlargement of the gospel of Christ whereunto the Princes of the reformed religion are chiefly bound amongst whom her Majestie is principally.
2. That all other English trades are grown beggerly or dangerous, especially in all the king of Spain his Dominions, where our men are driven to fling their Bibles and prayer Books into the sea, and to forswear and renounce their religion and conscience and consequently their obedience to her Majestie.
3. That this western voyage will yield unto us all the commodities of Europe, Africa, and Asia, as far as we were wont to travel, and supply the wants of all our decayed trades.
4. That this enterprise will be for the manifold employment of numbers of idle men, and for breeding of many sufficient, and for utterance of the great quantity of the commodities of our Realm.
5. That this voyage will be a great bridle to the Indies of the king of Spaine and a means that we may arrest at our pleasure for the space of time weeks or three months every year, one or two hundred sail of his subjects shipped at the fishing in Newfoundland.
6. That the mischiefs that the Indian Treasure wrought in time of Charles the late Emperor father to the Spanish king, is to be had in consideracion of the Queens most excellent Majesty, least the continually coming of the like treasure from thence to his son, work the unrecoverable annoyance of this Realm, whereof already we have had very dangerous experience.
7. What special means may bring kinge Phillippe from his high Throne, and make him equal to the Princes his neighbours, wherewithal is showed his weakness in the west Indies.

8. That the limits of the king of Spain's dominions in the West Indies be nothing so large as is generally imagined and surmised, neither those parts which he holdeth be of any such forces as is falsely given out by the popish Clergy and others his suitors, to terrify the Princes of the Religion and to abuse and blind them.
9. The Names of the rich Towns lying along the sea coast on the north side from the equinoctial of the mainland of America under the kinge of Spaine.
10. A Briefe declaration of the chief Islands in the Bay of Mexico being under the king of Spaine, with their havens and forts, and what commodities they yeide.
11. That the Spaniards have executed most outrageous and more than Turkish cruelties in all the west Indies, whereby they are everywhere there, become most odious unto them, who would join with us or any other most willingly to shake of their most intolerable yoke, and have begun to do it already in diverse places where they were Lords heretofore.
12. That the passage in this voyage is easy and short, that it cutteth not near the trade of any other mighty Princes, nor near their Countries, that it is to be performed at all tymes of the year, and needeth but one kind of wind, that Ireland being full of good heavens on the south and west sides, is the nearest part of Europe to it, which by this trade shall be in more security, and the sooner drawn to more Civility.
13. That hereby the Revenues and customs of her Majestie both outwards and inwards shall mightely be enlarged by the toll, excises, and other duties which without oppression may be raised.
14. That this action will be greatly for the increase, maintenance and safety of our Navy, and especially of great shipping which is the strength of our Realm, and for the supportation of all those occupations that depend upon the same.
15. That speedy planting in diverse fit places is most necessary upon these lucky western discoveries for fear of the danger of being prevented by other nations which have the like intentions, with the order thereof and other reasons therewithal alleged.
16. Means to keep this enterprise from overthrow and the enterprisers from shame and dishonor.
17. That by these Colonies the Northwest passage to Cathay and China may easily quickly and perfectly be searched out as well by river and overland, as by sea, for proof whereof here are quoted and alleged diverse rare Testimonies out of the three volumes of voyages gathered by Ramusius and other grave authors.

18. That the Queen of England title to all the west Indies, or at the least to as much as is from Florida to the Circle arctic, is more lawful and right then the Spaniards or any other Christian Princes.
19. An answer to the Bull of the Donation of all the west Indies granted to the kings of Spain by Pope Alexander the VI who was himself a Spaniard borne.
20. A brief collection of certain reasons to induce her Majestie and the state to take in hand the western voyage and the planting there.
21. A note of some things to be prepared for the voyage which is set down rather to draw the takers of the voyage in hande to the present consideration then for any other reason for that diverse things require preparation long before the voyage, without which the voyage is maimed.

Richard Hakluyt, *A Discourse Concerning Western Planting, Written in the Year 1584*, Charles Deane, ed. (Cambridge: 1877), 1-5.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

John Winthrop Dreams of a City on a Hill, 1630

John Winthrop delivered the following sermon before he and his fellow settlers reached New England. The sermon is famous largely for its use of the phrase “a city on a hill,” used to describe the expectation that the Massachusetts Bay colony would shine like an example to the world. But Winthrop’s sermon also reveals how he expected Massachusetts to differ from the rest of the world.

A Modell Hereof

God Almighty in his most holy and wise providence hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection.

The Reason hereof:

1st Reason.

First to hold conformity with the rest of His world, being delighted to show forth the glory of his wisdom in the variety and difference of the creatures, and the glory of His power in ordering all these differences for the preservation and good of the whole, and the glory of His greatness, that as it is the glory of princes to have many officers, so this great king will have many stewards, counting himself more honored in dispensing his gifts to man by man, than if he did it by his own immediate hands.

2nd Reason.

Secondly, that He might have the more occasion to manifest the work of his Spirit: first upon the wicked in moderating and restraining them, so that the rich and mighty should not eat up the poor, nor the poor and despised rise up against and shake off their yoke. Secondly, in the regenerate, in exercising His graces in them, as in the great ones, their love, mercy, gentleness, temperance etc., and in the poor and inferior sort, their faith, patience, obedience etc.

3rd Reason.

Thirdly, that every man might have need of others, and from hence they might be all knit more nearly together in the bonds of brotherly affection. From hence it appears plainly that no man is made more honorable than another or more wealthy etc., out of any particular and singular respect to himself, but for the glory of his Creator and the common good of the creature, Man. Therefore God still reserves the property of these gifts to Himself as Ezek. 16:17, He there calls wealth, His gold and His silver, and Prov. 3:9, He claims their service as His due, “Honor the Lord with thy riches,” etc. — All men being thus (by divine providence) ranked into two sorts, rich and poor; under the first are comprehended all such as are able to live comfortably by their own means duly improved; and all others are poor according to the former distribution....

Question: What rule must we observe and walk by in cause of community of peril?

Answer:

The same as before, but with more enlargement towards others and less respect towards ourselves and our own right. Hence it was that in the primitive Church they sold all, had all things in common, neither did any man say that which he possessed was his own. Likewise in their return out of the captivity, because the work was great for the restoring of the church and the danger of enemies was common to all, Nehemiah directs the Jews to liberality and readiness in remitting their debts to their brethren, and disposing liberally to such as wanted, and stand not upon their own dues which they might have demanded of them. Thus did some of our forefathers in times of persecution in England, and so did many of the faithful of other churches, whereof we keep an honorable remembrance of them; and it is to be observed that both in Scriptures and latter stories of the churches that such as have been most bountiful to the poor saints, especially in those extraordinary times and occasions, God hath left them highly commended to posterity...

Thus stands the cause between God and us. We are entered into covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission. The Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles. We have professed to enterprise these and those accounts, upon these and those ends. We have hereupon besought Him of favor and blessing. Now if the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath He ratified this covenant and sealed our commission, and will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it; but if we shall neglect the observation of these articles which are the ends we have propounded, and, dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions, seeking great things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us, and be revenged of such a people, and make us know the price of the breach of such a covenant.

Now the only way to avoid this shipwreck, and to provide for our posterity, is to follow the counsel of Micah, to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. For this end, we must be knit together, in this work, as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. We must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of others' necessities. We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality. We must delight in each other; make others' conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body. So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us, as His own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of His wisdom, power, goodness and truth, than formerly we have been acquainted with. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when He shall make us a praise and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, "may the Lord make it like that of New England." *For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. We shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God, and all professors for God's*

sake. We shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going.

And to shut this discourse with that exhortation of Moses, that faithful servant of the Lord, in his last farewell to Israel, Deut. 30. "Beloved, there is now set before us life and death, good and evil," in that we are commanded this day to love the Lord our God, and to love one another, to walk in his ways and to keep his Commandments and his ordinance and his laws, and the articles of our Covenant with Him, that we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it. *But if our hearts shall turn away, so that we will not obey, but shall be seduced, and worship other Gods, our pleasure and profits, and serve them; it is propounded unto us this day, we shall surely perish out of the good land whither we pass over this vast sea to possess it.*

*Therefore let us choose life,
that we and our seed may live,
by obeying His voice and cleaving to Him,
for He is our life and our prosperity.*

John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," in *A Library of American Literature: Early Colonial Literature, 1607-1675*, Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson, eds. (New York: 1892), 304-307.

[Available through Google Books](#)

John Lawson Encounters Native Americans, 1709

John Lawson took detailed notes on the various peoples he encountered during his exploration of the Carolinas. Lawson recorded many aspects of Native American life and even noticed the progress of disease as it swept through native communities.

Next Morning very early, we waded thro' the Savanna, the Path lying there; and about ten a Clock came to a hunting Quarter, of a great many *Santees*; they made us all welcome; showing a great deal of Joy at our coming, giving us barbecued Turkeys, Bear's Oil, and Venison.

Here we hired *Santee Jack* (a good Hunter, and a well-humored Fellow) to be our Pilot to the *Congeree Indians*; we gave him a Stroud-water-Blew, to make his Wife an *Indian* Petticoat, who went with her Husband. After two Hours Refreshment, we went on, and got that Day about twenty Miles; we lay by a small swift Run of Water, which was paved at the Bottom with a Sort of Stone much like to Tripoli, and so light, that I fancied it would precipitate in no Stream, but where it naturally grew. The Weather was very cold, the Winds holding *Northerly*. We made our selves as merry as we could, having a good Supper with the Scraps of the Venison we had given us by the *Indians*, having kill'd 3 Teal and a Possum, which Medley all together made a curious Ragoo.

This Day all of us had a Mind to have rested, but the *Indian* was much against it, alleging, That the Place we lay at, was not good to hunt in; telling us, if we would go on, by Noon, he would bring us to a more convenient Place; so we moved forwards, and about twelve a Clock came to the most amazing Prospect I had seen since I had been in *Carolina*; we travelled by a Swamp-side, which Swamp I believe to be no less than twenty Miles over, the other Side being as far as I could well discern, there appearing great Ridges of Mountains, bearing from us *W.N. W.* One Alp with a Top like a Sugar-loaf, advanced its Head above all the rest very considerably; the Day was very serene, which gave us the Advantage of seeing a long Way; these Mountains were clothed all over with Trees, which seemed to us to be very large Timbers.

At the Sight of this fair Prospect, we stayed all Night; our *Indian* going about half an Hour before us, had provided three fat Turkeys e'er we got up to him.

The Swamp I now spoke of, is not a miry Bog, as others generally are, but you go down to it thro' a steep Bank, at the Foot of which, begins this Valley, where you may go dry for perhaps 200 Yards, then you meet with a small Brook or Run of Water, about 2 or 3 Foot deep, then dry Land for such another Space, so another Brook, thus continuing. The Land in this Percoarson, or Valley, being extraordinary rich, and the Runs of Water well stored with Fowl. It is the Head of one of the Branches of *Santee-River*, but a farther Discovery Time would not permit; only one Thing is very remarkable, there growing all over this Swamp, a tall, lofty Bay-tree, but is not the same as in *England*, these being in their Verdure all the

Winter long; which appears here, when you stand on the Ridge, (where our Path lay) as if it were one pleasant, green Field, and as even as a Bowling-green to the Eye of the Beholder; being hemmed in on one Side with these Ledges of vast high Mountains.

Viewing the Land here, we found an extraordinary rich, black Mold, and some of a Copper-color, both Sorts very good; the Land in some Places is much burthened with Iron, Stone, here being great Store of it, seemingly very good: The eviling Springs, which are many in these Parts. issuing out of the Rocks, which Water we drank of, it coloring the Excrements of Travellers (by its chalybid Quality) as black as a Coal. When we were all asleep, in the Beginning of the Night, we were awakened with the dismal's and most hideous Noise that ever pierced my Ears: This sudden Surprise incapacitated us of guessing what this threatening Noise might proceed from; but our *Indian* Pilot (who knew these Parts very well) acquainted us, that it was customary to hear such Music along that Swamp-side, there being endless Numbers of Panthers, Tigers, Wolves, and other Beasts of Prey, which take this Swamp for their Abode in the Day, coming in whole Drovers to hunt the Deer in the Night, making this frightful Ditty 'till Day appears, then all is still as in other Places.

The next Day it proved a small drizzly Rain, which is rare, there happening not the tenth Part of Foggy falling Weather towards these Mountains, as visits those Parts. Near the Sea-board, the *Indian* killed 15 Turkeys this Day; there coming out of the Swamp, (about Sun-rising) Flocks of these Fowl, containing several hundreds in a Gang, who feed upon the Acorns, it being most Oak that grow in these Woods. These are but very few Pines in those Quarters.

Early the next Morning, we set forward for the *Congeree-Indians*, parting with that delicious Prospect. By the Way, our Guide killed more Turkeys, and two Polcats, which he eat, esteeming them before fat Turkeys. Some of the Turkeys which we eat, whilst we stayed there, I believe, weighed no less than 40 pounds.

The Land we passed over this Day, was most of it good, and the worst passable. At Night we killed a Possum, being cloyed with Turkeys, made a Dish of that, which tasted much between young Pork and Veal; their Fat being as white as any I ever saw. Our *Indian* having this Day killed good Store of Provision with his Gun, they being curious Artists in managing a Gun, to make it carry either Ball, or Shot, true. When they have bought a Piece, and find it to shoot any Ways crooked, they take the Barrel out of the Stock, cutting a Notch in a Tree, wherein they set it straight, sometimes-shooting away above 100 Loads of Ammunition, before they bring the Gun to shoot according to their Mind. We took up our Quarters by a Fish-pond-side; the Pits in the Woods that stand full of Water, naturally breed Fish in them, in great Quantities. We cooked our Supper, but having neither Bread, or Salt, our fat Turkeys began to be loathsome to us, although' we were never wanting of a good Appetite, yet a Continuance of one Diet, made us weary.

The next Morning, *Santee Jack* told us, we should reach the *Indian* Settlement betimes that Day; about Noon, we passed by several fair Savanna's, very rich and dry; seeing great Copses of many Acres that bore nothing but Bushes, about the Bigness of Box-trees; which (in the Season) afford great Quantities of small Black-berries, very pleasant Fruit, and much like to

our Blues, or Huckle-berries, that grow on Heaths in *England*. Hard by the Savanna's we found the Town, where we halted; there was not above one Man left with the Women, the rest being gone a Hunting for a Feast. The Women were very busily engaged in Gaming: The Name or Grounds of it, I could not learn, though' I looked on above two Hours. Their Arithmetic was kept with a Heap of *Indian* Grain. When their Play was ended, the King, or *Cassetta's* Wife, invited us into her Cabin. The *Indian* Kings always entertaining Travellers, either *English*, or *Indian*; taking it as a great Affront, if they pass by their Cabins, and take up their Quarters at any other *Indian's* House. The Queen set Victuals before us, which good Compliment they use generally as soon as you come under their Roof.

The Town consists not of above a dozen Houses, they having other stragling Plantations up and down the Country, and are seated upon a small Branch of *Santee* River. Their Place hath curious dry Marshes, and Savanna's adjoining to it, and would prove an exceeding thriving Range for Cattle, and Hogs, provided the *English* were seated thereon. Besides, the Land is good for Plantations.

These *Indians* are a small People, having lost much of their former Numbers, by intestine Broils; but most by the Small-pox, which hath often visited them, sweeping away whole Towns; occasioned by the immoderate Government of themselves in their Sickness; as I have mentioned before, treating of the *Senecas*. Neither do I know any Savages that have traded with the *English*, but what have been great Losers by this Distemper.

John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina...* (London: 1709), 25-28.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

A Gaspesian Man Defends His Way of Life, 1641

Chrestien Le Clercq traveled to New France as a missionary, but found that many Native Americans were not interested in adopting European cultural practices. In this document, LeClercq records the words of a Gaspesian man who explained why he believed that his way of life was superior to Le Clercq's.

... the Indians esteem their camps as much as, and even more than, they do the most superb and commodious of our houses. To this they testified one day to some of our gentlemen of Isle Percée, who, having asked me to serve them as interpreter in a visit which they wished to make to these Indians in order to make the latter understand that it would be very much more advantageous for them to live and to build in our fashion, were extremely surprised when the leading Indian, who had listened with great patience to everything I had said to him on behalf of these gentlemen, answered me in these words :

I am greatly astonished that the French have so little cleverness, as they seem to exhibit in the matter of which thou hast just told me on their behalf, in the effort to persuade us to convert our poles, our barks, and our wigwams into those houses of stone and of wood which are tall and lofty, according to their account, as these trees. Very well! But why now, do men of five to six feet in height need houses which are sixty to eighty? For, in fact, as thou knowest very well thyself, Patriarch—do we not find in our own all the conveniences and the advantages that you have with yours, such as reposing, drinking, sleeping, eating, and amusing ourselves with our friends when we wish? This is not all, my brother, hast thou as much ingenuity and cleverness as the Indians, who carry their houses and their wigwams with them so that they may lodge wheresoever they please, independently of any seignior whatsoever? Thou art not as bold nor as stout as we, because when thou goest on a voyage thou canst not carry upon thy shoulders thy buildings and thy edifices. Therefore it is necessary that thou prepares as many lodgings as thou makest changes of residence, or else thou lodgest in a hired house which does not belong to thee. As for us, we find ourselves secure from all these inconveniences, and we can always say, more truly than thou, that we are at home everywhere, because we set up our wigwams with ease wheresoever we go, and without asking permission of anybody. Thou reproachest us, very inappropriately, that our country is a little hell in contrast with France, which thou comparest to a terrestrial paradise, inasmuch as it yields thee, so thou safest, every kind of provision in abundance. Thou sayest of us also that we are the most miserable and most unhappy of all men, living without religion, without manners, without honour, without social order, and, in a word, without any rules, like the beasts in our woods and our forests, lacking bread, wine, and a thousand other comforts which thou hast in superfluity in Europe. Well, my brother, if thou dost not yet know the real feelings which our Indians have towards thy country and towards all thy nation, it is proper that I inform thee at once. I beg thee now to believe that, all miserable as we seem in thine eyes, we consider ourselves nevertheless much happier than thou in this, that we are very content with the little that we have; and believe also once for

all, I pray, that thou deceivest thyself greatly if thou thinkest to persuade us that thy country is better than ours. For if France, as thou sayest, is a little terrestrial paradise, art thou sensible to leave it? And why abandon wives, children, relatives, and friends? Why risk thy life and thy property every year, and why venture thyself with such risk, in any season whatsoever, to the storms and tempests of the sea in order to come to a strange and barbarous country which thou considerest the poorest and least fortunate of the world? Besides, since we are wholly convinced of the contrary, we scarcely take the trouble to go to France, because we fear, with good reason, lest we find little satisfaction there, seeing, in our own experience, that those who are natives thereof leave it every year in order to enrich themselves on our shores. We believe, further, that you are also incomparably poorer than we, and that you are only simple journeymen, valets, servants, and slaves, all masters and grand captains though you may appear, seeing that you glory in our old rags and in our miserable suits of beaver which can no longer be of use to us, and that you find among us, in the fishery for cod which you make in these parts, the wherewithal to comfort your misery and the poverty which oppresses you. As to us, we find all our riches and all our conveniences among ourselves, without trouble and without exposing our lives to the dangers in which you find yourselves constantly through your long voyages. And, whilst feeling compassion for you in the sweetness of our repose, we wonder at the anxieties and cares which you give yourselves night and day in order to load your ship. We see also that all your people live, as a rule, only upon cod which you catch among us. It is everlastingly nothing but cod—cod in the morning, cod at midday, cod at evening, and always cod, until things come to such a pass that if you wish some good morsels, it is at our expense; and you are obliged to have recourse to the Indians, whom you despise so much, and to beg them to go a-hunting that you may be regaled. Now tell me this one little thing, if thou hast any sense: Which of these two is the wisest and happiest—he who labours without ceasing and only obtains, and that with great trouble, enough to live on, or he who rests in comfort and finds all that he needs in the pleasure of hunting and fishing? It is true, that we have not always had the use of bread and of wine which your France produces; but, in fact, before the arrival of the French in these parts, did not the Gaspesians live much longer than now? And if we have not any longer among us any of those old men of a hundred and thirty to forty years, it is only because we are gradually adopting your manner of living, for experience is making it very plain that those of us live longest who, despising your bread, your wine, and your brandy, are content with their natural food of beaver, of moose, of waterfowl, and fish, in accord with the custom of our ancestors and of all the Gaspesian nation. Learn now, my brother, once for all, because I must open to thee my heart: there is no Indian who does not consider himself infinitely more happy and more powerful than the French.

Crestien Le Clercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia: With the Customs and Religion of the Gaspesian Indians*, William F. Ganong, ed. and trans. (Toronto: 1910), 103-106.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

The Legend of Moshup, 1830

Most Native American peoples shared information solely through the spoken word. These oral cultures present unique challenges to historians, and force us to look beyond traditional written sources. Folk tales offer a valuable window into the ways that Native Americans understood themselves and the wider world. The Wampanoag legend of Moshup describes an ancient giant who lived on Martha's Vineyard Island and offered stories about the history of the region.

Once upon a time, in the month of bleak winds, a Pawkunnawkut Indian named Tackanash, who lived upon the main land, near the brook which was ploughed out by the great trout, was caught with his dog upon one of the pieces of floating ice, and carried in spite of his endeavours to Martha's Vineyard Island....

When Tackanash and his dog arrived at the island, he found the man whose existence had been doubted by many of the Indians, and believed to have been only seen by deceived eyes, heard by foolish ears, and talked of by lying tongues, living in a deep cave near the end of the island, nearest the setting sun. And this was the account which Tackanash on his return gave the chiefs of the strange creature. He was taller than the tallest tree upon Nope, and as large around him as the spread of the tops of a vigorous pine, that has seen the years of a full grown warrior. His skin was very black; but his beard, which he had never plucked nor clipped, and the hair of his head, which had never been shaved, were of the color of the feathers of the grey gull. His eyes were very white, and his teeth, which were only two in number, were green as the ooze raked up by the winds from the bottom of the sea. He was always good-natured and cheerful, save when he could not get plenty of meat, or when he missed his usual supply of the Indian weed, and the strong drink which made him see whales chasing deer in the woods, and frogs digging *quawbogs*. His principal food was the meat of whales, which he caught by wading after them into the great sea, and tossing them out, as the Indian boys do black bugs from a puddle. He would, however, eat porpoises, when no larger fish were to be had, and even tortoises, and deer, and rabbits, rather than be hungry. The bones of the whales, and the coals of the fire in which he roasted them, are to be seen now at the place where he lived. I have not yet told my brothers the name of this big man of Nope—it was Moshup.

I hear the stranger ask, "Who was he?" I hear my brothers ask, "Was he a spirit from the shades of departed men, or did he come from the hills of the thunder? I answer, he was a Spirit, but whence he came, when first he landed in our Indian country, I know not. It was a long time ago, and the Island was then very young, being just placed on the back of the Great Tortoise which now supports it. As it was very heavy the tortoise tried to roll it off, but the Great Spirit would not let him, and whipped him till he lay still.

Moshup told the Pawkunnawkut that he once lived upon the main land. He said that much people grew up around him, men who lived by hunting and fishing, while their women planted the corn, and beans, and pumpkins. They had *ponnows*, he said, who dressed

themselves in a strange dress, muttered diabolical words, and frightened the Indians till they gave them half their wampum. Our fathers knew by this, that they were their ancestors, who were always led by the priests—the more fools they! Once upon a time, Moshup said, a great bird whose wings were the flight of an arrow wide, whose body was the length of ten Indian strides, and whose head when he stretched up his neck peered over the tall oak-woods, came to Moshup's neighbourhood. At first, he only carried away deer and mooses; at last, many children were missing. This continued for many moons. Nobody could catch him, nobody could kill him. The Indians feared him, and dared not go near him; he in his turn feared Moshup, and would seek the region of the clouds the moment he saw him coming. When he caught children, he would immediately fly to the island which lay towards the hot winds. Moshup, angry that he could not catch him, and fearing that, if the creature hatched others of equal appetite and ferocity, the race of Indians would become extinct, one day waded into the water after him, and continued in pursuit till he had crossed to the island which sent the hot winds, and which is now called Nope. There, under a great tree, he found the bones of all the children which the great bird had carried away. A little further he found its nest, with seven hatched birds in it, which, together with the mother, he succeeded after a hard battle in killing. Extremely fatigued, he lay down to sleep, and dreamed that he must not quit the island again. When he waked, he wished much to smoke, but, on searching the island for tobacco, and finding none, he filled his pipe with *poke*, which our people sometimes use in the place of tobacco. Seated upon the high hills of Wabsquoy, he puffed the smoke from his pipe over the surface of the Great Lake, which soon grew dim and misty. This was the beginning of fog, which since, for the long space between the Frog-month and the Hunting-month, has at times obscured Nope and all the shores of the Indian people. This was the story which Moshup told Tackanash and his dog. If it is not true, I am not the liar...”

James Athearn Jones, *Traditions of the North American Indians, Vol. 2* (Project Gutenberg EBook: 2007).

[Available through Project Gutenberg](#)

Accusations of witchcraft, 1692 and 1706

These two documents explore the hysteria and death that captured Salem, Massachusetts at the end of the seventeenth century. In the first document, Sarah Carrier testifies that her mother forced her to engage in witchcraft. Her mother, Martha Carrier, was hung one week later. In the second document, Ann Putnam recants her own deadly accusations twenty years after the witchcraft trials.

The examination of Sarah Carrier, 1692

It was asked Sarah Carrier by the Magistrates or Justices John Hawthorne Esq; and others:
How long hast thou been a witch?

A. Ever since I was six years old.

Q. How old are you now?

A. Near eight years old, brother Richard says, I shall be eight years old in November next.

Q. Who made you a witch?

A. My mother, she made me set my hand to a book.

Q. How did you set your hand to it?

A. I touched it with my fingers and the book was red, the paper of it was white. She said she never had seen the black man; the place where she did it was in Andrew Foster's pasture and Elizabeth Johnson junior was there.

Being asked who was there beside, she answered her Aunt Toothaker and her cousin. Being asked when it was, she said, when she was baptized.

Q. What did they promise to give you?

A. A black dog.

Q. Did the dog ever come to you?

A. No.

Q. But you said you saw a cat once. What did that say to you?

A. It said it would tear me in pieces if I would not set my hand to the book. She said her mother baptized her, and the devil or black man was not there, as she saw, and her mother said when she baptized her, thou are mine for ever and ever and amen.

Q. How did you afflict folks?

A. I pinched them, and she said she had no puppets, but she went to them that she afflicted. Being asked whether she went in her body or her spirit, she said in her spirit. She said her mother carried her thither to afflict.

Q. How did your mother carry you when she was in prison?

A. She came like a black cat.

Q. How did you know that it was your mother?

A. The cat told me so that she was my mother. She said she afflicted Phelp's child last saturday, and Elizabeth Johnson joined with her to do it. She had a wooden spear, about as long as her finger, of Elizabeth Johnson, and she had it of the devil. She would not own that she had ever been at the witch meeting at the village. This is the substance.

"Examination of Sarah Carrier [Legal Document]," in *Children and Youth in History*, Item #282. Annotated by Tom Rushford.

[Available through the Center for History and New Media, George Mason University.](#)

The confession of Ann Putnam, 1706

I desire to be humbled before God for that sad and humbling providence that befell my father's family in the year about '92; that I, then being in my childhood, should, by such a providence of God, be made an instrument for the accusing of several persons of a grievous crime, whereby their lives were taken away from them, whom now I have just grounds and good reason to believe they were innocent persons; and that it was a great delusion of Satan that deceived me in that sad time, whereby I justly fear I have been instrumental, with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon myself and this land the guilt of innocent blood; though what was said or done by me against any person I can truly and uprightly say, before God and man, I did it not out of any anger, malice, or ill-will to any person, for I had no such thing against one of them; but what I did was ignorantly, being deluded by Satan. And particularly, as I was a chief instrument of accusing of Goodwife Nurse and her two sisters, I desire to lie in the dust, and to be humbled for it, in that I was a cause, with others, of so sad a calamity to them and their families; for which cause I desire to lie in the dust, and earnestly beg forgiveness of God, and from all those unto whom I have given just cause of sorrow and offence, whose relations were taken away or accused.

The Edinburgh Review, Or Critical Journal, Volume 128 (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1868), 39.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Manuel Trujillo Accuses Asencio Povia and Antonio Yuba of Sodomy, 1731

In 1731, Manuel Trujillo accused two Pueblo men, Acensio Povia and Antonio Yuba, of committing sodomy. Both Povia and Yuba denied this accusation, and Yuba invoked his status as a Christian in order to bolster his credibility. Governor Gervasio Cruzat y Góngora chose to exile Povia and Yuba to different pueblos for a period of four months, during which time they were to cease any and all communication with one another. This case explores sexual practices deemed “nefarious sins” as well as illustrates what scholars have called the colonial dilemma—the situation where Indigenous peoples remained in a subjected state despite theological equality following their Christian conversion.

In the town of Santa Fe on the twenty fifth day of the month of June of one thousand and thirty-one years, before me, Don Antonio Pérez Velarde Lieutenant General of this Kingdom of New Mexico, appeared Manuel Trujillo vecino of the said town. He gave me information that some goats, having damaged his estate, prompted him to follow their trail and find their owner. He followed their trail to meet the owner so that he could pay for the damages. And, climbing a hill next to a glen just by a river he saw, unexpectedly and ocularly, two Indians that were committing the nefarious sin. And, recognizing well this deed he turned his horse [around] and went to where they were and gave them, with the reins of his bridle, some lashes, reprimanding them for the offense they were committing against God our Lord. And, so that they be punished, he gave me this information that I, the said Lieutenant General, can determine how justice should be served and carried out against the said two Indians and, so that they cease their desires and proceed against them, I commanded and command that they adhere to this trial and procedure and I give the order that they be put in a good prison. Ordered and signed with the witnesses at my service and acting as receiver judge due to the lack of a royal public notary.

Immediately afterwards on the said day, month, and year, I, the said lieutenant general, in virtue of the aforementioned command, ordered Joaquin de Anaya and Cristobal Martínez, soldiers of this garrison, to go in the company of the said Manuel Trujillo to the site and the place where he found and saw the said two Indians committing the said sin. That they find them and bring them [back] as prisoners. And, after having been found, that they turn them over to the guards of this garrison and send them to the Corporal of the Guards.

(Asencio Povia’s statement)

... He is called Asencio Povia and he appears to be eighteen years old because he did not know his exact age; he is a natural Indian from the Pueblo of San Francisco de Nambe; he is of the Tewa nation; he is single. Asked if he knew the cause of his imprisonment, he stated that it was because a Spaniard caught this confessant with another Indian lying on the ground belly to belly and that the referred to imprisoned Indian grabbed this confessant’s virile member and brought it to his posterior but that it was not sufficiently agitated (i.e. excited or erect) in order to put it in (the posterior), and that he could not get agitated; and that by God it did not get agitated, and that being this confessant over the other Indian belly

to belly, arrived the Spaniard and eventually pulled him off and that was his response. And asked to state clearly and truthfully why there was a denunciation before me from the said Manuel Trujillo that he saw them committing the nefarious sin and not what he stated in the previous question that they were lying belly to belly, he stated that what he said was what happened and not something else because it is the truth and that he is a Christian and that by God he tells the truth in this oath that he made and affirmed and ratified. He did not provide his signature because he does not know how. His guardian signed in his place who was present at this confession.

(Antonio Yuba's confession)

... he said that he was called Antonio Yuba; that he was thirty years of age according to his appearance because he did not know his exact age. He is a natural of Tesuque Pueblo; he is of the Tewa nation and he is single.

When asked if he knew the cause of his imprisonment, he said that it was because Manuel Trujillo came and said many things about him and the other Indian. When asked what were the things that the said Manuel Trujillo came to say, he responded that he did not know those things but that he [Trujillo] came shouting and that he went to see the governor.

Asked to confess and tell the truth because the said Manuel Trujillo saw that they were on top of one another committing the nefarious sin. He said that it was true that the other Indian was wrestling with this confessant and that he told him [Povia] to stop it that he was going to tend to his livestock and that on this occasion arrived Manuel Trujillo.... Asked to tell the truth why it is on record that when the said Trujillo arrived, this confessant was with the other Indian belly to belly and that he [Yuba] took his [Povia's] virile member and brought it close to his posterior to commit the said sin but since there was no activity he could not execute it, [so Yuba] took the member of the said Indian, stroking it with his hands to fulfill his wish to commit the said sin. He said that it is true that when they were wrestling belly to belly the other Indian scratched this confessant's [member] and that he took the member and pulled it to his lower part and scratched it and this is the truth by the oath that he has dated and signed and ratified ...

(The verdict)

Attention to which the detained should be freed from the prison in which they are found preceding first, and making them aware of this, my decision, in the presence of the said interpreter and defense attorney so that in view of what my order is and in its fulfillment they leave for the term of four months with everything from the day of their notification. They are to be exiled, Asencio Povia—natural of Nambe Pueblo and of the Tewa nation—to San Felipe Pueblo and Antonio Yuba—natural of Tesuque Pueblo and of the Tewa nation—to Zuni Pueblo and each one of them will remain for four months in the pueblo that is assigned, under penalty of two hundred lashes and under the same penalty, they must not return to meet or communicate their thoughts and sayings because, by doing so, [the crime] will be considered as incurred once again. And, when that term of exile is finished, they should be brought before the local justice for the record to be complied with the exile

referred to by certification of the said judge. Thus, I have provided, ordered, and signed acting as the recipient before me due to the absence of a public and royal notary in this kingdom with the witnesses at my assistance that I give faith.

Don Gervasio Cruzat y Gongora, Gaspar Bitton, Juan Antonio de Unanue

Spanish Archives of New Mexico (SANM), MF 450, roll 6, frames 830-833; 845-846; 848-850; 881-882; 887. Translation by Anderson Hagler.

Painting of New Orleans



Jean-Pierre Lassus, "Vie et Perspective de la Nouvelle Orleans," 1726, Centre des archives d'outre-mer, France via [Wikimedia](#).

During the contact period, the frontier was constantly shifting and places that are now considered old were once tenuous settlements. This watercolor painting depicts New Orleans in 1726 when it was an 8-year-old French frontier settlement, nearly forty years prior to the Spanish acquisition of the Louisiana territory. In the foreground, enslaved Africans fell trees on land belonging to the Company of the Indies, and another enslaved man spears a massive alligator. Land has been cleared only just beyond the town limits and a wooden palisade provides meager protection from competing European empires.

Sketch of an Algonquin Village



John White, "Village of the Secotan, 1585, via Wikimedia.

Native settlements were usually organized around political, economic, or religious activity. John White shows this Algonquin community engaged in some kind of celebration across from the fire he identified as "The place of solemne prayer," indicating that ceremonial activity could be both solemn and raucous. In the center of the image, a communal meal has been laid alongside crops that are in varying stages of growth, suggesting the use of planting techniques like crop rotation. He also shows the interior of several longhouses, made of bent saplings and covered with bark and woven mats. Among the Powhatan, similar structures were called yehakins. In putting the longhouses and the settlement in a series of rows, White's English perspective comes through: archaeological evidence shows that these houses were usually situated around communal gathering places or moved next to fields under cultivation not ordered in European-style rows.

3. British North America

Introduction

The seventeenth century saw the creation and maturation of Britain's North American colonies. Colonists endured a century of struggle against unforgiving climates, hostile natives, and imperial intrigue. They did so largely through ruthless expressions of power. Colonists conquered Native Americans, attacked European rivals, and joined a highly lucrative transatlantic economy rooted in slavery. After surviving a century of desperation and war, British North American colonists fashioned increasingly complex societies with unique religious cultures, economic ties, and political traditions. These sources reveal the often brutal conditions of life in colonial America.

Olaudah Equiano Describes the Middle Passage, 1789

In this harrowing description of the Middle Passage, Olaudah Equiano described the terror of the transatlantic slave trade. Equiano eventually purchased his freedom and lived in London where he advocated for abolition.

At last, when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps for myself I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself; I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with served only to render my state more painful, and heighten my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites. One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on the deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings.

One day, when we had a smooth sea, and a moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings, and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also

followed their example; and I believe many more would soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were, in a moment, put down under the deck; and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat to go out after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate; hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade. — Many a time we were near suffocation, from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many. During our passage I first saw flying fishes, which surprised me very much: they used frequently to fly across the ship, and many of them fell on the deck. I also now first saw the use of the quadrant. I had often with astonishment seen the mariners make observations with it, and I could not think what it meant. They at last took notice of my surprise; and one of them, willing to increase it, as well as to gratify my curiosity, made me one day look through it. The clouds appeared to me to be land, which disappeared as they passed along. This heightened my wonder: and I was now more persuaded than ever that I was in another world, and that every thing about me was magic. At last we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes, at which the whites on board gave a great shout, and made many signs of joy to us.

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, written by Himself* (London: 1790), 51-54.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Recruiting Settlers to Carolina, 1666

Robert Horne's wanted to entice English settlers to join the new colony of Carolina. According to Horne, natural bounty, economic opportunity, and religious liberty awaited anyone willing to make the journey. Horne wanted to recruit settlers of every social class, from those "of Genteel blood" to those who would have to sign a contract of indentured servitude.

First, There is full and free Liberty of Conscience granted to all, so that no man is to be molested or called in question for matters of Religious Concern; but every one to be obedient to the Civil Government, worshipping God after their own way.

Secondly, There is freedom from Custom, for all Wine, Silk, Raisins, Currans, Oil, Olives, and Almonds, that shall be raised in the Province for 7. years, after 4 Ton of any of those commodities shall be imported in one Bottom.

Thirdly, Every Free-man and Free-woman that transport themselves and Servants by the 25 of March next, being 1667. shall have for Himself, Wife, Children, and Men-servants, for each 100 Acres of Land for him and his Heirs for ever, and for every Woman-servant and Slave 50 Acres, paying at most 1/2*d.* per acre, *per annum*, in lieu of all demands, to the Lords Proprietors: Provided always, That every Man be armed with a good musket full bore, 10lbs Powder, and 20lbs of Bullet, and six Months Provision for all, to serve them whilst they raise Provision in that Country.

Fourthly, Every Man-Servant at the expiration of their time, is to have of the Country a 100 Acres of Land to him and his heirs for ever, paying only 1/2*d.* per Acre, *per annum*, and the Women 50. Acres of Land on the same conditions; their Masters also are to allow them two Suits of Apparel and Tools such as he is best able to work with, according to the Custom of the Country.

Fifthly, They are to have a Governor and Council appointed from among themselves, to see the Laws of the Assembly put in due execution; but the Governor is to rule but 3 years, and then learn to obey; also he hath no power to lay any Tax, or make or abrogate any Law, without the Consent of the Colony in their Assembly.

Sixthly, They are to choose annually from among themselves, a certain Number of Men, according to their divisions, which constitute the General Assembly with the Governor and his Council, and have the sole power of Making Laws, and Laying Taxes for the common good when need shall require.

These are the chief and Fundamental privileges, but the Right Honorable Lords Proprietors have promised (and it is their Interest so to do) to be ready to grant what other Privileges may be found advantageous for the good, of the Colony.

Is there therefore any younger Brother who is born of Genteel blood, and whose Spirit is elevated above the common sort, and yet the hard usage of our Country hath not allowed

suitable fortune; he will not surely be afraid to leave his Native Soil to advance his Fortunes equal to his Blood and Spirit, and so he will avoid those unlawful ways too many of our young Gentlemen take to maintain themselves according to their high education, having but small Estates; here, with a few Servants and a small Stock a great Estate may be raised, although his Birth have not entitled him to any of the Land of his Ancestors, yet his Industry may supply him so, as to make him the head of as famous a family.

Such as are here tormented with much care how to get worth to gain a Livelihood, or that with their labor can hardly get a comfortable subsistence, shall do well to go to this place, where any man whatever, that is but willing to take moderate pains, may be assured of a most comfortable subsistence, and be in a way to raise his fortunes far beyond what he could ever hope for in England. Let no man be troubled at the thoughts of being a Servant for 4 or 5 year, for I can assure you, that many men give money with their children to serve 7 years, to take more pains and fare nothing so well as the Servants in this Plantation will do. Then it is to be considered, that so soon as he is out of his time, he hath Land, and Tools, and Clothes given him, and is in a way of advancement. Therefore all Artificers, as Carpenters, Wheelrights, Joiners, Coopers, Bricklayers, Smiths, or diligent Husbandmen and Laborers, that are willing to advance their fortunes, and live in a most pleasant healthful and fruitful Country, where Artificers are of high esteem, and used with all Civility and Courtesy imaginable...

If any Maid or single Woman have a desire to go over, they will think themselves in the Golden Age, when Men paid a Dowry for their Wives; for if they be but Civil, and under 50 years of Age, some honest Man or other, will purchase them for their Wives.

Those that desire further advice, or Servants that would be entertained, let them repair to Mr. Matthew Wilkinson, Ironmonger, at the Sign of the Three Feathers, in Bishops gate Street, where they may be informed when the Ships will be ready, and what they must carry with them.

A.S. Salley, ed., *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650-1708* (New York: 1911), 71-73.

[Available through HathiTrust](#)

Letter from Carolina, 1682

Thomas Neve's account of his experience in Carolina offers an interesting counter to Robert Horne's prediction of what would await settlers. Neve describes deadly disease, war with Native Americans, and unprepared colonists. Neve longs for news from home but also appears committed to making a new life for himself in Carolina.

May 29th, 1682, by way of Barbados

Most Honored Father:

. . . one thing I understand (to my sorrow) that I knew not before, [that] most have a seasoning, but few dye of it. I find the Commonalty here to be mightily dissatisfied, the reason is 3 or 4 of the great ones, for furs and skins, have furnished the Indians with arms and ammunitions especially those with whom they are now at War, for from those they had all or most of their fur, so that trade which 3 or 4 only kept in their hands is at present gone to decay, and now they have armed the next most potent tribe of the Indians to fight the former, and some few English there are out, looking after them, which is a charge to the people and a stop [to] the further settling of the Country. The soil is generally very light, but apt to produce whatsoever is put into it. There are already all sorts of English fruit and garden herbs besides many others that I never saw in England, and they do send a great deal of Pork, Corn and Cedar to Barbados, besides the victualing of several Vessels that come in here, as Privateers and others which to do in the space of 12 years the time from the 1st seating of it by the English, is no small work, especially if we consider the first Planters which were most of them tradesmen, poor and wholly ignorant of husbandry and till of late but few in number, it being increased more the 3 or 4 last years then the whole time before the whole at present not amounting to 4000, so that their whole Business was to clear a little ground to get Bread for their Families, few of them having wherewithal to purchase a Cow, the first stock whereof they were furnished with, from Bermudas and New England, from the later of which they had their horses which are not so good as those in England, but by reason of their scarcity much dearer, an ordinary Colt at 3 years old being valued at 15 or 16 *lies*. as they are scarce, so there is but little use of them yet, all Plantations being seated on the Rivers, they can go to and fro by Canoe or Boat as well and as soon as they can ride, the horses here like the Indians and many of the English do travail without shoes. Now each family hath got a stock of Hogs and Cows, which when once a little more increased, they may send of to the Islands cheaper then any other place can, by reason of its propinquity, which trade alone will make it far more considerable than either Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and those other places to the North of us.

I desire you would be pleased by the next opportunity to send me over the best herbalist for Physical Plants in as small a Volume as you can get. There was a new one just came out as I left England, if I mistake not in 8^{vo}. that was much commended, the Author I have forgot, but there are several in the College that can direct you to the best. If Mr. Sessions, Mr.

Hobart or Mr. White, should send to you for money for the passage of a servant, whether man or boy that they Judge likely, I desire you would be pleased to send it them, for such will turn to good account here; and if you please to enquire at some Apothecaries what Sassafras (which grows here in great plenty) is worth a pound and how and at what time of the year to cure it, let me know as soon as you can, for if the profit is not I am sure the knowledge is worth sending for. Pray Sir let me hear by the next how all our friends and relations do, what change in the College, and what considerable alteration through the whole Town; I have now nothing more to speak but my desire that you may still retain (what I know you do) that love with which I daily was blest and that readiness in pardoning whatsoever you find amiss, and to believe that my affections are not changed with the Climate unless like it too, grown warmer, this with my most humble duty to yourself and my mother, my kind love to my sister and Brothers and all the rest of our Friends I rest

Your most dutiful and obedient son,

Thomas Newe

A.S. Salley, ed., *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650-1708* (New York: 1911), 183-185.

[Available through HathiTrust](#)

Francis Daniel Pastorius Describes his Ocean Voyage, 1684

The journey across the Atlantic was difficult at best and deadly at worst. Francis Pastorius left his home in Germany to create a new life in Pennsylvania. This account shows the discomforts and dangers of oceanic travel in the seventeenth century.

Accordingly I will begin with the voyage, which is certainly on the one hand dangerous on account of the terror of shipwreck, and on the other hand very unpleasant on account of the bad and hard fare; so that I now from my own experience understand in a measure what David says in the 107th Psalm, that on the sea one may observe and perceive not only the wonderful works of God, but also the spirit of the storm. As to my voyage hither, I sailed from Deal on the tenth of June with four menservants, two maidservants, two children, and one young boy. We had the whole way over, for the most part, contrary winds, and never favorable for twelve hours together; many tempests and thunderstorms. Also the foremast broke twice, so that it was ten weeks before we arrived here... considering that it seldom happens that any persons arrive here much more quickly. The Crefelders, who arrived here on October 6, were also ten weeks upon the ocean, and the ship that set out with ours from Deal was fourteen days longer on the voyage, and several people died in it. The Crefelders lost a grown girl between Rotterdam and England, whose loss however was replaced between England and Pennsylvania by the birth of two children. On our ship, on the other hand, no one died and no one was born.

Almost all the passengers were seasick for some days, I however for not more than four hours. On the other hand I underwent other accidents, namely, that the two carved lugs over the ship's bell fell right upon my back, and on the 9th of July during a storm in the night I fell so severely upon my left side that for some days I had to keep to my bed. These two falls reminded me forcibly of the first fall of our original parents in Paradise, which has come down upon all their posterity, and also of many of those falls which I have undergone in this vale of misery of my exile. *Per varios casus*, etc [Latin for through many difficulties]. But praised be the fatherly hand of the divine mercy which lifts us up again so many times and holds us back that we fall not entirely into the abyss of the evil one. George Wertmuller also fell down extremely hard, Thomas Gasper had an eruption of the body, the English maid had the erysipelas [skin infection], and Isaac Dilbeck, who according to outward appearance was the strongest, succumbed for the greatest length of time. So I had a small ship hospital, although I alone of the Germans had taken my berth among the English. That one of the boatmen became insane and that our ship was shaken by the repeated assaults of a whale, I set forth at length in my last letter.

The rations upon the ship were very bad... Every ten persons received three pounds of butter a week, four cans of beer and two cans of water a day, two platters full of peas every noon, meat four dinners in the week and fish three, and these we were obliged to prepare

with our own butter. Also we must every noon save up enough so that we might get our supper from it. The worst of all was that both the meat and the fish were salted to such an extent and had become so rancid that we could hardly eat half of them. And had I not by the advice of good friends in England provided myself with various kinds of refreshment, it might perhaps have gone very badly for me. Therefore all those who hereafter intend to make the voyage hither should take good heed that they either, if there are many of them, procure their own provisions, or else agree distinctly with the captain as to both quantity and quality, how much food and of what sort they are to receive each day; and to hold him down the more completely to this agreement, one should reserve some small part of the passage money, to be paid on this side. Also when possible one should arrange with a ship which sails up to this city of Philadelphia, since in the case of the others which end their voyage at Upland, one is subjected to many inconveniences.

Albert Cook Myers, ed., *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware* (New York: 1912), 392-395.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Song about Life in Virginia

Some English men and women understood the New World to be a place of opportunity, where they could create new lives. More common, however, was the belief that the New World was a place of great danger and suffering. This song was written from the perspective of a young girl who was sent to Virginia against her will, where she faced a life of hunger and never-ending work.

Give ear unto a Maid,
That lately was betray'd,
And sent into Virginny O:
In brief I shall declare,
What I have suffered there,
When that I was weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

When that first I came
To this Land of Fame,
Which is called Virginny, O;
The Axe and the Hoe
Have wrought my Overthrow,
When that I was weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

Five Years served I,
Under Master Guy,
In the Land of Virginny, O:
Which made me for to know,
Sorrow, Grief, and Woe;
When that I was weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

When my Dame says, Go,
Then I must do so,
In the Land of Virginny, O;
When she sits at Meat,
Then I have none to eat,
When that I was weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

The Cloaths that I brought in,
They are worn very thin,
In the Land of Virginny, O;

Which makes me for to say,
Alas, and Well-a-day,
When that I was weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

Instead of Beds of Ease,
To lye down when I please,
In the Land of Virginny, O,
Upon a Bed of Straw,
I lay down full of Woe,
When that I was weary
weary, weary, weary, O.

Then the Spider she
Daily waits on me,
In the Land of Virginny, O;
Round about my Bed,
She spins her tender web,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

So soon as it is day,
To work I must away,
In the Land of Virginny, O;
Then my Dame she knocks
With her Tinder-box,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

I have play'd my part,
Both at Plow and at Cart,
In the Land of Virginny, O:
Billats from the Wood,
Upon my back they load,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

Instead of drinking Beer,
I drink the Water clear,
In the Land of Virginny, O;
Which makes me pale and wan
Do all that e'r I can,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

If my Dame says, Go,
I dare not say no,
In the Land of Virginy, O:
The Water from the Spring,
Upon my head I bring,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

When the Mill doth stand,
I'm ready at command,
In the Land of Virginy, O:
The Morter for to make,
Which made my heart to ake,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

When the Child doth cry,
I must sing, By a by;
In the Land of Virginy, O:
No rest that I can have,
Whilst I am here a Slave,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

A thousand Woes beside,
That I do here abide,
In the Land of Virginy, O:
In misery I spend
My time that hath no end,
When that I am weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

Then let Maids beware,
All by my ill-fare,
In the Land of Virginy, O;
Be sure thou stay at home,
For if you do here come,
You will all be weary,
weary, weary, weary, O.

But if it be my chance,
Homewards to advance,
From the Land of Virginy, O;

If that I once more,
Land on English Shore,
I'll no more be weary,
weary, weary, weary O.

The Trappan'd Maiden: Or the Distressed Damsel. Broadside 1689-1703 EBBA 21947 (Samuel Pepys Library, Magdalene College) 4.286.

[Available through the English Ballad Broadside Archive, University of California at Santa Barbara](#)

Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address

This Thanksgiving address was used by the six nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) to open and close major gatherings or meetings. The prayer was also sometimes used individually at the beginning or end of the day.

The People

Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as people.

Now our minds are one.

The Earth Mother

We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our mother, we send greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Waters

We give thanks to all the waters of the world for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is life. We know its power in many forms- waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the spirit of Water.

Now our minds are one.

The Fish

We turn our minds to the all the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that we can still find pure water. So, we turn now to the Fish and send our greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Plants

Now we turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come.

Now our minds are one.

The Food Plants

With one mind, we turn to honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans and berries have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them too. We gather all the Plant Foods together as one and send them a greeting of thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Medicine Herbs

Now we turn to all the Medicine herbs of the world. From the beginning they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the Medicines and to the keepers of the Medicines.

Now our minds are one.

The Animals

We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We are honored by them when they give up their lives so we may use their bodies as food for our people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope that it will always be so.

Now our minds are one.

The Trees

We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many people of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life.

Now our minds are one.

The Birds

We put our minds together as one and thank all the Birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them beautiful songs. Each day they remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader. To all the Birds-from the smallest to the largest-we send our joyful greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Four Winds

We are all thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help us to bring the change

of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind, we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds.

Now our minds are one.

Closing Words

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

Now our minds are one.

Thanksgiving Address: Greetings to the Natural World English version: John Stokes and Kanawahienton (David Benedict, Turtle Clan/Mohawk) Mohawk version: Rokwaho (Dan Thompson, Wolf Clan/Mohawk) Original inspiration: Tekaronianekon (Jake Swamp, Wolf Clan/Mohawk).

[Available through the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.](#)

Rose Davis is sentenced to a life of slavery, 1715

Rose Davis was born to an indentured servant white woman and a Black man. Slave law claimed that children inherited the status of their mother, a law which enabled enslavers to control the reproductive functions of their enslaved women laborers. However, as race increasingly became a marker of slavery, even the children of free white women could be vulnerable to enslavement. Rose had been working as an indentured servant when she petitioned the court for her freedom. Instead, she was sentenced to a lifetime of slavery.

August 1715

On the petition of Rose the mulatto daughter of Mary Davis of the province of Maryland against Mr. Henry Darnall about her freedom &c. It is ordered that notice be given Mr. William Diggs, attorney for the said Mr. Henry Darnall that the second Tuesday of November next.

8 November 1715

Rose a mulatto petition against Henry Darnall about her freedom consideration referred until next Court.

13 March 1715/6

Petition of Rose the mulatto daughter of Mary Davis of the province of Maryland now a servant of Mr. Henry Darnall of the County aforesaid. Hereby showeth that your petitioner being a Baptized mulatto descended by the mother of Christian race as appears from the evidence of her said mother on the other said handscribed the original whereafter she is ready to provide as well as other testimonies if need be to confirm the same and being arrived to the age of thirty one years the 11 August 1715 at in time she supposes the servitude imposed in such unhappy issue expires. She therefore humbly prays the benefit by Law allowed to those in her unhappy circumstances and that she may accordingly receive a free manumission from the said servitude which handscribed evidence mentioned in the petition follows in the words vizt.

I Mary Davis the daughter of Richard Davis now dwelling in Mark Lane in the City of London in England where I was born and there now have dwelling a brother called John Davis, do give this Bible unto my son Thomas begotten in wedlock on my body by a negro called Domingoe once a servant to Joseph Tilley of Hunting Creek in Calvert County where I was married to him the said negroe but now we both are dwelling with the right honorable the proprietor of this province of Maryland and my before said son Thomas was born on a plantation of my lords in Lyons Creek in Calvert County on the 14th day of March 1677 and was baptized by Mr. Wessley in the house of Mr. Richard. Massoms and James Thompson was godfather and Ann his wife was godmother. That is here inserted to satisfy any whom it may concern that my said son Thomas came from a Christian race by his mother and I the said Mary Davis above mentioned and named have also a Daughter by the

same negro my husband aforesaid whose name is Rose. She was born in St. Maries County on a plantation called the Top of the Hill on the 11 August 1684 and baptized at Nottley Hall by Mr. Richard. Hebert Priest and Mr. Henry Wharton was the godfather and Rose Hebert now the wife of Thomas Nation was the godmother. That is above inserted that you may know she my said Daughter came of the Christian race by her mother a true copy take out of the aforesaid Bible.

Signed Mary Davis.

Given by said Mary to her son Thomas now in the possession and custody of the said Rose.

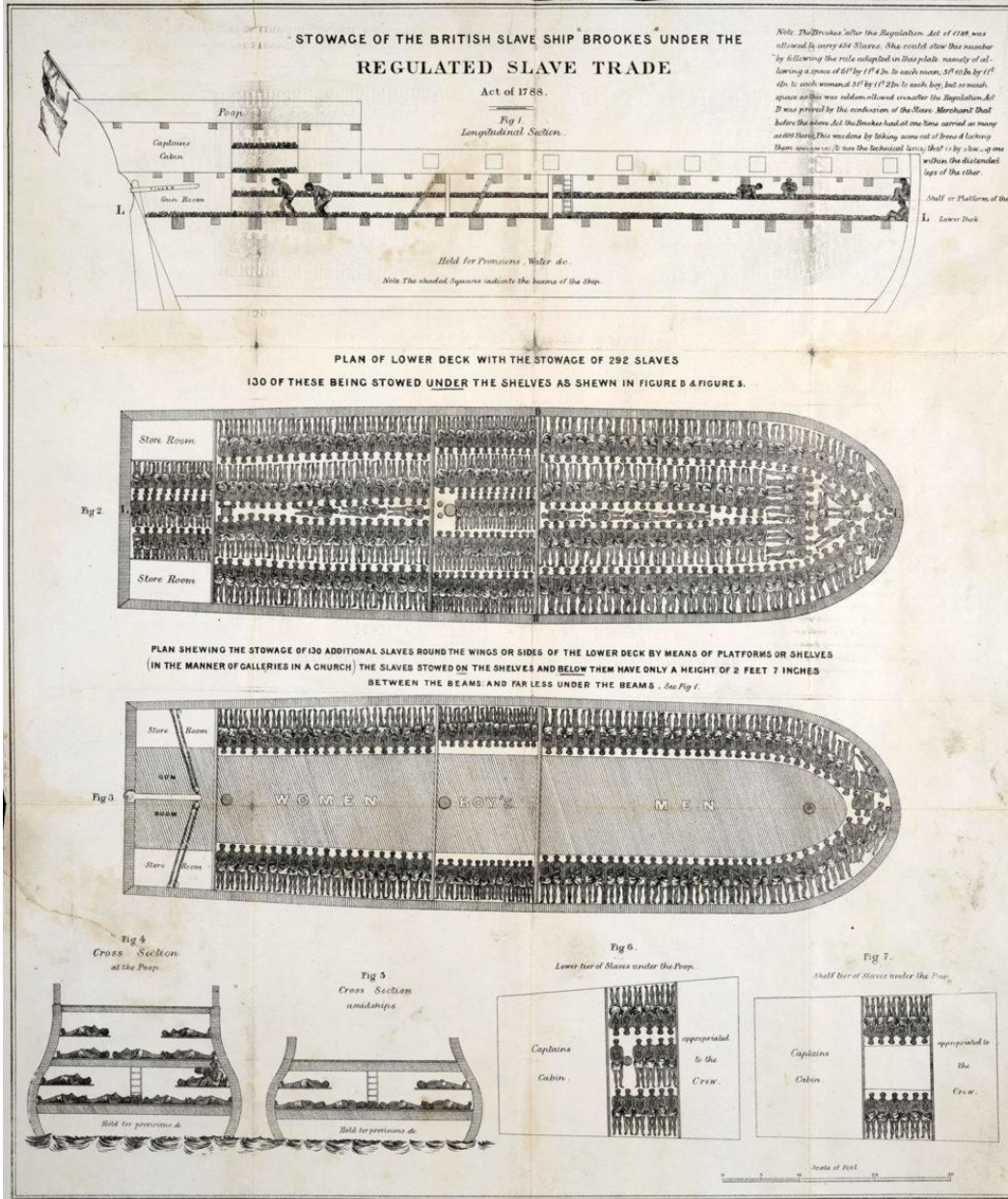
Court resolving to proceed this day 8 November 1715

Next Court: Mature deliberation ... It is thereupon considered by the Justices that the said Rose the mulatto and person aforesaid serve during life as a slave and that her master Mr. Henry Darnall pay fees.

“Rose Davis against Henry Darnall, August 1715,” Anne Arundel County Court (Judgment Record) 08/1712—03/1715, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Maryland, <http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/AnneArundel.htm>.

[Available from the American Society of Genealogists.](http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/AnneArundel.htm)

Print of the Slave Ship Brookes



"Stowage of the British slave ship Brookes under the regulated slave trade act of 1788," 1789, via [Wikimedia](#).

Slave ships transported 11-12 million Africans to destinations in North and South America, but it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that any kind of regulation was introduced. The Brookes print dates to after the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788, but still shows enslaved Africans chained in rows using bilboes, which were iron leg shackles used to chain pairs of enslaved people together during the Middle Passage throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The slave ship Brookes was allowed to carry up to 454 enslaved people, allotting 6 feet (1.8 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each man; 5 feet 10 inches (1.78 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each woman, and 5 feet (1.5 m) by 1 foot 2 inches (0.36 m) to each child, but one slave trader alleged that before 1788, the ship carried as many as 609 enslaved Africans.

Map of British North America



Henry Popple, "A map of the British Empire in America with the French and Spanish settlements adjacent thereto," 1733 via [Library of Congress](#).

British colonists in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries occupied a constantly contested frontier. The British Empire competed with French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and even Scottish explorers to claim land in North America and the Caribbean – much of it already settled by Native Americans. This diverse territory would continue to be contested throughout the eighteenth century. Eventually, the British Empire included twenty-six colonies in North America, producing everything from grain and timber to luxury goods like tobacco and sugar.

4. Colonial Society

Introduction

Eighteenth century American culture moved in competing directions. Commercial, military and cultural ties between Great Britain and the North American colonies tightened, while a new, distinctly American culture began to form and bind together colonists from New Hampshire to Georgia. Immigrants from other European nations meanwhile combined with Native Americans and enslaved Africans to create an increasingly diverse colonial population. Men and women, Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans led distinct lives and wrought new distinct societies. While life in the thirteen colonies was shaped in part by English practices and participation in the larger Atlantic World, emerging cultural patterns increasingly transformed North America into something wholly different. These sources unfold the early manifestations of new American cultures.

Boston trader Sarah Knight on her travels in Connecticut, 1704

Sarah Knight traveled from her home in Massachusetts to trade goods. Through her diary, we can get a sense of life during the consumer revolution, as well as some of the prejudices and inequalities that shaped life in eighteenth-century New England.

Saturday October 7

Their diversions in this part of the country are on lecture days and training days mostly: on the former there is riding from town to town.

And on training days the youth divert themselves by shooting at the target, as they call it (but it very much resembles a pillory), where he that hits nearest the white has some yards of red ribbon presented him which being tied to his hatband, the two ends streaming down his back, he is led away in triumph, with great applause as the winners of the olympic games. They generally marry very young: the males oftener as I am told under twenty than above; they generally make public weddings...

There are a great plenty of oysters all along by the sea side, as far as I rode in the colony, and those very good. And they generally lived very well and comfortably in their families. But too indulgent (especially the farmers) to their slaves: suffering too great familiarity from them, permitting them to sit at table and eat with them (as they say to save time), and into the dish goes the black hoof as freely as the white hand....

There are everywhere in the towns as I passed, a number of Indians the natives of the country, and are the most savage of all the savages of that kind that I had ever seen: little or no care taken (as I heard upon inquiry) to make them otherwise. They have in some places lands of their own, and governed by the laws of their own making; they marry many wives and at pleasure put them away, and on the least, dislike or fickle humour, on either side, saying stand away to one another is a sufficient divorce. And indeed those uncomely stand aways are too much in vogue among the English in this (indulgent colony) as their records plentifully prove, and on very trivial matters, of which some have been told me, but are not proper to be related by a female pen, tho some of that foolish sex have had too large a share in the story....

They give the title of merchant to every trader, who rate their goods according to the time and specie they pay in: for example, pay, money, pay as money, and trusting. Pay is grain, pork, beef, etc at the prices set by the general court that year; money is pieces of eight, reals, or Boston or Bay shillings (as they call them) or good hard money, as sometimes silver coin is termed by them; also wampum Indian beads which serve for change. Pay as money is provisions as aforesaid one third cheaper than as the assembly or general court sets it; and trust as they and the merchant agree for time.

Now, when the buyer comes to ask for a commodity, sometimes before the merchant answers that he has it, he says, "is your pay ready?" Perhaps the chap replies, "Yes." "What do you pay in?" says the merchant. The buyer having answered, then the price is set; as suppose he wants a sixpenny knife, in pay it is 12d—in pay as money eight pence, and hard money its own price six dollars. It seems a very intricate way of trade and what *Lex Mercatoria* had not thought of.

Being at a merchants house, in comes a tall country fellow with his alfogeos (saddle bags) full of tobacco; for they seldom lose their cud, but keep chewing and spitting as long as their eyes are open,—he advanced to the middle of the room, and makes an awkward nod, and spitting a large deal of aromatic tincture, he gave scrape with his shovel-like shoe, leaving a small shovel full of dirt on the floor, made a full stop, hugging his own pretty body with his hands under his arms, stood staring around him like a cat let out of a basket. At last, like the creature Balaam rode on (a donkey), he opened his mouth and said, "Have you any ribbon for hatbands to sell I pray?" The questions and answer about the pay being past, the ribbon is brought and opened. Bumpkin Simpners, cries its confounded gay I vow, and beckoning to the door, in comes Joan Tawdry, dropping about 50 curtseys and stands by him: he shows her the ribbon.... Then she enquires, "Have you any hood silk, I pray?" which being brought and bought, "Have you any thread silk to sew it with says she, which being accommodated with they departed. They generally stand after they come in a great while speechless, and sometimes don't say a word till they are asked what they want, which I impute to the aw they stand in of the merchants who they are constantly almost indebted to...

Sarah Kemble Knight, *The Journal of Madam Knight, With an Introductory Note by George Parker Winship* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1920), 36-43.

[Available on Google Books](#)

Eliza Lucas Letters, 1740-1741

Eliza Lucas was born into a moderately wealthy family in South Carolina. Throughout her life she shrewdly managed her money and greatly added to her family's wealth. These two letters from an unusually intelligent financial manager offer a glimpse into the commercial revolution and social worlds of the early eighteenth century.

Letter to a friend in London

May 2, 1740

I flatter myself it will be a satisfaction to you to hear I like this part of the world, as my lot has fallen here—which I really do. I prefer England to it, 'tis true, but think Carolina greatly preferable to the West Indies, as was my Papa here I should be very happy.

We have a very good acquaintance from whom we have received much friendship and civility. Charles Town, the principal one in this province, is a polite, agreeable place. The people live very gentle and very much in the English taste. The country is in general fertile and abounds with venison and wild fowl; the venison is much higher flavored than in England but 'tis seldom fat.

My Papa and Mama's great indulgence to me leaves it to me to choose our place of residence either in town or country, but I think it more prudent as well as agreeable to my Mama and self to be in the country during Father's absence. We are 17 mile by land and 6 y water from Charles Town—where we have about 6 agreeable families around us with whom we live in great harmony.

I have a little library well furnished (for my papa has left me most of his books) in which I spend part of my time. My music and the garden, which I am very fond of, take up the rest of my time that is not employed in business, of which my father has left me a pretty good share—and indeed, 'twas unavoidable as my Mama's bad state of heath prevents her going through any fatigue.

I have the business of 3 plantations to transact, which requires much writing and more business and fatigue of other sorts than you can imagine. But least you should imagine it too burdensome to a girl at my early time of life, give me leave to answer you; I assure you I think myself happy that I can be useful to so good a father, and by rising very early I find I can go through much business. But least you should think I shall be quite moped with this way of life I am to inform you there is to worthy ladies in Charles Town, Mrs. Pickney and Mrs. Cleland, who are partial enough to me to be always pleased to have me with them, and insist upon making their houses my home when in town and press me to relax, a little much oftener than 'tis my honor to accept of their obliging entreaties. But I sometimes am with one or the other for 3 weeks or a month at a time, and enjoy all the pleasures Charles Town affords, but nothing gives me more than subscribing myself.

Yr. most affectionate and most obliged humble servt.

Eliza. Lucas

Letter to her father

June 4, 1741

Never were letters more welcome than yours of Feb. 19th and 20th and March the 15th and 21st, which came almost together. It was near 6 months since we had the pleasure of a line from you. Our fears increased apace and we dreaded some fatal accident befallen, but hearing of your recovery from a dangerous fit of illness has more than equaled, great as it was, our former anxiety. Nor shall we ever think ourselves sufficiently thankful to Almighty God for the continuance of so great a blessing.

I sympathize most sincerely with a calamity as the scarcity of provisions and the want of the necessaries of life to the poorer sort. We shall send all we can get of all sorts of provisions particularly what you write for. I write this day to Starrat for a barrel of butter.

We expect the boat dayly from Garden Hill when I shall be able to give you an account of affairs there. The cotton, guiney corn, and most of the ginger planted here was cut off by a frost. I wrote you a former letter we had a fine crop of indigo seed upon the ground, and since informed you the frost took it before it was dry. I picked out the best of it and had it planted but there is not more than a hundred bushes of it come up—which proves the more unlucky as you have sent a man to make it. I make no doubt indigo will prove a very valuable commodity in time if we could have the seed from the West Indies time enough to plant the latter end of March, that the seed might be dry enough to gather before our frost. I am sorry we lost this season. We can do nothing towards it now but make the works ready for next year. The lucern is yet dwindling, but Mr. Hunt tells me 'tis always so here the first year.

The death of my Grandmamma was, as you imagine, very shocking and grievous to my Mama, but I hope the considerations of the miserys that attend so advanced an age will help time to wear it off. I am very much obliged to you for the present you were so good to send me of the fifty pound bill of exchange which I duly received.

We hear Carthagene is taken.

Mr. Wallis is dead. Capt. Norberry was lately killed in a duel by Capt. Dobrusee, whose life was despaired of by the wounds he received. He is much blamed for quarreling with such a brawling man as Norberry who was disregarded by every body. Norberry has a wife and 3 or 4 children in very bad circumstances to lament his rashness.

Mama tenders her affections and Polly joins in duty with.

My Dr. Papa

Your most obedient and ever devoted daughter

E. Lucas

Harriott Horry Ravenel, *Eliza Pinckney* (New York: 1896), 5-6, 8-10.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Jonathan Edwards Revives Enfield, Connecticut, 1741

Jonathan Edwards catalyzed the revivals known as the Great Awakening. While Edwards was not the most prolific revivalist of the era—that honor belonged to George Whitefield—he did deliver the most famous sermon of the eighteenth century, commonly called “Sinners in the Hands of Angry God.” This excerpt is drawn from the final portion of the sermon, known as the application, where hearers were called to take action.

That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone is extended abroad under you. *There* is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell’s wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of: there is nothing between you and hell but the air; ’tis only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but don’t see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it. . . .

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes as the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet ’tis nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment; ’tis to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep: and there is no other reason to be given why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God’s hand has held you up; there is no other reason to be given why you han’t gone to hell since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship: yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you don’t this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: ’tis a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell; you hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of

wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment...

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies that he will inflict wrath without any pity... you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel but only to be filled full of wrath: God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that 'tis said he will only laugh and mock (*Proverbs 1:25-32*)...

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath, and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation, that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old. There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have: it may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in hell? And it would be a wonder if some that are now present, should not be in hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some person that now sits here in some seat of this meeting house in health, and quiet and secure, should be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you that finally continue in a natural condition, that shall keep out of hell longest, will be there in a little time! your damnation don't slumber; it will come swiftly, and in all probability very suddenly upon many of you. You have reason to wonder, that you are not already in hell. 'Tis doubtless the case of some that heretofore you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you: their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in the land of the living, and in the house of God, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned, hopeless souls give for one day's such opportunity as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has flung the door of mercy wide open, and stands in the door calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are in now an happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him that has loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as

precious as the souls of the people at Suffield,⁷ where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

... And you *children* that are unconverted, don't you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God that is now angry with you every day, and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let everyone that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's Word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, that is a day of such great favor to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others...

Therefore let everyone that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over great part of this congregation: let everyone fly out of Sodom. Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed [*Genesis 19:17*].

Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*, Harry S. Stout, ed. (Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, Vol. 22), 410-418.

[Available through The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University](#)

Samson Occom describes his conversion and ministry, 1768

Samson Occom was raised with the traditional spirituality of his Mobegan parents but converted to Christianity during the Great Awakening. He then studied for the ministry and became a missionary, minister, and teacher on Long Island, New York. Despite his successful ministry, Occom struggled to receive the same level of support as white missionaries.

When I was 16 years of age, we heard a Strange Rumor among the English, that there were Extraordinary Ministers Preaching from place to Place and a Strange Concern among the White People. This was in the Spring of the Year. But we Saw nothing of these things, till Some Time in the Summer, when Some Ministers began to visit us and Preach the Word of God; and the Common People all Came frequently and exhorted us to the things of God, which it pleased the Lord, as I humbly hope, to Bless and accompany with Divine Influence to the Conviction and Saving Conversion of a Number of us; amongst whom I was one that was impressed with the things we had heard. These Preachers did not only come to us, but we frequently went to their meetings and Churches. After I was awakened & converted, I went to all the meetings, I could come at; & Continued under Trouble of Mind about 6 months; at which time I began to Learn the English Letters; got me a Primer, and used to go to my English Neighbours frequently for Assistance in Reading, but went to no School. And when I was 17 years of age, I had, as I trust, a Discovery of the way of Salvation through Jesus Christ, and was enabled to put my trust in him alone for Life & Salvation.

From this Time the Distress and Burden of my mind was removed, and I found Serenity and Pleasure of Soul, in Serving God. By this time I just began to Read in the New Testament without Spelling,—and I had a Stronger Desire Still to Learn to read the Word of God, and at the Same Time had an uncommon Pity and Compassion to my Poor Brethren According to the Flesh. I used to wish I was capable of Instructing my poor Kindred. I used to think, if I Could once Learn to Read I would Instruct the poor Children in Reading,—and used frequently to talk with our Indians Concerning Religion. This continued till I was in my 19th year: by this Time I Could Read a little in the Bible. At this Time my Poor Mother was going to Lebanon, and having had Some Knowledge of Mr. Wheelock and hearing he had a Number of English youth under his Tuition, I had a great Inclination to go to him and be with him a week or a Fortnight, and Desired by Mother to Ask Mr. Wheelock whether he would take me a little while to Instruct me in Reading. Mother did so; and when She Came Back, She Said Mr. Wheelock wanted to See me as Soon as possible. So I went up, thinking I Should be back again in a few Days; when I got up there, he received me With kindness and Compassion and instead of Staying a Fortnight or 3 Weeks, I Spent 4 Years with him. — After I had been with him Some Time, he began to acquaint his Friends of my being with him, and of his Intentions of Educating me, and my Circumstances...

As soon as I left Mr. Wheelock, I endeavored to find Some Employ among the Indians... I kept School as I did before and Carried on the Religious Meetings as often as ever, and attended the Sick and their Funerals, and did what Writings they wanted, and often Sat as a

Judge to reconcile and Decide their Matters Between them, and had visitors of Indians from all Quarters....

My Method in the School was, as Soon as the Children got together, and took their proper Seats, I Prayed with them, then began to hear them. I generally began (after some of them Could Spell and Read,) With those that were yet in their Alphabets, So around, as they were properly Seated till I got through and I obliged them to Study their Books, and to help one another. When they could not make out a hard word they Brought it to me—and I usually heard them, in the Summer Season 8 Times a Day 4 in the morning, and in the afternoon. —In the Winter Season 6 Times a Day, As Soon as they could Spell, they were obliged to Spell whenever they wanted to go out. I concluded with Prayer; I generally heard my Evening Scholars 3 Times Round, And as they go out the School, every one, that Can Spell, is obliged to Spell a Word, and to go out Leisurely one after another....

I frequently Discussed or Exhorted my Scholars, in Religious matters.—My Method in our Religious Meetings was this; Sabbath Morning we Assemble together about 10 o’C and begin with Singing; we generally Sung Dr. Watt’s Psalms or Hymns. I distinctly read the Psalm or Hymn first, and then gave the meaning of it to them, after that Sing, then Pray, and Sing again after Prayer. Then proceed to Read from Suitable portion of Scripture, and so Just give the plain Sense of it in Familiar Discourse and apply it to them. So continued with Prayer and Singing. In the after Noon and Evening we Proceed in the Same Manner, and so in Wednesday Evening. Some Time after Mr. Horton left these Indians, there was a remarkable revival of religion among these Indians and many were hopefully converted to the Saving knowledge of God in Jesus.

... Now you See what difference they made between me and other missionaries; they gave me 180 Pounds for 12 years Service, which they gave for one years Services in another Mission, — In my Service (I speak like a fool, but I am Constrained) I was my own Interpreter. I both a School master and Minister to the Indians, yea I was their Ear, Eye & Hand, as Well as Mouth. I leave it with the World, as wicked as it is, to Judge whether I ought not to have had half as much...

So I am ready to Say, they have used me thus, because I Can’t Influence the Indians so well as other missionaries; but I can assure them I have endeavoured to teach them as well as I know how;—but I must Say, I believe it is because I am a poor Indian.” I Can’t help that God has made me So; I did not make myself so, —

Sansom Occom, *A Short Narrative of My Life* (Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1982), 12–18.

[Available from Dartmouth College](#)

Extracts from Gibson Clough's War Journal, 1759

Gibson Clough enlisted in the militia during the Seven Years War. His diary shows the experience of soldiers in the conflict, but also reveals the brutal discipline of the British regular army. Soldiers like Clough ended their term of service with pride in their role defending the glory of Britain but also suspicion of the rigid British military.

I was born in Salem in New England in ye year 1738, in June the 22 and I lived with my father until that I was almost one and twenty years of age and I was brought up very carefully and tenderly by my parents and they to me gave common learning as is usual for parents to do by children under their Care and as there had been war between the Crown of England and France by which reason men was very hard for to be raised in New England, I then willingly enlisted in the service of my King and Country in the then intended expedition against Canada, in Capt. Andrew Giddings Company in a provincial Regiment Commanded by Coll Jonathan Bagley Esqr in the year 1759...

And so we stayed all winter, which was hard as we were only enlisted for six months by a proclamation issued forth by his Excellency Thomas Pownall ye Governor ; and as was said we were to be dismissed by the first of November or as much sooner as his majesty's service would admit....

Here begins the New Year 1700 or the second part of my journal, which I hope will be more entertaining than the first was to the reader.

January the 1st. Capt. Hannears died here in the night before in which the year ended 1759, and now the year begins; but God only knows who will see the end, for death spares not any.

2. We turned out for to learn the funeral exercise or the reversing of the fire lock, occasioned by the death of Capt. Hannears of Boston, who was the first officer of our Regiment that died here in this garrison of Louisburg.

4th. Capt. Hannears was interred here with great solemnity, having 48 men in turns to attend his funeral, with firing three vollies over his grave.

11th. One Hager of our Regiment was whipped thirty stripes for disobedience of orders.

19th. An escort went from here bound to Spanish River, consisting of 43 men, commanded by Lieutenant Henderson and Ensign Berry, one Sergeant and two Corporals. They went for to carry blankets to Capt. Davis' men, who were on command there, and cutting wood there for the garrison; and the escort went there and returned in nine days.

January 28th. A drummer belonging to Warburton's Regiment was shot for breaking into a house and stealing a box of Soap, and for other offences he had committed, and also a private Soldier was condemned to die with him; but after having come to the place of execution, he was reprieved by the intercession of one Capt. Johnson for him. The drummer's name was Conrey, and the other was Johnson, ye latter reprieved, also three more are to receive other punishment as whipping, the one is to have one thousand lashes, and the other two five hundred each. The aforesaid had their last trial at a general Court Martial on the 19th instant.

31st. As great a Snow Storm as I ever knew in my life, and thus ends the month with a cold storm and winter like weather, but I think for to take it in general it is as good weather as what we have in New England for the season of the year, and it is a warm winter.

February 6. A Corporal who belonged to Warburton's Regiment, who had stolen six shirts from his Captain, fearing it would be found out, went to a place called black rock, and there cut one of his arms to that degree, that what with the loss of blood and of cold he died there. But before he died, he pulled off his hat and coat and went down to the edge of the water, as it was thought with an intent of drowning himself and be carried off by it, but he died before the water name to him, so he was found and buried.

8. Mrs. Treawoue was buried here, a woman that belonged to our Regiment and to Capt. Blake's Company.

9. A schooner arrived here from Boston, but could not get in because of the ice in the harbor.

11. We have news by the aforesaid schooner that ye province had granted to each man that stayed this winter a bounty of four pounds for our winter service. There is a flying news here that there has been a fire in Boston, which burnt from the Town house to ye long Wharf.

14. One Alline belonging to our Company was buried.

18. Three regular drummers fell through the ice but were not drowned.

March 3d. A Lieutenant belonging to Warburton's regiment was interred here.

9. An escort of one Subaltern, two Sargeants, one Corporal, and 32 privates going in command of Lieut. Henderson to the grand parsuge, the march 150 miles and they are to bring in French prisoners if they find any; and a schooner arrived here from Marblehead, but last from Halifax, Benjamin Darling Captain.

19. One of the Artillery was whipped 200 stripes.

22. Two schooners arrived here, one from Ipswich and the other from Boston. The first says there is great talk of a Spanish war.

25. Lieut. Henderson gave the company a treat and enlisted three men for the ensuing campaign against Canada. Solomon Smith and Robert Pickett enlisted...

31. Rain and snow and warm, and thus the month ends as of old said “March, hack ham, comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb.”

April 1. I enlisted again for ye ensuing campaign against Canada.

3. I wrote a letter to my father. I also heard a death watch in the iron grate, but ye meaning I cannot tell, only I think some of my friends are dead at home.

15. A schooner arrived from Boston in four days and brings no news, only that there had been a fire in Boston which burned down 260 houses, which news we heard before.

22. The day was kept by all ye Englishmen in the garrison of ye three regular regiments, and 150 of them marched round the ramparts, with drums beating and colors flying, as it was St. George’s day.

26. Several vessels arrived from Boston and I received three letters from my father and one from John Ward the third. I was not well....

20 December. We make sail at 3 o’clock, and spake with a ship from London bound to Boston; they inform us of ye death of our Lord George the Second....

1st January, 1761. I arrive at Salem my native place, to my great joy and content, and thus I conclude my Journal, with my best wishes and good will to all brother soldiers.

Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, Volume III (Salem: 1861), 99-106, 195-201.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Pontiac Calls for War, 1763

Pontiac, an Ottawa war chief, drew on the teachings of the prophet Neolin to rally resistance to European powers. This passage includes Neolin's call that Native Americans abandon ways of life adapted after contact with Europeans.

I am the Master of Life, whom thou desirest to know and to whom thou wouldst speak. Listen well to what I am going to say to thee and all thy red brethren. I am he who made heaven and earth, the trees, lakes, rivers, all men, and all that thou seest, and all that thou hast seen on earth. Because . . . I love you, you must do what I say and [not do] what I hate. I do not like that you drink until you lose your reason, as you do; or that you fight with each other; or that you take two wives, or run after the wives of others; you do not well; I hate that. You must have but one wife, and keep her until death. When you are going to war, you juggle, join the medicine dance, and believe that I am speaking. You are mistaken, it is to Manitou to whom you speak; he is a bad spirit who whispers to you nothing but evil, and to whom you listen because you do not know me well. This land, where you live, I have made for you and not for others. How comes it that you suffer the whites on your lands? Can you not do without them? I know that those whom you call the children of your Great Father supply your wants, but if you were not bad, as you are, you would well do without them. You might live wholly as you did before you knew them. Before those whom you call your brothers come on your lands, did you not live by bow and arrow? You had no need of gun nor powder, nor the rest of their things, and nevertheless you caught animals to live and clothe yourselves with their skins, but when I saw that you inclined to the evil, I called back the animals into the depths of the woods, so that you had need of your brothers to have your wants supplied and I shall send back to you the animals to live on. I do not forbid you, for all that, to suffer amongst you the children of your father. I love them, they know me and pray to me, and I give them their necessities and all that they bring to you, but as regards those who have come to trouble your country, drive them out, make war on them. I love them not, they know me not, they are my enemies and the enemies of your brothers. Send them back to the country which I made for them. There let them remain.

Collections of the Pioneer Society of the State of Michigan together with Reports of County Pioneer Societies, Volume VIII, Second Edition (Lansing, MI: 1907), 270-271.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Alibamo Mingo, Choctaw leader, Reflects on the British and French, 1765

The end of the Seven Years War brought shockwaves throughout Native American communities. With the French removed from North America, their former Native American allies were forced to adapt quickly. In this document, a Choctaw leader expresses his concern over the new political reality.

When I was Young the White Men came amongst us bearing abundance along with them, I took them by the hand & have ever remained firm to my Engagements, in return all my wants & those of my Warriors & Wives & Children have been Bountifully Supplied. I now See another Race of White Men Come amongst us bearing the Same abundance, & I expect they will be equally Bountiful which must be done if they wish equally to gain the affection of my people.

I and my Men have used the Guns of France these Eighty Winters Back, I wish I was Young to try the English Guns & English Powder both of which I hope will flourish & rejoice the Heart of the Hunters thro' the Land and Cover the Nakedness of the Women.

With respect to the Land I was not Consulted in it, if I was to deliver my Sentiments evil disposed People might impute it to Motives very different from those which actuate me, it is true the Land belonged chiefly to those who have given it away; that the Words which were Spoken have been written with a Lasting Mark, the Superintendent marks every word after word as one would count Bullets so that no variation can happen, & therefore the words have been Spoken and the eternal marks traced I will not Say anything to contradict, but, on the Contrary Confirm the Cession which has been made. What I have now to Say on that head is, to wish that all the Land may be Settled in four years that I may See it myself before I die.

I Listened to all the parts of the Talks and Liked them exceeding well, except that part from the Superintendent, where he reported that those Medal Chiefs who did not behave well Should be broke & their Medals given to others. The Conversation I have held with Faver, in private, has rung every Night in my Ear, as I laid my Head on the bear Skin & as I have many Enemies in the Nation, I dreamed I should be the Person, which would break my heart in my Old Age, to Loose the Authority I have so long held.

I cannot imagine the Great King could send the Superintendent to deceive us. In case we deliver up our French Medals & Commissions we expect to receive as good in their place, and that we Should bear the Same Authority & be entitled to the Same presents, If you wish to Serve your Old Friends you may give New Medals & Commissions & presents, but the worthy cannot bear to be disgraced without a fault, Neither will the Generous Inflict a Punishment without a Crime.

There was one thing I would mention though' it cannot concern myself, & that is the Behavior of the traders towards our Women, I was told of old by the Creeks & Cherokees, wherever the English went they caused disturbances for they lived under no Government and paid no respect either to Wisdom or Station. I hoped for better things, that those Old Talks had no truth in them. One thing I must report which has happened within my own knowledge, that often when the Traders sent for a Basket of Bread & the Generous Indian sent his own wife to Supply their wants instead of taking the Bread out of the Basket they put their hand upon the Breast of their Wives which was not to be admitted, for the first maxim in our Language is that Death is preferable to disgrace.

I am not of opinion that in giving Land to the English, we deprive ourselves of the use of it, on the Contrary, I think we shall share it with them, as for Example the House I now Speak in was built by the White people on our Land yet it is divided between the White & the Red people. Therefore we need not be uneasy that the English Settle upon our Lands as by that means they can more easily Supply our wants.

Dunbar Rowland, ed. *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1763-1766, English Dominion, Letters and Enclosures to the Secretary of State from Major Robert Farmar and Governor George Johnstone, Volume I* (Nashville, TN: 1911), 240-241.

[Available through Google Books](#)

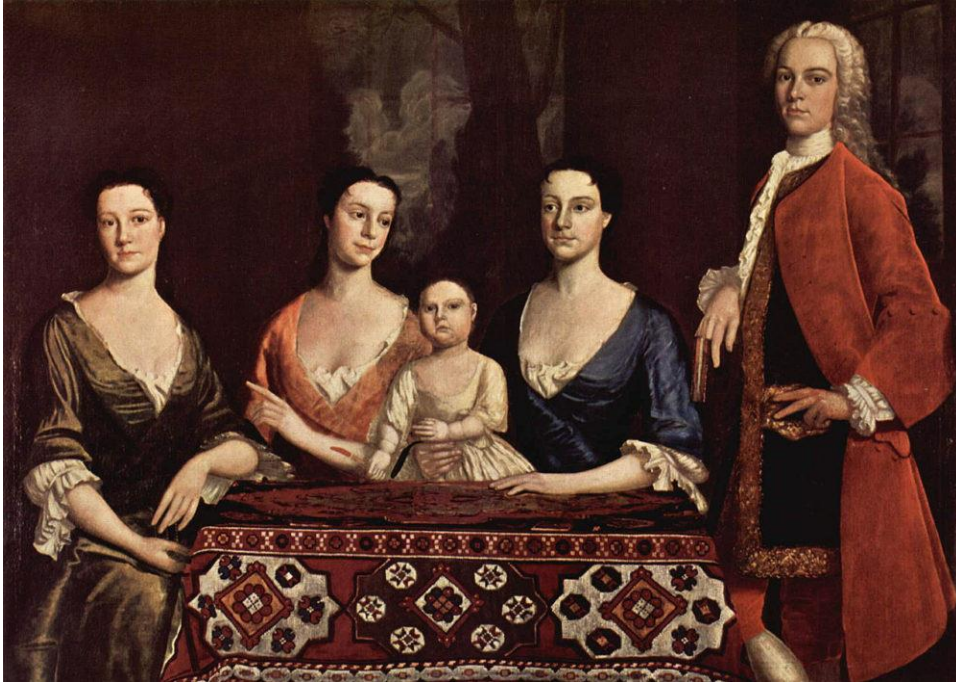
Blueprint and Photograph of Christ Church



Christ Church, Virginia, via [Library of Congress](#).

Religion played an important role in each of the British colonies – for different reasons. In Virginia, the Anglican church was the official religion of the colonial government and colonists had to attend or be fined, so churches like Christ Church became important sites for political, economic, and social activity that reinforced the dominance of the planter elite. Robert “King” Carter built this church on the site of an earlier one built by his father. The Carter tombs belong to Robert Carter and his first and second wives. The colonial road that stopped at the door of the church went directly to the Carter family estate. Pews corresponded with social status: the highest ranking member of the gentry sat in the pew before the altar, across from the pulpit. Poor whites sat at the back, and enslaved men and women who came to church would have stood or taken the seats closest to the door – cold in winter, hot in summer, and farthest from the preacher. Many churches eventually built separate gallery seating for the enslaved who attended services. These churches were criticized during the Great Awakening, particularly by Baptists, who preached the equality of souls and felt the Anglican church was lacking in religiosity.

Royall Family



Robert Feke, "Familienporträt des Isaac Royall," 1741, via [Wikimedia](#).

Colonial elites used clothing, houses, portraits, furniture, and manners to participate in a culture of gentility that they believed placed them on an equal footing with elites in England. Robert Feke's 1741 portrait of the Royall family portrays Isaac Royall Jr. at age 22, just two years after he inherited his father's estate, including the family mansion outside Boston, a sugar plantation on Antigua, and eighteen enslaved African Americans, which helped him become one of the wealthiest men in the colony of Massachusetts. He married Elizabeth McIntosh (wearing blue), aged fifteen at the time of her marriage in 1738, confirming his position among the colonial elite. Their eight-month-old daughter, Elizabeth, holds a coral teething stick with a gold and ivory handle (coral was traditionally believed to ward off evil spirits). Also pictured is Penelope Royall Vassall, Isaac's sister who married a Jamaican planter, and his sister-in-law, Mary McIntosh Palmer. Mary Palmer's pointed finger and Isaac Royall's hand on his hip were poses drawn from other major artistic works and were intended to convey their ease and refinement, while their silken clothes communicated wealth.

5. The American Revolution

Introduction

In 1763, nothing would have seemed as improbable as the American Revolution. And yet, in a little over a decade, American colonists would declare their independence and break away from the British Empire. Revolutionaries justified their new nation with radical new ideals that changed the course of history and sparked a global “age of revolution.” Men and women of all ranks contributed to the colonies’ most improbable victory, from the commoners protesting against the Stamp Act to the women who helped organize the boycotts to the Townshend duties; from the men, black and white, who fought in the army and the women who contributed to its support. Over time, the Revolution’s rhetoric of equality, as encapsulated in the Declaration of Independence, helped highlight inequalities and became a shared aspiration for future social and political movements. These sources explore the experiences of those who lived through this time of transformation and created a legacy for future generations of change-makers.

George R. T. Hewes, A Retrospect of the Boston Tea-party, 1834

George R.T. Hewes wrote the following reminiscence of the Boston Tea Party almost 61 years after it occurred. It is likely that his memories included more than a few stories he picked up well after 1773. Nonetheless Hewes provides a highly detailed account of this important event.

The tea destroyed was contained in three ships, laying near each other, at what was called at that time Griffin's wharf, and were surrounded by armed ships of war; the commanders of which had publicly declared, that if the rebels, as they were pleased to style the Bostonians, should not withdraw their opposition to the landing of the tea before a certain day, the 17th day of December, 1773, they should on that day force it on shore, under the cover of their cannon's mouth. On the day preceding the seventeenth, there was a meeting of the citizens of the county of Suffolk, convened at one of the churches in Boston, for the purpose of consulting on what measures might be considered expedient to prevent the landing of the tea, or secure the people from the collection of the duty. At that meeting a committee was appointed to wait on Governor Hutchinson, and request him to inform them whether he would take any measures to satisfy the people on the object of the meeting. To the first application of this committee, the governor told them he would give them a definite answer by five o'clock in the afternoon. At the hour appointed, the committee again repaired to the governor's house, and on inquiry found he had gone to his country seat at Milton, a distance of about six miles. When the committee returned and informed the meeting of the absence of the governor, there was a confused murmur among the members, and the meeting was immediately dissolved, many of them crying out, Let every man do his duty, and be true to his country; and there was a general huzza for Griffins wharf. It was now evening, and I immediately dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet, which I and my associates denominated the tomahawk, with which, and a club, after having painted my face and hands with coal dust in the shop of a blacksmith, I repaired to Griffins wharf, where the ships lay that contained the tea. When I first appeared in the street, after being thus disguised, I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and who fell in with me, and marched in order to the place of our destination. When we arrived at the wharf, there were three of our number who assumed an authority to direct our operations, to which we readily submitted. They divided us into three parties, for the purpose of boarding the three ships which contained the tea at the same time. The name of him who commanded the division to which I was assigned, was Leonard Pitt. The names of the other commanders I never knew. We were immediately ordered by the respective commanders to board all the ships at the same time, which we promptly obeyed. The commander of the division to which I belonged, as soon as we were on board the ship, appointed me boatswain, and ordered me to go to the captain and demand of him the keys to the hatches and a dozen candles. I made the demand accordingly, and the captain promptly replied, and delivered the articles; but requested me at the same time to do no

damage to the ship or rigging. We then were ordered by our commander to open the hatches, and take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard, and we immediately proceeded to execute his orders; first cutting and splitting the chests with our tomahawks, so as thoroughly to expose them to the effects of the water. In about three hours from the time we went on board, we had thus broken and thrown overboard every tea chest to be found in the ship; while those in the other ships were disposing of the tea in the same way, at the same time. We were surrounded by British armed ships, but no attempt was made to resist us. We then quietly retired to our several places of residence, without having any conversation with each other, or taking any measures to discover who were our associates; nor do I recollect of our having had the knowledge of the name of a single individual concerned in that affair, except that of Leonard Pitt, the commander of my division, who I have mentioned. There appeared to be an understanding that each individual should volunteer his services, keep his own secret, and risk the consequences for himself. No disorder took place during that transaction, and it was observed at that time, that the stillest night ensued that Boston had enjoyed for many months.

During the time we were throwing the tea overboard, there were several attempts made by some of the citizens of Boston and its vicinity, to carry off small quantities of it for their family use. To effect that object, they would watch their opportunity to snatch up a handful from the deck, where it became plentifully scattered, and put it into their pockets. One Captain O'Conner, whom I well knew, came on board for that purpose, and when he supposed he was not noticed, filled his pockets, and also the lining of his coat. But I had detected him, and gave information to the captain of what he was doing. We were ordered to take him into custody, and just as he was stepping from the vessel, I seized him by the skirt of his coat, and in attempting to pull him back, I tore it off; but springing forward, by a rapid effort, he made his escape. He had however to run a gauntlet through the crowd upon the wharf; each one, as he passed, giving him a kick or a stroke.

The next day we nailed the skirt of his coat, which I had pulled off, to the whipping post in Charlestown, the place of his residence, with a label upon it, commemorative of the occasion, which had thus subjected the proprietor to the popular indignation.

Another attempt was made to save a little tea from the ruins of the cargo, by a tall aged man, who wore a large cocked hat and white wig, which was fashionable at that time. He had slightly slipped a little into his pocket, but being detected, they seized him, and taking his hat and wig from his head, threw them, together with the tea, of which they had emptied his pockets, into the water. In consideration of his advanced age, he was permitted to escape, with now and then a slight kick.

The next morning, after we had cleared the ships of the tea, it was discovered that very considerable quantities of it was floating upon the surface of the water; and to prevent the possibility of any of its being saved for use, a number of small boats were manned by sailors and citizens, who rowed them into those parts of the harbor wherever the tea was visible, and by beating it with oars and paddles, so thoroughly drenched it, as to render its entire destruction inevitable.

George R. T. Hewes, *A Retrospect of the Boston Tea-party, with a Memoir of George R.T. Hewes* (New York: 1834), 37-41.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Thomas Paine Calls for American independence, 1776

Britons had long understood themselves as the freest people on earth, blessed with a limited monarchy and an enlightened parliament. Paine's pamphlet offered a very different portrayal of the British government. His criticisms swept across the North American continent and generated widespread support for American independence.

Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not YET sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing WRONG, gives it a superficial appearance of being RIGHT, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason. As a long and violent abuse of power, is generally the Means of calling the right of it in question (and in Matters too which might never have been thought of, had not the Sufferers been aggravated into the inquiry) and as the King of England hath undertaken in his OWN RIGHT, to support the Parliament in what he calls THEIRS, and as the good people of this country are grievously oppressed by the combination, they have an undoubted privilege to inquire into the pretensions of both, and equally to reject the usurpation of either. In the following sheets, the author hath studiously avoided every thing which is personal among ourselves. Compliments as well as censure to individuals make no part thereof. The wise, and the worthy, need not the triumph of a pamphlet; and those whose sentiments are injudicious, or unfriendly, will cease of themselves unless too much pains are bestowed upon their conversion. The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested. The laying a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the natural rights of all Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling; of which Class, regardless of Party Censure, is the AUTHOR...

Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil...

MANKIND being originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance: the distinctions of rich and poor may in a great measure be accounted for, and that without having recourse to the harsh ill-sounding names of oppression and avarice. Oppression is often the CONSEQUENCE, but seldom or never the MEANS of riches; and tho' avarice will preserve a man from being necessitously poor, it generally makes him too timorous to be wealthy.

But there is another and great distinction for which no truly natural or religious reason can be assigned, and that is the distinction of men into KINGS and SUBJECTS. Male and

female are the distinctions of nature, good and bad the distinctions of Heaven; but how a race of men came into the world so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth inquiring into, and whether they are the means of happiness or of misery to mankind.

In the early ages of the world, according to the scripture chronology there were no kings; the consequence of which was, there were no wars; it is the pride of kings which throws mankind into confusion. Holland, without a king hath enjoyed more peace for this last century than any of the monarchical governments in Europe. Antiquity favors the same remark; for the quiet and rural lives of the first Patriarchs have a snappy something in them, which vanishes when we come to the history of Jewish royalty.

Government by kings was first introduced into the world by the Heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom. It was the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry. The Heathens paid divine honors to their deceased kings, and the Christian World hath improved on the plan by doing the same to their living ones. How impious is the title of sacred Majesty applied to a worm, who in the midst of his splendor is crumbling into dust!..

To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary succession; and as the first is a degradation and lessening of ourselves, so the second, claimed as a matter of right, is an insult and imposition on posterity. For all men being originally equals, no one by birth could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others for ever, and tho' himself might deserve some decent degree of honors of his contemporaries, yet his descendants might be far too unworthy to inherit them. One of the strongest natural proofs of the folly of hereditary right in Kings, is that nature disapproves it, otherwise she would not so frequently turn it into ridicule, by giving mankind an ASS FOR A LION....

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. — Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Project Gutenberg EBook: June 2008)

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Declaration of Independence, 1776

It is hard to overstate the significance of the Declaration of Independence. Designed as a measured justification for the severing of ties with Britain, the document has also functioned as a transformative piece of political philosophy. Most of the conflicts of American history from this point forward emerged from attempts to understand and implement what it means to believe "all men are created equal."

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

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 form, 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 all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. 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 usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless 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 inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing 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 for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish

and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

The 56 signatures on the Declaration appear in the positions indicated:

Column 1

Georgia:

Button Gwinnett

Lyman Hall

George Walton

Column 2

North Carolina:

William Hooper

Joseph Hewes

John Penn

South Carolina:

Edward Rutledge

Thomas Heyward, Jr.

Thomas Lynch, Jr.

Arthur Middleton

Column 3

Massachusetts:

John Hancock

Maryland:

Samuel Chase

William Paca

Thomas Stone

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia:

George Wythe

Richard Henry Lee

Thomas Jefferson

Benjamin Harrison

Thomas Nelson, Jr.

Francis Lightfoot Lee

Carter Braxton

Column 4

Pennsylvania:
Robert Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin
John Morton
George Clymer
James Smith
George Taylor
James Wilson
George Ross
Delaware:
Caesar Rodney
George Read
Thomas McKean
Column 5
New York:
William Floyd
Philip Livingston
Francis Lewis
Lewis Morris
New Jersey:
Richard Stockton
John Witherspoon
Francis Hopkinson
John Hart
Abraham Clark
Column 6
New Hampshire:
Josiah Bartlett
William Whipple
Massachusetts:
Samuel Adams
John Adams
Robert Treat Paine
Elbridge Gerry
Rhode Island:
Stephen Hopkins
William Ellery
Connecticut:
Roger Sherman
Samuel Huntington
William Williams
Oliver Wolcott
New Hampshire:

Matthew Thornton

Engrossed copy of the Declaration of Independence, August 2, 1776; Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

[Available through the National Archives and Records Administration](#)

Women in South Carolina Experience Occupation, 1780

The British faced the difficult task of fighting a war without pushing more colonists into the hands of the revolutionaries. As a result, the Revolutionary War included little direct attacks on civilians, but that does not mean that civilians did not suffer. The following account from Eliza Wilkinson describes the stress faced by non-combatants who had to face the British army.

On the second of June, two men belonging to the enemy, rode up to the house, and asked many questions, saying that Colonel M'Girth and his soldiers might be presently looked for, and that the inmates could expect no mercy. The family remained in a state of cruel suspense for many hours...

I had no time for thought – they were up to the house – entered with drawn swords and pistols in their hands: indeed they rushed in in the most furious manner, crying out, ‘Where are these women rebels?’ That was the first salutation! The moment they espied us, off went our caps. (I always heard say none but women pulled caps!) And for what, think you? Why, only to get a paltry stone and wax pin, which kept them on our heads; at the same time uttering the most abusive language imaginable, and making as if they would hew us to pieces with their swords. But it is not in my power to describe the scene: it was terrible to the last degree; and what augmented it, they had several armed negroes with them, who threatened and abused us greatly. They then began to plunder the house of every thing they thought valuable or worth taking; our trunks were split to pieces, and each mean, pitiful wretch crammed his bosom with the contents, which were our apparel, &c...

This outrage was followed by a visit from M'Girth's men, who treated the ladies with more civility; one of them promising to make a report at camp of the usage they had received. It was little consolation, however, to know that the robbers would probably be punished. The others, who professed so much feeling for the fair, were not content without their share of plunder, though more polite in the manner of taking it.” While the British soldiers were talking to us, some of the silent ones withdrew, and presently laid siege to a beehive, which they soon brought to terms. The others perceiving it, cried out, ‘Hand the ladies a plate of honey.’ This was immediately done with officious haste, no doubt thinking they were very generous in treating us with our own. There were a few horses feeding in the pasture. They had them driven up. ‘Ladies, do either of you own these horses?’ ‘No; they partly belonged to father and Mr. Smilie!’ ‘Well, ladies, as they are not your property, we will take them!’ “

They asked the distance to the other settlements; and the females begged that forbearance might be shown to the aged father. He was visited the same day by another body of troops, who abused him and plundered the house. “One came to search mother's pockets, too, but she resolutely threw his hand aside. ‘if you must see what's in my pocket, I'll show you myself;’ and she took out a threadcase, which had thread, needles, pins, tape, &c. The mean

wretch took it from her.” . . . “After drinking all the wine, rum, &c., they could find, and inviting the negroes they had with them, who were very insolent, to do the same, they went to their horses, and would shake hands with father and mother before their departure. Fine amends, to be sure!”

After such unwelcome visitors, it is not surprising that the unprotected women could not eat or sleep in peace. They lay in their clothes every night, alarmed by the least noise; while the days were spent in anxiety and melancholy. . .

The siege and capitulation of Charleston brought the evils under which the land had groaned, to their height. The hardships endured by those within the beleaguered city – the gloomy resignation of hope – the submission to inevitable misfortune, have been described by abler chroniclers.

Elizabeth Ellet, *The Women of the American Revolution, Volume 1* (New York: 1819), 225-232.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Oneida Declaration of Neutrality, 1775

The Oneida nation, one of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), issued a formal declaration of neutrality on June 19, 1775 to the governor of Connecticut after the imperial crisis between Great Britain and their North American colonies erupted into violence. This declaration hints at the Oneida conceptions of their own sovereignty among the Six Nations confederacy, the independence of other Native American nations, and how the Oneida understand the conflict as a war “between two brothers.” Samuel Kirkland, a missionary living in Iroquois country, interpreted and transcribed the Oneida’s words and sent them to Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut.

A Speech of the Chiefs and Warriors of the Oneida Tribe of Indians, to the four New-England Provinces, directed to Governour Trumbull; and by him to be communicated:

As our younger brothers of the New-England Indians, (who have settled in our vicinity) are now going down to visit their friends, and to move up parts of their families that were left behind, with this belt by them, we open the road wide, clearing it of all obstacles, that they may visit their friends and return to their settlements here in peace.

We Oneidas are induced to this measure on account of the disagreeable situation of affairs that way; and we hope, by the help of God, that they may go and return in peace. We earnestly recommend them to your charity through their long journey.

Now we more immediately address you, our brother, the Governor and the Chiefs of New-England.

Brothers! We have heard of the unhappy differences and great contention betwixt you and old England. We wonder greatly, and are troubled in our minds.

Brothers! Possess your minds in peace respecting us Indians. We cannot intermeddle in this dispute between two brothers. The quarrel seems to be unnatural; you are two brothers of one blood. We are unwilling to join one other side in such a contest, for we bear an equal affection to both of you, Old and New-England. Should the great King of England apply to us for our aid, we shall deny him. If the Colonies apply, we will refuse. The present situation of you two brothers is new and strangetous. We Indians can not find nor recollect in the traditions of our ancestors the like case or a similar instance.

Brothers! For these reasons possess your minds in peace, and taken umbrage that we Indians refuse joining in the contest; we are for peace.

Brothers! Was it an alien, a foreign Nation, which struck you, we should look into the matter. We hope, through the wise government and good pleasure of God, your distresses may soon be removed, and the dark cloud be dispersed.

Brothers! As we have declared for peace, we desire you will not apply to our Indian brethren in New-England for their assistance. Let us Indians be all of one mind, and live in peace with one another, and you white people settle your own disputes betwixt yourselves.

Brothers! We have now declared our minds; please write to us that we may know yours. We, the sachems, warriors, and female governesses of Oneida, send our love to you, brother Governour, and all the other chiefs in New-England.

Signed by the Chief Warriors of the Oneida: William Sunoghsis, Viklasha Watshaleagh, William Kanaghquassea, Peter Thayehcase, Germine Tegayavher, Nickhes Ahsechose, Thomas Yoghtanawca, Adam Ohonwano, Quedellis Agwerondongwas, Handerschiko Tegahpreahdyen, John Skeanender, Thomas Teorddeatha.

Caughnawaga, June 19, 1775.

Interpreted and wrote by Samuel Kirkland, Missionary.

American archives : consisting of a collection of authentick records, state papers, debates, and letters and other notices of publick affairs, the whole forming a documentary history of the origin and progress of the North American colonies; of the causes and accomplishment of the American revolution; and of the Constitution of government for the United States, to the final ratification thereof..., Peter Force, ed. (Washington: M. St. Claire Clark and Peter Force, 1837), 1116-1117.

[Available from the Internet Archive](#)

Boston King recalls fighting for the British and securing his freedom, 1798

Boston King was born into slavery in South Carolina in 1760. He escaped to the British Army during their invasion of South Carolina in 1780. He served as a Loyalist in the British Army, and participated in several important battles. Although captured, and once again enslaved by the Americans, King was able to escape to the British again, who secured his freedom by sending him and other Black Loyalists to Canada. Many Black colonists sought freedom by joining with the British, with estimates as high as 5,000. King later became a missionary and one of the first Black Canadian settlers of Sierra Leone in West Africa.

To escape [a neighboring enslaver's] cruelty, I determined to go Charles-Town, and throw myself into the hands of the English. They received me readily, and I began to feel the happiness of liberty, of which I knew nothing before, altho' I was much grieved at first, to be obliged to leave my friends, and reside among strangers. In this situation I was seized with the small-pox, and suffered great hardships; for all the Blacks affected with that disease, were ordered to be carried a mile from the camp, lest the soldiers should be infected, and disabled from marching. This was a grievous circumstance to me and many others. We lay sometimes a whole day without any thing to eat or drink; but Providence sent a man, who belonged to the York volunteers whom I was acquainted with, to my relief. He brought me such things a I stood in need of; and by the blessing of the Lord I began to recover...

Three weeks after, our Light-horse went to the Island... our situation was very precarious; and we expected to be made prisoners every day; for the Americans had 1600 men, not far off; whereas our whole number amounted only to 250: But there were 1200 English about 30 miles off; only we knew not how to inform them of our danger... Our commander at length determined to send me with a letter, promising me great rewards, if I was successful in the business, I refused going on horse-back, and set off on foot about 3 o'clock in the afternoon... As soon as he knew that I had brought an express from Nelson's-ferry, he received me with great kindness, and expressed his approbation of my courage and conduct in this dangerous business. Next morning, Colonel Small gave me three shillings, and many fine promises, which were all that I ever received for this service from him. However he sent 600 men to relieve the troops at Nelson's-ferry.

Soon after I went to Charles-Town, and entered on board a man of war. As we were going to Chesapeake Bay, we were at the taking of a rich prize. We stayed in the bay two days, and then sailed for New-York, where I went on shore. Here I endeavoured to follow my trade, but for want of tools was obliged to relinquish it, and enter into service. But the wages were so low that I was not able to keep myself in clothes, so that I was under the necessity of leaving my master and going to another. I stayed with him four months, but he never paid me, and I was obliged to leave him also, and work about the town until I was married. A year after I was taken very ill, but the Lord raised me up again in about five weeks. I then went out in a pilot boat... we were taken by an American whale-boat... my mind was sorely distressed at the thought of being again reduced to slavery, and separated from my wife and family; and at the same time it was exceeding difficult to escape from my bondage...

... As I was at prayer on Sunday evening, I thought the Lord heard me, and would mercifully deliver me. Therefore putting my confidence in him, about one o'clock in the morning I went down to the river side, and found the guards were either asleep or in the tavern. I instantly entered into the river, but when I was a little distance from the opposite shore, I heard the sentinels disputing among themselves: One said "I am sure I saw a man cross the river." Another replied, "There is no such thing." It seems they were afraid to fire at me, or make an alarm, lest they should be punished for their negligence....

When I arrived at New-York, my friends rejoiced to see me once more restored to liberty... in 1783) the horrors and devastation of war happily terminated, and peace was restored between America and Great Britain, which diffused universal joy among all parties, except us, who had escaped from slavery and taken refuge in the English army; for a report prevailed at New-York, that all the slaves, in number 2000, were to be delivered up to their masters, altho' some of them had been three or four years among the English. This dreadful rumour filled us all with inexpressible anguish and terror, especially when we saw our old masters coming from Virginia, North-Carolina, and other parts, and seizing upon their slaves in the streets of New-York, or even dragging them out of their beds. Many of the slaves had very cruel masters, so that the thoughts of returning home with them embittered life to us. For some days we lost our appetite for food, and sleep departed from our eyes. The English had compassion upon us in the day of distress, and issued out a Proclamation, importing, That all slaves should be free, who had taken refuge in the British lines, and claimed the sanction and privileges of the Proclamations respecting the security and protection of Negroes. In consequence of this, each of us received a certificate from the commanding officer at New-York, which dispelled all our fears, and filled us with joy and gratitude. Soon after, ships were fitted out, and furnished with every necessary for conveying us to Nova Scotia. We arrived at Burch Town in the month of August, where we all safely landed. Every family had a lot of land, and we exerted all our strength in order to build comfortable huts before the cold weather set in.

Boston King, "Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, a Black Preacher," *The Methodist Magazine* (March 1798, April 1798).

[Available through Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University](#)

Abigail and John Adams Converse on Women's Rights, 1776

The American Revolution invited a reconsideration of all social inequalities. Abigail Adams, in this letter to her husband John Adams, asked her husband to "remember the ladies" in any new laws he may create. In his reply, John Adams treated this sentiment as a joke, demonstrating the limits of revolutionary liberty.

Abigail Adams letter to John Adams

Braintree March 31 1776

I wish you would ever write me a Letter half as long as I write you; and tell me if you may where your Fleet are gone? What sort of Defence Virginia can make against our common Enemy? Whether it is so situated as to make an able Defence? Are not the Gentry Lords and the common people vassals, are they not like the uncivilized Natives Brittain represents us to be? I hope their Riffel Men who have shewen themselves very savage and even Blood thirsty; are not a specimen of the Generality of the people.

I am willing to allow the Colony great merit for having produced a Washington but they have been shamefully duped by a Dunmore.

I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be Equally Strong in the Breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow Creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain that it is not founded upon that generous and christian principal of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us. . . .

I long to hear that you have declared an independancy—and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the

Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings

placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

April 5

Not having an opportunity of sending this I shall add a few lines more; tho not with a heart so gay. I have been attending the sick chamber of our Neighbour Trot whose affliction I most sensibly feel but cannot describe, striped of two lovely children in one week. Gorge the Eldest died on wednesday and Billy the youngest on fryday, with the Canker fever, a terrible disorder so much like the thr[o]at distemper, that it differs but little from it. Betsy Cranch has been very bad, but upon the recovery. Becky Peck they do not expect will live out the day. Many grown person[s] are now sick with it, in this [street?] 5. It rages much in other Towns. The Mumps too are very frequent. Isaac is now confined with it. Our own little flock are yet well. My Heart trembles with anxiety for them. God preserve them.

I want to hear much oftener from you than I do. March 8 was the last date of any that I have yet had.—You inquire of whether I am making Salt peter. I have not yet attempted it, but after Soap making believe I shall make the experiment. I find as much as I can do to manufacture cloathing for my family which would else be Naked. I know of but one person in this part of the Town who has made any, that is Mr. Tertias Bass as he is calld who has got very near an hundred weight which has been found to be very good. I have heard of some others in the other parishes. Mr. Reed of Weymouth has been applied to, to go to Andover to the mills which are now at work, and has gone. I have lately seen a small Manuscrip de[s]cribing the proportions for the various sorts of powder, fit for cannon, small arms and pistols. If it would be of any Service your way I will get it transcribed and send it to you.—Every one of your Friend[s] send their Regards, and all the little ones. Your Brothers youngest child lies bad with convulsion fitts. Adieu. I need not say how much I am Your ever faithfull Friend.

John Adams to Abigail Adams (in reply to her March 31 letter):

Ap. 14, 1776

As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government every where. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient — that schools and Colledges were grown turbulent — that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters. But your Letter was the first Intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerfull than all the rest were grown discontented. — This is rather too coarse a Compliment but you are so saucy, I wont blot it out.

Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Altho they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full

Latitude. We are obliged to go fair, and softly, and in Practice you know We are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would compleatly subject Us to the Despotism of the Peticoat, I hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight. I am sure every good Politician would plot, as long as he would against Despotism, Empire, Monarchy, Aristocracy, Oligarchy, or Ochlocracy. — A fine Story indeed. I begin to think the Ministry as deep as they are wicked. After stirring up Tories, Landjobbers, Trimmers, Bigots, Canadians, Indians, Negroes, Hanoverians, Hessians, Russians, Irish Roman Catholicks, Scotch Renegadoes, at last they have stimulated the to demand new Priviledges and threaten to rebel.

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March – 5 April 1776 [electronic edition]. Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive. Massachusetts Historical Society.

Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 April 1776 [electronic edition]. Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive. Massachusetts Historical Society.

[Available through the Massachusetts Historical Society](#)

American Revolution Cartoon



J. Barrow, "The British Lion engaging Four Powers," 1782, via [National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London](https://www.nationalmaritimemuseum.org.uk/collections/objects/1782-01).

Political cartoons provide insight into public opinion and the decisions made by politicians. Cartoons became an important medium for voicing criticism and dissent during the American Revolution. In this 1782 cartoon, the British lion faces a spaniel (Spain), a rooster (France), a rattlesnake (America), and a pug dog (Netherlands). Though the caption predicts Britain's success, it illustrates that Britain faced challenges—and therefore drains on their military and treasury—from more than just the American rebels.

Drawing of Uniforms of the American Revolution



Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, "American soldiers at the siege of Yorktown," 1781, via [Wikimedia](#).

American soldiers came from a variety of backgrounds and had numerous reasons for fighting with the American army. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine DeVerger, a French sublieutenant at the Battle of Yorktown, painted this watercolor soon after that battle and chose to depict four men in men military dress: an African American soldier from the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment, a man in the homespun of the militia, another wearing the common "hunting shirt" of the frontier, and the French soldier on the end.

6. A New Nation

Introduction

A grand debate over political power engulfed the young United States. The Constitution ensured that there would be a strong federal government capable of taxing, waging war, and making law, but it could never resolve the young nation's many conflicting constituencies. The new nation was never as cohesive as its champions had hoped. Although the officials of the new federal government—and the people who supported it—placed great emphasis on unity and cooperation, the country was often anything but unified. As the 1790s progressed, Americans became bitterly divided over political parties and foreign wars. As party differences and regional quarrels tested the federal government, the new nation increasingly explored the limits of its democracy. Analyzing these sources allows us to see these national tensions and the limits to American democracy.

Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur Describes the American people, 1782

Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur was born in France, but relocated to the colony of New York and married a local woman named Mehitable Tippet. For a period of several years, de Crèvecoeur wrote about the people he encountered in North America. The resulting work was widely successful in Europe. In this passage, Crèvecoeur attempts to reflect on the difference between life in Europe and life in North America.

The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe. Some few towns excepted, we are all tillers of the earth, from Nova Scotia to West Florida. We are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory communicating with each other by means of good roads and navigable rivers, united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power, because they are equitable. We are all animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself. If he travels through our rural districts he views not the hostile castle, and the haughty mansion, contrasted with the clay-built hut and miserable cabin, where cattle and men help to keep each other warm, and dwell in meanness, smoke, and indigence. A pleasing uniformity of decent competence appears throughout our habitations. The meanest of our log-houses is a dry and comfortable habitation. Lawyer or merchant are the fairest titles our towns afford; that of a farmer is the only appellation of the rural inhabitants of our country. It must take some time ere he can reconcile himself to our dictionary, which is but short in words of dignity, and names of honour. (There, on a Sunday, he sees a congregation of respectable farmers and their wives, all clad in neat homespun, well mounted, or riding in their own humble waggons. There is not among them an esquire, saving the unlettered magistrate. There he sees a parson as simple as his flock, a farmer who does not riot on the labour of others. We have no princes, for whom we toil, starve, and bleed: we are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free; as he ought to be; nor is this pleasing equality so transitory as many others are. Many ages will not see the shores of our great lakes replenished with inland nations, nor the unknown bounds of North America entirely peopled. Who can tell how far it extends? Who can tell the millions of men whom it will feed and contain? for no European foot has as yet travelled half the extent of this mighty continent!

The next wish of this traveller will be to know whence came all these people? they are mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have arisen...

In this great American asylum, the poor of Europe have by some means met together, and in consequence of various causes; to what purpose should they ask one another what countrymen they are? Alas, two thirds of them had no country... Formerly they were not numbered in any civil lists of their country, except in those of the poor; here they rank as citizens. By what invisible power has this surprising metamorphosis been performed? By that

of the laws and that of their industry. The laws, the indulgent laws, protect them as they arrive, stamping on them the symbol of adoption; they receive ample rewards for their labours; these accumulated rewards procure them lands; those lands confer on them the title of freemen, and to that title every benefit is affixed which men can possibly require. This is the great operation daily performed by our laws. From whence proceed these laws? From our government. Whence the government? It is derived from the original genius and strong desire of the people ratified and confirmed by the crown...

What attachment can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing? The knowledge of the language, the love of a few kindred as poor as himself, were the only cords that tied him: his country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequence: *Ubi panis ibi patria*, is the motto of all emigrants. What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, self-interest; can it want a stronger allurements? Wives and children, who before in vain demanded of him a morsel of bread, now, fat and frolicsome, gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all; without any part being claimed, either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord. Here religion demands but little of him; a small voluntary salary to the minister, and gratitude to God; can he refuse these? The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence. —This is an American

Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: 1904), 49-56.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

A Confederation of Native peoples seek peace with the United States, 1786

In 1786, half a year before the Constitutional Convention, a collection of Native American leaders gathered on the banks of the Detroit River to offer a unified message to the Congress of the United States. Despite this proposal, American surveyors, settlers, and others continued to cross the Ohio River.

Speech of the United Indian Nations, at their Confederate Council held near the mouth of the Detroit River between the 28th November and 18th December, 1786

Present The Five Nations, the Hurons, Delewares, Shawnese, Ottawas, Chippewas, Pottawatomies, Twichtwees, Cherokees, and the Wabash Confederated

To the Congress of the United States of America

Brethren of the United States of America

It is now more than three years since peace was made between the King of Great Britain and you, but we the Indians, were disappointed finding ourselves not included in that peace according to our expectations, for we thought that it's conclusion would have promoted a friendship between the United States and Indians, & that we might enjoy that happiness that formerly subsisted between us and our elder brethren. We have received two very agreeable messages from the Thirteen United States. We also received a message from the King, whose war we were engaged in desiring us to remain quiet, which we accordingly complied with. During the time of this tranquility we were deliberating the best method we could to form a lasting reconciliation with the Thirteen United States. Pleased at the same time we thought that we were entering upon a reconciliation and friendship with a set of people born on the same continent with ourselves, certain that the quarrel between us was not of our own making. In the course of our Councils we imagined we hit upon an expedient that would promote a lasting Peace between us.

Brothers,

We still are of the same opinion as to the means which may tend to reconcile us to each other. We are sorry to find although we had the best thoughts in our minds during the before mentioned period mischief has nevertheless happened between you and us. We are still anxious of putting our plan of accommodation into execution and we shall briefly inform you of the means that seem most probable to us of effecting a firm and lasting peace and reconciliation. The first step towards which should in our opinion be that all treaties carried on with the United States on our part, should be with the general voice of the whole Confederacy and carried on in the most open manner without any restraint on either side. And especially as landed matters are often the subject of our councils with you, a matter of the greatest importance & of general concern to us in this case we hold in indispensably

necessary that any cession of our lands should be made in the most public manner & by the united voice of the confederacy. Holding all partial treaties as void and of no effect.

We think it is owing to you that the tranquility which since the peace between us has not lasted and that essential good, has been followed by mischief and confusion having managed everything respecting your own way. You kindled your council fires where you thought proper, without consulting us, at which you held separate treaties, and have entirely neglected our plan of having a general conference with the different nations of the confederacy. Had this happened we have reason to believe everything would now have been settled between us in a most friendly manner. We did everything in our power at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix to induce you to follow this Plan, as our real intentions were at that very time to promote peace and concord between us, and that we might look upon each other as friends, having given you no cause or provocation to be otherwise —

Brothers.

Notwithstanding the mischief that has happened we are still sincere in our wishes to have peace and tranquility established between us, earnestly hoping to find the same inclinations in you. We wish therefore you would take it into consideration and let us speak to you in the manner we proposed. Let us have a treaty with you early in the spring. Let us pursue reasonable steps. Let us meet halfway for our mutual convenience. We shall then bury in oblivion the misfortunes that have happened and meet each other on a footing of friendship.

Brothers,

We say let us meet halfway and let us pursue such steps as become upright and honest men, we beg that you will prevent your surveyors and other people from coming upon our side of the Ohio River. We have told you before we wished to pursue just steps, and we are determined they shall appear just and reasonable in the eyes of the world. This is the determination of all the chiefs of our Confederacy now assembled here, notwithstanding the accidents that have happened in our villages, even when in council, where several imminent chiefs were killed when absolutely engaged in promoting a peace with you the Thirteen United States.

Although then interrupted the chiefs here present still wish to meet you in the spring for the before mentioned good purpose, when we hope to speak to each other without either haughtiness or menace.

Brothers.

We again request of you in the most earnest manner, to order your surveyors and others that mark out land to cease from crossing the Ohio until we shall have spoken to you because the mischief that has recently happened has originated in that quarter, we shall likewise prevent our people from going over until that time.

Brothers.

It shall not be our fault if the plan which we have suggested to you should not be carried into execution. In that case the event will be very precarious, and if fresh ruptures ensue we hope to be able to exultate ourselves, and shall most assuredly with our limited force be obliged to defend those rights and privileges which have been transmitted to us.... And if we should be thereby reduced to misfortune, the world will pity us when they think of the amiable proposals we now make to prevent the unnecessary effusion of blood. These are our thoughts and firm resolves and we earnestly desire that you will transmit to us, as soon as possible, your answer, be it what it may.

Done at our Confederate Council Fire at the Huron Village, near the mouth of the Detroit River December 18, 1786

The Five Nations
Cherokee
Huron
Shawnee
Delaware
Ottawa
Pottawattomi
Twitchee
Joseph Brant
The Wabash Confederation

Speech of the United Indian Nations at their Confederate Council; 12/18/1786; Letters from Major General Henry Knox, Secretary at War; Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774 – 1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, Record Group 360; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

[Available from the National Archives](#)

Mary Smith Cranch comments on politics, 1786-87

In the aftermath of the Revolution, politics became a sport consumed by both men and women. In a series of letters sent to her sister, Mary Smith Cranch comments on a series of political events including the lack of support for diplomats, the circulation of paper or hard currency, legal reform, tariffs against imported tea tables, Shays rebellion, and the role of women in supporting the nation's interests.

On foreign policy, pending legislation, and women's political participation

I began to write you last night but my eyes were so poor that I could not continue it. I am now risen with the sun to thank you for the charming budget you have sent me. Such frequent communications shortens the idea of distance by many miles. I believe there have been letters constantly upon the water for each other ever since you left us. The idea of your returning soon to your dear friends here would be a much more joyful one if this country would suffer you first to do all the good your inclinations lead you too, and what they really wish you to do though they put it out of your power to do it. I hope they will come to their senses before winter. The court is adjourned to next January. The House have been disputing half this session whether we should have paper money, any lawyers or any court of common pleas. They voted finally, against paper money, sent up to the Senate a curious bill with regards to lawyers and the inferior court. A committee of five from the Senate have it to consider till next term. Mr. Cranch is one of them. Thus do they spend their time in curtailing tea tables, while they are suffering thousand to be wrested from them for want of giving ampler powers to Congress. It is dreadful to those who see the necessity of different measures to stand by and see such pursued as they fear will ruin their country. Ask no excuse my dear sister for writing politics. It would be such a want of public spirit not to feel interested in the welfare of our country as the wives of ministers and Senators ought to be ashamed off. Let no one say that the ladies are of no importance in the affairs of the nation. Persuade them to renounce all their luxuries and it would be found that they are, and believe me there is not a more effectual way to do it, than to make them acquainted with the causes of the distresses of their country. We do not want spirit. We only want to have it properly directed.

“Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, 10 July 1786,” Founders Online, National Archives.

[Available through the National Archives](#)

Her frustration with the Massachusetts state legislature

May 22, 1786

“Not one word of politics have I written nor shall I have time to do it now. If I had I would tell you what wonderful things the House are doing with the lawyers, the court of common pleas, &c, but the newspapers will do it for me. I am thankful there is a Senate as well as a House. What has Congress done? Anything to detain you in Europe. I love my country too

well to wish you to return yet, much as I wisht to see you. I did design to write to my dear niece by this vessel but fear I shall not have time. My sincere love and good wishes attend her and hers. 'Tis very late good night my ever dear Sister and believe me, yours affectionately.

“Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, 22 May 1786,” Founders Online, National Archives.

[Available through the National Archives](#)

Commenting on Shays' Rebellion

November 26, 1786

There is like to be a great disturbance in Cambridge at the sitting of the Court of Common Pleas this week. There is an express come to the governor to inform him that Shays, one of the heads of the incendiaries, (it is a many headed beast) is determined to come with eighteen hundred men to stop the court. There will be force sent to oppose them I suppose, and I wish there may not be blood shed. Are we not hastening fast to monarchy, to Anarchy? I am sure we are unless the people discover a better spirit soon. We are concerned for our children I assure you. The college company are wishing to be allowed to march out in defence of government but they will not be permitted. Mr Cranch will go tomorrow and take care of them, of our children I mean...

“Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, 26 November 1786,” Founders Online, National Archives

[Available through the National Archives](#)

Further thoughts on Shays' Rebellion

February 9, 1787

“If you have received our Letters by Captain Callahan, you will be in some measure prepared for the accounts which Captain Folger will bring you of the rebellion which exists in this state. It had arisen to such a height that it was necessary to oppose it by force of arms. We are always in this country to do things in an extraordinary manner. The militia were called for, but there was not a copper in the treasury to pay them or to support them upon their march. Town meetings were called in many places and promises were made them that if they would enlist, they would pay them and wait till the money could be collected from the public for their pay. And for their present support people contributed as they were able and in this manner in less than a week was collected an army of five thousand men who marched under the command of General Lincoln to Worcester to protect the court. The result you will see in the papers. The season has been stormy and severe our army have suffered greatly in some of their marches, especially last Saturday night. Many of them were badly froze, they marched thirty miles without stopping to refresh themselves in order to take Shays and his army by surprise. They took about 150 of them. Shays and a number with him scampered off and have gotten to New Hampshire.

Shays and his party are a poor deluded people. They have given much trouble and put us and themselves to much expense and have greatly added to the difficulties they complain off. I think you must have been very uneasy about us. Shays has not a small party in Braintree but not many in this parish. They want paper money to cheat with. They called a town meeting about a week since to forbid collection. Thayers attending the general court but they could not get a vote.

“Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, 9 February 1787,” Founders Online, National Archives.

[Available through the National Archives](#)

James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, 1785

Before the American Revolution, Virginia supported local Anglican churches through taxes. After the American Revolution, Virginia had to decide what to do with this policy. Some founding fathers, including Patrick Henry, wanted to equally distribute tax dollars to all churches. In this document, James Madison explains why he did not want any government money to support religious causes in Virginia.

To the Honorable the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia

A Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments

We the subscribers, citizens of the said Commonwealth, having taken into serious consideration, a Bill printed by order of the last Session of General Assembly, entitled “A Bill establishing a provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion,” and conceiving that the same if finally armed with the sanctions of a law, will be a dangerous abuse of power, are bound as faithful members of a free State to remonstrate against it, and to declare the reasons by which we are determined. We remonstrate against the said Bill,

1. Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, “that religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence...”
2. Because Religion be exempt from the authority of the Society at large, still less can it be subject to that of the Legislative Body...
3. Because it is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of Citizens, and one of the noblest characteristics of the late Revolution...
4. ... Whilst we assert for ourselves a freedom to embrace, to profess and to observe the Religion which we believe to be of divine origin, we cannot deny an equal freedom to those whose minds have not yet yielded to the evidence which has convinced us. If this freedom be abused, it is an offence against God, not against man: To God, therefore, not to man, must an account of it be rendered...
5. Because the Bill implies either that the Civil Magistrate is a competent Judge of Religious Truth; or that he may employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy. The first is an arrogant pretension falsified by the contradictory opinions of Rulers in all ages, and throughout the world: the second an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation...

6. Because the establishment proposed by the Bill is not requisite for the support of the Christian Religion. To say that it is, is a contradiction to the Christian Religion itself, for every page of it disavows a dependence on the powers of this world...
7. Because experience witnesseth that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation...
8. ... What influence in fact have ecclesiastical establishments had on Civil Society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of the Civil authority; in many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny: in no instance have they been seen the guardians of the liberties of the people...
9. Because the proposed establishment is a departure from the generous policy, which, offering an Asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every Nation and Religion, promised a lustre to our country, and an accession to the number of its citizens. What a melancholy mark is the Bill of sudden degeneracy?..
10. Because it will have a like tendency to banish our Citizens...
11. ... Torrents of blood have been split in the old world, by vain attempts of the secular arm, to extinguish Religious discord, by proscribing all difference in Religious opinion...
12. Because the policy of the Bill is adverse to the diffusion of the light of Christianity. The first wish of those who enjoy this precious gift ought to be that it may be imparted to the whole race of mankind. Compare the number of those who have as yet received it with the number still remaining under the dominion of false Religions; and how small is the former! Does the policy of the Bill tend to lessen the disproportion? No; it at once discourages those who are strangers to the light of revelation from coming into the Region of it; and countenances by example the nations who continue in darkness, in shutting out those who might convey it to them. Instead of Levelling as far as possible, every obstacle to the victorious progress of Truth, the Bill with an ignoble and unchristian timidity would circumscribe it with a wall of defence against the encroachments of error.
13. Because attempts to enforce by legal sanctions, acts obnoxious to go great a proportion of Citizens, tend to enervate the laws in general, and to slacken the bands of Society...
14. Because a measure of such singular magnitude and delicacy ought not to be imposed, without the clearest evidence that it is called for by a majority of citizens, and no satisfactory method is yet proposed by which the voice of the majority in this case may be determined, or its influence secured...

15. Because finally, “the equal right of every citizen to the free exercise of his Religion according to the dictates of conscience” is held by the same tenure with all our other rights...

We the Subscribers say, that the General Assembly of this Commonwealth have no such authority: And that no effort may be omitted on our part against so dangerous an usurpation, we oppose to it, this remonstrance; earnestly praying, as we are in duty bound, that the Supreme Lawgiver of the Universe, by illuminating those to whom it is addressed, may on the one hand, turn their Councils from every act which would affront his holy prerogative, or violate the trust committed to them: and on the other, guide them into every measure which may be worthy of his blessing, may redound to their own praise, and may establish more firmly the liberties, the prosperity and the happiness of the Commonwealth.

“Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments, [ca. 20 June] 1785,” Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-08-02-0163> [last update: 2015-06-29]). Source: *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 8, 10 March 1784-28 March 1786, ed. Robert A. Rutland and William M. E. Rachal (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 295–306.

[Available through Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration](#)

George Washington, “Farewell Address,” 1796

George Washington used his final public address as president to warn against what he understood as the two greatest dangers to American prosperity: political parties and foreign wars. Washington urged the American people to avoid political partisanship and entanglements with European wars.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me...

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me, on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection ...

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations, Northern and Southern, Atlantic and Western; whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views....

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty...

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to

cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened....

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course...

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?

Washington's Farewell Address, delivered September 17th, 1796 (New York: 1861), 5-6, 10-, 13-14, 16-17, 20-21.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Venture Smith, A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, 1798

Venture Smith's autobiography is one of the earliest slave narratives to circulate in the Atlantic World. Slave narratives grew into the most important genre of antislavery literature and bore testimony to the injustices of the slave system. Smith was unusually lucky in that he was able to purchase his freedom, but his story nonetheless reveals the hardships faced by even the most fortunate enslaved men and women.

... it was agreed that I should live with Col. Smith. This was the third time of my being sold, and I was then thirty-one years old. As I never had an opportunity of redeeming myself whilst I was owned by Miner, though he promised to give me a chance, I was then very ambitious of obtaining it. I asked my master one time if he would consent to have me purchase my freedom. He replied that he would. I was then very happy, knowing that I was at that time able to pay part of the purchase money, by means of the money which I some time since buried. This I took out of the earth and tendered to my master, having previously engaged a free negro man to take his security for it, as I was the property of my master, and therefore could not safely take his obligation myself. What was wanting in redeeming myself, my master agreed to wait on me for, until I could procure it for him. I still continued to work for Col. Smith. There was continually some interest accruing on my master's note to my friend the free negro man above named, which I received, and with some besides which I got by fishing, I laid out in land adjoining my old master Stanton's. By cultivating this land with the greatest diligence and economy, at times when my master did not require my labor, in two years I laid up ten pounds. This my friend tendered my master for myself, and received his note for it.

Being encouraged by the success which I had met in redeeming myself, I again solicited my master for a further chance of completing it. The chance for which I solicited him was that of going out to work the ensuing winter. He agreed to this on condition that I would give him one quarter of my earnings. On these terms I worked the following winter, and earned four pounds sixteen shillings, one quarter of which went to my master for the privilege, and the rest was paid him on my own account. This added to the other payments made up forty four pounds, eight shillings, which I had paid on my own account. I was then about thirty five years old.

The next summer I again desired he would give me a chance of going out to work. But he refused and answered that he must have my labor this summer, as he did not have it the past winter. I replied that I considered it as hard that I could not have a chance to work out when the season became advantageous, and that I must only be permitted to hire myself out in the poorest season of the year. He asked me after this what I would give him for the privilege per month. I replied that I would leave it wholly with his own generosity to determine what I should return him a month. Well then, said he, if so two pounds a month. I answered him that if that was the least he would take I would be contented.

Accordingly I hired myself out at Fisher's Island, and earned twenty pounds; thirteen pounds six shillings of which my master drew for the privilege, and the remainder I paid him for my freedom. This made fifty-one pounds two shillings which I paid him. In October following I went and wrought six months at Long Island. In that six month's time I cut and corded four hundred cords of wood, besides threshing out seventy-five bushels of grain, and received of my wages down only twenty pounds, which left remaining a larger sum. Whilst I was out that time, I took up on my wages only one pair of shoes. At night I lay on the hearth, with one coverlet over and another under me. I returned to my master and gave him what I received of my six months labor. This left only thirteen pounds eighteen shillings to make up the full sum for my redemption. My master liberated me, saying that I might pay what was behind if I could ever make it convenient, otherwise it would be well. The amount of the money which I had paid my master towards redeeming my time, was seventy-one pounds two shillings. The reason of my master for asking such an unreasonable price, was he said, to secure himself in case I should ever come to want. Being thirty-six years old, I left Col. Smith once for all. I had already been sold three different times, made considerable money with seemingly nothing to derive it from, been cheated out of a large sum of money, lost much by misfortunes, and paid an enormous sum for my freedom.

Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, A Native of Africa* (New London: 1798), 22-24.

[Available through Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

Susannah Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*, 1794

In Charlotte Temple, the first novel written in America, Susannah Rowson offered a cautionary tale of a woman deceived and then abandoned by a roguish man. Americans throughout the new nation read the book with rapt attention and many even traveled to New York City to visit the supposed grave of this fictional character.

“And am I indeed fallen so low,” said Charlotte, “as to be only pitied? Will the voice of approbation no more meet my ear? and shall I never again possess a friend, whose face will wear a smile of joy whenever I approach? Alas! how thoughtless, how dreadfully imprudent have I been! I know not which is most painful to endure, the sneer of contempt, or the glance of compassion, which is depicted in the various countenances of my own sex: they are both equally humiliating. Ah! my dear parents, could you now see the child of your affections, the daughter whom you so dearly loved, a poor solitary being, without society, here wearing out her heavy hours in deep regret and anguish of heart, no kind friend of her own sex to whom she can unbosom her griefs, no beloved mother, no woman of character will appear in my company, and low as your Charlotte is fallen, she cannot associate with infamy.”

These were the painful reflections which occupied the mind of Charlotte. Montraville had placed her in a small house a few miles from New-York: he gave her one female attendant, and supplied her with what money she wanted; but business and pleasure so entirely occupied his time, that he had little to devote to the woman, whom he had brought from all her connections, and robbed of innocence. Sometimes, indeed, he would steal out at the close of evening, and pass a few hours with her; and then so much was she attached to him, that all her sorrows were forgotten while blest with his society: she would enjoy a walk by moonlight, or sit by him in a little arbour at the bottom of the garden, and play on the harp, accompanying it with her plaintive, harmonious voice. But often, very often, did he promise to renew his visits, and, forgetful of his promise, leave her to mourn her disappointment. What painful hours of expectation would she pass! She would sit at a window which looked toward a field he used to cross, counting the minutes, and straining her eyes to catch the first glimpse of his person, till blinded with tears of disappointment, she would lean her head on her hands, and give free vent to her sorrows: then catching at some new hope, she would again renew her watchful position, till the shades of evening enveloped every object in a dusky cloud: she would then renew her complaints, and, with a heart bursting with disappointed love and wounded sensibility, retire to a bed which remorse had strewn with thorns, and court in vain that comforter of weary nature (who seldom visits the unhappy) to come and steep her senses in oblivion...

My dear Madam, contract not your brow into a frown of disapprobation. I mean not to extenuate the faults of those unhappy women who fall victims to guilt and folly; but surely, when we reflect how many errors we are ourselves subject to, how many secret faults lie hid in the recesses of our hearts, which we should blush to have brought into open day (and yet

those faults require the lenity and pity of a benevolent judge, or awful would be our prospect of futurity) I say, my dear Madam, when we consider this, we surely may pity the faults of others.

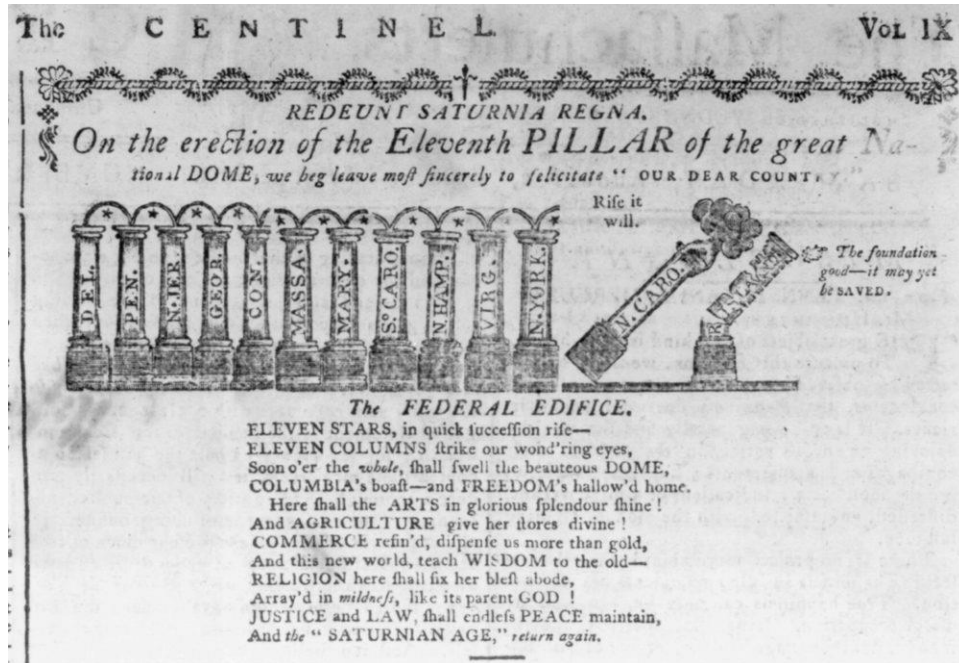
Believe me, many an unfortunate female, who has once strayed into the thorny paths of vice, would gladly return to virtue, was any generous friend to endeavour to raise and re-assure her; but alas! it cannot be, you say; the world would deride and scoff. Then let me tell you, Madam, 'tis a very unfeeling world, and does not deserve half the blessings which a bountiful Providence showers upon it.

Oh, thou benevolent giver of all good! how shall we erring mortals dare to look up to thy mercy in the great day of retribution, if we now uncharitably refuse to overlook the errors, or alleviate the miseries, of our fellow-creatures!

Susannah Rowson, *Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth* (Boston: 1824).

[Available through Google Books](#)

Constitutional Ratification Cartoon, 1789



"The Federal Pillars," from *The Massachusetts Centinel*, August 2, 1789, via [Library of Congress](#).

The *Massachusetts Centinel* ran a series of cartoons depicting the ratification of the Constitution. Each vertical pillar represents a state that has ratified the new government. In this cartoon, North Carolina's pillar is being guided into place (it would vote for ratification in November 1789). Rhode Island's pillar, however, is crumbling and shows the uncertainty of the vote there.

Anti-Thomas Jefferson Cartoon, 1797



"Providential Detection," 1797 via [American Antiquarian Society](#).

This image attacks Jefferson's support of the French Revolution and religious freedom. The Altar to "Gallic Despotism" mocks Jefferson's allegiance to the French. The letter, "To Mazzei," refers to a 1796 correspondence that criticized the Federalists and, by association, President Washington.

7. The Early Republic

Introduction

Thomas Jefferson's electoral victory over John Adams—and the larger victory of the Republicans over the Federalists—was but one of many changes in the early republic. The wealthy and the powerful, middling and poor whites, Native Americans, free and enslaved African Americans, influential and poor women: all demanded a voice in the new nation that Thomas Paine called an “asylum” for liberty. They would all, in their own way, lay claim to the ideals of freedom and equality heralded, if not fully realized, by the Revolution. These sources show these competing claims to freedom and reveal the competing visions for the new nation.

Letter of Cato and Petition by “the negroes who obtained freedom by the late act,” in *Postscript to the Freeman’s Journal*, September 21, 1781

The elimination of slavery in northern states like Pennsylvania was slow and hard-fought. A bill passed in 1780 began the slow process of eroding slavery in the state, but a proposal just one year later would have erased that bill and furthered the distance between slavery and freedom. The action of Black Philadelphians and others succeeded in defeating this measure. In this letter to the Black newspaper, Philadelphia Freedom’s Journal, a formerly enslaved man uses the rhetoric of the American Revolution to attack American slavery.

Mr. PRINTER.

I AM a poor negro, who with myself and children have had the good fortune to get my freedom, by means of an act of assembly passed on the first of March 1780, and should now with my family be as happy a set of people as any on the face of the earth, but I am told the assembly are going to pass a law to send us all back to our masters. Why dear Mr. Printer, this would be the cruelest act that ever a sett of worthy good gentlemen could be guilty of. To make a law to hang us all, would be *merciful*, when compared with this law; for many of our masters would treat us with unheard of barbarity, for daring to take the advantage (as we have done) of the law made in our favor.—Our lots in *slavery* were hard enough to bear: but having tasted the sweets of *freedom*, we should now be miserable indeed.—Surely no Christian gentlemen can be so cruel! I cannot believe they will pass such a law.—I have read the act which made me free, and I always read it with joy—and I always dwell with particular pleasure on the following words, spoken by the assembly in the top of the said law. “We esteem it a particular blessing granted to us, that we are enabled this day to add one more step to universal civilization, by removing as much as possible the sorrows of those, who have lived in *undeserved* bondage, and from which, by the assumed authority of the kings of Great-Britain, no effectual legal relief could be obtained.” See it was the king of Great-Britain that kept us in slavery before.—Now surely, after saying so, it cannot be possible for them to make slaves of us again—nobody, but the king of England can do it—and I sincerely pray, that he may never have it in his power.—It cannot be, that the assembly will take from us the liberty they have given, because a little further they go on and say, “we conceive ourselves, at this particular period, extraordinarily called upon, by the blessings which *we* have received, to make manifest the sincerity of our professions and to give a substantial proof of our gratitude.” If after all this, *we*, who by virtue of this very law (which has those very words in it which I have copied,) are now enjoying the sweets of that “substantial proof of gratitude” I say if we should be plunged back into slavery, what must we think of the meaning of all those words in the beginning of the said law, which seem to

be a kind of creed respecting slavery? But what is most serious than all, what will our great father think of such doings? But I pray that he may be pleased to tern the hearts of the honorable assembly from this cruel law; and that he will be pleased to make us poor blacks deserving of his mercies.

CATO

Letter of Cato and Petition by “the negroes who obtained freedom by the late act,” *Postscript to the Freeman’s Journal*, September 21, 1781 in Library Company of Philadelphia, “Black Founders: The Free Black Community in the Early Republic.”

[Available through the Library Company of Philadelphia](#)

Thomas Jefferson's Racism, 1788

American racism spread during the first decades after the American Revolution. Racial prejudice existed for centuries, but the belief that African-descended peoples were inherently and permanently inferior to Anglo-descended peoples developed sometime around the late eighteenth century. Writings such as this piece from Thomas Jefferson fostered faulty scientific reasoning to justify laws that protected slavery and white supremacy.

The first difference which strikes us is that of color. Whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the color of the blood, the color of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us. And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of color in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race? Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favor of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the orangutan for the black women over those of his own species. The circumstance of superior beauty, is thought worthy attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs, and other domestic animals; why not in that of man? Besides those of color, figure, and hair, there are other physical distinctions proving a difference of race. They have less hair on the face and body. They secrete less by the kidneys, and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odor. This greater degree of transpiration renders them more tolerant of heat, and less so of cold, than the whites. Perhaps too a difference of structure in the pulmonary apparatus, which a late ingenious experimentalist has discovered to be the principal regulator of animal heat, may have disabled them from extricating, in the act of inspiration, so much of that fluid from the outer air, or obliged them in expiration, to part with more of it. They seem to require less sleep. A black, after hard labor through the day, will be induced by the slightest amusements to sit up till midnight, or later, though knowing he must be out with the first dawn of the morning. They are at least as brave, and more adventuresome. But this may perhaps proceed from a want of forethought, which prevents their seeing a danger till it be present. When present, they do not go through it with more coolness or steadiness than the whites. They are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them. In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection. To this must be ascribed their disposition to sleep when abstracted from their diversions, and unemployed in labor. An animal whose body is at rest, and who does not reflect, must be disposed to sleep of course. Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to

me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous. It would be unfair to follow them to Africa for this investigation. We will consider them here, on the same stage with the whites, and where the facts are not apocryphal on which a judgment is to be formed. It will be right to make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move. Many millions of them have been brought to, and born in America. Most of them indeed have been confined to tillage, to their own homes, and their own society: yet many have been so situated, that they might have availed themselves of the conversation of their masters; many have been brought up to the handicraft arts, and from that circumstance have always been associated with the whites. Some have been liberally educated, and all have lived in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree, and have had before their eyes samples of the best works from abroad. The Indians, with no advantages of this kind, will often carve figures on their pipes not destitute of design and merit. They will crayon out an animal, a plant, or a country, so as to prove the existence of a germ in their minds which only wants cultivation. They astonish you with strokes of the most sublime oratory; such as prove their reason and sentiment strong, their imagination glowing and elevated. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never see even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture. In music they are more generally gifted than the whites with accurate ears for tune and time, and they have been found capable of imagining a small catch. Whether they will be equal to the composition of a more extensive run of melody, or of complicated harmony, is yet to be proved. Misery is often the parent of the most affecting touches in poetry. — Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry. Love is the peculiar oestrum of the poet. Their love is ardent, but it kindles the senses only, not the imagination...

... I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications. Will not a lover of natural history then, one who views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed them? This unfortunate difference of color, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Many of their advocates, while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature, are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty. Some of these, embarrassed by the question 'What further is to be done with them?' Join themselves in opposition with those who are actuated by sordid avarice only. Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Richmond: 1853), 149-152, 155.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Black scientist Benjamin Banneker demonstrates Black intelligence to Thomas Jefferson, 1791

Benjamin Banneker, a free Black American and largely self-taught astronomer and mathematician, wrote Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State, on August 19, 1791. Banneker included this letter, as well as Jefferson's short reply, in several of the first editions of his almanacs in part because he hoped it would dispel the widespread assumption that Jefferson perpetuated in his Notes on the State of Virginia that Black people were incapable of intellectual achievement.

Sir

I am fully sensible of the greatness of that freedom which I take with you on the present occasion; a liberty which Seemed to me scarcely allowable, when I reflected on that distinguished, and dignified station in which you Stand; and the almost general prejudice and prepossession which is so prevalent in the world against those of my complexion.

I suppose it is a truth too well attested to you, to need a proof here, that we are a race of Beings who have long laboured under the abuse and censure of the world, that we have long been looked upon with an eye of contempt, and that we have long been considered rather as brutish than human, and Scarcely capable of mental endowments.

... I apprehend you will readily embrace every opportunity to eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas and opinions which so generally prevails with respect to us, and that your Sentiments are concurrent with mine, which are that one universal Father hath given being to us all, and that he hath not only made us all of one flesh, but that he hath also without partiality afforded us all the Same Sensations, and endued us all with the same faculties, and that however variable we may be in Society or religion, however diversified in Situation or colour, we are all of the Same Family, and Stand in the Same relation to him.

Sir, if these are Sentiments of which you are fully persuaded, I hope you cannot but acknowledge, that it is the indispensable duty of those who maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who profess the obligations of Christianity, to extend their power and influence to the relief of every part of the human race, from whatever burthen or oppression they may unjustly labour under, and this I apprehend a full conviction of the truth and obligation of these principles should lead all to.

Sir, I have long been convinced, that if your love for your Selves, and for those inestimable laws which preserve to you the rights of human nature, was founded on Sincerity, you could not but be Solicitous, that every Individual of whatsoever rank or distinction, might with you equally enjoy the blessings thereof, neither could you rest Satisfied, short of the most active diffusion of your exertions, in order to their promotion from any State of degradation, to which the unjustifiable cruelty and barbarism of men may have reduced them.

Sir I freely and Cheerfully acknowledge, that I am of the African race, and in that colour which is natural to them of the deepest dye, and it is under a Sense of the most profound gratitude to the Supreme Ruler of the universe, that I now confess to you, that I am not under that State of tyrannical thraldom, and inhuman captivity, to which too many of my brethren are doomed; but that I have abundantly tasted of the fruition of those blessings which proceed from that free and unequalled liberty with which you are favoured and which I hope you will willingly allow you have received from the immediate hand of that Being, from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift.

Sir, Suffer me to recall to your mind that time in which the Arms and tyranny of the British Crown were exerted with every powerful effort in order to reduce you to a State of Servitude, look back I entreat you on the variety of dangers to which you were exposed, reflect on that time in which every human aid appeared unavailable, and in which even hope and fortitude wore the aspect of inability to the Conflict, and you cannot but be led to a Serious and grateful Sense of your miraculous and providential preservation; you cannot but acknowledge that the present freedom and tranquility which you enjoy you have mercifully received, and that it is the peculiar blessing of Heaven.

This Sir, was a time in which you clearly saw into the injustice of a State of Slavery, and in which you had just apprehensions of the horrors of its condition, it was now Sir, that your abhorrence thereof was so excited, that you publickly held forth this true and invaluable doctrine, which is worthy to be recorded and remember'd in all Succeeding ages. "We hold these truths to be Self evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Here Sir, was a time in which your tender feelings for your selves had engaged you thus to declare, you were then impressed with proper ideas of the great valuation of liberty, and the free possession of those blessings to which you were entitled by nature; but Sir how pitiable is it to reflect, that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of mankind, and of his equal and impartial distribution of those rights and privileges which he had conferred upon them, that you should at the Same time counteract his mercies, in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren under groaning captivity and cruel oppression, that you should at the Same time be found guilty of that most criminal act, which you professedly detested in others, with respect to yourselves.

Sir, I suppose that your knowledge of the situation of my brethren is too extensive to need a recital here; neither shall I presume to prescribe methods by which they may be relieved; otherwise than by recommending to you and all others, to wean yourselves from these narrow prejudices which you have imbibed with respect to them, and as Job proposed to his friends "Put your Souls in their Souls stead," thus shall your hearts be enlarged with kindness and benevolence toward them, and thus shall you need neither the direction of myself or others in what manner to proceed herein.

And now, Sir, altho my Sympathy and affection for my brethren hath caused my enlargement thus far, I ardently hope that your candour and generosity will plead with you in

my behalf, when I make known to you, that it was not originally my design; but that having taken up my pen in order to direct to you as a present, a copy of an Almanack which I have calculated for the Succeeding year, I was unexpectedly and unavoidably led thereto.

This calculation, Sir, is the production of my arduous Study in this my advanced Stage of life; for having long had unbounded desires to become acquainted with the Secrets of nature, I have had to gratify my curiosity herein thro my own assiduous application to Astronomical Study, in which I need not to recount to you the many difficulties and disadvantages which I have had to encounter.

And altho I had almost declined to make my calculation for the ensuing year... I industriously apply'd myself thereto, which I hope I have accomplished with correctness and accuracy, a copy of which I have taken the liberty to direct to you, and which I humbly request you will favourably receive, and altho you may have the opportunity of perusing it after its publication, yet I chose to send it to you in manuscript previous thereto, that thereby you might not only have an earlier inspection, but that you might also view it in my own hand writing.—And now Sir, I shall conclude and Subscribe my Self with the most profound respect your most Obedient humble Servant,

Benjamin Banneker

The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. 22, ed. Charles T. Cullen. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 49–54.

[Available from the National Archives](#)

Creek headman Alexander McGillivray (Hoboi-Hili-Miko) seeks to build an alliance with Spain, 1785

Native peoples had long employed strategies of playing Europeans off against each other to maintain their independence and neutrality. As early as 1785, the Creek headman Alexander McGillivray (Hoboi-Hili-Miko) saw the threat the expansionist Americans placed on Native peoples and the inability of a weak United States government to restrain their citizens from encroaching on Native lands. McGillivray sought the aid and protection of the Spanish in order to maintain the supply of trade goods into Creek country and counter the Americans.

Little Tallasie 22d August 1785

His Excellency Governor de Zespedes

Sir,

I have the honor of acknowledging the receipt of Your Excellency's most esteemed favor of 13^t. June. the letters enclosed for Governor O'Neil & Colo. Piernass were delivered to the former the latter is at Orleans Commanding in absence of Governor Miro who is gone to the Natchez to regulate some matters. a great many troops having arrived & gone up that river.

The reports Your Excellency has heard concerning the americans are not founded in truth although they are proceeding in great numbers to the Mississippi with an Intent to establish themselves upon the Territory as given them by the treaty of Peace between Britain & the State of America. But as Yet no hostilities have Commenced between any forces on the river — Nor is there any Post on the Cherokee river tho a very proper place for one at the mouth of it where it Joins the Mississippi. The americans will certainly attempt to establish a New State in that Country at the risque of a war. The Authority of Congress is but weak even in the heart of the States & those that are settled at the distance of five or Six hundred miles from the Seat of Government — despite its mandates. but before they attempt any great matters they will do all they can to gain over the Indian Nations that lay in their way & are most able to obstruct their views in Some measure. The gaining of these Creek Nations over to them is more Immediately an object of their Policy & to effect which purpose they have held forth the most tempting baits to my people to Induce them to meet the Commissioners of the States in Congress twice in the course of this Summer. but being Sensible of their Insidious Views I have hitherto prevented the Indians from Complying with their wishes & which I have the more effectually been enabled to do from the Support I have met with from Your Excellency permitting the House of Panton Leslie & Co. to supply the wants of the Indians from the Store at Apalachy & if the establishments that are made are kept up & well Supported so as the Indians are Certain of a permanent & well regulated Support of the Goods that they have been accustomed to it will remove from their minds the prejudices they have Conceived in favor of other Nations & attach themselves to that Government

which Supports them in a trade on liberal principles. there are no other modes Can be adopted to Conciliate their minds so effectually as that. they have very little Consideration for any professions of Friendship that can be made to them without it.

I imagine that the Apalachy Store must now be nearly or quite drained of Goods. it will be therefore extremely necessary that there should be soon in Store there the usual Winter Supplies & that Messr. Pantou Leslie & Co. be enabled to effect the same without loss of time.

Perryman Certainly meant no more in the Step he took than a Compliment for the many favors he had received. an Indian in the honesty of his heart seldom attends to & is Ignorant of those nice distinctions practised by Civilized people. but I can assure Your Excellency he has always been Steady in such measures as has been recommended to him for the Good of his Country & will adhere in the same Steps that the rest of the Chiefs his Countrymen shall pursue. — — —

It has long been a matter of great Concern to me that the very fluctuating Situation of Affairs has been such that it has hitherto prevented my direct— Compliance with Your requisitions but I Shall now prepare to do myself that pleasure which I have long wished for that of repairing to St. Augustine to receive—in person Your Commands & Shall Set out from the in the missile of the next month as the Season then will be favorable for traveling in Florida From the Wisdom of the measures adopted & pursued by Your Excellency with regard to Indian Affairs has been attended with the best Consequences for the Interest of Your Government & a Confidence that the Court will enable You to Continue the same line of Conduct & — which affords me the greatest encouragement to persevere in the arduous Task I have undertaken to Conciliate the minds of the different Indians Nations to his Majesty Interest on the most permanent basis.”

That Your Excellency may enjoy many years of Health & happiness is the Sincere wishes of Sir Your Excellency’s Most Obedient Servant

Alex: McGillivray

“Transcript of a letter From Alexander McGillivray to Governor Zéspedes,” August 22, 1785, in the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Alabama Textual Materials Collection, from the East Florida Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[Available from the Alabama Department of Archives and History](#)

Tecumseh Calls for Pan-Indian Resistance, 1810

Like Pontiac before him, Tecumseh articulated a spiritual message of unity and resistance. In this document, he acknowledges his Shawnee heritage, but appeals to a larger community of “red men,” who he describes as “once a happy race, since made miserable by the white people.” This document reveals not only Tecumseh’s message of resistance, but it also shows that Anglo-American understandings of race had spread to Native Americans as well.

It is true I am a Shawnee. My forefathers were warriors. Their son is a warrior. From them I take only my existence; from my tribe I take nothing. I am the maker of my own fortune; and oh! that I could make of my own fortune; and oh! that I could make that of my red people, and of my country, as great as the conceptions of my mind, when I think of the Spirit that rules the universe. I would not then come to Governor Harrison to ask him to tear the treaty and to obliterate the landmark; but I would say to him: “Sir, you have liberty to return to your own country.”

The being within, communing with past ages, tells me that once, nor until lately, there was no white man on this continent; that it then all belonged to red men, children of the same parents, placed on it by the Great Spirit that made them, to keep it, to traverse it, to enjoy its productions, and to fill it with the same race, once a happy race, since made miserable by the white people, who are never contented but always encroaching. The way, and the only way, to check and to stop this evil, is for all the red men to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first, and should be yet; for it never was divided, but belongs to all for the use of each. For no part has a right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers — hose who want all, and will not do with less.

The white people have no right to take the land from the Indians, because they had it first; it is theirs. They may sell, but all must join. Any sale not made by all is not valid. The late sale is bad. It was made by a part only. Part do not know how to sell. All red men have equal rights to the unoccupied land. The right of occupancy is as good in one place as in another. There can not be two occupations in the same place. The first excludes all others. It is not so in hunting or traveling; for there the same ground will serve many, as they may follow each other all day; but the camp is stationary, and that is occupancy. It belongs to the first who sits down on his blanket or skins which he has thrown upon the ground; and till he leaves it no other has a right.

Samuel G. Drake, *The Book of the Indians; or, the Biography and History of the Indians of North America, from its first discovery to the year 1841* (Boston: 1836), 121-122.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Congress Debates Going to War, 1811

Americans were not united in their support for the War of 1812. In these two documents we hear from members of congress as they debate whether or not America should go to war against Great Britain.

Felix Grundy, Dec 9, 1811

What, Mr. Speaker, are we now called on to decide? It is, whether we will resist by force the attempt, made by that Government, to subject our maritime rights to the arbitrary and capricious rule of her will; for my part I am not prepared to say that this country shall submit to have her commerce interdicted or regulated, by any foreign nation. Sir, I prefer war to submission.

Over and above these unjust pretensions of the British Government, for many years past, they have been in the practice of impressing our seamen, from merchant vessels; this unjust and lawless invasion of personal liberty, calls loudly for the interposition of this Government. To those better acquainted with the facts in relation to it, I leave it to fill up the picture. My mind is irresistibly drawn to the West.

Although others may not strongly feel the bearing, which the late transactions in that quarter have on this subject, upon my mind they have great influence. It cannot be believed by any many who will reflect, that the savage tribes, uninfluenced by other Powers, would think of making war on the United States. They understand too well their own weakness, and our strength. They have already felt the weight of our arms; they know they hold the very soil on which they live as tenants at sufferance. How, then, sir, are we to account for their late conduct? In one way only; some powerful nation must have intrigued with them, and turned their peaceful disposition towards us into hostilities. Great Britain alone has intercourse with those Northern tribes; I therefore infer, that if British gold has not been employed, their baubles and trinkets, and the promise of support and a place of refuge if necessary, have had their effect.

If I am right in this conjecture, war is not to commence by sea or land, it is already begun: and some of the richest blood of our country has already been shed...

This war, if carried on successfully, will have its advantages. We shall drive the British from our Continent – they will no longer have an opportunity of intriguing with our Indian neighbors, and setting on the ruthless savage to tomahawk our women and children. That nation will lose her Canadian trade, and, by having no resting place in this country, her means of annoying us will be diminished. The idea I am now about to advance is at war, I know, with sentiments of the gentleman from Virginia: I am willing to receive the Canadians as adopted brethren; it will have beneficial political effects; it will preserve the equilibrium of the Government. When Louisiana shall be fully peopled, the Northern States will lose their power; they will be at the discretion of others; they can be depressed at pleasure, and then

this Union might be endangered – I therefore feel anxious not only to add the Floridas to the South, but the Canadas to the North of this empire...

Annals of Congress, 12th Cong., 1st sess., 425-427.

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)

John Randolph, December 10, 1811

An insinuation has fallen from the gentleman from Tennessee, that the late massacre of our brethren on the Wabash had been instigated by the British Government. Has the President given any such information? Has the gentleman received any such, even informally, from an officer of this government? Is it so believed by the Administration? He had cause to think the contrary to be the fact; that such was not their opinion. This insinuation was of the grossest kind – a presumption the most rash, the most unjustifiable. Show buy good ground for it, he would give up the question at the threshold – he was ready to march to Canada. It was indeed well calculated to excite the feelings of the Western people particularly, who were not quite so tenderly attached to our red brethren as some modern philosophers; but it was destitute of any foundation, beyond mere surmise and suspicion...

He could but smile at the liberality of the gentleman, in giving Canada to New York, in order to strengthen the Northern balance of power, while at the same time he forewarned her that Western scale must preponderate. Mr. R. said he could almost fancy that he saw the Capitol in motion towards the falls of Ohio – after a short sojourn taking its flight to the Mississippi, and finally alighting on Darien; which, when the gentleman's dreams are realized, will be a most eligible seat of Government for the Republic (or Empire) of the two Americas!...

This war of conquest, a war for the acquisition of territory, and subjects, is to be a new commentary on the doctrine that republics are destitute of ambition—that they are addicted to peace, wedded to the happiness and safety of the great body of their people. But it seems that this is to be a holiday campaign—there is to be no expense of blood, or treasure, on our part—Canada is to conquer herself...

What, sir, is the situation of the slaveholding states? ... should we therefore be unobservant spectators of the progress of society within the last 20 years—of that silent but powerful change wrought by time and chance, upon its compositions and temper? When the fountains of the great deep of abomination were broken up, even the poor slaves had not escaped the general deluge. The French revolution had polluted even them. Nay, there had not been wanting men in that house witness to their legislative *Legendre*, the butcher who once held a seat there, to preach upon that flood these imprescriptible rights to a crowded audience of blacks in the galleries—teaching them that they are equal to their masters; in other words, advising them to cut their throats. Similar doctrines were disseminated by peddlers from New England and elsewhere throughout the southern country... While talking of taking Canada, some of us were shuddering for our own safety at home.”

...Name, however, but England, and all our antipathies are up in arms against her. Against whom? Against those whose blood runs in our veins; in common with whom we claim Shakespeare, and Newton, and Chatham, for our countrymen; whose form of government is the freest on earth, our own only excepted, from whom every valuable principle of our institutions had been borrowed – representation, jury trial, voting the supplies, writ of habeas corpus – our whole civil and criminal jurisprudence – against our fellow Protestants identified in blood, in language, in religion with ourselves...

Annals of Congress, 12th Cong., 1st sess., 445-452.

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)

Abigail Bailey Escapes an Abusive Relationship, 1815

Women in early America suffered from a lack of rights or means of defending themselves against domestic abuse. The case of Abigail Bailey is remarkable because she was able to successfully free herself and her children from an abusive husband and father.

Several months had passed, after Mr. B's last wicked conduct before mentioned, and nothing special took place. The following events then occurred. One of our young daughters, (too young to be a legal witness, but old enough to tell the truth,) informed one of her sisters, older than herself, what she saw and heard, more than a year before, on a certain Sabbath. This sister being filled with grief and astonishment at what she had heard, informed her oldest sister. When this oldest sister had heard the account, and was prepared to believe it, (after all the strange things which she herself had seen and heard,) she was so shocked, that she fainted. She was then at our house, I administered camphire, and such things as were suitable in her case. She soon revived. She then informed me of the occasion of her fainting. I had long before had full evidence to my mind of Mr. B's great wickedness in this matter; and I thought I was prepared to hear the worst. But verily the worst was dreadful! The last great day will unfold it. I truly at this time had a new lesson added, to all that ever I before heard, or conceived, of human depravity...

With much difficulty, and by the help of her aunt, I obtained ample information. I now found that none of my dreadful apprehensions concerning Mr. B's conduct had been too high. And I thought the case of this daughter was the most to be pitied of any person I ever knew. I wondered how the author of her calamities could tarry in this part of the world. I thought that his guilty conscience must make him flee; and that shame must give him wings, to fly with the utmost speed.

My query now was, what I ought to do? I had no doubt relative to my living any longer with the author of our family miseries. This point was fully settled. But whether it would be consistent with faithfulness to suffer him to flee, and not be made a monument of civil justice, was my query. The latter looked to me inexpressibly painful. And I persuaded myself, that if he would do what was right, relative to our property, and would go to some distant place, where we should be afflicted with him no more, it might be sufficient; and I might be spared the dreadful scene of prosecuting my husband.

I returned home, I told Mr. B. I had heard an awful account relative to some man. I mentioned some particulars, without intimating who the man was; or what family was affected by it. I immediately perceived he was deeply troubled! He turned pale, and trembled, as if he had been struck with death. It was with difficulty he could speak. He asked nothing, who the man was, that had done this great wickedness; but after a while said, I know you

believe it to be true; and that all our children believe it; but it is not true! Much more he said in way of denying. But he said he did not blame me for thinking as I did.

He asked me, what I intended to do? I replied, that one thing was settled: I would never live with him any more! He soon appeared in great anguish; and asked what I could advise him to do? Such was his appearance, that the pity of my heart was greatly moved. He had been my dear husband; and had destroyed himself. And now he felt something of his wretchedness. I now felt my need of Christian fortitude, to be firm in pursuing my duty. I was determined to put on firmness, and go through with the most interesting and undesirable business, to which God, in his providence, had called me, and which I had undertaken. I told him his case to me looked truly dreadful and desperate. That thought [though] I had long and greatly labored for his reformation and good, yet he had rejected all my advice. He had felt sufficient to be his own counselor; and now he felt something of the result of his own counsels...

I proposed he should turn a one hundred acre lot, which we could well spare, and take the avails of it.

I earnestly entreated him to break off his sins by unfeigned repentance, and make it his immediate care to become reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, who died for lost man, and even for the greatest of sinners. I suggested to Mr. B. that if he would reform, and would never injure his family relative to the interest, I could truly wish him well, and so much peace as was consistent with the holy and wise purposes of God. But that if he should undertake any farther to afflict our family, or any of his dear children, he might expect punishment in this life, and that the judgments of God would follow him. I begged of him to treat his family well, in relation to our property, and to treat all mankind, henceforth, well.

Abigail Bailey, *Memoirs of Mrs. Abigail Bailey, who had been the wife of Major Asa Bailey...*, Ethan Smith, ed. (Boston: 1815), 57-60.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

**Genius of the Ladies Magazine Illustration,
1792**



Thackara & Vallance, Frontispiece and title page from "The Lady's magazine, and repository of entertaining knowledge" showing the "Genius of the Ladies magazine" presenting the figure of Liberty with a copy of Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the rights of women," 1792 via [Library of Congress](#).

Despite the restrictions imposed on their American citizenship, white women worked to expand their rights to education in the new nation using literature and the arts. The first journal for women in the United States, *The Lady's Magazine, and repository of entertaining knowledge*, introduced their initial volume with an engraving celebrating the transatlantic exchange between women's rights advocates. In the engraving, English writer Mary Wollstonecraft presents her work, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," to Liberty who has the tools of the arts at her feet.

America Guided by Wisdom Engraving, 1815



John J. Bartlett, "America guided by wisdom An allegorical representation of the United States depicting their independence and prosperity," 1815, via [Library of Congress](#).

This print reflects the sense of triumph many white Americans felt following the War of 1812. Drawing from the visual language of Jeffersonian Republicans, we see America—represented as a woman in classical dress—surrounded by gods of wisdom, commerce, and agriculture on one side and a statue of George Washington emblazoned with the recent war's victories on the other. The romantic sense of the United States as the heir to the ancient Roman republic, pride in military victory, and the glorification of domestic production contributed to the idea the young nation was about to enter an "era of good feelings."

8. The Market Revolution

Introduction

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Americans' endless commercial ambition—what one Baltimore paper in 1815 called an “almost universal ambition to get forward”—remade the nation. Steam power, the technology that moved steamboats and railroads, fueled the rise of American industry by powering mills and sparking new national transportation networks. More and more farmers grew crops for profit, not self-sufficiency. Vast factories and cities arose in the North. As northern textile factories boomed, the demand for southern cotton swelled, and the institution of American slavery accelerated. The market revolution sparked not only explosive economic growth and new personal wealth but also devastating depressions—“panics”—and a growing lower class of property-less workers. Many Americans labored for low wages and became trapped in endless cycles of poverty. Although northern states gradually abolished slavery, their factories fueled the demand for slave-grown southern cotton that ensured the profitability and continued existence of the American slave system. And so, as the economy advanced, the market revolution wrenched the United States in new directions as it became a nation of free labor and slavery, of wealth and inequality, and of new promise and peril. These sources illustrate how the market revolution transformed how Americans worked, traveled, politicked, and even loved.

James Madison Asks Congress to Support Internal Improvements, 1815

After the War of 1812, Americans looked to strengthen their nation through government spending on infrastructure, or what were then called internal improvements. In his seventh annual address to congress, Madison called for public investment to create national roads, canals, and even a national seminary. He also called for a tariff, or tax on certain imports, designed to make foreign goods more expensive, giving American producers an advantage in domestic markets.

Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:

...Notwithstanding the security for future repose which the United States ought to find in their love of peace and their constant respect for the rights of other nations, the character of the times particularly inculcates the lesson that, whether to prevent or repel danger, we ought not to be unprepared for it. This consideration will sufficiently recommend to Congress a liberal provision for the immediate extension and gradual completion of the works of defense, both fixed and floating, on our maritime frontier, and an adequate provision for guarding our inland frontier against dangers to which certain portions of it may continue to be exposed...

In adjusting the duties on imports to the object of revenue the influence of the tariff on manufactures will necessarily present itself for consideration. However wise the theory may be which leaves to the sagacity and interest of individuals the application of their industry and resources, there are in this as in other cases exceptions to the general rule. Besides the condition which the theory itself implies of a reciprocal adoption by other nations, experience teaches that so many circumstances must concur in introducing and maturing manufacturing establishments, especially of the more complicated kinds, that a country may remain long without them, although sufficiently advanced and in some respects even peculiarly fitted for carrying them on with success. Under circumstances giving a powerful impulse to manufacturing industry it has made among us a progress and exhibited an efficiency which justify the belief that with a protection not more than is due to the enterprising citizens whose interests are now at stake it will become at an early day not only safe against occasional competitions from abroad, but a source of domestic wealth and even of external commerce. In selecting the branches more especially entitled to the public patronage a preference is obviously claimed by such as will relieve the United States from a dependence on foreign supplies ever subject to casual failures, for articles necessary for the public defense or connected with the primary wants of individuals. It will be an additional recommendation of particular manufactures where the materials for them are extensively drawn from our agriculture, and consequently impart and insure to that great fund of national prosperity and independence an encouragement which can not fail to be rewarded.

Among the means of advancing the public interest the occasion is a proper one for recalling the attention of Congress to the great importance of establishing throughout our country the roads and canals which can best be executed under the national authority. No objects within the circle of political economy so richly repay the expense bestowed on them; there are none the utility of which is more universally ascertained and acknowledged; none that do more honor to the governments whose wise and enlarged patriotism duly appreciates them. Nor is there any country which presents a field where nature invites more the art of man to complete her own work for his accommodation and benefit. These considerations are strengthened, moreover, by the political effect of these facilities for intercommunication in bringing and binding more closely together the various parts of our extended confederacy. Whilst the States individually, with a laudable enterprise and emulation, avail themselves of their local advantages by new roads, by navigable canals, and by improving the streams susceptible of navigation, the General Government is the more urged to similar undertakings, requiring a national jurisdiction and national means, by the prospect of thus systematically completing so inestimable a work; and it is a happy reflection that any defect of constitutional authority which may be encountered can be supplied in a mode which the Constitution itself has providently pointed out.

The present is a favorable season also for bringing again into view the establishment of a national seminary of learning within the District of Columbia, and with means drawn from the property therein, subject to the authority of the General Government. Such an institution claims the patronage of Congress as a monument of their solicitude for the advancement of knowledge, without which the blessings of liberty can not be fully enjoyed or long preserved; as a model instructive in the formation of other seminaries; as a nursery of enlightened preceptors, and as a central resort of youth and genius from every part of their country, diffusing on their return examples of those national feelings, those liberal sentiments, and those congenial manners which contribute cement to our Union and strength to the great political fabric of which that is the foundation....

It remains for the guardians of the public welfare to persevere in that justice and good will toward other nations which invite a return of these sentiments toward the United States; to cherish institutions which guarantee their safety and their liberties, civil and religious; and to combine with a liberal system of foreign commerce an improvement of the national advantages and a protection and extension of the independent resources of our highly favored and happy country.

The Speeches, Addresses, and Messages of the Several Presidents of the United States... (Philadelphia: 1825), 330-335.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

A Traveler Describes Life Along the Erie Canal, 1829

Basil Hall, a British visitor traveled along the Erie Canal and took careful notes on what he found. In this excerpt, he described life in Rochester, New York. Rochester, and other small towns in upstate New York, grew rapidly as a result of the Erie Canal.

On the 25th of June we drove across the country to the village of Rochester, which is built on the banks of the Genesee river, just above some beautiful waterfalls, and only a few miles from the southern shore of Lake Ontario, which, I was sorry to find, was not visible from thence, owing to the dense screen of untouched forest which intervenes. The Erie Canal passes through the heart of this singular village, and strides across the Genesee River on a noble aqueduct of stone.

Rochester is celebrated all over the Union as presenting one of the most striking instances of rapid increase in size and population of which that country affords any example. It may be proper to remark, that about this period I began to learn that in America the word improvement, which, in England, means making things better, signifies, in that country, an augmentation in the number of houses and people, and above all, in the amount of the acres of cleared land. It is laid down by the Americans as an admitted maxim, to doubt the solidity of which never enters any man's head for an instant, that a rapid increase of population is, to all intents and purposes, tantamount to an increase of national greatness and power, as well as an increase of individual happiness and prosperity. Consequently, say they, such increase ought to be forwarded by every possible means, as the greatest blessing to the country...

The ladies in America obtain their fashions direct from Paris. I speak now of the great cities on the sea-coast, where the communication with Europe is easy and frequent. In the back settlements, people are obliged to catch what opportunities come in their way; and accordingly, many applications were made to us for a sight of our wardrobe, which, it may be supposed, was none of the largest. The child's clothes excited most interest, however, and patterns were asked for on many occasions.

While touching on this subject, I hope I may be permitted to say a few words, without giving offence certainly without meaning to give any respecting the attire of the male part of the population, who, I have reason to think, do not, generally speaking, consider dress an object deserving of nearly so much attention as it undoubtedly ought, to receive. It seems to me that dress is a branch, and not an unimportant branch, of manners, a science they all profess themselves anxious to study. The men, probably without their being aware of it, have, somehow or other, acquired a habit of negligence in this respect quite obvious to the eye of a stranger. From the hat, which is never brushed, to the shoe, which is seldom polished, all parts of their dress are often left pretty much to take care of themselves. Nothing seems to fit, or to be made with any precision.

The chief source of the commercial and agricultural prosperity of Rochester is the Erie canal, as that village is made the emporium of the rich agricultural districts bordering on the Genesee river; and its capitalists both send out and import a vast quantity of wheat, flour, beef, and pork, pot and pearl ashes, whiskey, and so on. In return for these articles, Rochester supplies the adjacent country with all kinds of manufactured goods, which are carried up by the canal from New York. In proportion as the soil is brought into cultivation, or subdued, to use the local phrase, the consumers will become more numerous, and their means more extensive. Thus the demands of the surrounding country must go on augmenting rapidly, and along with them, both the imports and exports of every kind will increase in proportion. There were in 1826 no less than 160 canal boats, drawn by 882 horses, owned by persons actually residing in the village, besides numberless others belonging to non-residents.

Out of more than 8000 souls in this gigantic young village, there was not to be found in 1827 a single grown-up person born there, the oldest native not being then seventeen years of age. The population is composed principally of emigrants from New England that is from the States of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Some settlers are to be found from other parts of the Union; and these, together with a considerable number from Germany, England, Ireland, and Scotland, and a few natives of Canada, Norway, and Switzerland, make up a very singular society....

Much of all this prosperity may be traced to the cheapness of conveyance on the Erie Canal...

On the 26th of June, 1827, we strolled through the village of Rochester, under the guidance of a most obliging and intelligent friend, a native of this part of the country. Everything in this bustling place appeared to be in motion. The very streets seemed to be starting up of their own accord, ready-made, and looking as fresh and new, as if they had been turned out of the workmen's hands but an hour before, or that a great boxful of new houses had been sent by steam from New York, and tumbled out on the half-cleared land. The canal banks were at some places still un-turfed; the lime seemed hardly dry in the masonry of the aqueduct, in the bridges, and in the numberless great saw-mills and manufactories. In many of these buildings the people were at work below stairs, while at top the carpenters were busy nailing on the planks of the roof.

Some dwellings were half painted, while the foundations of others, within five yards distance, were only beginning. I cannot say how many churches, courthouses, jails, and hotels I counted, all in motion, creeping upwards. Several streets were nearly finished, but had not as yet received their names; and many others were in the reverse predicament, being named, but not commenced, their local habitation being merely signified by lines of stakes. Here and there we saw great warehouses, without window sashes, but half filled with goods, and furnished with hoisting cranes, ready to fish up the huge pyramids of flour barrels, bales, and boxes lying in the streets. In the center of the town the spire of a Presbyterian church rose to a great height, and on each side of the supporting tower was to be seen the dial-plate of a clock, of which the machinery, in the hurry-scurry, had been left at New York. I need

not say that these half-finished, whole-finished, and embryo streets were crowded with people, carts, stages, cattle, pigs, far beyond the reach of numbers; and as all these were lifting up their voices together, in keeping with the clatter of hammers, the ringing of axes, and the creaking of machinery, there was a fine concert, I assure you!

Basil Hall, *Travels in North America, in the year 1827 and 1828* (Philadelphia: 1829), 83-87.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Blacksmith Apprentice Contract, 1836

The factories and production of the Market Revolution eroded the wealth and power of skilled small business owners called artisans. This indenture contract illustrated the former way of doing things, where a young person would agree to serve for a number of years as an apprentice to a skilled artisan before venturing out on his own.

Indenture of an Apprentice

This Indenture witnesseth, that James Long, of the township of Lower Makesfield, in the county of Bucks, son of Francis Long, by and with the consent of his father, as testified by his signing as a witness herento, hath put himself, and by these presents doth voluntarily, and of his own free will and accord, put himself apprentice to Samuel Downs, of the same place, Blacksmith, to learn his art, trade and mystery, and after the manner of an apprentice to serve him from the day of the date hereof, for and during the full end and term of four years and two months, next ensuing. During all which term the apprentice his said master faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep, his lawful commands every where gladly obey. He shall do no damage to his said master, nor see it done by others, without letting or giving notice thereof to his said master. He shall not waste his said master's goods, nor lend them unlawfully to any. With his own goods, nor the goods of others, without license from his said master, he shall neither buy nor sell. He shall not absent himself day nor night from his said master's service without his leave; nor haunt ale-houses, taverns or play-houses; but in all things behave himself as a faithful apprentice ought to do, during the said term. And the said master shall use the utmost of his endeavors to teach our cause to be taught or instructed the said apprentice, in the trade or mystery of a Blacksmith; and procure for him sufficient meat, drink, apparel, lodging and washing fitting for an apprentice, during the said term of four years and two months, and give him within the said term six months' schooling, one-half thereof is to be in the last year of the said term; and when he is free, to give him two suits of clothing, one whereof is to be entirely new. And for the performance of all and singular the covenants and agreements aforesaid, the said parties bind themselves unto the other, firmly, by these presents. In witness hereof, the said parties have set their hands and seals hereunto—Dates the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty six.

James Long.

Sealed and delivered in the presence of Francis Long.

Jason M. Mahan, *The Private Instructor, or Mathematics Simplified, comprising everything necessary in arithmetic, bookkeeping, conveyancing, mesuration, and gauging, to form and complete the man of business* (Harrisburg: 1835), 231-232.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Maria Stewart bemoans the consequences of racism, 1832

Maria Stewart electrified audiences in Boston with a number of powerful speeches. Her most common theme was the evil of slavery. However, here she attacks the soul-crushing consequences of racism in American capitalism, claiming that the lack of social and economic equality doomed Black Americans to a life of suffering and spiritual death.

Why sit ye here and die? If we say we will go to a foreign land, the famine and the pestilence are there, and there we shall die. If we sit here, we shall die. Come let us plead our cause before the whites: if they save us alive, we shall live—and if they kill us, we shall but die.

Methinks I heard a spiritual interrogation—'Who shall go forward, and take off the reproach that is cast upon the people of color? Shall it be a woman? And my heart made this reply — 'If it is thy will, be it even so, Lord Jesus!'

I have heard much respecting the horrors of slavery; but may Heaven forbid that the generality of my color throughout these United States should experience any more of its horrors than to be a servant of servants, or hewers of wood and drawers of water! Tell us no more of southern slavery; for with few exceptions, although I may be very erroneous in my opinion, yet I consider our condition but little better than that. Yet, after all, methinks there are no chains so galling as the chains of ignorance—no fetters so binding as those that bind the soul, and exclude it from the vast field of useful and scientific knowledge. O, had I received the advantages of early education, my ideas would, ere now, have expanded far and wide; but, alas! I possess nothing but moral capability—no teachings but the teachings of the Holy spirit.

I have asked several individuals of my sex, who transact business for themselves, if providing our girls were to give them the most satisfactory references, they would not be willing to grant them an equal opportunity with others? Their reply has been—for their own part, they had no objection; but as it was not the custom, were they to take them into their employ, they would be in danger of losing the public patronage.

And such is the powerful force of prejudice. Let our girls possess what amiable qualities of soul they may; let their characters be fair and spotless as innocence itself; let their natural taste and ingenuity be what they may; it is impossible for scarce an individual of them to rise above the condition of servants...

Few white persons of either sex, who are calculated for any thing else, are willing to spend their lives and bury their talents in performing mean, servile labor. And such is the horrible idea that I entertain respecting a life of servitude, that if I conceived of there being no possibility of my rising above the condition of a servant, I would gladly hail death as a welcome messenger. O, horrible idea, indeed! to possess noble souls aspiring after high and honorable acquirements, yet confined by the chains of ignorance and poverty to lives of continual drudgery and toil. Neither do I know of any who have enriched themselves by

spending their lives as house-domestics, washing windows, shaking carpets, brushing boots, or tending upon gentlemen's tables. I can but die for expressing my sentiments; and I am as willing to die by the sword as the pestilence; for I and a true born American; your blood flows in my veins, and your spirit fires my breast.

I observed a piece in the *Liberator* a few months since, stating that the colonizationists had published a work respecting us, asserting that we were lazy and idle. I confute them on that point. Take us generally as a people, we are neither lazy nor idle; and considering how little we have to excite or stimulate us, I am almost astonished that there are so many industrious and ambitious ones to be found; although I acknowledge, with extreme sorrow, that there are some who never were and never will be serviceable to society. And have you not a similar class among yourselves?

Again. It was asserted that we were "a ragged set, crying for liberty." I reply to it, the whites have so long and so loudly proclaimed the theme of equal rights and privileges, that our souls have caught the flame also, ragged as we are. As far as our merit deserves, we feel a common desire to rise above the condition of servants and drudges. I have learnt, by bitter experience, that continual hard labor deadens the energies of the soul, and benumbs the faculties of the mind; the ideas become confined, the mind barren, and, like the scorching sands of Arabia, produces nothing; or, like the uncultivated soil, brings forth thorns and thistles.

Again, continual hard labor irritates our tempers and sours our dispositions; the whole system becomes worn out with toil and failure; nature herself becomes almost exhausted, and we care but little whether we live or die. It is true, that the free people of color throughout these United States are neither bought nor sold, nor under the lash of the cruel driver; many obtain a comfortable support; but few, if any, have an opportunity of becoming rich and independent; and the employments we most pursue are as unprofitable to us as the spider's web or the floating bubbles that vanish into air. As servants, we are respected; but let us presume to aspire any higher, our employer regards us no longer. And where it not that the King eternal has declared that Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God, I should indeed despair.

... Do you ask, why are you wretched and miserable? I reply, look at many of the most worthy and interesting of us doomed to spend our lives in gentlemen's kitchens. Look at our young men, smart, active and energetic, with souls filled with ambitious fire; if they look forward, alas! what are their prospects? They can be nothing but the humblest laborers, on account of their dark complexions; hence many of them lose their ambition, and become worthless. Look at our middle-aged men, clad in their rusty plaids and coats; in winter, every cent they earn goes to buy their wood and pay their rents; their poor wives also toil beyond their strength, to help support their families. Look at our aged sires, whose heads are whitened with the front of seventy winters, with their old wood-saws on their backs. Alas, what keeps us so? Prejudice, ignorance and poverty. But ah! methinks our oppression is soon to come to an end; yes, before the Majesty of heaven, our groans and cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth [James 5:4]. As the prayers and tears of Christians will avail the

finally impenitent nothing; neither will the prayers and tears of the friends of humanity avail us any thing, unless we possess a spirit of virtuous emulation within our breasts. Did the pilgrims, when they first landed on these shores, quietly compose themselves, and say, “the Britons have all the money and all the power, and we must continue their servants forever?” Did they sluggishly sigh and say, “our lot is hard, the Indians own the soil, and we cannot cultivate it?” No; they first made powerful efforts to raise themselves and then God raised up those illustrious patriots WASHINGTON and LAFAYETTE, to assist and defend them. And, my brethren, have you made a powerful effort? Have you prayed the Legislature for mercy’s sake to grant you all the rights and privileges of free citizens, that your daughters may raise to that degree of respectability which true merit deserves, and your sons above the servile situations which most of them fill?

Maria W. Stewart, “Lecture Delivered At The Franklin Hall, Boston, September 21, 1832” in *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (Washington: 1879), 55-59.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Harriet H. Robinson Remembers a Mill Workers’ Strike, 1836

The social upheavals of the Market Revolution created new tensions between rich and poor, particularly between the new class of workers and the new class of managers. Lowell, Massachusetts was the location of the first American factory. In this document, a woman reminisces about a strike that she participated in at a Lowell textile mill.

One of the first strikes of cotton-factory operatives that ever took place in this country was that in Lowell, in October, 1836. When it was announced that the wages were to be cut down, great indignation was felt, and it was decided to strike, en masse. This was done. The mills were shut down, and the girls went in procession from their several corporations to the “grove” on Chapel Hill, and listened to “incendiary” speeches from early labor reformers.

One of the girls stood on a pump, and gave vent to the feelings of her companions in a neat speech, declaring that it was their duty to resist all attempts at cutting down the wages. This was the first time a woman had spoken in public in Lowell, and the event caused surprise and consternation among her audience.

Cutting down the wages was not their only grievance, nor the only cause of this strike. Hitherto the corporations had paid twenty—five cents a week towards the board of each operative, and now it was their purpose to have the girls pay the sum; and this, in addition to the cut in the wages, would make a difference of at least one dollar a week. It was estimated that as many as twelve or fifteen hundred girls turned out, and walked in procession through the streets. They had neither flags nor music, but sang songs, a favorite (but rather inappropriate) one being a parody on “I won’t be a nun.”

“Oh! isn’t it a pity, such a pretty girl as I-

Should be sent to the factory to pine away and die?

Oh ! I cannot be a slave,

I will not be a slave,

For I'm so fond of liberty

That I cannot be a slave.”

My own recollection of this first strike (or “turn out” as it was called) is very vivid. I worked in a lower room, where I had heard the proposed strike fully, if not vehemently, discussed; I had been an ardent listener to what was said against this attempt at “oppression” on the part of the corporation, and naturally I took sides with the strikers. When the day came on which the girls were to turn out, those in the upper rooms started first, and so many of them left that our mill was at once shut down. Then, when the girls in my room stood irresolute, uncertain what to do, asking each other, “Would you?” or “Shall we turn out?” and not one of them having the courage to lead off, I, who began to think they would not go out, after all their talk, became impatient, and started on ahead, saying, with childish bravado, “I don’t care what you do, I am going to turn out, whether any one else does or not;” and I marched out, and was followed by the others.

As I looked back at the long line that followed me, I was more proud than I have ever been since at any success I may have achieved, and more proud than I shall ever be again until my own beloved State gives to its women citizens the right of suffrage.

The agent of the corporation where I then worked took some small revenges on the supposed ringleaders; on the principle of sending the weaker to the wall, my mother was turned away from her boarding-house, that functionary saying, “Mrs. Hanson, you could not prevent the older girls from turning out, but your daughter is a child, and her you could control.”

It is hardly necessary to say that so far as results were concerned this strike did no good. The dissatisfaction of the operatives subsided, or burned itself out, and though the authorities did not accede to their demands, the majority returned to their work, and the corporation went on cutting down the wages.

And after a time, as the wages became more and more reduced, the best portion of the girls left and went to their homes, or to the other employments that were fast opening to women, until there were very few of the old guard left.

Harriet H. Robinson, *Loom and spindle : or, life among the early mill girls ; with a sketch of “The Lowell Offering” and some of its contributors* (New York: 1898), 83-86.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Alexis de Tocqueville, “How Americans Understand the Equality of the Sexes,” 1840

The French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville traveled extensively through the United States in gathering research for his book Democracy In America. In this excerpt, he described the belief that American men and women lived in “separate spheres,” men in public, women in the home. This expectation justified the denial of rights to women. All women were denied political rights in nineteenth century America, but only a small number of wealthy families could afford to remove women from economic production, like de Tocqueville claimed.

There are people in Europe who, confounding together the different characteristics of the sexes, would make man and woman into beings not only equal but alike. They would give to both the same functions, impose on both the same duties, and grant to both the same rights; they would mix them in all things—their occupations, their pleasures, their business. It may readily be conceived that by thus attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded, and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women.

It is not thus that the Americans understand that species of democratic equality which may be established between the sexes. They admit that as nature has appointed such wide differences between the physical and moral constitution of man and woman, her manifest design was to give a distinct employment to their various faculties; and they hold that improvement does not consist in making beings so dissimilar do pretty nearly the same things, but in causing each of them to fulfill their respective tasks in the best possible manner. The Americans have applied to the sexes the great principle of political economy which governs the manufacturers of our age, by carefully dividing the duties of man from those of woman in order that the great work of society may be the better carried on.

In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways that are always different. American women never manage the outward concerns of the family or conduct a business or take a part in political life; nor are they, on the other hand, ever compelled to perform the rough labor of the fields or to make any of those laborious efforts which demand the exertion of physical strength. No families are so poor as to form an exception to this rule. If, on the one hand, an American woman cannot escape from the quiet circle of domestic employments, she is never forced, on the other, to go beyond it. Hence it is that the women of America, who often exhibit a masculine strength of understanding and a manly energy, generally preserve great delicacy of personal appearance and always retain the manners of women although they sometimes show that they have the hearts and minds of men.

Nor have the Americans ever supposed that one consequence of democratic principles is the subversion of marital power or the confusion of the natural authorities in families. They hold that every association must have a head in order to accomplish its object, and that the

natural head of the conjugal association is man. They do not therefore deny him the right of directing his partner, and they maintain that in the smaller association of husband and wife as well as in the great social community the object of democracy is to regulate and legalize the powers that are necessary, and not to subvert all power.

This opinion is not peculiar to one sex and contested by the other; I never observed that the women of America consider conjugal authority as a fortunate usurpation of their rights, or that they thought themselves degraded by submitting to it. It appeared to me, on the contrary, that they attach a sort of pride to the voluntary surrender of their own will and make it their boast to bend themselves to the yoke, not to shake it off. Such, at least, is the feeling expressed by the most virtuous of their sex; the others are silent; and in the United States it is not the practice for a guilty wife to clamor for the rights of women while she is trampling on her own holiest duties...

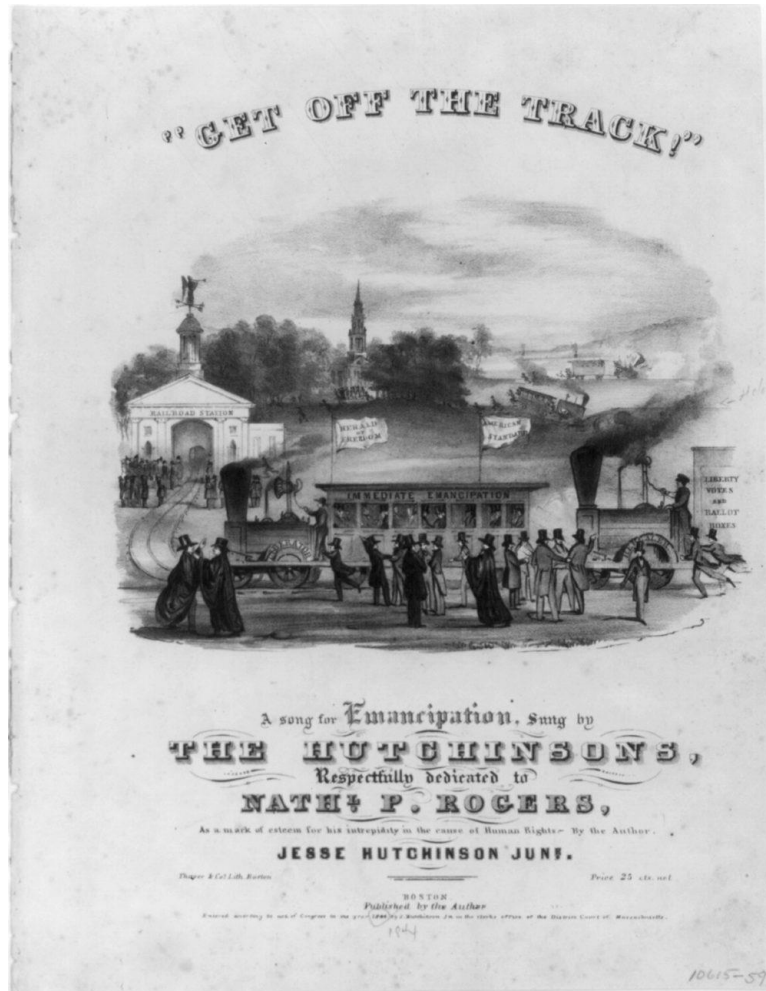
Thus the Americans do not think that man and woman have either the duty or the right to perform the same offices, but they show an equal regard for both their respective parts; and though their lot is different, they consider both of them as beings of equal value. They do not give to the courage of woman the same form or the same direction as to that of man, but they never doubt her courage; and if they hold that man and his partner ought not always to exercise their intellect and understanding in the same manner, they at least believe the understanding of the one to be as sound as that of the other, and her intellect to be as clear. Thus, then, while they have allowed the social inferiority of woman to continue, they have done all they could to raise her morally and intellectually to the level of man; and in this respect they appear to me to have excellently understood the true principle of democratic improvement.

As for myself, I do not hesitate to avow that although the women of the United States are confined within the narrow circle of domestic life, and their situation is in some respects one of extreme dependence, I have nowhere seen woman occupying a loftier position; and if I were asked, now that I am drawing to the close of this work, in which I have spoken of so many important things done by the Americans, to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply: To the superiority of their women.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II. E-text created by the American Studies Program at the University of Virginia. Charlottesville, VA, 1997.

[Available through the University of Virginia](#)

Abolitionist Sheet Music Cover Page, 1844



Jesse Hutchinson and B.W. Thayer & Co, "Get off the track!" A song for emancipation, sung by The Hutchinsons," 1844, via [Library of Congress](#).

The "transportation revolution" shaped economic change in the early 1800s, but the massive construction of railroads also had a profound impact on American politics and culture. This sheet music title page shows how abolitionists used railroad imagery to advocate for the immediate emancipation of enslaved people and to promote their political platform before the 1844 presidential election.

9. Democracy in America

Introduction

Today, most Americans think democracy is a good thing. We tend to assume the nation's early political leaders believed the same. Wasn't the American Revolution a victory for democratic principles? For many of the Founders, however, the answer was no. American democracy did not flow smoothly after the American Revolution. It had to be fought for again and again. The 1830s were dominated by battles over democracy as a new populist Democratic Party led by Andrew Jackson repealed property restrictions on voting. Universal white male suffrage was the rallying cry of the era. This expansion of the franchise occurred at the expense of black Americans, however, as race came to replace class as barrier to democratic participation. These sources explore the fights over democracy at the heart of the era.

Missouri Controversy Documents, 1819-1920

Southerners dominated the highest federal offices in the early United States, as Virginians held the Presidency thirty-two of the first thirty-six years of the nation's history. Northerners resented this dominance and sectional tensions simmered until they threatened to boil over in 1820 when James Tallmadge included the below amendment to Missouri's application for statehood. Included below is Tallmadge's amendment; the final act which settled the crisis, at least temporarily; and a private letter from Thomas Jefferson illustrating his reaction to the crisis.

Tallmadge Amendment, February 13, 1819

And provided, that the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been fully convicted; and that all children born within the said State, after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years

Lawrence Wilson, ed., *The National Register: A weekly paper, containing a series of the important public documents, and the proceedings of Congress...* Volume VII (Washington City: 1819), 125.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Missouri Admission Act

An Act to authorize the people of the Missouri territory to form a constitution and state government, and for the admission of such state into the Union on an equal footing with the original states, and to prohibit slavery in certain territories.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the inhabitants of that portion of the Missouri territory included within the boundaries herein after designated, be, and they are hereby, authorized to form for themselves a constitution and state government, and to assume such name as they shall deem proper; and the said state, when formed, shall be admitted into the Union, upon an equal footing with the original states, in all respects whatsoever....

SEC. 8. And be it further enacted. That in all that territory ceded by France to the United States, under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude, not included within the limits of the state, contemplated by this act, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, whereof the parties shall have been duly convicted, shall be, and is hereby, forever prohibited: Provided always, That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed, in

any state or territory of the United States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid.

APPROVED, March 6, 1820.

Conference committee report on the Missouri Compromise, March 1, 1820; Joint Committee of Conference on the Missouri Bill, 03/01/1820-03/06/1820; Record Group 128; Records of Joint Committees of Congress, 1789-1989; National Archives.

[Available through the National Archives and Records Administration](#)

Thomas Jefferson letter to John Holmes, April 22, 1820

I thank you, Dear Sir, for the copy you have been so kind as to send me of the letter to your constituents on the Missouri question. It is a perfect justification to them. I had for a long time ceased to read the newspapers or pay any attention to public affairs, confident they were in good hands, and content to be a passenger in our bark to the shore from which I am not distant. But this momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. It is hushed indeed for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper. I can say with conscious truth that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would, to relieve us from this heavy reproach, in any *practicable* way. The cession of that kind of property, for so it is misnamed, is a bagatelle which would not cost me in a second thought, if, in that way, a general emancipation and *expatriation* could be effected: and, gradually, and with due sacrifices, I think it might be. But, as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other. Of one thing I am certain, that as the passage of slaves from one state to another would not make a slave of a single human being who would not be so without it, so their diffusion over a greater surface would make them individually happier and proportionally facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation, by dividing the burthen on a greater number of coadjutors. An abstinence too from this act of power would remove the jealousy excited by the undertaking of Congress, to regulate the condition of the different descriptions of men composing a state. This certainly is the exclusive right of every state, which nothing in the constitution has taken from them and given to the general government. Could congress, for example say that the Non-freemen of Connecticut, shall be freemen, or that they shall not emigrate into any other state?

I regret that I am now to die in the belief that the useless sacrifice of themselves, by the generation of '76, to acquire self government and happiness to their country, is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons, and that my only consolation is to be that I live not to weep over it. If they would but dispassionately weigh the blessings they will throw away against an abstract principle more likely to be effected by union than by

scission, they would pause before they would perpetrate this act of suicide on themselves and of treason against the hopes of the world.

To yourself as the faithful advocate of union I tender the offering of my high esteem and respect.

Th. Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820. Letter. From Library of Congress, *Thomas Jefferson Exhibition*. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/159.html> (accessed July 18, 2015)

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)

Rhode Islanders Protest Property Restrictions on Voting, 1834

Many poor white men gained voting rights, also known as suffrage, for the first time in the 1830s. These changes in American democracy did not take place without conflict. Voting rights in Rhode Island only changed after poor Rhode Islanders raised a militia and threatened violence. Below is the proposal of many of the men who seven years later took up arms to fight for voting rights.

...We have arrived at the conclusion that government was designed for the protection and perpetuation of rights—not derived from itself, but natural and inherent—in such a way as to promote the greatest good of the whole; and that the question now before us is, not what right of suffrage the government ought to grant as a gift, but with what restrictions, required by this greatest good, suffrage may be *claimed* as a right by the people of this State. Is it consistent with this general good that the present landed qualifications should be any longer continued...?

...we should show that the present restriction is, in its operation, inconsistent with republican principles, then we shall secure the aid of all those who consistently hold those principles, in having this restriction removed...

...whatever course a true patriot might feel himself to adopt in one of the corrupt monarchies of the old world, no such reason can be given for a postponement of political rights in our own country. No privileged orders have ever existed in it, to create a vast inequality which prevails elsewhere between the many and the few. A freedom was brought with the by our ancestors, and has ever subsisted among us...The true American doctrine is, that the majority have not only a right to govern, but that they are sufficiently intelligent and honest to govern; and that, if there be any doubt about this sufficiency, we ought immediately to set to work and build more schools. Men in Europe, who are opposed to any further improvement in government, may talk about the necessity of “barring out the people,” and of “defending themselves against the people.” But this will not do here...

...the condition of things has changed—the towns have changed; new interests have sprung up, and useful citizens, who own no land, but who contribute by their occupations, and by the payment of taxes to the extend of their means, their proportionate measure to the public welfare. Yet these men have no voice in the government which they contribute to support; being excluded upon the false notion that landed property is the only kind that is decisive of a man’s intelligence and honesty. Look at the hardship of the case of a mechanic, for instance. He has received a common education; he has served as a journeyman, and is now about to commence business for himself with some small earnings of his own; his savings are only sufficient to procure the implements of his trade. After fairly starting in life on his own account, he becomes anxious to provide for himself a home. He marries; he hires a tenement; in the course of time he acquires more money, which his interest demands

should be invested in the stock of his trade. He is fully able to purchase one hundred and thirty four dollars worth of land; but it is, in most cases, against his interest to do so, until he can purchase a great deal more. In the mean time, he is debarred from the polls; and if he asks why, the answer must be that the non freeholders are too ignorant and dishonest to be trusted in so important a matter as voting. This we believe is a fair statement of the case of hundreds of mechanics in this State...

But this restriction is not merely burdensome upon traders and mechanics. How fare the younger sons of farmers? True, a sort of virtue is transmitted from the land-owner, but it reaches no farther than the first-born son... the real question is why either of the sons, or any other person should be exempted from the general law of qualification, whatever it may be. No good reason has been, nor can be, given...

The majority of lawyers, clergymen, and physicians, as a body, certainly are not landholders, and yet we freely intrust our property, our consciences, and our lives, to men who, the law says, are too ignorant and corrupt to vote for a constable!...

The existing restriction on suffrage is, then, we think, clearly in opposition to the real intention of our ancestors, and to the spirit of democracy which they established... If it were unjust for our forefathers to be taxed without representation, it is equally unjust for our their descendants to be so taxed by their brethren, as long as they have not vote in determining either the quantity or appropriation...

An Address to the People of Rhode Island, from the Convention assembled at Providence, on the 22nd day of February, and again on the 12th day of March, 1834, to Promote the Establishment of a State Constitution (Providence: 1834), 32-34, 38-40, 44-45.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Black Philadelphians Defend their Voting Rights, 1838

The expansion of voting rights to poor white men brought a loss of voting rights for Black men. Race, rather than class, quickly became the most important social distinction in the United States. Some wealthy Black men, like James Forten and Robert Purvis of Pennsylvania, lost voting rights that they previously enjoyed. In this document, Philadelphians protest the loss of their voting rights.

PHILADELPHIA, March 14, 1838.

FELLOW CITIZENS:— We appeal to you from the decision of the “Reform Convention,” which has stripped us of a right peaceably enjoyed during forty-seven years under the Constitution of this commonwealth. We honor Pennsylvania and her noble institutions too much to part with our birthright, as her free citizens, without a struggle. To all her citizens the right of suffrage is valuable in proportion as she is free; but surely there are none who can so ill afford to spare it as ourselves...

To us our right under the *Constitution* has been more precious, and our deprivation of it will be the more grievous, because our expatriation has come to be a darling project with many of our fellow citizens. Our abhorrence of a scheme which comes to us in the guise of Christian benevolence, and asks us to suffer ourselves to be transplanted to a distant and barbarous land... We love our native country, much as it has wronged us; and in the peaceable exercise of our inalienable rights, we will cling to it. The immortal *Franklin*, and his fellow laborers in the cause of humanity, have bound us to our homes here with chains of gratitude. We are PENNSYLVANIANS, and we hope to see the day when Pennsylvania will have reason to be proud of us, as we believe she has now none to be ashamed. Will you starve our patriotism? Will you cast our hearts out of the treasury of the commonwealth? Do you count our enmity better than our friendship?...

We were regarded as *citizens* by those who drew up the articles of confederation between the States, in 1778... On the adoption of the present Constitution of the United States no change was made as to the rights of citizenship. This is explicitly proved by the Journal of *Congress*...

We ask your attention, fellow citizens, to facts and testimonies which go to show that, considering the circumstances in which we have been placed, our country has no reason to be ashamed of us, and that those have the most occasion to blush to whom nature has given the power.

By the careful inquiry of a committee appointed by the “*Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery*,” it has been ascertained that the colored population of Philadelphia and its suburbs, numbering 18,768 souls, possess at the present time, of real and personal estate, not less than \$1,350,000. They have paid for taxes during the last year \$3,252.83, for house,

water, and ground rent, \$166,963.50. This committee estimate the income to the holders of real estate occupied by the colored people, to be 7½ per cent. on a capital of about \$2,000,000. Here is an addition to the wealth of their white brethren. But the rents and taxes are not all; to pay them, the colored people must be employed in labor, and here is another profit to the whites, for no man employs another unless he can make his labor profitable to himself. For a similar reason, a profit is made by all the whites who sell to colored people the necessaries or luxuries of life. Though the aggregate amount of the wealth derived by the whites from our people can only be conjectured, its importance is worthy of consideration by those who would make it less by lessening our motive to accumulate for ourselves.

Nor is the profit derived from us counterbalanced by the sums which we in any way draw from the public treasures. From a statement published by order of the *Guardians of the Poor of Philadelphia*, in 1830, it appears that out of 549 out-door poor relieved during the year, only 22 were persons of color, being about four per cent. of the whole number, while the ratio of our population to that of the city and suburbs exceeds 8¼ per cent. . .

That we are not neglectful of our religious interests, nor of the education of our children, is shown by the fact that there are among us in Philadelphia, Pittsburg, York, West Chester, and Columbia, 22 churches, 48 clergymen, 26 day schools, 20 Sabbath schools, 125 Sabbath school teachers, 4 literary societies, 2 public libraries, consisting of about 800 volumes, besides 8,333 volumes in private libraries, 2 tract societies, 2 Bible societies, and 7 temperance societies. . . .

Are we to be disfranchised, lest the purity of the *white* blood should be sullied by an intermixture with ours? It seems to us that our white brethren might well enough reserve their fear, till we seek such alliance with them. We ask no social favors. We would not willingly darken the doors of those to whom the complexion and features, which our Maker has given us, are disagreeable. The territories of the commonwealth are sufficiently ample to afford us a home without doing violence to the delicate nerves of our white brethren, for centuries to come. Besides, we are not intruders here, nor were our ancestors. Surely you ought to bear as unrepiningly the evil consequences of your fathers' guilt, as we those of our fathers' misfortune. Proscription and disfranchisement are the last things in the world to alleviate these evil consequences. Nothing, as shameful experience has already proved, can so powerfully promote the evil which you profess to deprecate, as the degradation of our race by the oppressive rule of yours. Give us that fair and honorable ground which self-respect requires to stand on, and the dreaded amalgamation, if it take place at all, shall be by your own fault, as indeed it always has been. We dare not give full vent to the indignation we feel on this point, but we will not attempt wholly to conceal it. We ask a voice in the disposition of those public resources which we ourselves have helped to earn; we claim a right to be heard, according to our numbers, in regard to all those great public measures which involve our lives and fortunes, as well as those of our fellow citizens; we assert our right to vote at the polls as a shield against that strange species of benevolence which seeks legislative aid to banish us—and we are told that our white fellow citizens cannot submit to an *intermixture of the races!* . . .

We would not misrepresent the motives of the Convention; but we are constrained to believe that they have laid our rights a sacrifice on the altar of slavery. We do not believe our disfranchisement would have been proposed, but for the desire which is felt by political aspirants to gain the favor of the slave-holding States. This is not the first time that northern statesmen have “bowed the knee to the dark spirit of slavery,” but it is the first time that they have bowed so low!...

Firm upon our old Pennsylvania BILL OF RIGHTS, and trusting in a God of Truth and justice, we lay our claim before you, with the warning that no amendments of the present Constitution can compensate for the loss of its foundation principle of equal rights, nor for the conversion into enemies of 40,000 friends.

In behalf of the Committee, *ROBERT PURVIS, Chairman.*

Robert Purvis, *Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens, Threatened with Disfranchisement, to the People of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: 1838), 1-18.

[Available through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania](#)

Andrew Jackson's Veto Message Against Re-chartering the Bank of the United States, 1832

President Andrew Jackson, like Thomas Jefferson before him, was highly suspicious of the Bank of the United States. He blamed the bank for the Panic of 1819 and for corrupting politics with too much money. After congress renewed the bank charter, Jackson vetoed the bill. The following was the message he gave to congress after issuing his veto. Jackson's decision was controversial. Some Americans accused him of acting like a dictator to redistribute wealth. Others saw the act as an attack on a corrupt system that only favored the rich.

[1] To the Senate: The bill "to modify and continue" the act entitled "An act to incorporate the subscribers to the Bank of the United States" was presented to me on the 4th July instant. Having considered it with that solemn regard to the principles of the Constitution which the day was calculated to inspire, and come to the conclusion that it ought not to become a law, I herewith return it to the Senate, . . . with my objections.

[2] . . . It [the Bank] enjoys an exclusive privilege of banking under the authority of the General Government, a monopoly of its favor and support, and, as a necessary consequence, almost a monopoly of the foreign and domestic exchange. . . .

[3] . . . It appears that more than a fourth part of the stock is held by foreigners and the residue is held by a few hundred of our citizens, chiefly of the richest class. . . .

[4] . . . Of the twenty-five directors of this bank five are chosen by the Government and twenty by the citizen stockholders. From all voice in these elections the foreign stockholders are excluded by the charter. In proportion, therefore, as the stock is transferred to foreign holders the extent of suffrage in the choice of directors is curtailed. . . . The entire control . . . would necessarily fall into the hands of a few citizen stockholders. . . . There is danger that a president and directors would then be able to elect themselves from year to year, and without responsibility or control manage the whole concerns of the bank It is easy to conceive that great evils to our country and its institutions might flow from such a concentration of power in the hands of a few men irresponsible to the people.

[5] Is there no danger to our liberty and independence in a bank that in its nature has so little to bind it to our country? The president of the bank has told us that most of the State banks exist by its forbearance. Should its influence become concentered, as it may under . . . such an act as this, in the hands of a self-elected directory whose interest are identified with foreign stockholders, will there not be cause to tremble for the purity of our elections in peace and for the independence of our country in war? . . . But if any private citizen or public functionary should interpose to curtail its powers . . . it can not be doubted that he would be made to feel its influence.

[6] . . . If we must have a bank with private stockholders, every consideration of sound policy and every impulse of American feeling admonishes that it should be purely American. Its stockholders should be composed exclusively of our own citizens, who at least ought to be friendly to our Government and willing to support it in times of difficulty and danger. . . .

[7] . . . It is maintained by the advocates of the bank that its constitutionality in all its features ought to be considered as settled by precedent and by the decision of the Supreme Court. To this conclusion I can not assent. . . .

[8] . . . The Congress, the Executive, and the Court must each for itself be guided by its own opinion of the Constitution. Each public officer who takes an oath to support the Constitution swears that he will support it as he understands it, and not as it is understood by others. It is as much the duty of the House of Representatives, of the Senate, and of the President to decide upon the constitutionality of any bill or resolution which may be presented to them for passage or approval as it is of the supreme judges when it may be brought before them for judicial decision. The opinion of the judges has no more authority over Congress than the opinion of Congress has over the judges, and on that point the President is independent of both. . . .

[9] . . . There is nothing in its [the Bank's] legitimate functions which makes it necessary or proper. . . .

[10] . . . It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth can not be produced by human institutions. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government. There are no necessary evils in government. Its evils exist only in its abuses. If it would confine itself to equal protection, and, as Heaven does its rains, shower its favors alike on the high and the low, the rich and the poor, it would be an unqualified blessing. In the act before me there seems to be a wide and unnecessary departure from these just principles. . . .

James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1908* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1908), II: 576-591.

[Available through the White House Historical Association](#)

Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” 1852

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Talbot County, Maryland in 1818. He was separated from his mother in infancy and lived with his grandmother until he was separated from her as well at age seven. After several attempts, he finally successfully escape slavery in 1838. He became one of the most influential abolitionist speakers and before a crowd of white abolitionists in 1852, he delivered this, one of the greatest abolitionist speeches.

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

... But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common.-The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day?

...Fellow-citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them... My subject, then, fellow-citizens, is American slavery. I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing there identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future.

.... At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the

nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour...

But the church of this country is not only indifferent to the wrongs of the slave, it actually takes sides with the oppressors. It has made itself the bulwark of American slavery, and the shield of American slave-hunters. Many of its most eloquent Divines, who stand as the very lights of the church, have shamelessly given the sanction of religion and the Bible to the whole slave system. They have taught that man may, properly, be a slave; that the relation of master and slave is ordained of God; that to send back an escaped bondman to his master is clearly the duty of all the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this horrible blasphemy is palmed off upon the world for Christianity...

Americans! your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties) is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen...

Fellow-citizens, I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretense, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad: it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing and a bye-word to a mocking earth...

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented, of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery.

Frederick Douglass, *Oration Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester* (Rochester: Lee, Man, and Co, 1852), 14-37.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Rebecca Reed accuses nuns of abuse, 1835

In 1834 anti-Catholic rioters burned the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts. In 1835, Rebecca Reed published a memoir about her time staying at the convent. Prior to its publication, rumors existed about Reed's experience that may have motivated the arsonists. In these documents, we read excerpts from Reed's account and the response from the convent's Mother Superior Mary St. George.

Rebecca Reed's accusations

... I complained to her of my strength's failing, and of my diet, not being such as I was used to ; she replied, that a Religieuse should have no choice, and that I should have left my feelings in the world ; and she immediately imposed the following penances: — to make the sign of the cross on the floor with my tongue, and to eat a crust of bread in the morning for my portion....

The reader may well judge of my feelings at this moment; a young and inexperienced female, shut out from the world, and entirely beyond the reach of friends ; threatened with speedy transportation to another country, and involuntary confinement for life, with no power to resist the immediate fulfilment of the startling conspiracy I had overheard....

In a day or two Priest B. again came... he said, " Is it possible that a young lady wishes to have her name made public ?" I answered, " You very well know I should shrink from such a thing, but I should rather return to the world and expose myself to its scorn, than remain subject to the commands of a tyrant." "Then," said he, " if you are determined to return to the world, you may go to ruin there for all I can do; and rely upon it, you will shed tears of blood in consequence of the step you have taken, if you do not repent and confess all at the secret tribunal of God." I told him I should confess to none but God, and that my conscience prompted me to do as I had done. He asked me if I would go with him to the Superior, as she wanted to see me. I replied, ; No, I will not, for I believe you or any other Catholic would (if directed) take my life, were it in your power, as truly as I believe I am living, and I will not trust myself in your clutches again."

... I also told him that I believed it had been his intention to deliver me again into their hands, but I had broken the chains which bound me, and felt free; and that I should always be thankful that I had delivered myself from the bondage of what I should consider to be a Romish yoke, rather than the true cross of Christ....

If, in consequence of my having for a time strayed from the true religion, I am enabled to become an humble instrument "in the hands of God in warning others of the errors of Romanism, and preventing even one from falling into its snares, and from being shrouded in its delusions, I shall feel richly rewarded.

Rebecca Theresa Reed, *Six months in a convent, or, The narrative of Rebecca Theresa Reed, who was under the influence of the Roman Catholics about two years, and an inmate of the Ursuline convent on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, Mass., nearly six months, in the years 1831-2* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, 1835)

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

The Mother Superior responds

The object of this part of the book is not truth or the public good, or the vindication of private character, as is pretended, but to exasperate the public mind against Catholics and Catholic institutions; to persecute them through the medium of popular opinion, and drive them from the country as the enemies of true religion and of civil liberty. Not content with seeing the few defenceless and pious females composing the Ursuline Community, driven from their habitation at midnight and their property destroyed ; not satisfied with screening the perpetrators from punishment, and even exhibiting these worthies as public benefactors; (not in direct terms perhaps but by their acts, and the general scope of their arguments) they have now finished another act of the drama, by a most foul attempt to blast the fair character of this Community and its individual members....

The week after the Convent was burned, half the persons who spoke of the act as an horrible outrage, at the same time intimated the belief, that the Convent was a very wicked place. Upon asking the reasons of such behef, the answer invariably was, "Why, a young woman, who resided there, and ran away, tells very bad stories," &c. Many, probably thousands, who had merely heard her name, had heard and believed the slanders which were attached to it....

It is extremely painful to be obliged to expose a young woman, who is easily called an innocent, a humble and defenceless female ; but when that female unsexes herself and sets about the work of detraction openly and publicly; when she undertakes upon any pretence to destroy the reputations of retired, religious, and defenceless women, at whose hands she has received nothing but benefits, she presents herself in a character which entitles her to no sympathy and renders it absolutely necessary in defence of innocence and truth, to call things by their right names and to do what is attempted in this review of her work. It is admitted by herself, that after long sollicitation she obtained admittance to the Convent as an object of charity—that she was fed, clothed and instructed, by the Ursuline Sisters, who could have had no motive on earth, but a charitable one, for she had neither property, or friends, or influence. She had neither mental capacity, docility, or solidity of character, to permit her ever to become a member of their Community, and she never received the least encouragement to that effect. Finding her hopes disappointed, she elopes in a dishonorable manner, and either from revenge, vanity, or as a means of living, commences the abominable work of ruining her benefactors by the private circulation of unfounded calumnies.

Mary Anne Ursula Moffatt, *An answer to Six months in a convent, exposing its falsehoods and manifold absurdities* (Boston: James Murnoe, 1835).

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Samuel Morse Fears a Catholic Conspiracy, 1835

Irish immigrants in the early nineteenth century filled jobs created by the Market Revolution. Their arrival provided an important source of labor for a growing economy, but many Americans worried about the influence of these arrivals. Samuel Morse, an inventor who contributed to the development of the telegraph and Morse Code, feared that Irish immigrants represented the front line of a Catholic conspiracy to destroy the United States.

That a vigorous and unexampled effort is making by the despotic governments of Europe to cause Popery to overspread this country, is a fact too palpable to be contradicted. Did not official documents lately published, put this fact beyond dispute, yet the writer had personal evidence sufficient to convince him of the fact and of the political object of the enterprise, while residing in Italy in the years 1830-31, from conversations with nobles and gentlemen of different countries, with the officers of various foreign governments, visiting and resident in the Roman and Austrian states, and with priests and other ecclesiastics of the Roman faith. Sometimes it was hinted to him as a check to too sanguine anticipations of the triumph of the experiment of our democratic republican government; sometimes it was told him by the former class in a tone of exultation that a cause was in operation which would surely overthrow our institutions and gradually bring us under a form of government less obnoxious to the pride, and less dangerous to the existence, of the antiquated despotic systems of Europe. In addition to these hints to the writer, concerning the efforts making by the governments of Europe to carry Popery through all our borders, other American travellers will testify to similar hints made to them. By one I am permitted to say, that the celebrated naturalist, the late Baron Cuvier, known also as a zealous Protestant, inquired of him with marks of concern, if it were indeed true that Popery had made such progress in the United States, as to cause the exultation (which it seems was no secret) among the legitimates of Europe. And again, that a distinguished member of one of the Protestant German embassies, in Rome also made similar inquiries of him, having heard much boasting of the progress of Popery in the United States, adding this pertinent remark, "they will be hammer or nails, Sir, they will persecute, or be persecuted." These facts may be of so much importance in aid of the other proofs of a conspiracy which these numbers unfold, as to show that among the various higher classes of Europe the enterprise of a Popish crusade in this country is not only a subject of notoriety, but is viewed with great interest, and is considered as having a most important political bearing...

Mistrust of all that Popery does, or affects to do, whether as a friend or foe in any part of the country, is the only feeling that true charity, universal charity, allows us to indulge....

Every account from Europe attests the correctness of the views here taken more than a year since, of the political state of the civilized world. This war of opinions, or of categories, as Lafayette termed it, is in truth commenced, and Americans, if they will but use common

observation, cannot but feel that a neglect to notice, and provide against the consequences of that settled, systematic hostility to free institutions so strongly manifested by foreign powers, and which is daily assuming a more serious aspect, will inevitably result in mischief to the country, will surely be attended with anarchy if they wake not to the apprehension of the reality of this danger. Americans, you indeed sleep upon a mine. This is scarcely a figure of speech; you have excitable materials in the bosom of your society, which, skillfully put in action by artful demagogues, will subvert your present social system; you have a foreign interest too, daily, hourly, increasing, ready to take advantage of every excitement, and which will shortly be beyond your control, or will be subdued only by blood. You have agents among you, men in the pay of those very foreign powers, whose every measure of foreign and domestic policy has now for its end and aim the destruction of liberty every where. To increase your peril, you have a press that will not apprise you of the dangers that threaten you; we can reach you with our warnings only through the religious journals ; the daily press is blind, or asleep, or bribed, or afraid; at any rate, it is silent on this subject, and thus is throwing the weight of its influence on the side of your enemies. Foreign spies have clothed themselves in a religious dress, and so awe-struck are our journalists at its sacred texture, or so unable or unwilling to discern the difference between the man and his mask, that they start away in fear, lest they should be called bigoted or intolerant, or persecuting, if they should venture to lift up the consecrated cloak that hides a foreign foe. Americans, if you depend on your daily press, you rely on a broken reed; it fails you in your need. It dare not, no, it dare not attack Popery. It dare not drag into the light the political enemies of your liberty, because they come in the name of religion. All despotic Europe is awake and active in plotting your downfall, and yet they let you sleep, and you choose not to be awaked; “a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep.” And now like a man whose house is on fire, dreaming of comfort and security, you will perhaps repel with passion and reproach the friendly hand that would wake you in season to escape with your life.

Samuel Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States* (New York: 1835), 16-18, 141-143.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

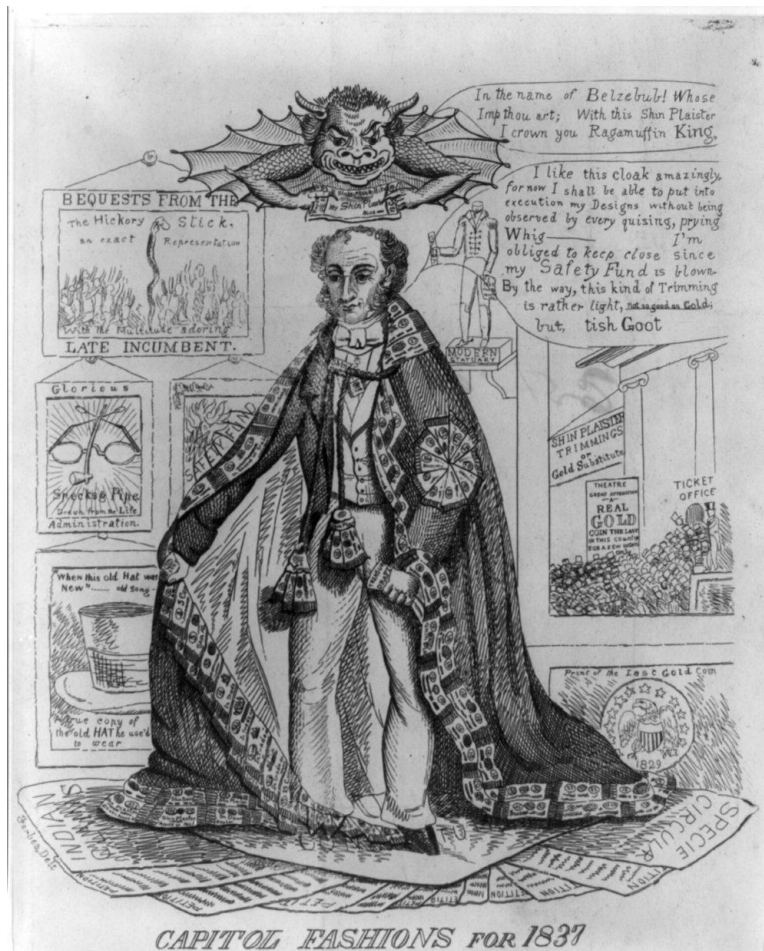
County Election Painting, 1854



George Caleb Bingham, "The County Election," 1854, via [Reynolda House Museum of American Art](#).

Beginning in the late 1840s, George Caleb Bingham created a series of paintings illustrating American democracy. He was drawn to the energy and near-chaos of speeches, rallies, election days, public announcements of voting results and more. Prior to painting this work, Bingham himself ran for state office in Missouri as a Whig. Here he shows the tumult of a county election day. Children play games, drunkards raise their glass (while political operatives drag inebriated men to the poll), citizens carefully debate the issues, while others study the newspaper. Art historians argue whether Bingham is celebrating or mocking American democracy.

Martin Van Buren Cartoon, 1837



Winston, F. J. "Capitol Fashions for 1837," 1837, via [Library of Congress](#).

This caricature of President Martin Van Buren cloaked in worthless bank notes was created during the Panic of 1837. The artist mocks Van Buren and the policies of his predecessor, Andrew Jackson. The cartoon includes mentions to Jackson's "Specie Circular," an order that government officials only accept gold or silver as payment for land and Van Buren's "Safety Fund," a program designed to offset the damage of bank failures. A document labeled "Indian claims" also refers to Jackson's policy of Indian Removal. These and other subtle details reveal the anxieties of economic collapse and the policy differences between Democrats and Whigs.

10. Religion and Reform

Introduction

The early nineteenth century was a period of great optimism, with the possibilities of self-governance infusing everything from religion to politics. Yet it was also a period of great discord, as the benefits of industrialization and democratization increasingly accrued along starkly uneven lines of gender, race, and class. Westward expansion distanced urban dwellers from frontier settlers more than ever before, even as the technological innovations of industrialization—like the telegraph and railroads—offered exciting new ways to maintain communication. The spread of democracy opened the franchise to nearly all white men, but urbanization and a dramatic influx of European migration increased social tensions and class divides. Americans looked on these changes with a mixture of enthusiasm and suspicion, wondering how the moral fabric of the new nation would hold up against emerging social challenges. Increasingly, many turned to two powerful tools to help understand and manage the various transformations: spiritual revivalism and social reform. These sources illustrate how religion and reform encouraged Americans to dream of a better nation and a better world.

Revivalist Charles G. Finney Emphasizes Human Choice in Salvation, 1836

Charles Grandison Finney left a successful law practice when he believed God called him to become a preacher. He enjoyed great success, particularly in Upstate New York, a region that Finney called "the burned over district." Finney's revivals emphasized human action, and he encouraged his converts to join various reform organizations, including avoiding alcohol and eventually opposing slavery.

Thus the world is divided into two great political parties; the difference between them is, that one party choose Satan as the god of this world, yield obedience to his laws, and are devoted to his interest. Selfishness is the law of Satan's empire, and all impenitent sinners yield it a willing obedience. The other party choose Jehovah for their governor, and consecrate themselves, with all their interests, to his service and glory. Nor does this change imply a constitutional alteration of the powers of body or mind, any more than a change of mind in regard to the form or administration of a human government....

Because you have all the powers of moral agency; and the thing required is, not to alter these powers, but to employ them in the service of your Maker. God has created these powers, and you can and do use them. He gives you power to obey or disobey; and your sin is, that while he sustains these powers, you prostitute them to the service of sin and Satan....

Sinners make their own wicked hearts. Their preference of sin is their own voluntary act. They make self-gratification the rule to which they conform all their conduct. When they come into being, the first principle that we discover in their conduct, is their determination to gratify themselves. It soon comes to pass that any effort to thwart them in the gratification of their appetites, is met by them with stout resistance, they seem to set their hearts fully to pursue their own happiness, and gratify themselves, come what will; and thus they will successively make war on their nurse, their parents, and their God, when ever they find that their requirements prohibit the pursuit of this end. Now this is purely a voluntary state of mind. This state of mind is not a subject of creation, it is entirely the result of temptation to selfishness, arising out of the circumstances under which the child comes into being. This preference to self-interest, is suffered by the sinner to grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength, until this desperately wicked heart bears him onward to the gates of hell...

Some persons, as I have already observed, seem disposed to be passive, to wait for some mysterious influence, like an electric shock, to change their hearts. But in this attitude, and with these views, they may wait till the day of judgment, and God will never do their duty for them. The fact is, sinners, that God requires you to turn, and what he requires of you, he cannot do for you. It must be your own voluntary act. It is not the appropriate work of God

to do what he requires of you. Do not wait then for him to do your duty, but do it immediately yourself, on pain of eternal death....

And now, sinner, while the subject is before you, will you yield? To keep yourself away from under the motives of the Gospel, by neglecting church, and neglecting your Bible, will prove fatal to your soul. And to be careless when you do attend, or to hear with attention and refuse to make up your mind and yield, will be equally fatal. And now, "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you at this time render your body and soul, a living sacrifice to God, which is your reasonable service." Let the truth take hold upon your conscience—throw down your rebellious weapons—give up your refuges of lies—fix your mind steadfastly upon the world of considerations that should instantly decide you to close in with the offer of reconciliation while it now lies before you. Another moment's delay, and it may be too late for ever. The Spirit of God may depart from you—the offer of life may be made no more, and this one more slighted offer of mercy may close up your account, and seal you over to all the horrors of eternal death. Hear, then, O sinner, I beseech you, and obey the word of the Lord—"Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die?"

Charles Grandison Finney, *Sermons on Various Subjects* (New York: 1834), 8, 13, 16, 20, 28.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Dorothea Dix defends the mentally ill, 1843

Dorothea Dix worked as an educator and author until she took up the campaign for improving the treatment for the mentally ill. Struggling with depression and other mental illnesses herself, Dix presented this petition to the Massachusetts state legislature after visiting a number of jails to chronicle abuses.

Gentlemen,—I respectfully ask to present this Memorial, believing that the cause, which actuates to and sanctions so unusual a movement, presents no equivocal claim to public consideration and sympathy. . .

About two years since leisure afforded opportunity and duty prompted me to visit several prisons and almshouses in the vicinity of this metropolis. I found, near Boston, in the jails and asylums for the poor, a numerous class brought into unsuitable connection with criminals and the general mass of paupers. I refer to idiots and insane persons, dwelling in circumstances not only adverse to their own physical and moral improvement, but productive of extreme disadvantages to all other persons brought into association with them. I applied myself diligently to trace the causes of these evils, and sought to supply remedies. As one obstacle was surmounted, fresh difficulties appeared. Every new investigation has given depth to the conviction that it is only by decided, prompt, and vigorous legislation the evils to which I refer, and which I shall proceed more fully to illustrate, can be remedied. I shall be obliged to speak with great plainness, and to reveal many things revolting to the taste, and from which my woman's nature shrinks with peculiar sensitiveness. But truth is the highest consideration. I tell what I have seen—painful and shocking as the details often are—that from them you may feel more deeply the imperative obligation which lies upon you to prevent the possibility of a repetition or continuance of such outrages upon humanity. . . .

I come to present the strong claims of suffering humanity. I come to place before the Legislature of Massachusetts the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast. I come as the advocate of helpless, forgotten, insane, and idiotic men and women; of beings sunk to a condition from which the most unconcerned would start with real horror; of beings wretched in our prisons, and more wretched in our almshouses. . . .

Lincoln. A woman in a cage. Medford. One idiotic subject chained, and one in a close stall for seventeen years. Pepperell. One often doubly chained, hand and foot; another violent; several peaceable now. Brookfield. One man caged, comfortable. Granville. One often closely confined; now losing the use of his limbs from want of exercise. Charlemont. One man caged. Savoy. One man caged. Lenox. Two in the jail, against whose unfit condition there the jailer protests.

Dedham. The insane disadvantageously placed in the jail. In the almshouse, two females in stalls, situated in the main building; lie in wooden bunks filled with straw; always shut up. One of these subjects is supposed curable. The overseers of the poor have declined giving her a trial at the hospital, as I was informed, on account of expense...

Besides the above, I have seen many who, part of the year, are chained or caged. The use of cages all but universal. Hardly a town but can refer to some not distant period of using them;

chains are less common; negligences frequent; wilful abuse less frequent than sufferings proceeding from ignorance, or want of consideration. I encountered during the last three months many poor creatures wandering reckless and unprotected through the country. . . .

I give a few illustrations; but description fades before reality....

Men of Massachusetts, I beg, I implore, I demand pity and protection for these of my suffering, outraged sex. Fathers, husbands, brothers, I would supplicate you for this boon; but what do I say? I dishonor you, divest you at once of Christianity and humanity, does this appeal imply distrust. If it comes burdened with a doubt of your righteousness in this legislation, then blot it out; while I declare confidence in your honor, not less than your humanity. Here you will put away the cold, calculating spirit of selfishness and self-seeking; lay off the armor of local strife and political opposition; here and now, for once, forgetful of the earthly and perishable, come up to these halls and consecrate them with one heart and one mind to works of righteousness and just judgment.

Become the benefactors of your race, the just guardians of the solemn rights you hold in trust. Raise up the fallen, succor the desolate, restore the outcast, defend the helpless, and for your eternal and great reward receive the benediction, "Well done, good and faithful servants, become rulers over many things!"

Injustice is also done to the convicts: it is certainly very wrong that they should be doomed day after day and night after night to listen to the ravings of madmen and madwomen. This is a kind of punishment that is not recognized by our statutes, and is what the criminal ought not to be called upon to undergo. The confinement of the criminal and of the insane in the same building is subversive of that good order and discipline which should be observed in every well-regulated prison. I do most sincerely hope that more permanent provision will be made for the pauper insane by the State, either to restore Worcester Insane Asylum to what it was originally designed to be or else make some just appropriation for the benefit of this very unfortunate class of our "fellow-beings."

Dorothea Dix, *Memorial to the legislature of Massachusetts: In behalf of the pauper insane and idiots in jails and poorhouses throughout the Commonwealth. Jan. 1843* (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1843), 3-32.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, 1829

David Walker was the son of an enslaved man and a free Black woman. He traveled widely before settling in Boston where he worked in and owned clothing stores and involved himself in various reform causes. In 1829, he wrote the remarkable Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World. In it, he exposed the hypocrisies of American claims of freedom and Christianity, attacked the plan to colonize Black Americans in Africa, and predicted that God's justice promised violence for the enslaving United States.

Having travelled over a considerable portion of these United States, and having, in the course of my travels, taken the most accurate observations of things as they exist—the result of my observations has warranted the full and unshaken conviction, that we, (coloured people of these United States,) are the most degraded, wretched, and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began; and I pray God that none like us ever may live again until time shall be no more. They tell us of the Israelites in Egypt, the Helots in Sparta, and of the Roman Slaves, which last were made up from almost every nation under heaven, whose sufferings under those ancient and heathen nations, were, in comparison with ours, under this enlightened and Christian nation, no more than a cypher—or, in other words, those heathen nations of antiquity, had but little more among them than the name and form of slavery; while wretchedness and endless miseries were reserved, apparently in a phial, to be poured out upon our fathers, ourselves and our children, by *Christian* Americans!

... But against all accusations which may or can be preferred against me, I appeal to Heaven for my motive in writing—who knows what my object is, if possible, to awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this *Republican Land of Liberty!!!!!!*

...Will any of us leave our homes and go to Africa? I hope not. Let them commence their attack upon us as they did on our brethren in Ohio, driving and beating us from our country, and my soul for theirs, they will have enough of it. Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country, than it is the whites—we have enriched it with our *blood and tears*. The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears:—and will they drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our *blood*? They must look sharp or this very thing will bring swift destruction upon them. The Americans have got so fat on our blood and groans, that they have almost forgotten the God of armies. But let them go on...

I also ask the attention of the world of mankind to the declaration of these very American people, of the United States. *A declaration made July 4, 1776*. It says, “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 for 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” See your Declaration Americans!!! Do you understand your own language? Hear your language, proclaimed to the world, July 4th, 1776—”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!!” Compare your own language above, extracted from your Declaration of Independence, with your cruelties and murders inflicted by your cruel and unmerciful fathers and yourselves on our fathers and on us—men who have never given your fathers or you the least provocation!!!!!!

Now, Americans! I ask you candidly, was your sufferings under Great Britain, one hundredth part as cruel and tyrannical as you have rendered ours under you? Some of you, no doubt, believe that we will never throw off your murderous government and “provide new guards for our future security.” If Satan has made you believe it, will he not deceive you? Do the whites say, I being a black man, ought to be humble, which I readily admit? I ask them, ought they not to be as humble as I? or do they think that they can measure arms with Jehovah? Will not the Lord yet humble them? or will not these very coloured people whom they now treat worse than brutes, yet under God, humble them low down enough? Some of the whites are ignorant enough to tell us that we ought to be submissive to them, that they may keep their feet on our throats. And if we do not submit to be beaten to death by them, we are bad creatures and of course must be damned, &c. If any man wishes to hear this doctrine openly preached to us by the American preachers, let him go into the Southern and Western sections of this country—I do not speak from hear say—what I have written, is what I have seen and heard myself. No man may think that my book is made up of conjecture— I have travelled and observed nearly the whole of those things myself, and what little I did not get by my own observation, I received from those among the whites and blacks, in whom the greatest confidence may be placed.

The Americans may be as vigilant as they please, but they cannot be vigilant enough for the Lord, neither can they hide themselves, where he will not find and bring them out.

David Walker, *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (Boston: 1830), 3-4, 73, 84, 86.

[Available through Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

William Lloyd Garrison Introduces *The Liberator*, 1831

William Lloyd Garrison participated in reform causes in Massachusetts from a young age. In the 1820s he advocated Black colonization in Africa and the gradual abolition of slavery. Reading the work of Black northerners like David Walker changed his mind. In 1831, he created a newspaper, called The Liberator. The following is the opening essay that Garrison used to explain the purpose of his paper.

In the month of August, I issued proposals for publishing “THE LIBERATOR” in Washington City; but the enterprise, though hailed in different sections of the country, was palsied by public indifference. Since that time, the removal of the Genius of Universal Emancipation to the Seat of Government has tendered less imperious the establishment of a similar periodical in that quarter.

During my recent tour for the purpose of exciting the minds of the people by a series of discourses on the subject of slavery, every place that I visited gave fresh evidence of the fact, that a greater revolution in public sentiment was to be effected in the free States—and particularly in New-England—than at the South. I found contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen, than among slave-owners themselves. Of course, there were individual exceptions to the contrary. This state of things afflicted, but did not dishearten me. I determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birthplace of liberty. That standard is now unfurled; and long may it float, unhurt by the spoliations of time or the missiles of a desperate foe—yea, till every chain be broken, and every bondman set free! Let Southern oppressors tremble—let their secret abettors tremble—let their Northern apologists tremble—let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble.

I deem the publication of my original Prospectus unnecessary, as it has obtained a wide circulation. The principles therein inculcated will be steadily pursued in this paper, excepting that I shall not array myself as the political partisan of any man. In defending the great cause of human rights, I wish to derive the assistance of all religions and of all parties.

Assenting to the “self-evident truth” maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, “that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. In Park-Street Church, on the Fourth of July, 1829, in an address on slavery, I unreflectingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation, and thus publicly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren the poor slaves, for having uttered a sentiment so full of timidity, injustice, and absurdity. A similar recantation, from my pen, was published in the

Genius of Universal Emancipation at Baltimore, in September, 1829. My conscience is now satisfied.

I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present! I am in earnest—I will not equivocate I will not excuse— I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.

It is pretended, that I am retarding the cause of emancipation by the coarseness of my invective and the precipitancy of my measures. The charge is not true. On this question my influence,—humble as it is,—is felt at this moment to a considerable extent, and shall be felt in coming years—not perniciously, but beneficially—not as a curse, but as a blessing; and posterity will bear testimony that I was right. I desire to thank God, that he enables me to disregard “the fear of man which bringeth a snare,” and to speak his truth in its simplicity and power. . . .

Oppression! I have seen thee, face to face,
And met thy cruel eye and cloudy brow;
But thy soul-withering glance I fear not now —
For dread to prouder feelings doth give place
Of deep abhorrence! Scorning the disgrace
Of slavish knees that at thy footstool bow,
I also kneel — but with far other vow
Do hail thee and thy hord of hirelings base: —
I swear, while life-blood warms my throbbing veins,
Still to oppose and thwart, with heart and hand,
Thy brutalising sway — till Afric’s chains
Are burst, and Freedom rules the rescued land, —
Trampling Oppression and his iron rod:
Such is the vow I take — SO HELP ME GOD!

William Lloyd Garrison, *A Memorial of William Lloyd Garrison from the City of Boston* (Boston: 1886), 35-37.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Angelina Grimké, Appeal to Christian Women of the South, 1836

Women were active participants in every aspect of the abolitionist movement. In this document, Angelina Grimké, a former Southerner herself, attempts to persuade Southern women of the immorality of slavery. This tactic, called moral suasion, directed the efforts of abolitionists, especially in the 1830s and 1840s.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

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

But there are other Christian women scattered over the Southern States, a very large number of whom have never seen me, and never heard my name, and who feel *no* interest whatever in *me*. But I feel an interest in *you*, as branches of the same vine from whose root I daily draw the principle of spiritual vitality—Yes! Sisters in Christ I feel an interest in *you*, and often has the secret prayer arisen on your behalf, Lord “open thou their eyes that they may see wondrous things out of thy Law”—It is then, because I *do feel* and *do pray* for you, that I thus address you upon a subject about which of all others, perhaps you would rather not hear any thing; but, “would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed bear with me, for I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.” Be not afraid then to read my appeal; it is *not* written in the heat of passion or prejudice, but in that solemn calmness which is the result of conviction and duty. It is true, I am going to tell you unwelcome truths, but I mean to speak those *truths in love*, and remember Solomon says, “faithful are the *wounds* of a friend.” I do not believe the time has yet come when *Christian women* “will not endure sound doctrine,” even on the subject of Slavery, if it is spoken to them in tenderness and love, therefore I now address *you*.

To all of you then, known or unknown, relatives or strangers, (for you are all *one* in Christ,) I would speak. I have felt for you at this time, when unwelcome light is pouring in upon the world on the subject of slavery.... We must come back to the good old doctrine of our fore fathers who declared to the world, “this self evident truth that *all* men are created equal, and that they have certain *inalienable* rights among which are, life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness.” It is even a greater absurdity to suppose a man can be legally born a slave under *our free Republican* Government, than under the petty despotisms of barbarian Africa. If then, we have no right to enslave an African, surely we can have none to enslave an

American; if a self evident truth that *all* men every where and of every color are born equal, and have an *inalienable right to liberty*, then it is equally true that *no* man can be born a slave, and no man can ever *rightfully* be reduced to *involuntary* bondage and held as a slave, however fair may be the claim of his master or mistress through wills and title-deeds....

The *women of the South can overthrow* this horrible system of oppression and cruelty, licentiousness and wrong. Such appeals to your legislatures would be irresistible, for there is something in the heart of man which *will bend under moral suasion*. There is a swift witness for truth in his bosom, which *will respond to truth* when it is uttered with calmness and dignity. If you could obtain but six signatures to such a petition in only one state, I would say, send up that petition, and be not in the least discouraged by the scoffs, and jeers of the heartless, or the resolution of the house to lay it on the table. It will be a great thing if the subject can be introduced into your legislatures in any way, even by *women*, and *they will* be the most likely to introduce it there in the best possible manner, as a matter of morals and *religion*, not of expediency or politics. You may petition, too, the different ecclesiastical bodies of the slave states. Slavery must be attacked with the whole power of truth and the sword of the spirit. You must take it up on *Christian* ground, and fight against it with Christian weapons, whilst your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. And you *are now* loudly called upon by the cries of the widow and the orphan, to arise and gird yourselves for this great moral conflict, with the whole armour of righteousness upon the right hand and on the left.

Angelina Emily Grimké, *Appeal to Christian Women of the South* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836).

[Available through the University of Virginia](#)

Sarah Grimké Calls for Women's Rights, 1838

Antebellum Americans increasingly confined middle-class white women to the home, where they were responsible for educating children and maintaining household virtue. Yet women used these ideas to become more active in the public sphere than ever before, taking prominent roles in all the major reform causes of the era. Women's participation in the antislavery crusade most directly inspired specific women's rights campaigns. In this document, Sarah Moore Grimké calls for equality between men and women.

The lust of dominion was probably the first effect of the fall; and as there was no other intelligent being over whom to exercise it, woman was the first victim of this unhallowed passion. We afterwards see it exhibited by Cain in the murder of his brother, by Nimrod in his becoming a mighty hunter of men, and setting up a kingdom over which to reign. Here we see the origin of that Upas of slavery, which sprang up immediately after the fall, and has spread its pestilential branches over the whole face of the known world. All history attests that man has subjected woman to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasures, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could do to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says, the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior.

Woman has been placed by John Quincy Adams, side by side with the slave, whilst he was contending for the right side of petition. I thank him for ranking us with the oppressed; for I shall not find it difficult to show, that in all ages and countries, not even excepting enlightened republican America, woman has more or less been made a means to promote the welfare of man, without due regard to her own happiness, and the glory of God as the end of her creation...

Man almost always addresses himself to the weakness of woman. By flattery, by an appeal to her passions, he seeks access to her heart; and when he has gained her affections, he uses her as the instrument of his pleasure—the minister of his temporal comfort. He furnishes himself with a housekeeper, whose chief business is in the kitchen, or the nursery. And whilst he goes abroad and enjoys the means of improvement afforded by collision of intellect with cultivated minds, his wife is condemned to draw nearly all her instruction from books, if she has time to pursue them; and if not, from her meditations, whilst engaged in those domestic duties, which are necessary for the comfort of her lord and master...

I believe it will be found that men, in the exercise of their usurped dominion over women, have almost invariably done one of two things. They have either made slaves of the creatures whom God designed to be their companions and their coadjutors in every moral and intellectual improvement, or they have dressed them like dolls, and used them as toys to amuse their hours of recreation...

I maintain that they [men and women] are equal, and that God never invested fallen man with unlimited power over his fellow man; and I rejoice that circumstances have prevented

woman from being more deeply involved in the guilt which appears to be inseparable from political affairs. If woman had not almost universally been depressed and degraded, the page of history would have exhibited as many eminent statesmen and politicians among women as men. We are much in the situation of the slave. Man has asserted and assumed authority over us...

Now a new and vast sphere of usefulness is opened to her, and she is pressed by surrounding circumstances to come up to the help of the Lord against the giant sins which desolate our beloved country. Shall woman shrink from duty...and forget her brethren and sisters in bondage...whose husbands and wives are torn from them by relentless tyrants, and whose children are snatched from their arms by their unfeeling task-masters?... Shall she, because 'her house is her home,' refuse her aid and her sympathy to the down trodden slave?...Did God give her those blessings to steel her heart to the sufferings of her fellow creatures?...

The page of history teems with women's wrongs, and it is wet with women's tears.—For the sake of my degraded sex every where, and for the sake of my brethren, who suffer just in proportion as they place woman lower in the scale of creation than man...I entreat my sisters to arise...in all the dignity of immortal beings, and plant themselves, side by side, on the platform of human rights, with man to whom they were designed to be companions, equals and helpers in every good word and work...

Thine in the bonds of womanhood,

SARAH M. GRIMKÉ

Sarah Moore Grimké, *Letters on the equality of the sexes, and the condition of woman* (Boston: 1838), 11-12, 23, 27, 33, 40-41, 45.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Henry David Thoreau Reflects on Nature, 1854

The Transcendentalist movement began in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1836, when a group of Unitarian clergymen formed what later became known as the Transcendental Club. The club met for four years and quickly expanded to include numerous literary intellectuals. Among these were the author Henry David Thoreau. In 1845, Thoreau took up residence at Walden Pond and began to write. The result was Walden, which touted simple living, communion with nature, and self-sufficiency.

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

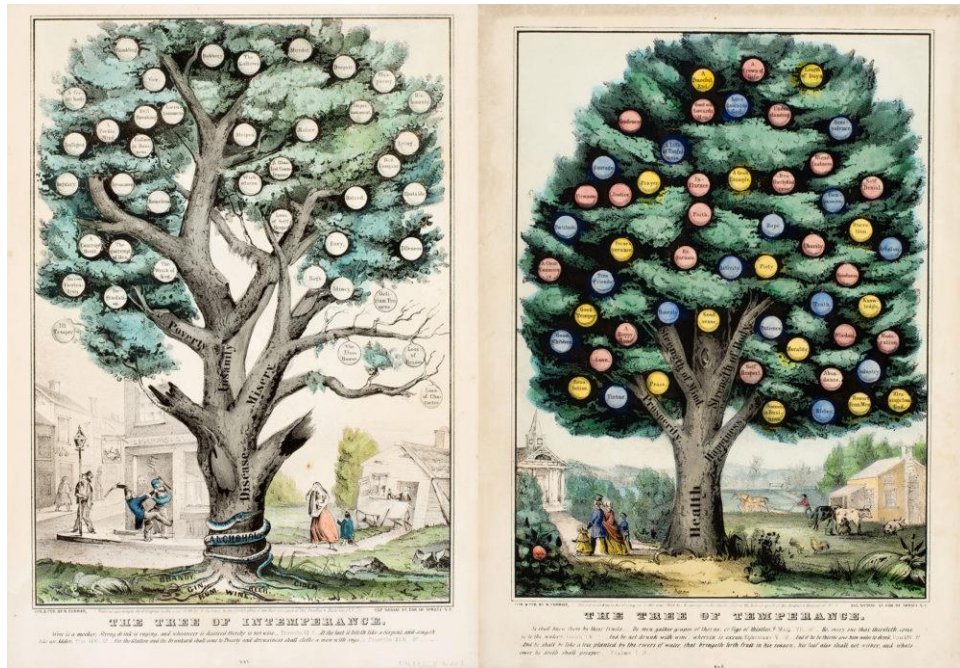
Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is

like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: 1910), 117-121.

[Available through Google Books](#)

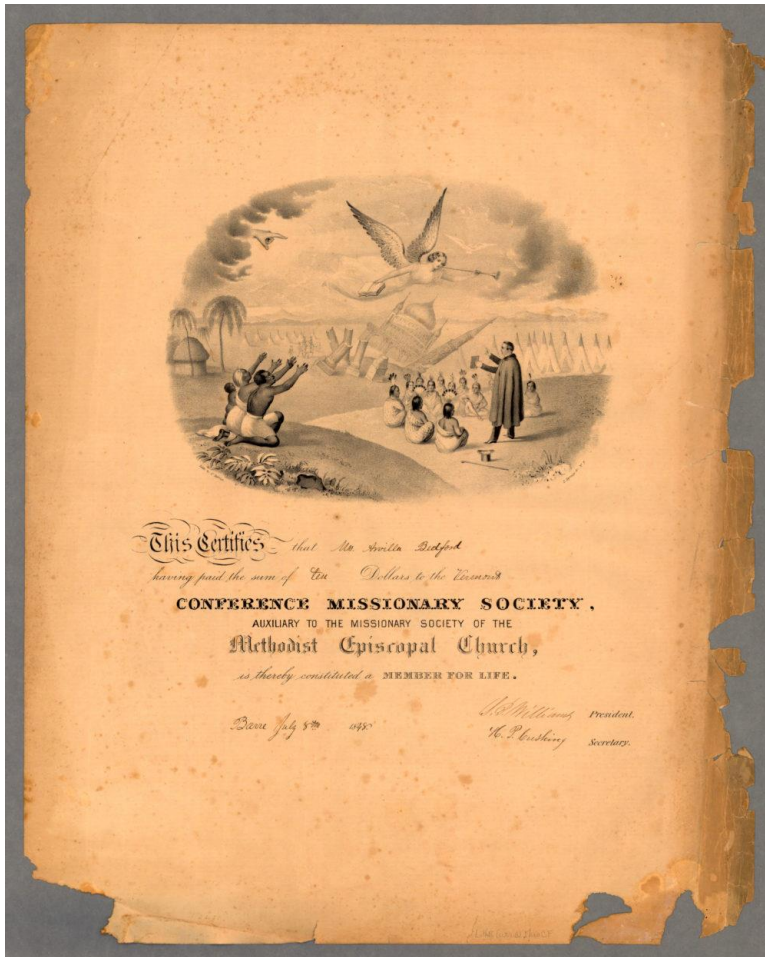
The Fruit of Alcohol and Temperance Lithographs, 1849



N. Currier, "Tree of Temperance" and "Tree of Intemperance," 1849, via [American Antiquarian Society](#).

This pair of lithographs, created by Nathaniel Currier (later of Currier & Ives fame), contrasts the "fruits" of abstaining from alcohol to those of indulging in strong drink. It leaves little to the imagination. Intemperance is symbolized by a diseased tree, surrounded by drunks outside of a pawn shop and a woman and her children being thrown out of their home. The lush foliage of temperance, on the other hand, is surrounded by prosperous church-going farm families.

Missionary Society Membership Certificate, 1848



N. Currier, *Membership Certificate to [Vermont] Conference Missionary Society, 1848*, via [American Antiquarian Society](#).

The Second Great Awakening moved American evangelicals to proselytize at home and abroad. The image on this lifetime membership certificate to a missionary society shows how the new member's money will be used. The guiding hand of Providence and an angel bearing a book (presumably a Bible) hover at the top of the image. In the background, a mosque topples over. An African family kneels and reaches towards the heavens on the left side, while a minister preaches to Native Americans gathered before him on the right.

11. The Cotton Revolution

Introduction

Cotton created the antebellum South. The wildly profitable commodity opened a previously closed society to the grandeur, the profit, the exploitation, and the social dimensions of a larger, more connected, global community. Populations became more cosmopolitan, more educated, and wealthier. Systems of class—lower-, middle-, and upper-class communities—developed where they had never clearly existed. Ports that had once focused entirely on the importation of slaves, and shipped only regionally, became homes to daily and weekly shipping lines to New York City, Liverpool, Manchester, Le Havre, and Lisbon. The world was, slowly but surely, coming closer together; and the South was right in the middle. But slavery remained, and the internal slave trade rose as the 1860s approached. Political debate, race relations, and the burden of slavery continued beneath the roar of steamboats, counting houses, and the exchange of goods. Underneath it all, many questions remained—chief among them, what to do if slavery somehow came under threat. These sources offer perspectives on how southerners, enslaved and free, made meaning of their lives in an era of great change.

Nat Turner explains the Southampton rebellion, 1831

In August, 1831, Nat Turner led a group of enslaved and free Black men in a rebellion that killed over fifty white men, women, and children. Nat Turner understood his rebellion as an act of God. While he awaited trial, Turner spoke with the white attorney, Thomas Ruffin Gray, who wrote their conversations into the following document.

I was struck with that particular passage which says : “Seek ye the kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you.” I reflected much on this passage, and prayed daily for light on this subject—As I was praying one day at my plough, the spirit spoke to me, saying “Seek ye the kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you.”

Question—what do you mean by the Spirit.

Answer—The Spirit that spoke to the prophets in former days—and I was greatly astonished, and for two years prayed continually, whenever my duty would permit—and then again I had the same revelation, which fully confirmed me in the impression that I was ordained for some great purpose in the hands of the Almighty. Several years rolled round, in which many events occurred to strengthen me in this my belief. At this time I reverted in my mind to the remarks made of me in my childhood, and the things that had been shewn me—and as it had been said of me in my childhood by those by whom I had been taught to pray, both white and black, and in whom I had the greatest confidence, that I had too much sense to be raised, and if I was, I would never be of any use to any one as a slave. Now finding I had arrived to man’s estate, and was a slave, and these revelations being made known to me, I began to direct my attention to this great object, to fulfil the purpose for which, by this time, I felt assured I was intended. Knowing the influence I had obtained over the minds of my fellow servants, (not by the means of conjuring and such like tricks—for to them I always spoke of such things with contempt) but by the communion of the Spirit whose revelations I often communicated to them, and they believed and said my wisdom came from God. I now began to prepare them for my purpose, by telling them something was about to happen that would terminate in fulfilling the great promise that had been made to me—About this time I was placed under an overseer, from whom I ran away—and after remaining in the woods thirty days, I returned, to the astonishment of the negroes on the plantation, who thought I had made my escape to some other part of the country, as my father had done before. But the reason of my return was, that the Spirit appeared to me and said I had my wishes directed to the things of this world, and not to the kingdom of Heaven, and that I should return to the service of my earthly master—“For he who knoweth his Master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, and thus, have I chastened you.” And the negroes found fault, and murmured against me, saying that if they had my sense they would not serve any master in the world. And about this time I had a vision—and I saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened—the thunder rolled in

the Heavens, and blood flowed in streams—and I heard a voice saying, “Such is your luck, such you are called to see, and let it come rough or smooth, you must surely bare it.” I now withdrew myself as much as my situation would permit, from the intercourse of my fellow servants, for the avowed purpose of serving the Spirit more fully—and it appeared to me, and reminded me of the things it had already shown me, and that it would then reveal to me the knowledge of the elements, the revolution of the planets, the operation of tides, and changes of the seasons. After this revelation in the year 1825, and the knowledge of the elements being made known to me, I sought more than ever to obtain true holiness before the great day of judgment should appear, and then I began to receive the true knowledge of faith. And from the first steps of righteousness until the last, was I made perfect; and the Holy Ghost was with me, and said, “Behold me as I stand in the Heavens”—and I looked and saw the forms of men in different attitudes—and there were lights in the sky to which the children of darkness gave other names than what they really were—for they were the lights of the Savior’s hands, stretched forth from east to west, even as they were extended on the cross on Calvary for the redemption of sinners. And I wondered greatly at these miracles, and prayed to be informed of a certainty of the meaning thereof—and shortly afterwards, while laboring in the field, I discovered drops of blood on the corn as though it were dew from heaven—and I communicated it to many, both white and black, in the neighborhood—and I then found on the leaves in the woods hieroglyphic characters, and numbers, with the forms of men in different attitudes, portrayed in blood, and representing the figures I had seen before in the heavens. And now the Holy Ghost had revealed itself to me, and made plain the miracles it had shown me—For as the blood of Christ had been shed on this earth, and had ascended to heaven for the salvation of sinners, and was now returning to earth again in the form of dew—and as the leaves on the trees bore the impression of the figures I had seen in the heavens, it was plain to me that the Saviour was about to lay down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and the great day of judgment was at hand. About this time I told these things to a white man, on whom it had a wonderful effect—and he ceased from his wickedness, and was attacked immediately with a cutaneous eruption, and blood oozed from the pores of his skin, and after praying and fasting nine days, he was healed, and the Spirit appeared to me again, and said, as the Saviour had been baptised so should we be also—and when the white people would not let us be baptised by the church, we went down into the water together, in the sight of many who reviled us, and were baptised by the Spirit—After this I rejoiced greatly, and gave thanks to God. And on the 12th of May, 1828, I heard a loud noise in the heavens, and the Spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent, for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first.

Nat Turner, *Confessions of Nat Turner...* (Baltimore: 1831), 9-11.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

Harriet Jacobs on Rape and Slavery, 1860

Harriet Jacobs was born into slavery in North Carolina. After escaping to New York, Jacobs eventually wrote a narrative of her enslavement under the pseudonym of Linda Brent. In this excerpt Jacobs explains her experience struggling with sexual assault from her enslaver.

The secrets of slavery are concealed like those of the Inquisition. My master was, to my knowledge, the father of eleven slaves. But did the mothers dare to tell who was the father of their children? Did the other slaves dare to allude to it, except in whispers among themselves? No, indeed! They knew too well the terrible consequences.

My grandmother could not avoid seeing things which excited her suspicions. She was uneasy about me, and tried various ways to buy me; but the never-changing answer was always repeated: "Linda does not belong to me. She is my daughter's property, and I have no legal right to sell her." The conscientious man! He was too scrupulous to sell me; but he had no scruples whatever about committing a much greater wrong against the helpless young girl placed under his guardianship, as his daughter's property. Sometimes my persecutor would ask me whether I would like to be sold. I told him I would rather be sold to any body than to lead such a life as I did. On such occasions he would assume the air of a very injured individual, and reproach me for my ingratitude. "Did I not take you into the house, and make you the companion of my own children?" he would say. "Have I ever treated you like a negro? I have never allowed you to be punished, not even to please your mistress. And this is the recompense I get, you ungrateful girl!" I answered that he had reasons of his own for screening me from punishment, and that the course he pursued made my mistress hate me and persecute me. If I wept, he would say, "Poor child! Don't cry! don't cry! I will make peace for you with your mistress. Only let me arrange matters in my own way. Poor, foolish girl! you don't know what is for your own good. I would cherish you. I would make a lady of you. Now go, and think of all I have promised you."

I did think of it.

Reader, I draw no imaginary pictures of southern homes. I am telling you the plain truth. Yet when victims make their escape from this wild beast of Slavery, northerners consent to act the part of bloodhounds, and hunt the poor fugitive back into his den, "full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." Nay, more, they are not only willing, but proud, to give their daughters in marriage to slaveholders. The poor girls have romantic notions of a sunny clime, and of the flowering vines that all the year round shade a happy home. To what disappointments are they destined! The young wife soon learns that the husband in whose hands she has placed her happiness pays no regard to his marriage vows. Children of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies, and too well she knows that they are born unto him of his own household. Jealousy and hatred enter the flowery home, and it is ravaged of its loveliness.

Southern women often marry a man knowing that he is the father of many little slaves. They do not trouble themselves about it. They regard such children as property, as marketable as the pigs on the plantation; and it is seldom that they do not make them aware of this by passing them into the slave-trader's hands as soon as possible, and thus getting them out of their sight. I am glad to say there are some honorable exceptions.

I have myself known two southern wives who exhorted their husbands to free those slaves towards whom they stood in a "parental relation;" and their request was granted. These husbands blushed before the superior nobleness of their wives' natures. Though they had only counseled them to do that which it was their duty to do, it commanded their respect, and rendered their conduct more exemplary. Concealment was at an end, and confidence took the place of distrust.

Though this bad institution deadens the moral sense, even in white women, to a fearful extent, it is not altogether extinct. I have heard southern ladies say of Mr. Such a one, "He not only thinks it no disgrace to be the father of those little niggers, but he is not ashamed to call himself their master. I declare, such things ought not to be tolerated in any decent society!"

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: 1861), 55-57.

[Available through Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

Solomon Northup Describes a Slave Market, 1841

Solomon Northup was a free Black man in New York who was captured and sold into slavery. After twelve years, he was rescued and returned to his family. Shortly thereafter, he published a narrative of his experiences as a slave. This excerpt describes the horrors he saw in a slave market.

The very amiable, pious-hearted Mr. Theophilus Freeman, partner or consignee of James H. Burch, and keeper of the slave pen in New-Orleans, was out among his animals early in the morning. With an occasional kick of the older men and women, and many a sharp crack of the whip about the ears of the younger slaves, it was not long before they were all astir, and wide awake. Mr. Theophilus Freeman bustled about in a very industrious manner, getting his property ready for the sales-room, intending, no doubt, to do that day a rousing business.

In the first place we were required to wash thoroughly, and those with beards, to shave. We were then furnished with a new suit each, cheap, but clean. The men had hat, coat, shirt, pants and shoes; the women frocks of calico, and handkerchiefs to bind about their heads. We were now conducted into a large room in the front part of the building to which the yard was attached, in order to be properly trained, before the admission of customers. The men were arranged on one side of the room, the women on the other. The tallest was placed at the head of the row, then the next tallest, and so on in the order of their respective heights. Emily was at the foot of the line of women. Freeman charged us to remember our places; exhorted us to appear smart and lively, – sometimes threatening, and again, holding out various inducements. During the day he exercised us in the art of “looking smart,” and of moving to our places with exact precision.

After being fed, in the afternoon, we were again paraded and made to dance. Bob, a colored boy, who had some time belonged to Freeman, played on the violin. Standing near him, I made bold to inquire if he could play the “Virginia Reel.” He answered he could not, and asked me if I could play. Replying in the affirmative, he handed me the violin. I struck up a tune, and finished it. Freeman ordered me to continue playing, and seemed well pleased, telling Bob that I far excelled him – a remark that seemed to grieve my musical companion very much.

Next day many customers called to examine Freeman’s “new lot.” The latter gentleman was very loquacious, dwelling at much length upon our several good points and qualities. He would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel of our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase. Sometimes a man or woman was taken back to the small house in the yard, stripped, and inspected more minutely. Scars upon a slave’s back were considered evidence of a rebellious or unruly spirit, and hurt his sale.

One old gentleman, who said he wanted a coachman, appeared to take a fancy to me. From his conversation with Burch, I learned he was a resident in the city. I very much desired that he would buy me, because I conceived it would not be difficult to make my escape from New-Orleans on some northern vessel. Freeman asked him fifteen hundred dollars for me. The old gentleman insisted it was too much, as times were very hard. Freeman, however, declared that I was sound and healthy, of a good constitution, and intelligent. He made it a point to enlarge upon my musical attainments. The old gentleman argued quite adroitly that there was nothing extraordinary about the nigger, and finally, to my regret, went out, saying he would call again. During the day, however, a number of sales were made. David and Caroline were purchased together by a Natchez planter. They left us, grinning broadly, and in the most happy state of mind, caused by the fact of their not being separated. Lethe was sold to a planter of Baton Rouge, her eyes flashing with anger as she was led away.

The same man also purchased Randall. The little fellow was made to jump, and run across the floor, and perform many other feats, exhibiting his activity and condition. All the time the trade was going on, Eliza was crying aloud, and wringing her hands. She besought the man not to buy him, unless he also bought her self and Emily. She promised, in that case, to be the most faithful slave that ever lived. The man answered that he could not afford it, and then Eliza burst into a paroxysm of grief, weeping plaintively. Freeman turned round to her, savagely, with his whip in his uplifted hand, ordering her to stop her noise, or he would flog her. He would not have such work – such snivelling; and unless she ceased that minute, he would take her to the yard and give her a hundred lashes. Yes, he would take the nonsense out of her pretty quick – if he didn't, might he be d—d. Eliza shrunk before him, and tried to wipe away her tears, but it was all in vain. She wanted to be with her children, she said, the little time she had to live. All the frowns and threats of Freeman, could not wholly silence the afflicted mother. She kept on begging and beseeching them, most piteously not to separate the three. Over and over again she told them how she loved her boy. A great many times she repeated her former promises – how very faithful and obedient she would be; how hard she would labor day and night, to the last moment of her life, if he would only buy them all together. But it was of no avail; the man could not afford it. The bargain was agreed upon, and Randall must go alone. Then Eliza ran to him; embraced him passionately; kissed him again and again; told him to remember her – all the while her tears falling in the boy's face like rain.

Freeman damned her, calling her a blubbering, bawling wench, and ordered her to go to her place, and behave herself; and be somebody. He swore he wouldn't stand such stuff but a little longer. He would soon give her something to cry about, if she was not mighty careful, and that she might depend upon.

The planter from Baton Rouge, with his new purchases, was ready to depart.

“Don't cry, mama. I will be a good boy. Don't cry,” said Randall, looking back, as they passed out of the door.

What has become of the lad, God knows. It was a mournful scene indeed. I would have cried myself if I had dared.

Solomon Northup, *Twelve years a slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a citizen of New-York, kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and rescued in 1853, from a cotton plantation near the Red River in Louisiana* (Auburn, N.Y.: 1856), 78-82.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

George Fitzhugh Argues that Slavery is Better than Liberty and Equality, 1854

*As the nineteenth century progressed, some Americans shifted their understanding of slavery from a necessary evil to a positive good. George Fitzhugh offered one of the most consistent and sophisticated defenses of slavery. His study *Sociology for the South* attacked northern society as corrupt and slavery as a gentle system designed to “protect” the inferior Black race and promote social harmony.*

Liberty and equality are new things under the sun. The free states of antiquity abounded with slaves. The feudal system that supplanted Roman institutions changed the form of slavery, but brought with it neither liberty nor equality. France and the Northern States of our Union have alone fully and fairly tried the experiment of a social organization founded upon universal liberty and equality of rights. England has only approximated to this condition in her commercial and manufacturing cities. The examples of small communities in Europe are not fit exponents of the working of the system. In France and in our Northern States the experiment has already failed... we have conclusive proof that liberty and equality have not conduced to enhance the comfort or the happiness of the people. Crime and pauperism have increased. Riots, trades unions, strikes for higher wages, discontent breaking out into revolution, are things of daily occurrence, and show that the poor see and feel quite as clearly as the philosophers, that their condition is far worse under the new than under the old order of things....

The statistics of France, England and America show that pauperism and crime advance *pari passu* with liberty and equality. How can it be otherwise, when all society is combined to oppress the poor and weak minded? The rich man, however good he may be, employs the laborer who will work for the least wages. If he be a good man, his punctuality enables him to cheapen the wages of the poor man. The poor war with one another in the race of competition, in order to get employment, by underbidding; for laborers are more abundant than employers. Population increases faster than capital. Look to the situation of woman when she is thrown into this war of competition, and has to support herself by her daily wages. For the same or equally valuable services she gets not half the pay that man does, simply because the modesty of her sex prevents her from resorting to all the arts and means of competition which men employ. He who would emancipate woman, unless he could make her as coarse and strong in mind and body as man, would be her worst enemy; her subservience to and dependence on man, is necessary to her very existence. She is not a soldier fitted to enlist in the war of free competition. We do not set children and women free because they are not capable of taking care of themselves, not equal to the constant struggle of society. To set them free would be to give the lamb to the wolf to take care of. Society would quickly devour them. If the children of ten years of age were remitted to all the rights of person and property which men enjoy, all can perceive how soon ruin and penury would overtake them. But half of mankind are but grown-up children, and liberty is as fatal to them as it would be to children...

Domestic slavery in the Southern States has produced the same results in elevating the character of the master that it did in Greece and Rome. He is lofty and independent in his sentiments, generous, affectionate, brave and eloquent; he is superior to the Northerner, in every thing but the arts of thrift...

But the chief and far most important enquiry is, how does slavery affect the condition of the slave? One of the wildest sects of Communists in France proposes not only to hold all property in common, but to divide the profits not according to each mans in-put and labor but according to each mans wants. Now this is precisely the system of domestic slavery with us. We provide for each slave, in old age and in infancy, in sickness and in health, not according to his labor, but according to his wants. The masters wants are most costly and refined, and he therefore gets a larger share of the profits. A Southern farm is the beau ideal of Communism; it is a joint concern, in which the slave consumes more than the master, of the coarse products, and is far happier, because although the concern may fail, he is always sure of a support; he is only transferred to another master to participate in the profits of another concern...

There is no rivalry, no competition to get employment among slaves, as among free laborers. Nor is there a war between master and slave. The masters interest prevents his reducing the slaves allowance or wages in infancy or sickness, for he might lose the slave by so doing. His feeling for his slave never permits him to stint him in old age. The slaves are all well fed, well clad, have plenty of fuel, and are happy. They have no dread of the future no fear of want. A state of dependance is the only condition in which reciprocal affection can exist among human beings the only situation in which the war of competition ceases, and peace, amity and good will arise....

George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: 1854), 226, 230-231, 244-246.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Sermon on the Duties of a Christian Woman, 1851

The Market Revolution brought a hardening of gender roles in both the North and the South, but the South tended to hold more tightly to the expectation of "separate spheres." In this sermon, Rev. Aldert Smedes of Raleigh, North Carolina, praises the virtues of women and explains the duties of a Christian woman.

I purpose, then, to consider the duties and responsibilities of a woman,—thus showing, not only what she can do, but what she must do, if she would be entitled to the commendation, "She hath done what she could."

...The young man is very early apprenticed to the business or profession he is to pursue for a maintenance; and the studies or labors exacted by this preparation, he finds wholesome and constant occupation. But how often has the young woman many hours of every day at her command—hours not seldom lost through indolence, frittered away in dress, and vanity or gossip, or, worse than all, consumed in the perusal of works of fiction, generally of a light and enervating, sometimes even of a corrupt and debasing character.

How much in these hours might one, seriously disposed to do what she could, accomplish for her own mental improvement by such reading and studies, as will fit her, not only to sustain well her part in general society, but to discharge, with grace and intelligence, the engrossing duties of her after life, which leave so little time for the pursuits of taste and literature...

One of the first conditions of the married state is, that the desire of the wife shall be to her husband, and that he shall rule over her? "Wives," says St. Peter, "be in subjection to your own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord." "The Husband," says St. Paul, "is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church." How important then, nay how imperative, is it, that, in taking the step which links her "for better, for worse, till death do them part," to one who is henceforward to be "the disposer of her destiny," she should be influenced more by a regard to the moral and intellectual qualities, which, in her guide and head, she can honor and reverence, than to his possession of personal attractions, or incidental advantages, however great and desirable....

And here, it seems to me is indicated the most important duty of the Christian wife. From natural temperament, and the circumstances of her daily life, she is more sensitive than her husband to the appeals of religion, and less exposed to the dangers and temptations of the world. While, then, it should be her endeavor to render the home of her husband a place of rest from the toils of business—of comforts amid the disappointments of life—of cheerful recreation amid its cares—it should be especially her effort to make it the residence of purity and piety. Against anger, clamor, wrath, bitterness, evil-speaking, murmurs discontent, reproaches, and complainings, the door should be effectually shut; while for meekness

gentleness, resignation, forbearance, hope, peace and joy, there should be an abundant entrance, and a perpetual welcome!

In this way, may the Christian wife often become the minister to her husband's salvation. She may be to him, at all times, a preacher of righteousness, improving every event of sorrow or of joy, into some delightful lesson of Christian patience, or gratitude, or moderation. Not that she will seize every opportunity of inculcating in language the truths and precepts of the gospel, or ever obtrude in an offensive manner her remonstrances and appeals. The preaching of the wife to be effectual, and "to win the husband," must be simply her faithful exhibition in all her conduct of the beauty and heavenly influence of religion. It should appear in her subjection to her husband's authority, in her affectionate attachment to him, and her evident wish to make him happy. It should be seen in the cheerful discharge of her domestic duties, in her maternal solicitude, especially for the spiritual welfare of her offspring; in her mild and Christian, but watchful and careful control of her household, consulting by a wise economy the interests of her husband, and by a just distribution the comfort and happiness of her dependents and servants; in her forbearance towards the involuntary faults of the latter, her pains and patience in teaching them their duties, and the anxiety she manifests for their moral and religious improvement; in her performance of the gentle offices of charity towards her neighbors; in her assiduous endeavors to avail herself of all the public services of the sanctuary; in her evident, though unobtrusive attention to the private and most sacred duties of religion, and in the sacrifices she is willing to make of personal or domestic display, that she may have to give, and may enable and persuade her husband to give bountifully of his means, towards the labors of Christian benevolence, and especially towards the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

It is well known, that many, who in their matrimonial arrangements have thought only for their present happiness, have thus found in their believing wives the ministers to their everlasting bliss. What responsibility is thus thrown upon the Christian woman? If she does what she can in this most interesting relation, she may be the light, the joy, the salvation, of her husband and household; but if she is recreant to her obligations—if the wife is a deserter of her faith and its duties, the last hope, I had almost said, of husband and family, is gone forever!

Aldert Smedes, *"She Hath Done What She Could." A Sermon* (Raleigh: 1851), 3, 5, 8-11.

[Available through Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

Mary Polk Branch remembers plantation life, 1912

The coexistence of brutal oppression and genuine affection was but one of many contradictions in the antebellum slave system. In this postwar reflection, Mary Polk Branch recalls her life as an enslaver. We see here how many white southerners justified the ownership of human beings, as well as an indication of the priorities and perspectives of enslaving women.

In the “quarters,” as the negro cabins were called, there was usually a band, which played at night for the “white folks” to dance. “Old Master” always led off in the “Virginia Reel.” Negroes are always fond of music, and as they would play “Jim Crack Corn, I Don’t Care,” or “Run, Nigger Run,” or “The Patrolers Will Catch You,” or some other especial favorite, they would become wildly excited and beat the tambourines over their heads.

Our nurses we always called “Mammy,” and it was not considered good manners to address any old negro man or woman otherwise than as “uncle” or “aunt,” adding the name whatever that might be – the surname was always the master’s. We were taught to treat them with respect.

There was such a kindly feeling on both sides between the owners and their slaves – inherited kindly feelings. How could it be otherwise? Many were descendants of those who had served in the same family for generations – for instance, the nurse who nursed my children was the daughter of my nurse, and her grandmother had nursed my mother. My maid, Virginia (I can not recall the time when she was not my maid) was a very handsome young mulatto to whom I was especially attached. When she was married in her white dress and long veil flowing to her feet, the ceremony was performed in our back parlor, and Bishop Otey, the first bishop of Tennessee, officiated.

How great the pride the negroes felt in the wealth and importance of their owners, and interest indeed in all of their affairs, amusingly so, sometimes! I recall an old woman, coal black, a red bandanna handkerchief tied over her kinky locks, and great dignity of manner, she said to me: “Young missis should marry her cousin, Marse Tom, and keep our family likeness in our family.”

Indeed, ours was a gay and free-from-care life. I can recall delightful summers at Old Point Comfort, and the Greenbrier White, in Virginia – winters in which I journeyed from my father’s plantation, near Helena, Arkansas, to New Orleans...

The most beautiful assemblage of women I have ever seen I then saw. There was Madame Yznaga; I had known her as a schoolmate as Ellen Clement. Her husband was a Cuban planter, and she owned plantations on the Yazoo River, which had taken her South. Her sympathies were strongly Southern, and I heard of her playing the banjo and singing Dixie songs when abroad during the war. She was the mother of the Duchess of Manchester, and grandmother of the young Duke, who married Miss Zimmerman, of Cincinnati.

Among the beauties was Miss Sallie Ward, of Louisville, with the soft warm coloring and blue eyes which Kentuckians often inherit from their Virginia ancestry.

Then the Tennesseans, a very different type, with clearly cut, regular features, brunettes, and slight, graceful forms, brilliant eyes, but not with the languor which characterized the creoles.

While admiring them, a gentleman said: "No one here compares with Madame Bienvenu," and looking where I was directed I certainly saw a beautiful woman. I was told she was sixty, but it was beyond belief, although upon her shapely head were piled puffs of snowy hair. Her large, velvety eyes had a lovely expression, her creamy-white skin with but little color, but her lips were crimson. Her neck and arms showed to advantage in the black velvet gown by contrast, and a single white camelia she wore as a bouquet de corsage. I admired her enthusiastically.

The next summer I went to the "Greenbrier White," in Virginia, with my uncle, Andrew Polk, his wife and daughter, then a child, Antoinette Polk, afterward the Baronne de Charette. There could not have been a more delightful place. Brilliant belles from all over the South – gay cavaliers, chivalric and courteous. I recall my saying: "There is nothing more I wish for on earth; I am perfectly happy."

It was on the morning of November 29, 1859, that Col. Joseph Branch and I were married at "Buena Vista," my father's, afterwards my, home, at Columbia, Tennessee. Colonel Branch was finely educated, benevolent and honorable, and I may be excused for saying, handsome, though I have now no photograph of him...

Colonel Branch then left Florida and formed a partnership with his father-in-law, and their plantations were in the name of Martin and Branch. There were two plantations, seven miles long, in Desha and Arkansas Counties, Arkansas – the Davis and Dayton plantations. The Davis half-way encircled the lake, reflecting the white cabins and green trees of the "quarters" in the water. It was laid out in regular rows of houses with streets between, two hospitals – one for the men, one for the women – a nursery for the children, and two old women to take charge of them.

In approaching the place there was first a cotton field of one thousand acres, level as the floor, and at regular intervals sheds with lightning-rods attached in case of storms, and at each shed a cistern. A field of cotton would be one day white, the next day the blooms changing to pink, and presenting a beautiful appearance.

Upon these plantations were four hundred slaves before mine came, given me by my father from his plantation near Helena, Arkansas.

Upon my arrival as a bride at the plantation I found the house servants drawn up in a line on the front porch to greet me, and the house brilliantly illuminated. Among them was "Aunt Beck," a dignitary of great importance, my husband's nurse and then his cook. She was a privileged character. Colonel Branch's mother had left the children to the care of this devoted nurse on her deathbed, and her affection for them was boundless. As Governor

Branch's cook in Washington, where he was Secretary of the Navy, she had also been their consoler in many an escapade.

She had no children of her own, and my husband and his brothers, orphans, she considered her own. They gave her her freedom when they were grown, but she scorned it and said she would never leave "Marse Joe," my husband. Good and faithful woman! The bullet which killed her favorite broke her heart, and she lived but a short time afterwards....

Every day we went out on our horses, riding through the canebrakes, bayous, down the turn rows of immense fields of cotton, to the ditches where Irish laborers were digging to drain the marshes – to the nurseries, to the hospital with fruit, or some delicacy for the sick.

In the evening we entertained ourselves with the piano and the library; among the books were many religious ones, for Colonel Branch was pious, and a member of the Episcopal church.

An innocent and ideal life!

Mary Polk Branch, *Memoirs of a Southern Woman "Within the Lines," and a Geneological Record* (Chicago: Joseph G. Branch, 1912)

[Available through Documenting the American South at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

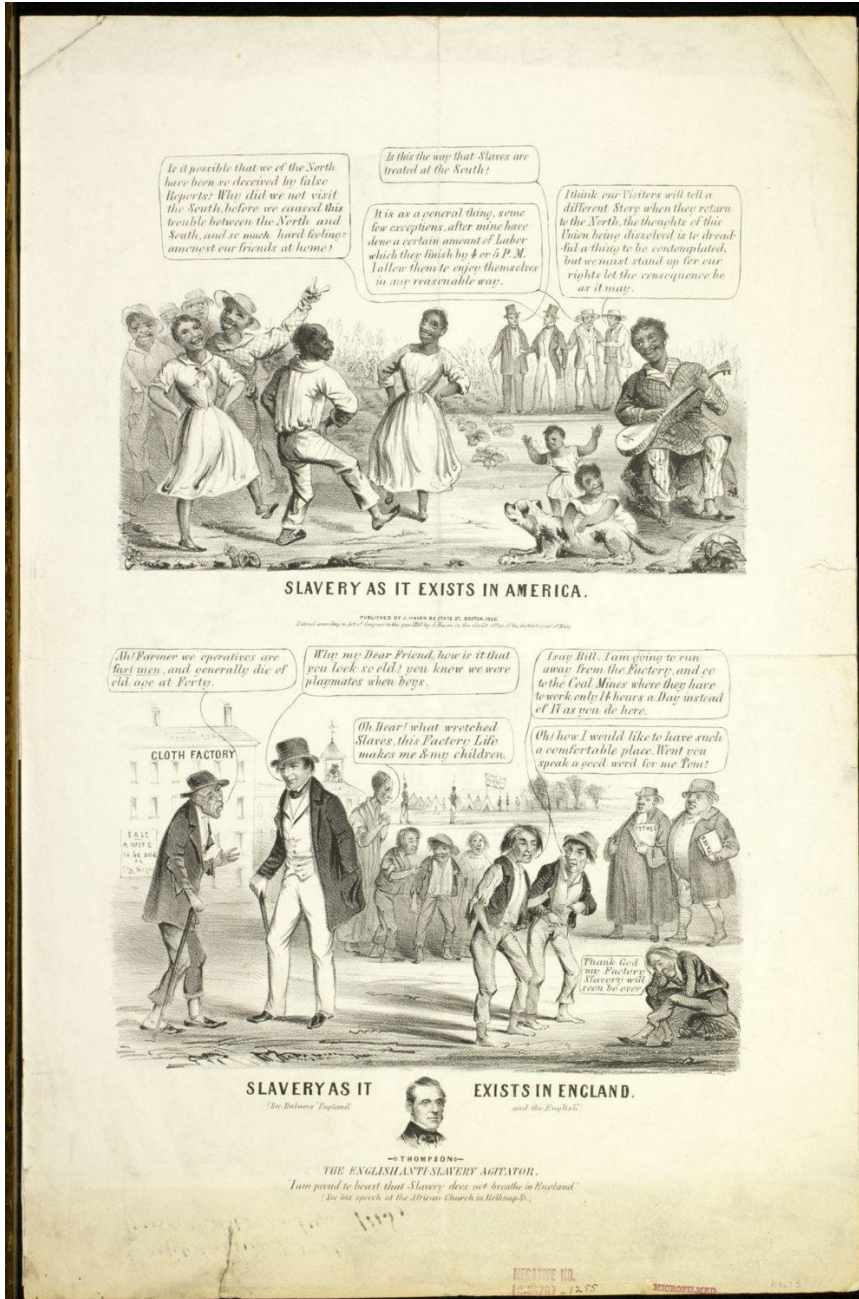
Painting of Enslaved Persons for Sale, 1861



Eyre Crowe, Slaves Waiting for Sale, Richmond, Virginia, 1861, via [University of Virginia, The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas](#).

The English painter Eyre Crowe traveled through the American South in the early 1850s. He was particularly shocked to see the horrors of a slave market where families were torn apart by sale. In this painting, Crowe depicts an enslaved man, several women, and children waiting to be sold at auction.

Proslavery Cartoon, 1850



“Slavery as it exists in America. Slavery as it exists in England,” 1850, via [Library Company of Philadelphia](#).

European alliances helped the American antislavery movement. But proslavery supporters also drew transatlantic comparisons. This proslavery image ignorantly portrays enslaved people who, according to white observers, were cheerful and pleased with their bondage. Proslavery advocates attempted to claim that English factory workers suffered a worse “slavery” than enslaved Africans and African Americans in the American South.

12. Manifest Destiny

Introduction

Many Americans believed that the United States was destined to conquer the American continent and perhaps beyond. Other Americans protested these expansions as betrayals of American values. Debates over expansion, economics, diplomacy, and manifest destiny exposed some of the weaknesses of the American system. The chauvinism of policies like Native American removal, the Mexican War, and filibustering, existed alongside growing anxiety. Manifest destiny attempted to make a virtue of America's lack of history and turn it into the very basis of nationhood. According to these Americans, the United States was the embodiment of the democratic ideal. Democracy had to be timeless, boundless, and portable. New methods of transportation and communication, the rapidity of the railroad and the telegraph, the rise of the international market economy, and the growth of the American frontier provided shared platforms to help Americans think across local identities and reaffirm a national character. These sources demonstrate the conflicts over antebellum American expansion.

Cherokee Petition Protesting Removal, 1836

Native Americans responded differently to the constant encroachments and attacks of American settlers. Some resisted violently. Others worked to adapt to American culture and defend themselves using particularly American weapons like lawsuits and petitions. The Cherokee did more to adapt than perhaps any other Native American group, creating a written constitution modeled off the American constitution and adopting American culture in dress, speech, religion and economic activity. In this document, Cherokee leaders protested the loss of their territory using a very American tactic: petitioning.

The undersigned representatives of the Cherokee nation, east of the river Mississippi, impelled by duty, would respectfully submit, for the consideration of your honorable body, the following statement of facts: It will be seen from the numerous subsisting treaties between the Cherokee nation and the United States, that from the earliest existence of this government, the United States, in Congress assembled, received the Cherokees and their nation in to favor and protection; and that the chiefs and warriors, for themselves and all parts of the Cherokee nation to be under the protection of the United States of America, and of no other sovereign whatsoever: they also stipulated, that the said Cherokee nation will not hold any treaty with any foreign power, individual State, or with individuals of any State; that for, and in consideration of, valuable concessions made by the Cherokee nation, the United States solemnly guaranteed to said nations all their lands not ceded, and pledged the faith of the government, that “all white people who have intruded, or may hereafter intrude, on the lands reserved for the Cherokees, shall be removed by the United States, and proceeded against, according to the provisions of the act, passed 30th March, 1802,” entitled “An act to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes, and to preserve peace on the frontiers.” The Cherokees were happy and prosperous under a scrupulous observance of treaty stipulations by the government of the United States, and from the fostering hand extended over them, they made rapid advances in civilization, morals, and in the arts and sciences. Little did they anticipate, that when taught to think and feel as the American citizen, and to have with him a common interest, they were to be despoiled by their guardian, to become strangers and wanderers in the land of their fathers, forced to return to the savage life, and to seek a new home in the wilds of the far west, and that without their consent. An instrument purporting to be a treaty with the Cherokee people, has recently been made public by the President of the United States, that will have such an operation if carried into effect. This instrument, the delegation aver before the civilized world, and in the presence of Almighty God, is fraudulent, false upon its face, made by unauthorized individuals, without the sanction, and against the wishes of the great body of the Cherokee people. Upwards of fifteen thousand of those people have protested against it, solemnly declaring they will never acquiesce. The delegation would respectfully call the attention of your honorable body to their memorial and protest, with the accompanying documents, submitted to the Senate of the United States, on the subject of the alleged treaty, which are herewith transmitted....

House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents: 13th Congress, 2d Session-49th Congress, 1st Session. United States congressional serial set. Doc. No. 286, pp. 1-5.

[Available through Google Books](#)

John O’Sullivan Declares America’s Manifest Destiny, 1845

John Louis O’Sullivan, a popular editor and columnist, articulated the long-standing American belief in the God-given mission of the United States to lead the world in the transition to democracy. He called this America’s “manifest destiny.” This idea motivated wars of American expansion. He explained this idea in the following essay where he advocated adding Texas to the United States.

Texas is now ours... Her star and her stripe may already be said to have taken their place in the glorious blazon of our common nationality; and the sweep of our eagle’s wing already includes within its circuit the wide extent of her fair and fertile land. She is no longer to us a mere geographical space—a certain combination of coast, plain, mountain, valley, forest and stream. She is no longer to us a mere country on the map. She comes within the dear and sacred designation of Our Country... other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves ... in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions. This we have seen done by England, our old rival and enemy; and by France, strangely coupled with her against us....

The independence of Texas was complete and absolute. It was an independence, not only in fact, but of right. No obligation of duty towards Mexico tended in the least degree to restrain our right to effect the desired recovery of the fair province once our own—whatever motives of policy might have prompted a more deferential consideration of her feelings and her pride, as involved in the question. If Texas became peopled with an American population; it was by no contrivance of our government, but on the express invitation of that of Mexico herself...

California will, probably, next fall away from the loose adhesion which, in such a country as Mexico, holds a remote province in a slight equivocal kind of dependence on the metropolis. Imbecile and distracted, Mexico never can exert any real governmental authority over such a country. The impotence of the one and the distance of the other, must make the relation one of virtual independence; unless, by stunting the province of all natural growth, and forbidding that immigration which can alone develop its capabilities and fulfil the purposes of its creation, tyranny may retain a military dominion, which is no government in the, legitimate sense of the term. In the case of California this is now impossible. The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting-houses. A population will soon be in actual occupation of California, over which it will be idle for Mexico to dream of dominion. They will necessarily become independent. All this without agency of our government, without responsibility of our people—in the natural

flow of events, the spontaneous working of principles, and the adaptation of the tendencies and wants of the human race to the elemental circumstances in the midst of which they find themselves placed. And they will have a right to independence—to self-government—to the possession of the homes conquered from the wilderness by their own labors and dangers, sufferings and sacrifices—a better and a truer right than the artificial title of sovereignty in Mexico, a thousand miles distant, inheriting from Spain a title good only against those who have none better. Their right to independence will be the natural right of self-government belonging to any community strong enough to maintain it—distinct in position, origin and character, and free from any mutual obligations of membership of a common political body, binding it to others by the duty of loyalty and compact of public faith. This will be their title to independence; and by this title, there can be no doubt that the population now fast streaming down upon California will both assert and maintain that independence. Whether they will then attach themselves to our Union or not, is not to be predicted with any certainty. Unless the projected railroad across the continent to the Pacific be carried into effect, perhaps they may not; though even in that case, the day is not distant when the Empires of the Atlantic and Pacific would again flow together into one, as soon as their inland border should approach each other. But that great work, colossal as appears the plan on its first suggestion, cannot remain long unbuilt. Its necessity for this very purpose of binding and holding together in its iron clasp our fast-settling Pacific region with that of the Mississippi valley—the natural facility of the route—the ease with which any amount of labor for the construction can be drawn in from the overcrowded populations of Europe, to be paid in the lands made valuable by the progress of the work itself—and its immense utility to the commerce of the world with the whole eastern Asia, alone almost sufficient for the support of such a road—these considerations give assurance that the day cannot be distant which shall witness the conveyance of the representatives from Oregon and California to Washington within less time than a few years ago was devoted to a similar journey by those from Ohio; while the magnetic telegraph will enable the editors of the “San Francisco Union,” the “Astoria Evening Post,” or the “Nootka Morning News,” to set up in type the first half of the President’s Inaugural before the echoes of the latter half shall have died away beneath the lofty porch of the Capitol, as spoken from his lips.

Away, then, with all idle French talk of *balances of power* on the American Continent. There is no growth in Spanish America! Whatever progress of population there may be in the British Canadas, is only for their own early severance of their present colonial relation to the little island three thousand miles across the Atlantic; soon to be followed by Annexation, and destined to swell the still accumulating momentum of our progress. And whosoever may hold the balance, though they should cast into the opposite scale all the bayonets and cannon, not only of France and England, but of Europe entire, how would it kick the beam against the simple, solid weight of the two hundred and fifty, or three hundred millions—and American millions—destined to gather beneath the flutter of the stripes and stars, in the fast hastening year of the Lord 1945!

John O'Sullivan, "Annexation," *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Volume 17 (New York: 1845), 5-6, 9-10.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Diary of a Woman Migrating to Oregon, 1853

The experience of migrating west into territory still controlled by Native Americans was difficult and dangerous. In these diary excerpts we find the experience of Amelia Stewart Knight who traveled with her husband and seven children from Iowa to Oregon. She was pregnant the entire trip and gave birth to her eighth child on the side of the road near the journey's end.

Saturday, April 9th, 1853 — STARTED FROM HOME [South-central Iowa] about 11 o'clock and traveled 8 miles and camped in an old house; night cold and frosty.

Thursday, April 14th — Quite cold. Little ewes crying with cold feet. Sixteen wagons all getting ready to cross the creek. Hurrah and bustle to get breakfast over. Feed the cattle. Hurrah boys, all ready, we will be the first to cross the creek this morning. Gee up Tip and Tyler, and away we go, the sun just rising. Evening — We have traveled 24 miles today and are about to camp in a large prairie without wood. Cold and chilly; east wind. The men have pitched the tent and are hunting something to make a fire to get supper. I have the sick headache and must leave to boys to get it themselves the best they can.

Saturday, April 16th — Camped last night three miles east of Chariton Point on the prairie. Made our beds down in the tent in the wet and mud. Bed clothes nearly spoiled. Cold and cloudy this morning, and every body out of humour. Seneca is half sick. Plutarch has broke his saddle girth. Husband is scolding and hurrying all hands (and the cook), and Almira says she wished she was home and I say ditto. "Home Sweet Home." Evening — We passed a small town this morning called Chariton Point. The sun shone a little this afternoon. Came 24 miles today, and have pitched our tent in the prairie again, and have some hay to put under our beds. Corn one dollar per bushel, feed for our stock cost 16 dol. to night.

Saturday, April 23rd — Still in camp, it rained hard all night, and blew a hurricane almost. All the tents were blown down, and some wagons capsized. Evening — It has been raining hard all day; everything is wet and muddy. One of the oxen missing; the boys have been hunting him all day. Dreary times, wet and muddy, and crowded in the tent, cold and wet and uncomfortable in the wagon. No place for the poor children. I have been busy cooking, roasting coffee, etc., today, and have come into the wagon to write this and make our bed.

Friday, April 29th — Cool and pleasant; saw the first Indians today. Lucy and Almira afraid and run into the wagon to hide. Done some washing and sewing.

Monday, May 2nd — Pleasant evening; have been cooking, and packing things away for an early start in the morning. Threw away several jars, some wooden buckets, and all our pickles. Too unhandy to carry. Indians came to our camp every day, begging money and something to eat. Children are getting used to them.

Thursday, May 5th — We crossed the river this morning on a large steam boat called the Hindoo, after a great deal of Hurrahing and trouble to get the cattle all aboard. One ox

jumped overboard and swam across the river, and came out like a drowned rat. The river is even with its banks, timber on it, which is mostly cottonwood, is quite green. Costs us 15 dollars to cross. After bidding Iowa a kind farewell we travel about 8 miles and camp among the old ruins of the Mormon towns. We here join another company, which will make in all 24 men, 10 wagons, and a large drove of cattle. Have appointed a captain, and are now prepared to guard the stock, four men watch 2 hours and then call up four more to take their places, so by that means no person can sleep about the camp. Such a wild noisy set was never heard.

Friday, May 6th — Pleasant. We have just passed the Mormon graveyard. There is a great number of graves on it. The road is covered with wagons and cattle. Here we passed a train of wagons on their way back, the head man had drowned a few days before, in a river called Elkhorn, while getting some cattle across, and his wife was lying in the wagon quite sick, and children were mourning for a father gone. With sadness and pity I passed those who perhaps a few days before had been well and happy as ourselves. Came 20 miles today.

Sunday, May 8th — Sunday morning. Still in camp waiting to cross. There are three hundred or more wagons in sight and as far as the eye can reach, the bottom is covered, on each side of the river, with cattle and horses. There is not ferry here and the men will have to make one out of the tightest wagon-bed (every company should have a waterproof wagon-bed for this purpose). Everything must now be hauled out of the wagons head over heels (and he who knows where to find anything will be a smart fellow), then the wagons must be all taken to pieces, and then by means of a strong rope stretched across the river, with a tight wagon-bed attached to the middle of it, the rope must be long enough to pull from one side to the other, with men on each side of the river to pull it. In this way we have to cross everything a little at a time. Women and children last, and then swim the cattle and horses. There were three horses and some cattle drowned while crossing this place yesterday. It is quite lively and merry here this morning and the weather fine. We are camped on a large bottom, with the broad, deep river on one side of us and a high bluff on the other.

Tuesday, June 28th — Still in camp waiting to cross. Nothing for the stock to eat. As far as the eye can reach it is nothing but a sandy desert and the road is strewn with dead cattle, and the stench is awful. One of our best oxen is too lame to travel; have to sell him for what we can get, to a native for 15 dollars (all along this road we see white men living with Indians; many of them have trading posts; they are mostly French and have squaw wives). Have to yoke up our muley cow in the ox's place.

Monday, July 18th — Traveled 22 miles. Crossed one small creek and have camped on one called Rock Creek. It is here the Indians are so troublesome. This creek is covered with small timber and thick underbrush, a great hiding place; and while in this part of the country the men have to guard the stock all night. One man traveling ahead of us had all his horses stolen and never found them as we know of. (I was very much frightened while at this camp. I lay awake all night. I expected every minute we would be killed. However, we all found our scalps on in the morning.) There are people killed at this place every year.

Monday, July 25th — Bad luck this morning to start with. A calf took sick and died before breakfast. Soon after starting one of our best cows was taken sick and died in a short time. Presume they were both poisoned with water or weeds. Left our poor cow for the wolves and started on. Evening — It has been very warm today. Traveled 18 miles and have camped right on top of a high, round sand hill, a fine mark for the Indians. We have also got onto a place that is full of rattlesnakes. One of our oxen sick.

Wednesday, August 17th — Crossed the Grand Ronde Valley, which is 8 miles across, and have camped close to the foot of the mountains. Good water and feed plenty. There are 50 or more wagons camped around us. Lucy and Myra have their feet and legs poisoned, which gives me a good deal of trouble. Bought some fresh salmon from the Indians this evening, which is quite a treat to us. It is the first we have seen.

Sunday, August 28th — Started last night about sun down and drove 5 miles and found tolerably good grass to turn cattle out to. Started very early this morning and drove as far as Willow Creek, 10 miles and camped again till evening. Plenty of willow to burn, but no running water. It is standing in holes along the creek and very poor. It will be 22 miles before we get water again.

Tuesday, September 13th — Ascended three steep, muddy hills this morning. Drove over some muddy, miry ground and through mud holes, and have just halted at the first farm to noon and rest awhile and buy feed for the stock. Paid \$1.50 per hundred for hay. Price of fresh beef 16 and 18 cts. per pound, butter ditto, 1 dollar, eggs 1 dollar a dozen, onions 4 and 5 dollars per bushel, all too dear for poor folks, so we have treated ourselves to some small turnips at the rate of 25 cents per dozen. Got rested and are now ready to travel again. Evening — Traveled 14 miles today. Crossed Deep Creek and have encamped on the bank of it, a very dull looking place; grass very scarce. We may not call ourselves through they say; and there we are in Oregon, making our camp in a n ugly bottom, with no home, except our wagons and tent. It is drizzling and the weather looks dark and gloomy. Here old man Fuller left us and Wilson Carl remains.

Saturday, September 17th — In camp yet. Still raining. Noon — It has cleared off and we are all ready for a start again, for some place we don't know where. Evening — Came 6 miles and have encamped in a fence corner by a Mr. Lambert's, about 7 miles from Milwaukie. Turn our stock out to tolerable good feed. A few days later my eighth child was born. After this we picked up and ferried across the Columbia River, utilizing skiff, canoes and flatboat to get across, taking three days to complete. Here husband traded two yoke of oxen for a half section of land with one-half acre planted to potatoes and a small log cabin and lean-to with no windows. This is the journey's end.

“Diary of Mrs. Amelia Stewart Knight,” *Transactions of the Fifty-Sixth Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1828* (Portland: 1933), 38-40, 45, 47-48, 50-51, 53.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Chinese Merchant Complains of Racist Abuse, 1860

The California Gold Rush of 1849 brought a major influx of Asian immigrants to the new state. This number only grew after railroad companies turned to Chinese laborers to build western railroads. Life for these immigrants was particularly difficult, as even financially successful Chinese immigrants faced considerable discrimination. In 1860, the Chinese merchant Pun Chi drafted this petition to congress, calling on the legislature to do more to protect Chinese immigrants.

We are natives of the empire of China, each following some employment or profession—literary men, farmers, mechanics or merchants. When your honorable government threw open the territory of California, the people of other lands were welcomed here to search for gold and to engage in trade. The ship-masters of your respected nation came over to our country, lauded the equality of your laws, extolled the beauty of your manners and customs, and made it known that your officers and people were extremely cordial toward the Chinese. Knowing well the harmony which had existed between our respective governments, we trusted in your sincerity. Not deterred by the long voyage, we came here presuming that our arrival would be hailed with cordiality and favor. But, alas! what times are these!—when former kind relations are forgotten, when we Chinese are viewed like thieves and enemies, when in the administration of justice our testimony is not received, when in the legal collection of the licenses we are injured and plundered, and villains of other nations are encouraged to rob and do violence to us! Our numberless wrongs it is most painful even to recite. At the present time, if we desire to quit the country, we are not possessed of the pecuniary means; if allowed to remain, we dread future troubles. But yet, on the other hand, it is our presumption that the conduct of the officers of justice here has been influenced by temporary prejudices and that your honorable government will surely not uphold their acts. We are sustained by the confidence that the benevolence of your eminent body, contemplating the people of the whole world as one family, will most assuredly not permit the Chinese population without guilt to endure injuries to so cruel a degree. We would therefore present the following twelve subjects for consideration at your bar. We earnestly pray that you would investigate and weigh them; that you would issue instructions to your authorities in each State that they shall cast away their partial and unjust practices, restore tranquillity to us strangers, and that you would determine whether we are to leave the country or to remain. Then we will endure ensuing calamities without repining, and will cherish for you sincere gratitude and most profound respect.

... The class that engage in digging gold are, as a whole, poor people. We go on board the ships. There we find ourselves unaccustomed to winds and waves and to the extremes of heat and cold. We eat little; we grieve much. Our appearance is plain and our clothing poor. At once, when we leave the vessel, boatmen extort heavy fares; all kinds of conveyances require from us more than the usual charges; as we go on our way we are pushed and kicked and struck by the drunken and the brutal; but as we cannot speak your language, we bear our

injuries and pass on. Even when within doors, rude boys throw sand and bad men stones after us. Passers by, instead of preventing these provocations, add to them by their laughter. We go up to the mines; there the collectors of the licenses make unlawful exactions and robbers strip, plunder, wound and even murder some of us. Thus we are plunged into endless uncommiserated wrongs. But the first root of them all is that very degradation and contempt of the Chinese as a race of which we have spoken, which begins with your honorable nation, but which they communicate to people from other countries, who carry it to greater lengths.

Now what injury have we Chinese done to your honorable people that they should thus turn upon us and make us drink the cup of wrong even to its last poisonous dregs?

... If a Chinese earns a dollar and a half in gold per day, his first desire is to go to an American and buy a mining claim. But should this yield a considerable result, the seller, it is possible, compels him to relinquish it. Perhaps robbers come and strip him of the gold. He dare not resist, since he cannot speak the language, and has not the power to withstand them. On the other hand, those who have no means to buy a claim seek some ground which other miners have dug over and left, and thus obtain a few dimes. From the proceeds of a hard day's toil, after the pay for food and clothes very little remains. It is hard for them to be prepared to meet the collector when he comes for the license money. If such a one turns his thoughts back to the time when he came here, perhaps he remembers that then he borrowed the money for his passage and expenses from his kindred and friends, or perhaps he sold all his property to obtain it; and how bitter those thoughts are! In the course of four years, out of each ten men that have come over scarcely more than one or two get back again. Among those who cannot do so, the purse is often empty; and the trials of many of them are worthy of deep compassion. Thus it is evident that the gold mines are truly of little advantage to the Chinese. Yet the legislature questions whether it shall not increase the license; that is, increase trouble upon trouble! It is pressing us to death. If it is your will that Chinese shall not dig the gold of your honorable country, then fix a limit as to time, say, for instance, three years, within which every man of them shall provide means to return to his own country. Thus we shall not perish in a foreign land. Thus mutual kindly sentiments shall be restored again...

Pun Chi, "A Remonstrance from the Chinese in California to the Congress of the United States," in William Speer, *The Oldest and the Newest Empire: China and the United States* (Pittsburg: 1877), 588-589. 594, 597-598.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Wyandotte woman describes tensions over slavery, 1849

In 1843, the Wyandotte nation was forcefully removed from their homeland in Ohio and brought to the Kansas Territory. They found themselves on a borderland Missouri's slave society and land held by Native Americans. When the national Methodist church split, debates over slavery threatened the Christianity of the Wyandotte. This letter depicts the complex relationship between recently removed Native peoples, Christianity, and slavery.

Wyandotte Nation Jan. 4th, 1849

Dear Sir,

I will make no other apology for addressing you that our friendship and the position you occupy in community.

It is well known to all, that the conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the slave holding state have seceded from the present church and have formed themselves into "a distinct ecclesiastical organization under the name the "Methodist Episcopal Church South." A majority of the members of the Wyandotte Society have refused to go with the secession and have sought and obtained a missionary from the Methodist Episcopal Church.

An effort is now being made by slave-holding missionaries and Government Agents to induce the Indian Department to expel our missionary from among us, and thus deprive us our religious rights.

We reside West of the State of Missouri where the compromise act forever excludes Slavery and we think that a slave-holding ministry ought not to be forced upon us, to the rather exclusion of the one of our choice. Dr. A. Stile the Presiding Elder of this District resides in the State of Missouri. The Government Agent threaten strongly that they will prohibit him from coming among us any more to hold our quarterly meeting. We think it a hard case that if after compelling us in a manner to leave our sweet Ohio the government should not allow us to seek our own church relations.

The Missionaries of the Church South bring their Slaves right in among us and engage in the traffic before our eyes. There are now about twenty negro slaves in the Shawnee and Wyandotte Territory's. It has a very bad affect upon the real Indian, it confirms him in his preconceived notion that labor is dishonorable.

Although slavery is the main objection we have to the new church yet we distinctly disclaim being abolitionists, but residing on free soil we desire to have nothing to do with and consider the matter here as settled.

Now as a personal friend and an acquaintance I have turned to you for assistance. Can you not create interest sufficient for us in Washington to induce the Indian Department to award to us our national inalienable religious rights.

Lucy B. Armstrong

Lucy B. Armstrong, January 4, 1849. Lucy B. Armstrong Papers, Indian History Coll. #590,
Box 7 Folder: Wyandotte. Kansas Historical Society.

[Available through the Kansas Historical Society](#)

Letters from Venezuelan General Francisco de Miranda regarding Latin American Revolution, 1805-1806

During a trip to the United States Venezuelan General Francisco de Miranda worked to launch a revolution in Venezuela that he expected would spread throughout South America. He made a series of high-level contacts, as indicated in the letters below. The American public saw South American revolutionaries as "fellow republicans." At least three American ships, numerous American guns, and about 200 recruits participated in Miranda's failed attempt at Revolution.

Sent from Washington, December 11, 1805 to Colonel William Stephens Smith

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have received your letters on the 1st and 6th of this month, and your commodores of the 5th: The business you and him mention is on the Tapis at this present moment, and will be concluded, I hope in the course of this week. Not a moment is lost and the appearances look very favourable.—Have a little patience and you shall soon hear the result. I hope you will act on your side with as much activity, &c &c. My best compliments to the worthy admiral and to major A. They both shall hear from me as soon as the thing is decided; write me here at Stelle's hotel, and that will be sufficient, if the direction is Mr. Molini.

Yours, M.A.

Sent from Washington, December 14, 1805 to Colonel William Stephens Smith

DEAR FRIEND,

I saw yesterday for the second time, both the gentlemen, and after talking fully on the subject, I think I brought the business to a conclusion. Yet Mr. M. upon hearing my determination of quitting the city tomorrow for New York, appeared surprised, and persuaded me not to leave it before Tuesday next, the 17th, when he expected me to dine with him, and have a little more conversation I suppose. On consideration, I thought that a stay three days longer, might show calm and patience on my part, which would give to this step all the dignity I intended, though I am persuaded that no more will be obtained, than what is already imparted. Their tacit approbation and good wishes are evidently for us, and they do not see any difficulty that may prevent the citizens of the U. States in attending personally or sending supplies for this object, provided the publick laws should not be openly violated. Your demand of permission or leave of absence is considered and impracticable, and Mr. M think it easier to take the risk upon yourself at once; however, we shall consider this subject with much reflection when we shall meet at New York. On the 18th, early, I shall certainly leave this for Philadelphia, from whence I will write to you again, and without much delay proceed to New York. In the meantime, I request you to have every thing ready for departure before the last of December, and I beg of you to show to our

worthy commodore as much as is necessary of this letter, not thinking prudent in me at this moment and on so delicate a subject to write any more; do the same with the major, and repeat to both my sincere friendship and permanent esteem. When we meet, you and they shall hear more on this subject, in the meantime act with much caution and great activity.

Yours.

M

Sent from New York, January 22, 1806 to President Thomas Jefferson

Mr. President,

I have the honour to send you enclosed the natural and civil history of Chili, of which we conversed at Washington; You will perhaps find more interesting facts and greater knowledge in this little volume than in those which have before been published on the same subject concerning this beautiful country. If ever the happy prediction which you have pronounced on the future destiny of our dear Columbia, is to be accomplished in our day, may Providence grant that it may be under your auspices, and by the generous efforts of her own children. We shall then in some sort behold the arrival of that age, the return of which the Roman bard invoked in favor of the human race:

“That last great age foretold by sacred rhymes,
Renews its finished course; Saturnian times,
Roll round again, and mighty years began,
From this first orb, in radiant circles ran.”

With the highest consideration, and profound respect, I am, Mr. President, your very humble servant,

Francisco de Miranda

Sent from New York, January 22, 1806 to Secretary of State James Madison,

Sir,

On the point of leaving the U. States allow me to address a few words to you to thank you for the attention that you were pleased to show me during my stay at Washington. The important concerns, which I then had the honour to communicate to you, I doubt will not remain a profound secret until the final result of that delicate affair; I have acted upon that supposition here, by conforming in every thing to the intentions of government, which I hope to have apprehended and observed with exactness and discretion. The enclosed letter contains a book which I have promised to the president of the U. States and which I pray you to transmit to him. Have the goodness to present my respectful compliments to Mrs. Madison, and to believe me with the highest consideration and esteem, sir,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

Francisco de Miranda

James Biggs, *The History of Don Francisco de Miranda's Attempt to Effect a Revolution in South America, in a Series of Letters* (Boston: Oliver and Munroe, 1808), 272-75.

[Available through Google Books](#)

President Monroe Outlines the Monroe Doctrine, 1823

The spirit of Manifest Destiny had its corollary in an earlier piece of American foreign policy. Americans sought to remove colonizing Europeans from the western hemisphere. As Secretary of State for President James Monroe, John Quincy Adams crafted what came to be called the Monroe Doctrine. President Monroe outlined the principles of this policy in his seventh annual message to Congress, excerpted here.

... At the proposal of the Russian Imperial Government, made through the minister of the Emperor residing here, a full power and instructions have been transmitted to the minister of the United States at St. Petersburg to arrange by amicable negotiation the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the northwest coast of this continent. A similar proposal has been made by His Imperial Majesty to the Government of Great Britain, which has likewise been acceded to. The Government of the United States has been desirous by this friendly proceeding of manifesting the great value which they have invariably attached to the friendship of the Emperor and their solicitude to cultivate the best understanding with his Government. In the discussions to which this interest has given rise and in the arrangements by which they may terminate the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers. . .It was stated at the commencement of the last session that a great effort was then making in Spain and Portugal to improve the condition of the people of those countries, and that it appeared to be conducted with extraordinary moderation. It need scarcely be remarked that the results have been so far very different from what was then anticipated. Of events in that quarter of the globe, with which we have so much intercourse and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow-men on that side of the Atlantic. In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America. This difference proceeds from that which exists in their respective Governments; and to the defense of our own, which has been achieved by the loss of so much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens, and under which we have enjoyed unexampled felicity, this whole nation is devoted. We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our

peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. In the war between those new Governments and Spain we declared our neutrality at the time of their recognition, and to this we have adhered, and shall continue to adhere, provided no change shall occur which, in the judgment of the competent authorities of this Government, shall make a corresponding change on the part of the United States indispensable to their security.

The late events in Spain and Portugal shew that Europe is still unsettled. Of this important fact no stronger proof can be adduced than that the allied powers should have thought it proper, on any principle satisfactory to themselves, to have interposed by force in the internal concerns of Spain. To what extent such interposition may be carried, on the same principle, is a question in which all independent powers whose governments differ from theirs are interested, even those most remote, and surely none of them more so than the United States. Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government de facto as the legitimate government for us; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy, meeting in all instances the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none. But in regard to those continents circumstances are eminently and conspicuously different.

It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference. If we look to the comparative strength and resources of Spain and those new Governments, and their distance from each other, it must be obvious that she can never subdue them. It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in hope that other powers will pursue the same course. . . .

Message of President James Monroe at the commencement of the first session of the 18th Congress, 12/02/1823; Presidential Messages of the 18th Congress, ca. 12/02/1823-ca. 03/03/1825; Record Group 46; Records of the United States Senate, 1789-1990; National Archives.

[Available through the National Archives and Records Administration](#)

Manifest Destiny Painting, 1872



John Gast, American Progress, 1872. [Wikimedia](#).

Columbia, the female figure of America, leads Americans into the West and into the future by carrying the values of republicanism (as seen through her Roman garb) and progress (shown through the inclusion of technological innovations like the telegraph) and clearing native peoples and animals, seen being pushed into the darkness.

Anti-Immigrant Cartoon, 1860



"The great fear of the period That Uncle Sam may be swallowed by foreigners : The problem solved," 1860-1869, [Library of Congress](#).

Many white Americans responded to increasing numbers of immigrants in the 1800s with great fear and xenophobic hatred, seeing immigrants as threats to their vision of manifest destiny. This cartoon depicts a highly racialized image of a Chinese immigrant and Irish immigrant "swallowing" the United States—in the form of Uncle Sam. In the second image, the Chinese immigrant swallows the Irish immigrant. Networks of railroads and the promise of American expansion can be seen in the background.

13. The Sectional Crisis

Introduction

Slavery had long divided the politics of the United States. In time, these divisions became both sectional and irreconcilable. As westward expansion continued, these fault lines grew unstable, particularly as the United States seized more lands from its war with Mexico. Violence in Kansas and in the United States capitol demonstrated how dangerous these divisions had become. As the country seemed to teeter ever closer to a full-throated endorsement of slavery, however, an antislavery coalition arose in the middle 1850s calling itself the Republican Party. Eager to cordon off slavery and confine it to where it already existed, the Republicans won the presidential election of 1860 and threw the nation on the path to war. By 1861 all bets were off, and the fate of slavery and the Union depended upon war. These sources offer glimpses into a nation on the verge of collapse.

Prigg v. Pennsylvania, 1842

Conflicts between the power of the federal government and states' rights strained American politics throughout the antebellum era. During the 1840s and 1850s, the most consistent source of tension on the issue stemmed from northerners refusing to comply with fugitive slave laws. As early as the 1780s, Pennsylvania passed laws that made it illegal to take a Black person from the state for the purpose of enslaving them. In the majority opinion, excerpted here, Supreme Court justice Joseph Story decided that the national fugitive slave act overruled Pennsylvania's law.

This is a writ of error to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, brought under the 25th section of the judiciary act of 1789, ch. 20, for the purpose of revising the judgment of that Court, in a case involving the construction of the Constitution and laws of the United States.

The facts are briefly these: The plaintiff ... was indicted ... for having, with force and violence, taken and carried away from [Pennsylvania] to the state of Maryland, a certain negro woman, named Margaret Morgan, with a design and intention of selling and disposing of, and keeping her as a slave or servant for life, contrary to a statute of Pennsylvania, passed on the 26th of March, 1826. That statute in the first section, in substance, provides, that if any person or persons shall from and after the passing of the act, by force and violence take and carry away, or cause to be taken and carried away, and shall by fraud or false pretense, seduce, or cause to be seduced, or shall attempt to take, carry away, or seduce any negro or mulatto from any part of that commonwealth, with a design and intention of selling and disposing of, or causing to be sold, or of keeping and detaining, or of causing to be kept and detained, such negro or mulatto as a slave or servant for life, or for any term whatsoever; every such person or persons, his or their aiders or abettors, shall, on conviction thereof, be deemed guilty of a felony, and shall forfeit and pay a sum not less than five hundred, nor more than one thousand dollars; and moreover, shall be sentenced to undergo a servitude for any term or terms of years, not less than seven years nor exceeding twenty-one years; and shall be confined and kept to hard labor, &c....

Few questions which have ever come before this Court involve more delicate and important considerations; and few upon which the public at large may be presumed to feel a more profound and pervading interest. We have accordingly given them our most deliberate examination; and it has become my duty to state the result to which we have arrived, and the reasoning by which it is supported....

There are two clauses in the Constitution upon the subject of fugitives, which stand in juxtaposition with each other, and have been thought mutually to illustrate each other. They are both contained in the second section of the fourth article, and are in the following words: "A person charged in any state with treason, felony, or other crime, who shall flee from justice, and be found in another state, shall, on demand of the executive authority of the state from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the state having jurisdiction of the crime."

“No person held to service or labor in one state under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor; but shall be delivered up, on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.”

The last clause is that, the true interpretation whereof is directly in judgment before us. Historically, it is well known, that the object of this clause was to secure to the citizens of the slaveholding states the complete right and title of ownership in their slaves, as property, in every state in the Union into which they might escape from the state where they were held in servitude. The full recognition of this right and title was indispensable to the security of this species of property in all the slaveholding states; and, indeed, was so vital to the preservation of their domestic interests and institutions, that it cannot be doubted that it constituted a fundamental article, without the adoption of which the Union could not have been formed. Its true design was to guard against the doctrines and principles prevalent in the non-slaveholding states, by preventing them from intermeddling with, or obstructing, or abolishing the rights of the owners of slaves.

.... if the Constitution had not contained this clause, every non-slaveholding state in the Union would have been at liberty to have declared free all runaway slaves coming within its limits, and to have given them entire immunity and protection against the claims of their masters; a course which would have created the most bitter animosities, and engendered perpetual strife between the different states. The clause was, therefore, of the last importance to the safety and security of the southern states; and could not have been surrendered by them without endangering their whole property in slaves. The clause was accordingly adopted into the Constitution by the unanimous consent of the framers of it; a proof at once of its intrinsic and practical necessity.

... The clause manifestly contemplates the existence of a positive, unqualified right on the part of the owner of the slave, which no state law or regulation can in any way qualify, regulate, control, or restrain. The slave is not to be discharged from service or labor, in consequence of any state law or regulation....

Upon these grounds, we are of opinion that the act of Pennsylvania upon which this indictment is founded, is unconstitutional and void. It purports to punish as a public offence against that state, the very act of seizing and removing a slave by his master, which the Constitution of the United States was designed to justify and uphold. The special verdict finds this fact, and the State Courts have rendered judgment against the plaintiff in error upon that verdict. That judgment must, therefore, be reversed, and the cause remanded to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania; with directions to carry into effect the judgment of this Court rendered upon the special verdict in favor of the plaintiff...

Richard Peters, *Report of the Case of Edward Prigg against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania...* (Philadelphia: 1842), 74, 76-78, 91-92

[Available through Google Books](#)

Stories from the Underground Railroad, 1855-1856

William Still was an African-American abolitionist who frequently risked his life to help freedom-seekers escape slavery. In these excerpts, Still offers the readers some of the letters sent to him from abolitionists and formerly enslaved persons. The passages shed light on family separation, the financial costs of the journey to freedom, and the logistics of the Underground Railroad.

Letter from John H. Hill, a fugitive, appealing on behalf of a poor slave in Petersburg, Virginia

Hamilton, Sept. 15th, 1856.

DEAR FRIEND STILL:—I write to inform you that Miss Mary Wever arrived safe in this city. You may imagine the happiness manifested on the part of the two lovers, Mr. H. and Miss W. I think they will be married as soon as they can get ready. I presume Mrs. Hill will commence to make up the articles tomorrow. Kind Sir, as all of us is concerned about the welfare of our enslaved brethren at the South, particularly our friends, we appeal to your sympathy to do whatever is in your power to save poor Willis Johnson from the hands of his cruel master. It is not for me to tell you of his case, because Miss Wever has related the matter fully to you. All I wish to say is this, I wish you to write to my uncle, at Petersburg, by our friend, the Capt. Tell my uncle to go to Richmond and ask my mother whereabouts this man is. The best for him is to make his way to Petersburg; that is, if you can get the Capt. to bring him. He have not much money. But I hope the friends of humanity will not withhold their aid on the account of money. However we will raise all the money that is wanting to pay for his safe delivery. You will please communicate this to the friends as soon as possible.

Letter from Joseph C. Bustill (U.G.R.R. Depot).

Harrisburg, March 24, '56.

FRIEND STILL:—I suppose ere this you have seen those five large and three small packages I sent by way of Reading, consisting of three men and women and children. They arrived here this morning at 8-1/2 o'clock and left twenty minutes past three. You will please send me any information likely to prove interesting in relation to them.

Lately we have formed a Society here, called the Fugitive Aid Society. This is our first case, and I hope it will prove entirely successful.

When you write, please inform me what signs or symbols you make use of in your dispatches, and any other information in relation to operations of the Underground Railroad.

Our reason for sending by the Reading Road, was to gain time; it is expected the owners will be in town this afternoon, and by this Road we gained five hours' time, which is a matter of much importance, and we may have occasion to use it sometimes in future. In great haste,

Yours with great respect,

Jos. C. BUSTILL,

Letter from G. S. Nelson (U.G.R.R. Depot)

Reading, May 27, '57.

We knew not that these goods were to come, consequently we were all taken by surprise. When you answer, use the word, goods. The reason of the excitement, is: some three weeks ago a big box was consigned to us by J. Bustill, of Harrisburg. We received it, and forwarded it on to J. Jones, Elmira, and the next day they were on the fresh hunt of said box; it got safe to Elmira, as I have had a letter from Jones, and all is safe.

Yours,

G.S.N.

Letter from Jefferson Pipkins

Sept. 28, 1856.

To WM. STILL. SIR:—I take the liberty of writing to you a few lines concerning my children, for I am very anxious to get them and I wish you to please try what you can do for me. Their names are Charles and Patrick and are living with Mrs. Joseph G. Wray in Murphysborough, Hartford County, North Carolina; Emma lives with a Lawyer Baker in Gatesville, North Carolina and Susan lives in Portsmouth, Virginia and is stopping with Dr. Collins' sister, a Mrs. Nash. You can find her out by enquiring for Dr. Collins at the ferry boat at Portsmouth, and Rose a coloured woman at the Crawford House can tell where she is. And I trust you will try what you think will be the best way. And you will do me a great favour.

Yours Respectfully,

Jefferson Pipkins

P.S. I am living at Yorkville near Toronto Canada West. My wife sends her best respects to Mrs. Still.

Letter from James Loguen

Syracuse, Oct. 5, 1856.

DEAR FRIEND STILL:—I write to you for Mrs. Susan Bell, who was at your city some time in September last. She is from Washington City. She left her dear little children behind (two children). She is stopping in our city, and wants to hear from her children very much indeed. She wishes to know if you have heard from Mr. Biglow, of Washington City. She will remain here until she can hear from you. She feels very anxious about her children, I will assure you. I should have written before this, but I have been from home much of the time

since she came to our city. She wants to know if Mr. Biglow has heard anything about her husband. If you have not written to Mr. Biglow, she wishes you would. She sends her love to you and your dear family. She says that you were all kind to her, and she does not forget it. You will direct your letter to me, dear brother, and I will see that she gets it.

Miss F.E. Watkins left our house yesterday for Ithaca, and other places in that part of the State. Frederick Douglass, William J. Watkins, and others were with us last week; Gerritt Smith with others. Miss Watkins is doing great good in our part of the State. We think much indeed of her. She is such a good and glorious speaker, that we are all charmed with her. We have had thirty-one fugitives in the last twenty-seven days; but you, no doubt, have had many more than that. I hope the good Lord may bless you and spare you long to do good to the hunted and outraged among our brethren.

Yours truly,

J.W. Loguen

Agent of the Underground Railroad.

William Still, *The Underground Railroad: A Record* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 41, 43, 378, 137, 158.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852

In 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe published her bestselling antislavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin. Sales for Uncle Tom's Cabin were astronomical, eclipsed only by sales of the Bible. The book became a sensation and helped move antislavery into everyday conversation for many northerners. In this passage, a senator and his wife debate the Fugitive Slave Law.

“Well,” said his wife, after the business of the tea-table was getting rather slack, “and what have they been doing in the Senate?”

Now, it was a very unusual thing for gentle little Mrs. Bird ever to trouble her head with what was going on in the house of the state, very wisely considering that she had enough to do to mind her own. Mr. Bird, therefore, opened his eyes in surprise, and said,

“Not very much of importance.”

“Well; but is it true that they have been passing a law forbidding people to give meat and drink to those poor colored folks that come along? I heard they were talking of some such law, but I didn't think any Christian legislature would pass it!”

“Why, Mary, you are getting to be a politician, all at once.”

“No, nonsense! I wouldn't give a fig for all your politics, generally, but I think this is something downright cruel and unchristian. I hope, my dear, no such law has been passed.”

“There has been a law passed forbidding people to help off the slaves that come over from Kentucky, my dear; so much of that thing has been done by these reckless Abolitionists, that our brethren in Kentucky are very strongly excited, and it seems necessary, and no more than Christian and kind, that something should be done by our state to quiet the excitement.”

“And what is the law? It don't forbid us to shelter those poor creatures a night, does it, and to give 'em something comfortable to eat, and a few old clothes, and send them quietly about their business?”

“Why, yes, my dear; that would be aiding and abetting, you know.”

Mrs. Bird was a timid, blushing little woman, of about four feet in height, and with mild blue eyes, and a peach-blow complexion, and the gentlest, sweetest voice in the world;—as for courage, a moderate-sized cock-turkey had been known to put her to rout at the very first gobble, and a stout house-dog, of moderate capacity, would bring her into subjection merely by a show of his teeth. Her husband and children were her entire world, and in these she ruled more by entreaty and persuasion than by command or argument. There was only one thing that was capable of arousing her, and that provocation came in on the side of her

unusually gentle and sympathetic nature;—anything in the shape of cruelty would throw her into a passion, which was the more alarming and inexplicable in proportion to the general softness of her nature. Generally the most indulgent and easy to be entreated of all mothers, still her boys had a very reverent remembrance of a most vehement chastisement she once bestowed on them, because she found them leagued with several graceless boys of the neighborhood, stoning a defenceless kitten....

On the present occasion, Mrs. Bird rose quickly, with very red cheeks, which quite improved her general appearance, and walked up to her husband, with quite a resolute air, and said, in a determined tone, “Now, John, I want to know if you think such a law as that is right and Christian?”

“You won’t shoot me, now, Mary, if I say I do!”

“I never could have thought it of you, John; you didn’t vote for it?”

“Even so, my fair politician.”

“You ought to be ashamed, John! Poor, homeless, houseless creatures! It’s a shameful, wicked, abominable law, and I’ll break it, for one, the first time I get a chance; and I hope I *shall* have a chance, I do! Things have got to a pretty pass, if a woman can’t give a warm supper and a bed to poor, starving creatures, just because they are slaves, and have been abused and oppressed all their lives, poor things!”

“But, Mary, just listen to me. Your feelings are all quite right, dear, and interesting, and I love you for them; but, then, dear, we mustn’t suffer our feelings to run away with our judgment; you must consider it’s not a matter of private feeling,—there are great public interests involved,—there is such a state of public agitation rising, that we must put aside our private feelings.”

“Now, John, I don’t know anything about politics, but I can read my Bible; and there I see that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the desolate; and that Bible I mean to follow.”

“But in cases where your doing so would involve a great public evil—”

“Obeying God never brings on public evils. I know it can’t. It’s always safest, all round, to *do as He* bids us.

“Now, listen to me, Mary, and I can state to you a very clear argument, to show—”

“O, nonsense, John! —you can talk all night, but you wouldn’t do it. I put it to you, John,—would *you* now turn away a poor, shivering, hungry creature from your door, because he was a runaway? *Would* you, now?”

... Mrs. Bird, seeing the defenceless condition of the enemy’s territory, had no more conscience than to push her advantage.

“I should like to see you doing that, John—I really should! Turning a woman out of doors in a snowstorm, for instance; or may be you’d take her up and put her in jail, wouldn’t you? You would make a great hand at that!”

“Of course, it would be a very painful duty,” began Mr. Bird, in a moderate tone.

“Duty, John! don’t use that word! You know it isn’t a duty—it can’t be a duty! If folks want to keep their slaves from running away, let ’em treat ’em well,—that’s my doctrine. If I had slaves (as I hope I never shall have), I’d risk their wanting to run away from me, or you either, John. I tell you folks don’t run away when they are happy; and when they do run, poor creatures! they suffer enough with cold and hunger and fear, without everybody’s turning against them; and, law or no law, I never will, so help me God!”

“Mary! Mary! My dear, let me reason with you.”

“I hate reasoning, John,—especially reasoning on such subjects. There’s a way you political folks have of coming round and round a plain right thing; and you don’t believe in it yourselves, when it comes to practice. I know *you* well enough, John. You don’t believe it’s right any more than I do; and you wouldn’t do it any sooner than I.”

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (Boston: 1852), 120-123.

[Available through the University of Virginia](#)

Charlotte Forten complains of racism in the North, 1855

Writer, activist, and teacher Charlotte Forten was born in Philadelphia in 1837 to a well-to-do African American family. Forten's diary entries from 1854 illuminate sectional tensions, especially in her discussion of the trial of Anthony Burns, a fugitive from slavery. She also expressed frequent frustration over the racism she encountered in Boston.

May 25, 1854. Did not intend to write this evening, but have just heard of something that is worth recording;—something which must ever rouse in the mind of every true friend of liberty and humanity, feelings of the deepest indignation and sorrow. Another fugitive [Anthony Burns] from bondage has been arrested; a poor man, who for two short months has trod the soil and breathed the air of the “Old Bay State,” was arrested like a criminal in the streets of her capital, and is now kept strictly guarded,—a double police force is required, the military are in readiness; and all this done to prevent a man, whom God has created in his own image, from regaining that freedom with which, he, in common with every human being, is endowed. I can only hope and pray most earnestly that Boston will not again disgrace herself by sending him back to a bondage worse than death; or rather that she will redeem herself from the disgrace which his arrest alone has brought upon her...

May 26, 1854. Words cannot express all that I feel; all that is felt by the friends of Freedom, when thinking of this great obstacle to the removal of slavery from our land. Alas! that it should be so.

June 2, 1854. Our worst fears are realized; the decision was against poor Burns, and he has been sent back to a bondage worse, a thousand times worse than death. Even an attempt at rescue was utterly impossible; the prisoner was completely surrounded by soldiers with bayonets fixed, a cannon loaded, ready to be fired at the slightest sign. To-day Massachusetts has again been disgraced; again she has shewed her submission to the Slave Power; and Oh! with what deep sorrow do we think of what will doubtless be the fate of that poor man, when he is again consigned to the horrors of Slavery. With what scorn must that government be regarded, which cowardly assembles thousands of soldiers to satisfy the demands of slaveholders; to deprive of his freedom a man, created in God's own image, whose sole offense is the color of his skin! And if resistance is offered to this outrage, these soldiers are to shoot down American citizens without mercy; and this by the express orders of a government which proudly boasts of being the freest in the world; this on the very soil where the Revolution of 1776 began; in sight of the battle-field, where thousands of brave men fought and died in opposing British tyranny, which was nothing compared with the American oppression to-day. In looking over my diary, I perceive that I did not mention that there was on the Friday night after the man's arrest, an attempt made to rescue him, but although it failed, on account of there not being men enough engaged in it, all honor should be given to those who bravely made the attempt. I can write no more. A cloud seems hanging over me, over all our persecuted race, which nothing can dispel.

Sept. 12, 1855. To-day school commenced.—Most happy am I to return to the companionship of my studies,—ever my most valued friends. It is pleasant to meet the scholars again; most of them greet me cordially, and were it not for the thought that will intrude, of the want of entire sympathy even of those I know and like best, I should greatly enjoy their society. There is one young girl and only one—Miss [Sarah] B[rown] who I believe thoroughly and heartily appreciates anti-slavery,—radical anti-slavery, and has no prejudice against color. I wonder that every colored person is not a misanthrope. Surely we have everything to make us hate mankind. I have met girls in the schoolroom[—]they have been thoroughly kind and cordial to me,—perhaps the next day met them in the street—they feared to recognize me; these I can but regard now with scorn and contempt,—once I liked them, believing them incapable of such meanness. Others give the most distant recognitions possible.—I, of course, acknowledge no such recognitions, and they soon cease entirely. These are but trifles, certainly, to the great, public wrongs which we as a people are obliged to endure. But to those who experience them, these apparent trifles are most wearing and discouraging; even to the child's mind they reveal volumes of deceit and heartlessness, and early teach a lesson of suspicion and distrust. Oh! it is hard to go through life meeting contempt with contempt, hatred with hatred, fearing, with too good reason, to love and trust hardly any one whose skin is white,—however lovable, attractive and congenial in seeming. In the bitter, passionate feelings of my soul again and again there rises the questions “When, oh! when shall this cease?” “Is there no help?” “How long oh! how long must we continue to suffer—to endure?” Conscience answers it is wrong, it is ignoble to despair; let us labor earnestly and faithfully to acquire knowledge, to break down the barriers of prejudice and oppression. Let us take courage; never ceasing to work,—hoping and believing that if not for us, for another generation there is a better, brighter day in store,—when slavery and prejudice shall vanish before the glorious light of Liberty and Truth; when the rights of every colored man shall everywhere be acknowledged and respected, and he shall be treated as a man and a brother.

Charlotte Forten, *The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten: Free Negro in the Slave Era*, ed. Ray Allen Billington (Dryden Press, 1953), 34-63.

[Available from the National Humanities Center](#)

Margaretta Mason and Lydia Maria Child Discuss John Brown, 1860

After John Brown was arrested for his raid on Harpers Ferry, Lydia Maria Child wrote to the governor of Virginia requesting to visit Brown. Margaretta Mason of Virginia wrote a searing letter to Child attacking her for supporting a murder. Child responded, and the exchange of letters was published by the American Antislavery Society.

Letter from Margaretta Mason to Lydia Maria Child

Do you read your Bible, Mrs. Child? If you do, read there “Wo unto you, hypocrites,” and take to yourself with twofold damnation that terrible sentence; for rest assured, in the day of judgment it shall be more tolerable for those thus scathed by the awful denunciation of the Son of God than for you. *You* would sooth with sisterly and motherly care the hoary-headed murder of Harpers Ferry! A man whose aim and intention was to incite the horrors of a servile war—to condemn women of your own race, ere death closed there eyes on their sufferings from violence and outrage, to see their husbands and fathers murdered, their children butchered, the ground strewed with the brains of their babes. The antecedents of Brown’s band prove them to have been the offspring of the earth; and what would have been our fate had they found as many sympathizers in Virginia as they seem to have in Massachusetts...

Reply from Lydia Maria Child

Prolonged absence from home has prevented my answering your letter so soon as I intended. I have no disposition to retort upon you the “twofold damnation” to which you consign me. On the contrary, I sincerely wish you well, both in this world and the next. If the anathema proved a safety valve to your own boiling spirit, it did some good to you, while it fell harmless upon me. Fortunately for all of us, the Heavenly Father rules His universe by laws, which the passions or the prejudices of mortals have no power to change.

As for John Brown, his reputation may be safely trusted to the impartial pen of History; and his motives will be righteously judged by Him who knoweth the secrets of all hearts. Men, however great they may be, are of small consequence in comparison with principles; and the principle for which John Brown died is the question at issue between us.

You refer me to the Bible, from which you quote the favorite text of slaveholders: “Servants be subject to your maststers with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward.” 1 Peter 2:18.

Abolitionists also have favorite texts, to some of which I would call your attention. “Remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them.” Hebrews 13:3...

If the appropriateness of these texts is not apparent, I will try to make it so, by evidence drawn entirely from *Southern* sources. The Abolitionists are not such an ignorant set of fanatics as you suppose. They *know* whereof they affirm. They are familiar with the laws of the slave states, which are along sufficient to inspire abhorrence in any humane heart or reflecting mind not perverted by the prejudices of education and custom. I might fill many letters with significant extracts from your statute books; but I have space only to glance at a few, which indicate the *leading* features of this system you cherish so tenaciously.

The universal rule of the slave states is that “the child follows the condition of its *mother*.” This is an index to many things. Marriages between white and colored people are forbidden by law; yet a very large number of the slaves are brown or yellow...

Throughout the slave states, the testimony of no colored person, bond or free, can be received against a white man. You have some laws which, on the face of them, would seem to restrain inhuman men from murdering or mutilating slaves; by they are rendered nearly null by the law I have cited. Any drunken master, overseer, or patrol, may go into the negro cabin and commit whatever outrage he pleases with perfect impunity, if no white person is present who chooses to witness against him....

Correspondence between Lydia Maria Child and Gov. Wise and Mrs. Mason, of Virginia (Boston: 1860), 16, 18-20.

[Available through the Internet Archive](#)

1860 Republican Party Platform

The 1860 Republican Party convention in Chicago created a platform that clearly opposed the expansion of slavery in the West and the reopening of the slave trade. However, nothing in the document claimed that the government had the power to eliminate slavery where it already existed. Controversies over slavery suffuse the platform, but maybe even more noticeable is the importance of the West to the Republican Party.

Resolved, That we, the delegated representatives of the Republican electors of the United States in Convention assembled, in discharge of the duty we owe to our constituents and our country, unite in the following declarations:

1. That the history of the nation during the last four years, has fully established the propriety and necessity of the organization and perpetuation of the Republican party, and that the causes which called it into existence are permanent in their nature, and now, more than ever before, demand its peaceful and constitutional triumph.
2. That the maintenance of the principles promulgated in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Federal Constitution, "That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable 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," is essential to the preservation of our Republican institutions; and that the Federal Constitution, the Rights of the States, and the Union of the States must and shall be preserved.
3. That to the Union of the States this nation owes its unprecedented increase in population, its surprising development of material resources, its rapid augmentation of wealth, its happiness at home and its honor abroad; and we hold in abhorrence all schemes for disunion, come from whatever source they may. And we congratulate the country that no Republican member of Congress has uttered or countenanced the threats of disunion so often made by Democratic members, without rebuke and with applause from their political associates; and we denounce those threats of disunion, in case of a popular overthrow of their ascendancy as denying the vital principles of a free government, and as an avowal of contemplated treason, which it is the imperative duty of an indignant people sternly to rebuke and forever silence.
4. That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the states, and especially the right of each state to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of powers on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depends; and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any state or territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.

5. That the present Democratic Administration has far exceeded our worst apprehensions, in its measureless subserviency to the exactions of a sectional interest, as especially evinced in its desperate exertions to force the infamous Lecompton Constitution upon the protesting people of Kansas; in construing the personal relations between master and servant to involve an unqualified property in persons; in its attempted enforcement everywhere, on land and sea, through the intervention of Congress and of the Federal Courts of the extreme pretensions of a purely local interest; and in its general and unvarying abuse of the power intrusted to it by a confiding people.
6. That the people justly view with alarm the reckless extravagance which pervades every department of the Federal Government; that a return to rigid economy and accountability is indispensable to arrest the systematic plunder of the public treasury by favored partisans; while the recent startling developments of frauds and corruptions at the Federal metropolis, show that an entire change of administration is imperatively demanded.
7. That the new dogma that the Constitution, of its own force, carries slavery into any or all of the territories of the United States, is a dangerous political heresy, at variance with the explicit provisions of that instrument itself, with contemporaneous exposition, and with legislative and judicial precedent; is revolutionary in its tendency, and subversive of the peace and harmony of the country.
8. That the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom: That, as our Republican fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national territory, ordained that "no persons should be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law," it becomes our duty, by legislation, whenever such legislation is necessary, to maintain this provision of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States.
9. That we brand the recent reopening of the African slave trade, under the cover of our national flag, aided by perversions of judicial power, as a crime against humanity and a burning shame to our country and age; and we call upon Congress to take prompt and efficient measures for the total and final suppression of that execrable traffic
10. That in the recent vetoes, by their Federal Governors, of the acts of the legislatures of Kansas and Nebraska, prohibiting slavery in those territories, we find a practical illustration of the boasted Democratic principle of Non-Intervention and Popular Sovereignty, embodied in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and a demonstration of the deception and fraud involved therein.

11. That Kansas should, of right, be immediately admitted as a state under the Constitution recently formed and adopted by her people, and accepted by the House of Representatives.
12. That, while providing revenue for the support of the general government by duties upon imports, sound policy requires such an adjustment of these imports as to encourage the development of the industrial interests of the whole country; and we commend that policy of national exchanges, which secures to the workingmen liberal wages, to agriculture remunerative prices, to mechanics and manufacturers an adequate reward for their skill, labor, and enterprise, and to the nation commercial prosperity and independence.
13. That we protest against any sale or alienation to others of the public lands held by actual settlers, and against any view of the free-homestead policy which regards the settlers as paupers or suppliants for public bounty; and we demand the passage by Congress of the complete and satisfactory homestead measure which has already passed the House.
14. That the Republican party is opposed to any change in our naturalization laws or any state legislation by which the rights of citizens hitherto accorded to immigrants from foreign lands shall be abridged or impaired; and in favor of giving a full and efficient protection to the rights of all classes of citizens, whether native or naturalized, both at home and abroad.
15. That appropriations by Congress for river and harbor improvements of a national character, required for the accommodation and security of an existing commerce, are authorized by the Constitution, and justified by the obligation of Government to protect the lives and property of its citizens.
16. That a railroad to the Pacific Ocean is imperatively demanded by the interests of the whole country; that the federal government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction; and that, as preliminary thereto, a daily overland mail should be promptly established.

Republican Party Platforms: "Republican Party Platform of 1860," May 17, 1860. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

[Available through the University of California at Santa Barbara](#)

South Carolina Declaration of Secession, 1860

Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 contest on November 6 with just 40% of the popular vote and not a single southern vote in the Electoral College. Within days, southern states were organizing secession conventions. On December 20, South Carolina voted to secede, and issued its "Declaration of the Immediate Causes."

In the present case, that fact is established with certainty. We assert that fourteen of the States have deliberately refused, for years past, to fulfill their constitutional obligations, and we refer to their own Statutes for the proof.

The Constitution of the United States, in its fourth Article, provides as follows: "No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

This stipulation was so material to the compact, that without it that compact would not have been made. The greater number of the contracting parties held slaves, and they had previously evinced their estimate of the value of such a stipulation by making it a condition in the Ordinance for the government of the territory ceded by Virginia, which now composes the States north of the Ohio River.

The same article of the Constitution stipulates also for rendition by the several States of fugitives from justice from the other States.

The General Government, as the common agent, passed laws to carry into effect these stipulations of the States. For many years these laws were executed. But an increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery, has led to a disregard of their obligations, and the laws of the General Government have ceased to effect the objects of the Constitution. The States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, have enacted laws which either nullify the Acts of Congress or render useless any attempt to execute them. In many of these States the fugitive is discharged from service or labor claimed, and in none of them has the State Government complied with the stipulation made in the Constitution. The State of New Jersey, at an early day, passed a law in conformity with her constitutional obligation; but the current of anti-slavery feeling has led her more recently to enact laws which render inoperative the remedies provided by her own law and by the laws of Congress. In the State of New York even the right of transit for a slave has been denied by her tribunals; and the States of Ohio and Iowa have refused to surrender to justice fugitives charged with murder, and with inciting servile insurrection in the State of Virginia. Thus the constituted compact has been deliberately broken and disregarded by the non-slaveholding States, and the consequence follows that South Carolina is released from her obligation.

The ends for which the Constitution was framed are declared by itself to be “to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”

These ends it endeavored to accomplish by a Federal Government, in which each State was recognized as an equal, and had separate control over its own institutions. The right of property in slaves was recognized by giving to free persons distinct political rights, by giving them the right to represent, and burthening them with direct taxes for three-fifths of their slaves; by authorizing the importation of slaves for twenty years; and by stipulating for the rendition of fugitives from labor.

We affirm that these ends for which this Government was instituted have been defeated, and the Government itself has been made destructive of them by the action of the non-slaveholding States. Those States have assume the right of deciding upon the propriety of our domestic institutions; and have denied the rights of property established in fifteen of the States and recognized by the Constitution; they have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery; they have permitted open establishment among them of societies, whose avowed object is to disturb the peace and to eloign the property of the citizens of other States. They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes; and those who remain, have been incited by emissaries, books and pictures to servile insurrection.

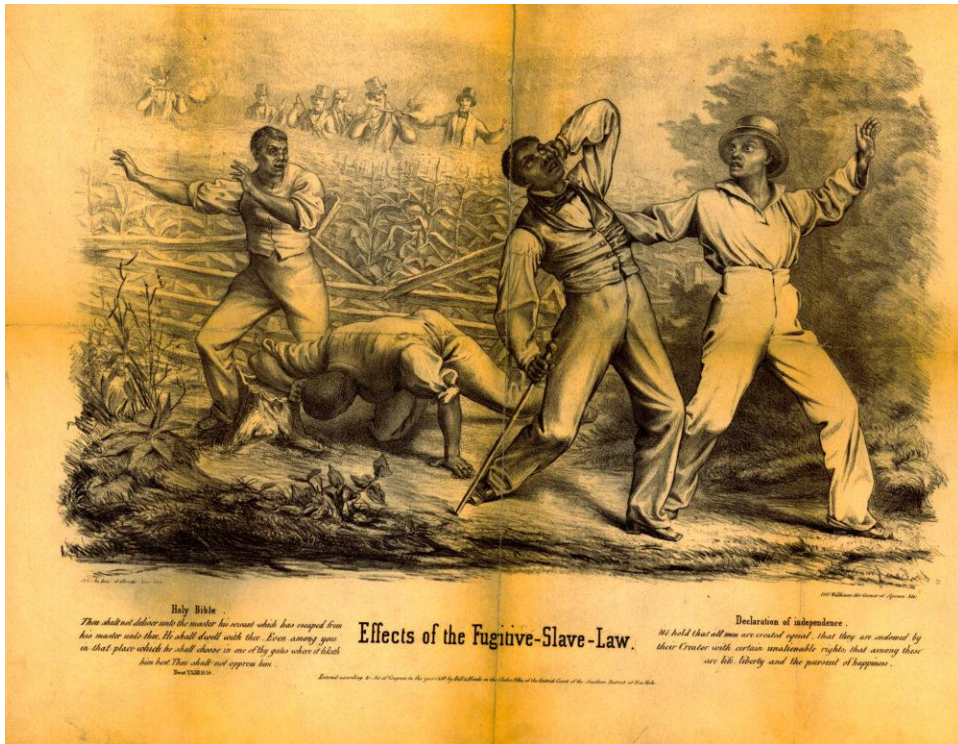
For twenty-five years this agitation has been steadily increasing, until it has now secured to its aid the power of the common Government. Observing the *forms* of the Constitution, a sectional party has found within that Article establishing the Executive Department, the means of subverting the Constitution itself. A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States, whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery. He is to be entrusted with the administration of the common Government, because he has declared that that “Government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free,” and that the public mind must rest in the belief that slavery is in the course of ultimate extinction.

We, therefore, the People of South Carolina, by our delegates in Convention assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, have solemnly declared that the Union heretofore existing between this State and the other States of North America, is dissolved, and that the State of South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent State; with full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do.

“Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union,” *The Avalon Project at the Yale Law School*.

[Available through The Avalon Project at Yale University](#)

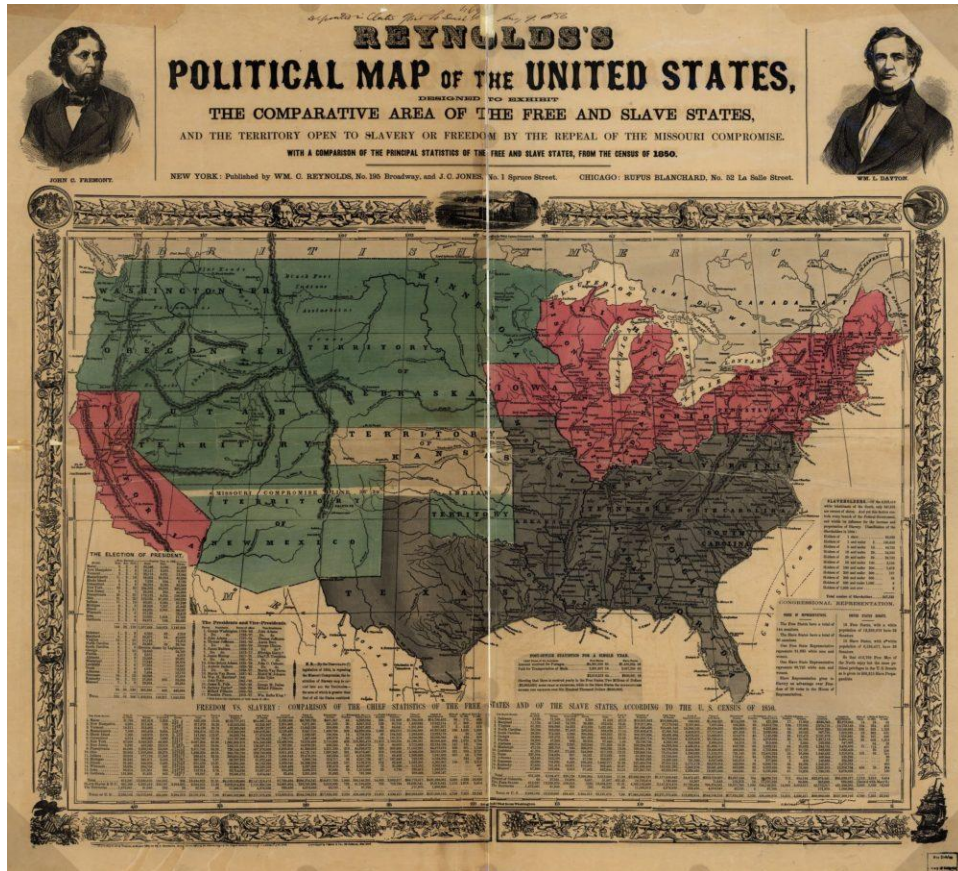
Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law Lithograph, 1850



Theodore Kaufman, "Effect of the Fugitive Slave Law," 1850, via [Library of Congress](#).

This lithograph imagines the consequences of the Fugitive Slave Act, part of the Compromise of 1850. Four well-dressed Black men are being hunted by a party of white men, seen in the background. There are a number of ambiguities in the image – are the Black men enslaved or free? Are they trying to escape or not? Where exactly are they? These ambiguities speak to the concerns many abolitionists had about the law, which required free citizens to return freedom-seekers to their enslavers.

Sectional Crisis Map, 1856



William C. Reynolds and J. C. Jones, "Reynolds's political map of the United States, designed to exhibit the comparative area of the free and slave states and the territory open to slavery or freedom by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise," 1856, via [Library of Congress](#).

This piece of Republican propaganda from the 1856 election makes clear distinctions between free states, slave states, and territories. Featured at the top of the page are engravings of John C. Fremont and his running mate, William C. Dayton. A vibrant red sets off the free states. The chart, "Freedom vs. Slavery," demonstrates the North's economic and cultural superiority over slave states in terms of everything from population per square mile, capital in manufactures, miles of railroad, the number of newspapers and public libraries, and value of churches.

14. The Civil War

Introduction

The American Civil War, the bloodiest in the nation's history, resulted in approximately 750,000 deaths. The war touched the life of nearly every American as military mobilization reached levels never seen before or since. The vast majority of northerners went to war to preserve the Union, but the war ultimately transformed into a struggle to eradicate slavery. African Americans, both enslaved and free pressed the issue of emancipation and nurtured this transformation. Simultaneously, women thrust themselves into critical wartime roles while navigating a world without many men of military age. The Civil War was a defining event in the history of the United States and, for the Americans thrust into it, a wrenching one. The struggles and suffering of the Civil War endure through the words and images of the era.

Alexander Stephens on Slavery and the Confederate Constitution, 1861

Confederates had to quickly create not only a government, but also a nation, including all of the cultural values required to foster patriotism. In this speech Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, proclaims that slavery and white supremacy were not only the cause for secession, but also the “cornerstone” of the Confederate nation.

The new Constitution has put at rest forever all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institutions—African slavery as it exists among us—the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. Jefferson, in his forecast, had anticipated this, as the “rock upon which the old Union would split.” He was right. What was conjecture with him, is now a realized fact. But whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock stood and stands, may be doubted. The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old Constitution were, that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally and politically. It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with; but the general opinion of the men of that day was, that, somehow or other, in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away. This idea, though not incorporated in the Constitution, was the prevailing idea at the time. The Constitution, it is true, secured every essential guarantee to the institution while it should last, and hence no argument can be justly used against the constitutional guarantees thus secured, because of the common sentiment of the day. Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the idea of a Government built upon it—when the “storm came and the wind blew, it fell.”

Our new Government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and moral condition. [Applause.] This, our new Government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all other truths in the various departments of science. It is so even amongst us. Many who hear me, perhaps, can recollect well that this truth was not generally admitted, even within their day. The errors of the past generation still clung to many as late as twenty years ago. Those at the North who still cling to these errors with a zeal above knowledge, we justly denominate fanatics. All fanaticism springs from an aberration of the mind; from a defect in reasoning. It is a species of insanity. One of the most striking characteristics of insanity, in many instances, is, forming correct conclusions from fancied or erroneous premises; so with the anti-slavery fanatics: their conclusions are right if their premises are. They assume that the negro is equal, and hence conclude that he is entitled to equal privileges and rights, with the white man.... I recollect once of having heard

a gentleman from one of the Northern States, of great power and ability, announce in the House of Representatives, with imposing effect, that we of the South would be compelled, ultimately, to yield upon this subject of slavery; that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics, as it was in physics or mechanics. That the principle would ultimately prevail. That we, in maintaining slavery as it exists with us, were warring against a principle—a principle founded in nature, the principle of the equality of man. The reply I made to him was, that upon his own grounds we should succeed, and that he and his associates in their crusade against our institutions would ultimately fail. The truth announced, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics as well as in physics and mechanics, I admitted, but told him it was he and those acting with him who were warring against a principle. They were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal.

In the conflict thus far, success has been on our side, complete throughout the length and breadth of the Confederate States. It is upon this, as I have stated, our social fabric is firmly planted; and I cannot permit myself to doubt the ultimate success of a full recognition of this principle throughout the civilized and enlightened world.

As I have stated, the truth of this principle may be slow in development, as all truths are, and ever have been, in the various branches of science. It was so with the principles announced by Galileo—it was so with Adam Smith and his principles of political economy. It was so with Harvey, and his theory of the circulation of the blood. It is stated that not a single one of the medical profession, living at the time of the announcement of the truths made by him, admitted them. Now, they are universally acknowledged. May we not therefore look with confidence to the ultimate universal acknowledgment of the truths upon which our system rests? It is the first Government ever instituted upon principles in strict conformity to nature, and the ordination of Providence, in furnishing the materials of human society. Many Governments have been founded upon the principles of certain classes; but the classes thus enslaved, were of the same race, and in violation of the laws of nature. Our system commits no such violation of nature's laws. The negro by nature, or by the curse against Canaan, is fitted for that condition which he occupies in our system. The architect, in the construction of buildings, lays the foundation with the proper material—the granite—then comes the brick or the marble. The substratum of our society is made of the material fitted by nature for it, and by experience we know that it is the best, not only for the superior but for the inferior race, that it should be so. It is, indeed, in conformity with the Creator. It is not for us to inquire into the wisdom of His ordinances or to question them. For His own purposes He has made one race to differ from another, as He has made “one star to differ from another in glory.”

The great objects of humanity are best attained, when conformed to his laws and degrees, in the formation of Governments as well as in all things else. Our Confederacy is founded upon principles in strict conformity with these laws. This stone which was rejected by the first builders “is become the chief stone of the corner” in our new edifice.

“Speech of A. H. Stephens,” Frank Moore, ed., *Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, etc.* Volume I, (New York: 1861), 45-46.

[Available through Google Books](#)

General Benjamin F. Butler Reacts to Self-Emancipating People, 1861

Self-emancipation posed a dilemma for the Union military. Soldiers were forbidden to interfere with slavery or assist runaways, but many soldiers disobeyed the policy. In May 1861, General Benjamin F. Butler went over his superiors' heads and began accepting freedom-seekers who came to Fortress Monroe in Virginia. In order to avoid the issue of their freedom, Butler reasoned that these people "contraband of war," and he had as much a right to seize them as he did to seize enemy horses or cannons. Later that summer Congress affirmed Butler's policy in the First Confiscation Act.

Sir

Since I wrote my last dispatch the question in regard to slave property is becoming one of very serious magnitude. The inhabitants of Virginia are using their negroes in the batteries, and are preparing to send the women and children South. The escapes from them are very numerous, and a squad has come in this morning to my pickets bringing their women and children. Of course these cannot be dealt with upon the Theory on which I designed to treat the services of able bodied men and women who might come within my lines and of which I gave you a detailed account in my last dispatch. I am in the utmost doubt what to do with this species of property. Up to this time I have had come within my lines men and women with their children—entire families—each family belonging to the same owner. I have therefore determined to employ, as I can do very profitably, the able-bodied persons in the party, issuing proper food for the support of all, and charging against their services the expense of care and sustenance of the non-laborers, keeping a strict and accurate account as well of the services as of the expenditure having the worth of the services and the cost of the expenditure determined by a board of Survey hereafter to be detailed. I know of no other manner in which to dispose of this subject and the questions connected therewith. As a matter of property to the insurgents it will be of very great moment, the number that I now have amounting as I am informed to what in good times would be of the value of sixty thousand dollars. Twelve of these negroes I am informed have escaped from the erection of the batteries on Sewall's point which this morning fired upon my expedition as it passed by out of range. As a means of offence therefore in the enemy's hands these negroes when able bodied are of the last importance. Without them the batteries could not have been erected at least for many weeks. As a military question it would seem to be a measure of necessity to deprive their masters of their services. How can this be done? As a political question and a question of humanity can I receive the services of a Father and a Mother and not take the children? Of the humanitarian aspect I have no doubt. Of the political one I have no right to judge. I therefore submit all this to your better judgement, and as these questions have a political aspect, I have ventured—and I trust I am not wrong in so doing—to duplicate the parts of my dispatch relating to this subject and forward them to the Secretary of War.

Benj. F. Butler

Benj. F. Butler to Lieutenant Genl. Scott, 27 May 1861, B-99 1861, Letters Received
Irregular, Secretary of War, Record Group 107, National Archives.

[Available through the Freedmen and Southern Society Project at University of Maryland](#)

William Henry Singleton, a formerly enslaved man, recalls fighting for the Union, 1922

William Henry Singleton was born to his enslaved mother, Lettice, and her master's brother, William Singleton. At the age of four he was sold away from his mother, but ran back to her several times throughout his life. When the war broke out, he escaped to Union lines and volunteered for service. After being dismissed, he rallied one thousand Black soldiers and received a promotion as a sergeant.

Then I was taken to General Burnside's headquarters and asked the best way to reach the rebels at Wives Forks, before you could get into Kinston. I laid the route out for them the best I knew how, but said that if I were going to command the expedition I would give them a flank movement by the way of the Trent river, which was five miles farther from Wives Forks than the Neuse river. But they did not accept my proposition and attacked directly, with the result that they were repulsed.

I took part in that attack as a guide and had a horse shot from under me. A few days later I told Colonel Leggett that I would not fight anymore unless I was prepared to defend myself. He said, "We never will take niggers in the army to fight. The war will be over before your people ever get in." I replied, "The war will not be over until I have had a chance to spill my blood. If that is your feeling toward me, pay me what you owe me and I will take it and go." He owed me five dollars and he paid me. I took that five dollars and hired the A. M. E. Zion church at Newbern and commenced to recruit a regiment of colored men. I secured the thousand men and they appointed me as their colonel and I drilled them with cornstalks for guns.

We had no way, of course, of getting guns and equipment. We drilled once a week. I supported myself by whatever I could get to do and my men did likewise. I spoke to General Burnside about getting my regiment into the federal service but he said he could do nothing about it. It was to General Burnside, however, and my later association with him, when I was with him for a time as his servant, that I owe what I now regard as one of the great experiences of my life. It was one day at the General's headquarters. His adjutant pointed to a man who was talking to the general in an inner room and said, "Do you know that man in there?" I said, "No." He said, "That is our President, Mr. Lincoln." In a few minutes the conference in the inner room apparently ended and Mr. Lincoln and General Burnside came out. I do not know whether they had told President Lincoln about me before or not, but the General pointed to me and said, "This is the little fellow who got up a colored regiment." President Lincoln shook hands with me and said, "It is a good thing. What do you want?" I said, "I have a thousand men. We want to help fight to free our race. We want to know if you will take us in the service?" He said, "You have got good pluck. But I can't take you now because you are contraband of war and not American citizens yet. But hold on to your society and there may be a chance for you." So saying he passed on. The only recollection I have of him is that of a tall, dark complexioned, raw boned man, with a pleasant face. I looked at him as he passed on in company with General Burnside and I never saw him again.

On January 1, 1863, he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which made me and all the rest of my race free. We could not be bought and sold any more or whipped or made to work without pay. We were not to be treated as things without souls any more, but as human beings. Of course I do not remember that I thought it all out in this way when I learned what President Lincoln had done. I am sure I did not. And the men in my regiment did not. I had gone back to Newbern then. The thing we expected was that we would be taken into the federal service at once. It was not until May 28, 1863, however, that the thing we had hoped for so long came to pass, when Colonel James C. Beecher, a brother of Henry Ward Beecher, that great champion of our race, came and took command of the regiment. I was appointed Sergeant of Company G, being the first colored man to be accepted into the federal service and the only colored man that furnished the government a thousand men in the Civil War. The regiment was at first called the First North Carolina Colored Regiment. It later became known as the 35th Regiment, United States Colored troops. Soon afterwards we were armed and equipped and shipped to South Carolina and stationed at Charleston Harbor. From that time until June, 1866, when we were mustered out at Charleston, South Carolina, I was in active service, ranking as First Sergeant, Company G, 35th U. S. Colored Infantry. J. C. White was the Captain of that company and Colonel James C. Beecher was the commander of the regiment. We saw active service in South Carolina, Florida and Georgia. I was wounded in the right leg at the battle of Alusta, Florida. After the war ended we were stationed for a time in South Carolina doing guard duty and were finally mustered out of the service on June 1, 1866.

My honorable discharge from the service dated on that day, although it is worn and not very legible now, as you can see, is one of my most prized possessions. Some years ago a man from the government service in Washington made out for me in a detailed form a record of my war service. It is in much more complete form than I have set it down here, but I think such details are of more interest to one's family than to the general public. My life since the war has been the ordinary life of the average man of my race. I have not so many accomplishments to boast of, but I have done the best I could to prove myself worthy of being a free man.

William Henry Singleton, "Recollection of My Slavery Days," Electronic Edition, Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina, (1922), revision 2000.

[Available through Documenting the American South from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

Poem about Civil War Nurses, 1866

The massive casualty rates of the Civil War meant that nurses were always needed. Women, North and South, left the comforts of home to care for the wounded. Hospital conditions were often so bad that many volunteer nurses quit soon after beginning. After the war, Kate Cumming, a nurse who traveled with the Army of Tennessee, published an account of her experience. She included a poem, written by an unknown author about nursing in the war.

Fold away all your bright-tinted dresses,
Turn the key on your jewels today,
And the wealth of your tendril-like tresses
Braid back in a serious way;
No more delicate gloves, no more laces,
No more trifling in boudoir or bower,
But come with your souls in your faces
To meet the stern wants of the hour.
Looks around. By the torchlight unsteady
The dead and the dying seem one—
What! Trembling and paling already,
Before your dear mission's begun?
These wounds are more precious than ghastly—
Time presses her lips to each scar,
While she chants of that glory which vastly
Transcends all the horrors of war.
Pause here by this bedside. How mellow
The light showers down on that brow!
Such a brave, brawny visage, poor fellow!
Some homestead is missing him now.
Some wife shades her eyes in the clearing,
Some mother sits moaning distressed,
While the loved one lies faint but unfearing,
With the enemy's ball in his breast.
Here's another—a lad—a mere stripling,
Picked up in the field almost dead,
With the blood through his sunny hair rippling
From the horrible gash in the head.
They say he was first in the action:
Gay-hearted, quick-headed, and witty:
He fought till he dropped with exhaustion.
At the gates of our fair southern city.
Fought and fell 'neath the guns of that city,
With a spirit transcending his years—

Lift him up in your large-hearted pity,
And wet his pale lips with your tears.
Touch him gently; most sacred the duty
Of dressing the poor shattered hand!
God spare him to rise in his beauty,
And battle once more for his land!
Pass on! It is useless to linger
While others are calling your care;
There is need for your delicate finger,
For your womanly sympathy there.
There are sick ones athirst for caressing,
There are dying ones raving at home,
There are wounds to be bound with a blessing,
And shrouds to make ready for some.
They have gathered about you the harvest
Of death in its ghastliest view;
The nearest as well as the furthest
Is there with the traitor and true.
And crowned with your beautiful patience,
Made sunny with love at the heart,
You must balsam the wounds of the nations,
Nor falter nor shrink from your part.
And the lips of the mother will bless you,
And angels, sweet-visaged and pale,
And the little ones run to caress you,
And the wives and the sisters cry hail!
But e'en if you drop down unheeded,
What matter? God's ways are the best:
You have poured out your life where 'twas needed,
And he will take care of the rest.

Unknown author, "A Call to the Hospital," in Kate Cumming, *A Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army of Tennessee* (Louisville: 1866), pp. 104-105

[Available through Google Books](#)

Ambrose Bierce Recalls his Experience at the Battle of Shiloh, 1881

Civil War soldiers described the experience of combat as both terrifying and confusing. The American writer, Ambrose Bierce, captures both the confusion and terror of the Battle of Shiloh in the below excerpt of his 1881 recollections of the battle.

Before us ran the turbulent river, vexed with plunging shells and obscured in spots by blue sheets of low-lying smoke. The two little steamers were doing their duty well. They came over to us empty and went back crowded, sitting very low in the water, apparently on the point of capsizing. The farther edge of the water could not be seen; the boats came out of the obscurity, took on their passengers and vanished in the darkness. But on the heights above, the battle was burning brightly enough; a thousand lights kindled and expired in every second of time. There were broad flushings in the sky, against which the branches of the trees showed black. Sudden flames burst out here and there, singly and in dozens. Fleeting streaks of fire crossed over to us by way of welcome. These expired in blinding flashes and fierce little rolls of smoke, attended with the peculiar metallic ring of bursting shells, and followed by the musical humming of the fragments as they struck into the ground on every side, making us wince, but doing little harm. The air was full of noises. To the right and the left the musketry rattled smartly and petulantly; directly in front it sighed and growled. To the experienced ear this meant that the death-line was an arc of which the river was the chord. There were deep, shaking explosions and smart shocks; the whisper of stray bullets and the hurtle of conical shells; the rush of round shot. There were faint, desultory cheers, such as announce a momentary or partial triumph. Occasionally, against the glare behind the trees, could be seen moving black figures, singularly distinct but apparently no longer than a thumb. They seemed to me ludicrously like the figures of demons in old allegorical prints of hell....

The night was now black-dark; as is usual after a battle, it had begun to rain. Still we moved; we were being put into position by somebody. Inch by inch we crept along, treading on one another's heels by way of keeping together. Commands were passed along the line in whispers; more commonly none were given. When the men had pressed so closely together that they could advance no farther they stood stock-still, sheltering the locks of their rifles with their ponchos. In this position many fell asleep. When those in front suddenly stepped away those in the rear, roused by the tramping, hastened after with such zeal that the line was soon choked again. Evidently the head of the division was being piloted at a snail's pace by some one who did not feel sure of his ground. Very often we struck our feet against the dead; more frequently against those who still had spirit enough to resent it with a moan. These were lifted carefully to one side and abandoned. Some had sense enough to ask in their weak way for water. Absurd! Their clothes were soaked, their hair dank; their white faces, dimly discernible, were clammy and cold. Besides, none of us had any water. There was plenty coming, though, for before midnight a thunderstorm broke upon us with great

violence. The rain, which had for hours been a dull drizzle, fell with a copiousness that stifled us; we moved in running water up to our ankles....

In a few moments we had passed out of the singular oasis that had so marvelously escaped the desolation of battle, and now the evidences of the previous day's struggle were present in profusion. The ground was tolerably level here, the forest less dense, mostly clear of undergrowth, and occasionally opening out into small natural meadows. Here and there were small pools—mere discs of rainwater with a tinge of blood. Riven and torn with cannon-shot, the trunks of the trees protruded bunches of splinters like hands, the fingers above the wound interlacing with those below. Large branches had been lopped, and hung their green heads to the ground, or swung critically in their netting of vines, as in a hammock. Many had been cut clean off and their masses of foliage seriously impeded the progress of the troops. The bark of these trees, from the root upward to a height of ten or twenty feet, was so thickly pierced with bullets and grape that one could not have laid a hand on it without covering several punctures. None had escaped. How the human body survives a storm like this must be explained by the fact that it is exposed to it but a few moments at a time, whereas these grand old trees had had no one to take their places, from the rising to the going down of the sun. Angular bits of iron, concavo-convex, sticking in the sides of muddy depressions, showed where shells had exploded in their furrows. Knapsacks, canteens, haversacks distended with soaken and swollen biscuits, gaping to disgorge, blankets beaten into the soil by the rain, rifles with bent barrels or splintered stocks, waist-belts, hats and the omnipresent sardine-box—all the wretched debris of the battle still littered the spongy earth as far as one could see, in every direction. Dead horses were everywhere; a few disabled caissons, or limbers, reclining on one elbow, as it were; ammunition wagons standing disconsolate behind four or six sprawling mules. Men? There were men enough; all dead apparently, except one, who lay near where I had halted my platoon to await the slower movement of the line—a Federal sergeant, variously hurt, who had been a fine giant in his time. He lay face upward, taking in his breath in convulsive, rattling snorts, and blowing it out in sputters of froth which crawled creamily down his cheeks, piling itself alongside his neck and ears. A bullet had clipped a groove in his skull, above the temple; from this the brain protruded in bosses, dropping off in flakes and strings. I had not previously known one could get on, even in this unsatisfactory fashion, with so little brain. One of my men whom I knew for a womanish fellow, asked if he should put his bayonet through him. Inexpressibly shocked by the cold-blooded proposal, I told him I thought not; it was unusual, and too many were looking.

Ambrose Bierce, "What I Saw of Shiloh," *The Ambrose Bierce Project*. Craig E. Warren, ed. Penn State University,

[Available through the Ambrose Bierce Project at Penn State University](#)

Civil War songs, 1862

Music played an important role in the Civil War. Songs celebrated the cause, mourned the loss of life, and bound singers together in shared commitments to mutual sacrifice. These two songs, both written by women, one in the North and the other in the South, show the flexibility of Civil War music. The first is an example of the somber, sacralizing function of music, while the latter is an example of a lighthearted attempt at humor.

Julia Ward Howe, "Battle-Hymn of the Republic," 1862

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fatal lightning of his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps.
His Day is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on."

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment-seat:
Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
While God is marching on.

Julia Ward Howe, "Battle Hymn of the Republic," (Philadelphia: Published by the
Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments, 1863).

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)

Margaret Weir, "Dixie Doodle," 1862

Dixie whipped old Yankee Doodle
Early in the morning,
So Yankeedom had best look out,
And take a timely warning.

Hurrah! for our Dixie Land!
Hurrah! for our borders!
Southern boys to arms will stand,
And whip the dark marauders!

Yankee Doodles soundly slept
Upon their greasy pillows,
While Dixie boys, with muffled oars,
Were gliding o'er the billows.

Hurrah! for our Dixie Land!
Hurrah! for our borders!
Southern boys to arms will stand,
And whip the dark marauders!

Yankee Doodles, grease your heels,
Make ready to be running,
For Dixie boys are near at hand,
Surpassing you in cunning.

Hurrah! for our Dixie Land!
Hurrah! for our borders!

Southern boys to arms will stand,
And whip the dark marauders!

Anderson, the gallant brave,
Who broke upon their slumbers,
E'en little girls and boys shall sing
Your name in tuneful numbers.

Hurrah! for our Dixie Land!
Hurrah! for our borders!
Southern boys to arms will stand,
And whip the dark marauders!

A thousand blessings on your heads,
Our brave, unflinching leaders,
A light you are upon the path
Of all our brave seceders.

Hurrah! for our Dixie Land!
Hurrah! for our borders!
Southern boys to arms will stand,
And whip the dark marauders!

Wright, on Carolina's coast,
Was e'er a hero bolder?
He seized a Yankee foe, and made
A breastwork of the soldier.

Hurrah! for our Dixie Land!
Hurrah! for our borders!
Southern boys to arms will stand,
And whip the dark marauders!

Louisiana, bold and brave,
Renowned for Creole beauty,
Your champions will bear in mind
The watchword, grace and booty!

Hurrah! for our Dixie Land!
Hurrah! for our borders!
Southern boys to arms will stand,
And whip the dark marauders!

Yankee Doodle, fair thee well,
Ere long you'll be forgotten,
While Dixie's notes shall gaily float
Throughout the land of cotton.

Margaret Weir, "Dixie Doodle," (New Orleans: P. P. Werlein & Halsey, 1862)

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)

Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, 1865

Abraham Lincoln offered a first draft of history in his second inaugural address, casting the Civil War as a war for union that later became a spiritual process of national penance for two hundred and fifty years of slaving. Lincoln also looked to the future, envisioning a harmonious and speedy Reconstruction that would take place "with malice toward none" and "with charity for all."

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN: At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then, a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth, on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it — all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war — seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar, and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate and extend this interest, was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more, than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered — that of neither, has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs

come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove; and that He gives to both north and south this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish, a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

Abraham Lincoln, March 4, 1865, "Second Inaugural Address; endorsed by Lincoln, April 10, 1865," *The Abraham Lincoln Papers*, Library of Congress.

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)

Civil War Nurses Illustration, 1864



Thomas Nast, "Our Heroines, United States Sanitary Commission," in *Harper's Weekly*, April 9, 1864, via [Cushing/Whitney Medical Library at Yale University](#).

The Civil War ultimately opened a variety of arenas for Union and Confederate women's participation. In the North, the United States Sanitary Commission in particular centralized women's opportunities to volunteer as nurses, donate supplies, and to raise funds at Sanitary Fairs. This 1864 image from popular periodical *Harper's Weekly* celebrates women's contributions on the battlefield, in the hospital, in the parlor, and at the fair.

Burying the Dead Photograph, 1865



John Reekie, "A Burial Party, Cold Harbor, Virginia," 1865, via [Library of Congress](#).

Death pervaded every aspect of life during the years of the Civil War. This gruesome photograph, taken after the battle of Cold Harbor, shows the hasty burial procedures used to reckon with unprecedented death. Dirty jobs like this were often left to Black soldiers or freedpeople in Contraband Camps.

15. Reconstruction

Introduction

After the Civil War, much of the South lay in ruins. How would these states be brought back into the Union? Would they be conquered territories or equal states? How would they rebuild their governments, economies, and social systems? What rights did freedom confer upon formerly enslaved people? The answers to many of Reconstruction's questions hinged upon the concepts of citizenship and equality. The era witnessed perhaps the most open and widespread discussions of citizenship since the nation's founding. It was a moment of revolutionary possibility and violent backlash. African Americans and Radical Republicans pushed the nation to finally realize the Declaration of Independence's promises that "all men were created equal" and had "certain, unalienable rights." Conservative white Democrats granted African Americans legal freedom but little more. When Black Americans and their radical allies succeeded in securing citizenship for freedpeople, a new fight commenced to determine the legal, political, and social implications of American citizenship. Resistance continued, and Reconstruction eventually collapsed. In the South, limits on human freedom endured and would stand for nearly a century more. These sources gesture toward both the successes and failures of Reconstruction.

Freedmen discuss post-emancipation life with General Sherman, 1865

Reconstruction began before the War ended. After his famous March to the Sea in January of 1865, General William T. Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton met with twenty of Savannah's African American religious leaders to discuss the future of the freedmen of the state of Georgia. In the excerpt below, Garrison Frazier, the chosen spokesman for the group, explains the importance of land for freedom. The result of this meeting was Sherman's famous Field Order 15, which set aside confiscated plantation lands along the coast from Charleston, S.C. to Jacksonville, FL, for Black land ownership. The policy would later be overruled and freedpeople would lose their right to the land.

Garrison Frazier being chosen by the persons present to express their common sentiments upon the matters of inquiry, makes answers to inquiries as follows:

First: State what your understanding is in regard to the acts of Congress and President Lincoln's [Emancipation] proclamation, touching the condition of the colored people in the Rebel States.

Answer—So far as I understand President Lincoln's proclamation to the Rebellious States, it is, that if they would lay down their arms and submit to the laws of the United States before the first of January, 1863, all should be well; but if they did not, then all the slaves in the Rebel States should be free henceforth and forever. That is what I understood.

Second—State what you understand by Slavery and the freedom that was to be given by the President's proclamation.

Answer—Slavery is, receiving by irresistible power the work of another man, and not by his consent. The freedom, as I understand it, promised by the proclamation, is taking us from under the yoke of bondage, and placing us where we could reap the fruit of our own labor, take care of ourselves and assist the Government in maintaining our freedom.

Third: State in what manner you think you can take care of yourselves, and how can you best assist the Government in maintaining your freedom.

Answer: The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn it and till it by our own labor—that is, by the labor of the women and children and old men; and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare. And to assist the Government, the young men should enlist in the service of the Government, and serve in such manner as they may be wanted. (The Rebels told us that they piled them up and made batteries of them, and sold them to Cuba; but we don't believe that.) We want to be placed on land until we are able to buy it and make it our own.

Fourth: State in what manner you would rather live—whether scattered among the whites or in colonies by yourselves.

Answer: I would prefer to live by ourselves, for there is a prejudice against us in the South that will take years to get over; but I do not know that I can answer for my brethren. [Mr.

Lynch says he thinks they should not be separated, but live together. All the other persons present, being questioned one by one, answer that they agree with Brother Frazier.]

Fifth: Do you think that there is intelligence enough among the slaves of the South to maintain themselves under the Government of the United States and the equal protection of its laws, and maintain good and peaceable relations among yourselves and with your neighbors?

Answer—I think there is sufficient intelligence among us to do so.

Sixth—State what is the feeling of the black population of the South toward the Government of the United States; what is the understanding in respect to the present war—its causes and object, and their disposition to aid either side. State fully your views.

Answer—I think you will find there are thousands that are willing to make any sacrifice to assist the Government of the United States, while there are also many that are not willing to take up arms. I do not suppose there are a dozen men that are opposed to the Government. I understand, as to the war, that the South is the aggressor. President Lincoln was elected President by a majority of the United States, which guaranteed him the right of holding the office and exercising that right over the whole United States. The South, without knowing what he would do, rebelled. The war was commenced by the Rebels before he came into office. The object of the war was not at first to give the slaves their freedom, but the sole object of the war was at first to bring the rebellious States back into the Union and their loyalty to the laws of the United States. Afterward, knowing the value set on the slaves by the Rebels, the President thought that his proclamation would stimulate them to lay down their arms, reduce them to obedience, and help to bring back the Rebel States; and their not doing so has now made the freedom of the slaves a part of the war. It is my opinion that there is not a man in this city that could be started to help the Rebels one inch, for that would be suicide. There were two black men left with the Rebels because they had taken an active part for the Rebels, and thought something might befall them if they stayed behind; but there is not another man. If the prayers that have gone up for the Union army could be read out, you would not get through them these two weeks.

Seventh: State whether the sentiments you now express are those only of the colored people in the city; or do they extend to the colored population through the country? and what are your means of knowing the sentiments of those living in the country?

Answer: I think the sentiments are the same among the colored people of the State. My opinion is formed by personal communication in the course of my ministry, and also from the thousands that followed the Union army, leaving their homes and undergoing suffering. I did not think there would be so many; the number surpassed my expectation.

Eighth: If the Rebel leaders were to arm the slaves, what would be its effect?

Answer: I think they would fight as long as they were before the bayonet, and just as soon as soon as they could get away, they would desert, in my opinion.

Ninth: What, in your opinion, is the feeling of the colored people about enlisting and serving as soldiers of the United States? and what kind of military service do they prefer?

Answer: A large number have gone as soldiers to Port Royal [S.C.] to be drilled and put in

the service; and I think there are thousands of the young men that would enlist. There is something about them that perhaps is wrong. They have suffered so long from the Rebels that they want to shoulder the musket. Others want to go into the Quartermaster's or Commissary's service.

Tenth: Do you understand the mode of enlistments of colored persons in the Rebel States by State agents under the Act of Congress? If yea, state what your understanding is.

Answer: My understanding is, that colored persons enlisted by State agents are enlisted as substitutes, and give credit to the States, and do not swell the army, because every black man enlisted by a State agent leaves a white man at home; and, also, that larger bounties are given or promised by State agents than are given by the States. The great object should be to push through this Rebellion the shortest way, and there seems to be something wanting in the enlistment by State agents, for it don't strengthen the army, but takes one away for every colored man enlisted.

Eleventh: State what, in your opinion, is the best way to enlist colored men for soldiers.

Answer: I think, sir, that all compulsory operations should be put a stop to. The ministers would talk to them, and the young men would enlist. It is my opinion that it would be far better for the State agents to stay at home, and the enlistments to be made for the United States under the direction of Gen. Sherman.

In the absence of Gen. Sherman, the following question was asked:

Twelfth: State what is the feeling of the colored people in regard to Gen. Sherman; and how far do they regard his sentiments and actions as friendly to their rights and interests, or otherwise?

Answer: We looked upon Gen. Sherman prior to his arrival as a man in the Providence of God specially set apart to accomplish this work, and we unanimously feel inexpressible gratitude to him, looking upon him as a man that should be honored for the faithful performance of his duty. Some of us called upon him immediately upon his arrival, and it is probable he would not meet the Secretary with more courtesy than he met us. His conduct and deportment toward us characterized him as a friend and a gentleman. We have confidence in Gen. Sherman, and think that what concerns us could not be under better hands. This is our opinion now from the short acquaintance and interest we have had. (Mr. Lynch states that with his limited acquaintance with Gen. Sherman, he is unwilling to express an opinion. All others present declare their agreement with Mr. Frazier about Gen. Sherman.)

"Minutes of the Interview Between the Colored Ministers and Church Officers at Savannah With the Secretary of War and Major Gen. Sherman" *New York Daily Tribune*, Feb. 13, 1865 (New York, New York).

[Available through the Freedmen and Southern Society Project from the University of Maryland](#)

Jourdon Anderson Writes His Former Enslaver, 1865

Black Americans hoped that the end of the Civil War would create an entirely new world, while white southerners tried to restore the antebellum order as much as they could. Most former enslavers sought to maintain control over their laborers through sharecropping contracts. P.H. Anderson of Tennessee was one such former enslaver. After the war, he contacted his former enslaved laborer Jourdon Anderson, offering him a job opportunity. The following is Jourdon Anderson's reply.

Dayton, Ohio, August 7, 1865.

To my old Master, Colonel P. H. Anderson, Big Spring, Tennessee.

Sir: I got your letter, and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this, for harboring Rebs they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Colonel Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again, and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me that Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here. I get twenty-five dollars a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy,—the folks call her Mrs. Anderson,—and the children—Milly, Jane, and Grundy—go to school and are learning well. The teacher says Grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday school, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated. Sometimes we overhear others saying, "Them colored people were slaves" down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks; but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Colonel Anderson. Many darkeys would have been proud, as I used to be, to call you master. Now if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free papers in 1864 from the Provost-Marshal-General of the Department of Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you were disposed to treat us justly and kindly; and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive

old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years. At twenty-five dollars a month for me, and two dollars a week for Mandy, our earnings would amount to eleven thousand six hundred and eighty dollars. Add to this the interest for the time our wages have been kept back, and deduct what you paid for our clothing, and three doctor's visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams's Express, in care of V. Winters, Esq.,

Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past, we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night; but in Tennessee there was never any pay-day for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

In answering this letter, please state if there would be any safety for my Milly and Jane, who are now grown up, and both good-looking girls. You know how it was with poor Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve—and die, if it come to that—than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood. The great desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them form virtuous habits.

Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

From your old servant,

Jourdon Anderson

“Letter from a freedman to his old master,” *The Freedmen's Book*, Lydia Maria Child, ed. (Boston: 1865), 265-267.

[Available through Project Gutenberg](#)

Charlotte Forten Teaches Freed Children in South Carolina, 1864

Charlotte Forten was born into a wealthy Black family in Philadelphia. After receiving an education in Salem, Massachusetts, Forten became the first Black American hired to teach white students. She lent her educational expertise to the war effort by relocating to South Carolina in 1862 with the goal of educating freed people. This excerpt from her diary explains her experiences during this time.

The first day at school was rather trying. Most of my children were very small, and consequently restless. Some were too young to learn the alphabet. These little ones were brought to school because the older children — in whose care their parents leave them while at work — could not come without them. We were therefore willing to have them come, although they seemed to have discovered the secret of perpetual motion, and tried one's patience sadly. But after some days of positive, though not severe treatment, order was brought out of chaos, and I found but little difficulty in managing and quieting the tiniest and most restless spirits. I never before saw children so eager to learn, although I had had several years' experience in New England schools. Coming to school is a constant delight and recreation to them. They come here as other children go to play. The older ones, during the summer, work in the fields from early morning until eleven or twelve o'clock, and then come into school, after their hard toil in the hot sun, as bright and as anxious to learn as ever.

Of course there are some stupid ones, but these are the minority. The majority learn with wonderful rapidity. Many of the grown people are desirous of learning to read. It is wonderful how a people who have been so long crushed to the earth, so imbruted as these have been, — and they are said to be among the most degraded negroes of the South, — can have so great a desire for knowledge, and such a capability for attaining it. One cannot believe that the haughty Anglo Saxon race, after centuries of such an experience as these people have had, would be very much superior to them. And one's indignation increases against those who, North as well as South, taunt the colored race with inferiority while they themselves use every means in their power to crush and degrade them, denying them every right and privilege, closing against them every avenue of elevation and improvement. Were they, under such circumstances, intellectual and refined, they would certainly be vastly superior to any other race that ever existed.

After the lessons, we used to talk freely to the children, often giving them slight sketches of some of the great and good men. Before teaching them the "John Brown" song, which they learned to sing with great spirit. Miss T. told them the story of the brave old man who had died for them. I told them about Toussaint, thinking it well they should know what one of their own color had done for his race. They listened attentively, and seemed to understand. We found it rather hard to keep their attention in school. It is not strange, as they have been so entirely unused to intellectual concentration. It is necessary to interest them every

moment, in order to keep their thoughts from wandering. Teaching here is consequently far more fatiguing than at the North. In the church, we had of course but one room in which to hear all the children; and to make one's self heard, when there were often as many as a hundred and forty reciting at once, it was necessary to tax the lungs very severely.

My walk to school, of about a mile, was part of the way through a road lined with trees, — on one side stately pines, on the other noble live-oaks, hung with moss and canopied with vines. The ground was carpeted with brown, fragrant pine-leaves; and as I passed through in the morning, the woods were enlivened by the delicious songs of mocking-birds, which abound here, making one realize the truthful felicity of the description in “Evangeline,” —

“The mocking-bird, wildest of singers,

Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious music

That the whole air and the woods and the waves seemed silent to listen.”

The hedges were all aglow with the brilliant scarlet berries of the cassena, and on some of the oaks we observed the mistletoe, laden with its pure white, pearl-like berries. Out of the woods the roads are generally bad, and we found it hard work plodding through the deep sand.

Charlotte Forten, “Life on the Sea Islands,” *Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art, and Politics*, Volume XIII (Boston: 1864), 591-592.

[Available through Google Books](#)

Mississippi Black Code, 1865

Many southern governments enacted legislation that reestablished antebellum power relationships. South Carolina and Mississippi passed laws known as Black Codes to regulate black behavior and impose social and economic control. While they granted some rights to African Americans – like the right to own property, to marry or to make contracts – they also denied other fundamental rights. Mississippi's vagrant law, excerpted here, required all freedmen to carry papers proving they had means of employment. If they had no proof, they could be arrested, fined, or even re-enslaved and leased out to their former enslaver.

Vagrancy Law

Section 2. *Be it further enacted*, that all freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes in this state over the age of eighteen years found on the second Monday in January 1866, or thereafter, with no lawful employment or business, or found unlawfully assembling themselves together either in the day or nighttime, and all white persons so assembling with freedmen, free Negroes, or mulattoes, or usually associating with freedmen, free Negroes, or mulattoes on terms of equality, or living in adultery or fornication with a freedwoman, free Negro, or mulatto, shall be deemed vagrants; and, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in the sum of not exceeding, in the case of a freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, 150, and a white man, \$200, and imprisoned at the discretion of the court, the free Negro not exceeding ten days, and the white man not exceeding six months....

Section 7. *Be it further enacted*, that if any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto shall fail or refuse to pay any tax levied according to the provisions of the 6th Section of this act, it shall be prima facie evidence of vagrancy, and it shall be the duty of the sheriff to arrest such freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, or such person refusing or neglecting to pay such tax, and proceed at once to hire, for the shortest time, such delinquent taxpayer to anyone who will pay the said tax, with accruing costs, giving preference to the employer, if there be one.

Section 8. *Be it further enacted*, that any person feeling himself or herself aggrieved by the judgment of any justice of the peace, mayor, or alderman in cases arising under this act may, within five days, appeal to the next term of the county court of the proper county, upon giving bond and security in a sum not less than \$25 nor more than \$150, conditioned to appear and prosecute said appeal, and abide by the judgment of the county court, and said appeal shall be tried *de novo* in the county court, and the decision of said court shall be final.

Civil Rights of Freedmen

Section 1. *Be it enacted by the legislature of the state of Mississippi*, that all freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes may sue and be sued, implead and be impleaded in all the courts of law and equity of this state, and may acquire personal property and choses in action, by descent or purchase, and may dispose of the same in the same manner and to the same extent that white persons may:

Provided, that the provisions of this section shall not be construed as to allow any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto to rent or lease any lands or tenements, except in incorporated towns or cities, in which places the corporate authorities shall control the same....

Section 7. *Be it further enacted*, that every civil officer shall, and every person may, arrest and carry back to his or her legal employer any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto who shall have quit the service of his or her employer before the expiration of his or her term of service without good cause, and said officer and person shall be entitled to receive for arresting and carrying back every deserting employee aforesaid the sum of \$5, and 10 cents per mile from the place of arrest to the place of delivery, and the same shall be paid by the employer, and held as a setoff for so much against the wages of said deserting employee:

Provided, that said arrested party, after being so returned, may appeal to a justice of the peace or member of the board of police of the county, who, on notice to the alleged employer, shall try summarily whether said appellant is legally employed by the alleged employer and his good cause to quit said employer; either party shall have the right of appeal to the county court, pending which the alleged deserter shall be remanded to the alleged employer or otherwise disposed of as shall be right and just, and the decision of the county court shall be final.

Penal Code

Section 1. *Be it enacted by the legislature of the state of Mississippi*, that no freedman, free Negro, or mulatto not in the military service of the United States government, and not licensed so to do by the board of police of his or her county, shall keep or carry firearms of any kind, or any ammunition, dirk, or Bowie knife; and, on conviction *thereof in the county* court, shall be punished by fine, not exceeding \$10, and pay the costs of such proceedings, and all such arms or ammunition shall be forfeited to the informer; and it shall be the duty of every civil and military officer to arrest any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto found with any such arms or ammunition, and cause him or her to be committed for trial in default of bail...

Section 4. *Be it further enacted*, that all the penal and criminal laws now in force in this state defining offenses and prescribing the mode of punishment for crimes and misdemeanors committed by slaves, free Negroes, or mulattoes be and the same are hereby reenacted and declared to be in full force and effect against freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes, except so far m the mode and manner of trial and punishment have been changed or altered by law....

Section 5. *Be it further enacted*, that if any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto convicted of any of the misdemeanors provided against in this act shall fail-or refuse, for the space of five days after conviction, to pay the fine and costs imposed, such person shall be hired out by the sheriff or other officer, at public outcry, to any white person who will pay said fine and all costs and take such convict for the shortest time.

Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America during the period known as Reconstruction*.... (Washington D.C.: 1871), 80-82.

[Available through Google Books](#)

General Reynolds Describes Lawlessness in Texas, 1868

Most histories of the Civil War claim that the war ended in the summer of 1865 when Confederate armies surrendered. However, violent resistance and terrorism continued in the South for over a decade. In this report, General J.J. Reynolds describes the lawlessness of Texas during Reconstruction.

General: I have the honor to forward herewith annual tabular statement of expeditions and souts, and reports of movements of the various regiments serving in this district, for the year ending September 30, 1868.

Armed organizations, generally known as "Ku-Klux Klans," exist, independently or in concert with other armed bands, in many parts of Texas, but are most numerous, bold, and aggressive east of Trinity River.

The precise objects of the organizations cannot be readily explained, but seems, in this state, to be to disarm, rob, and in many cases murder Union men and negroes, and as occasion may offer, murder United States officers and soldiers; also to intimidate every one who knows anything of the organization but who will not join it.

The civil law east of the Trinity River is almost a dead letter. In some counties the civil officers are all, or a portion of them, members of the Klan. In other counties where the civil officers will not join the Klan, or some other armed band, they have been compelled to leave their counties. Examples are Van Zandt, Smith, and Marion counties; (the county seat of the latter is Jefferson.)

In many counties where the county officers have not been driven off their influence is scarcely felt. What political end, if any, is aimed at by these bands I cannot say, but they attend in large bodies the political meetings (barbecues) which have been and are still being held in various parts of this State under the auspices of the democratic clubs of the different counties.

The speakers encourage their attendance, and in several counties men have been indicated by name from the speaker's stand, as those selected for murder. The men thus pointed out have no course left them but to leave their homes or be murdered on the first convenient opportunity.

The murder of negroes is so common as to render it impossible to keep an accurate account of them.

Many of the members of these bands of outlaws are transient persons in the State; the absence of railroads and telegraphs and great length of time required to communicate between remote points facilitating their devilish purposes.

These organizations are evidently countenanced, or at least not discouraged, by a majority of the white people in the counties where the bands are most numerous. They could not otherwise exist.

I have given this matter close attention, and am satisfied that a remedy to be effective must be gradually applied and continued with the firm support of the army until these outlaws are punished or dispersed.

They cannot be punished by the civil courts until some examples by military commissions show that men can be punished in Texas for murder and kindred crimes. Perpetrators of such crimes have not heretofore, except in very rare instances, been punished in this state at all.

Free speech and a free press, as the terms are generally understood in other States, have never existed in Texas. In fact, the citizens of other states cannot appreciate the state of affairs in Texas without actually experiencing it. The official reports of lawlessness and crime, so far from being exaggerated, do not tell the whole truth.

Jefferson is the center from which most of the trade, travel, and lawlessness of eastern Texas radiate, and at this point or its vicinity there should be stationed about a regiment of troops. The recent murder at Jefferson of Hon. G. W. Smith, a delegate to the constitutional convention, has made it necessary to order more troops to that point. This movement weakens the frontier posts to such an extent as to impair their efficiency for protection against Indians, but the bold, wholesale murdering in the interior of the state seems at present to present a more urgent demand for the troops than Indian depredations. The frontier posts should, however, be reinforced if possible, as it is not improbably that the Indians from the northwest, after having suffered defeat there, will make heavy incursions into Texas.

To restore measurable peace and quiet to Texas will require, for a long time, that troops be stationed at many county seats, until, by their presence, and aid if necessary, the civil law can be placed in the hands of reliable officers, and executed. This will be the work of years, and will be fully accomplished only by an increase of population.

“Report of Brevet Major General J. J. Reynolds, Commanding Fifth Military District”
in *Annual Report of the Secretary of War* (Washington: 1868), 704-705.

[Available through Google Books](#)

A case of sexual violence during Reconstruction, 1866

These documents chronicle a case in the wider wave of violence that targeted people of color during Reconstruction. The first document includes Frances Thompson and Lucy Smith's testimony about their assault, rape, and robbery in 1866. The second document, demonstrates one way that white Southerners denied these claims. In 1876, Thompson was exposed for cross-dressing. For twenty years she successfully passed as a woman. Southerners trumpeted this case as evidence that widely documented cases of violence, sexual and otherwise, were fabricated.

Testimony of Frances Thompson

State your name and residence.

My name is Frances Thompson; I live in Gayoso Street, here in Memphis.

What is your occupation?

I sew and take in washing and ironing.

Have you been a slave?

Yes sir.

Where were you raised?

I was raised in Maryland. All our people but mistress got killed in the rebel army.

Have you been injured?

I am a cripple. (the witness used crutches) I have a cancer in my foot.

Were you here during the late riots?

Yes, sir.

State what you know or saw of the rioting.

Between one and two o'clock Tuesday night seven men, two of whom were policemen, came to my house. I know they were policemen by their stars. They were all Irishmen. They said they must have supper, and asked me what I had, and said they must have some eggs, and ham, and biscuit. I made them some biscuit and some strong coffee, and they all sat down and ate. A girl lives with me; her name is Lucy Smith; she is about 16 years old. When they had eaten supper, they said they wanted some woman to sleep with. I said we were not that sort of women, and they must go. They said, "that didn't make a damned bit of difference." One of them then laid hold of me and hit me in the side of my face, and holding my throat, choked me. Lucy tried to get out of the window when one of them knocked her down and choked her. They drew their pistols and said they would shoot us and fire the house if we did not let them have their way with us. All seven of the men violated us two. Four of them had to do with me, the rest with Lucy.

Were you injured?

I was sick for two weeks. I lay for three days with a hot, burning fever.

Did anyone attend you?

I had a cold before, and Dr. Rambert attended me after this.

Were you robbed?

After they got through with us, they just robbed the house. They took the clothes out of my trunk and took one hundred dollars that I had in greenbacks belonging to me, and two hundred dollars that belonged to a colored woman, that was left with me to keep safe for her.

Did they take anything else?

They took three silk dresses of mine and a right nice one of Lucy's. They put the things into two pillow slips and took them away.

How long did these men stay?

They were there, perhaps, for nearly four hours: it was getting day when they left.

Did they say anything?

They said they intended to "burn up the last God damned nigger."

Do you know any of them?

They were all Irishmen; there was not an American among them.

Did anything else take place?

There were some quilts about that we had been making. They asked us what they were made for. When we told them we made them for the soldiers, they swore at us, and said the soldiers would never have them on their beds, and they took them away with the rest of the things. They said they would drive all the Yankees out of the town, and then there would be only some rebel niggers and butternuts left. I thought all the time they would burn the house down, but they didn't.

U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Memphis Riots and Massacres. 39th Congress, 1st session, 1865-66. House Report No. 101. Washington, DC, 1866, 196-97.

[Available through the Hathi Trust](#)

Testimony of Lucy Smith

State your name and how old you are.

Lucy Smith; I am going on 17 years of age.

Have you been a slave?

I have been a slave girl, and have been free four years come July next.

Do you live in this city?

I live in Memphis and was raised here.

Were you here at the time of the riots?

I was living with Frances Thompson at the time of the riots.

State what you know of the late riots.

On Tuesday, the first night of the riots, some men came to our house. We were in bed. They told us to get up and get some supper for them. We got up, and made a fire, and got them supper.

What else took place?

What was left of the sugar, and coffee, and ham they threw into the bayou.

How many men were there?

There were seven of them; but I was so scared I could not be certain.

Did they rob you?

We had two trunks. They did not unlock them, but just jerked them open. They took \$100 belonging to Frances, and \$200 belonging to a friend of Frances, given to her to take care of. They took all the money and clothes and carried them off.

Did you know any of the men?

There were two policemen with the men. I saw their stars.

What else took place?

They tried to take advantage of me and did. I told them I did not do such things and would not. One of them said he would make me, and choked me by the neck. My neck was swollen up the next day, and for two weeks I could not talk to anyone. After the first man had connexion with me, another go hold of me and tried to violate me, but I was so bad he did not. He gave me a lick with his fist and said I was so damned near dead he would not have anything to do with me.

Were you injured?

I bled from what the first man had done to me. The man said, "Oh, she is so near dead I won't have anything to do with her." I was injured right smart, and kept my bed for two weeks after.

Did they do anything else?

We had some quilts in the room that we had been quilting red, white, and blue. They asked us if we made them before or after the Yankees came. We said after. They said, "You niggers have a mighty liking for the damned Yankees, but we will kill you, and you will have no liking for any one then." There were some pictures in the room: we had General Hooker and some other Union officers, and they said they would not have hurt us so bad if it had not been for these pictures. They were in the house a good while after they hurt me, but I lay down on the bed for I thought they had killed me; it was mostly from the choking and the lick on the side of my yead.

Did anyone attend you?

Dr. Riley, a colored doctor, afterwards examined me. I was in bed two weeks later.

U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Memphis Riots and Massacres. 39th Congress, 1st session, 1865-66. House Report No. 101. Washington, DC, 1866, 197.

[Available through the Hathi Trust](#)

Newspaper story about Frances Thompson

Frances Thompson (colored) better known as “Aunt Crutchie,” who for the past twenty-seven years has gone about this city in female garb, was arrested yesterday, and after medical examination was pronounced a member of the male sex. The quartette of medical experts who worked upon the case also discovered that the dusky Thompson’s lower limbs were as crooked as a young dogwood tree or a ram’s horn. This deformity served as an excuse for the pretended female cripple to promenade the streets on crutches. Thompson is well known to the people of this city as a low minded criminal of the most revolting character. The recorder imposed a fine of \$50 upon the prisoner. Not being able to pay the fine a lot of male toggery was put upon the impecunious Thompson, and he was sent out on the chain gang to work the streets. An immense crowd of curious idling people collected about to see the changed figure of the thick lipped, foul mouthed scamp, and finding it impossible to drive them off, Thompson was sent to the lock up again. Known then as Miss Frances Thompson, this person testified before the Washington Congressional Committee to have been outraged a number of times during the Memphis riots soon after the war. Her evidence appears at length in the official report. It is just probable Mr. Thompson lied — Memphis Avalanche

Under False Colors. “A Colored Man Who Has Successfully Passed as a Woman for Twenty-Seven Years.” *The Memphis Avalanche*; reprinted in *The Pulaski Citizen* (Pulaski, TN), Thursday, July 20, 1876, page 2.

[Available through Newspapers.com](#)

Frederick Douglass on Remembering the Civil War, 1877

Americans came together after the Civil War largely by collectively forgetting what the war was about. Celebrations honored the bravery of both armies, and the meaning of the war faded. Frederick Douglass and other Black leaders engaged with Confederate sympathizers in a battle of historical memory. In this speech, Douglass calls on Americans to remember the war for what it was—a struggle between an army fighting to protect slavery and a nation reluctantly transformed into a force for liberation.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS: In this place, hallowed and made glorious by a statue of the best man, truest patriot, and wisest statesman of his time and country; I have been invited – I might say ordered – by the Lincoln Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, to say a few words to you in appropriate celebration of this annual national memorial day...

We tender you on this memorial day the homage of the loyal nation, and the heartfelt gratitude of emancipated millions. If the great work you undertook to accomplish is still incomplete; if a lawless and revolutionary spirit is still aboard in the country; if the principles for which you bravely fought are in any way compromised or threatened; if the Constitution and the laws are in any measure dishonored and disregarded; if duly elected State Governments are in any way overthrown by violence; if the elective franchise has been overborne by intimidation and fraud; if the Southern States, under the idea of local self-government, are endeavoring to paralyze the arm and shrivel the body of the National Government so that it cannot protect the humblest citizen in his rights, the fault is not yours. You, at least, were faithful and did your whole duty.

Fellow-citizens, I am not here to fan the flame of sectional animosity, to revive old issues, or to stir up strife between the races; but no candid man, looking at the political situation of the hour, can fail to see that we are still afflicted by the painful sequences both of slavery and of the late rebellion. In the spirit of the noble man whose image now looks down upon us we should have “charity toward all, and malice toward none.” In the language of our greatest soldier, twice honored with the Presidency of the nation. “Let us have peace.” Yes, let us have peace, but let us have liberty, law, and justice first. Let us have the Constitution, with its thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments, fairly interpreted, faithfully executed, and cheerfully obeyed in the fullness of their spirit and the completeness of their letter....

My own feeling toward the old master class of the South is well known. Though I have worn the yoke of bondage, and have no love for what are called the good old times of slavery, there is in my heart no taint of malice toward the ex-slaveholders. Many of them were not sinners above all others, but were in some sense the slaves of the slave system, for slavery was a power in the State greater than the State itself. With the aid of a few brilliant orators and plotting conspirators, it sundered the bonds of the Union and inaugurated war....

Nevertheless, we must not be asked to say that the South was right in the rebellion, or to say the North was wrong. We must not be asked to put no difference between those who fought for the Union and those who fought against it, or between loyalty and treason...

But the sectional character of this war was merely accidental and its least significant feature. It was a war of ideas, a battle of principles and ideas which united one section and divided the other; a war between the old and new, slavery and freedom, barbarism and civilization; between a government based upon the broadest and grandest declaration of human rights the world ever heard or read, and another pretended government, based upon an open, bold and shocking denial of all rights, except the right of the strongest.

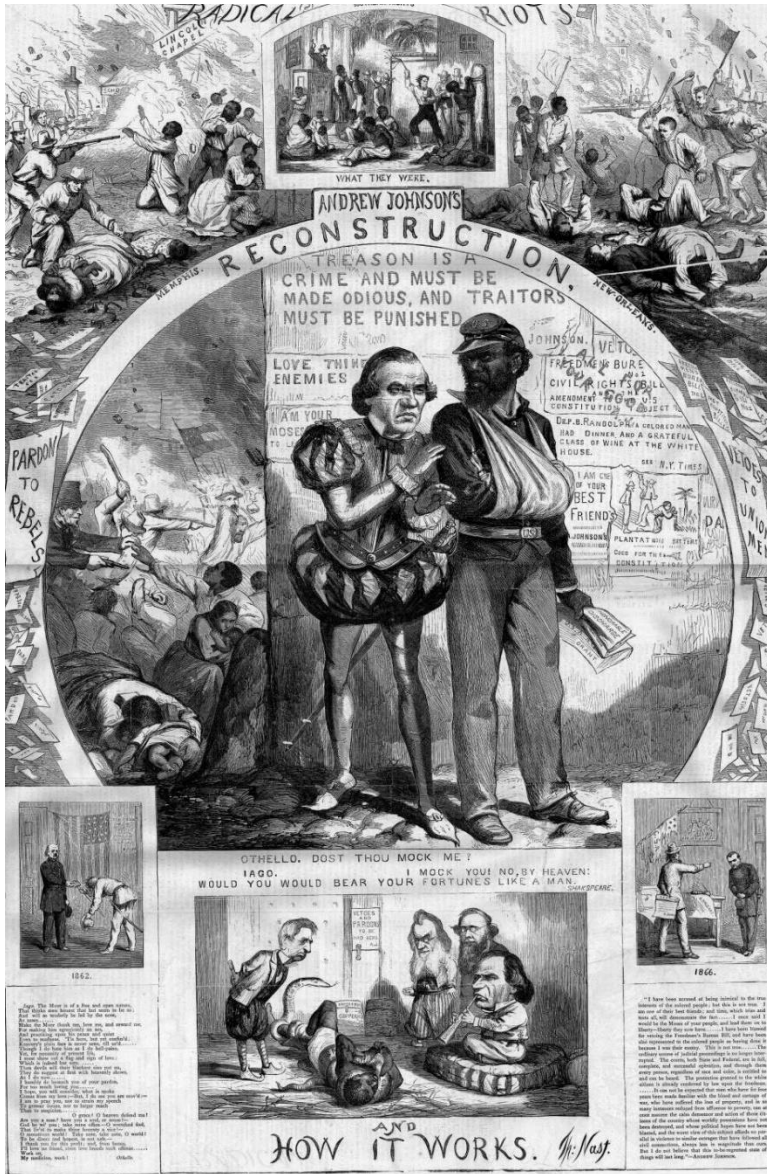
Good, wise, and generous men at the North, in power and out of power, for whose good intentions and patriotism we must all have the highest respect, doubt the wisdom of observing this memorial day, and would have us forget and forgive, strew flowers alike and lovingly, on rebel and on loyal graves. This sentiment is noble and generous, worthy of all honor as such; but it is only a sentiment after all, and must submit to its own rational limitations. There was a right side and a wrong side in the late war, which no sentiment ought to cause us to forget, and while today we should have malice toward none, and charity toward all, it is no part of our duty to confound right with wrong, or loyalty with treason. If the observance of this memorial days has any apology, office, or significance, it is derived from the moral character of this war, from the far-reaching, unchangeable and eternal principles in dispute, and for which our sons and brothers encountered hardship, danger, and death....

... though freedom of speech and of the ballot have for the present fallen before the shot-guns of the South, and, the party of slavery is now in the ascendant, we need bate no jot of heart or hope. The American people will, in any great emergency, be true to themselves. The heart of the nation is still sound and strong, and as in the past, so in the future, patriotic millions, with able captains to lead them, will stand as a wall of fire around the Republic, and in the end see Liberty, Equality, and Justice triumphant.

Frederick Douglass, "Speech delivered in Madison Square, New York, Decoration Day."
1877. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division

[Available through the Library of Congress](#)

Johnson and Reconstruction Cartoon, 1866



Thomas Nast, "Reconstruction and How It Works," Harper's Weekly, 1866, via HarpWeek.com.

This print mocks Reconstruction by making several allusions to Shakespeare. The center illustration shows a Black soldier as Othello and President Andrew Johnson as Iago. Johnson's slogans "Treason is a crime and must be made odious" and "I am your Moses" are on the wall. The top left shows a riot in Memphis and at the top a riot in New Orleans. At the bottom, Johnson is trying to charm a Confederate Copperhead. General Benjamin Butler is at the bottom left, accepting the Confederate surrender of New Orleans in 1862. This scene is contrasted to the bottom right where General Philipps Sheridan bows to Louisiana Attorney General Andrew Herron in 1866, implying a defeat for Reconstruction. Click on the image for more information.

Left Side:

Iago. The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
And will as tenderly be led by the nose,
As asses...
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,
For making him egregiously an ass,
And practicing upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confus'd;
Knavery's plain face is never seen, till us'd...
Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love;
Which is indeed but sign...
Then devils will their blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now...
I humbly do beseech you of your pardon,
For too much loving you...
I hope, you will consider, what is spoke
Comes from my love;—But, I do see you are mov'd:—
I am to pray you, not to strain my speech
To grosser issues, nor to larger reach
Than to suspicion...

O grace! O heaven defend me!

Are you a man? Have you a soul, or sense?—
God be wi' you; take mine office.—O wretched fool,
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!—
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world!
To be direct and honest, is not safe.—
I thank you for this profit; and, from hence,
I'll love no friend, since love breeds such offense...

Work on,
My medicine, work!

Othello.

Right Side:

“I have been accused of being inimical to the true interests of the colored people’ but this is not true. I am one of their best friends; and time, which tries and tests all, will demonstrate the fact...I once said I would be the Moses of your people, and lead them on to liberty—liberty they now have...I have been blamed for vetoing the Freedmen’s Bureau Bill, and have been also represented to the colored people as having done it because I was their enemy. This is not true...The ordinary course of judicial proceedings is no longer interrupted. The courts, both State and Federal, are in full, complete, and successful operation, and through them every person, regardless of race and color, is entitled to and can be hear. The protection granted to the white citizen is already conferred by law upon the freedman...It can not be expected that men who have for four years been made familiar with the blood and carnage of war, who have suffered the loss of property, and in so many instances reduced from affluence to poverty, can at once assume the calm demeanor and action of those citizens of the country whose worldly possessions have not been destroyed, and whose political hopes have not been blasted, and the worst view of this subject affords no parallel in violence to similar outrages that have followed all civil commotions, always less in magnitude than ours. But I do not believe that this to-be-regretted state of things will last long.”— Andrew Johnson.

Fifteenth Amendment Print, 1870



Thomas Kelley, "The Fifteenth Amendment," 1870, via [Wikimedia](https://www.wikimedia.org/).

This 1870 print celebrated the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Here we see several of the themes most important to Black Americans during Reconstruction: The print celebrates the military achievements of Black veterans, the voting rights protected by the amendment, the right to marry and establish families, the creation and protection of Black churches, and the right to own and improve land. Unfortunately, many of these freedoms would be short-lived as the United States retreated from Reconstruction.