

Inquiry Lesson Plan



Why did Slavery Survive the American Revolution?

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Abstract

When the United States declared its independence in 1776, the slave population had grown to 500,000, about one-fifth of the new nation's residents. While Americans experienced a fight against an oppressive government in the Revolutionary War, African Americans saw an opportunity to claim freedom in the ideals of the Revolution and the reality of war. Ironically though, slavery continued to expand following the birth of a country built on egalitarian principles. The following lesson plan is a prototype of the Inquiry model in which students formulate hypotheses, investigate a series of data sets in order to calibrate their findings with the purpose of developing a reasoned response to the focus question: Why did the institution of slavery survive and expand into new territories after the War for Independence? This lesson offers an in-depth perspective of the young republic and its founding fathers by examining personal letters, pro-slavery petitions, and the rough draft of the Declaration of Independence.

Ideal Audience

This inquiry lesson is adaptable to all high school social studies classrooms; however it would be most efficient in a U.S. history classroom. This lesson could also be used in an American Government/Political Science class exploring the issues challenging the founding politicians of the young republic.

This inquiry lesson is designed for use in a U.S. History course. A vital aspect to understanding the significance of the revolution is accomplished via researching the ideals produced by the American Revolution and how they were challenged immediately following the birth of the new nation. The lesson touches upon reoccurring themes in American history, such as liberty, freedom, personal interest, and inequality.

Objectives

Throughout this lesson student will:

- Formulate collective and independent hypothesis'
- Examine primary and secondary documents
- Create a scholarly interpretation to a focus question by testing a hypothesis
- Identify possible causes to international conflict
- Analyze the primary differences between various political and social ideologies
- Develop a collective, reasoned response to the focus question, "*Why did slavery survive the American Revolution*"
- Consider the importance of participation in Government and the value of virtuous legislators

Multiple Objectives

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards Achieved by Lesson

1. Explain different points of view on the same subject using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, newspapers, diaries, and government documents. (WMAS B.12.1)

2. Analyze primary and secondary sources relating to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a well reasoned conclusion. (WMAS B.12.2)
3. Assess the validity of different interpretations of significant historical events. (WMAS B.12.4)
4. Gather various types of historical evidence, including visual and quantitative data, to analyze issues of freedom and equality, liberty and order, region and nation, individual and community, law and conscience, diversity and civic duty; form a reasoned conclusion in the light of other possible conclusions; and develop a coherent argument in the light of other possible arguments. (B.12.5)

Time

This lesson can take between three and five, fifty minute class periods. The first two to four class periods are spent formulating and revising hypotheses while examining data. The third or fifth class period will serve the purpose of a classroom discussion or open forum in which students discuss and express their conclusions. The length of the lesson largely depends on the amount of time dedicated to the examination of each data set and the participation level of the students.

Materials

1. “Revolution: Debate and Political Symbols” 1754-1820s video from PBS *Africans in America*.
2. Television
3. DVD Player or VCR
4. 30 copies of Inquiry Hypothesis Worksheet --*One for Each Student* -(Attached)
5. 30-35 – Copies of Conclusions Essay Rubric –*One for Each Student*- (Attached)
6. 10 – Copies of data set packets (One for each investigative group and the instructor)
7. Dry Erase/Chalk Board/Proper Writing Utensil
8. Overhead Projector/Transparency/Markers
- 9.

Procedure

I. Engagement in the Inquiry or “Hook”

This lesson will be introduced with a 27 minute video clip from “Revolution: Debate and Political Symbols” An outline of the video from PBS *Africans in America: Explore the rhetoric of British American colonists during the American Revolution and its application to the lives of enslaved Africans and free blacks. Understand that both fought for freedom and liberty against similar causes.* After viewing the video, the instructor will explain the inquiry process (steps II through IV below), describe the plans for assessment, and answer any questions that might arise.

II. Elicit Student Hypothesis

Next the instructor will ask: How could the reality of American slavery coexist with the ideal of American liberty? Students will then create their own hypothesis to the question. The instructor will then split the class into groups. The students will then discuss their hypotheses with their group and write down any new ideas that emerge for the discussion. After ample time is given to students to discuss their hypotheses

the teacher will have a volunteer from each group write the potential hypotheses on the board. The instructor will then ask groups to come up with an “off the wall” idea that could answer the question and send a representative to record it on the board. At this point, all hypotheses are accepted as valid. Next the class will group the identical hypotheses, at this time the instructor will hand out the first data set and designate someone to read it out loud when called on.

III. Data Gathering and Data Processing

Before the first data set is examined the instructor will pass out “Questions to Consider When Interpreting a Primary Source” and the hypothesis/evidence worksheet to the class. The student with the data set will then read it to the class and the instructor will promote a class discussion on the data. Next the instructor will allow the class to meet with their groups again to discuss what hypotheses can be drawn from the data. At this time students should record their ideas on the hypothesis/evidence worksheet. After 4 or 5 minutes the instructor will have each group share any new hypotheses and record them on the board. After each hypothesis is written the instructor will record (using a plus or minus) what previous hypotheses were supported/undermined by the data set. The next data set is then passed out and the process is repeated, however, as students become more comfortable with the activity the instructor will contribute less to the discussion.

IV. Conclusion

Once all data sets have been presented and the gathering and processing of hypotheses is complete, the teacher will instruct each student to choose either one or a group of hypothesis that best answer the focus question. With the information students have discovered, coupled with the hypothesis that it confirms, students will then be handed the conclusions position paper that will serve as the primary performance assessment for this inquiry unit. Attached to the assignment will be a rubric that clearly explains the expectations and guidelines for the position paper. After this assignment is handed out, the instructor will then begin a class discussion as to what the students feel are the strongest hypotheses that are supported by evidence. During this discussion students must support their conclusions with the factual information provided by the data sets. This classroom discussion will serve as a form of informal measure to illustrate how well the students have interpreted and retained the information in each data set. After the focus question has been thoroughly discussed, students will then be asked how this process has helped them understand the process involved in discovering history. In order to cement the idea of an evolving process the instructor will then hand out a final data set in the form of a refuting piece of evidence that forces students to look at the question from a different perspective. This re-examination process is important for students to grasp the importance of examining new information pertaining to historical ideas in order to revise their interpretations. This conclusion process is essential for students to properly situate the focus question and develop an appreciation for the evolutionary nature of the historical process.

Supporting Materials

Hypothesis Worksheet

Directions: Using the table provided below, form and initial hypothesis (educated guess) and record the additional hypotheses that evolve from the investigation of data. With each data set, indicate whether the information provided supports or undermines each hypothesis.

Focus Question: *Why did Slavery Survive the American Revolution?*

Initial Individual Hypothesis:

List of Class Hypothesis⁶

Evidence Supports (+) or Undermines (-)

Position Paper Rubric

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Date : _____

Title of Work: _____

	Criteria				Points
	1	2	3	4	
Quality of Thesis Statement	Thesis statement unclear or irrelevant to focus question	Thesis statement valid and pertains to focus question	Thesis statement shows valid, pertains to focus question, and is evident throughout essay	Thesis statement is vivid, well worded, evident throughout essay, and very descriptive of authors position	_____
Supporting Argument	Supporting argument is unclear or irrelevant to focus question	Supporting argument is clear, and incorporates some data from lesson	Supporting argument is clear, incorporates most data from lesson, and shows clear parallels to thesis statement.	Supporting argument is well thought out, incorporates most data from lesson, shows excellent relationship to thesis statement	_____
Structure of Essay	Organization of essay is illogical, many grammatical errors	Organization of essay is adequate, some grammatical errors	Organization of essay progress logically, few grammatical errors	Organization of essay is logical, clear, and progression related to thesis statement, no grammatical errors	_____

				Total---->	_____

Teacher Comments:

POTENTIAL HYPOTHESES

FOCUS QUESTION: Why did slavery survive the American Revolution?

Slavery survived because...

- Southern owners viewed slavery as property no as human beings
- Southerners believed it was supported by the Bible
- Racism was deeply rooted in early American culture
- People believed the Revolution secured the liberty to use property as one wished the institution of slavery benefited the American economy
- the Union couldn't have been formed without Southern support
- Northerners didn't view blacks as equal or human
- Slavery wasn't seen as morally wrong practice
- Society believed slavery was a moral responsibility of the white American
- The founders feared abolition would hinder the foundation of a unified nation

Data Set #1

"Defense of Slavery in Virginia"

REVEREND PETER FONTAINE'S DEFENSE OF SLAVERY IN VIRGINIA
(1757)

As to your second query, if enslaving our fellow creatures be a practice agreeable to Christianity, it is answered in a great measure in many treatises at home, to which I refer you. I shall only mention something of our present state here. Like Adam, we are all apt to shift off the blame from ourselves and lay it upon others, how justly in our case you may judge. The Negroes are enslaved by the Negroes themselves before they are purchased by the masters of the ships who bring them here. It is, to be sure, at our choice whether we buy them or not, so this then is our crime, folly, or whatever you will please to call it.

But our Assembly, foreseeing the ill consequences of importing such numbers among us, has often attempted to lay a duty upon them which would amount to a prohibition, such as £10 or £20 a head; but no governor dare pass such a law, having instructions to the contrary from the Board of Trade at home. By this means they are forced upon us, whether we will or will not. This plainly shows the African Company has the advantage of the colonies, and may do as it pleases with the Ministry.

Indeed, since we have been exhausted of our little stock of cash by the war, the importation has stopped; our poverty then is our best security. There is no more picking for their ravenous jaws upon bare bones; but should we begin to thrive, they will be at same again. All our taxes are now laid upon slaves and on shippers of tobacco, which they wink at while we are in danger of being torn from them, but we dare not do it in time of peace, it being looked upon as the highest presumption to lay any burden upon trade. This is our part of the grievance, but to live in Virginia without slaves is morally impossible.

Before our troubles, you could not hire a servant or slave for love or money, so that, unless robust enough to cut wood, to go to mill, to work at the hoe, etc., you must starve or board in some family where they both fleece and half starve you. There is no set price upon corn, wheat, and provisions; so they take advantage of the necessities of strangers, who are thus obliged to purchase some slaves and land. This, of course, draws us all into the original sin and curse of the country of purchasing slaves, and this is the reason we have no merchants, traders, or artificers of any sort but what become planters in a short time.

A common laborer, white or black, if you can be so much favored as to hire one, is 1s . Sterling or 15d. Currency per day; a bungling carpenter, 2s. or 2s. 6d.. per day; besides diet and lodging. For a lazy fellow to get wood and water, £19 16s. 3d. current per annum; add to this £7 or £8 more and you have a slave for life. ¹

¹Education in the United States – A Documentary History, Volume 1, edited by Sol Cohen, Random House, Inc., 1974.

Data Set #2

Abigail Adams's letter to her husband

2



Boston [...] Sep 22 1774

I have just returned from a visit to my Brother, with my Father who carried me there the day before yesterday -- and called here in my return to see this much injured Town. I view it with much the same sensations that I should the body of a departed friend -- only [put] of its present glory -- for to [irk] finally to a more happy state. I will not despair, but will believe that our cause being good we shall finally prevail. The [mascine] in time of peace prepare for war -- (if this may be called a time of peace) resounds throughout the Country, [...] [...] they are [warned] at Braintree all above 14 and under 60 to attend with their arms and to train once a fortnight from that time is a Scheme which lays much at heart with many.

Scot has arrived, and brings news that he expected to find all peace and quietness here as he left them at home -- you will have more particulars than I am able to send you from much better hands. There has been in Town conspiracy of the Negroes -- at present it is kept pretty private and was discovered by one who endeavored to dissuade them from it -- he being threatened with his life applied to justice Quincy for protection -- they conducted in this ways -- got an [...] man to draw up a petition to the Governor telling him they would fight for him provided he would arm them and engage to liberate them if he conquered -- and it is said that he attended so much to it as to [consult] [...] upon it -- and one [...] has been very busy and active -- there is but little said, and what steps they will take in consequence of it I know not -- I wish most sincerely there was not a slave in the province -- it always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me. fight ourselves for what we are daily [ebbing] and plundering from those who have as good a right freedom as we have -- you know my mind upon this subject. I left all our little ones well, and shall return to them to night. I hope to hear from you by the return of the heaven of this and by [Revere] -- I long for the Day of your return, yet look upon you much safer where you are, but know it will not do for you -- not one action has been brought to this court, no briefings of any fort in your way -- all law [...]. and the [...] will soon follow -- for they are supporters of each other -- adieu my father hurries me Yours most sincerely

Abigail Adams³

² Image Credit: http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/presidents/bio2.htm

³ Courtesy Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston

Data Set #3

Rough draft of the Declaration Of Independence

Of all his writings, Thomas Jefferson's most famous and far-reaching was undoubtedly his draft of the Declaration of Independence.

Although the issue of slavery was widely debated -- both the chattel slavery of Africans in America and the civil slavery that fired patriot rhetoric -- it is conspicuously absent from the final version of the Declaration. Yet in his rough draft, Jefferson railed against King George III for creating and sustaining the slave trade.

he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to insure miserable death in their transportation hither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian king of Great Britain. [determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold,] he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce [determining to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold]: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he had deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom he also obruded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.

Although Jefferson's description of the slave trade was as much an indictment of the colonies as of Britain and the king, the issue that most distressed the patriots stemmed from Lord Dunmore's 1775 proclamation that offered freedom to slaves who joined the British cause.

When the document was presented to the Continental Congress on July 1, 1776, both northern and southern slaveholding delegates objected to its inclusion, and it was removed. The only remaining allusion to the original paragraph on slavery is the phrase "He has excited domestic Insurrections among us," included in a list of grievances against the king.

A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America in
General Congress assembled.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to
dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, & to assume
among the powers of the earth the separate & equal station, to which the laws of
nature & 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 inherent & inalienable rights: that among
these are life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness: that to secure these rights, gov-
ernments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the con-
sent 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, & to institute
new government, laying its foundation on such principles, & organising its pow-
ers 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 expe-
rience 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 & usurpations, begun at a dis-
tinguished period, & 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, & to provide new guards for their future security.
such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the ne-
cessity which constrains them to exchange their former systems of government
the history of the present king of Great Britain is a history of unremitted injuries &
usurpations, among which appears no solitary fact to contradict the uniform
tenor of the rest, but all have in direct object the establishment of an absolute
tyranny over these states. to prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world,
for the truth of which we pledge a faith not unallied by falsehood.
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 & pressing importance,
unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained;
and when so suspended, he has neglected utterly to attend to them.

Data Set #4

Massey, Gregory D. "The Limits of Antislavery Thought in the Revolutionary Lower South: John Laurens and Henry Laurens." *Journal of Southern History*: Vol. 63, No. 3, p499-525.

Be very careful to guard against insurrection. Never put your life in the power a moment. For a moment is sufficient to deprive you of it and make way for the destruction of all you Men & yet you may treat such Negroes with great humanity." Henry Laurens advice to his son reveals an institution fraught with ambiguity: slaves were antagonists who could never be fully trusted yet also humans who merited humane treatment.

This ambivalence—acknowledgment that Africans were human yet insistence on treating them as property—can be traced in Laurens participation in the slave trade even after 1762, when his trading partnership... ended. However, in 1777 Henry Laurens made the boldest declaration of his life: he proposed to free many of his own slaves, worth an estimated 20,000 pounds. "I am not the Man who enslaved them," he reiterated, "they are indebted to English Men for that favour, nevertheless I am devising means for manumitting many of them & for cutting of the entail of Slavery." Though he recognized the hurdles that stood in the way of progress: "Great powers oppose me, the Laws & Customs of my Country, my own & the avarice of my Country Men."

Among those obstacles was that emancipation would deprive his children of much of their inheritance. The future of his heirs, including their place in society and their identity, was tied to investment in human property. He realized that his contemporaries saw no contradiction in enslaving "thousands who are as well entitled to freedom as themselves." Thus, he added, "I perceive the work before me is great. I shall appear to many as a promoter not only of strange but of dangerous doctrines, it will therefore be necessary to proceed with caution."

John heartily applauded his father, and he agreed that caution was necessary. "There may be some Inconvenience and even Danger in advancing Men suddenly from a State of Slavery while possess'd of their manners and Principles incident to the State... there may be danger I say in advancing such Men too suddenly to the Rights of Freemen."

Before they could intervene actively to alleviate the sufferings of others, people needed to believe that a potentially successful strategy exists. Henry Laurens's only strategy to end slavery was to watch and wait. Like Thomas Jefferson, Laurens was a "Conditional Terminator," willing to act against slavery only when time and circumstances were right. Because slaves were a majority of South Carolina's population and formed the bedrock of the economy the proper conditions to emancipation did not exist.

These men (Carolinians), who had rebelled against what they perceived as British tyranny threatening to enslave them, considered arming their slaves to be an even worse form of enslavement. There were limits on how far they would go to win their independence.

Certainly economic motives influenced many men to oppose slave enlistment. John Laurens exclaimed, “White Pride & Avarice are great obstacles in the way of Black Liberty.” Yet there was an additional factor... the proposal asked slaveholders engaged in a struggle for liberty to relinquish their property. To Carolinians, and to eighteenth—century Americans in general the foundation of liberty was independence, which was based on ownership of property. Liberty rested not only on the ownership of property but also in the freedom to dispose that property as one saw fit. If (Continental Congress) freed their slaves.. Carolina planters’ liberty was in jeopardy. Even those who questioned morality of slavery held the racist attitude that blacks were of inferior nature. Unable to envision a truly biracial republican society, men like Thomas Jefferson agreed that resettlement of blacks outside America, must accompany the end of slavery.

To a Arthur Middleton, a Carolina delegate to the Continental Congress the debate over emancipation could be described as, “another hard battle on the subject... about 12 or 15 were for it & 100 against it—I now hope it will rest forever & a day. But I do assure you I was very much alarmed on the occasion. I was repeatedly told that a large party was made & I believe was; but after argument people returned to their senses, & the debate was ended.”

Another discussion among Carolinians was northerners’ views on slavery and race relations. Aednus Burke, a Carolinian jurist wrote “The northern people regard the condition of slavery in a light different from us, I am much deceived indeed, if they do not secretly wish for a general Emancipation, if the present struggle was over—A very sensible Philadelphian once mentioned seriously to me, that our Country would be a fine one, if our whites and blacks inter-married—which concerns me.” Miscegenation was central to the fears of southerners... Talk about the sanctity of property and the inability to work without slave laor was a concern, what frightened many white males was unrestrained sexual relations between blacks and whites, tainting the blood of the master race.

During the Revolution, a majority of whites in the lower South fought to protect their property and their freedom to dispose of it as they pleased; their vision of liberty and the American dream entailed use of slave labor to accumulate more wealth. Their nineteenth century descendants took these views a step further and tolerated dissent on slavery issue.

Banneker's letter to Jefferson

5



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 labored 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.

Sir, I hope I may safely admit, in consequence of that report which hath reached me, that you are a man far less inflexible in sentiments of this nature, than many others; that you are measurably friendly, and well disposed towards us; and that you are willing and ready to lend your aid and assistance to our relief, from those many distresses, and numerous calamities, to which we are reduced. Now Sir, if this is founded in truth, I apprehend you will 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 endowed us all with the same faculties; and that however variable we may be in society or religion, however diversified in situation or color, 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

⁵ Image Credit: Reproduced by the Trustees of The Wedgwood Museum, Barlaston, Staffordshire, England

acknowledge, that it is the indispensable duty of those, who maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who possess the obligations of Christianity, to extend their power and influence to the relief of every part of the human race, from whatever burden or oppression they may unjustly labor 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 yourselves, and for those inestimable laws, which preserved to you the rights of human nature, was founded on sincerity, you could not but be solicitous, that every individual, of whatever rank or distinction, might with you equally enjoy the blessings thereof; neither could you rest satisfied short of the most active effusion 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 color 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 thralldom, 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 favored; and which, I hope, you will willingly allow you have mercifully 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 when 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 that your abhorrence thereof was so excited, that you publicly held forth this true and invaluable doctrine, which is worthy to be recorded and remembered in all succeeding ages : "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, and that among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Here was a time, in which your tender feelings for yourselves had engaged you thus to declare, you were then impressed with proper ideas of the great violation 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 these rights and privileges, which he hath 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.

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 those narrow prejudices which you have imbibed with respect to them, and as Job proposed to his friends, ``put your soul in their souls' stead;" thus shall your hearts be enlarged with kindness and benevolence towards them; and thus shall you need neither the direction of myself or others, in what manner to proceed herein. And now, Sir, although my sympathy and affection for my brethren hath caused my enlargement thus far, I ardently hope, that your candor and generosity will plead with you in my behalf, when I make known to you, that it was not originally my design; but having taken up my pen in order to direct to you, as a present, a copy of an Almanac, which I have calculated for the succeeding year, I was unexpectedly and unavoidably led thereto.

This calculation 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, through my own assiduous application to Astronomical Study, in which I need not recount to you the many difficulties and disadvantages, which I have had to encounter.

And although I had almost declined to make my calculation for the ensuing year, in consequence of that time which I had allotted therefore, being taken up at the Federal Territory, by the request of Mr. Andrew Ellicott, yet finding myself under several engagements to Printers of this state, to whom I had communicated my design, on my return to my place of residence, I industriously applied 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 favorably receive; and although you may have the opportunity of perusing it after its publication, yet I choose 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 myself, with the most profound respect,
Your most obedient humble servant,⁶

BENJAMIN BANNEKER.

⁶ University of Virginia

Data Set #6

Jefferson's reply to Banneker



⁷To Mr. BENJAMIN BANNEKER.
Philadelphia, August 30, 1791.

SIR,

I THANK you, sincerely, for your letter of the 19th instant, and for the Almanac it contained. No body wishes more than I do, to see such proofs as you exhibit, that nature has given to our black brethren talents equal to those of the other colors of men ; and that the appearance of the want of them, is owing merely to the degraded condition of their existence, both in Africa and America. I can add with truth, that no body wishes more ardently to see a good system commenced, for raising the condition, both of their body and mind, to what it ought to be, as far as the

imbecility of their present existence, and other circumstances, which cannot be neglected, will admit.

I have taken the liberty of sending your Almanac to Monsieur de Condozett, Secretary of the Academy of Sciences at Paris, and Member of the Philanthropic Society, because I considered it as a document, to which your whole color had a right for their justification, against the doubts which have been entertained of them.

I am with great esteem, Sir, Your most obedient Humble Servant, ⁸

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

⁷ Image credit:

<http://www.millercenter.virginia.edu/academic/americanpresident/jefferson>

⁸ University of Virginia

Data Set #7

Pro-slavery petitions in Virginia

Gentlemen,

When the British parliament usurped a Right to dispose of our Property without our consent we dissolved the Union with our parent country and established a ...government of our own. We risked our Lives and Fortunes, and waded through Seas of Blood...we understand a very subtle and daring attempt is made to dispossess us of a very important Part of our Property...TO WREST US FROM OUR SLAVES, by an act of Legislature for general emancipation.

It is unsupported by Scripture. For we find in the Old Testament...slavery was permitted by the Deity himself... It is also exceedingly impolitic. For it involves in it, and is productive of Want, Poverty, Distress, and Ruin to FREE citizens, Neglect, Famine and Death to the black Infant...The Horrors of all Rapes, Murders, and Outrages which a vast multitude of unprincipled unpropertied, revengeful and remorseless Banditti are capable of perpetrating...sure and final Ruin to this now flourishing free and happy Country.

We solemnly adjure and humbly pray that you will discountenance and utterly reject every motion and proposal for emancipating our slaves.

And you Petitioners shall ever pray, ...

(submitted in several different counties with almost 300 hundred signatures)

Gentlemen,

Thus happily possessed of all the rational rights of freedom, this country might have stood the envy of admiring Nations to the end of time...But how far this has, or had not, been our happy lot...we have sealed with our Blood, a Titles to the full free and absolute enjoyment of every species of our property whensoever or howsoever legally acquired...

Some men of considerable weight to wrestle from us, by an Act of the legislature, the most valuable and indispensable Article of our Property, our SLAVES by general emancipation of them....Such a scheme indeed consists very well with the principles and designs of the North, whose Finger is sufficiently visible in it...No language can express our indignation, Contempt and Detestation of the apostate wretches...It therefore cannot be admitted that any man had a right...to divest us of our known rights to property which are so clearly defined...To an unequivocal Construction therefore of this Bill of rights we now appeal and claim the utmost benefits of...in whatever may tend...to preserve our rights...secure to us the Blessings of he free...

We most solemnly adjure and humbly pray that you Gentlemen to whom we have

committed the Guardship of our rights of property, utterly reject every Motion and Proposal for emancipating our slaves...and totally repeal the Act for permitting Owners of Slaves to emancipate them;⁹

And we shall ever Pray/ ...

(Lundenburg County 1785 with 161 signatures)

⁹ The Library of Virginia

Data Set #8

Washington's letter to Robert Morris



Dear Sir: I give you the trouble of this letter at the instance of Mr. Dalby of Alexandria; who is called to Philadelphia to attend what he conceives to be a vexatious lawsuit respecting a slave of his, whom a Society of Quakers in the city (formed for such purposes) have attempted to liberate. . . . And if the practice of this Society of which Mr. Dalby speaks, is not discountenanced, none of those whose misfortune it is to have slaves as attendants, will visit the City if they can possibly avoid it; because by so doing they hazard their property; or they must be at the expense (and this will not always succeed) of providing servants of another description for the trip.

I hope it will not be conceived from these observations, that it is my wish to hold the unhappy people, who are the subject of this letter, in slavery. I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished and that is by Legislative authority; and this, as far as my suffrage will go, shall never be wanting. But when slaves who are happy and contented with their present masters, are tampered with and seduced to leave; when a conduct of this sort begets discontent on one side and resentment on the other, and when it happens to fall on a man, whose purse will not measure with that of the Society, he loses [sic] his property for want of means to defend it; it is oppression in the latter case, and not humanity in any, because it introduces more evils than it can cure.¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources*, by John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. 1754-1799, Vol. 28 (Washington, 1938). *Eyewitness: The Negro in American History* Touchstone Edition, by William Loren Katz, 1995 Ethrac Publications Inc.

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