

1. **George Washington:** There is not a man living who wishes more than sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of [slavery].

—Letter to Morris, April 12, 1786, in *George Washington: A Collection*, ed. W.B. Allen (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1989), 319.

2. **John Adams:** Every measure of prudence, therefore, ought to be assumed for the eventual total extirpation of slavery from the United States...I have through my whole life held the practice of slavery in abhorrence.

—Letter to Evans, June 8, 1819, in *Selected Writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. Adrienne Koch et al. (New York: Knopf, 1946), 209-10.

3. **Benjamin Franklin:** Slavery is...an atrocious debasement of human nature.

—“An Address to the Public from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery” (1789), *Benjamin Franklin: Writings*, ed. J.A. Leo Lemay (New York: Library of America, 1987), 1154.

4. **Alexander Hamilton:** The laws of certain states give an ownership in the service of negroes as personal property. But being men, by the laws of God and nature, they were capable of acquiring liberty—and when the captor in war thought fit to give them liberty, the gift was not only valid, but irrevocable.

—Philo Camillus no. 2 (1795), in *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 19:101-2.

5. **James Madison:** We have seen the mere distinction of color made in the most enlightened period of time, a ground of the most oppressive dominion ever exercised by man over man.

—Speech at Constitutional Convention, June 6, 1787, in Max Farrand, ed., *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 1:135.

6. **James Madison:** [We will not] admit into the Constitution the idea that there could be property in men. Slaves are not [property] like merchandise.

—Speech at Constitutional Convention, August 25, 1787, in Max Farrand, ed., *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 2:415.

7. **Thomas Jefferson:** He [George III] 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 & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. 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 & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very
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people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded 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.

—Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence, July 2, 1776, in *Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 22.

8. **Thomas Jefferson:** Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.

—“Notes on the State of Virginia,” Query XIII, in *Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 264.

9. **Thomas Jefferson:** The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present.

But, generally, it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances.

...I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the present revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.

—“Notes on the State of Virginia: Query XVIII,” in *Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 288.

10. **Thomas Jefferson:** Be assured that no person living wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a complete refutation of the doubts I have myself entertained and expressed on the grade of understanding allotted to [black slaves] by nature, and to find that in this respect they are on a par with ourselves. My doubts were the result of personal observation on the limited sphere of my own State, where the opportunities for the development of their genius were not favorable, and those of exercising it still less so. I expressed them therefore with great hesitation; but whatever be their degree of talent it is no measure of their rights. Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding, he was not therefore lord of the person or property of others.

—Letter to Henri Gregoire, February 25, 1809, in *Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1201.

- 11. The Federalist Papers #54:** “We subscribe to the doctrine,” might one of our Southern brethren observe, “that representation relates more immediately to persons, and taxation more immediately to property, and we join in the application of this distinction to the case of our slaves. But we must deny the fact that slaves are considered merely as property, and in no respect whatever as persons. The true state of the case is that slaves partake of both these qualities: being considered by our laws, in some respects, as persons, and in other respects as property.

“In being compelled to labor, not for himself, but for a master; in being vendible by one master to another master; and in being subject at all times to be restrained in his liberty and chastised in his body, by the capricious will of another, the slave may appear to be degraded from the human rank, and classed with those irrational animals which fall under the legal denomination of property. In being protected, on the other hand, in his life and in his limbs, against the violence of all others, even the master of his labor and his liberty; and in being punishable himself for all violence committed against others, the slave is no less evidently regarded by the law as a member of the society, not as a part of the irrational creation; as a moral person, not as a mere article of property.

“The Federal Constitution therefore, decides with great propriety on the case of our slaves, when it views them in the mixed character of persons and of property. This is in fact their true character. It is the character bestowed on them by the laws under which they live; and it will not be denied that these are the proper criterion; because it is only under the pretext that the laws have transformed the negroes into subjects of property, that a place is disputed them in the computation of numbers; and it is admitted that if the laws were to restore the rights which have been taken away, the negroes could no longer be refused an equal share of representation with the other inhabitants.”

- 12. U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 2 (Three-Fifths Clause):** Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.
- 13. U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 9 (Slave Importation Clause):** The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.
- 14. U.S. Constitution, Article IV, Section 2 (Fugitive Slave Clause):** No Person held to Service or Labour 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 Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.
- 15. Northwest Ordinance of 1787:** Art. 6: There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: *Provided, always,* That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid.
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- 16. Abraham Lincoln:** All this is not the result of accident. It has a philosophical cause. Without the Constitution and the Union, we could not have attained the result; but even these, are not the primary cause of our great prosperity. There is something back of these, entwining itself more closely about the human heart. That something, is the principle of “Liberty to all”—the principle that clears the path for all—gives hope to all—and, by consequence, enterprise, and industry to all.

The expression of that principle, in our Declaration of Independence, was most happy, and fortunate. Without this, as well as with it, we could have declared our independence from Great Britain; but without it, we could not, I think, have secured our free government, and consequent prosperity. No oppressed, people will fight, and endure, as our fathers did, without the promise of something better, than a mere change of masters.

The assertion of that principle, at that time, was the word, “fitly spoken” which has proved an “apple of gold” to us. The Union, and the Constitution, are the picture of silver, subsequently framed around it. The picture was made, not to conceal, or destroy the apple; but to adorn, and preserve it. The picture was made for the apple—not the apple for the picture.

So let us act that neither picture, nor apple, shall ever be blurred, or bruised, or broken. That we may so act, we must study, and understand the points of danger.

—Fragment on the Constitution and Union, c. January, 1861, in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), IV:168-69.

- 17. Frederick Douglass:** Fellow-citizens! There is no matter in respect to which the people of the North have allowed themselves to be so ruinously imposed upon as that of the pro-slavery character of the Constitution.

In that instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT. Read its preamble. Consider its purposes. Is slavery among them? Is it at the gateway? Or is it in the temple? It is neither.

Let me ask, if it be not somewhat singular that, if the Constitution were intended to be, by its framers and adopters, a slave-holding instrument, why neither [the words] slavery, slaveholding, nor slave can anywhere be found in it.

Take the Constitution according to its plain reading, and I defy the presentation of a single pro-slavery clause in it. On the other hand it will be found to contain principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery.

—“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”, July 5, 1852, TeachingAmericanHistory.org, <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/> (accessed June 11, 2019).
