### Section 5: Abolition and Complicity, 1827-1865

**Introduction:** *New York State and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance, 1827-1865* by Alan Singer

**Lesson Plans**
- What role did White New Yorkers play in the battle over slavery as the nation approached Civil War?....
- Why did the Fugitive Slave Law spur resistance to slavery in New York State? .........................
- How did African Americans in New York State struggle to end slavery in the United States? ....
- Frederick Douglass: Should African Americans celebrate the Fourth of July? .........................
- Harriet Jacobs: How did one African American woman struggle to be free? ...........................
- How did African American New Yorkers fight for civil rights in the 1850s? ...........................
- What was New York State’s role on the Underground Railroad? ...........................................
- Was Dred Scott a human being or private property? ............................................................
- John Brown: Martyr or Religious Fanatic? Freedom fighter or traitor and terrorist? ...............
- What was New York City’s role in the illegal 19th century trans-Atlantic Slave Trade? .........
- How did New York City merchants and bankers profit from slavery in Cuba? ....................
- How did New York City’s economic and political elite respond to the threat of Southern Secession? .................................
- Why did New York’s African Americans demand the right to fight in the Civil War? ...........
- Why did Civil War draft resisters turn against New York City’s African American population? .................................
- Why did the end of slavery lead to divisions in the abolitionist movement? ..........................

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New York State and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance, 1827-1865


From 1827 until 1865, as the United States moved toward and was finally engulfed by civil war, New Yorkers were sharply divided in the battle over ending the enslavement of people of African ancestry. New York State was a leading center of opposition to slavery and was home to some of the best known and most militant abolitionists in the nation. Frederick Douglass published his abolitionist newspaper out of Rochester. Harriet Tubman, the leading conductor on the Underground Railroad, lived in Auburn. Sojourner Truth, a noted orator and campaigner for human rights was from Kingston. The Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, who headed a congregation in Troy, campaigned across the state calling for a violent overthrow of slavery. John Brown, who was supported by a number of New York abolitionists, had a farm in the “North Country.” The Erie Canal was a major escape route on the Underground Railroad and New York’s courts were often sympathetic to the rights of those seeking freedom.

The Fugitive Slave Act, passed by Congress in 1850, was a major rallying point in New York’s opposition to slavery in the United States. The act mandated fines and jail sentences for people who refused to assist in the recapture of escaped slaves. In September, 1851, James Hamlet of New York City was arrested by a federal officer as an escaped slave and sent to Baltimore, Maryland. New York’s Black community and their abolitionist supporters raised eight hundred dollars to purchase Hamlet’s freedom. In October, Jerry McHenry, accused of being a fugitive slave, was rescued from a Syracuse courthouse by a large group that included Congressman Gerrit Smith and Reverend Samuel May. In 1860, Harriet Tubman led hundreds of protesters in Troy who demanded the release of an accused runaway who was threatened with being sent to the South.

New York City’s Merchants and Bankers

At the same time, New York City’s merchants and bankers were among the leading economic partners of the Southern planters and were major financial supporters of the illegal Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade from Africa to the Caribbean. Many of these merchants and bankers rose to social and political prominence and invested their profits in what would become major American corporations.

William Havemeyer, elected mayor of New York City in 1845 and 1848 and again in 1872, was a director of the Merchants’ Exchange Bank, president of the Bank of North America, and a major investor in the Pennsylvania Coal Company, the Long Island Railroad and numerous insurance companies. Havemeyer launched his successful political and business careers from the family’s sugar refining business. First based in Manhattan and then in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (where a street still bears the Havemeyer name), it later evolved into the American Sugar Company and Domino Sugar. The raw material that provided the initial profit for all of these ventures, sugar, was imported from the deep south and the Caribbean, especially Cuba, which in 1860 produced over a quarter of the world’s sugar supply. In all of these places, sugar was produced by slave labor.

Moses Taylor was a sugar merchant with offices on South Street at the East River seaport, a finance capitalist and an industrialist, as well as a banker. He was a member of the New York City Chamber of Commerce and a major stockholder, board member or officer in firms that later merged with or developed into Citibank, Con Edison, Bethlehem Steel and ATT. Taylor earned a commission for brokering the sale of Cuban sugar in the port of New York, as well as additional fees for exchanging currency and negotiating the New York City Custom’s House. He supervised the investment of profits by the sugar planters in United States banks, gas companies, railroads, and real

New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance

Gateway to the City
estate, purchased and shipped supplies and machinery to Cuba, operated six of his own boats and numerous chartered vessels in the Cuban trade, repaired and equipped other boats with goods and provisions, provided sugar planters with financing to arrange for land purchases and the acquisition of a labor force, and even supervised the planters’ children when they came to New York City as students or to serve as apprentices for mercantile firms. As a result of his success in the sugar trade, Taylor became a member of the board of the City Bank in 1837, and served as its president from 1855 until his death. Taylor’s personal resources and role as business agent for the leading exporter of Cuban sugar to the United States proved invaluable to the bank, helping it survive financial panics in 1837 and 1857 that bankrupted many of its competitors.

In memoirs published in 1864, Captain James Smith, a convicted slave trader, described New York as “the chief port in the world for the Slave Trade. It is the greatest place in the universe for it. Neither in Cuba, nor in the Brazils is it carried on so extensively. Ships that convey Slaves to the West Indies and South America are fitted out in New York. Now and then one sails from Boston and Philadelphia; but New York is our headquarters. . . I can go down to South Street, and go into a number of houses that help fit out ships for the business.” The trade was so profitable that on one voyage, a ship that “cost $13,000 to fit her out completely,” delivered a human cargo worth “$220,000” to Cuba.

New York-based insurance companies helped Southern slave owners protect their investment in slaves who were doing dangerous work. They included the Nautilus Insurance company, which later changed its name to New York Life. According to a history of the company, over a third of its initial policies were written on the lives of enslaved Africans with their “masters” as beneficiaries. Other companies involved in this business included banks that are now part of J.P. Morgan Chase and the American International Group.

Many major media companies in the New York area are descended from companies whose newspapers ran ads promoting slavery or the recapture of runaways in the pre-Civil War era. They include the Tribune company, which owns Long Island’s Newsday and WPIX in New York City, and Gannett. Gannett, the publisher of USA Today, also owns the Journal News (Westchester), The Ithaca Journal, Observer-Dispatch (Utica), Poughkeepsie Journal, Press & Sun-Bulletin (Binghamton), Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, Star-Gazette (Elmira), and WGRZ-TV (Buffalo).

**New York Politicians And Religious Leaders**

Leading New York politicians and religious leaders in this era were also divided over the issue of slavery. The anti-slavery Liberty Party, a precursor of the Republican Party, was largely based in New York, but so was the Nativist Party headed by Samuel Morse that opposed immigration and argued against the humanity of people of African ancestry. William Seward, a New York Governor and Senator and later a member of Abraham Lincoln’s cabinet, actively opposed the extension of slavery to the west during the 1850s. Fernando Wood, as Mayor of New York City in 1861, called on the city to secede from the union along with the South. Later as a Congressman, he opposed the thirteenth amendment to the United States Constitution.

Roman Catholic Archbishop John Hughes was an apostle for slavery and slave owners while Congregationalist minister Henry Ward Beecher rallied members of his church in Brooklyn to oppose slavery. Archbishop Hughes traveled in Cuba and the American South where he was a guest on a number of plantations and witnessed the slave system first hand. In 1854, Hughes delivered a sermon at old St. Patrick’s Cathedral where he cited passages from the Gospel according John to justify slavery, comparing the slave master to the father of a family. Hughes claimed to recognize that “slavery is an evil,” but declared it was “not an absolute and unmitigated evil” because it brought Africans to Christianity. He believed that conditions for Africans were actually improved by enslavement.

The Reverend Beecher organized mock-slave auctions at his church to protest against the inhumanity of slavery and in a sermon in 1861 declared that “(w)e who dwell in the North are not without responsibility for this sin. . . . When our Constitution was adopted; . . . All the institutions were prepared for liberty, and all the public men were on the side of liberty.” However, because of the “delinquency of the North,” the nation’s commitment to liberty was “sacrificed.” He called the North’s failure to preserve liberty “an astounding sin! It is an unparalleled guilt!”

Tension between abolitionists and anti-abolitionist forces in New York State were so great that there were several violent confrontations. A mob attacked an abolitionist meeting in New York City in 1834 and sacked homes and businesses. Efforts to prevent the recapture of escaped slaves led to physical confrontations in Buffalo,
Syracuse and Troy. In his memoirs, William W. Brown graphically described efforts in 1836 by the African American community of Buffalo to free a family that had been seized in Canada by slave catchers and brought back to the United States. Perhaps the most violent upheaval took place during four days of rioting by White mobs in New York City in 1863 during protests against the military draft. A mob destroyed the city’s orphanage for African American children and a number of free Blacks were caught, beaten and killed.

**First Person Narratives**

This section includes narrative accounts of their lives by Isabella Van Wagener (Sojourner Truth), the Reverend Thomas James, Solomon Northup, the Reverend James Pennington, Harriet Jacobs, the Reverend Samuel Ringgold Ward, James Banks, William W. Brown, Frederick Douglass, the Reverend Jermain Lougen, Joseph Dimock and William Cullen Bryant. Isabella Van Wagener (Sojourner Truth), the Reverend Thomas James, and Solomon Northup discuss conditions growing up, living and working in New York State as African Americans. Pennington and Jacobs discuss fear in the African American community of potential capture and being shipped to the south. The Reverend Samuel Ringgold Ward and James Banks describe escaping from slavery and arriving in New York. The excerpts from the narratives of Frederick Douglass, William W. Brown, and Jermain Loguen focus on the abolitionist movement, the Underground Railroad and resistance to the fugitive slave laws.

Joseph Dimock and William Cullen Bryant were White men who wrote about their visits to Cuban sugar plantations. Dimock, a New York City merchant, had family ties to Cuban planters. In *Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century*, he describes an 1859 visit to Cuba and provides details about conditions for enslaved Africans. Bryant was a poet, an editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and a founder of the Republican Party. In this excerpt from *Letters of a Traveller; Or, Notes of Things Seen in Europe and America* (1855), he describes a trip to Cuba he made in 1849. In one passage, Bryant describes slavery and the slave trade in Cuba. In the second passage, he describes the execution of an enslaved African accused of murdering his “master.”
AIM: What role did White New Yorkers play in the battle over slavery as the nation approached Civil War?

BACKGROUND: Prominent New Yorkers both supported and opposed the institution of slavery in the United States and the Caribbean. This can be done as a one-day lesson or done for multiple days. A one-day lesson (Activity Sheet A. New Yorkers Debate Slavery and the Slave System in the United States) opens with the account from the memoir of Samuel May and then compares the views of William Seward and Fernando Wood. A multiple-day lesson opens the same way but allows student teams to examine the ideas of a number of prominent New Yorkers, rewrite their positions as concise statements, and concludes with a staged debate between all of the participants. Opponents of slavery include William Cullen Bryant, William H. Seward, Lewis Tappan, Walt Whitman, Gerrit Smith, Henry Ward Beecher, Chester Arthur, Preston King and Horace Greeley. Apologists for slavery include Martin Van Buren, Archbishop Bishop John Hughes, New York City Mayor Fernando Wood and Samuel Morse. Separate lessons explore the role played by Black abolitionists in New York, John Brown and key members of the New York merchant and banking elite.

DO NOW: Examine Samuel J. May, “Some Recollections of Antislavery Conflict (1835),” and answer questions. MOTIVATION: Discuss an issue that divides the nation today. Why do some issues lead to such impassioned debate? Why do some issues seem like they are beyond compromise? Do you think compromise was possible in the debate over slavery? Explain.

ACTIVITIES:
ONE-DAY: Students compare and contrast the views of slavery of Bishop John Hughes and New York State Senator William Seward.
MULTI-DAY: Students (as individuals or in teams) are assigned to read and present the ideas of different abolitionists and apologists for slavery and prepare a statement for a debate over whether the United States should abolish slavery.

KEY QUESTIONS: What is abolition? Who was in support of abolition? Who was against abolition? Why? Why would White New Yorkers join the fight to end slavery?

SUMMARY: Why was the debate over the abolition of slavery so divisive in New York and the nation?

HOMEWORK OPTIONS:
1. Write a dialogue poem (with at least 5 back and forth responses) between two New Yorkers, a White abolitionist and a White supporter of slavery, where they explain why they take their positions on slavery.
2. Write a dialogue poem (with at least 5 back and forth responses) between two New Yorkers, a free Black and a White supporter of slavery, where they explain why they take their positions on slavery.

APPLICATION: Should White New Yorkers who supported or tolerated slave be forgiven because they were products of their times?
A. New Yorkers Debate Slavery and the Slave System in the United States

1. Samuel J. May, Some Recollections of Antislavery Conflict (1835)


At the annual meeting of the American Antislavery Society in May, 1835, I was sitting upon the platform of the Houston Street Presbyterian Church in New York, when I was surprised to see a gentleman enter and take his seat who, I knew, was a partner in one of the most prominent mercantile houses in the city. He had not been seated long before he beckoned me to meet him at the door. I did so. “Please walk out with me, sir” said he,: “I have something of great importance to communicate.” When we had reached the sidewalk he said, with considerable emotion and emphasis: “Mr. May, we are not such fools as not to know that slavery is a great evil, a great wrong. But it was consented to by the founders of our Republic. It was provided for in the Constitution of our Union. A great portion of the property of the Southerners is invested under its sanction; and the business of the North, as well as the South, has become adjusted to it. There are millions upon millions of dollars due from Southerners to the merchants and mechanics of this city alone, the payment of which would be jeopardized by any rupture between the North and the South. We cannot afford, sir, to let you and your associates succeed in your endeavor to overthrow slavery. It is not a matter of principle with us. It is a matter of business necessity. We cannot afford to let you succeed. And I have called you out to let you know, and to let your fellow-laborers know, that we do not mean to allow you to succeed. We mean, sir,” said he, with increased emphasis- “we mean, sir, to put you Abolitionists down- by fair means if we can, by foul means if we must.”

Questions
1. Where does this discussion take place?
2. Who is Samuel May talking to?
3. What position is expressed by the man speaking with May?
4. How does he defend this position?

2. 1854. Archbishop Hughes Defends Slavery and the Slave Trade

**Sources:** Singer, A. “In United States and New York City history, it is hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys,” *The Amsterdam News*, 94(31), July 31 - August 6, 2003, p. 13; *The New York Times*, May 2, 1854, p. 2.

John Hughes, an immigrant from Ireland, became the acting head of New York Roman Catholic diocese in 1838. He was appointed its bishop in 1842 and an archbishop of the church in 1850. In 1853 and 1854, Archbishop Hughes traveled in Cuba and the American South where he was a guest on a number of plantations and witnessed the slave system first hand. In May, 1854, Hughes delivered a sermon at old St. Patrick’s Cathedral, in what is now Soho, where he discussed his experiences during this trip.

In his sermon, Hughes cited passages from the Gospel according John to justify slavery, comparing the slave master to the father of a family, and telling his congregation, “Is not the father of the family invested with the power of God that he is sovereign, commanding and expecting to be obeyed as he should?” Hughes claimed to recognize that “slavery is an evil,” but declared it was “not an absolute and unmitigated eveil” because it brought Africans to Christianity. He believed that conditions for Africans were actually improved by enslavement and claimed that during his trip he had “taken pains to inquire of some who had been brought to Cuba as slaves from the Coast of Africa, whether they wished to return, and they invariably stated they did not; and the reason is that their conditions here, degraded as it is, is much better than it was at home, . . .so it is really a mitigation of their lot to be sold into foreign bondage.” In his column in the *Metropolitan Record*, he wrote: “We of course believe that no genuine Christian – no decent man – would be engaged in this kind of business: still, we cannot discover the crime, even of the slaver, in snatching them from the butcheries of their native land.”

Archbishop Hughes continued his public support for slavery during the Civil War. He warned Europeans who questioned his position on slavery, “There are in the southern states four millions of slaves. Abolish slavery all at once and what is to become of them? What is to become of their masters? What is to become of those articles
which are the produce of their toil and which Europe so much needs?” In May, 1861, he declared that efforts to abolish slavery would violate the United States Constitution and demanded that Lincoln resign from the presidency if this was his goal.

Questions
1. Who is John Hughes?
2. What is Hughes’ position on slavery in the American South and Cuba?
3. What evidence does Hughes offer to support his position?

3. William Seward Denounces the Slave System, Rochester, New York (October 25, 1858)
Source: http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASseward.htm

William H. Seward was born in Florida (Orange County), New York in 1801. Seward witnessed the injustice of slavery while teaching in the state of Georgia in 1819 and he became one of the most outspoken anti-slavery politicians of the period. An opponent of the Fugitive Slave Act, he defended runaway slaves in court. Seward and his wife Frances helped Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad by hiding fugitive slaves in their Auburn home. In 1838 and 1840 Seward was elected governor of New York State. In 1849 Seward was elected to the United States Senate where he built a reputation as an anti-slavery senator and opposed the Compromise of 1850 because of its concessions to the slave states. After Abraham Lincoln’s election, Seward was appointed Secretary of State, a position he held until 1869. He died in Auburn, New York on October 10, 1872.

“The slave system is one of constant danger, distrust, suspicion, and watchfulness. It debases those whose toil alone can produce wealth and resources for defense to the lowest degree of which human nature is capable, to guard against mutiny and insurrection, and this wastes energies which otherwise might be employed in national development and aggrandizement. In states where the slave system prevails, the masters directly or indirectly secure all political power and constitute a ruling aristocracy. In states where the free-labor system prevails, universal suffrage necessarily obtains and the state inevitably becomes sooner or later a republic or democracy. The two systems are at once perceived to be incongruous - they are incompatible. They never have permanently existed together in one country, and they never can. Hitherto, the two systems have existed in different states, but side by side within the American Union. This has happened because the Union is a confederation of states. But in another aspect the United States constitute only one nation. Increase of population which is filling the states out to their very borders, together with a new and extended network of railroads and other avenues, and an internal commerce which daily becomes more intimate, is rapidly bringing the states into a higher and more perfect social unity of consolidation.”

Questions
1. Who is William H. Seward?
2. Why does Seward describe the slave system as “one of constant danger, distrust, suspicion, and watchfulness”? Explain.
B. Prominent White New Yorkers Who Took a Stand Against Slavery

1. William Cullen Bryant, Poet and Publisher (1832-1860)

William Cullen Bryant, a famous American poet, was the editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and a founder of the Republican Party. A White man, he was born in 1794 in Massachusetts and died in 1878 at his home in New York City. His poem, “The African Chief,” attacked the inhumanity of slavery and the slave trade, however, his primary concern in the era before the Civil War was preservation of the Union. Bryant opposed both the expansion of slavery in the west and radical calls for the abolition of slavery. During the Civil War, he argued that while it was “not a war directly aimed at the release of the slave,” saving the Union required that Lincoln emancipate the slaves.

A. Bryant responds to William Lloyd Garrison and the Radical Abolitionists, 1832

“Garrison is a man who, whatever may be the state of his mind on other topics, is as mad as the winds on the slavery question. . . . As to the associates of Garrison in this city, some of them may be of good intentions, but they are men whose enthusiasm runs away with their judgment - and the remainder are persons who owe what notoriety they have to their love of meddling with agitating subjects. . . . They are regarded as advocating measures which, if carried out, would most assuredly deluge the country in blood, and the mere discussion of which has a tendency to embroil (pit) the south with the north, and to endanger these relations of good will which are essential to the duration of the Union. . . .”

B. Bryant defended the right of abolitionists to free speech, 1837

“The right to discuss freely and openly, by speech, by the pen, by the press, all political questions, and to examine and animadvert (speak out) upon all political institutions, is a right so clear and certain, so interwoven with our other liberties, so necessary, in fact to their existence, that without it we must fall at once into depression or anarchy. To say that he who holds unpopular opinions must hold them at the peril of his life, and that, if he expresses them in public, he has only himself to blame if they who disagree with him should rise and put him to death, is to strike at all rights, all liberties, all protection of the laws, and to justify and extenuate (worsen) all crimes.”

C. Bryant’s description of slavery in the South is unsympathetic toward Blacks, 1843

“The black of this region are a cheerful, careless, dirty, race, not hard worked, and in many respects indulgently treated. It is of course the desire of the master that his slaves shall be laborious; on the other hand it is the determination of the slave to lead an easy life as he can. The master has the power of punishment on his side; the slave, on his, has invincible inclination, and a thousand expedients learned by long practice. . . Good natured though imperfect and slovenly obedience on one side, is purchased by good treatment on the other.”

D. Bryant wants to bar slavery in the western territories, 1847

“A man who does not approve of slavery . . . may tolerate it where it exists, from want of constitutional authority to extinguish it, . . . and the difficulties of change; but how can he justify himself in instituting it in new communities. . . . The federal government represents the free as well as the slave states; and while it does not attempt to abolish slavery in the states where it exists, it must not authorize slavery where it does not exist. This is the only middle ground - the ‘true basis of conciliation and adjustment.’”

E. Response to John Brown’s call for a Slave Rebellion and the attack on Harpers Ferry, 1859

“The great body of the northern people have no desire nor intention to interfere with slavery within its present limits, except by persuasion and argument. They are unalterably opposed to the spread of it, as the south ought to be, but they are willing to leave the extinction of it in the states to the certain influences of commerce, of good sense, of the sentiment of justice and truth, and the march of civilization.”

F. Bryant endorses Lincoln and the Republicans, 1860

“The slave interest is a spoiled child. . . . The more we give it the louder it cries and the more furious its threats . . . if we exercise the right of suffrage, and elect a president of our own choice, instead of giving it one of its own favorites.”
2. Senator William Seward Denounces the Compromise of 1850 and the Slave System

**Sources:** http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASsward.htm
http://www.sewardhouse.org/biography/seward-b.htm; http://www.lib.rochester.edu/rbk/SEWARDX.stm

William H. Seward was born in Florida (Orange County), New York in 1801. He graduated from Union College in Schenectady in 1820. He studied law in Goshen and New York City and in 1823 moved to Auburn (Cayuga County) New York. Seward witnessed the injustice of slavery while teaching in the state of Georgia in 1819 and he became one of the most outspoken anti-slavery politicians of the period. An opponent of the Fugitive Slave Act, he defended runaway slaves in court. Seward and his wife Frances helped Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad by hiding fugitive slaves in their Auburn home. Seward was also instrumental in helping Harriet Tubman secure property in Auburn, New York that was her home for over sixty years. In 1838 and 1840 Seward was elected governor of New York State. In 1849 Seward was elected to the United States Senate where he built a reputation as an anti-slavery senator and opposed the Compromise of 1850 because of its concessions to the slave states. When the Whig party merged into the Republican party, Seward became one of the leading Republicans and a leading contender for the party’s presidential nomination in 1856 and 1860. After Abraham Lincoln’s election, Seward was appointed Secretary of State, a position he held until 1869. William Henry Seward died in Auburn on October 10, 1872.

A. The Impact of Slavery on the South


“It was necessary that I should travel in Virginia to have any ideas of a slave State. . . . An exhausted soil, old decaying towns, wretchedly-neglected roads, and, in every respect, an absence of enterprise and improvement, distinguish the region through which we have come, in contrast to that in which we live. Such has been the effect of slavery (1835).”

“Yet the city [New Orleans] is secondary, and the state [Louisiana] unimportant. . . . Commerce and political power, as well as military strength, can never permanently reside, on this continent, in a community where slavery exists (1846).”

B. Speech to the United States Senate opposing the Compromise of 1850 (March 11, 1850)

**Source:** http://www.skidmore.edu/~tkuroda/hi324/sewd1850.htm

“It is insisted that the admission of California shall be attended by a COMPROMISE of questions which have arisen out of slavery! I am opposed to any such compromise, in any and all the forms in which it has been proposed; . . . Relying on the perversion of the Constitution, which makes slaves mere chattels, the slave states have applied to them the principles of the criminal law, and have held that he who aided the escape of his fellow-man from bondage was guilty of a larceny in stealing him. . . . We deem the principle of the law for the recapture of fugitives, . . . unjust, unconstitutional, and immoral; and thus, while patriotism withholds its approbation, the consciences of our people condemn it. . . . [T]he spirit of the people of the free states is set upon a spring that rises with the pressure put upon it. That spring, if pressed too hard, will give a recoil. . . . You will say that this implies violence. Not at all. It implies only peaceful, lawful, constitutional, customary action.

C. William Seward Denounces the Slave System, Rochester, New York (October 25, 1858)

**Source:** http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASsward.htm

The slave system is one of constant danger, distrust, suspicion, and watchfulness. It debases those whose toil alone can produce wealth and resources for defense to the lowest degree of which human nature is capable, to guard against mutiny and insurrection, and this wastes energies which otherwise might be employed in national development and aggrandizement. In states where the slave system prevails, the masters directly or indirectly secure all political power and constitute a ruling aristocracy. In states where the free-labor system prevails, universal suffrage necessarily obtains and the state inevitably becomes sooner or later a republic or democracy. The two systems are at once perceived to be incongruous - they are incompatible. They never have permanently existed together in one country, and they never can.
3. Lewis Tappan and the Amistad Case (1839)

Source: http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAStappanL.htm

Lewis Tappan was born in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1788. In 1828 he joined his brother, Arthur Tappan, as a silk merchant in New York City. The Tappans were deeply religious and contributed large amounts of money to campaigns against slavery and the use of alcohol and tobacco. In 1831, they helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York. Lewis Tappan is probably best remembered for organizing a committee of New York City’s leading abolitionists to aid in the defense of the kidnapped Africans on the Amistad. During their trial in Connecticut, Lewis Tappan wrote reports published in the New York Journal of Commerce. After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, Lewis Tappan declared it was now legitimate to disobey laws promoting the slave system and he became an active supporter of the Underground Railroad. He died in Brooklyn Heights, NY in 1873.

A. Appeal to the Friends of Liberty, September 4, 1839

Thirty-eight fellow men from Africa, after having been piratically kidnapped from their native land, transported across the seas, and subjected to atrocious cruelties, have been thrown upon our shores, and are now incarcerated in jail to await their trial for crimes alleged by their oppressors to have been committed by them. They are ignorant of our language, of the usages of civilized society, and the obligations of Christianity. Under these circumstances, several friends of human rights have met to consult upon the case of these unfortunate men, and have appointed the undersigned a committee to employ interpreters, able counsel, and take all necessary means to secure the rights of the accused. It is intended to employ three legal gentlemen of distinguished abilities, and to incur other needful expenses. The poor prisoners being destitute of clothing, and several having scarcely rags to cover them, immediate steps will be taken to provide what may be necessary. The undersigned, therefore, makes this appeal to the friends of humanity to contribute for the above objects. Donations may be sent to either of the Committee, who will acknowledge the same, and make a public report of their disbursements.

B. Letter describing Africans from the Amistad

I arrived here last Friday evening, with three men who are natives of Africa...to act as interpreters in conversing with Joseph Cinquez and his comrades. On going to the jail, the next morning, we found to our great disappointment, that only one of the men, [John Ferry], was able to converse with the prisoners. Most of the prisoners can understand him, although none of them can speak his Geshie dialect. You may imagine the joy manifested by these poor Africans, when they heard one of their own color address them in a friendly manner, and in a language they could comprehend! The four children are apparently from 10 to 12 years of age. . . . They are robust [and] full of hilarity. . . . The sheriff of the county took them to ride in a wagon on Friday. At first their eyes were filled with tears, and they seemed to be afraid, but soon they enjoyed themselves very well, and appeared to be greatly delighted. Most of the prisoners told the interpreter that they are from Mandingo. The district of Mandingo, in the Senegambia country, is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, and is directly north of Liberia. Two or three of the men, besides one of the little girls, are natives of Congo, which is on the coast just south of the equator. Cinquez is about 5 feet 8 inches high, of fine proportions, with a noble air. Indeed, the whole company, although thin in flesh, and generally of slight forms, and limbs, especially, are as good looking and intelligent a body of men as we usually meet with. All are young, and several are quite striplings. The Mandingos are described in books as being a very gentle race, cheerful in their dispositions, inquisitive, credulous, simple hearted, and much given to trading propensities.

4. The Relationship between Gerrit Smith and John Brown (1846-1859)

Source: http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/exhibits/g/GerritSmith/harpers.htm

Gerrit Smith was born in Utica, New York in 1797 and died in 1874. For most of his life he lived in nearby Peterboro. Smith was a political activist and philanthropist. His cousin was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a well known abolitionist and crusader for women’s rights.

In 1835, Gerrit Smith joined the American Anti-Slavery Society. He decided to join the group after witnessing its speakers being attacked by a mob in Utica. Five years later Smith helped found the anti-slavery Liberty Party which was based in New York State. He was the Liberty Party candidate for president of the United States in 1848 and 1852. He also served briefly as a Congressman representing the Capital-region in Washington DC.
Smith used his family’s fortune to establish communities for formerly enslaved Africans. He was a supporter of John Brown’s campaign against the extension of slavery into Kansas and was suspected of financing Brown’s raid on a federal arsenal in Harper’s Ferry, Virginia in 1859. Smith denied prior knowledge of the attack or that he wanted to promote insurrection among enslaved Africans in the South.

Gerrit Smith’s relationship with John Brown started in 1848 when Smith helped Brown move his family to North Elba, New York. Smith sold Brown 244 acres of land for $1 an acre in the Adirondack North Country in an area where Smith had established a settlement for poor Black men, former slaves and their families.

When John Brown went to Kansas to fight against supporters of slavery who wanted the territory to enter the union as a slave state, Smith raised money to support his military operations. Smith also supported Brown’s plan to create a refuge in the mountains of Virginia that would help enslaved Africans escape from bondage and train them for a potential rebellion against slavery. When Brown’s forces raided the federal arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Brown had on him a check for $100 from Gerrit Smith.

After his execution, John Brown’s wife brought his body to their North Elba farm for burial. Since 1895, the farm has been a designated historic site owned and operated by New York State. An outdoor interpretive display offers photographs and descriptions of the men who joined John Brown in the raid on Harper’s Ferry.

5. Walt Whitman: A New York Poet Views Slavery

In the poem, “Song Of Myself,” New York poet, Walt Whitman, describes the Underground Railroad and explains his view of slavery. This version is from the third edition of “Leaves of Grass (1882).

10. The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,
And brought water and fill’d a tub for his sweated body and bruised feet,
And gave him a room that enter’d from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass’d north,
I had him sit next to me at table, my fire-lock lean’d in the corner.

24. Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.
Through me the afflatus [affinity] surging and surging, through me the current and index.
I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.
Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,
Voices of the diseas’d and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the fatherstuff,
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
Of the deformed trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.
Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil’d and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigured.

Henry Ward Beecher was a minister at the Plymouth Congregationalist Church in Brooklyn, New York and a leading opponent of slavery in the 1850s. He was also the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe. In 1848, 1856 and 1859, to protest against the evil of slavery, Beecher raised money in his church to purchase the freedom of slaves. Because of his popularity as a minister, many of his sermons were published. Beecher believed it was necessary to oppose the Fugitive Slave Law and the extension of slavery into the west. He thought it was a mistake to actively oppose slavery in the South or encourage slaves to run away. The following passages are excerpts from his writings in 1850 and 1859.

A. A Response to the Compromise of 1850

“There are two incompatible and mutually exclusive principles brought together in the government of this land . . . These elements are slavery and liberty . . . One or the other must die . . . The South now demands room and right for extension. She asks the North to be a partner. For every free state she demands one for slavery . . . It is time for good men and true . . . to stand for God and humanity. No compromise will help us which dodges the question, certainly none which settle it for slavery . . . There never was a plainer question for the North. It is her duty to openly and firmly, and forever to refuse to slavery another inch of territory . . . It is her duty to refuse her hand or countenance (help) to slavery where it now exists. It is her duty to declare that she will under no consideration be a party to any further inhumanity or injustice . . . If the compromises of the Constitution include requisitions (rules) which violate humanity, I will not be bound by them, not ever the Constitution shall make me unjust . . .”

B. Should Righteous Men Break Unjust Laws?

“Nothing could be more mischievous (wrong) than the prevalence of the doctrine that a citizen may disobey an unjust burdensome law . . . How can we as good citizens subscribe to such wholesome doctrines and yet openly resist the Fugitive Slave Laws? . . . Every citizen must obey a law which inflicts injury upon his person, estate and civil privilege (rights), until legally redressed (corrected); but no citizen is bound to obey a law which commands him to inflict injury upon another. We must endure but never commit wrong . . . Let no man stand uncommitted, dodging between day light and dark on this vital principle . . . Obedience to laws, even though they sin against me; disobedience to every law that commands me to sin.”

C. The Future of Slavery in the United States

“Our policy for the future is plain. All the natural laws of God are warring upon slavery. Let it go to seed . . . Shut it up to itself and let it alone. We do not ask to interfere with the internal policy of a single State by constitutional enactment . . . We only ask that a line be drawn about it . . . that it be fixed and forever settled that slavery must find no new sources (or) new fields . . .”

D. Response to John Brown’s Call for a Slave Rebellion and the attack on Harpers Ferry.

“We have no right to treat the citizens of the South with acrimony (anger) and bitterness because they are involved in a system of wrong doing . . . The preaching of discontent among the bondsmen of our land is not the way to help them . . . No relief will be carried to the slaves or to the South as a body by any individual or organized plans to carry them off or to incite them to abscond (runaway) . . . If we would benefit the African in the South we must begin at home. No one can fail to see the inconsistency between our treatment of those amongst us who are in the lower walks of life and our professing of sympathy for the Southern slave . . . We must quicken all the springs of feeling in the free states on behalf of human liberty . . . We must maintain sympathy and kindness toward the South . . . You should care for both the master and the slave . . . You ought to set your face against and discountenance (oppose) anything like an insurrectionary spirit.
7. Chester Arthur and the Lemmon Case (1852)


In November, 1852, Jonathan Lemmon of Virginia brought eight enslaved Africans into the port of New York for the purpose of taking them to Texas. Louis Napoleon, a free African American residing in New York discovered that they were being held and petitioned for their freedom to Justice Elijah Paine of the Superior Court of the city of New York. A hearing was held on November 6, 1852 and Justice Paine ordered that they eight captives be released. A member of the legal team in the case was Chester Arthur, a future President of the United States. Chester Arthur was born in Vermont in 1829. His father William was a Baptist minister. The Arthur family moved to New York State in 1835 where William Arthur helped found the New York Anti-Slavery Society.

Chester Arthur graduated from Union College in Schenectady in 1848. While a college student he taught school at Schaghticoke in Rensselaer County. Later, after working as the schoolmaster at the North Pownal Academy in Vermont, he became a lawyer in New York City. In the 1850s, Chester Arthur was an opponent of slavery and racial discrimination. He participated in the first Republican state convention at Saratoga, and took an active part in the Fremont campaign of 1856. In the “Lemmon Slave Case,” Arthur helped secure the decision that enslaved Africans brought into New York while in transit between slave states were free. His responsibilities included securing support from the state legislature and the governor and arguing the case before the New York State Court of Appeals. Chester Arthur also successfully represented Elizabeth Jennings, an African American woman, in her case against a New York streetcar company. Jennings had been forced off a car reserved for whites. During the Civil War, Chester Arthur served as Quartermaster General of New York with the rank of Brigadier General. In 1880, he was nominated for Vice-president of the United States by the Republican party as a compromise candidate and became President when James Garfield was assassinated. Chester Arthur died in New York City in 1886 and was buried in the family plot at the Rural Cemetery in Albany.

Petition to the Court by Louis Napoleon

In November, 1852, Jonathan Lemmon and Juliet, his wife, having been before that time, citizens and residents of the State of Virginia, brought eight colored persons, who had been held as slaves of Juliet Lemmon, pursuant to the laws of that State, into the port of New York, for the purpose of taking them to Texas, to be there retained as slaves.

They had adopted, as their mode of travel, for the whole party, the steamer from Norfolk to New York, with the intention of remaining in New York only until a proper vessel could be obtained, to continue their journey. Meantime the slaves were landed and conveyed to a boarding-house at No. 8 Carlisle street, where they were discovered by a colored man named Louis Napoleon, who thereupon presented a petition to the Hon. Elijah Paine, then one of the Justices of the Superior Court of the city of New York, for a writ of Habeas Corpus, for the production of the colored persons before him, to inquire into the cause of their detention.

The petition of Louis Napoleon shows, that seven colored persons, a man, two females, and four children, whose names are unknown, are, and each of them was yesterday confined, and restrained of their liberty, on board the steamer Richmond City, or ‘City of Richmond,’ so called, in the harbor of New York, and taken therefrom last night, and are now confined in house No. 5 Carlisle street, in New York, and that they are not committed or detained by virtue of any process issued by any court of the United States, or by any judge thereof, nor are they committed or detained by virtue of the final judgment or decree of any competent tribunal of civil or criminal jurisdiction, or by virtue of any execution issued upon such judgment or decree. That the cause or pretence of such detention or restraint, according to the best of the knowledge and belief of your petitioner, is, that said persons so restrained, are held under pretense that they are slaves; and that they have, as your petitioner is informed and believes, been bought up by a negro trader or speculator called Lemmings, by whom, together with the aid of the man keeping the house, whose name is unknown, and of an agent of said Lemmings, whose name is unknown, and in whose custody they were left as such agent, they are held and confined therein, and that the said negro trader intends very shortly to ship them for Texas, and there to sell and reduce them to slavery; and that the illegality of their restraint and detention consists in the fact, as your petitioner is advised and believes, that they are not slaves, but free persons, and entitled to their freedom.
8. Preston King: A New York State Political Leader Who Took a Stand Against Slavery


Preston King was born in Ogdensburg, New York on October 14, 1806. He graduated from Union College in 1827, studied law and became a lawyer in St. Lawrence County. King was an admirer of Andrew Jackson and started a newspaper in Ogdensburg, the St. Lawrence Republican, to support him. King served as the postmaster of Ogdensburg from 1831 until 1834 and served in the New York State Assembly from 1834 until 1837. In 1842, King was elected to the United States House of Representatives as a member of the Democratic Party. He remained in Congress until March, 1847. In the 1840s, Preston King was a leader of the radical anti-slavery “Barnburner” wing of the New York State Democratic Party. They were upset by southern influence in the Democratic Party and demanded that the party oppose the extension of slavery into newly acquired western territories. They saw this as a first step towards emancipation. In 1848 they split with the Democratic Party and supported former New York State Governor and former President Martin Van Buren for President as the candidate of a new Free Soil Party. Although Van Buren was soundly defeated, Preston King was re-elected to Congress as a Free Soiler.

In 1854, because of his opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska bill, Preston King joined the new Republican Party. He was the new party’s candidate for secretary of state of New York in 1855 and served in the United States Senate from 1857 until 1863. In 1861, King argued during debate in the Senate that the Union would not be destroyed peaceably and declared, “I tell these gentlemen, in my judgment this treason must come to an end-peacefully, I hope; but, never, in my judgment, peacefully by the ignominious submission of the people of this country to traitors—never. I desire peace, but I would amply provide means for the defense of the country by war, if necessary.” While an opponent of slavery, Preston King did not believe in racial equality. In 1858, he endorsed a constitution for the new state of Oregon that barred free Blacks from entering the state, testifying in court and owning property. He was also a leading supporter of the movement to re-colonize Blacks in Africa.

When Andrew Johnson became president in 1865, he appointed Preston King as the tariff collector of the port of New York. King only served in that position for a short period of time. He committed suicide by jumping from a ferryboat on November 12, 1865 and was buried in the City Cemetery in Ogdensburg.

9. Horace Greeley and the Debate over Emancipation

Horace Greeley was the founder of the New York Tribune and edited the newspaper for over thirty years. Greeley took a strong moral tone in his newspaper and campaigned against alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, prostitution and capital punishment. However, his main concern was the abolition of slavery. In 1860, Greeley supported the presidential campaign of Abraham Lincoln, but was unhappy with Lincoln’s attitude toward emancipation. He wrote an open letter to the President on August 19, 1862, complaining about the Union army’s unwillingness to free slaves in captured territory.

Horace Greeley, letter to President Abraham Lincoln, August 19, 1862

We think you are strangely and disastrously remiss in the discharge of your official and imperative (necessary) duty with regard to the emancipating provisions of the new Confiscation Act. Those provisions were designed to fight slavery with liberty. They prescribe that men loyal to the Union, and willing to shed their blood in the behalf, shall no longer be held, with the nation’s consent, in bondage to persistent, malignant (poisonous) traitors, who for twenty years have been plotting and for sixteen months have been fighting to divide and destroy our country. Why these traitors should be treated with tenderness by you, to the prejudice of the dearest rights of loyal men, we cannot conceive. We ask you to consider that slavery is everywhere the inciting cause and sustaining base of treason. . . . It seems to us the most obvious truth that whatever strengthens or fortifies slavery in the border states strengthens also treason and drives home the wedge intended to divide the Union.

We complain that the Union cause has suffered and is now suffering immensely from mistaken deference to Rebel slavery. . . . We complain that the officers of your armies have habitually repelled rather than invited the approach of slaves who would have gladly taken the risks of escaping from their Rebel masters to our camps, bringing intelligence often of inestimable value to the Union cause.
C. Prominent White New Yorkers who were Apologists for Slavery

1. The New York City “Abolitionist” Riot (1834)


In May and June, 1834, Arthur and Lewis Tappan and other leading New York City abolitionists intensified their campaign against slavery and the idea of recolonizing African Americans in Africa. This included the founding of a Female Anti-Slavery Society. Arthur Tappan also made a public statement on the humanity of African Americans by inviting the Rev. Samuel Cornish to sit in his pew at the Laight Street Church. When other parishioners were outraged, the Rev. Samuel Cox challenged their intolerance. Anti-abolitionists and pro-colonization groups began to circulate rumors that the abolitionists were promoting interracial marriage. In July, when an interracial group met at the Chatham Street Chapel to commemorate New York’s emancipation day, an angry mob broke up the meeting. On July 7, the group tried to meet again, but they were physically attacked by members of the New York Sacred Music Society who claimed that they had prior use of the Chapel. The musicians were outnumbered and driven from the building, but police arrived and arrested six of the African Americans. A large White mob then forced the rest of the group to flee. Riots broke out on Wednesday night July 9, 1834 and continued for two more days. Pro-abolitionist churches and businesses and African American institutions, including the African school house on Orange Street, were damaged and some were destroyed. These articles are reproduced from the Journal of Commerce. The Journal of Commerce was founded by Samuel Morse in 1827 to promote moral virtue in the city. It became a leading reporter of financial news and a major critic of the abolitionist movement. During the Civil War it accused Lincoln and the Republicans of launching a war on the South. Despite its political leaning, William Lloyd Garrison’s Liberator reprinted articles from the Journal of Commerce on the 1834 anti-abolitionist riots

2. President Martin Van Buren: Man of Contradiction or Political Chamelon?


President Martin Van Buren was born in the small Dutch village of Kinderhook, New York in 1782. His father, who operated a farm and tavern, also owned six enslaved African Americans. While Martin Van Buren opposed slavery for most of his adult life, he also owned an enslaved African man named “Tom.” At one point, “Tom” escaped from Van Buren and remained free for ten years before he was recaptured. Van Buren sold him to his captor for fifty dollars.

As a founder of the modern Democratic Party, Martin Van Buren held a number of New York State and national offices. He served in the State Senate, as state attorney general, and Secretary of State, Vice President and President of the United States. After he was defeated for re-election in 1840, Van Buren became active in the campaign to block the extension of slavery into new territories and in 1848 he was the presidential candidate of the Free-Soil Party. He later joined the Republican Party and supported Abraham Lincoln for President.

Early in his career, Martin Van Buren argued that slavery was “an evil of the first magnitude” and that he had a sacred obligation to fight against its growth. He voted to extend voting rights to property-holding Blacks in New York State. As he became more prominent in the national Democratic Party, Van Buren changed his position, arguing that while slavery was morally wrong, attacking the slave system violated the constitutional principle of states’ rights As a candidate for President, Van Buren assured slaveowners that he and the entire northern white population, had no desire to intervene in their local affairs and was prohibited them from doing so by the Constitution. He promised that as President, he would protect their property rights as slaveowners. However, some historians believe that he blocked the annexation of Texas because it would enter the union as a slave state.

After his defeat for reelection in 1840, Van Buren changed his position on slavery again. He became a “Free Soiler” because he believed that free White labor could never compete economically with enslaved Africans and he decided that Congress had the authority to prevent the extension of slavery into new territories and abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.
Excerpt from Martin Van Buren’s 1837 Presidential Inaugural Address
Source: www.juntosociety.com/inaugural/vanburen.html

The last, perhaps the greatest, of the prominent sources of discord and disaster supposed to lurk in our political condition was the institution of domestic slavery. Our forefathers were deeply impressed with the delicacy of this subject, and they treated it with a forbearance so evidently wise that in spite of every sinister foreboding it never until the present period disturbed the tranquillity of our common country. . . . Perceiving before my election the deep interest this subject was beginning to excite, I believed it a solemn duty fully to make known my sentiments in regard to it. . . . I then declared that if the desire of those of my countrymen who were favorable to my election was gratified “I must go into the Presidential chair the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of every attempt on the part of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia against the wishes of the slaveholding States, and also with a determination equally decided to resist the slightest interference with it in the States where it exists.” I submitted also to my fellow-citizens, with fullness and frankness, the reasons which led me to this determination. The result authorizes me to believe that they have been approved and are confided in by a majority of the people of the United States, including those whom they most immediately affect It now only remains to add that no bill conflicting with these views can ever receive my constitutional sanction. These opinions have been adopted in the firm belief that they are in accordance with the spirit that actuated the venerated fathers of the Republic, and that succeeding experience has proved them to be humane, patriotic, expedient, honorable, and just. If the agitation of this subject was intended to reach the stability of our institutions, enough has occurred to show that it has signally failed, and that in this as in every other instance the apprehensions of the timid and the hopes of the wicked for the destruction of our Government are again destined to be disappointed.

3. Archbishop Hughes Defends the Slave Trade (1854)

John Hughes, an immigrant from Ireland, became the acting head of New York Roman Catholic diocese in 1838. He was appointed its bishop in 1842 and an archbishop of the church in 1850. In 1853 and 1854, Archbishop Hughes traveled in Cuba and the American South where he was a guest on a number of plantations and witnessed the slave system first hand. In May, 1854, Hughes delivered a sermon at old St. Patrick’s Cathedral, in what is now Soho, where he discussed his experiences during this trip.

In his sermon, Hughes cited passages from the Gospel according John to justify slavery, comparing the slave master to the father of a family, and telling his congregation, “Is not the father of the family invested with the power of God that he is sovereign, commanding and expecting to be obeyed as he should?” Hughes claimed to recognize that “slavery is an evil,” but declared it was “not an absolute and unmitigated evil” because it brought Africans to Christianity. He believed that conditions for Africans were actually improved by enslavement and claimed that during his trip he had “taken pains to inquire of some who had been brought to Cuba as slaves from the Coast of Africa, whether they wished to return, and they invariably stated they did not; and the reason is that their conditions here, degraded as it is, is much better than it was at home, . . . so it is really a mitigation of their lot to be sold into foreign bondage.” In his column in the Metropolitan Record, he wrote: “We of course believe that no genuine Christian – no decent man – would be engaged in this kind of business: still, we cannot discover the crime, even of the slaver, in snatching them from the butcheries of their native land.”

Archbishop Hughes continued his public support for slavery during the Civil War. He warned Europeans who questioned his position on slavery, “There are in the southern states four millions of slaves. Abolish slavery all at once and what is to become of them? What is to become of their masters? What is to become of those articles which are the produce of their toil and which Europe so much needs?” In May, 1861, he declared that efforts to abolish slavery would violate the United States Constitution and demanded that Lincoln resign from the presidency if this was his goal.

The New York Times, May 2, 1854, p. 2

Archbishop Hughes, in his first sermon since his return from Cuba, perched on Sunday last, took occasion to speak of Slavery, both in the abstract and as it exists in that Spanish Colony. He said that he had taken pains to inquire of some who had been bought to Cuba as slaves from the Coast of Africa, whether they wished to return and they invariably stated that they did not; and the reason is that their condition here, degraded as it is, is much better than it was at home, where they were exposed to constant wars, in which mercy to the conquered is unknown, so that it is really a mitigation of their lot to be sold into foreign bondage. He bore testimony to the conscientious
efforts made by many slave-owners to perform the duties which the responsibility of their position devolved upon them and said that he could see no great difference between the obligations of those who own slaves and those who have control over hired servants or over children.

There is undoubtedly much truth in the Archbishop’s views; the only danger is that they may be compelled to give sanction to inferences not properly deducible from them. It is probably true that the condition of a slave in Cuba, or at the South is better than that of a negro in the heart of Africa, especially if he were there the prisoner of a hostile tribe. This fact however would scarcely justify the kidnapper in seizing negroes in Africa and selling them into Cuban or American slavery. And, yet, it may very possibly be used at some future day as an argument for the restoration of the Slave trade, as it was once used against its abolition. It was very strongly pressed by the mercantile interest of England which with the King and nobility strenuously resisted the abolition of the African Slave trade against the efforts of Pitt Wilberforce and their colaborers in this great work and it was heard on the floors of our Congress in connection with the struggle which resulted in declaring the Slave trade privacy.

It is by no means impossible that this whole question may again become the theme of public discussion; and we should, in such a case regret to find the Archbishop’s sentiments concerning Slavery quoted to sustain practices which we are quite certain he would not directly approve.

4. Message of New York City Mayor Fernando Wood Supporting Secession

As a Congressman in the 1840s, Fernando Wood was a strong supporter of slavery and the South. He continued his support of the South when he became Mayor of New York City in the 1850s. On January 8, 1861, The New York Times published the transcript of Mayor Wood’s annual report to the city’s Common Council. In this message, Wood spoke about the city’s options as the United States federal union appeared to be dissolving. An unedited version of the text is available in The New York Times on microfilm for that date on page 2. The New York Times’ editorial response is on page 4.

We are entering upon the public duties of the year under circumstances as unprecedented as they are gloomy and painful to contemplate. The great trading and producing interests of not only the City of New York, but of the entire country are prostrated by a momentary crisis.

It would seem that a dissolution of the Federal Union is inevitable. Having been formed originally upon a basis of general and mutual protection, but separate local independence - each State reserving the entire and absolute control of its own domestic affairs, it is evidently impossible to keep them together longer than they deem themselves fairly treated by each other, or longer than the interests, honor and fraternity of the people of the several States are satisfied. It cannot be preserved by coercion or held together by force. A resort to this last dreadful alternative would of itself destroy not only the Government, but the lives and property of the people.

With our aggrieved brethren of the Slave States we have friendly relations and a common sympathy. We have not participated in the warfare upon their constitutional rights or their domestic institutions. While other portions of our State have unfortunately been imbued with the fanatical spirit, the City of New York has unfalteringly preserved the integrity of its principles in adherence to the compromises of the Constitution. Our ships have penetrated to every clime, and so have New York capital, energy and enterprise found their way to every State. New York should endeavor to preserve a continuance of uninterrupted intercourse with every section.

New York may have more cause of apprehension from the aggressive legislation of our own State than from external dangers. No candid mind can fail to perceive the extent of the usurpations that have been made on the municipal rights and civil liberties of New York.

I claim for the City the distinction of a municipal corporation, self-existing and sustained by its own inherent and proper vigor. As a free City, with but a nominal duty on imports, her local government could be supported without taxation upon her people. In this she would have the whole and united support of the Southern States as well as of all other States to whose interests and rights under the Constitution she has always been true. If the Confederacy is broken up the Government is dissolved, and it behooves every distinct community as well as every individual to take care of themselves.

When disunion has become a fixed and certain fact, why may not New York disrupt the bands which bind her to a corrupt and venal master. New York, as a Free City, may shed the only light and hope for a future reconstruction of our once blessed Confederacy.
5. Samuel F. B. Morse Advocates for Slavery (1863)


Samuel Finley Breese Morse was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1791 and died in New York in 1872. He is buried in Greenlawn Cemetery in Brooklyn. During his lifetime, he was a well-known artist, a famous inventor, a professor at New York University, twice a candidate for mayor of New York City, an active opponent of immigration to the United States, and a leading defender of slavery. One of his biographers compared him to Leonardo da Vinci because of Morse’s involvement in so many fields.

When Samuel F. B. Morse graduated from Yale University in 1810, he became an artist and lived on a plantation in South Carolina with wealthy slave-owning patrons. He later studied art in England and moved to New York City in 1825. He was a professor of painting and sculptor at New York University from 1832 until 1841 and a founder and the first president of the National Academy of Design.

Samuel F. B. Morse is best known today as the inventor of the telegraph and the Morse code. His first working model was probably completed in 1835 and he applied for a patent in 1837. In 1843, Morse secured money from Congress to construct a telegraph line Baltimore to Washington D.C. It was the first telegraph line in the United States. By telegraph lines from Washington reached Boston. The the development of the telegraph made Morse a wealthy man and he was able to purchase an estate for his family near Poughkeepsie, New York.

In 1836 and 1841, Morse ran for mayor of New York City on a “nativist,” or anti-immigrant, platform and he was badly defeated both times. His major target were the Irish, whom he opposed as foreigners and Roman Catholics. Samuel F. B. Morse also supported the enslavement of African Americans and argued that it was a positive good that should be extended throughout the country.

A. An Argument on the Ethical Position of Slavery (1863).

“Slavery or the servile relation is proved to be one of the indispensable regulators of the social system, divinely ordained for the discipline of the human race in this world, and that it is in perfect harmony . . . with the great declared object of the Savior's mission to earth. . . . If the servile relation is an essential and indispensable divinely arranged part of the Social System, is not the attempt to blot it out altogether by force in any community, under the plea that it is a sin, an evil, a wrong, or an outrage to humanity, or indeed in any other place, sacrilegious? . . .

Are there not in this relation [of master to slave], when faithfully carried out according to Divine directions, some of the most beautiful examples of domestic happiness and contentment that this fallen world knows? Protection and judicious guidance and careful provision on the one part; cheerful obedience, affection and confidence on the other. . . .

Christianity has been most successfully propagated among a barbarous race, when they have been enslaved to a Christian race. Slavery to them has been Salvation, and Freedom, ruin. . . . When the relation of Master & Slave is left to its natural workings under the regulations divinely established, and unobstructed by outside fanatic busybodism, the result, on the enslaved and on society at large, is salutary and benevolent. When resisted, as it is by the abolitionism of the day, we have only to look around us to see the horrible fruits, in every frightful, and disorganizing, and bloody shape.”


“My creed on the subject of slavery is short. Slavery per se is not sin. It is a social condition ordained from the beginning of the world for the wisest purposes, benevolent and disciplinary, by Divine Wisdom. The mere holding of slaves, therefore, is a condition having per se nothing of moral character in it, any more than the being a parent, or employer, or ruler” . . .

Conscience in this matter has moved some Christians quite as strongly to view Abolitionism as a sin of the deepest dye, as it has other Christian minds to view Slavery as a sin . . . Who is to decide in a conflict of consciences? If the Bible is to be the umpire, as I hold it to be, then it is the Abolitionist that is denounced as worthy of excommunication; it is the Abolitionist from whom we are commanded to withdraw ourselves, while not a syllable of reproof do I find in the sacred volume administered to those who maintain, in the spirit of the gospel, the relation of Masters and Slaves.”
6. The Miscegenation Hoax (1863)


According to Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1981), miscegenation means “a mixture of races,” especially “marriage or cohabitation between a white person and a member of another race” (728). The term was first used in an anonymous pamphlet distributed in New York City in 1863. The pamphlet claimed that the goal of Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party was the “interbreeding” of “White” and African Americans in the United States. Many people thought the pamphlet, Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro, was written by abolitionists who supported the idea. In February 17, 1864, a Democratic congressman denounced the pamphlet in a speech delivered to the House of Representatives. He claimed it represented the social philosophy of the Republican Party. The actual authors of the pamphlet were an editor and reporter from the New York World, a pro-Democratic Party newspaper. They wrote it to use stir up racist attitudes among White voters as part of the newspaper’s opposition to Abraham Lincoln’s reelection campaign.

“‘The miscegenetic or mixed races are much superior, mentally, physically, and morally to those pure or unmixed,’ the author proclaimed. Furthermore, he argued, the strength of the American nation stemmed ‘not from its Anglo-Saxon progenitors, but from all the different nationalities. . . All that is needed to make us the finest race on earth is to engrat upon our stock the negro element. . . . It is idle to maintain that this present war is not a war for the negro . . . It is a war, if you please, of amalgamation . . . a war looking, as its final fruit, to the blending of the white and black . . . Let the war go on. . . until church, and state, and society recognize not only the propriety but the necessity of the fusion of the white and black—in short, until the great truth shall be declared in our public documents and announced in the messages of our Presidents, that it is desirable the white man should marry the black woman and the white woman the black man. . . .[T]he solution of the negro problem will not have been reached in this country until public opinion sanctions a union of the two races . . . that in the millennial future, the most perfect and highest type of manhood will not be white or black but brown, or colored, and that whoever helps to unite the various races of man, helps to make the human family the sooner realize its great destiny.’”

7. Debate Over the Anti-Slavery Constitutional Amendment (1864)

On June 15, 1864, The New York Times reported on debate in the House of Representatives over passage of “the Anti-Slavery Constitutional Amendment,” which would become the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. New York City was represented by former Mayor Fernando Wood who opposed the amendment.

“Mr. Fernando Wood of New York said that this was no time for a change of the organic law. We were in the midst of civil war. The din of the conflict and the groans of the dying and wounded are sad evidences of the destruction around us. The entire people are involved directly or indirectly in the dreadful conflict. There was too much excitement in the public mind to admit of calm and cautious investigation. If such a change could be made in the Constitution, this was not the time for it. The effect of such an amendment would produce a revulsion widespread and radical in character and add to the existing sectional hostility, and if possible, make the conflict more intense. . . . Among his reasons for opposing the resolution, he said it proposed to make social institutions subject to the Government, and this was an antagonism to the principles which underlie our republican system. It was unjust. It was the breach of good faith, and not reconcilable even with expediency. It struck at property, and involved the extermination of the whites of the Southern States and the forfeiture of their property, and lands to be given to the black race, who may drive the former out of existence.”
AIM: Why did the Fugitive Slave Law spur resistance to slavery in New York State?

DO NOW: Examine A. The Fugitive Slave Law.

MOTIVATION: During the history of the United States, some issues have directly affected individuals and enflamed the national passions. These included opposition to the draft law during the War in Vietnam, the battle over school desegregation and the right to reproductive freedom. In your opinion, why have these issues elicited such heated debate in the country? In the 1850s, people in the North reacted to the Fugitive Slave Law in a similar way. Why do you think this happened?

ACTIVITY: Activity sheets B-F examine resistance to slavery at a number of upstate New York sites. Teams can examine and report on different documents or examine the entire package as part of a History-Mystery.

KEY QUESTIONS:
What is the fugitive slave law?
How did the fugitive slave law influence the abolitionist movement?

SUMMARY QUESTION: In your opinion, why did the Fugitive Slave Law arouse such intense opposition in New York State?

HOMEWORK: Like most northern towns during this time period, the passing of this act has strengthened the abolitionist movement. You and your other town members are so furious about the passing of this act that you have decided to put together a coalition to protest the fugitive slave law. Design a political campaign to win support for your campaign against slavery and the Fugitive Slave law.

APPLICATION: Activity sheet “G. 19th Century Resistance to Slavery in Upstate New York” is a summary of upstate New York resistance to slavery. The class can use it as a starting point for an extended research project on the history of upstate New York and slavery.

Lesson developed by Gaurav Passi
A. The Fugitive Slave Law

Source: http://www.nationalcenter.org/FugitiveSlaveAct.html; http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/fugitive.htm

The Fugitive Slave Act was part of the group of laws referred to as the “Compromise of 1850.” In this compromise, anti-slavery advocates gained the admission of California as a free state and the prohibition of slave-trading in the District of Columbia (Washington DC). The Fugitive Slave Act stated that federal marshalls, and even bystandings, could be deputized to help in the recapture of Africans who had escaped from slavery. People suspected of being a runaway slave could be arrested without warrant and turned over to a claimant on nothing more than his sworn testimony of ownership. A suspected black slave could not ask for a jury trial nor testify on his or her behalf. The law was so hated by abolitionists that it spurred increased Northern resistance to slavery.

Fugitive Slave Law: That it shall be the duty of all marshals and deputy marshals to obey and execute all warrants and precepts issued under the provisions of this act, when to them directed; and should any marshal or deputy marshal refuse to receive such warrant, . . . or to use all proper means diligently to execute the same, he shall, on conviction thereof, be fined in the sum of one thousand dollars. . . . [A]fter arrest of such fugitive, by such marshal or his deputy, . . . such marshal shall be liable, . . . for the full value of the service or labor of said fugitive. . . . [T]hey are hereby authorized and empowered, . . . to summon and call to their aid the bystanders, or posse comitatus of the proper county, when necessary to ensure a faithful observance of the clause of the Constitution referred to, in conformity with the provisions of this act; and all good citizens are hereby commanded to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required. . . . [M]ay pursue and reclaim such fugitive person, . . . under the laws of the State or Territory from which such person owing service or labor may have escaped. . . . In no trial or hearing under this act shall the testimony of such alleged fugitive be admitted in evidence. . . . That any person who shall knowingly and willingly obstruct, hinder, or prevent such claimant, his agent or attorney, or any person or persons lawfully assisting him, her, or them, from arresting such a fugitive from service or labor, . . . shall . . . be subject to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisonment not exceeding six months, by indictment and conviction. . . .

Questions
1. What were the major measures adopted in the “compromise of 1850”?
2. In your opinion, why did the Fugitive Slave Law increase Northern resistance to slavery?

B. Resistance to Fugitive Slave Laws in Upstate New York (1850)


This leaflet was inserted into the Madison County Whig on October 23, 1850. It called for “noble men and women” to gather under the “banners of the good old Liberty Party” and reminded the public that William Chaplin, the general agent of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, was imprisoned on the charge of aiding runaways.

5000 Men & Women Wanted To Attend the Meeting in Canastota, Wednesday, Oct. 23d, Cazenovia, Friday, Oct. 25th, Hamilton, Wednesday, Oct. 30th, Peterboro, Friday, Nov. 1st

None but real Men and Women are wanted. The . . . Men and Women who can stick to the Whig and Democratic parties are not wanted. These parties made the accursed law, under which oppressors and kidnappers are now chasing down the poor among us, to make slaves of them. Hence, there is no hope of good from persons, who can stick to these Devil - prompted parties. We want such men and women to attend these meetings, as would rather suffer imprisonment and death than tolerate the execution of this man stealing law. We want such, as would be glad to see William L Chaplin now lying in a Maryland prison on account of his merciful feelings to the enslaved made Governor of the State of New York. We want, in a word, such noble men and women as need to gather under the banners of the good old Liberty Party.

Questions
1. What is the “man-stealing” law?
2. What is the purpose of this flyer?
C. Rev. Loguen of Syracuse Denounces the Fugitive Slave Law (1850)


I was a slave; I knew the dangers I was exposed to. I had made up my mind as to the course I was to take. On that score I needed no counsel, nor did the colored citizens generally. They had taken their stand-they would not be taken back to slavery. If to shoot down their assailants should forfeit their lives, such result was the least of the evil. They will have their liberties or die in their defence. What is life to me if I am to be a slave in Tennessee? My neighbors! I have lived with you many years, and you know me. My home is here, and my children were born here. I am bound to Syracuse by pecuniary interests, and social and family bonds. And do you think I can be taken away from you and from my wife and children, and be a slave in Tennessee? . . .

Some kind and good friends advise me to quit my country, and stay in Canada, until this tempest is passed. I doubt not the sincerity of such counsellors. But my conviction is strong, that their advice comes from lack of knowledge of themselves and the case in hand. I believe that our own bosoms are charged to the brim with qualities that will smite to the earth the villains who may interfere to enslave any man in Syracuse. . . .

I tell you people of Syracuse and the whole North must meet this tyranny and crush it by force, or be crushed by it. This hellish enactment has precipitated the conclusion that the white men must live in dishonorable submission, and colored men be slaves, or they must give their physical as well as intellectual powers to the defence of human rights. The time has come to change the tones of submission into tones of defiance- and to tell Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Webster, if they propose to execute this measure upon us, to send on their blood-hounds. . . .

Now, you are assembled here, the strength of this city is here to express their sense of this fugitive slave act, and to proclaim to the despots at Washington whether it shall be enforced here - whether you will permit the government to return me and other fugitives who have sought an asylum among you, to the Hell of slavery. The question is with you. If you will give us up, say so, and we will shake the dust from our feet and leave you. But we believe better things. . . . The immensity of this meeting testifies to the general consternation that has brought it together, necessarily, precipitately, to decide the most stirring question that can be presented, to wit, whether, the government having transgressed constitutional and natural limits, you will bravely resist its aggressions, and tell its soulless agents that no slave-holder shall make your city and county a hunting field for slaves. . . .

I don’t respect this law - I don’t fear it - I won’t obey it! It outlaws me, and I outlaw it, and the men who attempt to enforce it on me. I place the governmental officials on the ground that they place me. I will not live a slave, and if force is employed to re-enslave me, I shall make preparations to meet the crisis as becomes a man. If you will stand by me - and I believe you will do it, for your freedom and honor are involved as well as mine, . . . you will be the saviours of your country. Your decision tonight in favor of resistance will give vent to the spirit of liberty, and will break the bands of party, and shout for joy all over the North. Your example only is needed to be the type of public action in Auburn, and Rochester, and Utica, and Buffalo, and all the West, and eventually in the Atlantic cities. Heaven knows that this act of noble daring will break out somewhere - and may God grant that Syracuse be the honored spot, whence it shall send an earthquake voice through the land!

Questions
1. How does Reverend Loguen plan to end the Fugitive Slave Law?
2. What does Loguen believe will happen if the Fugitive Slave Law is permitted to continue?
3. In your opinion, what are the most effective arguments made in this speech? Explain.
D. The Jerry Rescue, Syracuse, NY (1851)

Sources: libwww.syr.edu/digital/exhibits/g/GerritSmith/jerry.htm
libwww.syr.edu/digital/exhibits/g/GerritSmith/index.htm

Leaders of the Syracuse area abolition movement, including Underground Railroad Stationmaster Jermain Loguen, organized a local committee to thwart enforcement of the recently adopted Fugitive Slave Law. On October 1, 1851, federal marshals from Rochester, Auburn, Syracuse, and Canandaigua, accompanied by the local police, arrested a man who called himself Jerry. Jerry, also known as William Henry, was working as a barrel maker, and was arrested at his workplace. He was originally told the charge was theft until after he was in manacles. On being informed that he was being arrested under the Fugitive Slave Law, he put up substantial resistance, but was subdued.

Word of the arrest quickly reached the Liberty Party Convention at a nearby church. An immediate effort to free the prisoner was unsuccessful, and though he escaped to the street in irons, he was rapidly recaptured. The arraignment was put off until evening and relocated to a larger room. A large crowd gathered in the street, this time equipped for a more serious rescue attempt.

With a battering ram the door was broken in and despite pistol shots out the window by one of the deputy marshals, it became clear that the crowd was too large and determined to be resisted. The prisoner was surrendered, and one deputy marshal broke his arm jumping from a window to escape the crowd. The injured prisoner was hidden in the city for several days in the home of a local butcher known for his anti-abolitionist sentiments, and later taken in a wagon to Oswego, where he crossed Lake Ontario into Canada.

Nineteen indictments were returned against the rescuers. Rev. (later Bishop) Loguen, himself a fugitive from slavery, was among those indicted. Taken to Auburn for arraignment, the suspects were bailed out by, among others, William H. Seward, the current US Senator and former Governor of New York. The proceedings dragged on for two years with one conviction. Gerrit Smith and others obtained an indictment against Marshal Allen for kidnapping, and used the occasion to argue against the Constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Law.

Fugitive Slave - His Rescue - Great Excitement - The Military called out,
Wednesday, October 1, 1851. The New York Times, p. 2

A colored man named W. Henry, who has resided in this city for some time past, was arrested this morning by U.S. Marshal Allen, as a fugitive slave. He is a cooper by trade, and was at work in his shop when he was arrested. The officer informed him that he was charged with some slight offence, and he allowed himself to be taken and handcuffed under that impression. He was taken before Commissioner Saline, and an examination gone into.

Considerable excitement was occasioned by the arrest, and a large crowd assembled in and about the office of the Commissioner. While the examination was progressing the negro made his escape into the street and was closely followed by a crowd of persons, some of whom were desirous to assist in his escape, and others were equally anxious to assist in his recapture. A carriage was speedfly procured by the negro’s friends, but not in season to be made available for the object in view. He was recaptured by the officers before he got out of the limits of the city. He was taken to the police office followed by a large crowd composed mostly of his friends. Nothing further was done with the examination up to 7 o’clock but the military were ordered out, and all arrangements made to carry the law into effect. What will be the end no one can tell.

Questions
1. Why did the police claim they arrested William Henry?
2. In your opinion, why did they give a false reason?
3. How did New Yorkers respond to his arrest?
4. In the end, what happened to William Henry?
To the Editor of the N.Y. Tribune.

I was born a slave, reared in the Southern hot-bed until I was the mother of two children, sold at the early age of two and four years old. I have been hunted through all of the Northern States, but no, I will not tell you of my own suffering - no, it would harrow up my soul, and defeat the object that I wish to pursue. . . .

My mother was held as property by a maiden lady; . . . my younger sister was in her fourteenth year, . . . She was as gentle as she was beautiful. Innocent and guileless child, the light of our desolate hearth! But oh, my heart bleeds to tell you of the misery and degradation she was forced to suffer in slavery. The monster who owned her had no humanity in his soul. The most sincere affection that his heart was capable of, could not make him faithful to his beautiful and wealthy bride the short time of three months, but every stratagem was used to seduce my sister. Mortified and tormented beyond endurance, this child came and threw herself on her mother's bosom, the only place where she could seek refuge from her persecutor. . . . My poor mother, naturally high-spirited, smarting under what she considered as the wrongs and outrages which her child had to bear, sought her master, entreating him to spare her child. Nothing could exceed his rage at this what he called impertinence. My mother was dragged to jail, there remained twenty-five days, with Negro traders to come in as they liked to examine her, as she was offered for sale. My sister was told that she must yield, or never expect to see her mother again. . . . That child gave herself up to her master's bidding, to save one that was dearer to her than life itself. . . .

At fifteen, my sister held to her bosom an innocent offspring of her guilt and misery. In this way she dragged a miserable existence of two years, between the fires of her mistress's jealousy and her master's brutal passion. At seventeen, she gave birth to another helpless infant, heir to all the evils of slavery. Thus life and its sufferings was meted out to her until her twenty-first year. Sorrow and suffering has made its ravages upon her - she was less the object to be desired by the fiend who had crushed her to the earth; and as her children grew, they bore too strong a resemblance to him who desired to give them no other inheritance save Chains and Handcuffs, and in the dead hour of the night, . . . that broken-hearted mother was far on her way to the capitol of Virginia. That day should have refused her light to so disgraceful and inhuman an act in your boasted country of Liberty. Yet, reader, it is true, those two helpless children were the sons of one of your sainted Members in Congress; that agonized mother, his victim and slave. And where she now is God only knows, who has kept a record on high of all that she has suffered on earth. . . .

Could not the master have been more merciful to his children? God is merciful to all of his children, but it is seldom that a slaveholder has any mercy for his slave child. And you will believe it when I tell you that mother and her children were sold to make room for another sister, who was now the age of that mother when she entered the family. And this selling appeased the mistress's wrath, and satisfied her desire for revenge, and made the path more smooth for her young rival at first. For there is a strong rivalry between a handsome mulatto girl and a jealous and faded mistress, and her liege lord sadly neglects his wife or doubles his attentions, to save him being suspected by his wife. Would you not think that Southern Women had cause to despise that Slavery which forces them to bear so much deception practiced by their husbands? Yet all this is true, for a slaveholder seldom takes a white mistress, for she is an expensive commodity, not as submissive as he would like to have her, but more apt to be tyrannical; and when his passion seeks another object, he must leave her in quiet possession of all the gewgaws that she has sold herself for. But not so with his poor slave victim, that he has robbed of everything that can make life desirable; she must be torn from the little that is left to bind her to life, and sold by her seducer and master, caring not where, so that it puts him in possession of enough to purchase another victim. And such are the peculiar circumstances of American Slavery.

Questions
1. Who was Harriet Jacob’s?
2. What happened to Harriet Jacob’s sister?
3. What is Harriet Jacob’s view of slavery and of slave masters?
F. Harriet Tubman’s Troy, New York, Raid (1859)

**Source:** Bradford, S. (1886). *Harriet, the Moses of her people*, G.R. Lockwood & Son.

In the spring of 1860, Harriet Tubman . . . stopped at Troy to visit a cousin, and while there the colored people were one day startled with the intelligence that a fugitive slave, by the name of Charles Nalle, had been followed by his master (who was his younger brother, and not one grain whiter than he), and that he was already in the hands of the officers, and was to be taken back to the South. The instant Harriet heard the news, she started for the office of the United States Commissioner, scattering the tidings as she went. An excited crowd was gathered about the office, through which Harriet forced her way, and rushed up stairs to the door of the room where the fugitive was detained. A wagon was already waiting before the door to carry off the man, but the crowd was even then so great, and in such a state of excitement, that the officers did not dare to bring the man down.

On the opposite side of the street stood the colored people, watching the window where they could see Harriet’s sunbonnet, and feeling assured that so long as she stood there, the fugitive was still in the office. Time passed on, and he did not appear. ‘They’ve taken him out another way, depend upon that.” said some of the colored people.

“No,” replied others, “there stands Moses’ yet, and as long as she is there, he is safe.” Harriet, now seeing the necessity for a tremendous effort for his rescue, sent out some little boys to cry fire. The bells rang, the crowd increased, till the whole street was a dense mass of people. Again and again the officers came out to try and clear the stairs, and make a way to take their captive down; others were driven down, but Harriet stood her ground, her head bent and her arms folded. . . .

Offers were made to buy Charles from his master, who at first agreed to take twelve hundred dollars for him; but when this was subscribed, he immediately raised the price to fifteen hundred. The crowd grew more excited. A gentleman raised a window and called out, “Two hundred dollars for his rescue, but not one cent to his master!” This was responded to by a roar of satisfaction from the crowd below. At length the officers appeared, and announced to the crowd, that if they would open a lane to the wagon, they would promise to bring the man down the front way. The lane was opened, and the man was brought out -- a tall, handsome, intelligent white man, with his wrists manacled together, walking between the U. S. Marshal and another officer, and behind him his brother and his master, so like him that one could hardly be told from the other.

The moment they appeared, Harriet . . . cried to her friends: “Here he comes -- take him!” and then darted down the stairs like a wildcat. She seized one officer and pulled him down, then another, and tore him away from the man and keeping her arms about the slave, she cried to her friends: “Drag us out! Drag him to the river! Drown him! but don’t let them have him!” . . . She tore off her sunbonnet and tied it on the head of the fugitive. When he rose, only his head could be seen, and amid the surging mass of people the slave was no longer recognized. . . . Again and again they were knocked down, the poor slave utterly helpless, with his manacled wrists, streaming with blood. Harriet’s outer clothes were torn from her, . . . yet she never relinquished her hold of the man, till she had dragged him to the river, where he was tumbled into a boat, Harriet following in a ferry-boat to the other side.

But the telegraph was ahead of them, and as soon as they landed he was seized and hurried from her sight. After a time, some school children came hurrying along, and to her anxious inquiries they answered, “He is up in that house, in the third story.” Harriet rushed up to the place. Some men were attempting to make their way up the stairs. The officers were firing down, and two men were lying on the stairs, who had been shot. Over their bodies our heroine rushed, and with the help of others burst open the door of the room, and dragged out the fugitive, whom Harriet carried down stairs in her arms.

A gentleman who was riding by with a fine horse, stopped to ask what the disturbance meant; and on hearing the story, his sympathies seemed to be thoroughly aroused; he sprang from his wagon, calling out, “That is a blood-horse, drive him till be drops.” The poor man was hurried in; some of his friends jumped in after him, and drove at the most rapid rate to Schenectady.

**Questions**

1. Who was Charles Nalle?
2. What role did Harriet Tubman plan in the freeing of Nalle?
3. In your opinion, what was the impact of a story like this one on the struggle against slavery?
G. 19th Century Resistance to Slavery in Upstate New York


Assignment: This activity sheet is a summary of upstate New York resistance to slavery. Use it as a starting point for an extended research project on the history of upstate New York and slavery. Your final goal is to create a class magazine with historical reports, maps, photographs and illustrations. It can also include fictional pieces (stories, poems or songs) about the resistance to slavery in upstate New York.

Buffalo: Joseph “Black Joe” Hodge escaped from slavery in the late 1700s and was the Buffalo region’s first known American settler. He lived with local native Americans. William Wells Brown was a fugitive slave, abolitionist, author and Underground Railroad station master. Brown transported many runaways across Lake Erie. Following the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, a former New York City school teacher who feared the precariousness of her own free status, fled to Canada. While residing in Toronto, she founded The Provincial Freeman, a weekly newspaper which was distributed in Erie and Niagara Counties. In 1823, a fugitive known only as “slave Ellen” was captured in Rochester and sent to Buffalo for her eventual return to Virginia. Ellen slit her own throat rather than be returned to slavery and separated from her husband and daughter. The home of Sterling and L. Sheldon Ely on Como Park Blvd. served as an Underground Railroad station. E.M. Pettit, author of Sketches, detailing his life as a conductor on the Underground Railroad in southwestern New York State. Buffalo area abolitionists included John Wilkes, Elihu Rice, Alvin Orr, Benjamin Parker, and Abner H. Francis. In 1843, Buffalo hosted the annual National Convention of Colored Citizens. Black delegates from various states who met to discuss the problems facing the race. Henry Highland Garnet delivered his “Address to the Slaves of the United States of America,” a call for rebellion.

Rochester: In 1795, free black, Asa Dunbar and his family were among the first pioneers in the Rochester region. Dunbar, who served the local community as city attorney, eventually resettled in Canada. Frederick Douglass arrived in Rochester in the 1840s. A noted orators, essayist and newspaper editor, he was one of the premier leaders of the campaign to abolish slavery. Thomas James was born slave in Montgomery County. When he was eight years old he witnessed the sale of his mother, sister, and brother. In 1830, he built a church on Favor Street in Rochester that served also as a school and an Underground Railroad station. Abolitionist Austin Steward was a fugitive slave and a successful Rochester businessman. He lead the July 5, 1827 Emancipation day celebration in Rochester. Isaac and Amy Post Were leaders of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. Their Rochester home served as an Underground Railroad Station during the 1840s and 1850s. Rochester area abolitionists included Gideon Pitts, Asa Anthony, Isaac Moore, Lindley Moore, Sara Fish, Samuel Porter, Edward Williams, Ashley Sampson, Thomas Warrant, William Clough Bloss, George Avery, William Falls, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Syracuse: In 1839, Harriet Powell arrived in Syracuse were she was held in slavery by an owner from Mississippi. Aided in her escape, she spent time at the home of Gerrit Smith where she met Smith’s cousin, Elizabeth Cady (Stanton). A fugitive from Tennessee, the Rev. Jermain Loguen settled in Syracuse in 1840 and opened his home at 293 East Genessee Street as an Underground Railroad station and “Fugitive Aid Society.” In 1845, the Rev. Samuel May became pastor of the Unitarian Church in Syracuse and opened his home as an Underground Railroad station. In October 1851, Black and White abolitionists help rescue fugitive slave William “Jerry” Henry from federal officers. Nineteen people were indicted for helping Henry, but only one was convicted. Enoch Reed, a black rescuer, died during appeals. Edmonia Highgate was a young Black woman who left Syracuse following the Emancipation Proclamation to teach the newly freed slaves in the South.

Albany and Troy: In 1794, two enslaved women and a man were hanged on the northwest corner of Pearl and State Street in Albany. Their executions were intended to serve as a deterrent to all slaves. Pinkster was Afro-Dutch cultural and religious festival dating from the 17th century. In 1811, the celebration of Pinkster was outlawed by the Albany Common Council. Nathaniel Paul, the abolitionist minister of the First African Baptist Church in Albany was a strong advocate for the Wilberforce Colony, the free black colony in Canada. In the 1830s, Paul traveled
abroad to raise money for anti-slavery activities, including aid to refugees. Stephen Myers, a former slave, was called the state’s best Underground Railroad station master. In the 1840s, he published Albany’s *Northern Star and Freeman’s Advocate*. With Samuel Ringgold Ward, Myers later published the *Impartial Citizen*. He served also as a lobbyist for anti-slavery causes at the state capitol. In 1846, the Rev. Charles T. Torrey, an abolitionist and editor of the anti-slavery newspaper, *The Patriot*, died in prison while serving a six year sentence for aiding fugitives. He claimed to have helped nearly four hundred escaped slaves reach freedom. In 1850, Gen. William Chaplin, an editor of *The Patriot*, was arrested for aiding fugitives. Local abolitionists included E.C. Delavan, Dr. J. C. Jackson, and Lydia Mott.

**Other Upstate New York Historic Sites in the struggle to end slavery:** In Wyoming County, the Rev. Ralston W. Lyman, Horatio N. Waldo operator of a woolen mill, and Col. Charles O. Shepard and Samuel Tilden helped escaped slaves or served as conductors on the Underground Railroad. Katherine Harris, a free Black abolitionist, founded the AME Zion Church in Jamestown. She sometimes harbored as many as seventeen escaped slaves in the attic of her home. In the 1850s, the Women’s Anti-Slavery Society of Ellington conducted sewing-circles in the Jamestown area to supply clothes, bedding and other necessities to fugitives. In 1844, John W. Jones escaped from slavery in Virginia. Jones became an Underground Railroad station master in Elmira and helped hundreds of escaped slaves reach freedom. He often used an actual railroad, the Northern Central Railroad, to get refugees into Canada. Beriah Green’s Oneida Institute in Oneida County was a 19th Century school for Whites, Blacks and Native Americans. Graduates included Henry Highland Garnet, Alexander Crummell, and Jermain Loguen. In 1832, Green transformed the school into a center of abolitionism. In 1840s abolitionist Gerrit Smith sold over 140,000 acres of Adirondack Woodland near Petersboro in Essex County, in forty acre plots for one dollar each, to poor blacks and whites. Throughout the Adirondack range are small enclaves with names like Timbuktu and Blacksville. Towns like Witherbee, Northhampton, and North Elba (John Brown’s burial site) had significant Black populations by the 19th century.
AIM: How did African Americans in New York State struggle to end slavery in the United States?

BACKGROUND: Each of the people discussed in this lesson was involved in the campaign to end slavery in the United States. They are all African Americans and New Yorkers. Sojourner Truth was born a slave in Hurley, New York. She campaigned for rights for both women and African Americans and is probably one of the best known Americans from the 19th century. David Ruggles was born free in Norwich, Connecticut in 1810. He moved to New York City in 1827 where he was a founder and secretary of the New York Committee of Vigilance which aided hundreds of fugitive slaves. He also founded the city’s first “Black” bookstore, was a noted abolitionist lecturer, published a newspaper, and ran a boarding house that was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Jermain Loguen was trained as an abolitionist, teacher and minister at the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro, New York (near Utica). In 1841, he moved to Syracuse, where as the “station master” of the local underground railroad “depot,” he helped over one thousand “fugitives” escape to Canada. In 1859, he published his memoir. Henry Highland Garnet escaped to the North when he was eleven and graduated from the Oneida Institute in 1840. The pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Troy, New York, he issued a call for slaves to revolt against their masters. His ideas were considered radical at the time because most abolitionists preferred using moral and economic arguments to challenge slavery and opposed violence. William Brown was born on a plantation near Lexington, Kentucky, in 1814. He escaped from slavery in 1834. He and his family moved to New York State in the 1840s, and he began lecturing for the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. Brown worked for nine years as a steamboatman on Lake Erie and as a conductor for the Underground Railroad in Buffalo, New York.

DO NOW: Read and discuss the following statement by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
“We must never forget that everything that Hitler did in Germany was ‘legal.’ It was illegal to aid and comfort a Jew, in the days of Hitlers Germany. But I believe that if I had the same attitude then as I have now I would publicly aid my Jewish brothers in Germany. . . Our nation in a sense came into being through a massive act of civil disobedience for the Boston Tea Party was nothing but a massive civil disobedience. Those who stood up against the slave laws, the abolitionists, by and large practiced civil disobedience.” Source: Address to the Fellowship of the Concerned, Nov. 16, 1961 A Last Testament of Hope, The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. ed. James M. Washington (Harper, San Francisco), 1991 p. 50

MOTIVATION: Why does Dr. King discuss what happened in Nazi Germany in the days of Adolph Hitler? Why does Dr. King believe that civil disobedience has had an important place in the history of the United States? In your opinion, is it right to break a law if you consider it unjust? Would you be willing to use physical force to support your beliefs? Under what circumstances? Why?

ACTIVITIES: Student teams will be assigned to read about resistance to slavery by one of the people in this lesson. Team members will write a first person speech representing the ideas and actions of their person and select one team member to present it to the full class.

KEY QUESTIONS:
What are some of the ways these people worked to end slavery?
Describe some of the contributions these people made to the abolitionist movement?
Why did these people risk their lives to support the abolitionist movement?

SUMMARY QUESTION: How did African Americans in New York State struggle to end slavery in the United States?

Lesson developed by Gaurav Passi and Jessica Pavlick
A. Isabella Van Wagener of Ulster County, also known as Sojourner Truth (1797–1827)

Source: docsouth.unc.edu

Among Isabella’s earliest recollections was the removal of her master, Charles Ardinburgh, into his new house, which he had built for a hotel. A cellar, under this hotel, was assigned to his slaves, as their sleeping apartment, all the slaves he possessed, of both sexes, sleeping in the same room. She carries in her mind, to this day, a vivid picture of this dismal chamber; its only lights consisting of a few panes of glass, through which she thinks the sun never shone; and the space between the loose boards of the floor, and the uneven earth below, was often filled with mud and water. She shudders, even now, as she goes back in memory, and revisits this cellar, and sees its inmates, of both sexes and all ages, sleeping on those damp boards, like the horse, with a little straw and a blanket; and she wonders not at the rheumatisms, and fever-sores, and palsies, that distorted the limbs and racked the bodies of those fellow-slaves in after-life.

Childhood

Isabella’s father was very tall and straight, when young, which gave him the name of ‘Bomefree’, low Dutch for tree. The most familiar appellation of her mother was ‘Mau-mau Bett.’ She was the mother of some ten or twelve children; though Sojourner is far from knowing the exact number of her brothers and sisters; she being the youngest, save one, and all older than herself having been sold before her remembrance. Of the two that immediately preceded her in age, a boy of five years, and a girl of three, who were sold when she was an infant, she heard much; and she wishes that all who believe that slave parents have not natural affection for their offspring, could have listened as she did, while Bomefree and Mau-mau Bett would sit for hours, recalling and recounting every endearing, as well as harrowing circumstance that taxed memory could supply, from the histories of those dear departed ones, of whom they had been robbed, and for whom their hearts still bled.

Isabella and Peter, her youngest brother, remained, with their parents, the legal property of Charles Ardinburgh till his decease, which took place when Isabella was near nine years old. After this event, she was often surprised to find her mother in tears; and when, in her simplicity; she inquired, ‘Mau-mau, what makes you cry?’ she would answer, ‘Oh, my child, I am thinking of your brothers and sisters that have been sold away from me.’

Slave Auction

At length, the never-to-be-forgotten day of the terrible auction arrived, when the ‘slaves, horses, and other cattle’ of Charles Ardinburgh, deceased, were to be put under the hammer, and again change masters. Not only Isabella and Peter, but their mother, was now destined to the auction block, and would have been struck off with the rest to the highest bidder, but for the following circumstance: A question arose among the heirs, ‘Who shall be burdened with Bomefree,’? He was becoming weak and infirm; he was no longer considered of value, but must soon be a burden and care to some one. It was finally agreed, as most expedient for the heirs, that the price of Mau-mau Bett should be sacrificed, and she received her freedom, on condition that she take care of and support her husband.

A slave auction is a terrible affair to its victims. Isabella was struck off, for the sum of one hundred dollars, to one John Nealy, of Ulster County, New York; and she has an impression that in this sale she was connected with a lot of sheep. She was now nine years of age. She could only talk Dutch, and the Nealys could only talk English, and this, of itself, was a formidable obstacle in the way of a good understanding between them, and for some time was a fruitful source of dissatisfaction to the mistress, and of punishment and suffering for Isabella.

They gave her a plenty to eat, and also plenty of whipping. One Sunday morning, in particular, she was told to go to the barn; on going there, she found her master with a bundle of rods, prepared in the embers, and bound together with cords. When he had tied her hands together before her, he gave her the most cruel whipping she was ever tortured with. He whipped her till the flesh was deeply lacerated, and the blood streamed from her wounds, and the scars remain to the present day to testify the fact.

A long time had not elapsed, when a fisherman by the name of Scriver appeared at Mr. Nealy’s and inquired of Isabel ‘if she would like to go and live with him,’ and she soon started off with him, walking while he rode; he had bought her at the suggestion of her father, paying one hundred and five dollars for her. He also lived in Ulster County, but some five or six miles from Mr. Nealy’s. Scriver, besides being a fisherman, kept a tavern. She was expected to carry fish, to hoe corn, to bring roots and herbs from the wood for beers, and go to the Strand for a
Section 5

New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance

Isabella was married to a fellow-slave, named Thomas, after the fashion of slavery, one of the slaves performing the ceremony for them; as no true minister of Christ can perform what he knows to be a mere farce, unrecognized by any civil law, and liable to be annulled any moment, when the interest or caprice (whim) of the master should dictate. In process of time, Isabella found herself the mother of five children. When Isabella went to the field to work, she used to put her infant in a basket, tying a rope to each handle, and suspending the basket to a branch of a tree, set another small child to swing it.

**Emancipation**

After emancipation had been decreed by the State, some years before the time fixed for its consummation, Isabella’s master told her if she would do well, and be faithful, he would give her ‘free papers,’ one year before she was legally free by statute. In the year 1826, she had a badly diseased hand, which greatly diminished her usefulness; but on the arrival of July 4, 1827, the time specified for her receiving her ‘free papers,’ she claimed the fulfillment of her master’s promise; but he refused on account of the loss he had sustained by her hand. She plead that she had worked all the time, but her master remained inflexible.

The question in her mind now was, ‘How can I get away?’ One fine morning, a little before day-break, she might have been seen stepping stealthily away from the rear of Master Dumont’s house, her infant on one arm and her wardrobe on the other; the bulk and weight of which, probably, she never found so convenient as on the present occasion, a cotton handkerchief containing both her clothes and her provisions.

Mr. and Mrs. Van Wagener listened to her story, assuring her they never turned the needy away, and willingly gave her employment. She had not been there long before her old master, Dumont, appeared. Mr. Isaac S. Van Wagener then interposed, saying, he had never been in the practice of buying and selling slaves; he did not believe in slavery; but, rather than have Isabella taken back by force, he would buy her services for the balance of the year, for which her master charged twenty dollars, and five in addition for the child. She resided one year, and from them she derived the name of Van Wagener; he being her last master in the eye of the law, and a slave’s surname is ever the same as his master.

A little previous to Isabel’s leaving her old master, he had sold her child, a boy of five years, to a Dr. Gedney, who took him with him as far as New York city, on his way to England; but finding the boy too small for his service, he sent him back to his brother, Solomon Gedney. This man disposed him to his sister’s husband, a wealthy planter, by the name of Fowler, who took him to his own home in Alabama. This illegal and fraudulent transaction had been perpetrated some months before Isabella knew of it. The law expressly prohibited the sale of any slave out of the State. When Isabel heard that her son had been sold South, she immediately started on foot and alone, to find the man who had thus dared, in the face of all law, human and divine, to sell her child out of the State; and if possible, to bring him to account for the deed.

Quakers gave her lodgings and saw that she was taken and set down near Kingston, with directions to go to the Court House, and enter complaint to the Grand Jury. The clerk now gave her a writ, directing her to take it to the constable of New Paltz, and have him serve it on Solomon Gedney. She obeyed, walking or rather trotting, in her haste, some eight or nine miles. Solomon Gedney, meanwhile, consulted a lawyer, who advised him to go to Alabama and bring back the boy, otherwise it might cost him fourteen years’ imprisonment, and a thousand dollars in cash.

(A lawyer told Isabelle) if she would give him five dollars, he would get her son for her, in twenty-four hours. She performed the journey to Poppletown, a distance of some ten miles, collected considerable more than the sum specified by the barrister (from the Quakers); then, shutting the money tightly in her hand, she trotted back, and paid the lawyer a larger fee than he had demanded. The next morning saw Isabel at the lawyer’s door, while he was yet in his bed. He now assured her that before noon her son would be there. She went to the office, but at sight of her the boy cried aloud, denying his mother, and clinging to his master. When the pleading was at an end, Isabella understood the Judge to declare, as the sentence of the Court, that the ‘boy be delivered into the hands of the mother, having no other master, no other controller, no other conductor, but his mother.’
B. David Ruggles of New York City, an African American Activist (1834-1841)

David Ruggles was born free in Norwich, Connecticut in 1810. He moved to New York City in 1827 where he became a grocer. Ruggles was a founder and secretary of the New York Committee of Vigilance which aided hundreds of fugitive slaves. He also founded the city’s first “Black” bookstore, was a noted abolitionist lecturer, published a newspaper, and ran a boarding house that was a stop on the Underground Railroad. In 1836, Ruggles was jailed for abolitionist activities and his bookstore was destroyed. In 1838, he provided safe-haven in his home for an escaped slave named Frederick Bailey who would later change his name to Frederick Douglass. Ruggles died in 1849 at the age of thirty-nine. Sources: Katz, W. (1997). Black Legacy (NY: Antheneum), p. 64-66; Aptheker, H. (1973). A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, v. 1. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press.

“Amalgamation” of the Races (1834)

Abolitionists do not wish “amalgamation.” I do not wish it, nor does any colored man or woman of my acquaintance, . . . which of the two races would “forfeit all character” by intermarrying, the white or the colored? The whites have robbed us (the blacks) for centuries - they made Africa bleed rivers of blood! - they have torn husbands from their wives - wives from their husbands - parents from their children - children from their parents - brothers from their sisters - sisters from their brothers, and bound them in chains - forced them into holds of vessels - subjected them to the most unmerciful tortures: starved and murdered, and doomed them to endure the horrors of slavery. . . . But why is it that it seems to you so “repugnant” to marry your sons and daughters to colored persons? Simply because public opinion is against it. Nature teaches no such “repugnance,” but experience has taught me that education only does. Do children feel and exercise that prejudice towards colored persons? Do not colored and white children play together promiscuously until the white is taught to despise the colored?

Slavery in New York State (1837)


Mr. Editor: I suppose, not one in a thousand of your readers can be aware of the extent to which slavery prevails even in the so-called free state of New York. Within the last four weeks, I have seen not less than eleven different persons who have recently been brought from the south, and who are now held as slaves by their masters in this state; as you know the laws of this state allow any slaveholder to do this, nine months at a time; so that when the slave has been here nine months, the master has only to take him out of the state, and then return with him immediately, and have him registered again, and so he may hold on to the slave as long as he lives.

Disunity (1841)

The Liberator, September 24, 1841.

While every man’s hand is against us, our every hand is against each other. I speak plainly, because truth will set us free. Are we not guilty of cherishing, to an alarming extent, the sin of sectarian, geographical, and complexional proscription? The spirit abroad is this: Is that brother a Methodist? He is not one of us. A Baptist? He is not one of us. A Presbyterian? He is not one of us. An Episcopalian? He is not one of us. A Roman Catholic? He is not one of us. Does he live above human creeds, and enjoy the religion of the heart? He is of Beelzebub. Again. Is that brother from the east? He is not of us. From the west? He is not of us. From the north? He is not of us. From the south? He is not of us. From the middle states? He is not of us. Is he a foreigner? He can never be of us. But, forsooth, is that brother of a dark complexion? He is of no worth. Is he of a light complexion? He is of no nation. Such, sir, are the visible lines of distinction, marked by slavery for us to follow. If we hope for redemption from our present condition, we must repent, turn, and unite in the hallowed cause of reform.
C. Jermain Loguen and the Underground Railroad in Syracuse

Jermain Loguen was trained as an abolitionist, teacher and minister at the Onedia Institute in Whitesboro, New York (near Utica). In 1841, he moved to Syracuse, where as the “station master” of the local underground railroad “depot,” he helped over one thousand “fugitives” escape to Canada. In 1859, he published his memoirs, *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman* (Syracuse, NY: J. G. K. Truair).

In the month of September, 1839, J. Davenport, of Mississippi, accompanied with his wife and child, and another white lady, arrived, with much show of importance, in Syracuse, and took lodgings at the Syracuse House... It was soon learned by the servants, and communicated to outsiders, that this beautiful southern girl was a slave - the property of Mr. Davenport. The fact that a woman so white and attractive was held as property, awakened curiosity and indignation among some who had no objection to black slavery... Two citizens, ... having learned that this young lady felt keenly the restraints of slavery, and that rich dresses, and expensive baubles in her ears, and on her fingers and bosom, were no compensation for liberty, signified to her through the colored servants of the hotel, that if she dared, they would put her into Canada, and she should be free. She consented, and a plan was concocted ... to put her out of the reach of her master. ... She was aware her master had been importuned to sell her for $2500, for the worst of purposes, and she knew he had no conscientious scruples to deter him from yielding to the base intents of the purchaser.

Mr. Davenport now fixed the day of his departure to Mississippi. A single day intervened - the evening of which was spent at a select party at Major Cook’s, as a sort of closing fete of the Syracuse fashionables to their southern friends. Harriet was at the party to take charge of the babe, and at a certain hour of the evening - which had been settled as the hour for her escape - she passed through the assembly, very naturally, and placed the babe in its mother’s lap, and told her she wished to step out. The mother took the child without suspicion, and the beautiful white slave disappeared from her sight forever. ... The rage of the man Davenport, so soon as the escape was known, was beyond bounds--and political and sectarian snobs, officials, and citizens, joined these mad ones in a chorus of indignation. Every man and horse was put in requisition to find the beautiful Harriet, who had so slyly and foolishly fled from happiness and duty. No afflicted King or Queen ever had more, or more genuine sympathizers among their subjects, than had Mr. and Mrs. Davenport on that occasion.

The tide of feeling took two directions - one to find the track of the girl, and hunt her down and plunge her into slavery; and the other to hunt out the villains who dared to put their abolition in practice in Syracuse, and subject them to the terrible penalties of slave laws. But it was vain. The white and black men managed this enterprise so prudently and bravely, that no trace of the one or the other could be scented by the blood hounds. ... No crime was ever committed in Syracuse that excited so much blistering and active indignation as this.

Expresses were sent to Oswego and in other directions, to had and capture the fugitive. The outrage was published through the press, then decidedly on the side of slavery; and the enraged slave-holder issued a circular, describing the person of Harriet, her ornaments and dresses, and offering a reward of $200 to whoever would return her to him, and $100 to any one who would inform of her whereabouts, that she might be captured.

The friends of liberty quietly but firmly pursued their course, notwithstanding the threats of their numerous and powerful opponents - who appeared before magistrates, and searched their houses, and disturbed their wives and children, to find the beautiful slave.

Harriet had enjoyed her asylum but a short time, ere her saviors learned that Davenport & Co., by means of some treachery not yet explained, were informed of her whereabouts. Happily, this information was given late at night, and the anti-Abolitionists determined early next morning to take and return her to slavery. Her liberators, however, were informed of the treachery the same night, and sent an express and ... carried her to Lebanon, Madison county, and concealed her with a friend.

The next morning, the agents of Davenport & Co. arrived at Mr. Shepard’s and demanded Harriet - not doubting she was in the house. Mr. Shepard made very strange of the matter, and so conducted that the agents, after searching the house, left for Syracuse - cursing the traitors, as they charged, who had humbugged them. The result was as it should be - the informer lost all credit for truth and honor, by all parties, - and what was worse than that in his esteem, he lost the one hundred dollars bribe which Davenport offered to quiet his conscience if he would assist in re-enslaving Harriet.
D. Reverend Henry Garnet of Troy Calls For Rebellion (1843)

From August 21 through 24, 1843, a National Negro Convention was held in Buffalo, New York. Over seventy delegates from a dozen states were present, Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Henry Highland Garnet. Garnet escaped to the North when he was eleven and graduated from Oneida Institute in 1840. The pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Troy, New York, he issued a call for slaves to revolt against their masters. His ideas were considered radical at the time because most abolitionists preferred using moral and economic arguments to challenge slavery and opposed violence. Source: Aptheker, H. (1973). A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, v. 1, 226-233.

A. How the African arrived in America

Two hundred and twenty-seven years ago, the first of our injured race were brought to the shores of America. They came not with glad spirits to select their homes in the New World. They came not with their own consent. The first dealings they had with men calling themselves Christians, exhibited to them the worst features of corrupt hearts, and convinced them that no cruelty is too great, no villainy and no robbery too abhorrent (horrible) for even enlightened men to perform, when influenced by avarice (greed) and lust. They came with broken hearts, from their beloved native land, and were doomed to unrequited (unending) toil and deep degradation (disgrace). Nor did the evil of their bondage end at their emancipation by death. Succeeding generations inherited their chains, and millions have come and have returned again to the world of spirits, cursed and ruined by American slavery.

B. Slavery is Defiance of God

To such degradation it is sinful in the extreme for you to make voluntary submission. The divine commandments you are in duty bound to reverence and obey. If you do not obey them, you will surely meet with the displeasure of the Almighty. He requires you to love him supremely, and your neighbor as yourself, to keep the Sabbath day holy, to search the Scriptures, and bring up your children with respect for His laws, and to worship no other God but Him. But slavery sets all these at nought, and hurls defiance in the face of Jehovah.

C. Resistance to bondage is justified

Brethren (brothers), it is as wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery, as it was for the man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors, when the bloody foot-prints of the first remorseless soul-thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland. The humblest peasant is as free in the sight of God as the proudest monarch. Liberty is a spirit sent out from God and is no respecter of persons.

Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been, you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are four millions!

D. Let your motto be resistance!

It is in your power so to torment the God-cursed slave-holders, that they will be glad to let you go free. If the scale was turned, and black men were the masters and white men the slaves, every destructive agent and element would be employed to lay the oppressor low. Danger and death would hang over their heads day and night. Yes, the tyrants would meet with plagues more terrible than those of Pharaoh. But you are a patient people. You act as though you were made for the special use of these devils. You act as though your daughters were born to pamper the lusts of your masters and overseers. And worse than all, you tamely submit while your lords tear your wives from your embraces and defile them before your eyes. In the name of God, we ask, are you men? Where is the blood of your fathers? Has it all run out of your veins? Awake, awake; millions of voices are calling you! Your dead fathers speak to you from their graves. Heaven, as with a voice of thunder, calls on you to arise from the dust.

Let your motto be resistance! resistance! resistance! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. Trust in the living God. Labor for the peace of the human race, and remember that you are four millions.
During the autumn of 1836, a slaveholder by the name of Bacon Tate, from the State of Tennessee, came to the north in search of fugitives from slavery. On his arrival at Buffalo he heard two of the most valuable of the slaves that he was in pursuit of were residing in St. Catharine’s, in Upper Canada, some twenty-five miles from Buffalo. Bacon Tate was a man who had long been engaged in the slave-trade, and previous to that had been employed as a Negro-driver. In these two situations he had gained the name of being the most complete “Negro-breaker” in that part of Tennessee where he resided. He was as unfeeling and as devoid of principle as a man could possibly be.

Stanford and his little family were as happily situated as fugitives can be, who make their escape to Canada in the cold season of the year. Tate, on his arrival at Buffalo, took lodgings at the Eagle Tavern, the best house at that time in the city. And here he began to lay his plans to catch and carry back into slavery those men and women who had undergone so much to get their freedom. He soon became acquainted with a colored woman, who was a servant in the hotel, and who was as unprincipled as himself. This woman was sent to St. Catharine’s, to spy out the situation of Stanford’s family. Under the pretense of wishing to get board in the family, and at the same time offering to pay a week’s board in advance, she was taken in. After remaining with them three or four days, the spy returned to Buffalo, and informed Tate how they were situated. By the liberal use of money, Tate soon found those who were willing to do his bidding. A carriage was hired, and four men employed to go with it to St. Catharine’s, and to secure their victims during the night.

The carriage, with the kidnappers, crossed the Niagara river at Black Rock, on Saturday evening, about seven o’clock, and went on its way towards St. Catharine’s; no one suspecting in the least that they were after fugitive slaves. About twelve o’clock that night they attacked Stanford’s dwelling by breaking in the door. They found the family asleep, and of course met with no obstacle.

The carriage re-crossed the river, at the same place, the next morning at sunrise, and proceeded to Buffalo, where it remained a short time, and after changing horses and leaving some of its company, it proceeded on its journey. The carriage being closely covered, no one had made the least discovery as to its contents. But some time during the morning, a man, who was neighbor to Stanford came on an errand, and finding the house deserted, and seeing the most of the family’s clothes lying on the floor and stains of blood, soon gave the alarm, and the neighbors started in every direction, to see if they could find the kidnappers. One man got on the track of the carriage, and followed it to the ferry at Black Rock, where he heard that it had crossed some three hours before. He went on to Buffalo, and gave the alarm to the colored people of that place. The colored people of Buffalo are noted for their promptness in giving aid to the fugitive slave. The alarm was given just as the bells were ringing for church. I was in company with five or six others, when I heard that a brother slave with his family had been seized and dragged from his home during the night previous. We started on a run for the livery-stable, where we found as many more of our own color trying to hire horses to go in search of the fugitives. There were two roads which the kidnappers could take, and we were at some loss to know which to take ourselves, and so divided our company, one half taking the road to Erie, the other taking the road leading to Hamburgh. I was among those who took the latter.

We traveled on at a rapid rate, until we came within half a mile of Hamburgh Corners, when we met a man on the side of the road on foot, who made signs to us to stop. We halted for a moment, when he informed us that the carriage that we were in pursuit of was at the public house. We proceeded to the tavern, where we found the carriage standing in front of the door, with a pair of fresh horses ready to proceed on their journey. The kidnappers, seeing us coming, took their victims into a room, and locked the door and fastened down the windows. We all dismounted, fastened our horses, and entered the house. We found four or five persons in the bar-room, who seemed to rejoice as we entered.

One of our company demanded the opening of the door, while others went out and surrounded the house. The kidnappers stationed one of their number at the door, and another at the window. They refused to let us enter the room, and the tavern-keeper, who was more favorable to us than we had anticipated, said to us, “Boys, get into the room in any way that you can; the house is mine, and I give you the liberty to break in through the door or window.” This was all that we wanted, and we were soon making preparations to enter the room at all hazards. One of our company, who had obtained a crow-bar, went to the window, and succeeded in getting it under the sash, and soon we had the window up, and the kidnappers, together with their victims, in full view. As soon as they saw that
we were determined to rescue the slaves at all hazards, they gave up, one of their number telling us that we might “come in.”

The door was thrown open, and we entered, and there found Stanford seated in one corner of the room, with his hands tied behind him, and his clothing, what little he had on, much stained with blood. Near him was his wife, with her child, but a few weeks old, in her arms. Neither of them had anything on except their night-clothes. They had both been gagged, to keep them from alarming the people, and had been much beaten and bruised when first attacked by the kidnappers. Their countenances lighted up the moment we entered the room. Most of those who made up our company were persons who had made their escape from slavery, and who knew its horrors from personal experience, and who had left relatives behind them. And we knew how to “feel for those in bonds as bound with them.”

After an hour and a half’s drive, we found ourselves in the city of Buffalo. The excitement which the alarm had created in the morning had broken up the meetings of the colored people for that day; and on our arrival in the city we were met by some forty or fifty colored persons. On our arrival in the city, we learned that the man who had charge of the carriage and fugitives when we caught up with them, returned to the city immediately after giving the slaves up to us, and had informed Tate of what had occurred. Tate immediately employed the sheriff and his posse to re-take the slaves. News soon come to us that the sheriff, with his under officers, together with some sixty or seventy men who were at work on the canal, intended to re-take the slaves when we should attempt to take them to the ferry to convey them to Canada.

About four we started for Black Rock ferry, which is about three miles below Buffalo. We had in our company some fifty or more able-bodied, resolute men, who were determined to stand by the slaves, and who had resolved, before they left the city, that if the sheriff and his men took the slaves, they should first pass over their dead bodies.

A mile below the city, the sheriff and his men surrounded us. The sheriff came forward, and read something purporting to be a “Riot Act,” and at the same time called upon all good citizens to aid him in keeping the “peace.” This was a trick of his, to get possession of the slaves. His men rushed upon us with their clubs and stones and a general fight ensued (started). Our company had surrounded the slaves, and had succeeded in keeping the sheriff and his men off. We fought, and at the same time kept pushing on towards the ferry.

In the midst of the fight, a little white man made his appearance among us, and proved to be a valuable friend. His name was Pepper; and he proved himself a pepper to the sheriff and his posse that day. He was a lawyer; and as the officers would arrest any of our company, he would step up and ask the officer if he had a “warrant to take that man;” and as none of them had warrants, and could not answer affirmatively, he would say to the colored man, “He has no right to take you; knock him down.” The command was no sooner given than the man would fall. If the one who had been arrested was not able to knock him down, some who were close by, and who were armed with a club or other weapon, would come to his assistance.

After a hard-fought battle, of nearly two hours, we arrived at the ferry, the slaves still in our possession. Here another battle was to be fought, before the slaves could reach Canada. The boat was fastened at each end by a chain, and in the scuffle for the ascendancy, one party took charge of one end of the boat, while the other took the other end. The blacks were commanding the ferryman to carry them over, while the whites were commanding him not to. While each party was contending for power, the slaves were pushed on board, and the boat shoved from the wharf. Many of the blacks jumped on board of the boat, while the whites jumped on shore. And the swift current of the Niagara soon carried them off, amid the shouts of the blacks, and the oaths and imprecations of the whites. We on shore swung our hats and gave cheers, just as a reinforcement came to the whites. Seeing the odds entirely against us in numbers, and having gained the great victory, we gave up without resistance, and suffered ourselves to be arrested by the sheriff’s posse.

On Monday, at ten o’clock, we were all carried before Justice Grosvenor; and of the forty who had been committed the evening before, twenty-five were held to bail to answer to a higher court. When the trials came on, we were fined more or less from five to fifty dollars each. Thus ended one of the most fearful fights for human freedom that I ever witnessed. The reader will observe that this conflict took place on the Sabbath, and that those who were foremost in getting it up were officers of justice. The plea of the sheriff and his posse was, that we were breaking the Sabbath by assembling in such large numbers to protect a brother slave and his wife and child from being dragged back into slavery, which is far worse than death itself.
AIM: Frederick Douglass: Should African Americans celebrate the Fourth of July?

BACKGROUND: Frederick Washington Bailey was born in Maryland in 1817. He was son of a White man and an enslaved African woman. As a boy he was taught to read in violation of state law. In 1838, he escaped to New York City where he married and changed his name to Frederick Douglass. William Lloyd Garrison arranged for Douglass to become an agent and lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1845 the society helped him publish his autobiography, The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. After the publication of his book, Douglass was afraid he might be recaptured by his former owner, so he travelled to Britain and Ireland where he lectured on slavery. He returned to New York after the purchase of his freedom and established an abolitionist newspaper in Rochester, New York. Frederick Douglass started out a strong ally of William Lloyd Garrison and his newspaper The Liberator. However Douglass’ views and those of Garrison diverged. Garrison rejected the United States Constitution as a pro-slavery document. Douglass came to oppose the dissolution of the union and believed that the constitution in its “letter and spirit” was “an anti-slavery instrument.” Despite this position, Frederick Douglass delivered a Fourth of July speech in in 1852 in Rochester where he demanded to know, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” During the Civil War, Frederick Douglass, a Radical Republican, tried to persuade President Abraham Lincoln that former slaves should be allowed to join the Union Army. After the war, he campaigned for full civil rights for former slaves and was a strong supporter of women’s suffrage. He also held several government positions including marshall of the District of Columbia (1877-1881) and U.S. minister to Haiti (1889-1891). Frederick Douglass died in 1895 and was buried in Rochester, New York.

DO NOW: Read the biography of Frederick Douglass.

MOTIVATION: Every Fourth of July, we gather with our friends and families to have a party, watch fireworks, wave our flags and celebrate the fact that we are a free country. Imagine you were once enslaved. Would you be able to appreciate a day that celebrates freedom for all?

ACTIVITIES: Read and discuss the life and ideas of Frederick Douglass. This can be done either as a full class or with groups of students reading and reporting on different passages. The entire class should read the final passage on the Fourth of July and answer and discuss the following questions.
What is the tone of Douglass’ speech? Do you think he is festive?
Why does Douglass believe that he is not included in this glorious anniversary?
Why do you Douglass mourn on the Fourth of July?
Do you think this speech caused controversy? Explain.

SUMMARY QUESTION: Was Frederick Douglass justified in thinking that African Americans should not participate in the Fourth of July?

Lesson developed by Anne Marie Calitri
A. Frederick Douglass, African American Freedom Fighter

Source: http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASdouglass.htm

Frederick Washington Bailey was born in Maryland in 1817. He was son of a White man and an enslaved African woman. As a boy he was taught to read in violation of state law. In 1838, he escaped to New York City where he married and changed his name to Frederick Douglass. William Lloyd Garrison arranged for Douglass to become an agent and lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1845 the society helped him publish his autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. After the publication of his book, Douglass was afraid he might be recaptured by his former owner, so he travelled to Britain and Ireland where he lectured on slavery. He returned to New York after the purchase of his freedom and established an abolitionist newspaper in Rochester, New York. Frederick Douglass started out a strong ally of William Lloyd Garrison and his newspaper *The Liberator*. However Douglass’ views and those of Garrison diverged. Garrison rejected the United States Constitution as a pro-slavery document. Douglass came to oppose the dissolution of the union and believed that the constitution in its “letter and spirit” was “an anti-slavery instrument.” Despite this position, Frederick Douglass delivered a Fourth of July speech in 1852 in Rochester where he demanded to know “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” During the Civil War, Frederick Douglass, a Radical Republican, tried to persuade President Abraham Lincoln that former slaves should be allowed to join the Union Army. After the war, he campaigned for full civil rights for former slaves and was a strong supporter of women’s suffrage. He also held several government positions including marshall of the District of Columbia (1877-1881) and U.S. minister to Haiti (1889-1891). Frederick Douglass died in 1895 and was buried in Rochester, New York.

B. Frederick Douglass Discusses Slavery (1850)


“More than twenty years of my life were consumed in a state of slavery. My childhood was environed by the baneful peculiarities of the slave system. I grew up to manhood in the presence of this hydra-headed monster—not as an idle spectator—not as the guest of the slaveholder; but as a slave, eating the bread and drinking the cup of slavery with the most degraded of my brother bondmen, and sharing with them all the painful conditions of their wretched lot. In consideration of these facts, I feel that I have a right to speak, and to speak *strongly*. . . . A master is one (to speak in the vocabulary of the Southern States) who claims and exercises a right of property in the person of a fellow man. This he does with the force of the law and the sanction of Southern religion. The law gives the master absolute power over the slave. He may work him, flog him, hire him out, sell him, and in certain contingencies, *kill* him, with perfect impunity. The slave is a human being, divested of all rights-reduced to the level of a brute—a mere "chattel" in the eye of the law-placed beyond the circle of human brotherhood—cut off from his kind—name, which the "recording angel" may have enrolled in heaven, among the blest, is impiously inserted in a *masters ledger*, with horses, sheep and swine. In law, the slave has no wife, no children, no country, and no home. He can own nothing, possess nothing, acquire nothing, but what must belong to another. To eat the fruit of his own toil, to clothe his person with the work of his own hands, is considered stealing. He toils that another may reap the fruit; he is industrious that another may live in idleness; he eats unbolted meal, that another may ride in ease and splendor abroad; he lives in ignorance, that another may be educated; he is abused, that another may be exalted; he rests his toil-worn limbs on the cold, damp ground, that another may repose on the softest pillow; he is sheltered only by the wretched hovel, that a master may dwell in a magnificent mansion; and to this condition he is bound down as by an arm of iron.”

C. Opening Editorial from Frederick Douglass’s North Star (1847)


“We solemnly dedicate the ‘North Star’ to the cause of our long oppressed and plundered fellow countrymen. May God bless the undertaking to your good. It shall fearlessly assert your rights, faithfully proclaim your wrongs, and earnestly demand for you instant and even-handed justice. Giving no quarter to slavery at the South, it will hold no truce with oppressors at the North. While it shall boldly advocate emancipation for our enslaved brethren, it will omit no opportunity to gain for the nominally free complete enfranchisement. Every effort to injure or degrade you or your cause . . . shall find in it a constant, unswerving and inflexible foe. . . . “
D. Life and Work in Rochester, New York

Source: Life And Times Of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself.

“[T]here were moral forces operating against me in Rochester, as well as material ones. There were those who regarded the publication of a “Negro paper” in that beautiful city as a blemish and a misfortune. The New York Herald, . . . counselled the people of the place to throw my printing press into Lake Ontario and to banish me to Canada, and while they were not quite prepared for this violence, it was plain that many of them did not well relish my presence amongst them. This feeling, however, wore away gradually, as the people knew more of me and my works. I lectured every Sunday evening during an entire winter in the beautiful Corinthian Hall, then owned by Wm. R. Reynolds, Esq., who though he was not an abolitionist, was a lover of fair-play and was willing to allow me to be heard. If in these lectures I did not make abolitionists I did succeed in making tolerant the moral atmosphere in Rochester. . . . I did not rely alone upon what I could do by the paper, but would write all day, then take a train to Victor, Farmington, Canandaigua, Geneva, Waterloo, Batavia, or Buffalo, or elsewhere, and speak in the evening, returning home afterwards or early in the morning, to be again at my desk writing or mailing papers.”

E. Station Master on the Underground Railroad

Source: Life And Times Of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself.

“[A]s the editor of an anti-slavery paper, naturally made me the station master and conductor of the underground railroad passing through this goodly city. . . . I could take no step in it without exposing myself to fine and imprisonment, for these were the penalties imposed by the fugitive slave law, for feeding, harboring, or otherwise assisting a slave to escape from his master. . . . True as a means of destroying slavery, it was like an attempt to bail out the ocean with a teaspoon, but the thought that there was one less slave, and one more freeman,—having myself been a slave, and a fugitive slave - brought to my heart unspeakable joy. On one occasion I had eleven fugitives at the same time under my roof, and it was necessary for them to remain with me, until I could collect sufficient money to get them on to Canada. It was the largest number I ever had at any one time, and I had some difficulty in providing so many with food and shelter, but as may well be imagined, they were not very fastidious in either direction, and were well content with very plain food, and a strip of carpet on the floor for a bed, or a place on the straw in the barn loft.”

F. Frederick Douglass Discusses the Fourth of July (1852)


“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?. . . 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 [given] by your fathers is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of 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 today?

Fellow citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are today rendered more intolerable by the jubilant shouts that reach them. . . . To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then, fellow citizens, is ‘American Slavery.’ I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave’s point of view...conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July.

What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all other days of 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. . . . There is not a nation of the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of these United States at this very hour.”
AIM: Harriet Jacobs: How did one African American woman struggle to be free?

BACKGROUND: Harriet Jacobs was one of many slaves who ran away from their masters to gain freedom in the north. Harriet Jacobs wrote an autobiography about her life and the abuse she endured by her master. Many people opposed Jacobs book because of the content it dealt with. For a long period of time, no one ever discussed the issue of abuse done to the slaves. Harriet Jacobs wrote the book to make it known of dangers faced by enslaved African women in the south. Harriet was born in North Carolina in 1813. She was a mulatto, her mother was black and her father was a white slaveholder. In 1825 Harriet Jacobs was sold to Dr. James Norcom, who was sexually abusive toward Jacobs. The harassment by Dr. Norcom still continued till she escaped in 1834. Jacobs could no longer endure the sexual harassment she faced by Dr. Norcom, so Jacobs fled. She hid in her grandmother’s attic for seven years until it became too dangerous for her to stay there. Harriet escaped to Philadelphia then to New York where she found employment as a nursemaid. During the Civil War Harriet worked as a nurse in Virginia. Harriet Jacobs’s story is one of success. She was eventually freed from slavery and re-united with her children. She was one of the fortunate ones, but there are so many more who were eventually captured and returned to their masters. This is one of the reasons why it is important to understand the struggles of enslaved Africans had to endure to gain freedom. In this lesson, students will use primary sources to examine the life of Harriet Jacobs. Students will read excerpts from her autobiography that details her treatment in slavery. Students will also look at her runaway poster and a letter she wrote to the tribune. The best way for students to understand what it was like to be an enslaved African it to read primary sources from someone who experienced it firsthand.

DO NOW: Examine the wanted poster seeking the capture and return of Harriet Jacobs.

MOTIVATION: If you were born enslaved, would you have risked your life to run away? Explain.

ACTIVITIES:
Students will then read excerpts from Harriet Jacob’s autobiography. Students should answer questions that follow each excerpt. Students should display understanding of what it was like to be an enslaved African.

HOMEWORK: Students will write a journal essay about being an enslaved African in 1850’s. The students should use Harriet Jacob’s autobiography as a reference. Students should also research the topic using the Internet; they should locate other slave narratives and autobiographies. There should be at least four journal entries.

Lesson developed by Hanae Okita
A. Harriet Jacobs’ Runaway Slave Notice

Source: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h1541b.html

Questions
1. According to this notice, who is Harriet Jacobs?
2. How is she described in the notice?
3. What will be paid to the person who arranges for her capture and return to the South?
4. According to the notice, Harriet Jacob absconded from a plantation in the south “without any known cause or provocation.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.
B. Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861)

Source: http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/SJacobs.htm; docsouth.unc.edu, p. 265-275

Harriet Jacobs was born enslaved in North Carolina in 1813. After hiding in an attic for seven years, she escaped to the north by boat in 1842. She published her memoir in 1861 using the pseudonym Linda Brent. In section 1 she describes her family and childhood in the South. In section 2 she discusses her experience with racial prejudice while working as the nursemaid for a White child in New York. In section 3 she describes fleeing New York for Boston once she was identified as an escaped slave. Read the excerpts and answer the questions.

1. Family and Childhood in the South

A. I was born a slave; but I never knew it till six years of happy childhood had passed away. . . . In complexion my parents were a light shade of brownish yellow, and were termed mulattoes. They lived together in a comfortable home; and, though we were all slaves, I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to them for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment

B. On one of these sale days, I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction-block. She knew that some of them would be taken from her; but they took all. The children were sold to a slave-trader, and their mother was bought by a man in her own town. Before night her children were all far away. She begged the trader to tell her where he intended to take them; this he refused to do. How could he, when he knew he would sell them, one by one, wherever he could command the highest price? I met that mother in the street, and her wild, haggard face lives to-day in my mind. She wrung her hands in anguish, and exclaimed, “Gone! All gone! Why don’t God kill me?” I had no words wherewith to comfort her. Instances of this kind are of daily, yea, of hourly occurrence.

C. When they visit the north, and return home, they tell their slaves of the runaways they have seen, and describe them to be in the most deplorable condition. A slaveholder once told me that he had seen a runaway friend of mine in New York, and that she besought him to take her back to her master, for she was literally dying of starvation; that many days she had only one cold potato to eat, and at other times could get nothing at all. He said he refused to take her, because he knew her master would not thank him for bringing such a miserable wretch to his house. He ended by saying to me, “This is the punishment she brought on herself for running away from a kind master.” Many of the slaves believe such stories, and think it is not worthwhile to exchange slavery for such a hard kind of freedom.

D. We were placed in a row-boat, and in about fifteen minutes were landed on a wood wharf in Philadelphia. As I stood looking round, the friendly captain touched me on the shoulder, and said, “There is a respectable-looking colored man behind you. I will speak to him about the New York trains, and tell him you wish to go directly on.” I thanked him, and asked him to direct me to some shops where I could buy gloves and veils. He did so, and said he would talk with the colored man till I returned. I made what haste I could. Constant exercise on board the vessel, and frequent rubbing with salt water, had nearly restored the use of my limbs. The noise of the great city confused me, but I found the shops, and bought some double veils and gloves for Fanny and myself. I made my way back to the wharf, where the captain introduced me to the colored man, as the Rev. Jeremiah Durham, minister of Bethel church. He took me by the hand, as if I had been an old friend. He told us we were too late for the morning cars to New York, and must wait until the evening, or the next morning. He invited me to go home with him, assuring me that his wife would give me a cordial welcome; and for my friend he would provide a home with one of his neighbors. I thanked him for so much kindness to strangers, and told him if I must be detained, I should like to hunt up some people who formerly went from our part of the country. Mr. Durham insisted that I should dine with him, and then he would assist me in finding my friends. The sailors came to bid us good by. I shook their hardy hands, with tears in my eyes. They had all been kind to us, and they had rendered us a greater service than they could possibly conceive of.

Questions
1. What was Jacob’s childhood like? Describe the incident with the mother at the auction-block.
2. Does Harriet seem immune to the incident that occurred? Explain.
3. What story did masters tell their slaves to deter them from running away?
4. Did many slaves runaway after hearing stories like this?
5. Describe Jacob’s journey to New York? Who helped Jacob’s to New York and how?
2. Racial Prejudice in New York

A. We went to Albany in the steamboat Knickerbocker. When the gong sounded for tea, Mrs. Bruce said, “Linda, it is late, and you and baby had better come to the table with me.” I replied, “I know it is time baby had her supper, but I had rather not go with you, if you please. I am afraid of being insulted.” “O no, not if you are with me,” she said. I saw several white nurses go with their ladies, and I ventured to do the same. We were at the extreme end of the table. I was no sooner seated, than a gruff voice said, “Get up! You know you are not allowed to sit here.” I looked up, and, to my astonishment and indignation, saw that the speaker was a colored man. If his office required him to enforce the by-laws of the boat, he might, at least, have done it politely. I replied, “I shall not get up, unless the captain comes and takes me up.” No cup of tea was offered me, but Mrs. Bruce handed me hers and called for another. I looked to see whether the other nurses were treated in a similar manner. They were all properly waited on. Next morning, when we stopped at Troy for breakfast, every body was making a rush for the table. Mrs. Bruce said, “Take my arm, Linda, and we’ll go in together.” The landlord heard her, and said, “Madam, will you allow your nurse and baby to take breakfast with my family?” I knew this was to be attributed to my complexion; but he spoke courteously, and therefore I did not mind it. At Saratoga we found the United States Hotel crowded, and Mr. Bruce took one of the cottages belonging to the hotel. I had thought, with gladness, of going to the quiet of the country, where I should meet few people, but here I found myself in the midst of a swarm of Southerners. I looked round me with fear and trembling, dreading to see some one who would recognize me. I was rejoiced to find that we were to stay but a short time.

B. We soon returned to New York, to make arrangements for spending the remainder of the summer at Rockaway. While the laundress was putting the clothes in order, I took an opportunity to go over to Brooklyn to see Ellen. I met her going to a grocery store, and the first words she said, were, “O, mother, don’t go to Mrs. Hobbs’s. Her brother, Mr. Thorne, has come from the south, and may be he’ll tell where you are.” I accepted the warning. I told her I was going away with Mrs. Bruce the next day, and would try to see her when I came back.

C. Being in servitude to the Anglo-Saxon race, I was not put into a “Jim Crow car,” on our way to Rockaway, neither was I invited to ride through the streets on the top of trunks in a truck; but every where I found the same manifestations of that cruel prejudice, which so discourages the feelings, and represses the energies of the colored people. We reached Rockaway before dark, and put up at the Pavilion - a large hotel, beautifully situated by the sea-side - a great resort of the fashionable world. Thirty or forty nurses were there, of a great variety of nations. Some of the ladies had colored waiting-maids and coachmen, but I was the only nurse tinged with the blood of Africa. When the tea bell rang, I took little Mary and followed the other nurses. Supper was served in a long hall. A young man, who had the ordering of things, took the circuit of the table two or three times, and finally pointed me to a seat at the lower end of it. As there was but one chair, I sat down and took the child in my lap. Whereupon the young man came to me and said, in the blandest manner possible, “Will you please seat the little girl in the chair, and stand behind it and feed her? After they have done, you will be shown to the kitchen, where you will have a good supper.”

D. This was the climax! I found it hard to preserve my self-control, when I looked round, and saw women who were nurses, as I was, and only one shade lighter in complexion, eyeing me with a defiant look, as if my presence were a contamination. However, I said nothing. I quietly took the child in my arms, went to our room, and refused to go to the table again. Mr. Bruce ordered meals to be sent to the room for little Mary and I. This answered for a few days; but the waiters of the establishment were white, and they soon began to complain, saying they were not hired to wait on negroes. The landlord requested Mr. Bruce to send me down to my meals, because his servants rebelled against bringing them up, and the colored servants of other boarders were dissatisfied because all were not treated alike.

Questions
1. What was life like for an African American woman in the north?
2. If you were Harriet Jacobs, how would you have reacted to this situation? Why?
3. Fleeing New York to Escape Capture

A. The contents of Mr. Thorne’s letter, as nearly as I can remember, were as follows: “I have seen your slave, Linda, and conversed with her. She can be taken very easily, if you manage prudently. There are enough of us here to swear to her identity as your property. I am a patriot, a lover of my country, and I do this as an act of justice to the laws.” . . . .

B. It was evident that I had no time to lose; and I hastened back to the city with a heavy heart. Again I was to be torn from a comfortable home, and all my plans for the welfare of my children were to be frustrated by that demon Slavery! I now regretted that I never told Mrs. Bruce my story. I had not concealed it merely on account of being a fugitive; that would have made her anxious, but it would have excited sympathy in her kind heart. I valued her good opinion, and I was afraid of losing it, if I told her all the particulars of my sad story. But now I felt that it was necessary for her to know how I was situated. I had once left her abruptly, without explaining the reason, and it would not be proper to do it again. I went home resolved to tell her in the morning. But the sadness of my face attracted her attention, and, in answer to her kind inquiries, I poured out my full heart to her, before bed time. She listened with true womanly sympathy, and told me she would do all she could to protect me. How my heart blessed her!

C. Early the next morning, Judge Vanderpool and Lawyer Hopper were consulted. They said I had better leave the city at once, as the risk would be great if the case came to trial. Mrs. Bruce took me in a carriage to the house of one of her friends, where she assured me I should be safe until my brother could arrive, which would be in a few days. . . .

D. My brother reached New York on Wednesday. Lawyer Hopper advised us to go to Boston by the Stonington route, as there was less Southern travel in that direction. Mrs. Bruce directed her servants to tell all inquirers that I formerly lived there, but had gone from the city. We reached the steamboat Rhode Island in safety. That boat employed colored hands, but I knew that colored passengers were not admitted to the cabin. I was very desirous for the seclusion of the cabin, not only on account of exposure to the night air, but also to avoid observation. Lawyer Hopper was waiting on board for us. He spoke to the stewardess, and asked, as a particular favor, that she would treat us well. He said to me, “Go and speak to the captain yourself by and by. Take your little girl with you, and I am sure that he will not let her sleep on deck.” With these kind words and a shake of the hand he departed.

E. The boat was soon on her way, bearing me rapidly from the friendly home where I had hoped to find security and rest. My brother had left me to purchase the tickets, thinking that I might have better success than he would. When the stewardess came to me, I paid what she asked, and she gave me three tickets with clipped corners. In the most unsophisticated manner I said, “You have made a mistake; I asked you for cabin tickets. I cannot possibly consent to sleep on deck with my little daughter.” She assured me there was no mistake. She said on some of the routes colored people were allowed to sleep in the cabin, but not on this route, which was much travelled by the wealthy. I asked her to show me to the captain’s office, and she said she would after tea. When the time came, I took Ellen by the hand and went to the captain, politely requesting him to change our tickets, as we should be very uncomfortable on deck. He said it was contrary to their custom, but he would see that we had berths below. . . . I was very much surprised at receiving so much kindness. I don’t know whether the pleasing, face of my little girl had won his heart, or whether the stewardess inferred from Lawyer Hopper’s manner that I was a fugitive, and had pleaded with him in my behalf.

F. When the boat arrived at Stonington, the conductor kept his promise, and showed us to seats in the first car, nearest the engine. He asked us to take seats next the door, but as he passed through, we ventured to move on toward the other end of the car. No incivility was offered us, and we reached Boston in safety. The day after my arrival was one of the happiest of my life. I felt as if I was beyond the reach of the bloodhounds; and, for the first time during many years, I had both my children together with me.

Questions
1. Why did Harriet Jacobs go to Boston?
2. How did she get there?
3. Why was her arrival in Boston such a relief?
Aim: How did African American New Yorkers fight for civil rights in the 1850s?

Background: The term Civil Rights Movement is often used referring to the time period in the 1950s and 60s. However, the origins of the movement can be traced back far further than that. A century earlier, in the 1850s, African Americans had already begun the struggle for equality. In the first part of this section, students learn about efforts by Thomas Jennings and Rev. James Pennington to integrate the New York City streetcar system, Frederick Douglass’ challenge to school segregation in Rochester, New York, and opposition to Governor Hunt’s proposal that state money be appropriated to the American Colonization Society. We often remember Rosa Parks for her bravery, we rarely mention those like Elizabeth Jennings, who did nearly the same thing, only earlier. The second activity focuses on Ms. Jennings role in the struggle for civil rights.

DO NOW: Read A1. Reverend Pennington’s Resistance to Streetcar Segregation (1856)

MOTIVATION: How is the story of Rosa Parks similar to the story of Rev. James Pennington? Today we will learn about a number of African American citizens of New York State who challenged racial segregation before the American Civil War, over 100 years before Rosa Parks made her protest.

ACTIVITIES: Complete and discuss Activity Sheet A. African American New Yorkers Fight for Civil Rights in the 1850s. Read and discuss Activity Sheet B. Elizabeth Jennings, 19th Century New York’s Rosa Parks.

Summary: Why did African American New Yorkers have to fight for civil rights in the 1850s?

APPLICATION: Students will select a current civil rights controversy, conduct research on the issue and propose a possible solution.

Lesson developed by Ron Widelec
A. African American New Yorkers Fight for Civil Rights in the 1850s
How did each of these individuals challenge racial prejudice and discrimination in 19th century New York?

1. Reverend James Pennington’s Resistance to Streetcar Segregation (1856)
   In the 1850s, New York City’s horse-drawn street cars were racially segregated. An article in the New York Daily Tribune on December 19, 1856 a protest against this policy on the Sixth Avenue line. “[A]s the doctor took his seat on the right side of the car, the [white] passengers near him rose up and left a vacant space on both sides of him for three or four seats. A number of the passengers went to the conductor and requested him to turn Dr. P. out.
   … He was approached and asked civilly to take a seat on the front platform, as that was the regulation on the road. He declined, but the conductor insisted on his leaving his seat to which he replied that he would maintain his rights.
   … The conductor then asked the driver to stop the car, and remove the doctor. He stopped, took Dr. P. in his arms, embraced him, and carried I him backward through the car, the doctor apparently making all the resistance in his power. He was, however, forced through the car, over the platform and into the street, near the sidewalk. . . .”

2. Frederick Douglass Describes the Life of Thomas L. Jennings (1859)
   “Mr. Jennings was a native of New York, and in his early youth was one of the bold men of color who, in this then slave State, paraded the streets of the metropolis with a banner inscribed with the figure of a black man, and the words, ‘Am I Not A Man And A Brother?’ He was one of the colored volunteers who aided in digging trenches on Long Island in the war of 1812. He took a leading part in the celebration of the abolition of slavery in New York in 1827. . . . He was one of the originators of the Legal Rights’ Association in New York city, and President thereof at the time of his death. His suit against the Third Avenue Railroad Company for ejecting his daughter from one of its cars on Sabbath day, led to the abolition of caste in cars in four out of the five city railroads. He was one of the founders, and during many years a trustee of the Abyssinian Baptist Church.”

3. Rev. James W. C. Pennington Denounce Colonization in Albany Speech (1852)
   Source: The Liberator. March 5, 1852.
   In January, 1852, Governor Hunt of New York proposed that money be appropriated to the American Colonization Society. The Rev. James W. C. Pennington issued a vigorous protest at in Albany’s City Hall. “Of the colored population of this State, there are not fifty persons, all told, who desire to emigrate to Africa. . . . We protest against such appropriation, because the American Colonization Society is a gigantic fraud. . . . a moulder of, and a profiter by a diseased public opinion, it keeps alive an army of agents who live by plundering us of our good name. . . . We protest against this appropriation, because we remember those that are in bonds as bound with them; bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, may evil betide us when the hope of gain, or the fear of oppression, shall compel or persuade us to forsake them to the rayless gloom of perpetual slavery.”

4. Frederick Douglass Denounces Racial Discrimination in Rochester (1848)
   In a letter from Frederick Douglass to Horatio G. Warner, the editor of The Rochester Courier, Douglass denounced discrimination against his nine-year-old daughter because of her race. Warner was responsible for preventing Douglass’ daughter from attending a local school. “Now sir, these are the whole facts, with one important exception, and that fact is, that you are the person, the only person of all the parents sending young ladies and misses to that Seminary, who was hardened and mean enough to take the responsibility of excluding that child from school. I say, to you exclusively belongs the honor or infamy, of attempting to degrade an innocent child by excluding her from the benefit of attending a respectable school. . . . Now I should like to know how much better are you than me, and how much better your children than mine? We are both worms of the dust, and our children are like us. We differ in color, it is true, . . . but who is to decide which color is most pleasing to God, or most honorable among men?”
B. Elizabeth Jennings, 19th Century New York’s Rosa Parks

Source: Social Science Docket, v 3, n. 1, p. 77.

On July 14, 1854, Elizabeth Jennings and her friend, Sarah Adams, walked to the corner of Pearl and Chatham streets in lower Manhattan. They planned to take a horse-drawn street car along Third Avenue to church. Instead, they entered into the pages of history. Elizabeth was a young African American woman who taught black children in New York City’s racially segregated public schools. Her father Thomas L. Jennings was a leading local abolitionist. An account of what happened to Elizabeth was presented on July 17 at a protest meeting at the First Colored Congregational Church in New York City. Elizabeth wrote the statement but did not speak because she was recovering from injuries. The group passed resolutions protesting what happened to Elizabeth and sent copies to the New York Tribune and Frederick Douglass’ Paper.

At the meeting at the First Colored Congregational Church, a Black Legal Rights Association was formed to investigate possible legal action. Elizabeth Jennings decided to sue the street car company. She was represented in court by a young white attorney named Chester A. Arthur, who later became a military officer during the Civil War and a politician. In 1880, Chester A. Arthur was elected Vice-President of the United States and he became president when James Garfield was murdered in 1881.

The court case was successful. The judge instructed the jury that transit companies had to respect the rights all respectable people and the jury awarded Elizabeth Jennings money for damages. While she had asked for $500 in her complaint, some members of the jury resisted granting such a large amount because she was “colored.” In the end, Elizabeth Jennings received $225 plus an additional ten percent for legal expenses. As a result of the legal protest by Elizabeth and Thomas Jennings and their legal victory, the Third Avenue Railroad Company issued an order to permit African Americans to ride on their cars.


   I [Elizabeth Jennings] held up my hand to the driver and he stopped the cars. We got on the platform, when the conductor told us to wait for the next car. I told him I could not wait, as I was in a hurry to go to church. He then told me that the other car had my people in it, that it was appropriated [intended] for that purpose. I then told him I wished to go to church, as I had been going for the last six months, and I did not wish to be detained. He insisted upon my getting off the car, but I did not get off. He waited some few minutes, when the driver, becoming impatient, said to me, “Well, you may go in, but remember, if the passengers raise any objections you shall go out, whether or no, or I’ll put you out.” I told him I was a respectable person, born and raised in New York, that I had never been insulted before while going to church, and that he was a good for nothing impudent [rude] fellow for insulting decent persons while on their way to church. He then said he would put me out. I told him not to lay his hands on me. I took hold of the window sash and held on. He pulled me until he broke my grasp and I took hold of his coat and held onto that. He ordered the driver to fasten his horses, which he did, and come and help him put me out of the car. They then both seized hold of me by the arms and pulled and dragged me flat down on the bottom of the platform, so that my feet hung one way and my head the other, nearly on the ground. I screamed murder with all my voice, and my companion screamed out “you’ll kill her. Don’t kill her.”

   The driver then let go of me and went to his horses. I went again in the car, and the conductor said you shall sweat for this; then told the driver to drive as fast as he could and not to take another passenger in the car; to drive until he saw an officer or a Station House. They got an officer on the corner of Walker and Bowery, whom the conductor told that his orders from the agent were to admit colored persons if the passengers did not object, but if they did, not to let them ride. When the officer took me there were some eight or ten persons in the car. Then the officer, without listening to anything I had to say, thrust me out, and then pushed me, and tauntingly told me to get redress [damages] if I could.

Questions
1. What did the street car conductor say to Elizabeth Jennings? Why?
2. What did Elizabeth Jennings decide to do?
3. What happened to Elizabeth Jennings?
4. What would you have done if you were Elizabeth Jennings? Why?
2. Resolutions unanimously adopted at the First Colored Congregational Church

Resolved, That we regard such conduct as intolerant, in a civil and religious point of view, and that it calls for the reprehension (blame) of the respectable portion of the community. Resolved, That there be a committee of five appointed to ascertain (learn) all the facts in the case, and if possible bring the whole affair before the legal authorities; and that we demand at the hands of the proprietors (owners), as colored citizens, the equal right to the accommodation of “transit” in the cars, so long as we possess the regular qualifications. Resolved, That the above resolutions be forwarded and printed in The New York Tribune and Frederick Douglass’s paper.

Questions
1. How did members of this church react to news that Elizabeth Jennings was thrown off of a street car?
2. What action did church members decide to take?
3. What do we learn about the African American community from this resolution?


The case of Elizabeth Jennings vs. the Third Ave. Railroad Company, was tried yesterday in the Brooklyn circuit, before Judge Rockwell. The plaintiff is a colored lady, a teacher in one of the public schools, and the organist in one of the churches in this City. She got upon one of the Company’s cars last summer, on the Sabbath, to ride to church. The conductor finally undertook to get her off, first alleging the car was full, and when that was shown to be false, he pretended the other passengers were displeased at her presence.

She saw nothing of that, and insisted on her rights. He took hold of her by force to expel her. She resisted, they got her down on the platform, jammed her bonnet, soiled her dress, and injured her person. Quite a crowd gathered around, but she effectually [effectively] resisted, and they were not able to get her off. Finally, after the car had gone on further, they got the aid of a policeman, and succeeded in getting her from the car.

Judge Rockwell gave a very clear and able charge, instructing the Jury that the Company were liable for the acts of their agents, whether committed carelessly and negligently, or willfully and maliciously. That they were common carriers, and as such bound to carry all respectable persons; that colored person, if sober, well-behaved, and free from disease, had the same rights as others; and could neither be excluded by any rules of the Company, nor by force or violence; and in case of such expulsion or exclusion, the Company was liable.

The plaintiff claimed $500 in her complaint, and a majority of the Jury were for giving her the full amount; but others maintained some peculiar notions as to colored people’s rights, and they finally agreed on $225, on which the Court added ten per cent, besides the costs.

Railroads, steamboats, omnibuses, and ferry boats will be admonished (instructed) from this, as to the rights of respectable colored people. It is high time the rights of this class of citizens were ascertained (respected), and that it should be known whether they are to be thrust from our public conveyances (vehicles), while German or Irish women, with a quarter of mutton (lamb) or a load of codfish, can be admitted.

Questions
1. What event is reported on in this news article?
2. What did Judge Rockwell instruct (tell) the jury?
3. What was the outcome?

4. “Legal Rights Vindicated,” Frederick Douglass’ Paper, March 2, 1855, 2:5

Our readers will rejoice with us in the righteous verdict. Miss Elizabeth Jennings, whose courageous conduct in the premises is beyond all praise, comes of a good old New York stock. Her grandfather, Jacob Cartwright, a native African, was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, and took active part in city politics until the time of his death in 1824; her father, Mr. Thomas L. Jennings, was mentioned in our paper as having delivered an oration on the Emancipation of the slaves in this State in 1827, and he was a founder of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief and of other institutions for the benefit and elevation of the colored people.

Questions
1. What do we learn about Elizabeth Jennings’ family from this article?
2. What does the Frederick Douglass’ Paper think of the verdict?