



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > The Founding Period and Slavery > The Paradox of Slavery in the Revolutionary War Period

Prince Hall And Other African Americans: A Petition to the Massachusetts Legislature, January 13, 1777

To the Honorable Counsel & House of Representatives for the State of Massachusitte Bay in General Court assembled, Jan. 13, 1777.

The petition of A Great Number of Blackes detained in a State of slavery in the Bowels of a free & Christian Country Humbly shuwith that your Petitioners apprehend that they have in Common with all other men a Natural and Unaliable Right to that freedom which the Great Parent of the Unavers hath Bestowed equalley on all menkind and which they have Never forfuted by any Compact or agreement whatever—but that thay were Unjustly Dragged by the hand of cruel Power from their Derest friends and sum of them Even torn from the Embraces of their tender Parents—from A popolous, Pleasant and plentiful contry and in violation of Laws of Nature and of Nations and in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity Brought hear Either to Be sold Like Beasts of Burthen & Like them Condemnd to Slavery for Life—Among A People Professing the mild Religion of Jesus A people Not Insensible of the Secrets of Rationable Being Nor without spirit to Resent the unjust endeavours of others to Reduce them to a state of Bondage and Subjection. Your honouer Need not to be informed that A Life of Slavery Like that of your petitioners Deprived of Every social privilege of Every thing Requiset to Render Life Tolable is far worse then Nonexistence.

In imitation of the Lawdable Example of the Good People of these States your petitioners have Long and Patiently waited the Event of petition after petition By them presented to the Legislative Body of this state and cannot but with Grief Reflect that their Sucess hath ben but too similar. They Cannot but express their Astonishment that It has Never Bin Consirdered that Every Principle from which Amarica has Acted in the Course of their unhappy Deficultes with Great Briton Pleads Stronger than A thousand arguments in favowrs of your petitioners. They therfor humbly Beseech your honours to give this petition its due weight & consideration and cause an act of the Legislatur to be past Wherby they may Be Restored to the Enjoyments of that which is the Naturel Right of all men—and their Children who were Born in this Land of Liberty may not be heald as Slaves after they arive at the age of Twenty one years so may the Inhabitance of thes States [be] No longer chargeable with the inconsistancy of acting themselves the part which they condem and oppose in others Be prospered in their present Glorious struggle for Liberty and have those Blessing to them, &c.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski, ed., *A Necessary Evil?*, Constitutional Heritage Series, Vol. II (Madison House, Madison, Wis. 1995), 11–12.