



## The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

#### Reading Set A: Views of the founders on slavery

**Directions:** Read the following documents and complete the questions on the worksheet.

Thomas Jefferson, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774)

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jeffsumm.htm>

For the most trifling reasons, and sometimes for no conceivable reason at all, his majesty [King George III] has rejected laws of the most salutary tendency. The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have, it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa; yet our repeated attempts to effect this by prohibitions, and by imposing duties which might amount to a prohibition, have been hitherto defeated by his majesty’s negative: Thus preferring the immediate advantages of a few African corsairs to the lasting interests of the American states, and to the rights of human nature, deeply wounded by this infamous practice...

Thomas Jefferson, Draft of the Declaration of Independence (1776)

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=4>

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

George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette (5 April 1783)

[http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=101868&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=101868&layout=html&Itemid=27)

The scheme, my dear Marqs. which you propose as a precedent, to encourage the emancipation of the black people of this Country from that state of Bondage in wch. they are held, is a striking evidence of the benevolence of your Heart. I shall be happy to join you in so laudable a work.

John Jay to R. Lushington (15 March 1786)

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=2186>

I have been favoured with your letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> ult., and immediately communicated it to the committee of our society for promoting the liberation of slaves, and protecting such as may be manumitted. They are taking proper measures on the occasion, and I flatter myself that our Legislature will interpose to prevent such enormities in future.

It is much to be wished that slavery may be abolished. The honour of the States, as well as justice and humanity, in my opinion, loudly call upon them to emancipate these unhappy people. To contend for our own liberty, and to deny that blessing to others, involves an inconsistency not to be excused.

Whatever may be the issue of the endeavours of you and others to promote this desirable end, the reflection that they are prompted by the best motives affords good reasons for persevering in them.

George Washington to Robert Morris (12 April 1786)

[http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=101934&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=101934&layout=html&Itemid=27)

I give you the trouble of this letter at the instance of Mr. Dalby of Alexandria; who is called to Philadelphia to attend what he conceives to be a vexatious lawsuit respecting a slave of his, which a Society of Quakers in the city (formed for such purposes) have attempted to liberate... And if the practice of this Society of which Mr. Dalby speaks, is not discountenanced, none of those whose *misfortune* it is to have slaves as attendants, will visit the City if they can possibly avoid it... I hope it will not be conceived from these observations, that it is my wish to hold the unhappy people, who are the subject of this letter, in slavery. I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, and that is by Legislative authority; and this, as far as my suffrage will go, shall never be wanting. But when slaves who are happy and contented with their present masters, are tampered with and seduced to leave them; when masters are taken unawares by these practices; when a conduct of this sort begets discontent on one side and resentment on the other... it introduces more evils than it can cure.

George Washington to Francis Mercer (9 September 1786)

[http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/docs\\_print/print\\_wash2.html](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/docs_print/print_wash2.html)

I never mean (unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it) to possess another slave by purchase; it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by the Legislature by which slavery in this Country may be abolished by slow, sure, & imperceptible degrees.

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787)

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jevifram.htm>

Query XVIII. There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do... The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who, permitting one half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the amor patriae of the other.

George Washington, Reflection of Slavery (c. 1788)

<http://www.pbs.org/georgewashington/classroom/slavery3.html>

The unfortunate condition of the persons, whose labor in part I employ, has been the only unavoidable subject of regret. To make the adults among them as easy and comfortable in their circumstances as their actual state of ignorance and improvidence would admit, and to lay a foundation to prepare the rising generation for a destiny different from that in which they were born, afforded some satisfaction to my mind, and could not I hoped be displeasing to the justice of the Creator.



# The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

**Directions:** Read the documents assigned for Activity One (Reading Set A) and answer the questions on the worksheet.

Question	Answer
<p>In his <i>Summary View of the Rights of British America</i>, what does Thomas Jefferson say the king must do before slavery can be abolished in America?</p>	
<p>In his draft of the Declaration of Independence, why does Jefferson accuse King George III of waging “cruel war against human nature”?</p>	
<p>In his letter of 5 April 1783, what “laudable work” does George Washington tell Lafayette he would be happy to join him with?</p>	
<p>In his letter to R. Lushington, why does John Jay say slavery is an “inconsistency not to be excused”?</p>	

<p>In his letter to Robert Morris, what does George Washington say is the proper means of abolishing slavery?</p>	
<p>In his letter to Francis Mercer, how does Washington say he would like to see slavery abolished?</p>	
<p>According to Jefferson in his <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i>, what are the effects of slavery on slave owners and their children?</p>	
<p>In his “Reflection on Slavery,” what does Washington say he has done to try to make up for the “only unavoidable subject of regret” in his life?</p>	



## The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

#### Reading Set B: Views of the founders on slaves

**Directions:** Read the following documents and complete the questions on the worksheet.

Alexander Hamilton to John Jay (14 March 1779)

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.com/library/index.asp?document=1004>

Colonel Laurens, who will have the honor of delivering you this letter, is on his way to South Carolina, on a project which I think, in the present situation of affairs there, is a very good one, and deserves every kind of support and encouragement. This is to raise two, three, or four battalions of negroes, with the assistance of the government of that State, by contributions from the owners, in proportion to the number they possess...

I have not the least doubt that the negroes will make very excellent soldiers, with proper management; and I will venture to pronounce, that they cannot be put in better hands than those of Mr. Laurens... I mention this because I have frequently heard it objected to the scheme of embodying negroes, that they are too stupid to make soldiers. This is so far from appearing to me a valid objection, that I think their want of cultivation (for their natural faculties are as good as ours), joined to that habit of subordination which they acquire from a life of servitude, will enable them sooner to become soldiers than our white inhabitants...

I foresee that this project will have to combat much opposition from prejudice and self-interest. The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks, makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor experience; and an unwillingness to part with property of so valuable a kind, will furnish a thousand arguments to show the impracticability, or pernicious tendency, of a scheme which requires such sacrifices... An essential part of the plan is to give them their freedom with their swords. This will secure their fidelity, animate their courage, and, I believe, will have a good influence upon those who remain, by opening a door to their emancipation. This circumstance, I confess, has no small weight in inducing me to wish the success of the project; for the dictates of humanity, and true policy, equally interest me in favor of this unfortunate class of men...

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787)

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jevifram.htm>

Query XIV. Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous... It will be right to make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move...

[W]e find among them numerous instances of the most rigid integrity, and as many as among their better instructed masters, of benevolence, gratitude and unshaken fidelity. The opinion, that they are inferior in the faculties of reason and imagination, must be hazarded with great diffidence... let me add too, as a circumstance of great tenderness, where our conclusion would degrade a whole race of men from the rank in the scale of beings which their Creator may perhaps have given them...

George Washington, "Last Will and Testament" (9 July 1799)

[http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=102201&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=102201&layout=html&Itemid=27)

And to my Mulatto man William (calling himself William Lee) I give immediate freedom; or if he should prefer it (on account of the accidents which have befallen him, and which have rendered him incapable of walking or of any active employment) to remain in the situation he now is, it shall be optional in him to do so: In either case however, I allow him an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, which shall be independent of the victuals and cloaths he has been accustomed to receive, if he chuses the last alternative; but in full, with his freedom, if he prefers the first; and this I give him as a testimony of my sense of his attachment to me, and for his faithful services during the Revolutionary War.

Thomas Jefferson to Henri Gregoire (25 February 1809)

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/images/vc80.jpg>

Dear Sir, — I have received the favor of your letter of August 17th, and with it the volume you were so kind as to send me on the "Literature of Negroes." Be assured that no person living wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a complete refutation of the doubts I have myself entertained and expressed on the grade of understanding allotted to them by nature, and to find that in this respect they are on a par with ourselves. My doubts were the result of personal observation on the limited sphere of my own State, where the opportunities for the development of their genius were not favorable, and those of exercising it still less so. I expressed them therefore with great hesitation; but whatever be their degree of talent it is no measure of their rights. Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding, he was not therefore lord of the person or property of others. On this subject they are gaining daily in the opinions of nations, and hopeful advances are making towards their re-establishment on an equal footing with the other colors of the human family. I pray you therefore to accept my thanks for the many instances you have enabled me to observe of respectable intelligence in that race of men, which cannot fail to have effect in hastening the day of their relief; and to be assured of the sentiments of high and just esteem and consideration which I tender to yourself with all sincerity.



# The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

**Directions:** Read the documents assigned for Activity One (Reading Set B) and answer the questions on the worksheet.

Question	Answer
<p>In his letter to John Jay, why does Hamilton believe slaves will make good soldiers during the Revolutionary War?</p>	
<p>Why does Hamilton say some people will oppose the plan to enlist slaves as soldiers?</p>	
<p>Why does Hamilton insist that freedom be an essential part of the plan to enlist slaves as soldiers?</p>	
<p>In his <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i>, what reasons does Jefferson give to explain the apparent inferiority of imagination and reason on the part of slaves?</p>	



<p>In his "Last Will and Testament," what is George Washington's opinion of his slave William?</p>	
<p>In his letter to Henri Gregoire, what reasons does Jefferson give for previously doubting the natural abilities of slaves?</p>	
<p>In his letter to Gregoire, what does Jefferson hope will happen to the slaves in the future?</p>	
<p>What example to Jefferson give to Gregoire to show that those who are less intelligent cannot be justly deprived of their liberty and property?</p>	



## The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

#### Reading Set C: Obstacles to emancipation

**Directions:** Read the following documents and complete the questions on the worksheet.

George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette (10 May 1786)

[http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=101936&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=101936&layout=html&Itemid=27)

The benevolence of your heart my [dear] Marqs. is so conspicuous upon all occasions, that I never wonder at any fresh proofs of it; but your late purchase of an estate in the colony of Cayenne, with a view of emancipating the slaves on it, is a generous and noble proof of your humanity. Would to God a like spirit would diffuse itself generally into the minds of the people of this country; but I despair of seeing it. Some petitions were presented to the Assembly, at its last Session, for the abolition of slavery, but they could scarcely obtain a reading. To set them afloat at once would, I really believe, be productive of much inconvenience and mischief; but by degrees it certainly might, and assuredly ought to be effected; and that too by legislative authority.

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787)

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jevifram.htm>

Query XIV. It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state, and thus save the expense of supplying, by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave? Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race. To these objections, which are political, may be added others, which are physical and moral. The first difference which strikes us is that of colour...

This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. Many of their advocates, while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty. Some of these, embarrassed by the question ‘*What further is to be done with them?*’ join themselves in opposition with those who are actuated by sordid avarice only. Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix with, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture...

Query XVIII. [I]f a slave can have a country in this world, it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labour for another; in which he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavours to the evanishment of the human race,

or entail his own miserable condition on the endless generations proceeding from him. With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labour. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever: that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest. - But it is impossible to be temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be contented to hope they will force their way into every one's mind. I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the present revolution. The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.

Oliver Ellsworth, *The Landholder* VI (10 December 1787)

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1982>

All good men wish the entire abolition of slavery, as soon as it can take place with safety to the public, and for the lasting good of the present wretched race of slaves. The only possible step that could be taken towards it by the convention was to fix a period after which they should not be imported.

Benjamin Franklin, "An Address to the Public" (9 November 1789)

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=2185>

Slavery is such an atrocious debasement of human nature, that its very extirpation, if not performed with solicitous care, may sometimes open a source of serious evils. The unhappy man, who has long been treated as a brute animal, too frequently sinks beneath the common standard of the human species. The galling chains that bind his body do also fetter his intellectual faculties, and impair the social affections of his heart. Accustomed to move like a mere machine, by the will of a master, reflection is suspended; he has not the power of choice; and reason and conscience have but little influence over his conduct, because he is chiefly governed by the passion of fear. He is poor and friendless; perhaps worn out by extreme labor, age, and disease.

Under such circumstances, freedom may often prove a misfortune to himself, and prejudicial to society. Attention to emancipated black people, it is therefore to be hoped, will become a branch of our national police; but, as far as we contribute to promote this emancipation, so far that attention is evidently a serious duty incumbent on us, and which we mean to discharge to the best of our judgment and abilities.

To instruct, to advise, to qualify those who have been restored to freedom, for the exercised and enjoyment of civil liberty; to promote in them habits of industry; to furnish them with employments suited to their age, sex, talents, and other circumstances; and to procure their children an education calculated for their future situation in life, these are the great outlines of the annexed plan, which we have adopted, and which we conceive will essentially promote the public good, and the happiness of these our hitherto too much neglected fellow-creatures.

George Washington, “Last Will and Testament” (9 July 1799)

[http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=102201&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=848&chapter=102201&layout=html&Itemid=27)

Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will and desire that all the Slaves which I hold in *my own right*, shall receive their freedom. To emancipate them during her life, would, tho' earnestly wished by me, be attended with such insuperable difficulties on account of their intermixture by Marriages with the Dower Negroes, as to excite the most painful sensations, if not disagreeable consequences from the latter, while both descriptions are in the occupancy of the same Proprietor; it not being in my power, under the tenure by which the Dower Negroes are held, to manumit them. And whereas among those who will receive freedom according to this devise, there may be some, who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who on account of their infancy, that will be unable to support themselves; it is my Will and desire that all who come under the first and second description shall be comfortably cloathed and fed by my heirs while they live; and that such of the latter description as have no parents living, or if living are unable, or unwilling to provide for them, shall be bound by the Court until they shall arrive at the age of twenty five years... The Negroes thus bound, are (by their Masters or Mistresses) to be taught to read and write; and to be brought up to some useful occupation, agreeably to the Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support of Orphan and other poor Children. And I do hereby expressly forbid the Sale, or transportation out of said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence whatsoever. And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors hereafter named, or the Survivors of them, to see that *this* clause respecting Slaves, and every part thereof be religiously fulfilled at the Epoch at which it is directed to take place; without evasion, neglect or delay, after the Crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects the aged and infirm; Seeing that a regular and permanent fund be established for their Support so long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the uncertain provision to be made by individuals.

Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes (22 April 1820)

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.com/library/index.asp?document=461>

I can say, with conscious truth, that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would to relieve us from this heavy reproach, in any *practicable* way. The cession of that kind of property, for so it is misnamed, is a bagatelle which would not cost me a second thought, if, in that way, a general emancipation and *expatriation* could be effected; and, gradually, and with due sacrifices, I think it might be. But as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other... I regret that I am now to die in the belief, that the useless sacrifice of themselves by the generation of 1776, to acquire self-government and happiness to their country, is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons, and that my only consolation is to be, that I live not to weep over it.



## The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

**Directions:** Read the documents assigned for Activity One (Reading Set C) and answer the questions on the worksheet.

Question	Answer
<p>In his letter to Lafayette, why does Washington despair of seeing the emancipation of slaves and their colonization in Africa?</p>	
<p>In his <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i>, what does Jefferson say are the obstacles to incorporating freed slaves into society peacefully?</p>	
<p>In his <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i>, is Jefferson hopeful or doubtful that the evil of slavery will be peacefully resolved?</p>	
<p>According to Oliver Ellsworth, what was the “only possible step” that the Constitutional Convention could take regarding slavery, and why?</p>	

<p>According to Benjamin Franklin, why might immediate emancipation prove to be a “misfortune” to both free citizens and former slaves?</p>	
<p>What is the “serious duty” incumbent on free citizens toward slaves, according to Franklin?</p>	
<p>In his “Last Will and Testament,” what difficulties prevented Washington from freeing his slaves before his wife’s death?</p>	
<p>In his “Last Will and Testament,” what does Washington insist to be done to promote the future welfare and happiness of his slaves?</p>	
<p>According to Jefferson in his letter to Holmes, what is the great dilemma that Americans faced regarding slavery?</p>	



## The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

#### Reading Set D: Economic self-interest and slavery

**Directions:** Read the following documents and complete the questions on the worksheet.

Constitutional Convention, 21 August 1787

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/debates/821.htm>

Mr. L. MARTIN, proposed ... to allow a prohibition or tax on the importation of slaves ... [S]laves weakened one part of the Union which the other parts were bound to protect: the privilege of importing them was therefore unreasonable ... [I]t was inconsistent with the principles of the revolution and dishonorable to the American character to have such a feature in the Constitution.

Mr. RUTLIDGE ... Religion & humanity had nothing to do with this question. Interest alone is the governing principle with nations. The true question at present is whether the Southern States shall or shall not be parties to the Union...

Mr. PINKNEY. South Carolina can never receive the plan if it prohibits the slave trade. In every proposed extension of the powers of the Congress, that State has expressly & watchfully excepted that of meddling with the importation of negroes. If the States be all left at liberty on this subject, S. Carolina may perhaps by degrees do of herself what is wished, as Virginia & Maryland have already done.

Constitutional Convention, 22 August 1787

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/debates/822.htm>

Mr. SHERMAN was for leaving the clause [*which did not give Congress the power to tax or prohibit the importation of slaves*] as it stands ... [A]s it was expedient to have as few objections as possible to the proposed scheme of Government, he thought it best to leave the matter as we find it. He observed that the abolition of Slavery seemed to be going on in the U. S. & that the good sense of the several States would probably by degrees compleat it...

Col. MASON. This infernal traffic originated in the avarice of British Merchants. The British Govt. constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing States alone but the whole Union ... Slavery discourages arts & manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the immigration of Whites, who really enrich & strengthen a Country. They produce the most pernicious effect on manners. Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a Country. As nations can not be rewarded or punished in the next world they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes & effects providence punishes national sins, by national calamities. He lamented that some of our Eastern brethren had from a

lust of gain embarked in this nefarious traffic. As to the States being in possession of the Right to import, this was the case with many other rights, now to be properly given up. He held it essential in every point of view that the General Govt. should have power to prevent the increase of slavery.

Mr. ELSWORTH ... Let us not intermeddle. As population increases poor laborers will be so plenty as to render slaves useless. Slavery in time will not be a speck in our Country. Provision is already made in Connecticut for abolishing it. And the abolition has already taken place in Massachusetts. As to the danger of insurrections from foreign influence, that will become a motive to kind treatment of the slaves.

Mr. PINKNEY. If slavery be wrong, it is justified by the example of all the world. He cited the case of Greece Rome & other antient States; the sanction given by France England, Holland & other modern States. In all ages one half of mankind have been slaves. If the S. States were let alone they will probably of themselves stop importations. He wd. himself as a Citizen of S. Carolina vote for it. An attempt to take away the right as proposed will produce serious objections to the Constitution which he wished to see adopted.

General PINKNEY declared it to be his firm opinion that if himself & all his colleagues were to sign the Constitution & use their personal influence, it would be of no avail towards obtaining the assent of their Constituents. S. Carolina & Georgia cannot do without slaves...

Mr. RUTLIDGE. If the Convention thinks that N. C. S. C. & Georgia will ever agree to the plan, unless their right to import slaves be untouched, the expectation is vain. The people of those States will never be such fools as to give up so important an interest...





## The “inconsistency not to be excused”: Slavery and the American Founding

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity One. “My only unavoidable subject of regret”: views of founders on slavery

**Directions:** Read the documents assigned for Activity One (Reading Set D) and answer the questions on the worksheet.

Question	Answer
<p>On August 21, why does Luther Martin of Maryland want to give Congress the power to tax or prohibit the importation of slaves?</p>	
<p>On August 21, what is the “true question at present” according to John Rutledge of South Carolina?</p>	
<p>On August 21, what does Mr. Charles Pinckney of South Carolina say might happen if “the states be all left at liberty on this subject”?</p>	
<p>On August 22, what reasons does Roger Sherman of Connecticut offer against giving Congress the authority to tax or prohibit the importation of slaves?</p>	

<p>On August 22, what reasons does George Mason of Virginia give to condemn slavery as harmful and dangerous?</p>	
<p>On August 22, why does Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut believe slavery will eventually die out in America?</p>	
<p>On August 22, what does Mr. Charles Pinckney say justifies slavery in the minds of many people? What does Mr. Pinckney say he personally would do with regard to the importation of slaves?</p>	
<p>On August 22, why does General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney say South Carolinians and Georgians would never be persuaded to give Congress the power to prohibit the importation of slaves?</p>	
<p>On August 22, why does John Rutledge say the Convention should not give Congress the power to prohibit or tax the importation of slaves?</p>	