

William Lloyd Garrison, Abolitionist

Excerpts from the "Declaration of Sentiments" of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Philadelphia, December 1833

William Lloyd Garrison, one of the founders of the Philadelphia-based American Anti-Slavery Society, was the main author of the "Declaration of Sentiments" below. Garrison, a devout Baptist from Boston, also founded an anti-slavery newspaper, The Liberator, in which he published many articles promoting the immediate emancipation of slaves.

Ours forbid the doing of evil that good may come, and lead us to reject, and to entreat the oppressed to reject, the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage; relying solely upon those which are spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. *[Garrison does not believe in the use of violence to free the slaves]*

..... For the crime of having a dark complexion, they suffer the pangs of hunger, the infliction of stripes, the ignominy of brutal servitude. They are kept in heathenish darkness by laws expressly enacted to make their instruction a criminal offence.

We further maintain—that no man has a right to enslave or imbrute his brother—to hold or acknowledge him, for one moment, as a piece of merchandise.....or to brutalize his mind, by denying him the means of intellectual, social and moral improvement. The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable. To invade it is to usurp the prerogative of Jehovah [against God's will]. Every man has a right to his own body—to the products of his own labor—to the protection of law—and to the common advantages of society. It is piracy to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude. Surely, the sin is as great to enslave an American as an African.

That every American citizen, who detains a human being in involuntary bondage as his property, is, according to Scripture, (Ex. xxi. 16,) a man-stealer:
That the slaves ought instantly to be set free, and brought under the protection of law:

We further believe and affirm—that all persons of color, who possess the qualifications which are demanded of others, ought to be admitted forthwith to the enjoyment of the same privileges, and the exercise of the same prerogatives, as others; and that the paths of preferment, of wealth, and of intelligence, should be opened as widely to them as to persons of a white complexion.

Friendly Questions:

- 1. Why should slaves be set free?*
- 2. What rights should slaves have?*

Unfriendly Questions:

- 1. Do you think slaveowners would willingly give up their slaves?*
- 2. Don't you think violence is justified when people are deprived of their rights?*