

Solon Robinson: Pro Slavery

In 1849, in a leading southern trade journal, Solon Robinson, a trader and agriculturist from the North, reported on his travels throughout the South. He argued against giving freedom to the slaves, stating that their lives were better than those of free laboring men.

I boldly and truly assert that you may travel Europe over - yea, you may visit the boasted freedmen of America - aye, you may search the world over, before you find a laboring peasantry who are more happy, more contented, as a class of people, or who are better clothed and fed and better provided for in sickness, infirmity and old age, or who enjoy more of the essential comforts of life, than these so-called miserable, oppressed, abused, starved slaves...

I doubt whether one single instance can be found among the slaves of the south, where one has injured himself at long and excessive labor....Masters know that over driving a negro, as well as a mule, is the poorest way to get work out of either of them....

....In all my tour, during the past winter, I did not see or hear of but two cases of flogging: one of which was for stealing, and the other for running away from as good a master as ever a servant need to have...

But I do seriously say that I did not see or hear of one place where the negroes were not well fed: and I did not see a ragged gang of negroes in the South, and I could only hear of one plantation where the negroes were overworked or unjustly flogged, and on that plantation the master was a drunken, abusive wretch, as heartily despised by his neighbors as he was hated by his negroes.

Friendly Questions:

1. You visited many plantations and experienced slavery. What did you see about how the slaves were treated?
2. Did you see any of the slaves get whipped?

Unfriendly Questions:

1. You are from the north and only visited the south. How can you say that you really know how slaves are treated?
2. Did you actually talk to the slaves or did you just talk to the slave owners to find out about slavery?