

In the Words of Forten

Summarize the following quotes from James Forten in your own words.

1. Letter to George Thacher, 1799

"Though our faces are black, yet we are men; and though many among us cannot write, yet we all have the feelings and passions of men, and are as anxious to enjoy the birth-right of the human race..."

2. Letters From a Man of Colour, on a late Bill before the Senate of Pennsylvania, 1813

Letter 1

"We hold this truth to be self-evident, that GOD created all men equal, and is one of the most prominent features in the declaration of Independence, and in that glorious fabric of collected wisdom, our noble constitution. This idea embraces the Indian and the European, the Savage and the Saint, the Peruvian and the Laplander, the white Man and the African, and whatever measures are adopted subversive of this inestimable privilege, are in direct violation of the letter and spirit of our constitution, and become subject to the animadversion of all, particularly those who are deeply interested in the measure.... Many of our ancestors were brought here more than one hundred years ago; many of our fathers, many of ourselves have fought and bled for the Independence of our country. Do not then expose us to sale. Let not the spirit of the father behold the son robbed of that Liberty which he died to establish, but let the motto of our Legislators be 'The Law knows no distinction.'"

Letter 2

"....why are we not to be considered as men. Has the God who made the white man and the black, left any record declaring us a different species. Are we not sustained by the same power, supported by the same food, hurt by the same wounds, pleased with the same delights, and propagated by the same means. And should we not then enjoy the same liberty, and be protected by the same laws...It seems almost incredible that the advocates of liberty, should conceive the idea of selling a fellow creature to slavery."

Letter 3

"It is to be hoped that in our legislature there is a patriotism, humanity, and mercy sufficient to crush this attempt upon the civil liberty of freemen, and to prove that the enlightened body who have hitherto guarded their fellow creatures, without regard to the colour of the skin, will stretch forth the wings of protection to that race, whose persons have been the scorn, and whose calamities have been the jest of the world for ages. We trust the time is at hand when this obnoxious bill will receive its death warrant, and freedom still remain to cheer the bosom of a man of colour."