GLOSSARY

ABOLITION
The actions of a person or group to legally end a system of oppression, such as slavery.

AGENCY
The ability to use power in one’s own life.

ANONYMOUS
Not identified with a name, often to keep a person’s identity secret.

BLOCKADE
To close or seal off a place in order to prevent people and/or goods from entering or leaving.

BOYCOTT
A form of protest in which people refuse to buy or use the goods or services of an organization or person.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
The refusal to follow a particular law or the act of demanding change by peaceful protest.

DESEGREGATE
The ending of a policy that separates people, usually because of their race, religion or gender.

EMBARGO
A government sponsored ban on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country or countries.

ENSLAVED
Owned by another person. Saying “enslaved person” rather than “slave” can remind people of the humanity of the person who is in the condition of being owned by another person.

ENTREPRENEUR
A person who creates and operates a new business, usually bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards.

FID
A wooden tool used in ropework (to help untie knots and get in between the twists of a rope) and canvwork (to create and shape holes called grommets).

FOREMAN
A person who supervises and directs others in a place of work.

FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT (1793 AND 1850)
The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 allowed for the capture and return of freedom-seekers by allowing local governments to seize and return them to their former owners. The act also penalized anyone who assisted a freedom-seeker. Another Fugitive Slave Act was enacted in 1850 before the Civil War with harsher punishments for anyone that helped a freedom-seeker.

GALLEY
The compartment of a train, ship or airplane where food is prepared and cooked.

INDENTURED SERVANTS
Individuals who have a contract to serve as laborers for a specific amount of time before receiving their freedom. These contracts were often entered into willingly by British subjects who wanted passage across the Atlantic Ocean to the British colonies but could not afford it themselves or by those — Europeans, free people of African descent — who needed food, shelter, and clothing and the opportunity to learn a skill. Sometimes British subjects were sentenced to indentured servitude as punishment for a crime or because they could not pay their debts.

INDUSTRIALIZATION
The wide scale development of industries in a country or region.

INTEGRATED
No longer separated and acting as one unit.

INTERRACIAL
Involving people of different races.

MANUMIT
To free an individual enslaved person or a small number of enslaved people. A similar word, emancipate, generally applies to larger numbers of enslaved people.

MARRIARCH
A woman who is the head of her family or tribe.

MESS
A small group of people, usually soldiers who eat their meals together and share a living space such as a tent.

MIGRANT
A person who moves from one place to another, usually in order to find work or better living conditions.

PENSION
A specific amount of money a person receives from a government as payment for their past public service (including in the military) or to help pay for their living expenses when they reach a certain age.

PETITION
A plea or a written document expressing complaints and desired actions, signed by one or multiple members of a community.

PHILANTHROPISTS
People who seek to help others, especially by the generous donation of money to good causes.

PREAMBLE
The beginning of a document that states its purpose.

PRECEDENT
An earlier action or event that is seen as an example or guide for similar actions or events.

PRIVATEER
A private sailing ship that has been authorized by a government to attack and capture enemy vessels and supplies in a time of war. The term can also be used to describe a sailor who serves aboard a privateer ship.

RATIFY
To sign or give formal approval to a treaty, constitution, contract, or agreement to make it officially valid.

REGIMENT
A group of soldiers in a military unit that fight together on foot or on horseback. The size of a regiment varies from army to army, but it was usually hundreds of soldiers segregated, separated or divided into groups.

SAILMAKER’S PALM
Protection for the palm of a hand while sewing.

SEGREGATED
Separated or divided.

STEREOTYPE
A belief or generalization (often unfair and untrue) that people have about a specific group.

SUFFRAGE
The right to vote in an election.

TEMPERANCE
To refrain from drinking alcohol or to moderate a specific behavior.

UNALIENABLE (OR INALIENABLE)
Unable to be taken away from or given away by someone. Often used in relation to a person’s individual rights.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
A network of routes and safe houses established in the United States during the early 1800s used by enslaved people to help them escape slavery and gain their freedom in a free state or Canada.

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