

Mount Vernon July 2d 1766.

1 Sir,

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3 With this Letter comes a Negro (Tom) which I beg the favour of you to sell, in any of the
4 Islands you may go to, for whatever he will fetch, & bring me in return for him

5 One Hhd of best Molasses

6 One Ditto of best Rum

7 One Barrl of Lymes—if good & Cheap

8 One Pot of Tamarinds—contg about 10 lbs.

9 Two small Do of mixed Sweetmeats—abt 5 lb. each

10 And the residue, much or little, in good old Spirits

11 That this Fellow is both a Rogue & Runaway (tho. he was by no means remarkable for the
12 former, and never practised the latter till of late) I shall not pretend to deny—But that he is
13 exceeding healthy, strong, and good at the Hoe, the whole neighbourhood can testifie &
14 particularly Mr Johnson and his Son, who have both had him under them as foreman of the gang;
15 which gives me reason to hope he may, with your good management, sell well, if kept clean &
16 trim'd up a little when offerd to Sale.

17 I shall very chearfully allow you the customary Commissions on this affair, and must beg the
18 favour of you (least he shoud attempt his escape) to keep him handcuffd till you get to Sea—or
19 in the Bay—after which I doubt not but you may make him very useful to you.

20 I wish you a pleasant and prosperous Passage, and a safe & speedy return, being Sir, Yr Very
21 Hble Servt

22

Go: Washington



1 The Money arising from the Sales [of flour] I would have laid out in Negroes, if choice ones
2 can be had under Forty pounds Sterl.; if not, then in Rum & Sugar from Barbadoes, or any of the
3 Windward Islands; and Sugar & Molasses if the Flour shd be sold in Jama [Jamaica].

4 If the Return's are in Slaves let there be two thirds of them Males, the other third Females—
5 The former not exceeding (at any rate) 20 yrs of age—the latter 16—All of them to be strait
6 Limb'd, & in every respect strong & likely, with good Teeth & good Countenances—to be
7 sufficiently provided with Cloaths.



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



Comment by George Washington, recorded by David Humphries in his *The Life of General Washington*, 1787-1788

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

Excerpt: United States Constitution, Ratified June 21, 1788

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- 1 Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be
- 2 included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by
- 3 adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of
- 4 Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.



1 ...in case it shall be found that any of my Slaves may, or any for them shall attempt their
2 freedom at the expiration of six months, it is my wish and desire that you would send the whole,
3 or such part of them as Mrs. Washington may not chuse to keep, home—for although I do not
4 think they would be benefitted by the change, yet the idea of freedom might be too great a
5 temptation for them to resist. At any rate it might, if they conceived they had a right to it, make
6 them insolent in a State of Slavery. As all except Hercules and Paris are dower negroes, it
7 behoves me to prevent the emancipation of them, otherwise I shall not only loose the use of
8 them, but may have them to pay for. If upon taking good advise it is found expedient to send
9 them back to Virginia, I wish to have it accomplished under pretext that may deceive both them
10 and the Public;—and none I think would so effectually do this, as Mrs. Washington coming to
11 Virginia next month (towards the middle or latter end of it, as she seemed to have a wish to do) if
12 she can accomplish it by any convenient and agreeable means, with the assistance of the Stage
13 Horses &c. This would naturally bring her maid and Austin—and Hercules under the idea of
14 coming home to Cook whilst we remained there, might be sent on in the Stage. [...] I request that
15 these Sentiments and this advise may be known to none but yourself & Mrs. Washington



1 SEC. 3. And be it also enacted, That when a person held to labor in any of the United States, or
2 in either of the Territories on the Northwest or South of the Ohio river, under the laws thereof,
3 shall escape into any other part of the said States or Territory, the person to whom such labor or
4 service may be due, his agent or attorney, is hereby empowered to seize or arrest such fugitive
5 from labor, and to take him or her before any Judge of the Circuit or District Courts of the United
6 States, residing or being within the State, or before any magistrate of a county, city, or town
7 corporate, wherein such seizure or arrest shall be made, and upon proof to the satisfaction of
8 such Judge or magistrate, either by oral testimony or affidavit taken before and certified by a
9 magistrate of any such State or Territory, that the person so seized or arrested, doth, under the
10 laws of the State or Territory from which he or she fled, owe service or labor to the person
11 claiming him or her, it shall be the duty of such Judge or magistrate to give a certificate thereof
12 to such claimant, his agent, or attorney, which shall be sufficient warrant for removing the said
13 fugitive from labor to the State or Territory from which he or she fled.

14 SEC. four. And be it further enacted, That any person who shall knowingly and willingly
15 obstruct or hinder such claimant, his agent, or attorney, in so seizing or arresting such fugitive
16 from labor, or shall rescue such fugitive from such claimant, his agent or attorney, when so
17 arrested pursuant to the authority herein given and declared; or shall harbor or conceal such
18 person after notice that he or she was a fugitive from labor, as aforesaid, shall, for either of the
19 said offences, forfeit and pay the sum of five hundred dollars. Which penalty may be recovered
20 by and for the benefit of such claimant, by action of debt, in any Court proper to try the same,
21 saving moreover to the person claiming such labor or service his right of action for or on account
22 of the said injuries, or either of them.

1 Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of
2 America in Congress assembled, That no citizen or citizens of the United States, or foreigner, or
3 any other person coming into, or residing within the same, shall, for himself or any other person
4 whatsoever, either as master, factor or owner, build, fit, equip, load or otherwise prepare any ship
5 or vessel, within any port or place of said United States, nor shall cause any ship or vessel to sail
6 from any port or place within same, for the purpose of carrying on any trade or traffic in slaves,
7 to any foreign country; or for the purpose of procuring, from any foreign kingdom, place or
8 country, the inhabitants of such kingdom, place or country, to be transported to any foreign
9 country, port, or place whatever, to be sold or disposed of, as slaves: And if any ship or vessel
10 shall be so fitted out, as aforesaid, for the said purposes, or shall be caused to sail, so as
11 aforesaid, every ship or vessel, her tackle, furniture, apparel and other appurtenances, shall be
12 forfeited to the United States; and shall be liable to be seized, prosecuted and condemned, in any
13 of the circuit courts or district court for the district where said ship or vessel may be found and
14 seized.

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No. 43, South Water street.
6101

May 23

Advertisement.

ABSCONDED from the household of the President of the United States, ONEY JUDGE, a light mulatto girl, much freckled, with very black eyes and bushy black hair, she is of middle stature, slender, and delicately formed, about 20 years of age.

She has many changes of good clothes, of all sorts, but they are not sufficiently recollected to be described—As there was no suspicion of her going off, nor no provocation to do so, it is not easy to conjecture whether she has gone, or fully, what her design is;—but as she may attempt to escape by water, all masters of vessels are cautioned against admitting her into them, although it is probable she will attempt to pass for a free woman, and has, it is said, wherewithal to pay her passage.

Ten dollars will be paid to any person who will bring her home, if taken in the city, or on board any vessel in the harbour;—and a reasonable additional sum if apprehended at, and brought from a greater distance, and in proportion to the distance.

FREDERICK KITT, Steward.

May 23 6101

To-morrow will be landed,

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Excerpt: George Washington to Lawrence Lewis, August 4, 1797

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Mount Vernon 4th Augt 1797.

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 24th Ulto has been received, and I am sorry to hear of the loss of your Servant; but it is my opinion these elopements will be much more, before they are less frequent; and that the persons making them should never be retained, if they are recovered, as they are sure to contaminate and discontent others. I wish from my Soul that the Legislature of this State could see the policy of a gradual abolition of Slavery; It might prevt much future mischief.

[...]

Go: Washington



Excerpt: George Washington's Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799

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[Mount Vernon, 9 July 1799]

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2 (Ite)m Upon the decease (of) my wife, it is my Will & desire th(at) all the Slaves which I
3 hold in (my) *own right*, shall receive their free(dom). To emancipate them during (her) life,
4 would, tho' earnestly wish(ed by) me, be attended with such insu(pera)ble difficulties on account
5 of thei(r interm)ixture by Marriages with the (dow)er Negroes, as to excite the most pa(in)ful
6 sensations, if not disagreeabl(e c)onsequences from the latter, while (both) descriptions are in the
7 occupancy (of) the same Proprietor; it not being (in) my power, under the tenure by which (th)e
8 Dower Negroes are held, to man(umi)t them. And whereas among (thos)e who will recieve
9 freedom ac(cor)ding to this devise, there may b(e so)me, who from old age or bodily
10 infi(rm)ities, and others who on account of (the)ir infancy, that will be unable to (su)pport
11 themselves; it is m(y Will and de)sire that all who (come under the first) & second descrip(tion
12 shall be comfor)tably cloathed & (fed by my heirs while) they live; and that such of the latter
13 description as have no parents living, or if living are unable, or unwilling to provide for them,
14 shall be bound by the Court until they shall arrive at the ag(e) of twenty five years; and in cases
15 where no record can be produced, whereby their ages can be ascertained, the judgment of the
16 Court, upon its own view of the subject, shall be adequate and final. The Negros thus bound, are
17 (by their Masters or Mistresses) to be taught to read & write; and to be brought up to some useful
18 occupation, agreeably to the Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support
19 of Orphan and other poor Children. and I do hereby expressly forbid the Sale, or transportation
20 out of the said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence
21 whatsoever. And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors
22 hereafter named, or the Survivors of them, to see that *th(is cla)use* respecting Slaves, and every
23 part thereof be religiously fulfilled at the Epoch at which it is directed to take place; without
24 evasion, neglect or delay, after the Crops which may then be on the ground are harvested,
25 particularly as it respects the aged and infirm; seeing that a regular and permanent fund be
26 established for their support so long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the
27 (u)ncertain provision to be made by individuals. And to my Mulatto man William (calling



Excerpt: George Washington's Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799

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28 himself William Lee) I give immediate freedom; or if he should prefer it (on account of the
29 accidents which ha(v)e befallen him, and which have rendered him incapable of walking or of
30 any active employment) to remain in the situation he now is, it shall be optional in him to do so:
31 In either case however, I allow him an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, whic(h)
32 shall be independent of the victuals and cloaths he has been accustomed to receive, if he chuses
33 the last alternative; but in full, with his freedom, if he prefers the first; & this I give him as a
34 test(im)ony of my sense of his attachment to me, and for his faithful services during the
35 Revolutionary War.