

Prince Hall's Petition for Freedom to the Massachusetts Legislature January 13, 1777

To the Honorable Council & House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts-Bay, in General Court assembled January 13th 1777—

The Petition of a great number of Negroes, who are detained in a state of Slavery, in the Bowels of a free & Christian Country—

Humbly Shewing—

That your Petitioners apprehend that they have, in common with all other Men, a natural & unalienable right to that freedom, which the great Parent of the Universe hath bestowed equally on all Mankind, & which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement whatever—But they were unjustly dragged, by the cruel hand of Power, from their dearest friends, & some of them even torn from the Embraces of their tender Parents—From a populous, pleasant, & plentiful Country—& in Violation of the Laws of Nature & of Nations & in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity, brought hither to be sold like Beasts of Burthen, & like them condemned to slavery for Life—Among a People professing the mild Religion of Jesus—A People not insensible of the sweets of rational freedom—nor without Spirit to resent the unjust endeavours of others, to reduce them to a State of Bondage & subjection—Your Honors need not to be informed that a Life of Slavery, like that of your petitioners, deprived of every social privilege, of every thing requisite to render Life even tolerable, is far worse than Non-Existence—In imitation of the laudable example of the good People of these States, your Petitioners have long & patiently waited the event of Petition after Petition, by them presented to the Legislative Body of this State, & cannot but with grief reflect that their success has been but too similar—They cannot but express their astonishment, that it has never been considered, that every principle from which America has acted in the course of her unhappy difficulties with Great-Britain, pleads stronger than a thousand arguments in favor of your Petitioners—They therefore humbly beseech your Honors, to give this Petition its due weight & consideration, & cause an Act of the Legislature to be passed, whereby they may be restored to the enjoyment of that freedom which is the natural right of all Men—& their Children (who were born in this land of Liberty) may not be held as Slaves after they arrive at the age of twenty one Years—So may the Inhabitants of this State (no longer chargeable with the inconsistency of acting, themselves, the part which they condemn & oppose in others) be prospered in their present glorious struggles for Liberty; & have those blessings secured to them by Heaven, of which benevolent minds cannot wish to deprive their fellow-Men.—

And your Petitioners, as in Duty bound shall ever pray—

LANCASTER HILL

HIS
JACK X PEIRPONT
MARK

PETER BESS

HIS
NERO X FUHILO
MARK

BRISTER SLENFEN

HIS
NEWPORT X SUMNER
MARK

PRINCE HALL

JOB LOCK

Document Source: Massachusetts Archives