

**James Madison to Thomas R. Dew, February 23, 1833. TTranscription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.**

**TO THOMAS R. DEW. MAD. MSS.**

Montpellier, Feby 23, 1833

I am aware of the impracticability of an immediate or early execution of any plan, that combines deportation, with emancipation; and of the inadmissibility of emancipation without deportation. But I have yielded to the expediency of attempting a gradual remedy by providing for the double operation.

If emancipation was the sole object, the extinguishment of slavery, would be easy, cheap & compleat. The purchase by the public of all female children at their birth, leaving them in bondage, till it wd. defray the charge of rearing them, would within a limited period be a radical resort.

With the condition of deportation, it has appeared to me, that the great difficulty does not lie either in the expence of emancipation, or in the expence or the means of deportation, but in the attainment 1 of the requisite Asylums, 2 the consent of the individuals to be removed, 3, the labor for the vacuum to be created.

With regard to the expence, 1, much will be saved by voluntary emancipations, increasing under the influence of example, and the prospect of bettering the lot of the slaves. 2, much

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may be expected in gifts & legacies from the opulent the philanthropic and the conscientious, 3, more still from Legislative grants by the States, of which encouraging examples & indications have already appeared, 4, Nor is there any room for despair of aid from the indirect or direct proceeds of the public lands held in trust by Congress. With a sufficiency of pecuniary means, the facility of providing a naval transportation of the exiles is shewn by the present amount of our tonnage and the promptitude with which it can be enlarged; by the number of emigrants brought from Europe to N. America within the last year; and by the greater number of slaves, which have been within single years brought from the Coast of Africa across the Atlantic.

In the attainment of adequate Asylums, the difficulty, though it may be considerable, is far from being discouraging. Africa is justly the favorite choice of the patrons of colonization; and the prospect there is flattering, 1, in the territory already acquired, 2 in the extent of Coast yet to be explored and which may be equally convenient, 3, the adjacent interior into which the littoral settlements can be expanded under the auspices of physical affinities between the new comers and the natives, and of the moral superiorities of the former, 4, the great inland Regions now ascertained to be accessible by navigable waters, & opening new fields for colonizing enterprises.

But Africa, tho' the primary, is not the sole asylum within contemplation. An auxiliary one presents itself in the islands adjoining this Continent where the colored population is already dominant, and where the wheel of revolution may from time to time produce the like result.

Nor ought another contingent receptacle for emancipated slaves to be altogether overlooked. It exists within the territory under the controul of the U. S. and is not too distant to be out of reach, whilst sufficiently distant to avoid for an indefinite period, the collisions to be apprehended from the vicinity of people distinguished from each other by physical as well as other characteristics.

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The consent of the individuals is another pre-requisite in the plan of removal. At present there is a known repugnance in those already in a state of freedom to leave their native homes; and among the slaves there is an almost universal preference of their present condition to freedom in a distant & unknown land. But in both classes particularly that of the slaves the prejudices arise from a distrust of the favorable accounts coming to them through white channels. By degrees truth will find its way to them from sources in which they will confide, and their aversion to removal may be overcome as fast as the means of effectuating it shall accrue.

The difficulty of replacing the labour withdrawn by a removal of the slaves, seems to be urged as of itself an insuperable objection to the attempt. The answer to it is, 1, that notwithstanding the emigrations of the whites, there will be an annual and by degrees an increasing surplus of the remaining mass. 2, That there will be an attraction of whites from without, increasing with the demand, and, as the population elsewhere will be yielding a surplus to be attracted, 3 that as the culture of Tobacco declines with the contraction of the space within which it is profitable, & still more from the successful competition in the west, and as the farming system takes place of the planting, a portion of labour can be spared, without impairing the requisite stock, 4 that altho' the process must be slow, be attended with much inconvenience, and be not even certain in its result, is it not preferable to a torpid acquiescence in a perpetuation of slavery, or an extinguishment of it by convulsions more disastrous in their character & consequences than slavery itself.

In my estimate of the experiment instituted by the Colonization Society I may indulge too much my wishes & hopes, to be safe from error. But a partial success will have its value, and an entire failure will leave behind a consciousness of the laudable intentions with which relief from the greatest of our calamities was attempted in the only mode presenting a chance of effecting it.

I hope I shall be pardoned for remarking that in accounting for the depressed condition of Virginia, you seem to allow too little to the existence of slavery; ascribe too much to the

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tariff laws, and not to have sufficiently taken into view the effect of the rapid settlement of the W. & S. W. Country.

Previous to the Revolution, when, of these causes, slavery alone was in operation, the face of Virga. was in every feature of improvement & prosperity, a contrast to the Colonies where slavery did not exist, or in a degree only, not worthy of notice. Again, during the period of the tariff laws prior to the latter state of them, the pressure was little if at all, regarded as a source of the general suffering. And whatever may be the degree in which the extravagant augmentation of the tariff may have contributed to the depression the extent of this cannot be explained by the extent of the cause. The great & adequate cause of

the evil is the cause last mentioned; if that be indeed an evil which improves the condition of our migrating citizens & adds more to the growth & prosperity of the whole than it subtracts from a part of the community.

Nothing is more certain than that the actual and prospective depression of Virginia, is to be referred to the fall in the value of her landed property, and in that of the staple products of the land. And it is not less certain that the fall in both cases, is the inevitable effect of the redundancy in the market both of land and of its products. The vast amount of fertile land offered at 125 Cents per acre in the W. & S. W. could not fail to have the effect already experienced of reducing the land here to half its value; and when the labour that will here produce one Hhd. of Tobo. and ten barrels of flour, will there produce two Hhds and twenty barrels, now so cheaply transportable to the destined outlets, a like effect on these articles must necessarily ensue. Already more Tobo. is sent to N. Orleans, than is exported from Virginia to foreign markets; Whilst the Article of flour exceeding for the most part the demand for it, is in a course of rapid increase from new sources as boundless as they are productive. The great staples of Virga. have but a limited market which is easily glutted. They have in fact sunk more in price, and have a more threatening prospect, than the more Southern staples of Cotton & Rice. The case is believed to be the same with her

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landed property. That it is so with her slaves is proved by the purchases made here for the market there. . . .