

APPENDIX A

The second issue of the *New York Times* featured a prominent editorial about a violent confrontation on September 11, 1851, in Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. This editorial was controversial in its time. Although it was not as bad as the notorious *Scott v. Sandford* decision later handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857, it would be infamous today if more people knew about what the *New York Times* wrote.

Here is a transcript.

Excerpt from the *New York Times*
September 19, 1851
Volume 1, Number 2
Page 2, Column 1

The Christiana Outrage.

Resistance to law is always an offence against the peace of society. No government can exist without punishing breaches of its law, – still less without disarming opposition to it. And there is no country in the world, where obedience to the law is more prompt and cheerful, than in the United States.

We have heard a great deal lately about a *higher* than human law; – and a very large class of newspapers and public men have zealously sought to make the world believe, that the believers in a “higher law” are the enemies of *all* law, and that the peace of society is in imminent danger from their machinations. Very little of this virulent denunciation, in our judgment, has been honest or sincere. Partizan schemes, business rivalries, personal animosities, have prompted much of it. These and other motives have incited journalists, orators, politicians, merchants, &c., to create a *panic* in society, – to alarm the country on account of the number of “higher law” men who exist in it, and whose pestilent heresies menace its existence.

Our chief regret, in this matter, grows out of the fact, that the men who believe in the “higher law,” and who act steadily, consistently, and conscientiously on that behalf, are not more numerous than they are. No absurdity was ever more gross than that of apprehending danger to society, from the *conscientiousness* of its members. If nobody believed in a *higher* law, human laws would not be worth the parchment they are

written on. It is only because men believe in the immutable laws of right and wrong – because they feel in their own hearts the consciousness of their existence and their sanctity – that they regard human laws as anything but the dictation of the strongest. All reverence for law, all regard for it as a rule of conduct and of life, all real respect for its dictates, springs from faith in a supreme law, higher than humanity, and represented to society and to man in these laws of human enactment. And when men lose all conviction of this higher law, their obedience to human law, will depend entirely upon the weakest of all reliances, their own inconstant and lawless will.

In Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, a few days since, a party of whites attempted to arrest several negroes, claiming them as their property, under a law of the United States. The negroes resisted, forcibly, and a mob of negroes, acting evidently in concert, came to their aid, resisted the seizure and killed the claimant. This is an offense against law, and must be punished as such. No one will contend that these negroes acted from their conscientious convictions of duty – that they killed this man because they really believed it their duty to do so. They acted from passion, from malice, from a determination that the negroes should not perform duties and hold positions which the law had recognized as imposed on them. We observe that the offenders are to be indicted for *treason*. Their offense may technically be considered treason; yet it seems to us sadly to belie the definition of that grave crime. These negroes resisted the Marshal – resisted in the execution of the law; but we doubt whether they designed to overthrow the government of the United States. It is not easy to say what would fill a negro's mind under such circumstances; but we do not believe that any of them had really any thought of dethroning the President, scattering his Cabinet and usurping federal powers. And yet, some such intention as this – at least some dim purpose of upsetting the federal Constitution, seems to us essential to the idea usually entertained of “levying arms against the government” of the United States.

Marshals and Sheriffs have often been resisted; – laws of the United States, and of the several States, have often been trampled upon. The offence, as was proper and necessary, has been punished, – but it was not called treason. Gov. JOHNSTON, in the letters to Messrs. CADWALLADER, SWIFT, & Co., puts this matter in its proper light. He cautions them against exaggerations of the offence committed. It is heinous enough in itself. They have committed murder, and will be tried and punished therefor. The idea of rebellion, – and of an insurrectionary movement in Lancaster County, – he treats as absurd. The laws, he says, have been grossly violated, and the judicial tribunals will punish the offenders. He thinks it unwise to give the crime committed undue dignity, or to pursue such a course as shall inspire distrust of the regular course of law. We think so too.

APPENDIX B

The *New York Times* gained commercial popularity among the slave owning planter class of the South. Here is an example of racial stereotyping and highly prejudiced reporting about slavery that propelled this newspaper into national prominence.

Excerpt from the *New York Times*

March 18, 1853

Page 2, Columns 3-4

The South: Conditions and Capacities of the Slave

A LETTER TO THE TRAVELING CORRESPONDENT OF THE NEW YORK DAILY TIMES

DEAR SIR: In common with the readers of the TIMES, I have been very much interested in the series of letters you are writing upon the condition and resources of the Southern States. I have been pleased with the spirit in which they are written – with the moderation, good feeling, and intelligence they display; but, above all, I have admired the desire to know and the ability to apprehend the truth, which you have everywhere manifested throughout them.

Yet, instructive as your letters are, there is one deficiency, I think, in them. They hardly allude to the condition and character of the Slave, and they do not explain, with as much precision and fulness as I would wish, the nature of the influence which Slavery has exercised upon the master. They present only the economical aspect of Slavery. They show only what the institution *costs* – by exhibiting the little worth of the Slave as a laborer, because of the laziness, his lack of thrift and intelligence, his intemperance and his propensity to steal. They demonstrate that, in Virginia, at least, free labor would be much cheaper than Slave labor. Yet, after all, is not this view of the subject the lowest that can be taken?

The influence of Slavery on the master concerns us most, and accordingly, I would have you enter into an examination of the effect produced by holding Slaves. It seems to be taken for granted, that this effect consists primarily in making the master lazy, and then in fastening upon him the hundred vices which always accompany laziness. And perhaps this may be so. Yet the question still remains, how precisely does the use of Slaves induce slothfulness? If the inducement lies, as it is said to do, in the substitution of the labor of Slaves for the master's own labor, how does it happen that the manufacturers of Manchester and Lowell, who work only through the hands of their operatives, are the most energetic race of men in the world? What distinction obtains in these cases between hired labor and Slave labor? Has there not been too little stress laid by those who have endeavored to assign the cause of the want of energy, which the people of the South exhibit, upon the climate and the soil of their country, and particularly upon the circumstances and character of their ancestors?

Then, too, in some future letter, will you not describe the condition and character of the Slave himself, as they have appeared to you during your journey. Of what does his food consist, and how great and of what quality is his allowance? How is he clothed, and in what sort of cabins does he live? Is he overworked, and if he is not, and has time which he can call his own, are his leisure hours spent in working for himself or in play or sleep? What care does he get when he is sick, and when he grows too old to work, what becomes of him? What what is his character? We, who have never been in the South, know something of him, but nothing certainly and distinctly. Is he a man of a high and chivalrous character – of keen and delicate sensibility, or an humble, steadfast, heroic Christian, like Uncle Tom, or is he a careless, happy fellow, fond of basking lazily in the sunshine, a lover of music and dancing, a child in intellect, superstition – yet licentious, fond of strong drink, a glutton, a thief, and a liar?

Trace also, if you will, the precise effect which Slavery has had on him. We are too prone, I think, to imagine that his bondage is the sole cause of his present degradation, forgetting that he was a savage when he was brought to this country. Has Slavery made him worse, or is he just what he was when he left Africa? Or has he become, in the main, under the influence of his master, better and more intelligent?

These questions seem to me important in determining the exact measure of the responsibility under which the South lies for her maintenance and defence of slavery. If her servants and laborers are better off than they were, or would have been in their own country, or even if their condition remains unchanged, there is no need surely that our blood should boil at the bare thought that they are not free.

But a proper knowledge of what the slave is, is only important in relation to what, under proper culture, he may become. There are many at the South, and doubtless you have not met some of this class during your journey, who maintain that owing to the inferiority of his mental organization, the slave is incapable of culture. These support their position not so much by reference to his condition or to experiments which have failed us by reference to some peculiarities to his *physique*. They point to the shape of his skull, his low forehead and his monkey-like features, as proofs of their position. But I have never been able to consider their phrenological argument as conclusive. What is the result of your own experience in the matter? From what you know of the slave, his capacity and disposition is any attempt to raise him from his degradation to be deemed hopeless? If it is not, then I need not say, all slaveholders are bound by every consideration of humanity to make long and earnest effort in education of the human beings they own. And here lies the sin of the South as regards Slavery. It does not lie in a want of attention to the physical well-being of her slaves. Nor does it consist in simply holding them in bondage. Odious as the system is, I cannot bring myself to the opinion, that slavery is, by necessity, under all circumstances, an offence against God. It lies rather in the undeniable fact, that she has scarcely ever made an attempt to raise her bondsman out of their degradation. She has done nothing for their development, but

neglecting them utterly has suffered them generation after generation to grow up like beasts. Nay, she has stood between them and the light, so that the shadow of her frown has fallen upon the few of her own people, who have tried to teach their slaves. This is no light thing, that a civilized Christian people, rich, powerful and at peace, should have suffered a poor, barbarian race to live among them for two hundred years, without having made an effort to reclaim it. And it is an immeasurably more serious thing, that the people partly by legislative enactment, and partly by force of public opinion, should have refused, and should even now refuse to suffer others to stretch forth a finger in its behalf.

Can we, who live in the non-slaveholding States, in the fulness of a loving spirit, urge the South to repair the wrong she has done? Let her begin at once the task, long and tedious as it will prove, of regenerating her slaves. There is but little hope that anything can be done with the old; they must in all probability die as they have lived. But let the children be taught to read and write; let them be taught to love and obey God; let patient and kind-hearted ministers and teachers be sent among them, and though the process of regeneration will be slow, and we who are now alive may never see the fruit ripen of the seed thus sown, who doubts but the regeneration will take place, and the seed spring up at last and ripen into a glorious harvest? In thus urging upon the people of the South the obligation under which they lie to educate their slaves, lies our sphere of action with regard to Slavery.

What can we do more than this? The time was, when by refusing to annex Texas, we could have put a limit to the power and to the duration of slavery. But we let the opportunity slip, and it is not likely to recur soon again. There is no reasonable ground for believing that the Fugitive Slave Law will ever be repealed. We have abolished the slave-trade in the District of Columbia, and it is doubtful whether we have the right to abolish slavery therein. We can extend a Wilmot Proviso over New Mexico and Utah, but what effect would such an act have except to breed ill-feeling? We have no right to meddle directly with slavery by legislation or by force any more than Louisiana has a right to interfere with the filth and wretchedness and misery of Cross-Street or Rotten-Row. We can declaim against the sin of slavery, but it is certain that it is absolutely a sin, and if this be proved, is it not clear from past experience that our declamation will only put off the day of emancipation? What then remains for us except to press home upon the people of the South, the sacred obligation under which they lie to educate their slaves; kindly to awaken them to a sense of their duty and cheerfully aid them in their task, if it be necessary, with money, with love, and with unobtrusive sympathy?

Yet if the South should refuse to listen to us, and should retort by pointing at the condition of free negroes among us, while their sin is none the less, what other course is left for us, except to be dumb for very shame? In our midst are a quarter of a million blacks, every whit as degraded as their enslaved brethren, and every whit as deserving of our aid and sympathy. Take this single illustration of their condition: In one of the towns lying upon the Hudson, and contained 2,500 inhabitants, are about 200 negroes. These are congregated, for the most part, in a back street of the village, and in an adjoining hamlet. They live in small and decayed

houses, half-a-dozen families to a house, and half-a-dozen persons in a room. Their clothing and dwellings are not dirtier than those of white of their own grade, but, judging from their appearance, they seldom wash their bodies. They are a careless, happy community, as all negroes are; but are ignorant, superstitious, slow to learn, lazy, and lie and steal, as of course. It is hard to say what are their means of support; some are at service; others saw wood, or work at the docks, or are fishermen; and a few bright-eyed mulatto women, who happen to be attractive enough, sell their favors at a cheap rate to the whites. But by far the greater number do nothing.

Marriage is not an uncommon rite among them. But it is a frequent practice to “swap” wives with one another. The women are prostitutes, if they who have never known what chastity is, can be called by so harsh a name, and the men are drunkards; and perhaps their worst trait, which proves their degradation more forcibly than anything else, since it puts them below the level of a dog, is their insensibility to kindness. Receive one into your house – treat him with consideration – feed him well and pay him well – nurse him when he is sick – and all your kindness will never prevent him, the very moment your back is turned, from neglecting your work, betraying your interests, and stealing from you whatever he has a chance to steal.

I do not mean to convey the impression that these negroes suffer from hunger, and in Winter from cold. They are expert beggars; they work a little, and steal more; and by these means keep off actual privation. But I have not exaggerated their moral condition; and throughout the Northern States, wherever I have gone, their condition and modes of life are the same with their condition and modes of life in the village I have spoken of. I know of but a single exception. In the town of Elmira, in Chemung County, they have risen in some degree, and are still improving. This has been principally owing, I suppose, to the influence of two or three of their own number, and those are fugitive slaves from South Carolina.

Now, Sir, bearing in mind the condition of our free negroes, this seems to be the whole scope of our duty with regard to Slavery. First of all, we are to take the beam out of our own eyes. We are to strive to bring up the blacks among us from their vice and ignorance. Then, when we are doing for them all we are bound to do, we are not to clamor about the abolition of Slavery, but in kindness to urge upon the South to follow in our footsteps. Yet, her people will not need much exhortation. The silence influence of our example, and the sight of our success, will so stir them that, of their own accord, they will begin the task, too long delayed, of the regeneration of the slaves; and when all this takes place, and not before, in our opinion, plans for their emancipation can be rightfully entertained.

Yours sincerely,

B.

NEW YORK, May 9, 1853.

APPENDIX C

This editorial should be regarded as an accurate reflection of the reputation of the *New York Times* as perceived by black establishment newspaper editors from the 1880's.

Excerpt from *The Sentinel* (Trenton, NJ)
November 5, 1881
Page 2, Column 1

Microfilmed by the Library of Congress for the Committee on Negro Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies, 1947, from newspapers loaned by the Trenton Public Library (Trenton, NJ)

A DESERVED CONDEMNATION.

No meaner or more uncharitable journal is published in New York than the *Times*. It is snobbish to the very last degree. The New York *Globe* this morning thus refers to it:

“The New York *Times* is incapable of a generous impulse for a wronged people. The aboriginal Americans, the oppressed and tyrannized Irishman, and the colored man, whose genealogy makes him the more than peer of his detractors – all come under his lash. With regard to Mr. Flipper, we would state that the *Times* based its Sunday article on the statement made in these columns from private correspondence of the lieutenant, but its studied contempt of fair dealing with regard to the colored man caused it to ignore that straight-forward letter, and deal its venom upon absence of explanation, or explanation too inconsequential to merit reproduction.”

Note: The *Sentinel* (Trenton, NJ) was a black newspaper edited by R. Henri Herbert. The *Globe* (New York, NY) was a black newspaper edited by T. Thomas Fortune.