

Memorial of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States (modified)

Source: Members of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society presented this petition against slavery, signed by Benjamin Franklin, to the United States Congress in February of 1790. This was the first anti-slavery petition to be sent to Congress. The House of Representatives created a committee to consider the petition, but the resulting bill did not ultimately move towards ending slavery in any way.

To the Senate & House of Representatives of the United States:

The Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, & the Improvement of the Condition of the African Race was formed several years ago in this State by a number of Citizens of various religious beliefs. The numbers of people who joined the Society grew due to the spread of a just & accurate **Conception** of the true Principles of liberty. The efforts of the Society have been successful in relieving from bondage a large number of their fellow **Creatures** of the African Race. The Society is also satisfied to observe that similar institutions are gradually forming at home & abroad, as a consequence of that Spirit of **Philanthropy** & genuine liberty.

The Christian Religion teaches us to believe that mankind are all formed by the same Almighty being, and are all alike objects of his Care, & are equally designed for the Enjoyment of Happiness. The Political **Creed** of America fully agrees with this position. Since we are particularly engaged in attending to the Distresses arising from Slavery, we believe it is our duty to present this Subject to you. We have observed with great Satisfaction that you have many important Powers for “promoting the Welfare & Securing the blessings of liberty to the People of the United States.” Since we believe that these blessings should be given without distinction of Colour to all People, we expect that everything should be done to help all people.

Because we believe that all men deserve equal liberty, we believe ourselves bound to use all possible methods to loosen the bonds of Slavery and promote a general Enjoyment of the blessings of Freedom. With these beliefs in mind, we beg you to pay attention to the Subject of Slavery, and to approve the Restoration of liberty to those unhappy Men. They are the only ones in this land of Freedom who are degraded by perpetual Bondage, and who are groaning in Servile Subjection, while all around them there is the general Joy of surrounding Freemen. We beg you to devise a way of removing this Inconsistency from the Character of the American People, and to promote mercy and Justice towards this distressed Race, & that you will Step to the very edge of the Powers you have to discourage every kind of buying and selling of our fellow men.

Philadelphia February 3, 1790
B. Franklin
President of the Society

conception = idea

creature = person (in this context)

philanthropy = the practice of giving time and money to try and make life better for others

creed = belief

Modified from the [original source](#) available at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.