Lesson 2 Primary Documents: Race Relations

Document No. 1

Publication: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
Date: December 18, 1863
Title: “Cheltenham Township, Dec. 15, 1863”

It is designed to treat the Soldiers at “Camp William Penn” to a Christmas Dinner.

Persons willing to contribute to this worthy purpose in Money, Vegetables, or Fruit, or in Provisions, such as Hams, Poultry, Pickles, Biscuits, Pies, Cake, &c., cooked and ready to be served, will please inform either of the undersigned by Monday evening, the 21st inst., as to the kind and quantity they will furnish.

The Provisions should be at the Camp (corner of County Line and Penrose avenue) on Christmas morning, not later than 10 o’clock. A Receiving Committee will be in attendance at the School Building on the Camp grounds to take charge of articles as sent in.

Document No. 2

Publication: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
Date: August 10, 1863
Title: “Startling Affair at Chelton Hill”

At the encampment of the colored Troops, at Chelton Hill, a sad mistake occurred on Friday evening, which resulted in the death of a gardener named William Fox. In company with his brother-in-law and several boys, Fox started out on a swimming Excursion and after bathing traversed the grounds of the encampment, and suddenly found himself and party confronted by an armed Sentry. The party halted at a fence and began questioning the century, who, after listening to a few questions, ordered them to move on. The party then started, leaving Fox at the fence, who contended that he had a perfect right to remain there. His brother-in-law returned and urged him to leave, but he refused. The century called twice for the Corporal of the guard and was asked what was the matter. He replied there was some men at the fence who would not go away. Someone called out, “Shoot them.” The sentry raised his piece and said, “Are you going to leave? If you don't I’ll shoot you.” The deceased replied, “I guess you won't.” After another warning the sentry fired. The officers of the camp came immediately to the spot, and the ball was extracted by Dr. J. F. Hope, Post Surgeon. It had struck the right wrist and then passed through the body. The unfortunate man was removed to a house on Mrs. Butler's place, and died in about an hour. He leaves a wife and four children.

From an examination made by Lieutenant Colonel Wagner, commanding the camp, it appear that the order, "Shoot them," was not given by the Corporal of the Guard, but by some of the men who had been getting water at the spring. The Corporal did not arrive on the ground until after the shot was fired.
There have been several desertions at that point lately, by men running by guards under cover of the night. This led to the loading of the sentries muskets. In his defense, Charles Ridley, the sentinel, stated that he imagined Fox pointed a pistol at him and attempted to climb over the fence. It was Ridley's first time on guard.

**Document No. 3**

**Publication:** *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
**Date:** September 21, 1863
**Title:** “Incident at Camp William Penn”

A Mr. GEORGE BIDDLE, of Cecil county, Md., recently drove out to Camp William Penn in a carriage, for the purpose of seizing a colored soldier, named John Price, a private in Company 1, Sixth Regiment. He claims said PRICE as his slave. PRICE was enlisted in Delaware, and was home week before last on furlough. He said his master followed him to camp. When MR. BIDDLE’s errand became known the men became excited, and, in a threatening manner, surrounded him, when he beat a hasty retreat. He afterwards found Colonel WAGNER at a neighboring house, who informed him he could not take the man. On returning to his carriage, Mr. BIDDLE was again surrounded, and would have met with rough treatment but for the timely arrival of Colonel WAGNER, who assured the men that the alleged slave should not be taken back, when they became pacified.

**Document No. 4**

**Publication:** *The Age*
**Date:** February 1, 1864
**Title:** “The Negro Camp”
**Location:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Numerous complaints have been made of the uncivilized-like conduct of the hundreds of negroes who daily visit the camp established at Chelton Hills for black volunteers. Their conduct in the cars, going to and from the grounds and while on the grounds, has become unsupportable. Unless they soon change their course the residents in the neighborhood of the camp will take the matter in their own hands and teach a few how to behave themselves. Free fights among the negro women, howling and swearing in the cars, are everyday occurrences.

**Questions**

1. Look at document number three. Did William Fox ever make it inside the camp? Do you believe sentry was within his rights to fire his weapon?

2. Do you think white neighbors were receptive to Camp William Penn?
3. In document number four, the author said the women on the cars were “howling.” Why do you think he chose the word howling and not yelling, or screaming?

4. How would you characterize the relationship between white civilians and the black soldiers in and around the camp?