



PRE-EXHIBIT LEARNING: FOUNDATIONAL LESSONS

Long Road to Justice The African American Experience in the Massachusetts Courts

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➔ Pre-Exhibit Lesson #1

AFRICANS IN COLONIAL MASSACHUSETTS & THE BODY OF LIBERTIES

Note to Teachers:

We do not know the names of the first Africans who arrived in the Massachusetts Bay colony. What we do know are the events that led to their arrival. African people were first brought to Massachusetts in 1638 as part of an exchange. The treaty that ended the Pequot War stated that the surviving Native American people were barred from living freely in their former territory. Some Native people were enslaved locally, others shipped to Bermuda. Enslaved African people were sent to the Massachusetts Bay colony in their place.

Slavery and indentured servitude were common practices in all of the European colonies in the Western Hemisphere at this time. Massachusetts Bay Colony made slavery legal in 1638. In 1641 the Massachusetts General Court established the first legal code by colonists in New England. This code specified laws pertaining to the treatment of “servants,” a category that included enslaved people. In contrast with southern colonies, enslaved Africans in Massachusetts had rights that were delineated in the Body of Liberties. As the **Long Road to Justice** exhibit points out, “Despite losing their freedom and personal autonomy, Massachusetts slaves retained access to the courts. They could give legal testimony under oath and bring civil actions to obtain their freedom.” A fascinating example of African Americans using the courts to advance their freedom is the case of Jenny Slew from Ipswich, Massachusetts – a case explored by students in the extension activity for this lesson.

Key Questions:

- ❑ How has the relationship between African Americans and the Massachusetts legal system evolved?
- ❑ How has the legal system of Massachusetts protected the rights of African Americans?
- ❑ How has the legal system constricted the rights and opportunities of African Americans? How has the African American community responded?

Activity 1 – Discussion of “Justice” and “Liberty”

Activity 2 – Reading the Body of Liberties

Activity 3 – Exploring Online Extensions

Student Activities:

Activity 1 – Discussion of “Justice” and “Liberty”

1. In your words, define **justice** and **liberty**.
2. “*With Liberty and Justice for all.*” Where do these words come from? What does this expression mean to you? Do you believe that there is liberty and justice for all in the United States? Using your experience, the experiences of people that you know, and what you have read or heard through the media, explain why you agree or disagree with this assertion.
3. If you felt that people were not being treated fairly or were being discriminated against, how might you work to solve this problem?

Activity 2 – Reading the Body of Liberties

Ask students to read excerpts (next page) from the **Body of Liberties** and then respond to the following:

1. Make a list of **five** interesting details or ideas you noticed in the text.
2. What is the authors’ purpose in creating the text?
3. Based on your reading of this excerpt, list the rights that enslaved people were guaranteed.
4. What are some of the responses you can imagine people may have had to this text? [Note: prompt students to consider a variety of people and their perspectives.]
5. Brainstorm **five** questions for further study. Consider questions you might ask about the text, its authors, or the time period.

Modification:

- Provide students with a simplified summary of the three paragraphs. Or have students help to paraphrase the legal statements in modern and simplified language.
- Read the simplified text together and check for understanding line by line.

Activity 3 – Exploring Online Extensions

- Have students read or listen to the “Mass Moment” *First Slaves Arrive in Massachusetts* and explore the supporting materials, including the primary document, *Letter 1645*.
<http://massmoments.org/index.cfm?mid=64>
- Ask students to read and summarize the case of Jenny Slew of Ipswich, Massachusetts, who petitioned for her freedom in the 1760s.
<https://ipswich.wordpress.com/2014/01/10/freedom-for-jenny-slew/>
- Have students review the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union website page: *Know Your Rights*. Questions for students to consider include, what categories of rights do you observe in this document? What limitations on your rights do you see? Which are most relevant to you? Which do you consider the most important right, and why? <https://aclum.org/resources/know-your-rights/>

BODY OF LIBERTIES (*Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1641*)

#12. Every man whether Inhabitant or fforreiner, free or not free shall have libertie to come to any publique Court, Councel, or Towne meeting, and either by speech or writeing to move any lawfull, seasonable, and materiall question, or to present any necessary motion, complaint, petition, Bill or information, whereof that meeting hath proper cognizance, so it be done in convenient time, due order, and respective manner.

Source: <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/masslib.html>

Liberties of Forreiners and Strangers.

#91. There shall never be any bond slaverie, villinage or Captivitie amongst us unles it be lawfull Captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly selle themselves or are sold to us. And these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of god established in Israell concerning such persons doeth morally require. This exempts none from servitude who shall be Judged thereto by Authoritie.

Source: <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/masslib.html>

Liberties of Servants.

#85. If any servants shall flee from the Tiranny and crueltie of their masters to the howse of any freeman of the same Towne, they shall be there protected and susteyned till due order be taken for their relife. Provided due notice thereof be speedily given to their maisters from whom they fled. And the next Assistant or Constable where the partie flying is harboured.

Source: <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/masslib.html>

Further Reading:

“Slavery in Massachusetts,” *Slavery in the North*

<http://slavenorth.com/massachusetts.htm>



➔ Pre-Exhibit Lesson #2

SLAVERY, EMANCIPATION AND THE MASSACHUSETTS CONSTITUTION

Note to Teachers:

“Why didn’t they fight back?” is often a question that young people ask when they hear about slavery. There is no question that enslaved people wanted to be free and took steps to attain freedom in every region of the colonies (later, the states) where they were held captive, including Massachusetts.

Primary sources, such as New England’s newspapers, tell this story. In colonial and post-independence newspapers, for example, there are numerous announcements seeking the return of runaways from cities and towns around Massachusetts. The newspapers also reveal the importance of slavery to northern colonial economies, demonstrated in the frantic effort of owners to recover their lost “property.”

As the story unfolds through historical documents, we can see that enslaved Africans sought their freedom using any means available to them. Students learned in the previous lesson that enslaved black colonists petitioned for their freedom under the Massachusetts Body of Liberties. During the American Revolution some black colonists earned their freedom fighting in the war; others found ways to earn money in order to purchase their freedom. With the creation of the Massachusetts Constitution (ratified 1780), a new possibility for freedom emerged. In this lesson students can explore how slaves used both civil disobedience and the Massachusetts Constitution to attain freedom—a topic developed in the **Long Road to Justice** exhibit through the cases of Elizabeth Freeman (“Mum Bett”) and Quock Walker.

Finally, students in this lesson are asked to consider, what is the price of freedom? What are people willing to sacrifice in order to be free?

Key Questions:

- ❑ How has the relationship between African Americans and the Massachusetts legal system evolved?
- ❑ What individual rights are guaranteed under the Massachusetts Constitution?
- ❑ What are people willing to give up in order to gain freedom?

Activity 1 – Analyzing Primary Sources: Runaway Slave Ads

Activity 2 – Reading the Massachusetts Constitution

Activity 3 – Researching the Life of Elizabeth Freeman

Activity 1 – Analyzing Primary Sources

Runaway Slave Ads

RAN – AWAY

From *Henry Sewall*, Esq; of *Brookline*, on the 20th of October Infant, a Molatto Servant named PETER, a slim Fellow, about 16 years of age, has straight black hair; and has light coloured cloaths. Whoever takes up said Servant, and will bring him to his Master, shall have THREE DOLLARS Reward, and necessary Charges paid.

Masters of vessels and other Persons are hereby cautioned against harboring, concealing or carrying off said Servant, as they would avoid the Penalty of Law;

The Massachusetts Gazette, and Boston News-letter,
Nov 5, 1767.

Run away, last night, from *James Mugford*, of this town, a Negro boy named Jack, about 16 years of age; had on when he went off, an old hat, blue jacket, ... shirt, dirty white breeches, no linings, dark grey stockings, large men's shoes, with odd buckles, turns his right foot out, and his right knee bends in, has a small scar on his nose just between his eyes. It's likely he stole a horse, as he carried off a bridle, and there is a horse missing. Whoever will take up said Negro, ... that his master may have him again shall have *Six dollars* Reward and all reasonable charges paid by James Mugford.

N.B. All masters of vessels are forbid carrying him off.

The Independent Chronicle. And the Universal Advertiser (Boston),
Marblehead, November 2, 1776

Run away from the Subscriber the 30th ult, a light coloured Negro Lad, named Osmer, about 16 years old; a likely Countenance; of a middle size; a Black-Smith by trade, he lately sheared the Wool off his Head. Whoever will take up said Negro, and return him to his Master, or secure him, so that he may be obtained, shall receive ten Dollars reward and all necessary Charges paid.

N.B. All Masters of Vessels and others are cautioned against harbouring or carrying of said Negro. Ebenezer Richardson... Billerica, Sept. 29, 1784.

American Herald,
October 25, 1784

Source: Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA
<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/digitalaas>

Questions to Consider:

After reading each of the ads for runaways, use the following questions to analyze these primary sources:

1. List the dates and locations of each advertisement.
2. Locate the cities or towns mentioned in each advertisement on a current or historic map of Massachusetts or by using Google Maps. What are some things you notice about these places? What inferences can you draw, if any? (An example for teachers: Marblehead is on the water, which could have aided escape.)
3. List five other details that you noticed while reading each ad. What did you notice that you did not expect? What pattern emerges through these three ads?
4. What do these advertisements tell us about life in 18th century Massachusetts?
5. What was happening in colonial America at the time these ads were placed in newspapers? How do you think readers may have responded? How might concurrent events have affected colonists' attitudes toward people seeking freedom?
6. Brainstorm five questions for further study. Consider questions you might ask about the owners, the people who sought freedom, or the time period.

Modification:

- Help students rewrite the ads in modern and simplified language before they attempt to interpret them. See if they can identify errors of spelling or grammar. (You might also point out the lack of language standardization in the colonial period.)
- Focus on questions 1-3.

Activity 2 – Reading the Massachusetts Constitution

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Constitution

In the infancy of the United States, the Massachusetts Constitution – written and approved in 1779, ratified in 1780 – played a pivotal role in the evolution of the nation's governance. It was also instrumental (if indirectly so) in ending slavery in Massachusetts. As you read this excerpt from the Constitution consider the following questions/challenges.

1. Highlight three ideas central to democracy expressed in the Preamble.
2. What individual rights are protected in Article 1 of the constitution? In 1976, Article 1 was amended. How is the amended Article 1 different from the original? Why do you think those changes were made?
3. Who is the intended audience for this document? Why was it written?
4. Can laws have unintended consequences? Do you think the authors of this document in 1779 intended to end slavery? Do you think they intended to render equality to women?
5. Extension Question (for students studying the U.S. Constitution): John Adams was the primary author of the Massachusetts Constitution in 1779. How did his thinking, as reflected in this earlier document, affect the development of American government on the national level?

Modification:

- Students can focus their reading on “Part the First – Article I” only, and answer questions 2, 3 and 4.

PREAMBLE.

The end of the institution, maintenance, and administration of government, is to secure the existence of the body politic, to protect it, and to furnish the individuals who compose it with the power of enjoying in safety and **tranquility** their *natural rights*, and the blessings of life: and whenever these great objects are not obtained, the people have a right to alter the government, and to take measures necessary for their safety, prosperity and happiness.

The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: it is a **social compact**, by which the whole people **covenants** with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good. It is the duty of the people, therefore, in framing a constitution of government, to provide for an **equitable** mode of making laws, as well as for an impartial interpretation, and a faithful **execution** of them; that every man may, at all times, find his security in them.

We, therefore, the people of Massachusetts, acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the goodness of the great Legislator of the universe, in affording us, in the course of His providence, an opportunity, deliberately and peaceably, without fraud, violence or surprise, of entering into an original, **explicit**, and solemn **compact** with each other; and of forming a new constitution of civil government, for ourselves and **posterity**; and devoutly **imploping** His direction in so interesting a design, do agree upon, ordain and establish the following *Declaration of Rights, and Frame of Government*, as the CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

PART THE FIRST

A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Article I. All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and **unalienable** rights; among which may be **reckoned** the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness. [Annulled by Amendments, Art. [CVI](#).]

Article CVI. [Article I of Part the First of the Constitution](#) is hereby annulled and the following is adopted:-

All people are born free and equal and have certain natural, essential and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness. Equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed or national origin (1976).

Online Resources to Support Further Exploration of the Massachusetts Constitution:

State Approves Constitution

<http://massmoments.org/moment.cfm?mid=176>

John Adams and the Massachusetts Constitution

<http://www.mass.gov/courts/court-info/sjc/edu-res-center/jn-adams/mass-constitution-1-gen.html>

Long Road to Justice: The African American Experience in the Massachusetts Courts

Teacher's Guide by Primary Source www.primarysource.org

Activity 3 – Reading and Researching the Life of Elizabeth Freeman

It has been reported that Elizabeth Freeman said, “Any time, any time while I was a slave, if one minute’s freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told I must die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it- just to stand on God’s (Earth) a free woman.” Using the online links below, research and read about the life of Elizabeth Freeman. Who was Elizabeth Freeman? Why is she important in Massachusetts history? How did she use her knowledge of the laws of Massachusetts to gain her freedom and help end slavery in the Commonwealth?

“Mum Bett Challenges Slavery” from **Long Road to Justice**

<http://www.longroadtojustice.org/topics/slavery/mum-bett.php>

Elizabeth Freeman

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p39.html>

<https://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00516/chapter5.pdf>

Judge Decides in favor of “Mum Bett” Freeman

<http://massmoments.org/moment.cfm?mid=244>

Modification:

Students can read one of these biographies in pairs (or listen to it being read) and take notes on a graphic organizer using the questions above:

- Felton, Harold W. *Mumbet: The Story of Elizabeth Freeman*. (Dodd, Mead and Co., 1970).
- Rose, Ben Z. *Mother of Freedom: Mum Bett and the Roots of Abolition*. (Treeline Press, 2009).

Online resources to support study of abolition in Massachusetts:

The Case for Ending Slavery

<http://www.masshist.org/education/loc-slavery/index.php>

Additional Resources:

Bly, Antonio T. “A Likely Negro’: Using Runaway-Slave Advertisements to Teach Slavery,” in Bethany Jay and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, eds. , *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. (University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).

Hidden Brookline: Slavery to Freedom

<http://hiddenbrookline.org/about/index.html>

Melish, Joanne Pope. *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860*. (Cornell University Press, 1998).

Romer, Robert H. *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts*. (Levellers Press, Florence, MA, 2009).

Royall House and Slave Quarters

<http://www.royallhouse.org>

Long Road to Justice: The African American Experience in the Massachusetts Courts
Teacher’s Guide by Primary Source www.primarysource.org



➔ Pre-Exhibit Lesson #3

EDUCATION, AGENCY AND LEGISLATION: THE ANTEBELLUM STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL SCHOOLS

Note to Teachers:

*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty Five
An Act concerning the Public Schools*

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: Any child unlawfully excluded from [any] Public School instruction in this Commonwealth, shall recover damages therefor (with full costs), in an action or case, to be brought in the name of said child by his guardian, or next friend (in the court of common pleas), against the city or town, in which such school is situated.

African American parents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries knew that freedom and literacy were inextricably bound together. They observed that literacy wielded power in the world. As tax paying citizens they believed it was the right of their children to have free public education. When access to education was denied, they knew their rights were being infringed based on the beliefs and values of a larger community that considered African Americans inferior. Despite these obstacles African American communities insisted on educating their children. How they faced the three- pronged challenge of segregation, lack of access to quality education, and discriminatory or degrading treatment in schools exemplified the power of unified communities and people of color acting on their own behalf.

The remedies they sought varied with the context. In an attempt to shelter black children from prejudice and discrimination, Prince Hall petitioned the Boston School Committee in 1787 requesting a separate school for black students. Paul Cuffee, an African American ship builder and owner, built a school on his property in Westport, Massachusetts and invited students of all races to attend. After Nantucket's African American residents petitioned its school committee seeking equal access to education and lost, they petitioned the state legislature. The result of this later action was the 1845 law guaranteeing access to education for all Massachusetts children.

Yet some towns and cities continued to practice racial segregation. The 1845 law was in turn the foundation for the 1850 Boston Public Schools desegregation case known as *Roberts v. The City of Boston*. As summarized in the **Long Road to Justice** exhibit, “Sarah and Benjamin Roberts lost their legal challenge in the Massachusetts courts. However, their efforts anticipated the successful struggle for civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*—more than a century after little Sarah Roberts was a student.”

Key Questions:

- ❑ How does an idea become a law? What is the process that Massachusetts residents can use to affect the state’s policies and practices?
- ❑ How has the relationship between African Americans and the Massachusetts legal system evolved?
- ❑ How has the agency of African Americans generated change in educational policy?

Activity 1-3 – Primary Source Analysis: Illustration from an Anti-Slavery Almanac

Activity 4 – Using Online Extensions to Introduce the Legislative Process

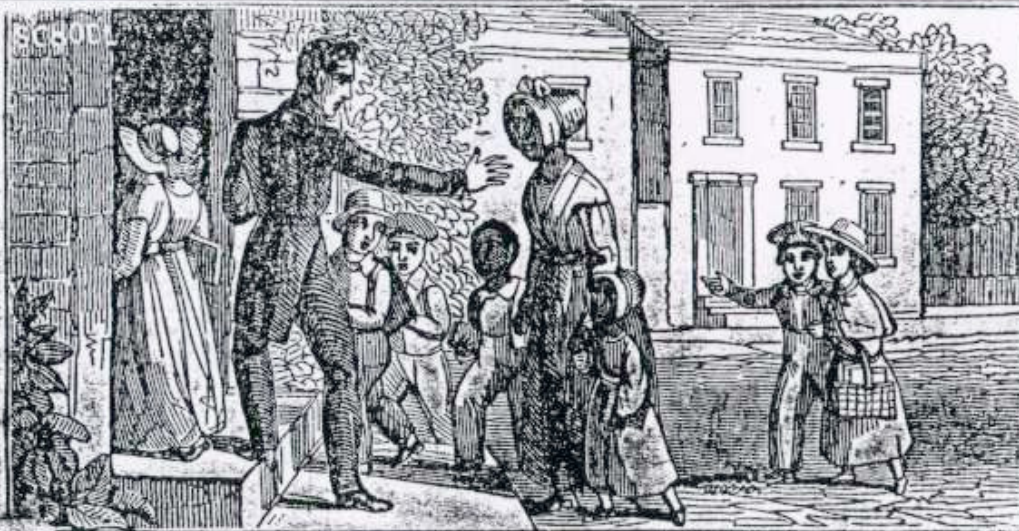
Activity 5 – Comparing and Contrasting Petitions to the State Legislature: Case Study from Nantucket

Activity 1-3 – Primary Source Analysis: Illustration from an Anti-Slavery Almanac

Note to Teachers:

Anti-Slavery Almanacs

According to the American Antiquarian Society, almanacs dating from as early as 1656 were abundant and essential pieces of literature in colonial households. When books were a luxury, almanacs provided information for farmers and navigators as well as advice for living. Today the one that is best-known is Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanac*. Less familiar is the work of Benjamin Banneker, a free man of color. Banneker, a resident of Maryland, published and sold his annual almanac from 1792-1797. His work contradicted widespread opinion of the time that Africans were intellectually inferior to whites.



COLORED SCHOLARS EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOLS.

"If the *free* colored people were generally taught to read, it might be an inducement to them to remain in this country. **WE WOULD OFFER THEM NO SUCH INDUCEMENT.**"—*Rev. Mr. Converse, a colonizationist, formerly of N. H. now editor of the Southern Religious Telegraph.*

In those parts of the country where the persecuting spirit of colonization has been colonized, such exclusion has ceased.

During the 19th century abolitionists published antislavery almanacs to inform Americans about the horrors of slavery. Almanacs typically included thirteen woodcuts, one for each month and the cover. Each image informed readers about the experiences of enslaved people as well as the dangers and discrimination that free people of color faced. The woodcut, *Excluded*, which students analyze in the activities that follow, focused its attention on incidents of educational discrimination against black children; the caption below the image revealed the almanac's anti-colonizationist stance (an opposition to African resettlement that was widespread though not universal in the African American community in this period). The accompanying article highlighted the dangers of insufficient education in a democratic society.

For Teacher Background on Anti-Slavery Almanacs:

The Anti Slavery Almanac- background notes

<http://www.teachushistory.org/second-great-awakening-age-reform/resources/anti-slavery-almanac>

1839 Anti Slavery Almanac

<http://www.slideshare.net/S7w5Xb/asx05a>

Biographical sketch of Benjamin Banneker

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p84.html>

Student Activities:

Activity 1 – Analyzing a Primary Source



Questions to consider:

1. Describe what you see. What do you notice first? What people and objects are shown? When do you think the image was made?
2. What is happening in this image?
3. Why do you think this image was created?
4. Who do you think was the audience for this image?
5. If someone made this today, what would be different? What issue might be at the heart of the image?
6. What questions emerged for you?

Activity 2 – Walking in Their Shoes through Writing

Select a person in the image to walk in their shoes. Tell the story of what is happening from their point of view, at that time. What might you be thinking if you were one of the people in this image? Describe how that person might feel. What might your thoughts be as the action is taking place or upon reflection later in the day?

Activity 3 – Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be well educated?
2. Who is responsible for making sure children are well educated?
3. How might a person's life be affected by a good or an inadequate education?
4. How does a community ensure that their children's educational needs are being met?

Activity 4 – Introducing the Legislative Process in Massachusetts: From Petition to Legislation

The following online resources can be used to introduce students to the “right of petition” and how a petition is considered as a piece of legislation:

1. ***The Ladybug Story: A Story About Lawmaking***

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/ciskid/kidlbs/lbsidx2.htm>

The Ladybug is the official bug for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This link recounts the story and the legislative process that brought this about in easy-to-understand language. (4th grade to 8th grade)

2. ***The Legislative Process***

<http://www.massbar.org/legislative-activities/the-legislative-process>

This webpage is designed for people who are serious about petitioning the state legislature. The language has some technical terms, so students may need assistance with some of the process. (7th grade to 12th grade)

3. ***How an Idea Became a Law***

<https://malegislature.gov/Engage/HowIdeaBecomesLaw>

This web page is organized in a student-friendly format; it outlines the steps taken by the Massachusetts Legislature in a list format. The language is straightforward. (7th grade to 12th grade)

Activity 5 – Weighing the Evidence: Reading Petitions from Nantucket Community Members (Nineteenth Century)

On the following pages you will find three petitions from the Nantucket community in the 1840s. Students will need to summarize the position of each petition.

Questions to consider:

1. Why did the families who sent petition #1 make their request for a law regarding public education?
2. What is the main argument presented in each petition? What is the specific request to the legislature in each document?
3. What evidence does each provide to support its request?

Petition by Black families of Nantucket

To the Senate and the House of representatives of Massachusetts, in the General Court assembled...

The undersigned inhabitants of Nantucket respectfully represent that they have between thirty and forty children who are deprived of their right to equal instruction with other children, in our Common schools; and that they can have no instruction from the town, unless they submit to insults and outrages upon their rights, quite equal to being imprisoned in a South Carolina jail; and for no other reason but, color. They have applied to some of the finest lawyers in the Commonwealth, and are informed that they can get no redress, through the law as it is; they therefore pray that there be some enactment, which will protect all children in their equal right to the schools, against the majorities of school committees; or that those who assemble in town meetings.

Edward Pompey Phebe Lucas Absalom Boston Hannah Boston William Leary
Caroline Clough Charles Williams Susan Harris Charles Geoffrey Margaret Burns
Lewis Beny Phebe Williams James Williams Sophia Geoffrey James Rossgrove
Jane Williams Henry Johnson Ann Cooper Benjamin Boston Sarah Ross
Henry Wheeler Ann Johnson

Petition #2 from Nantucket

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The memorial of the undersigned inhabitants and legal voters of the town of Nantucket, respectfully represents: That they have seen with surprise the petition of certain colored residents of this place, presented to the Legislature setting forth that some thirty or forty children are “deprived of their right to equal instruction in our common schools, and that they can have no instruction from the town unless they submit to insult and outrage” and praying for some enactment that “may protect all children in their equal rights to the schools” etc Now your memorialists beg leave to state that the said colored inhabitants, with very few exceptions, reside in a distinct portion of the town, forming a neighborhood of themselves. That there now is, and has been throughout the year past, maintained by the town, in the very midst of said neighborhood, an excellent school, capable of accommodating fifty scholars, where in is employed a male teacher competent according to law to give instruction in all the branches of learning taught in any of our public schools, with the exception only of the High School. That the peculiar location of these inhabitants, and no other cause, has hitherto prevented the admission of their children into any of the numerous other schools, situated in different parts of the town. That whenever any colored children may abide in other sections of the town, they are freely admitted to the schools in the vicinity of their said residence. That if said colored children have at any time been

deprived, as alleged “of their right to equal instruction” it has been through the influence of individuals who have persuaded them, in violation of law, not to attend the school provided for them; and not through any action of the school committee, or the great body of their constituents. Said colored children having been kept from the school thus established at their doors, in despite of the efforts of the school committee to cause their attendance, the School house aforesaid is now, of necessity, occupied chiefly by white children, coming from greater distances, who would forthwith be transferred, so soon as the said colored inhabitants may please to avail themselves of the ample provision made by the in the premises. Your memorialists therefore remonstrate against the positions erroneously assumed by the petitioners aforesaid, and against those who are manifestly ignorant of the facts in the case - and pray that the design thereof, having a tendency to disturb the order and prosperity of our school system, may not be subserved through any untoward legislation in this subject.

Nathaniel Fitzgerald Henry Swain Edward Mead Timothy Fitzgerald
Jason H. Starbuck John A. Brown Jared Macy Wm. Coffin Charles Bunker
M. Derby Davis Fordham 2nd et al.

Petition #3 from Eunice Ross

To the Hon. Senate and House of Representatives of the state of Massachusetts

The Undersigned respectfully requests that the prayer of the petition of E. J. Pompey and others may be granted. The undersigned has good reason to feel on this subject, as she was examined in 1840 by the School Committee, and found amply qualified for admission into the High School at Nantucket, and was refused admittance by a vote of the town, instructing the School Committee not to admit her, on account of her colour.

Eunice Ross

Source: **Massachusetts State Archive; digitized on the Massachusetts Studies Program** website (<http://www.msp.umb.edu/>). Access the African American section <http://www.msp.umb.edu/afam/index.html> and from there, the tab for **Primary Sources**. Each of the petitions is from the Massachusetts Archive; they are numbered 629- Eunice Ross, 627- Nathaniel Fitzgerald and others & 626 -Edward Pompey and Others.

Additional Resources:

Stephen Kendrick and Paul Kendrick, *Sarah's Long Walk: The Free Blacks of Boston and How Their Struggle for Equality Changed America*. (Beacon Press, 2006).

Barbara White, "The Integration of Nantucket Public Schools."
Nantucket Historical Association, Volume 40, # 3 (Fall 1992)
<http://www.nha.org/history/hn/HN-n40n3-white.htm>

Legislature Guarantees Right to Public Education, *Mass Moments*
<http://massmoments.org/moment.cfm?mid=93>

The Fight for Equal Education, *Mass Moments*
<http://massmoments.org/teachers/lesson.cfm?lid=22>

For Children:

Susan E. Goodman, *The First Step: How One Girl Put Segregation on Trial* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).
The Sarah Roberts case, for middle elementary readers.

Barbara Ann White, *A Line in The Sand*
(Spinner Publications; First edition, 2009).
The struggle for school equality in Nantucket related for younger readers.

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