

John Randolph's Negroes. Editorial, *Cincinnati Gazette*, reprinted in *The True American* July 15, 1846, p. 3.

This editorial demonstrates the capacity of northern white opinion to decry the cruelty of slavery in one breath and, in the next, to deny accommodation to its victims.

John Randolph, by will, gave freedom to his slaves and provided the means for their settlement in Ohio. Yesterday they passed through our city in Ohio on their way to the settlements purchased for them in the interior.

The troop was a large one. There appeared to lie some three hundred in it. It was composed of people of all ages and all sizes, and attracted no little attention.

In themselves, as they marched along, they bore testimony against Slavery. Their master had enjoyed the benefit of their services while he lived. For him they toiled. They worked daily, year in and year out; but the sweat of their face was spent for another, and not for themselves. Was *this* just? Death drew nigh; he felt its approach, and when told he must pass away, he summoned all his energy, as he remembered his slaves, and the various contradictory wills he had made with regard to them, and, also, what they had done for him, and said to the Physician by his side, "*Remember they are free.*" He would be just to them ere he met his God. He dared not die with the iniquity of human bondage resting upon his soul.

Well—they are free! The boon of mankind is theirs. But are they prepared to enjoy it? Their old master had means enough out of their labor to prepare them all for this step. He could travel in foreign lands; sport and spend freely on the race course; scatter profusely, or hold closely the money made by them, as fitful gleams of generosity, or hard grippings of avarice, seized and controlled him. For self, he would do as whim or caprice directed; but *for them*, in the way of enlightenment, he did nothing. And it was not till life's doings were spread out before him, and all of the past was concentrated in the brief hour of death, that he had the courage to declare orally that they should enjoy, untaught and unprepared as they were, what God meant should be common to all his creatures—freedom!

And now, the poor creatures are among us!— Why should this be? We have nothing to do with Slavery, and it is neither our interest, nor our duty, to add to the ignorance of our state, in

any way. Let us recall, in part, this remark. This emigration of John Randolph's negroes proves that we *have* something to do with slavery. And evidently, the people of Virginia think so too. For whenever their eyes get opened, because they hear the call of death, or know it is nigh, the first step is, to free their slaves, that they may lull the unquiet knowings [sic] of conscience—the next, to send them to Ohio, that they may be free! We have already several colored settlements among us,— And pray, why does not Virginia and Kentucky retain their freed blacks? What right have they to be pouring in upon us their helpless, new made free! We very much fear that the common objection made in the Slave States, that we, as Free Slates, have nothing to do with Slavery, will turn out on examination, to be eminently untrue, in more respects than one. Cincinnati Gazette.