

## GEORGE WASHINGTON'S CHARACTER AND SLAVERY

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### ABSTRACT

George Washington's ownership of slaves has been a point of much debate by not only Washington scholars but by civil rights advocates. The debate continues as to whether the many achievements and legacy of "The Father of His Country" ought to be measured against or with consideration to his participation in the practice of slavery. The complex character of the man is revisited with an examination of his contradictory and varied perspectives on the institution of slavery.

### INTRODUCTION

George Washington's character was recognized as sterling during his lifetime, and the assumption that he would be the first president played a key role in the formulation and adoption of the Constitution. Even during his lifetime he was revered by many, and after his death he was exalted almost to the point of apotheosis. At the dedication of the Washington Monument in 1885, Robert C. Winthrop declared: "Does not that Colossal Unit remind all who gaze at it... that there is one name in American history above all other names, one character more exalted than all other characters, ... one bright particular star in ... our firmament, whose guiding light and peerless lustre are for all men and all ages ... ?"<sup>1</sup>

More recent scholars have also written of Washington's admirable character. Seymour Martin Lipset argues that Washington's character was essential to the founding of the Republic because of his personal prestige, his commitment to the principles of constitutional government, and his key precedent of leaving office after two terms.<sup>2</sup> David Abshire argues that Washington was not perfect, but that he learned from his experience, and his public character was not different from his private behavior.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Epstein writes that Washington's "genius was perhaps the rarest kind of all: a genius for discerning right action so strong that he was utterly incapable of knowingly doing anything wrong." Epstein laments: "Each generation of our politicians today, at the end of their careers, happily peddle their influence in large law firms, or simply set up as

straight for causes in which they can have no real belief. Washington would have been aghast...<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Washington would have been aghast if he knew about modern politicians cashing in on their government experience. But then, modern politicians do not have slaves to provide for their economic well being. The question to be addressed here is: what light does slavery shed on the nature of Washington's character?

### WASHINGTON'S CHANGING ATTITUDE ON SLAVERY

George Washington was born into a slave-holding family, and he continued to increase his human property until late in his life. When he was eleven years old in 1743, Washington's father died and left him ten slaves. When Washington's half-brother died in 1752, he inherited a larger number of slaves. In an agreement with his half-brother's widow, Washington acquired Mount Vernon along with 18 more Negro slaves; he eventually added 5,600 acres of land to Mount Vernon. In 1759, when Washington married the widow, Martha Dandridge Custis, she brought with her several hundred more slaves. The slaves who came with Martha were legally "dower slaves," and Washington kept them separate in his financial accounting, though for practical purposes they were used as Washington's property in the running of Mount Vernon. Although the counts may not be exact due to conflicting records, Washington's slave holdings steadily increased during his lifetime, from 49 in 1760, to 87 in 1770, to 135 in 1774, to 317 when he died in 1799.<sup>5</sup>

Through most of Washington's life up to the Revolutionary War, his attitude toward slavery was much like that of most slave owners in the American South. He fed them adequately as important components of the operation of his plantation at Mount Vernon.<sup>6</sup> Though Washington did not encourage whipping of slaves by his overseers, he did condone it when deemed necessary for discipline.<sup>7</sup> He bought and sold slaves and threatened to sell disruptive slaves to owners in the West Indies as the ultimate enforcement of discipline. Conditions in the West Indies were even harsher than in the mainland colonies and later United States, and the tropical climate and probability of disease made the threat a serious one. For instance, in 1766 Washington wrote to Captain Joseph Thompson, a slave trader, that:

With this Letter comes a Negro (Tom) which I beg the favour of you to sell... for whatever he will fetch... This Fellow is both a Rogue & Runaway... [though] he is exceedingly healthy, strong, and good at the Hoe... and [I] must beg the favour of you (least he should [sic] attempt his escape) to keep him handcuffd till you get to Sea...<sup>8</sup>

Nor did Washington hesitate to pursue slaves who escaped his plantation.

It appears that Washington's attitude toward slavery, though not his public position, began to change during the Revolutionary War when he left Mount Vernon to lead the Continental Army.<sup>9</sup> Washington's change of perspective may have stemmed from the necessity of extending to slaves the opportunity to enlist in the Continental Army. Initially, when Washington went to Massachusetts to lead the Continental Army in 1775,

he removed the free Negro soldiers from the Army.<sup>10</sup> Southern slave owners did not want to take the risk of allowing slaves to join the army and bear arms. But, in 1775, Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation that any Negro who joined the British forces would be granted freedom. Washington thus felt compelled to allow the free blacks to reenlist and fight with the revolutionary forces, lest they constitute an effective force for the British against their former owners.<sup>11</sup> During the War, with blacks constituting 20 percent of his army, Washington treated Negroes as human beings and with the respect due to any soldier.<sup>12</sup> He also witnessed their willingness to fight and die for the revolutionary cause. After the War, perhaps because of his experience, Washington's attitude toward slavery began to change, though his public position did not.

In the winter of 1778-1779, Washington considered selling his slaves and investing the capital, in part because he did not want to "traffic in the human species," but he did not seriously pursue the idea.<sup>13</sup> In 1783, the Marquis de Lafayette proposed that he and Washington establish a small estate and work it with free Negroes as tenants rather than slaves, and added that "Such an example as yours might render it a general practice..."<sup>14</sup> Washington praised Lafayette's character, but nothing ever came of the proposal. In 1786, Washington wrote to Robert Morris, "I can only say that no man living wishes more sincerely than I do to see the abolition of [slavery]... by slow, sure, and imperceptible degrees."<sup>15</sup> Washington's contemporary, David Humphreys, quoted Washington as regretting the institution of slavery: "The unfortunate condition of the persons whose labors I in part employed has been the only unavoidable subject of regret."<sup>16</sup> Though Washington had resolved not to sell his slaves, when he returned to Mount Vernon after the War, he continued to manage his estate, fully utilizing the slave labor that was essential to its economic viability.

When Washington went to Philadelphia to preside over the Constitutional Convention, it was widely known that he was one of the largest slave holders in Virginia. At the Convention, his prestige and reputation was second to none, and he weighed his actions and words carefully because he was aware of their political effect. His acceptance of the institution of slavery and refusal to make any public statement against it, undoubtedly influenced the deliberations of the delegates against taking any steps against slavery, despite some strong arguments to do so.<sup>17</sup> But it is also probably that if the Constitution had contained proscriptions on slavery that the southern states would not have ratified it.

As president, Washington was careful to stay neutral on the slavery issue. His only official act on the issue was to sign the Fugitive Slave Law, which was passed by Congress in February 1793. In 1791, in Philadelphia, President Washington feared that if he was considered legally a resident, his household slaves might be automatically freed. He ordered Tobias Lear, his aide, to take some of his slaves back to Mount Vernon. "I wish to have it accomplished under a pretext that may deceive both them and the public... I request that these sentiments and this advice may be known to none but *yourself* and *Mrs. Washington*."<sup>18</sup>

In 1793, Washington "entertained serious thoughts" of dividing his Mount Vernon estate and renting the land to English farmers who would employ his slaves as free

laborers. Washington could thus live off of the rent. His purpose was "to liberate a certain species of property which I possess very repugantly to my own feelings, but which imperious necessity compels, and until I can substitute some other expedient by which expenses not in my power to avoid (however well disposed I may be to do it) can be defrayed."<sup>19</sup> Washington was not able to find suitable English farmers to rent Mount Vernon.

Despite Washington's private reservation about slavery, as late as 1796 when he was president, he sought the return of Oney Judge, a slave who had escaped to New Hampshire. Denouncing "the ingratitude of the girl," he wrote in a letter that she "ought not to escape with impunity if it can be avoided."<sup>20</sup> On the day in 1797 that Washington departed Philadelphia after his presidency to return to Mount Vernon, one of his other slaves escaped rather than return to work on the plantation. Washington sought this slave's return, but feared he had to replace him by buying another slave. He wrote to Major George Lewis, "The running off of my cook has been a most inconvenient thing to this family, and what renders it more disagreeable, is, that I had resolved never to become the master of another slave by *purchase*, but this resolution I fear I must break."<sup>21</sup> He continued to seek the return of his property into 1798, the year before his death, though he did not purchase another slave.

### HOW GENERAL WAS THE ACCEPTANCE OF SLAVERY?

It has been argued that Washington grew up in an era and in a part of the country where slavery was taken for granted and widely accepted by the white population, and thus he should not be held to account for his behavior with respect to owning slaves. This perspective maintains that we should not impose twentieth century values on eighteenth century people and blame them for violating what are only recently accepted as human rights. While this argument might be accepted with respect to some aspects of changing attitudes toward human rights, such as economic and political rights, the issue of slavery is much more basic. The owning and disposition as property of other human beings, despite various precedents in human history<sup>22</sup>, is such a basic breach of human values that it is hard to excuse. Other forms of economic or social exploitation pale in comparison with the evil of slavery. Thus, we must acknowledge that Washington, even though he was more humane than some other slave owners, may have had a character flaw in his behavior with respect to slavery.

His culpability for his behavior might be mitigated if slavery was so universally accepted that no one was speaking out against it. But from the earliest days of the European colonization of North America, voice had been raised against slavery by religious groups such as the Methodists, Puritans, Quakers, and Mennonites, and by prominent individuals such as James Oglethorpe, William Penn, and Roger Williams. In 1785, for instance, a Virginia Quaker, Robert Pleasants, wrote a letter to Washington saying, in part:

How strange then must it appear to impartial thinking men, to be informed, that many who were warm advocates for that noble cause during the War, are now siting [sic] down in a state of ease, dissipation and extravagance [sic] on the labour of Slaves? ... It seems highly probable to me, that thy example & influence at this time, towards a general emancipation, would be as productive of real happiness to mankind, as thy Sword may have been: I can but wish therefore, that thou may not loose the oportunity [sic] of Crowning the great Actions of thy Life, with the sattisfaction [sic] of, "doing to Others as thou would (in the like Situation) be done by," and finally transmit to future ages a Character, equally Famous for thy Christian Virtues, as thy wordly achievements...<sup>23</sup>

There is no record that Washington ever responded to the letter.<sup>24</sup>

Washington's unwillingness to abandon slavery or even speak out against it can be contrasted with some other Founders at the Constitutional Convention, such as Luther Martin and Gouverneur Morris, both of whom denounced slavery at the Convention. John Adams was a consistent opponent of slavery.<sup>25</sup> George Mason, a slave owner who was a close friend and neighbor of Washington, sought the end of trading in slaves, declaring: "This infernal traffic originated in the avarice of British Merchants... Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant... By an inevitable chain of cause & effects providence punishes national sins, by national calamities... the Genl. Govt. Should have the power to prevent the increase of slavery."<sup>26</sup> But Mason's position against the slave trade did not mean that he favored giving the national government the authority to abolish slavery. Virginians had an economic interest in the continuation of slavery, and their own slave property would multiply naturally; thus they would benefit from the ending of the slave trade in the United States, but did not want their own slaves to be freed.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, not all Virginians accepted slavery as natural and inevitable. The Commonwealth of Virginia passed a law in 1782 providing that owners of slaves could grant them freedom if they wished; by 1790, more than 12,000 slaves had been freed, and by 1800, there were 20,000 free blacks in Virginia.<sup>28</sup> Most of the northern states had declared slavery illegal in the late 1770s and early 1780s, and had abolished it by 1804.<sup>29</sup> A number of anti-slavery motions were introduced in the U.S. Congress as well as in the Virginia legislature. In 1790, Benjamin Franklin, who was president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, signed an anti-slavery document brought to the House of Representatives.<sup>30</sup> Though Franklin had owned and traded slaves in the 1730s, he came to see slavery as unwise as well as immoral. He wrote and spoke out on the evils of slavery from the 1750s until his death.<sup>31</sup>

While many of the abolitionists did not benefit from slavery personally and had little to lose in advocating its abolition, such was not the case with Robert Carter III, grandson of the notorious Robert "King" Carter who "seasoned" his newly arrived slaves from Africa by a "minor dismemberment – perhaps a finger or a toe."<sup>32</sup> The grandson was a correspondent of Jefferson, Madison, Mason, Patrick Henry, and neighbor of Washington. He was a significant member of the landed gentry who owned more land and slaves and books than either Washington or Jefferson. He lent money to Jefferson and hesitated to allow his daughter to marry into the Washington family.<sup>33</sup> In 1791, Carter decided that: "... Slavery is contrary to the true Principles of Religion and Justice,

and that therefor it was my duty to manumit them."<sup>34</sup> Over a period of years, Carter proceeded to free his slaves, at least 280 and probably many more, possibly as many as 500.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, slavery was not universally accepted in Washington's time, even by southern landholders, and many voices were raised against it, some of them directed personally at Washington.

### WASHINGTON FACES THE SLAVERY ISSUE

Toward the end of his life, Washington privately expressed opinions critical of slavery. In 1797, in a letter to his nephew, Washington confided: "I wish from my soul that the Legislature of the State could see the policy of a gradual Abolition of Slavery; it would prevt. much future mischief."<sup>36</sup> John Bernard talked with Washington about slavery in the summer of 1798 and quoted Washington as saying that the end of slavery was:

an event, sir, which, you may believe me, no man desires more heartily than I do. Not only do I pray for it, on the score of human dignity, but I can clearly foresee that nothing but the rooting out of slavery can perpetuate the existence of our union, by consolidating it in a common bond of principle.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, at the end of his life, Washington fully faced the implications of his changed attitude toward slavery. When he was drawing up his will in the summer of 1799, he made "the first and only tangible commitment... to the emancipation of the slaves."<sup>38</sup> Washington decided to free those slaves belonging completely to him at the death of his wife, Martha. The dower slaves that she had brought to the marriage would remain in her estate. His will provided:

Item Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will & desire that all the Slaves which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom... it not being in my power, under the tenure by which the Dower Negroes are held, to manumit them... they... shall be comfortably cloathed & fed by my heirs while they live... taught to read & write; and to be brought up to some useful occupation... And I do hereby expressly forbid the Sale, or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of...<sup>39</sup>

Washington set up a fund for their support as long as they lived. Martha Custis Washington, however, decided to free his slaves after a year, rather than waiting until her death, fearing that there might be too much motive on the part of some to speed their own freedom by quickening her demise. But Martha still possessed about 150 dower slaves in her own right that she left, along with Mount Vernon, to her own heirs.<sup>40</sup>

How then should we evaluate Washington's character with respect to slavery? His motives for freeing his slaves at the end of his life probably ranged from guilt to a recognition that abolition was inevitable if the United States was to survive, to an act of personal generosity toward those who had served him during his life.<sup>41</sup> But the deeper

reality was that Washington benefitted from his slaves all of his life. It was slavery that made his great wealth possible, and he was unwilling to make the serious economic sacrifice of freeing his slaves as long as he depended on their work for his own income.

His public silence on the issue, along with his own slave holdings, given his reputation, must have had an important effect on the willingness of others to go along and not question the status quo. Washington's reputation was so great that even a small public gesture or statement might have made a large difference. Joseph Ellis argues that regarding slavery, Washington, "perhaps alone, possessed the stature to have altered the political context if he had chose to do so." Observing that Washington had what Adams called "the gift of silence," Ellis concludes, "... this was one occasion when one could only have wished that the gift had failed him."<sup>42</sup> Thus, Washington's vice, as well as his virtues, had important public effects.

The most persuasive argument that Washington's lack of public opposition to slavery was based on admirable motives might be the argument that any sudden move to abolish slavery would have alienated the southern states so much that the union would have been in peril. At the time of the Constitutional Convention, any public move by Washington in the direction of emancipation might have jeopardized the willingness of the southern states to join the union and ratify the Constitution. His silence as President, particularly in his Farewell Address in which he spoke out against sectionalism generally, might be attributed to a prudential judgment that a public statement hostile to slavery might have inflamed sectionalism enough to put the union in jeopardy.<sup>43</sup>

But this explanation for his failure to speak out is more persuasive when applied to the time Washington was in public office than it is about the time after he retired from the presidency, when he refused to favor publicly even a gradual phasing out of slavery. The argument in this article is that Washington's character was flawed in that he failed to speak out publicly against slavery after leaving the presidency at the end of his life. His private statements clearly demonstrate that he knew slavery was wrong, yet he was unwilling to associate his personal prestige to public criticisms of slavery. The argument that Washington had a character defect with respect to slavery does not vitiate all of the other admirable aspects of Washington's character. Despite his public attitude toward slavery, Washington was still a great president and a great man. We must admit, however, that Washington's greatness existed along side his buying and selling of human beings.

Historian, Pulitzer Prize winner, and civil rights activist, Roger Wilkins, argues that Washington's ownership of slaves was understandable, because it was only the work of the slaves that enabled Washington to have the time to become a statesman and to lead the United States in its founding period.<sup>44</sup> "Washington became the indispensable man" necessary to the survival of the early Republic, and the success of the new Republic played an important role in the expansion of human freedom over the past two centuries. Wilkins continues, "Isn't it a wonderful coincidence that he was present and out front each step of the way." Wilkins concludes, "The founding slave owners were more than good men; they were great men. But... myth presents them as secular saints, and ... whitewash[es] their ownership of slaves and the deep legacy of racism that they helped to institutionalize..."<sup>45</sup>

In an article in *The New York Times* in 1998, historian Robert F. Dalzell, Jr. implicitly contrasted Washington with more recent presidents.<sup>46</sup> The question being publicly discussed was how could President Bill Clinton act effectively as president at the same time that he was engaging in unbecoming conduct with Monica Lewinsky. The explanation of being able to do these seemingly incompatible things at the same time (sometimes simultaneously) was that Clinton could "compartmentalize" in his mind the contrasting aspects of his personality and thus be capable of contradictory behavior.

Dalzell argued that, in deciding to free his slaves in his will, Washington was giving up a lot. "Washington had no talent for compartmentalizing the separate parts of his life. Nor did he wish to."<sup>47</sup> This is an argument that Washington's character was seamless, with no disjuncture between his private and public life. But the fact that Washington's slaves would not be freed until after he was dead proves just the opposite point from Dalzell's claim. Washington had to be capable of extreme compartmentalization in order to continue owning slaves at the same time as fighting for the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and presiding over the newly created Republic. Especially toward the end of his life when he began to reflect more seriously about the implications of slavery and privately express his distaste for it, his source of economic support must have weighed heavily on his mind.

Dalzell also makes the point that, in freeing his slaves, Washington was giving up a lot, since it necessarily implied the break up of his beloved Mount Vernon. But the fact that Washington had no children of his own may have played a role in his final decision. If he had biological heirs, would he have dissipated their patrimony on the principle of the injustice of slavery? Neither Thomas Jefferson nor George Mason, both of whom spoke out publicly against slavery, freed their slaves when they died.

## CONCLUSION

George Washington was born into a slave holding family and accepted slavery without question. As he grew to maturity, he had too much at stake to risk his economic well being and reject slavery. At some point, probably during the Revolutionary War, Washington came to realize that slavery was inconsistent with the ideals of the emerging Republic. Yet, he refused to speak out openly against slavery. Acceptance of slavery was not universal in the new Republic or even in its southern states. Washington may have refused to speak out on the slavery issue while he was president because he feared that the union would be torn apart, although he did not articulate this reasoning into his writings.

It can thus reasonably be concluded that Washington's failure to speak out publicly against slavery late in his life was a character flaw. But he must be given some credit for freeing his slaves and providing for them after his death, an action that some other, more outspoken founders, failed to take. But, if we are to be honest with ourselves, we must accept the negative dimensions of Washington's decision to embrace slavery (until after his death) along with his many accomplishments that were essential to the founding and



establishment of the United States. The point here is not that Washington was a bad person or president, merely that his character was complex and not seamless.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Quoted by Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington: Man and Monument* (New York: New American Library, 1982), p.1.
- <sup>2</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Conditions for Democracy in the United States and the Greatness of George Washington," typescript draft, second from the last page in manuscript. For an argument that Washington was more honored in his own time than recently, see Colleen J. Shogan, "George Washington: Can Aristotle Recapture What His Countrymen have Forgotten?" in Mark Rozell and William Pederson (New York: Praeger Press, 2000).
- <sup>3</sup> David Abshire, "The Character of George Washington and the Challenges of the Modern Presidency," pamphlet (Washington: Center for the Study of the Presidency, 1998).
- <sup>4</sup> Joseph Epstein, "George Washington, An Amateur's View," *The Hudson Review* LI (Spring 1998), p. 39.
- <sup>5</sup> Fritz Hirschfeld, *George Washington and Slavery: A Documentary Portrayal* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), pp. 11-12, 20, 212, 220. Hirschfeld's book is an impressive collection of documents and analysis. Much of the analysis in this section is based on the book. For a similar account of Washington's slave holdings, see James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell, 1793-1799*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1969, 1972), p. 113.
- <sup>6</sup> Washington was a "kind master," as slave owners went. But, as Roger Wilkins points out: "There were kind masters, though kindness in the context of such a heinous criminal enterprise as American slavery must necessarily have a rather shallow meaning." *Jefferson's Pillow* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).
- <sup>7</sup> Hirschfeld, p. 37.
- <sup>8</sup> Letter from Washington to Captain Joseph Thompson of the schooner, Swift, dated July 2d, 1766. Reproduced in Hirschfeld, pp. 67-68. The letter is also printed in part in Flexner, pp. 113-114.
- <sup>9</sup> However, as early as 1774 Washington wrote that if the Americans submitted to British domination, then "custom and use shall make us tame and abject slaves, as the blacks we rule over in such an arbitrary way." Quoted in Flexner, p. 114. Note that the words "custom and use" imply that blacks are not inherently inferior to whites, but that any perceived inferiority came from "custom and use" rather than race.
- <sup>10</sup> Flexner, p. 115.
- <sup>11</sup> Hirschfeld, pp. 21-29.
- <sup>12</sup> Roger Wilkins, pp. 44-45.

- <sup>13</sup> Flexner, p. 118.
- <sup>14</sup> Flexner, p. 118.
- <sup>15</sup> Flexner, p. 121.
- <sup>16</sup> Flexner, p. 121.
- <sup>17</sup> Hirschfeld, pp. 172-178.
- <sup>18</sup> Quoted in Flexner, p. 122 (italics in original).
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in Flexner, p. 113.
- <sup>20</sup> Letter from Washington to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., dated September 1, [1796]. Reproduced in Hirschfeld, p. 113. See also, Wilkins, pp. 82-83.
- <sup>21</sup> Letter from Washington to Major George Lewis, dated November 13, 1797. Quoted in Hirschfeld, p. 70.
- <sup>22</sup> See Flexner, p. 115.
- <sup>23</sup> Hirschfeld, p. 200.
- <sup>24</sup> Letter from Robert Pleasants to George Washington, dated "Curles 12mo. [Dec.] 11th 1785," reprinted in Hirschfeld, pp. 193-195.
- <sup>25</sup> See David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), pp. 132-134, 330-331, and passim.
- <sup>26</sup> Max Farrand, ed. *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, 2:364, 369, 370. Quoted in Hirschfeld, p. 174.
- <sup>27</sup> See Flexner, p. 115; see also Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), p. 96. Ellis argues that Madison, like Jefferson and others of the Virginia dynasty "regarded any explicit defense of slavery in the mode of South Carolina and Georgia as a moral embarrassment. On the other hand, he regarded any effort to end slavery as premature, politically impractical, and counterproductive." Ellis refers to this position as the "Virginia straddle." See Ellis, pp. 113-114.
- <sup>28</sup> Ellis, p. 90; Andrew Levy, "The Anti-Jefferson," *The American Scholar* 70 (Spring 2001), p. 19.
- <sup>29</sup> Ellis, pp. 89-90; see also Gordon S. Wood, "The Greatest Generation," *The New York Review of Books* (29 March 2001), pp. 17-22. Wood states: "Not only were there more anti-slave societies created in the South than in the North, but manumissions in the upper South grew rapidly in the years immediately following the end of the War for Independence." (p. 21)
- <sup>30</sup> Hirschfeld, p. 182.
- <sup>31</sup> On Benjamin Franklin and slavery, see Carl Van Foren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1941), pp. 128-129, 774-775; John C. Van Horne, "Collective Benevolence and the Common Good in Franklin's Philanthropy," in J. A. Leo Lemay, *Reappraising Benjamin Franklin* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), pp. 431-439; Claude-Anne Lopez, *My Life with Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 205-211.
- <sup>32</sup> Wilkins, pp. 90-91.
- <sup>33</sup> Levy, p. 16.
- <sup>34</sup> Levy, p. 24.
- <sup>35</sup> Levy, p. 25; See also "The Deed of Gift," Letter from the editor of *The American Scholar*, p. 2.
- <sup>36</sup> Hirschfeld, p. 79.
- <sup>37</sup> John Bernard's memoirs, *Retrospections of America, 1797-1811*, quoted in Hirschfeld, p. 73.
- <sup>38</sup> Hirschfeld, p. 209.
- <sup>39</sup> Hirschfeld, pp. 209-211.
- <sup>40</sup> Hirschfeld, pp. 213-222. John Adams' wife, Abigail, wrote to her sister Mary on December 21, 1800: "... she [Martha Washington] did not feel as tho (sic) her life was safe in their Hands, many of whom would be told that it was [in] their (sic) interest to get rid of her - She

therefore was advised to set them all free at the close of the year." Quoted in Hirschfeld, p. 214.

<sup>41</sup> Hirschfeld, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Ellis, p. 263.

<sup>43</sup> See Matthew Spalding and Patrick J. Garrity, *A Sacred Union of Citizens: George Washington's Farewell Address and the American Character* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), p. 71.

<sup>44</sup> See Wilkins.

<sup>45</sup> See Wilkins, pp. 128, 138-139.

<sup>46</sup> Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., "George Washington, Slaveholder," *The New York Times* (20 February 2000), p. A27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

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