

# Sources from the Past

## The Meaning of Freedom for an Ex-Slave

*Once a slave in Tennessee on the plantation of Colonel P. H. Anderson, Jourdan Anderson had gained his freedom in 1864, before the conclusion of the Civil War, and he and his family had relocated to Dayton, Ohio. This letter is his response to Colonel Anderson's missive to him, asking him to return to the Tennessee plantation, and his words evoke the often wondrous transformations linked to freedom from servitude.*

### Dayton, Ohio, August 7, 1865

To my Old Master, Col. P. H. Anderson, Big Spring, Tennessee

Sir: I got your letter and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdan, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this for harboring Rebs they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Col. Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt and I am glad you are still living. . . . I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got the chance.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here; I get \$25 a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy (the folks here call her Mrs. Anderson) and the children, Milly, Jane, and Grundy, go to school and are learning well; the teacher says Grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday-School, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated. . . . Now, if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free-papers in 1864 from the Provost-Marshal-General of the Department at

Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you are sincerely disposed to treat us justly and kindly—and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old sores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years, at \$25 a month for me, and \$2 a week for Mandy. Our earnings would amount to \$11,680. . . . Please send the money by Adams Express, in care of V. Winters, esq., Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. . . . Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

In answering this letter please state if there would be any safety for my Milly and Jane, who are now grown up and both good looking girls. . . . I would rather stay here and starve and die if it come to that than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood, the desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them form virtuous habits.

From your old servant, Jourdan Anderson.

P. S.—Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

### For Further Reflection

- In what clever ways does Jourdan Anderson test the seriousness of his former owner's offer of employment, and what does his approach say about the meaning of black freedom?

Source: "Letter from a Freedman to his Old Master," *New York Daily Tribune*, 22 August 1865, p. 7.

Work on the Canadian Pacific Railroad in the 1880s renewed the threat of white settlement to indigenous and métis society. The métis asked Riel to lead resistance to the railroad and British Canadian settlement. In 1885 he organized a military force of métis and native peoples in the Saskatchewan river country and led an insurrection known as the **Northwest Rebellion**. Canadian forces quickly subdued the makeshift army, and government authorities executed Riel for treason.

Although the Northwest Rebellion never had a chance of success, the execution of Riel nonetheless reverberated throughout Canadian history. French Canadians took it as an indication of the state's readiness to subdue individuals who were culturally distinct and politically opposed to the drive for a nation dominated by British Canadian elites. In the very year when completion of the transcontinental railroad signified for some the beginnings of Canadian national unity, Riel's execution foreshadowed a long term of cultural

### The Ottoman Empire in Decline

The Nature of Decline

Reform and Reorganization

The Young Turk Era

### The Russian Empire under Pressure

Military Defeat and Social Reform

Industrialization

Repression and Revolution

### The Chinese Empire under Siege

The Opium War and the Unequal Treaties

The Taiping Rebellion

Reform Frustrated

### The Transformation of Japan

From Tokugawa to Meiji

Meiji Reforms



European portrait of China's Empress Dowager Cixi from 1903. Beginning her political career as a concubine in the harem of the Xianfeng emperor, she developed into a powerful and charismatic figure who became the de facto ruler of the Manchu Qing dynasty in China for over forty years, from 1861 until her death in 1908.

### EYEWITNESS:

### “Heavenly King” Hong Xiuquan, Empress Dowager Cixi, and Qing Reform

**H**ong Xiuquan, the third son of a poor family, grew up in a farming village in southern China about 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Guangzhou. Although he was arrogant and irritable, he showed intellectual promise. His neighbors made him village teacher so that he could study and prepare for the civil service examinations—the principal avenue to government employment—since a position in the Qing bureaucracy would bring honor and wealth to both his family and his village. Between 1828 and 1837, Hong took the exams three times but failed to obtain even the lowest degree. This outcome was not surprising, since thousands of candidates competed for a degree, but only a few obtained it. Yet the disappointment was too

**Xiuquan** (shee-OH-chew-ahn)

**Qing** (ching)

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## Banning Opium in China

*In the following passages, a high commissioner of the Chinese government enumerated in 1839 four reasons for British traders to surrender their smuggled opium and to halt this illegal trade in China. Although opium was outlawed in Britain, and its importation was outlawed by China, the British East India Company engaged in large-scale importation of opium to India and China, which improved the European trade deficit with China but also led to the outbreak of two opium wars in the following decades.*

**First.** You ought to make haste and deliver up the opium, by virtue of that reason which Heaven hath implanted in all of us. . . . [W]hile you have been scheming after private advantage, with minds solely bent on profit, our people have been wasting their substance and losing their lives; and if the reason of Heaven be just, think you that there will be no retribution? If, however, you will now repent and deliver up your opium, by a well-timed repentance you may yet avert judgment and calamities; if not, then your wickedness being greater, the consequences of that wickedness will fall more fearfully upon you! . . .

Now our great emperor, being actuated by the exalted virtue of Heaven itself, wishes to cut off this deluge of opium, which is the plainest proof that such is the intention of high Heaven! . . .

**Secondly.** You ought to make immediate delivery of this opium, in order to comply with the law of your own countries, which prohibits the smoking of opium, and he who uses it is adjudged to death! . . . If, then, your laws forbid it to be consumed by yourselves, and yet permit it to be sold that it may be consumed by others, this is not in conformity with the principle of doing unto others what you would that they should do unto you. . . .

Our great emperor looks upon the opium trade with the most intense loathing, and burns to have it cut off forever; and I, the high commissioner, looking up to the great emperor, and feeling in my own person his sacred desire to love and cherish the men from afar, do mercifully spare you your lives. I wish nothing more than that you deliver up all the opium you have got, and forthwith write out a duly prepared bond, to the effect that you will henceforth never more bring opium to China, and, should you bring it, agreeing that the cargo be confiscated and the people who bring it, put to death.

**Thirdly.** You ought to make immediate delivery of this opium, by reason of your feelings as men. You come to this market of

Canton to trade, and you profit thereby full threefold. Every article of commerce that you bring with you, no matter whether coarse or fine, in whole pieces or in small, there is not one of it that is not sold off and consumed; and of the produce of your country, whether it be for feeding you, for clothing you, for any kind of use, or for mere sale, there is not a description that will not permit you to take away with you; so that not only do you reap the profit of the inner land by the goods which you bring, but, moreover, by means of the produce of our central land you gather gold from every country to which you transport. Supposing that you cut off and cast away your traffic in the sale of an article of opium, then the other business which you do will be much increased, and you will thereon reap your threefold profit comfortably.

**Fourthly.** You ought to make a speedy delivery of your opium for the reason of the necessity of the case. You foreigners from afar, coming hither to trade, have passed over an unbounded ocean, and your prospect for doing business depends entirely on your conduct on terms of harmony with your fellow-men, and keeping your own station in peace and quietness. Thus may you reap advantage and avoid misfortune! But if you will persist in selling your opium, and will go on involving the lives of our foolish people in your toils, there is not a good or upright man whose mind and heart will not burn with indignation at your conduct; and must look upon the lives of those who have suffered for smoking and selling the drug as sacrificed by you; the simple country people and the common people must feel anything but well pleased with the wrath of a whole country is not a thing easily restrained: these are circumstances about which you cannot but feel anxious.

### For Further Reflection

- The Chinese high commissioner appeared to base his arguments, and those of his emperor, on a moral rather than an economic frame of reference. Were his points effective, did his reasoning bring forth any hypocritical discrepancies in European beliefs?

*Source:* Reasons for the proclamation ordering foreigners to deliver up opium smuggled into China. In *Readings in Modern European History*. By James Harvey Robinson and Charles A. Beard. Volume II. Boston: Ginn & Company, 1909. pp. 419–422.

and the Grand Canal, the Chinese government had sued for peace. China experienced similar military setbacks throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in conflicts with Britain and France (1856–1858), France (1884–1885), and Japan (1894–1895).

**Unequal Treaties** In the wake of those confrontations came a series of pacts collectively known in China as **unequal treaties**, which curtailed China's sovereignty. Beginning with the **Treaty of Nanjing**, which Britain forced China to accept at the conclusion of the Opium War in 1842, these agreements