

The Constitution of the American Anti-Slavery Society

The American Anti-Slavery Society was formed in 1833 under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison; by 1840 it had 2000 auxiliary societies and 150,000 to 200,000 members.

Art. II. The object of this Society is the entire abolition of slavery in the United States. While it admits that each State in which slavery exists, has, by the Constitution of the United States, the exclusive right to *legislate* in regard to its abolition in said State it shall aim to convince all our fellow-citizens, by arguments addressed to their understandings and consciences that slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God, and that the duty, safety, and best interests of all concerned, require its *immediate abandonment*, without expatriation. The Society will also endeavour, in a constitutional way, to influence Congress to put an end to the domestic slave-trade, and to abolish slavery in all those portions of our common country which come under its control, especially in the District of Columbia,—and likewise to prevent the extension of it to any state that may be hereafter admitted to the Union.

Art. III. This Society shall aim to elevate the character and condition of the people of color, by encouraging their intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, and by removing public prejudice, that thus they may, according to their intellectual and moral worth, share an equality with the whites, of civil and religious privileges; but this Society will never, in any way, countenance the oppressed in vindicating their rights by resorting to physical force.

Art. IV. Any person who consents to the principles of this Constitution, who contributes to the funds of this Society, and is not a slaveholder, may be a member of this Society, and shall be entitled to vote at the meetings. . . .

Source: *Slaves and the Courts, 1740-1860*—American Memory Collection, Library of Congress