

TO THE ABOLITIONIST ELECTORS OF OSWEGO COUNTY

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BRETHREN AND FRIENDS:

It seems good unto us to write unto you, who with us have borne the burden and heat of the grand battle, which for the last four years we have fought in this county for the poor, despised, suffering slave. With us you have toiled, with us you have wept at the thought that in these United States, "the land of the free, and the home of the brave," man was made a chattel. Day by day have we labored to impress the mind of the community with the fact that American Slavery was an enormous sin, which would bring down the vengeance of Almighty God, if not speedily put away.

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The Whigs have nominated a man as obnoxious to the abolitionists of this district as they well could find in Oneida county—CHARLES P. KIRKLAND. It matters not how loud his professions are, how nobly he boasts of his love for the slave: actions in this case are louder than words, and mere assertion is like "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." Mr. Kirkland is destitute of love to the slave, PRACTICALLY EXHIBITED. If he has loved the slave and his defenders for years, and has not dared to own it for fear of public sentiment, it clearly settles the question in our mind, that he would how before our suffrages are on a par with those which DAVID P. BAEVENS and JOHN G. FLOYD can prefer. We have Mr. Kirkland's assertion that he is an abolitionist, and that is all. Can one of his friends show a line, printed or written prior to the fifteenth of September last, by Mr. Kirkland, which has ever been made public, in which he advocates the doctrine of immediate emancipation to all the slaves in these United States.—We venture to say No. The other gentlemen say that they were opposed to slavery, and are abolitionists, and so does every man who travels up and down these streets declare, and most secretly affirm, that he is a most excellent, judicious, prudent, expeditious abolitionist." But, brethren,

if to say and not do—if to have principles and not live them out—if to love liberty, and to refuse to worship at her shrine, save at midnight—if to be the complete slave of public sentiment, and act as "the attellite of its shifting vagaries," constitutes an abolitionist, then are these men abolitionists. On the other hand, if to open one's mouth for the dumb and plead his cause; if to watch in spirit over his lonely hovel, and hear the wailings of despair issue from his lips; if to feel for the bound as though we were bound with them; if to go from our high position as men, and seat ourselves by his side, and behold the iron as it pushes itself deeply into his soul; if to keep an eye single to the great principle of the Declaration of Independence, and see that its blessings fall equally upon the poor and the rich; if to refuse to stop pleading for "the dumb because the propriety of some favorite political scheme may be endangered by advocating his claims; if to do these things constitutes an abolitionist, then, gentlemen, we hesitate not to say that Charles P. Kirkland, and David Y. Brewster, and John G. Floyd, are not abolitionists. We feel that no good reason can be assigned why one of these men should receive our votes and the others be rejected, so far as this great question is concerned, save such as originates in expediency. The abolitionists of this county have fought too hard against the subtle, wicked, powerful principle of expediency, to ally with it at this late day. We could forgive all that has been done to us personally, but to labor to induce us to sacrifice our good and holy cause—to appeal to our fears and then to our loaves—to cause us to desert our principles for the sake of expediency—is a sin too base and ignoble for men of honor and integrity. For the deed, we admit, there is the sanction of great names.—Before its mighty mandate, Presidents and would-be Presidents bow down and render willing homage; and at its call, our Governors, and our Senators, and our Congressmen rally, ready to do battle in its behalf. But, brethren, the day has come when the political parties should remember that it is "righteousness exalteth a nation," and that the kingdom or people that will not follow her monitions, shall perish.

And what shall we say, brethren, of the candidates from this village for the Assembly. Are they not in the same condemnation? Let the friends of humanity answer—

"No, no—our votes we will hold,
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Brethren, let us be true to the principle of liberty—let us be true to the poor slave—let us be true to each other and to our beloved country—let us all remember that every effort which the wit or the ingenuity of man can devise, will be made to convince us that these men are our friends. Letters are almost daily received among us, and representations are made designed to mislead us with regard to the course our friends in Oneida county will pursue, and to seduce us from our steadfastness—but let us not be deceived by their flatteries, or awed by their threats, or their sneers, or their representations. Do you ask, for whom we shall vote? We suggest that we are not so solicitous for whom we shall vote as for whom we shall not vote.

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Anti-Slavery Committee Rooms, Oswego, October 26, 1838.

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EDWIN W. CLARKE,
JAMES C. JACKSON,
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LEMAN AUSTIN,
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In a letter written on October 26, 1838, the Oswego County Anti-Slavery Committee share concerns for an upcoming election.

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Questions:

1. Using census data and city directories, who are the people who signed this letter?
2. Can you find any documentation about the men who signed this letter, newspapers, speeches, etc?
3. Who are the Whigs?
4. What was happening in New York State government in 1838?
5. What was happening in United States government in 1838?
6. What would happen to fugitive slaves in 1838?
7. Explain how are the authors appealing to humanity in this letter to get more people to accept abolition of slavery.
8. What was the result of the 1838 election in New York state?
9. Did these newly elected officials have any impact during their political service?