



NICHOLAS WOOD

John Randolph of Roanoke and the Politics of Slavery in the Early Republic

As was not uncommon, John Randolph of Roanoke felt so sick one night in early 1817 that he thought he was going to die. Laudanum helped numb the pain, but it also clouded his mind and apparently did little to improve his mood. He later recounted the episode to his godson: “I was quite delirious, but had method in my madness; for they tell me I ordered [my slave] Juba to load my gun, and to shoot the first ‘doctor’ that should enter the room.” (Apparently no doctor entered the room.) Randolph’s excesses, eccentricities, and fits of madness are well known to historians of the early republic: he brought his hunting dogs into the House of Representatives, caned another congressman in the Capitol’s stairwell, and fought his first duel over the mispronunciation of a word and another against Secretary of State Henry Clay. Born into one of Virginia’s most prominent families, and tracing his ancestry to Pocahontas and John Rolfe, he was haughty, aristocratic, and nursed grudges. His aggressive debating style led one observer to describe him as an “*intellectual butcher*,” for “nothing delights him more than dissecting, cutting up and exposing to public gaze, the mangled carcasses of his political foes.” His enemies concluded that his apparent impotence was evidence of “Divine Providence,” for “[m]oral monsters cannot propagate.” Randolph’s personality, along with his uncompromising political principles, helped relegate him to the political margins for the quarter century after he broke with mainstream Republicans early in President Thomas Jefferson’s second term.¹

Aside from his eccentricities, Randolph is best remembered today for pioneering many of the tactics that came to characterize the “Slave Power.”

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By the 1840s, the Slave Power—the political power wielded by slaveowners to expand and perpetuate slavery—was embodied by John C. Calhoun with his portrayal of slavery as a “positive good” and the pressure he put on northern congressmen to support proslavery policies in Congress. But during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, Randolph appeared to many of his contemporaries and subsequent historians to be the precocious pioneer of the Slave Power. Following the Missouri crisis of 1819–21, one New England Federalist portrayed Randolph and other Virginians as leading a “*crusade for unlimited slavery*.” Worse yet, they seduced or intimidated the “weakest” and “most assailable” northern politicians into doing their bidding. It was imagined that slaveowners held banquets at which their northern “dough face” allies were given membership badges with the number 666—“the number of the beast”—to wear during their upcoming campaign to reopen the Atlantic slave trade and spread slavery throughout all of North America. Northern newspaper editors also imagined “secret sessions” in which Randolph browbeat dough faces into supporting proslavery policies. This image of Randolph as embodying the Slave Power became even more prominent following his death.²

Among historians, the connection between Randolph and the Slave Power was made most forcefully by Henry Adams. Adams was sympathetic to state rights as a political philosophy, but he correctly observed that by the mid-nineteenth century, “defiled by an unnatural union with the slave power, the doctrine became at last a mere phrase.” Many slaveholders cynically appealed to state rights when they felt slavery was threatened, but “whenever a question arose of extending or protecting slavery, the slaveholders became friends of centralized power, and used that dangerous weapon with a kind of frenzy.” In Adams’s opinion, the “prostitution [of state rights] to the base uses of the slave power,” was “begun by Randolph, and only at a later time consummated by Calhoun.” Yet, even as Randolph pioneered proslavery politics he “loudly and pathetically declared himself a victim to slavery, a hater of the detestable institution, an *ami des noirs*.” More recent historians have also been very critical of Randolph. Duncan Macleod attributes Randolph’s political principles to a commitment to slavery: “Randolph emphasized state rights because of the existence of slavery and the need to protect it. He argued for strict construction because the growth of a nation-

al, as opposed to a federal, government posed a potential threat to slavery.” Steven Deyle, in his work on the domestic slave trade, charges that Randolph “was willing to do almost anything necessary to protect this new trade.” Leonard Richards assumes that “Randolph had no use for Northerners who voted with the South” and despised the northerners whom he bent to his will.³

As historian Robert Forbes argues, however, most scholars have been too quick to focus on Randolph’s apparently proslavery actions while dismissing his “oft-cited and frequently displayed hatred of slavery” as an example of his “legendary eccentricity, or . . . a supposedly pervasive and unremarkable Virginian characteristic of hypocrisy with regard to the institution.” Treating Randolph’s words and actions seriously reveals a great deal more consistency and complexity than the caricature to which he is frequently reduced. Randolph was dedicated to the preservation of property rights and southern political power, opposing federal antislavery measures when they seemed to violate his constitutional doctrine of strict construction. But he also loathed slavery—especially slave trading—and supported federal action against slavery when it fell under clearly defined powers of the federal government, as in the Northwest Territory and the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Some of his contemporaries recognized this; his actions earned the praise of such abolitionists as William Wilberforce, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Julius Rubens Ames. The complexity of Randolph—and of his era—is obscured or anachronistically reduced to mere hypocrisy by reading the Slave Power concept too far back into the early nineteenth century or by taking the accusations of Randolph’s political opponents too seriously. During and after his lifetime, many of Randolph’s partisan opponents and critics made political hay by distorting his image into that of a proslavery bogeyman, and this continues to shape our image of Randolph and his time. When properly contextualized, Randolph emerges not as an erratic and precocious advocate of the Slave Power but as an illustration of the potential and limits of Jeffersonian antislavery. Randolph embodied the muddled relationships between state rights and slavery, proslavery and antislavery, and uncompromising stands and intersectional cooperation that were so characteristic of the early republic.⁴



Perhaps it is not surprising that many of John Randolph's contemporaries and historians have emphasized his proslavery positions. During many congressional debates on slavery, he adamantly opposed federal interference in the domestic institution. And on other occasions when slavery was only indirectly involved, such as during debates on foreign policy and internal improvements, Randolph framed his arguments in terms of guarding against slave revolts or avoiding steps down a slippery slope toward emancipation by the federal government. As many historians have argued, opposition to outside interference with slavery united southerners who were divided about other political and economic issues. Yet, whereas John C. Calhoun later sought to unite the South around slavery in order to perpetuate it, Randolph used the politics of slavery primarily to advance the political-economic principles of Old Republicans, such as state rights and a minimalist government. Moreover, as a growing body of historical research demonstrates, Calhoun and other proslavery advocates of the 1840s and 1850s rejected the backward-looking economic vision of Old Republicans and instead embraced economic development and the modernization of transportation networks. The relationship between state rights and slavery is extremely complicated, and such historians as Richard Ellis have demonstrated that state rights should not be viewed merely as a means to defend slavery. Nor were commitments to state rights and antislavery sentiment incompatible; Randolph's commitment to both was quite typical of his time and place.⁵

Born in 1773, John Randolph grew up during the height of Revolutionary-era antislavery sentiment, and his political views matured during the 1790s, when Republican opposition to Federalist economic policies and broad construction of the Constitution was largely unconnected to slavery. He once described himself as "an Anti-Federalist when hardly breached," and many of his family members had opposed ratifying the federal Constitution. In his youth, Randolph read the British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson's path-breaking *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* and later wrote that "the impression made upon my mind by that dissertation sunk deep." Personal influences also reinforced Randolph's youthful antislavery along with his republican principles. His stepfather, the

state rights advocate and jurist St. George Tucker, condemned slavery as an evil entailed upon Virginians by their forefathers, and he wrote one of the nation's first and most thoughtful proposals for gradual emancipation in 1796. And Randolph's older brother Richard, whom he idolized, freed his slaves upon his early death the same year. In his will, Richard denounced slavery as a "monstrous tyranny" that he regretted inheriting from his father (along with the debt that made him economically dependent on his slaves' labor). He explained his hope of setting an example: "to impress upon my children with just horror at the crime so enormous and indelible; to conjure them, in the last words of a fond father, never to participate in it." During the following few years, John Randolph "wearied all who would listen" with his plans to "make [his own slaves] free and provide tutors for them." As a result, during Randolph's first candidacy for Congress in 1799, Federalists in his district opportunistically portrayed him as a radical Jacobin who "advocated the emancipation of our slaves, and declared . . . that he should endeavor to carry that measure through Congress." Randolph responded by disavowing support for congressional action against slavery, claiming he had "ever been a[n]x[i]ous to restrain federal power." For the rest of his life, Randolph maintained his personal opposition to slavery—freeing his own slaves in his will—while also embracing a constitutional doctrine of strict construction and state rights that forbade federal interference with the peculiar institution.⁶

Historians often identify a transition from the Revolutionary-era defense of slavery as a "necessary evil" to the antebellum proslavery claim that slavery was a "positive good." As such scholars as William Freehling and Lacy Ford have shown, however, there was considerable variety within the "necessary evil" camp. Lower South planters stressed the "necessary" component based on arguments that white labor could not be profitable in their climate. They claimed that not only slavery but also the continued importation of slaves was economically essential. By contrast, slaveholders in the Upper South tended to stress that slavery was evil, both in terms of morality and "sound policy" (that is, considerations of economic efficiency and security). They projected responsibility for slavery onto their ancestors and the British, who had "entailed" the system upon them, while arguing that emancipation would produce even greater evils, such as social disruption, miscegenation,

and race war. Thus slavery's continuation was necessary only until a practical plan of emancipation could be devised. In a letter to Randolph, his friend James Mercer Garnett described slaveowners' perceived dilemma: "To free them at present, or indeed at any period, that I can anticipate, seems to me impossible without violating all the dictates of the soundest morals, & the most enlightened Policy. On the other hand, to hold them in slavery, & at the same time to act towards them as both Policy & moral duty requires, is an achievement of almost insuperable difficulty." It is more precise to label this view the "inherited dilemma" outlook. The adherents of this view joined with their Lower South counterparts in defending slavery from outside interference but broke with them in terms of the Atlantic slave trade. Throughout his life, Randolph remained firmly within the inherited dilemma camp, regretting that he and his country had inherited slavery while having difficulty envisioning a peaceful and practical solution to the dilemma. Or, in Freehling's terminology, Randolph was a "conditional terminator," like Jefferson and Madison, in contrast to "slavery perpetualists" like Calhoun.⁷

Calhoun, who began his political career as a proponent of a stronger central government, acknowledged that he converted to a doctrine of state rights as "the only remedy" against increased abolitionist agitation. He also sought to unify the South around the idea that slavery was a positive good that should be perpetuated and extended. By contrast, Randolph's commitment to state rights reflected the commitment to small government and laissez-faire economics around which much of the early Jeffersonian coalition had united. Although shared by many northerners, these economic principles were especially relevant to planters in the older slave states. National economic policies, such as tariffs and internal improvements, primarily benefited northern and western states while also requiring a broad construction of the Constitution, placing an economic burden on agriculturalists and increasing opportunities for political corruption. Randolph and Nathaniel Macon, an Old Republican leader from North Carolina, made it clear that they believed that internal improvements contradicted the economic self-interest of their states, though they recognized that newer slave states, such as Louisiana, endorsed sugar tariffs and internal improvements. Many northerners also shared the Old Republican view that laissez-faire economics best served their interests, as demonstrated in the popularity of Jefferson and

Andrew Jackson in the Mid-Atlantic states. These northerners feared that government interference in the economy, through chartering banks and corporations, would lead to privilege and corruption while reducing the social mobility of white men. A faith in laissez-faire economics and a fear of large government in turn circumscribed the federal government's capacity to promote the abolition of slavery.⁸

Opposition to federal interference in slavery was also heightened by fear of slave revolt. Randolph, like Jefferson and many other white southerners, feared that some measures intended to promote emancipation were unintentionally more likely to lead to racial violence and prove counterproductive. The example of the slave revolution on the French island of St. Domingue (Haiti) reinforced this concern. Many white southerners believed that the insurrection had been inspired by the actions of the French abolitionist *Société des Amis des Noirs*. Randolph worried about the antislavery experiments that northerners—who had no experience with slavery—might attempt if given the power, comparing the plight of white southerners to “mice in a receiver of mephitic gas, under the experiments of a set of new political chemists.”⁹

In addition to opposing measures that were directly connected to slavery in ways that he felt were dangerous and unconstitutional, Randolph also sought to use the southern fear of slave revolt and federal interference as a “southern strategy” to mobilize southern opposition to policies that contradicted his Old Republican principles. Randolph's opposition to the War of 1812 provides a prominent example. In a December 1811 speech against the “War Hawks” (a term he coined), Randolph focused primarily on how wars invariably disrupted trade and expanded centralized power while also arguing that Napoleonic France, not England, was the nation's true enemy. But he also appealed to white southerners' fear of slave revolt in order to discourage enthusiasm for war. Randolph claimed that this danger was much greater than it had been during the Revolutionary War. Not only had the slave population increased, but slaves' minds had also been “polluted” by the principles of the French Revolution and abolitionists who had taught them “that they are equal to their masters, in other words, advising them to cut their throats.” John Calhoun, the leader of the War Hawks in Congress, dismissed Randolph's fears of slave revolt.¹⁰

Nonetheless, arguments like Randolph's about outsiders inspiring slave revolts became increasingly common in the following decades. Some scholars have argued that this was a purely self-serving and irrational position that sought to scapegoat abolitionists for the real cause of slave revolts: slavery itself. Blaming revolt on outsiders appears to "deny African American agency and autonomy," suggesting they were incapable of independent thought and action. As one scholar has recently observed, "as is clear from the history of slave rebellions, slaves did not need abolitionists to tell them the system was unjust." This is, of course, true to a degree. But the history of slave rebellions—or more accurately the relative lack of slave rebellions—shows that oppression alone was rarely enough to trigger revolt. This was not because slaves lacked agency or awareness of their oppression but because they recognized that the odds of success were stacked greatly against them. Nonviolent forms of resistance that preserved a level of personal and cultural autonomy were much more prevalent. Throughout history, slave revolts tended to occur when slaves believed they could exploit divisions within the ruling class or would have outside allies or when the whites were already at war. For example, the Haitian Revolution had been successful because the slaves and free people of color were able to exploit divisions within the ruling class resulting from the French Revolution. Randolph's thinking may have been influenced by the slave revolt in Louisiana earlier that year, which is believed to have been instigated by slaves aware of nearby border conflicts with Spanish West Florida. Upon learning of the revolt, Randolph had expressed a fear that someday Virginians might also be awakened "by the blaze of their houses & the shrieks of their wives & children."¹¹

In 1811, Randolph failed to sway Congress, but during the next two decades he continued to exploit southern concern about slavery as a political tool to obstruct government policies that he opposed, even when the connection to slavery was indirect, such as with internal improvements. These tactics could easily give the impression that he was obsessed with protecting slavery. Moreover, Old Republicans were more successful in uniting southerners in defense of slavery than in discouraging government intervention in the economy, and their influence declined in the 1820s as Lower South radicals more forcefully defended slavery even as they rejected Old Republican economic principles and used the powers of the central government to pro-

mote slavery. As a result, Randolph's defense of slavery rather than his political-economic principles shaped his legacy.¹²



John Randolph's political dealings with the Atlantic and domestic slave trades can appear paradoxical, and they provoked contradictory responses from his contemporaries. Because of his defense of the rights of slaveowners, some dubbed him the "Prince of Negro Dealers," while other abolitionists celebrated him as a member of the "Legion of Liberty" because of his opposition to slave trading. Although Randolph despised slave trading, at times his dedication to property rights and strict construction, along with his fear that antislavery politics could be used as a partisan tool, led him to oppose legislation regulating the slave trades. Yet in other instances he defended federal legislation banning the Atlantic slave trade to the territories and called for investigations into slave trading in Washington D.C., two areas where Congress had clear jurisdiction. Randolph also promoted African colonization as a means to discourage both the Atlantic and domestic slave trade.¹³

By 1798 every state in the Union had voluntarily banned the Atlantic slave trade. In December 1803, however, South Carolina repealed its ban, causing public outrage throughout much of the nation. John Randolph shared in this disgust, writing to fellow Virginian Littleton W. Tazewell that "[t]o her indelible disgrace she [South Carolina] has legalized this abomination and all her indigo and cotton is to be converted into slaves." Unlike slaveholders who defended slavery and the slave trade as necessary given the climate and agriculture of South Carolina, Randolph denounced the trade in terms of both morality and political economy. "I tremble for the dreadful retribution which this horrid thirst for African blood, which the legislators of that state are base enough to feel yet more base enough to avow, may bring upon us," he wrote. Citing the fate of the "opulent nabobs of St. Domingo," he warned that "[i]t is obvious to me that the lower country of Carolina & Geo[rgia] can never be recovered, in case the negroes get possession."¹⁴

Despite regretting South Carolina's actions, Randolph opposed efforts in Congress to punish slave-importing states. The Constitution prohibited Congress from banning the importation of slaves before 1808 but permitted

a tax “not exceeding ten dollars” on each imported slave. South Carolina’s reopening of the Atlantic slave trade generated a debate over implementing such a tax; a bill was repeatedly postponed until 1806 and never enacted into law. Randolph said little during the debates, but his repeated votes for postponing discussion of the bill suggest his opposition. If motivated by economic self-interest, Randolph and other representatives from the Upper South might have been expected to support the ten-dollar tax, for any hindrance on the Atlantic slave trade would benefit the domestic slave trade, of which Virginian slaveowners were beneficiaries. Upper South opposition to the tax suggests a greater concern with the larger implications of federal actions related to slavery than with economic calculation. Randolph likely shared sentiments expressed by his close friend and political ally, Nathaniel Macon, who was speaker of the House. Macon voiced his regret at the existence of both slavery and the Atlantic slave trade, yet he argued that it was improper for the government to be “arraigning the conduct of a State Legislature . . . pointing at them the finger of reprobation of the whole nation.” Although Macon, like Randolph, shared in northerners’ moral outrage against the Atlantic slave trade, he feared the precedent of allowing Congress to impose moral standards on individual states. Penalizing particular states based on the moral disapprobation of congressional majorities appeared to be a dangerous precedent, and it undermined the Old Republican conception of federalism.¹⁵

Randolph drew a sharp distinction, however, between the proper congressional treatment of a state and a territory; during this time he wrote two congressional committee reports supporting a ban on slavery in the Indiana Territory and a ban on the Atlantic slave trade to the Louisiana Purchase Territory. He described the latter as “a measure equally dictated by humanity and policy.” As will be discussed below, Randolph saw no contradiction between this stance and his defense of slavery in Missouri in 1820.¹⁶

In December 1806, President Jefferson called for legislation that would ban the Atlantic slave trade as of 1 January 1808. Historians have long noted that the subsequent congressional debates over closing the slave trade marked a watershed in the development of sectional tension, with Randolph’s threat of secession being a prominent feature. Although no one in Congress opposed banning the trade, it immediately became clear that

southerners and northerners envisioned an abolition law very differently. There were three main points of contention: determining what to do with slaves illegally imported after 1808, how to punish slave smugglers, and how to regulate the domestic trade.¹⁷

Randolph featured most prominently in the debate on regulating the interstate slave trade. Some historians, especially those who argue for the existence of an organized Slave Power at this time, connect the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade with the Louisiana Purchase, arguing that Virginia slaveowners were using their political power to promote the domestic slave trade by increasing demand through territorial acquisition while reducing supply by curtailing the Atlantic slave trade. By this logic, Virginians had economic incentive to oppose any restrictions placed on the interstate slave trade, and John Randolph seemed to play this part (in contrast to the 1804–6 slave trade tax debates). When he learned the Senate proposed banning the seaborne transportation of slaves within the Union, Randolph threatened that he would personally “begin the example” and “set the law at defiance” if Congress passed the provision. A joint committee reached a compromise in which the coastal domestic slave trade was restricted to vessels of at least forty tons. Randolph continued to resist the restriction on the interstate movement of slave property, warning that at a future date “it might be made the pretext of universal emancipation.” Yet the House agreed to the compromise by a vote of sixty-three to forty-nine, and the bill was ready for Jefferson’s signature. Randolph remained uneasy about the coastal restriction, and the next day he called for an explanatory note to be attached to the bill. He felt that the limit on the domestic slave trade “laid the axe at the root of all property in the southern states” and insisted that Congress declare that nothing contained in the slave trade ban would “be construed to abridge, modify, or affect, in any manner whatever the full, complete, and absolute right of property of the owner or master of any slave.” If not, he “would say, let us secede and go home.” Nonetheless, Jefferson signed the bill into law on 2 March 1807.¹⁸

Randolph’s obstinacy on this point has led some people to view him as an unrepentant advocate of slave trading. Although it is clear that many of his actions had the effect of protecting slavery, Randolph never defended slave trading the way Lower South slaveowners did. In 1816 he complained

that he had been “calumniously and falsely held up, as one of the advocates” of the slave trade, which he denounced as “the most nefarious, the most disgraceful, and the most infernal traffic that has ever stained the annals of the human race.” Although we cannot be sure of Randolph’s motives, his own explanation coincided with his well-known commitment to property rights and opposition to expanding the scope of federal powers. In his mind, the forty-ton provision “assumed a prerogative to interfere in the right of property between master and slave,” and it seems that Randolph simply feared any precedent in which the federal government placed conditions on property rights. In any case, his threat to “set the law at defiance,” which would have included selling his own slaves just to spite the federal government, should be taken no more seriously than his later promise to travel a mile out of his way to kick sheep because he disliked the tariff on wool.¹⁹

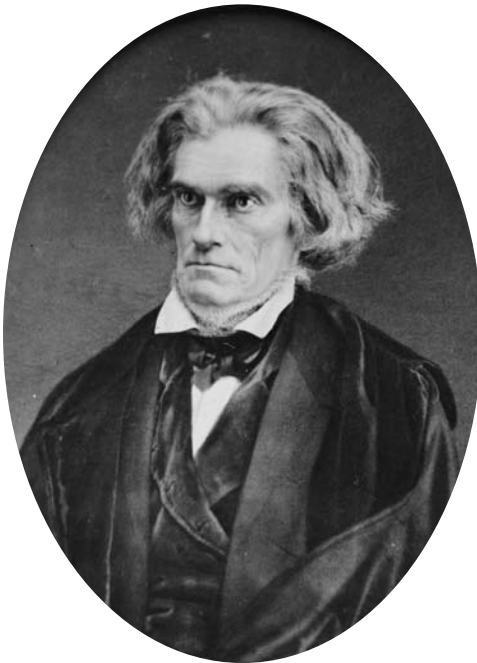
Rather than a commitment to slavery and slave trading motivating Randolph’s dedication to state rights, his revulsion of slavery helps explain some instances when he relaxed his opposition to the use of federal power. In March 1816, Randolph called on Congress to investigate the actions of slave traders in Washington, D.C. Congress had clear constitutional jurisdiction over the capital and had already banned the sale of slaves within the district, though slave traders were permitted to use the city as a depot for holding slaves before they were shipped to southern or western markets. Randolph’s intimate friend Francis Scott Key, however, had informed Randolph that he knew of many slave traders in the District who committed gross violations, including the “seizure of free persons who are hurried off in the night[,] brought to the City, & transported as slaves.” Randolph railed against these criminal acts along with other heinous, though legal, aspects of slave trading using the language of an abolitionist. He described the slave pens “where the unfortunate beings, reluctant, no doubt, to be torn from their connexions, and the affections of their lives, were incarcerated and chained down, and thence driven in fetters like beasts, to be paid for like cattle.” He also connected the domestic slave trade to the growing “demands for cotton, tobacco, and latterly of sugar” in the Southwest and decried the practice of kidnapping free blacks, who were “stolen, as he might say, from themselves.” Comparing the United States capital to the coast of Africa, Randolph denounced slave trading in Washington as “a crying sin before

God and man . . . not surpassed for abomination in any part of the earth; for in no part of it, not even excepting the rivers on the coast of Africa, was there so great and so infamous a slave market as in the metropolis, in the very Seat of Government of this nation, which prided itself in freedom.”²⁰

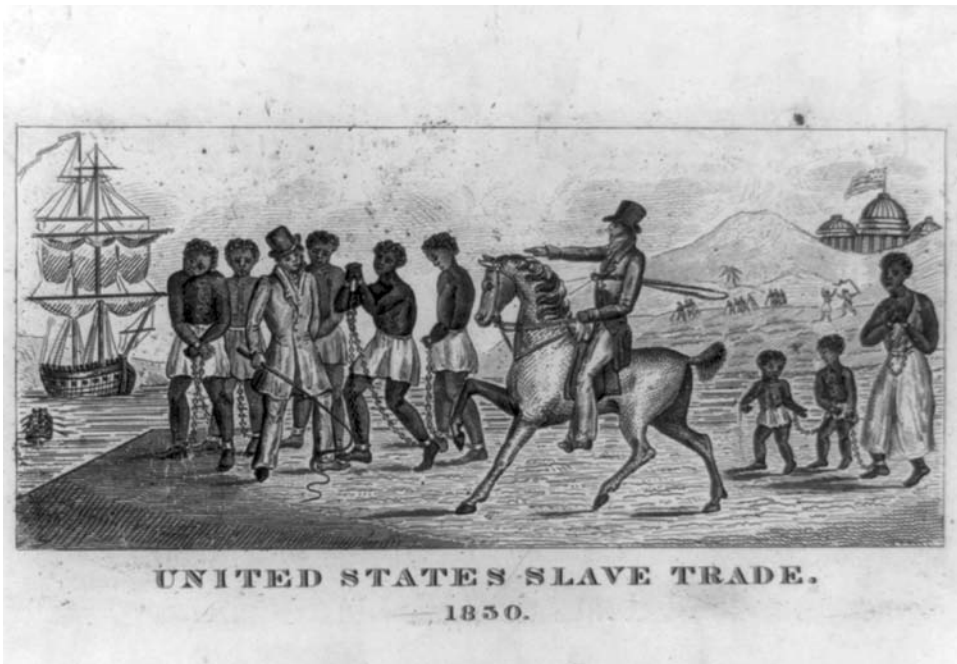
Despite his abolitionist-style rhetoric, Randolph was careful to assure the other southern representatives that he would refrain from “interfering in the very delicate subject of the relation between the slave and his owner.” As in 1807, he would defend the right of slaveowners to travel with their slaves, but he saw “a great difference between that and making the District into a depot for a systematic slave market.” Like many slaveholders, Randolph took pleasure in envisioning himself as a benevolent paternalist bound by moral duty to provide for his slaves. The domestic slave trade clearly violated the sense of mutual obligation that characterized paternalism, and rather than ignore this contradiction, Randolph criticized slave trading both in Congress and in his private correspondence. He regretted that so many Virginia slaveowners relinquished their duty, leading to “a general sale: & another ‘Coffle’ ‘start[ing]’ for the western country.” After witnessing slave trading in western Virginia, he described it in brutal terms: “The road is thronged with droves of these wretches & the human carcass-butchers, who drive them on the hoof to market.” He wrote that such scenes renewed his convictions against slavery, which had been planted in his mind thirty years earlier after reading the abolitionist works of Thomas Clarkson. As Randolph told the House of Representatives, although he would not support any abolitionist plans that could “throw the States into danger,” he supported regulating and limiting slavery when done in ways that were consistent with strict construction and posed no threat to southern security.²¹

The House of Representatives established a committee headed by Randolph to investigate slave trading in the capital. Randolph recorded depositions describing the illegal sale of slaves at George Miller’s tavern, the kidnapping of free blacks, the sale of blacks who were scheduled to be freed by northern gradual abolition laws, and instances of slaves who attempted to kill or mutilate themselves in order to prevent being sold away from their families. The witnesses complained of the “inefficient operation of the Habeas Corpus” and the “facility and security with which the art of man-

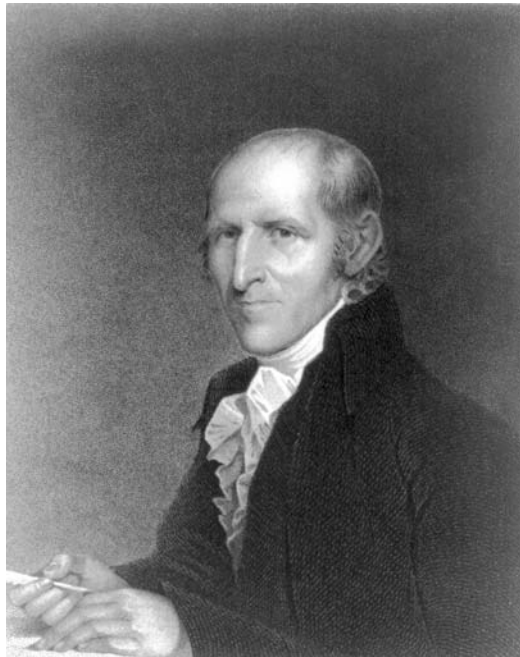
John Randolph (1773–1833) recognized that slavery was morally wrong. However, his commitment to state rights and laissez-faire economics, along with his fear of social disruption, led him to oppose all but the most conservative forms of abolitionism. (*Library of Congress*)



John Calhoun (1782–1850) advocated slavery as a “positive good” and used the power of the federal government to buttress and expand the institution, even as he drew on the doctrine of state rights to combat abolitionism. (*Library of Congress*)



John Randolph and Timothy Pickering (1745–1829) both supported the American Colonization Society as a means to reduce slave trading within the United States and suppress the African slave trade abroad. But they disagreed about the constitutionality of banning slavery in Missouri in 1820, with Pickering (shown at right) recognizing that new slave states would increase the demand for slaves and undermine the African colonization movement. (Both: *Library of Congress*)



stealing can be practiced.” These interviews continued from the middle of March until the end of April when the congressional session ended.²²

Although Congress took no action on Randolph’s report, his final witness, Jesse Torrey, Jr., made good use of the committee’s work. Torrey, a Philadelphia abolitionist, drew on Randolph’s findings in a lengthy pamphlet he published the following year. Scholars of domestic slave trading have shown that by the 1820s the volume of the domestic slave trade surpassed the number of slaves who traveled west with their emigrating masters, and Torrey’s *A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery* helped alert the public to this development. Although historians have noted the importance of Torrey’s pamphlet, Randolph’s influence on it has gone unremarked. Torrey observed that many slaveowners regretted slavery, viewing it as an “*inherited . . . curse from their ancestors.*” This was the position maintained by Randolph, and like Randolph, Torrey also believed that any workable plan for emancipation had to respect property rights and be very gradual. He cited Randolph’s congressional speech before expanding on the similarities between the Atlantic and domestic slave trades:

[Previously] the arrival of slave ships, on the coasts of Africa, was the uniform signal for the immediate commencement of wars for the attainment of prisoners, for sale and exportation to America. . . . In Maryland and Delaware, the same drama is now performed in miniature. The arrival of Man-Traffickers, laden with cash . . . is the well known signal for the professed kidnappers, like beasts of prey, to commence their nightly invasions [upon free black communities.]

Equating the immorality of the Atlantic and domestic slave trades was a key rhetorical strategy of abolitionists in the coming decades. The Atlantic slave trade had long been viewed as much worse than slavery itself, in part because it involved the enslavement of people born free. The domestic slave trade, by contrast, had drawn little public attention and was generally just accepted as a component of slavery. By highlighting the actions of slavers who kidnapped free blacks, along with the increasing scale of the domestic trade and its inherent inhumanity, Randolph and Torrey anticipated some of the major themes of abolitionism for the next four decades.²³

In December of 1816, Randolph joined Francis Scott Key, Henry Clay, Charles Fenton Mercer, and other prominent individuals to create the American Colonization Society (ACS), an organization dedicated to the voluntary removal of free blacks and manumitted slaves to Africa. Colonization was initially popular among abolitionists, but by the 1830s most abolitionists had concluded that slaveowners sought only to strengthen slavery by removing free blacks. This view, shared by some historians, assumes a false dichotomy between antislavery and proslavery that obscures the thinking of people like Randolph. As historian Christa Dierksheide has argued, “proslavery and antislavery shared the same genesis” in efforts to ameliorate slavery. The more relevant context for Randolph and many other ACS supporters was efforts to reduce slave trading—recognized as the worst feature of slavery—in ways that would not undermine state rights or property rights.²⁴

Randolph had previously written about the dilemma posed by his disgust of both slavery and slave trading. “Could I look on my slaves as mere property,” he noted, “the means of extrication were obvious and easy; but I have indulged in a hope that they should never know another taskmaster.” In 1806, the Virginia legislature had sharply curtailed the ability of masters to manumit their slaves based on concern that free blacks undermined the social order and encouraged slave rebelliousness. African colonization appeared to offer a safe way for slaveowners to extricate themselves from slavery, especially if the ACS could compensate masters otherwise predisposed to sell their slaves. Thus colonization promised to reduce the number of “human carcass-butchers” leading coffles of slaves and the abuses Randolph had discovered in his investigation into the Washington, D.C., slave trade. Furthermore, ACS members argued that establishing a colony in West Africa would be the most effective means of discouraging slave trading there by spreading civilization, Christianity, and peaceful commerce. As an ACS petition that Randolph submitted to Congress stated, when African colonization was “viewed in connection with that entire suppression of the slave trade . . . its importance shall become obvious in the extreme.”²⁵

During this time Randolph also formalized his commitment to follow his brother Richard’s example and free his slaves in his will, stating that “I give my slaves their freedom to which my conscience tells me they are justly entitled” while also expressing his hope of “emancipating them in my

lifetime.” The latter statement may indicate that he hoped to colonize his own slaves if it proved practical. In response to his support for African colonization and slave trade suppression, Randolph was honored by British abolitionist William Wilberforce and the African Institution when he visited England in 1822.²⁶

In many ways Randolph’s support for colonization as a means to reduce slave trading, facilitate gradual emancipation, and maintain social stability is less surprising than his initial willingness to enlist the federal government in the project. His opposition to slavery and the domestic slave trade, along with his concern about the destabilizing influence of free blacks in a slave society, appear to have overcome any initial reservations about seeking federal support for colonization. The ACS’s supporters understood from the beginning that their project would only be feasible if given substantial government support, and they began lobbying Congress almost immediately. Randolph delivered the ACS’s first petition to the House of Representatives on 14 January 1817. Introducing the petition, he “pray[ed] that Congress will aid with the power, the patronage, and the resources of the country, the great and beneficial object of their institution.” The House of Representatives referred the colonization petition to a Slave Trade Committee, which was already considering petitions regarding slave smuggling and the kidnapping of free blacks. These petitions, followed by others, began a process ultimately resulting in the 1819 Slave Trade Act, which included federally funded colonization of illegally imported slaves. This represented a dramatic departure from the principles of the 1807 Slave Trade Act, which had allowed state governments to sell illegally imported Africans as slaves and established a foundation for increased federal support for colonization in the future. Randolph left Congress in 1817 and suffered frequent bouts of illness and depression during the following two years, leaving little indication of his further views on federally funded colonization in the 1819 Slave Trade Act. When Randolph returned to Congress in December 1819, it was in the midst of the Missouri crisis.²⁷



The Missouri crisis began in February 1819 after the inhabitants of the Missouri territory applied for statehood and New York Republican Congressman James Tallmadge proposed that Congress require Missouri enact gradual abolition before becoming a state. After some heated debate, the northern majority in the House of Representatives passed Tallmadge's amendment, but it was defeated in the Senate, and the Fifteenth Congress disbanded in March without having settled the "Missouri question." Over the summer, newspapers and public rallies kept the issue alive.²⁸

Many northern supporters of the African colonization movement believed the territorial restriction of slavery was an essential component of the project. Timothy Pickering, who had endorsed colonization in the 1817 congressional report and written a series of pro-colonization newspaper articles, shared this view. Recognizing that colonization could not succeed "without the aid of the public treasury," Pickering argued it would be "in the highest degree absurd" for the federal government to simultaneously promote African colonization and the western expansion of slavery. The Massachusetts Federalist had a surprising friendship with Randolph (based in part on their shared hatred of Jefferson and John Adams), and he assumed his Virginia friend shared his views. Pickering wrote to Randolph that "I am very glad that you will have an opportunity of raising your voice against the extension of this great moral and political evil; and I pray God that your efforts and those of other distinguished members in this most important and righteous cause may prevail." In another letter to ACS manager Charles Fenton Mercer, Pickering discussed the motives he believed influenced those southern congressmen who opposed restriction—the "impression of a direct pecuniary interest." He observed that many of the older slave states had a "surplus" of slaves whom they could sell to "the planters and farmers of the Western World, who will give great prices for them!"²⁹

In Pickering's mind, as in the view of many northerners, the Missouri question was a simple contest between slavery and freedom. Randolph's well-known criticism of slave trading and support for the ACS apparently led Pickering to believe they both shared this outlook. Furthermore, in Randolph's 1804 committee report on the Northwest Ordinance's ban on slavery, he had criticized slavery as inefficient and dangerous, praising restriction as "wisely calculated to promote the happiness and prosperity of the

northwestern country.” In 1820, Randolph, however, would not play the role Pickering hoped. (Thomas Jefferson and James Madison similarly disappointed northerners who hoped they would support restriction in Missouri.) In his response to Pickering’s letter, Randolph regretted that he could “not have the satisfaction to agree” on “this topic so fruitful of bitterness.” He chose to “refer to a future meeting the explanation of my views on this subject unless perhaps they may find their way thro[ugh] the channel of debate to the newspapers.” Frustratingly (for historians) none of Randolph’s speeches on the Missouri question were recorded, and he wrote little about their substance in his correspondence. Thus we have imperfect evidence of his reasoning, but he seems to have shared the same opinions of other Virginia critics of slavery, like Jefferson and Madison, who also opposed restriction in Missouri.³⁰

Most Virginia politicians framed their objections to restriction primarily on constitutional grounds. They claimed that restricting slavery in Missouri at this stage would be unconstitutional. This was a plausible position; for Congress to have followed the constitutional precedent of the Northwest Ordinance, it should have banned slavery in Missouri when the territory was initially organized. Instead, Congress had allowed slavery in Missouri in the territorial legislation of 1805 and 1812, and there were more than ten thousand slaves in the territory by 1820. In 1819–20, the restrictionists were essentially attempting to impose retroactively what they had failed to do in the preceding decades, treating Missouri as if it were a new territory rather than a new state requesting admission into the Union. Southern politicians used the doctrines of strict construction and state rights to argue that Congress lacked the authority to ban slavery in Missouri at this late stage. (Some southerners, including James Madison in his private correspondence, took a more extreme position, denying that Congress had any power to regulate slavery in the federal territories.) The resurgence of the strict construction doctrine was heightened at this time by a number of important decisions by the Supreme Court, such as *Cohens v. Virginia* (1816) and *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), which both represented broad construction of the Constitution. Continuing their role since the 1790s, Virginia politicians and jurists were at the forefront of denouncing this trend toward “consolidation” of the federal government.”³¹

Southern congressmen also claimed that morality, when properly understood, was on their side, praising the “diffusion” of slavery. But whereas later proslavery advocates would proclaim slavery a “positive good” that should be spread in order to extend its alleged blessings to both blacks and whites, in 1820 diffusion was still advocated as a means toward eventual abolition. Endorsed by Jefferson, Madison, and virtually all southern congressmen, this view held that dispersing slaves over a wider geographic area would improve the slaves’ standard of living while facilitating emancipation by dividing the economic burden of emancipation. References to Randolph’s speeches suggest that he too supported this view, and although his speeches do not survive, it is possible to get a sense of Randolph’s thoughts on restriction and diffusion from a public letter he wrote during the War of 1812. At that time, Randolph acknowledged that the Northwest Ordinance’s ban on slavery benefited white northern settlers but claimed it harmed both slaveholders and their slaves. Touting the benefits of diffusion for the slaves, he wrote: “Dispersion is to them a bettering of their present condition, and of their chance for emancipation. It is only when this can be done without danger and without ruinous individual loss that it will be done at all.” In this thinking, diffusion would reduce the population density of slaves, thus replicating the conditions that had already facilitated gradual emancipation in the northern states.³²

Many diffusionists also dismissed the sincerity of the restrictionists’ purported antislavery motives. Virginia representatives frequently accused them of wearing the “mask of humanity”—cynically exploiting antislavery sentiment to create a sectional coalition that would advance Federalist economic policies designed to promote northern manufacturing at the expense of the agrarian South. These concerns were heightened by the Panic of 1819, which many people blamed on government meddling in the economy. Randolph’s friend James Mercer Garnett, an inveterate opponent of protective tariffs, believed this economic agenda was “the whole secret of [restrictionists’] exuberance & ostensible humanity about our Negroes.” Randolph concluded that “the cause of humanity to these unfortunates has been put back a century, certainly a generation, by the unprincipled conduct of ambitious men, availing themselves of a good as well as of a fanatical spirit in the nation.” Chief among the men whom Randolph believed were leading the “Swiss”—

that is, mercenary politicians serving the northern monied interests—was Gov. De Witt Clinton of New York. Historian Robert Forbes concludes that Clinton was, in fact, cynically using restriction as a tactic to boost his political base. Forbes also argues that the majority of restrictionists were motivated by sincere antislavery convictions; but for our purposes that is beside the point. In Randolph's mind he drew a sharp distinction between the antislavery sentiment of the northern public (with which he sympathized) and the cynical machinations of northern politicians pursuing an ulterior partisan and economic agenda. This view—regardless of its accuracy—helps explain why Randolph reacted so vehemently against the restrictionists.³³

Since the initial discussion of the Missouri question in February 1819, a small number of northern congressmen had opposed the restriction movement. Their numbers grew over time, with some of them sharing Randolph's conviction that restriction was a mere power grab by Federalists attempting to advance an economic agenda. Senator Jonathan Roberts of Pennsylvania celebrated the "agitation now awakened on the subject of slavery" among the public, but he also concluded there was "no shadow of doubt but the Ultra federalists look thro' this question to rise into power." Believing that compromise was "the genius of our government," Roberts supported reaching an agreement with southerners. Eventually a sufficient number of northerners agreed, allowing the Missouri Compromise. The compromise rejected the most radical interpretations of Congress's power over slavery in the territories, settling on a moderate interpretation that received the assent of a majority of both northerners and southerners. One bill recognized Missouri's right as a new state to maintain slavery while another confirmed Congress's control over slavery during the early stages of territorial development by banning it in the remaining Louisiana Purchase Territory north of the 36° 30' line of latitude. Randolph, however, opposed the compromise, believing that southern congressmen should not negotiate with aggressive northerners operating under what he thought were false pretenses.³⁴

Randolph had always viewed political debate as a form of combat, and his enthusiastic reading of the Irish satirist Thomas Moore further strengthened the analogy in his mind. Throughout the Missouri crisis, and in the following years, Randolph frequently referred to Moore's 1819 *Tom Crib's*

Memorial to Congress, which argued that disputes between nations should be settled by boxing matches rather than armies. Randolph adopted the pugilistic slang of *Tom Crib* in his own correspondence with his closest friends, describing the “hits” and “doses” that he would inflict on the restrictionists. During this time, however, Randolph was suffering from various physical ailments and insomnia, and he was frequently disappointed by his own rhetorical efforts. His most famous remarks were not from the actual debates but his denunciation of the restrictionists following the Missouri Compromise.³⁵

Operating under the conviction that the restrictionist effort was a mere “mask” for an economic agenda, Randolph mocked his defeated opponents. Referring to a game in which children wrapped themselves in a white sheet and wore a mask of dough in order to appear like a ghost to frighten each other, Randolph taunted the restrictionists as “scared of their own dough faces,” having backed down from their own bluster. (This was the second time Randolph had used the dough-face reference to denounce policies in Congress; in 1809 he had described Jefferson’s economic coercion against Britain as a dough-faced attempt to intimidate a more powerful foe.) In his mind, Randolph had “unmasked” and exposed the restrictionists’ false principles, and he ridiculed the congressmen “whose conscience, and morality, and religion, are bounded by thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude.”³⁶

Throughout the Missouri crisis, northerners and southerners had imputed sinister motives to their opponents: northerners sought only to promote Federalist pro-manufacturing policies while preventing circumstances that would facilitate gradual emancipation, southerners sought only to expand the domestic slave trade and increase slave state representation in Congress. These exaggerated perceptions shaped Randolph’s dough-face comment and—more importantly—northern assumptions of what his remark illustrated. Many northerners had dismissed the constitutional arguments of southerners and therefore attributed the actions of northern congressmen like Senator Roberts to the “base servility and mercenary hopes” of northern politicians who sought to ingratiate themselves with the South rather than to sincere principles. Unfamiliar with the southern children’s game to which Randolph had referred, most northerners assumed that his dough-face com-

ment indicated his belief that northerners were weak and malleable, like dough. In the following decades, northern politicians and abolitionists portrayed Randolph as embodying the hubris of the Slave Power, which used corrupt and weak-willed northern politicians as tools and then mocked them after they had served their proslavery purpose.³⁷

Historians view the Missouri crisis as an important moment in the development of antislavery ideology and the defense of slavery. Randolph recognized this trend while casting blame on restrictionists for provoking him and others southerners to defend an institution he despised: “These Yankees have almost reconciled me to negro slavery. They have produced a revulsion even in my mind, what must the effect be on those who had no scruples on the subject [?]” But whereas slaveowners with “no scruples” went on to become proslavery advocates, Randolph continued to view slavery as a great evil.³⁸

Much of Randolph’s correspondence and actions throughout the 1820s illustrate his continued criticism of slavery and contradict the image of him as the embodiment of the Slave Power. In 1826, Randolph welcomed Josiah Quincy, Jr., son of a Federalist friend from Massachusetts, as a visitor in Washington. Quincy later recounted the visit in his memoir in which he commented at length on Randolph’s views on slavery. He had asked Randolph who was the best orator he had ever seen (assuming the answer would be Patrick Henry), and the Virginian surprised him by speaking movingly of an enslaved woman whose “rostrum was the auction-block.” Randolph “rose and imitated with thrilling pathos the tones with which this woman had appealed to the sympathy and justice of the bystanders, and finally the indignation with which she denounced them. ‘There was eloquence!’ he said. ‘I have heard no man speak like that. It was overpowering!’” After criticizing slave trading, Randolph then entered into an “elaborate defence of the course which he and other Southerners felt compelled to pursue.” Although he regretted the continuation of slavery, Randolph could not envision peaceful emancipation. He described slavery’s continuation as “a necessity imposed on the South; not a Utopia of our own seeking.” This “defence” suggests that Randolph sought to sway northern opinion through developing empathy for Virginia’s dilemma rather than winning obedience through intimidation. Nor was such antislavery sentiment merely intended

to appease northern visitors; Randolph was similarly critical of slavery in correspondence with other Virginia slaveowners. During the especially harsh winter of 1826, he wrote to James Mercer Garnett about divine retribution for both the dispossession of Native American land and the African slave trade: “This climate has avenged the wrongs of my red ancestors. As the gullies & old fields, & rivers of mud (fishless) have that of the African Slave trade. God is just. Crime ensures punishment.”³⁹

Politically, however, Randolph continued to take stances that could be regarded as proslavery. His reaction to President John Quincy Adams’s proposal to send American delegates to a congress in Panama representing the newly independent nations of Latin America provides one example. Randolph was motivated in part by his avowed determination to thwart all measures supported by the administration of “the evil genius of the American House of Stuart” whom he believed had gained power through intrigue and corruption in the contested election of 1824. In order to rally the South in opposition to this measure, Randolph portrayed the Panama mission as a deadly threat to the slaveholding South. Observing that many of the Latin American republics had abolished slavery and enfranchised people of color during their independence struggles, Randolph warned that delegates of these nations would use force to promote emancipation in the United States. He predicted that they would first liberate Cuba from Spain and then use the island as a base from which to launch military expeditions into the American South. He also warned that diplomatic relations with nations of former slaves could exacerbate slave rebelliousness in the United States, recreating the horrors of St. Domingue and Guatemala, where emancipation had been achieved through slave rebellion.⁴⁰

Some newspaper editors declared that “the mask [is] off” and that Randolph’s open discussion of slavery demonstrated that he and the South were dedicated to the institution’s perpetuation. Yet in his speech Randolph maintained his view that slavery was an evil—a “cancer” on the face of America, but one that could not be safely removed by government action. The best policy was allowing the “disease [to] run its course.” Economics would eventually end slavery, as it already had in the North and was beginning to in Maryland and the “meadow and grain country” in Virginia. Human efforts to interfere with this laissez-faire vision of progress could be

dangerously counterproductive in Randolph's mind; regardless of sincerity they could lead to slave rebellion: "Thus fools rush in where angels fear to tread—whether ill meaning or well-meaning fools is of no importance to me, if my ruin is to be accomplished by their interference. What matters it whether the firebrands scattered were scattered by a fool, in sport, or by a mad-man, in earnest, if the city is reduced to ashes[?]" Moreover, as some contemporaries recognized, the issue was not one of proslavery versus anti-slavery. Hezekiah Niles, an influential editor whose economic views were directly opposed to Randolph's Old Republicanism, sought to co-opt the "proslavery" grounds in support of the Panama mission. Niles suggested (with much accuracy) that Randolph's opposition was based on personal animosity toward the president and argued that the true interest of the slaveholder was to support the Panama mission. Like Randolph, he warned that the Latin American republics might try to liberate Cuba from Spanish rule, and this could endanger the South. Yet he argued that sending delegates to Panama was the best way to prevent this, using diplomatic influence to protect American interests. Henry Clay likewise viewed both alliances with Latin America and the protection of slavery in the South as key components of his American System of economic development. Attributing Randolph's position simply to proslavery defensiveness misses the larger controversies over political economy and partisan politics.⁴¹

The main change in Randolph's views in regard to slavery was the end of his support for African colonization. It is likely that events connected to the Missouri crisis influenced his views. The restrictionist effort seemed to indicate that northern politicians were willing to use antislavery measures to advance economic policies or partisan advantage. In addition, Denmark Vesey's alleged slave conspiracy in South Carolina was attributed to having been inspired by Rufus King's antislavery rhetoric during the Missouri debates. Meanwhile, sectional disputes over tariffs and other economic issues made southerners hesitant to support policies that would increase the scope of the federal government. Thus in 1826, when Francis Scott Key and Chief Justice John Marshall, a vice president of the ACS, asked Randolph to submit another colonization petition to Congress, he gave them a "firm and positive refusal." Instead he told Congress that "as an experiment, I must say

it has failed; and, so far as it has done any thing, it has done mischief instead of good.”⁴²

As Randolph turned against colonization, he increased his dedication to paternalism. In his mind, “true humanity to the slave was to make him do a fair day’s work, and to treat him with all the kindness compatible with due subordination. By that means, the master could afford to clothe and feed him well, and take care of him in sickness and old age.” Randolph confirmed his continued desire to emancipate his slaves and provide land outside Virginia for them in wills and codicils of 1821, 1826, 1828, and 1831. His 1826 codicil also acknowledged the poor conditions in the Liberian colony, trusting his executor, William Leigh, was “too wise, just and humane to send them to Liberia, or any other place in Africa.” Additionally, the 1826 codicil provided that after his executor had purchased land for the manumitted slaves, Leigh could use any surplus funds “for the benefit” of his own slaves, suggesting that Randolph hoped his wealth could help extricate his friend from slaveholding. Therefore, despite the growing sectional tension of the 1820s, Randolph’s defense of slaveowners’ political rights did not evolve into the belief that slavery itself was anything better than an inherited evil. He turned against colonization because he believed it was fraught with too many problems rather than because he no longer believed slaves deserved freedom. In 1826 he also reportedly told Congress that he and his enslaved body servant “often talked over the subject of slavery, and both agreed it was wrong.”⁴³

It is true that at the end of Randolph’s life he reportedly became “more abusive” toward his slaves and struck the manumission clause from his will on New Year’s Day 1832, before reinstating it on his deathbed in 1833. But he was later determined to be legally insane during much of 1831–32, and his own correspondence shows that at moments of lucidity he recognized that his mental illness was affecting his treatment of his slaves. During “a most violent fit of hysteria” he had criticized his slaves for their “ingratitude” toward him but later reflected that “I am now inclined to think that I did the poor creatures some injustice.” Following Randolph’s death, William Leigh and Francis Scott Key successfully argued on behalf of the Randolph’s slaves during the lengthy litigation over his contradictory wills and pur-

chased land for them in Ohio. Unfortunately, racist white Ohioans drove the freedmen from their land after their arrival in 1846.⁴⁴



When Randolph was not in the depths of depression and taking opium for his pain, as in 1832, he consistently maintained his view that slavery was an inherited evil only tolerable because it could not yet be safely eradicated. This view, shared by many of Randolph's generation, became increasingly difficult to maintain in the years after his death, as a result of the dialectical development of immediatist abolitionism and proslavery responses. An exchange between Calhoun and Randolph's senatorial replacement, William Cabell Rives, illustrates this development.

In December 1837, Calhoun proposed a series of antiabolitionist resolutions. Embracing the active use of centralized power to protect slavery, in one resolution he declared that the federal government was "bound so to exercise its powers, as to give, as far as may be practicable, increased stability and security to the domestic institutions of the States." Furthermore, Calhoun denied that slavery was immoral, praising the institution as "a good—a great good." Rives responded to Calhoun's "positive good" thesis the way Randolph might have: he denounced slavery as an evil but also vowed to oppose both federal interference and abolitionist agitation, which he believed were counterproductive and dangerous. Calhoun dismissed Rives's position, replying: "The gentleman from Virginia held it [slavery] an evil. Yet he would defend it. Surely if it was an evil, moral, social, and political, the Senator, as a wise and virtuous man, was bound to exert himself to put it down." On this point, Calhoun mirrored the views of the new generation of abolitionists: one must either be for or against slavery, there could no longer be passive spectators or half-measures at amelioration. This binary between proslavery and antislavery was still nascent in the 1830s, but some contemporaries and historians have extended it back into the early republic. In the later antebellum era, Thomas Jefferson's limited antislavery sentiments were often exaggerated, and he was portrayed as the father of abolitionism, while John Randolph's proslavery actions were exaggerated into the embodiment of the Slave Power. These views served partisan pur-

poses in the nineteenth century, and their perpetuation distorts our understanding of the politics of slavery in the early republic.⁴⁵



NOTES

1. John Randolph (cited hereafter as JR) to Theodore Bland Dudley, 23 Feb. 1817, in Theodore Bland Dudley, *Letters of John Randolph to a Young Relative* (Philadelphia, 1834), 195 (first quotation) (Randolph added that the gun was loaded with “only mustard seed, and will serve just to sting him”); “Noah,” *U.S. Telegraph* (Washington, D.C.), 23 June 1826 (second quotation) (emphasis in original); and Henry L. Bowen, *Memoir of Tristram Burges, with Selections From His Speeches and Occasional Writings* (Providence, 1835), 105, cited in William Cabell Bruce, *John Randolph of Roanoke, 1773–1833: A Biography Based Largely on New Material* (2 vols., New York, 1922), 2:774 (third quotation). Important biographies of Randolph that I have drawn on include: Hugh A. Garland, *The Life of John Randolph of Roanoke* (2 vols., New York, 1850–51); Henry Adams, *John Randolph* (1882; repr., Armonk, N.Y., 1996); Russell Kirk, *John Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in American Politics*, 4th ed. (Indianapolis, 1997); and Robert Dawidoff, *The Education of John Randolph* (New York, 1979).
2. [William Hillhouse], *Pocahontas: A Proclamation* (New Haven, [1820]), 6–7, 12, 13 (emphasis in original); “NO FICTION,” *Democratic Press*, 10 May 1826; and *New Hampshire Sentinel* (Keene), 14 Apr. 1826.
3. Adams, *John Randolph*, 38 (first quotation), 178–79 (second and third quotations); Robert E. Bonner, *Mastering America: Southern Slaveholders and the Crisis of American Nationhood* (New York, 2009); Peter Zavodnyik, *The Age of Strict Construction: A History of the Growth of Federal Power, 1789–1861* (Washington, D.C., 2007), 218–46; Duncan J. Macleod, *Slavery, Race, and the American Revolution* (New York, 1974), 90 (fourth quotation); Steven Deyle, “An ‘Abominable’ New Trade: The Closing of the African Slave Trade and the Changing Patterns of U.S. Political Power, 1808–60,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. ser., 66 (2009): 838 (fifth quotation); and Leonard Richards, *Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780–1860* (Baton Rouge, 2000), 85 (sixth quotation). Robert McColley is significantly more sympathetic to Randolph in his introduction to the 1996 reprint of Henry Adams’s biography, but he only “qualifies without reversing Adams’s major theme: that the representatives of slaveholding states became increasingly self-conscious in defending slavery from 1819 onward, and John Randolph was their prophet” (Adams, *John Randolph*, 6). Most other biographers of Randolph had been considerably more sympathetic to Randolph’s relationship with slavery than Henry Adams, though their work has been less influential. On the connection between Randolph and proslavery, see also Richards, *Slave Power*, 83–106; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York,

2005), 105; David Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York, 2007), 222; Padraig Griffin Riley, “Northern Republicans and Southern Slavery: Democracy in the Age of Jefferson” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007), esp. 395–420; and Padraig Griffin Riley, “Slavery and the Problem of Democracy in Jeffersonian America,” in John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason, eds., *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation* (Charlottesville, 2011), 236, 240.

4. Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill, 2007), 117; Bruce, *John Randolph*, 1:471; Mary Haldane Coleman, “Whittier on John Randolph of Roanoke,” *New England Quarterly* 8 (1935): 551–54; and Julius Rubens Ames, *‘Liberty’: The Image and Superscription of Every Coin Issued by the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1837), 42–44. For example, Gary Wills uses the Slave Power paradigm to explain the actions of Thomas Jefferson and his supporters (Gary Wills, *“Negro President”: Jefferson and the Slave Power* [New York, 2003]).

5. William Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (1983; repr., Columbia, S.C., 2000); William H. Freehling, *Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854* (New York, 1990); Dawidoff, *Education of John Randolph*, 57; John F. Devanny, Jr., “A Loathing of Public Debt, Taxes, and Excises: The Political Economy of John Randolph of Roanoke,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109 (2001): 387–416; Norman K. Risjord, *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson* (New York, 1965); and Richard E. Ellis, *The Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States’ Rights and the Nullification Crisis* (New York, 1987). For examples of the recent view of the forward-looking economic vision of proslavery advocates, see the essays in L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers, eds., *The Old South’s Modern Worlds: Slavery, Region, and Nation in the Age of Progress* (New York, 2011). For a discussion on the differences between the Old Republican defense of slavery and state rights and the politics of the South Carolina nullifiers, see Ellis, *Union at Risk*, 193–97. See also Richard E. Ellis, *Aggressive Nationalism: McCulloch v. Maryland and the Foundation of Federal Authority in the Young Republic* (New York, 2007), 140–42.

6. JR to Josiah Quincy, 18 Oct. 1813, in Edmund Quincy, ed., *The Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1868), 337–38 (first quotation); JR to Harmanus Bleecker, 10 Oct. 1818, Randolph-Bleecker letterbook, Papers of John Randolph, University of Virginia Special Collections (second quotation); St. George Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia, 1796); Bruce, *John Randolph*, 1:104 (third quotation), 2:286–87 (fourth quotation); statement by William Hopkins, 28 Mar. 1799, in *Virginia Gazette*, 4 Apr. 1799 (fifth quotation); and statement by JR in *Virginia Gazette*, 5 Apr. 1799 (sixth quotation). Because they were mortgaged, Richard Randolph’s slaves were not technically freed until 1810. On the fate of his slaves, see Melvin Patrick Ely, *Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s through the Civil War* (New York, 2004). Others complained about how Richard Randolph’s former slaves were allowed to live without an overseer in a situation which “had more the appearance of an old Indian town than anything else” (William Bentley to F. Watkins, 12 Apr. 1799, in *Virginia Gazette*, 23 Apr. 1799). John Randolph’s political need to distance himself from his antislavery sentiments may have contributed to his fierce opposition to an 1800 antislavery petition submitted by the free black minister Absalom Jones (*Annals of Congress*, 6th Congress–1st Session, 233–34 [cited hereafter as *Annals of Congress*, Congress number:Session number, that is, *Annals of Congress* 6:1]). Robert Dawidoff emphasizes that Randolph’s

paradoxical relationship with slavery can be accounted for based on dividing his actions into the separate spheres of political and private. As a politician he faithfully represented the interests of his slaveholding constituents while embracing antislavery at the personal level (Dawidoff, *Education of John Randolph*, 51).

7. James Mercer Garnett (cited hereafter as JMG) to JR, 15 Dec. 1818, Papers of John Randolph, University of Virginia Special Collections (cited hereafter as JR Papers) (quotation). See also JR to Harmanus Bleecker, 16 Nov. 1818, Randolph-Bleecker letterbook. Of course it was impossible to develop a plan of emancipation that a majority of slaveowners would accept as “practical” (Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 121–43 and Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* [New York, 2009]).

8. *Congressional Globe*, 25th Congress—2d Session, Appendix, 23, 29–30, 70–71 (cited hereafter as *Congressional Globe*, Congress number:Session number, that is, *Congressional Globe* 25:2); James H. Read, *Majority Rule Versus Consensus: The Political Thought of John C. Calhoun* (Lawrence, Kans., 2009), 85–159; Risjord, *Old Republicans*, 177, 243–44; and Richard E. Ellis, “The Market Revolution and the Transformation of American Politics, 1801–1837,” in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800–1880* (Charlottesville, 1996), 149–76.

9. Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2008), 42–53 and *Annals of Congress* 18:1, 1310 (quotation).

10. Risjord, *Old Republicans*, 243–44; Adam L. Tate, *Conservatism and Southern Intellectuals, 1789–1861: Liberty, Traditions, and the Good Society* (Columbia, Miss., 2005), 30–69; and *Annals of Congress* 12:1, 451 (quotation), 480.

11. Patricia Roberts-Miller, *Fanatical Schemes: Proslavery Rhetoric and the Tragedy of Consensus* (Tuscaloosa, 2009), 50, 53 (first quotation); David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828–1861: Toward Civil War* (New York, 1998), 18 (second quotation); Rugemer, *Problem of Emancipation*, 44–45, 53–65; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, 2004), 127–31; and JR to JMG, 17 Feb. 1811, JR Papers (third quotation). For one example from a vast literature on nonviolent forms of slave resistance, see Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill, 2004).

12. Risjord, *Old Republicans*, 213; Michael Les Benedict, “States’ Rights, State Sovereignty, and Nullification,” in Paul Finkelman and Donald R. Kennon, eds., *Congress and the Emergence of Sectionalism: From the Missouri Compromise to the Age of Jackson* (Athens, Ohio, 2008), 152–87, esp. 186–87; and Ellis, *Union at Risk*, 191–98. For an example of Randolph’s use of the southern concern about slavery as a political tool to obstruct policies with which he disagreed, see his 1824 speeches on internal improvements and Greek independence (*Annals of Congress* 18:1, 1181–90, 1296–1308). See also Tate, *Conservatism and Southern Intellectuals*, 30–69.

13. *Westchester* (N.Y.) *Herald*, 26 Sept. 1820, and Julius Reuben Ames, *The Legion of Liberty! And Force of Truth, Containing the Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, of Some Prominent Apostles, Champions and Martyrs*, 2d ed. (New York, 1843).

14. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870* (1896; repr., Mineola, N.Y., 1970), 71 and JR to Littleton Waller Tazewell, 28 Jan.

[1804], University of North Carolina, in Correspondence of Randolph, microfilm reel 1, University of Virginia (quotation). The Correspondence of Randolph microfilm collection at UVA includes copies of John Randolph's correspondence located in other repositories, as indicated in my citations.

15. U.S. Const., art. 1, sec. 9, cl. 1; Don Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery* (New York, 2001), 137–38, 142–44; *Annals of Congress* 9:1, 272–74, 301, 306 (quotation), 323, 346, 375, 393, 1020, 1035–36; and Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 92. A tax on imported slaves had been considered but rejected in 1789 (*Annals of Congress* 1:1, 349–55). Names were not recorded for the final and successful vote for postponement, but it can be assumed that Randolph voted as he had earlier. The natural growth of the enslaved population, soil exhaustion, and the transition from tobacco to grains created a labor surplus in Virginia, allowing planters to make significant profits by selling slaves to frontier regions of the South (Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* [Madison, Wisc., 1989]).

16. Report 76, *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 1:146 and *Annals of Congress* 8:2, 1016 (quotation).

17. Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*, 94–107; Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 144–48; and Matthew E. Mason, “Slavery Overshadowed: Congress Debates Prohibiting the Atlantic Slave Trade to the United States, 1806–1807,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 20 (2000): 64–73.

18. Deyle, “An ‘Abominable’ New Trade,” 834–38; Wills, *Negro President*, 121; *Annals of Congress* 9:2, 528 (first quotation), 626–27 (second quotation on page 626), 636–37; *U.S. Gazette*, 2 Mar. 1807 (third and fourth quotations); and “An Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves,” in Richard Peters, ed., *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America* (18 vols.; Boston, 1845–78), 2:426–30. These larger ships were easier to regulate and could be an inconvenience for slaveowners because many vessels that traded along the coast were smaller in size (Mason, “Slavery Overshadowed,” 70). The following November, Randolph again proposed that Congress explicitly confirm that the language of the 1807 act was not intended to infringe slaveholders’ property rights, though again nothing came of this (*Annals of Congress* 10:1, 854–55).

19. *Annals of Congress* 14:1, 1115–16 (first and second quotations) and Bruce, *John Randolph*, 1:492. Unfortunately, Randolph's correspondence provides no further insight into his views on slave trading.

20. William T. Laprade, “The Domestic Slave Trade in the District of Columbia,” *Journal of Negro History* 11 (1926): 17–34, esp. 28–30; deposition of Francis S. Key, 22 Apr. 1816, in Slave Trade Committee Records, HR 14A-C17.4, National Archives (first quotation); and *Annals of Congress* 14:1, 1115–16 (second and third quotations).

21. *Annals of Congress* 14:1, 1115–16 (first, second, and fifth quotations); JR to Harmanus Bleecker, 16 Nov. 1818, Randolph-Bleecker letterbook (see also JR to JMG, 16 Nov. and 22 Dec. 1818, JR Papers); JR to JMG, 16 Nov. 1818, JR Papers (third quotation); and JR to Harmanus Bleecker, 10 Oct. 1818, Randolph-Bleecker letterbook (fourth quotation, emphasis in original). Some historians have suggested that Randolph's actions were cynically calculated to “strengthen slavery” by “reforming it so that its opponents would have no room for criticism” (Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* [Baton

Rouge, 2003], 39). Matthew Mason also states that Randolph “apparently [sought] to do public relations for slavery as a domestic institution” (Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* [Chapel Hill, 2006], 169). Undoubtedly, Randolph would have been happy if reforms reduced northern criticism of slavery, but it is clear from his private correspondence that his disgust at the slave trade was sincere.

22. *Annals of Congress 14:1*, 1127, 1465; and deposition of Samuel Brooks, 7 Mar. 1816, deposition of Mr. Cranch, 7 Mar. 1816, extract of a letter from [Isaac Gibbs for John Reynold, Esq.] to [B. S.] Lear, 5 Jan. 1816, and deposition of Jesse Torrey, Jr., 29 Apr. 1816 (quotation), all in Slave Trade Committee Records.

23. Jesse Torrey, Jr., *A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States . . . Including Memoirs of Facts on the Interior Traffic in Slaves* (Philadelphia, 1817), 12 (emphasis in original) (first quotation), 58–61; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 14; and Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York, 2005), 178. Torrey credited Randolph with the comparison and quoted the first part of his passage from the British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson (Torrey, *Portraiture of Domestic Slavery*, 47 [second quotation]).

24. Christa Breault Dierksheide, “The Amelioration of Slavery in the Anglo-American Imagination, 1770–1840” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2008), 17 (quotation). For a recent discussion on the ACS and the historiography on colonization, see Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 299–302, 616.

25. JR to Josiah Quincy, 18 Oct. 1813, in Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy*, 337–38 (quotation); Eva Sheppard Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner’s Rebellion* (Baton Rouge, 2006), 121–29; *Annals of Congress 16:1*, 1047–51 (quotation from page 1050); and *Second Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1819), 12–17. Randolph also reportedly threatened to flog a planter who sought to purchase one of his slaves (Bruce, *John Randolph*, 2:257).

26. Bruce, *John Randolph*, 1:471, 2:49–60 (quotation on page 49).

27. *Annals of Congress 14:2*, 481 (quotation), 639 and Douglas Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer and the Trial of National Conservatism* [Jackson, Miss., 1989], 164–68. Egerton portrays Randolph as a reluctant participant who presented the petition “with as little enthusiasm as possible” but cites no evidence for this assumption (Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer*, 111, 164–66). For the creation of the Slave Trade Committee and other petitions, see *Annals of Congress 14:2*, 234–35, 244, 266, 311–12, 442, 508, 842–43, and 939–40 (report in favor of colonization and additional action to suppress the Atlantic slave trade).

28. Moore, *Missouri Crisis*, 65–83. On the Missouri crisis, see Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 263–66; Forbes, *Missouri Compromise*, 33–120; John Craig Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West* (Charlottesville, 2007), 154–68; Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 177–212; Donald L. Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765–1820* (New York, 1971), 402–23; Glover Moore, *The Missouri Crisis, 1819–1821* (Lexington, Ky., 1953); and George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholder’s Union: Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic* (Chicago, 2010), 225–66.

29. *Annals of Congress 14:2*, 939–41; Timothy Pickering (cited hereafter as TP) to Charles Fenton Mercer, 15 Jan. 1820, Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (third quotation); [TP], “Colonizing the Free People of Colour, No. I–III,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 28, 29, and 30 Sept.

1819; and TP to JR, 24 Dec. 1819 (first and second quotations), and TP to Charles Fenton Mercer, 15 Jan. 1820, both in Pickering Papers. For an example of a northern supporter of the African colonization movement who believed the territorial restriction of slavery was an essential component of colonization, see the essays written by Robert Evans under the pseudonym “Benjamin Rush,” in *National Intelligencer*, 4 and 24 Nov. 1819. To my knowledge, no Randolph scholar has studied the friendship between John Randolph and Timothy Pickering, and none of their correspondence, which is primarily at the Massachusetts Historical Society, is listed in William E. Stokes, Jr. and Francis L. Berkeley, Jr., eds., *The Papers of John Randolph of Roanoke: A Preliminary Checklist of His Surviving Texts in Manuscript and in Print* (Charlottesville, 1950).

30. Report No. 76, *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 1:146 (first quotation) and JR to TP, [1 Jan.] 1820, Pickering Papers (second quotation). Randolph frequently complained that he was suffering from severe illness and insomnia and that he was disappointed by his own speeches. For example, see JR to Joseph A. Clay, 20 Feb. 1820, JR Papers and JR to Henry Middleton Rutledge, 20 Mar. 1820, Duke University, Correspondence of Randolph, microfilm reel 1.

31. Mark A. Graber, *Dred Scott and the Problem of Constitutional Evil* (New York, 2006), 120–26, 157–76; Peter Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, 2000), 109–21; Van Cleve, *Slaveholders’ Union*, 242–57; Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 55–75; Forbes, *Missouri Compromise*, 32; Historical Census Browser, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/index.html> (accessed 10 Apr. 2012); Ellis, *Aggressive Nationalism*, 13–32, 111–42; and Risjord, *Old Republicans*, 223–27. For an example of how southern politicians used the doctrines of strict construction and state rights to argue that Congress lacked the authority to ban slavery in Missouri, see James Barbour, *Speech of Mr. J. Barbour, of Virginia, on the Restriction of Slavery in Missouri, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, Jan. 31, 1820* (n.p., [1820]), 13 and Alexander Smyth, *Speech of Mr. Smyth, on the Restriction of Slavery in Missouri, Delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States, January 28, 1820* ([Washington, D.C.?], [1820]), 12–14. James Madison argued, in somewhat convoluted fashion, that the 1787 Northwest Ordinance’s restriction of slavery was only valid because it was passed before 1808, when territorial restriction was the only means of curtailing the Atlantic slave trade by reducing demand. But following the abolition of the slave trade, Madison advocated diffusion (James Madison to Robert Walsh, Jr., 27 Nov. 1819, in J. C. A. Stagg, ed., *The Papers of James Madison: Digital Edition* [Charlottesville, 2010], <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-04-01-02-0504> [accessed 23 Apr. 2012] and Drew R. McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy* [New York, 1989], 108–14, 268–69, 325).

32. JR to [Senator John Lloyd and the people of New England], 15 Dec. 1814, in Kirk, *John Randolph*, 249 (quotation). See Ezra Gross’s speech of 1 February 1820, in *National Intelligencer*, 30 May 1820. The diffusionist logic assumes that slaveowners wanted to free their slaves and would have done so as soon as it became practical. Of course, in reality the effect was merely to increase the value of slaves and the number of states with congressmen committed to protecting slavery.

33. *Speech of Mr. J[ames] Barbour*, 19; *Speech of Mr. Smyth*, 24; Van Cleve, *Slaveholders’ Union*, 239; Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 193; Moore, *Missouri Crisis*, 151; Forbes, *Missouri Compromise*, 75, 88; JMG to JR, 24 Jan. 1820, JR Papers (first quotation); JR to Dr. Brockenbrough, 24 Feb. 1820, in Kenneth Shorey, ed., *Collected Letters of John Randolph of Roanoke to Dr. John Brockenbrough, 1812–1833* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1988), 26–27 (second quotation); and JR to JMG, 29 Jan. 1820, JR Papers.

34. Jonathan Roberts to Mathew Roberts, 16 Feb. 1820 (quotation), and Jonathan Roberts to Mathew Roberts, 27 Feb. 1820, both in Jonathan Roberts Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Roberts's decision to support compromise is also detailed in Forbes, *Missouri Compromise*, 75–80 and Van Cleve, *Slaveholder's Union*, 238–40. A third bill admitted Maine as a free state (Forbes, *Missouri Compromise*, 75–98).

35. [Thomas Moore], *Tom Crib's Memorial to Congress, With a Preface, Notes, and Appendix, by One of the Fancy*, 3d ed. (London, 1819); and JMG to JR, 24 Jan. 1820, JR to JMG, 29 Jan. 1820, and Tom Crib alias Roanoke [JR] to Cornplanter [JMG] and his old Comrade [Brockenbrough], 23 Feb. 1820, all in JR Papers.

36. Moore, *Missouri Crisis*, 104 (quotation) and *Annals of Congress* 10:2, 1509. The full quotation of Randolph's mocking "dough face" speech is: "I knew *these would give way*. They were scared at their own dough faces—yes, they were scared at their own dough faces! We had *them*, and if we had wanted *three* more, we could have had them; yes, and if *these* had failed, we could have had three more of these men, whose conscience, and morality, and religion, extend to thirty six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude. You can never find any difficulty in obtaining the support of men whose principles of morality and religion are bounded by thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north latitude!" (Moore, *Missouri Crisis*, 104). See also *Massachusetts Spy*, 19 Apr. 1820 and *Northern Whig*, 2 May 1820. My interpretation of Randolph's meaning behind "dough face" breaks with the standard interpretation that assumes that he was vindictively mocking his own northern allies, representing the hubris of the Slave Power. I discuss the dough face remark with greater detail and evidence in my forthcoming dissertation, "Questions of Humanity and Expediency: Slave Trading and the African Colonization Movement in the Early American Republic" (PhD. diss., University of Virginia, expected 2013). A number of scholars have realized that Randolph was referring to the child's game but have failed to discern his meaning behind this imagery (Sperber and Tidwell, "Words and Phrases," 96; Wilentz, "Jeffersonian Democracy and the Origins of Political Antislavery in the United States: The Missouri Crisis Revisited," *Journal of the Historical Society* 4 [2004]: 397n; and Richards, *Slave Power*, 86). On the concept of "unmasking," see Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Arguments, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, 1996), 24–50.

37. Jeremiah Mason to Rufus King, 15 Apr. 1820, in George S. Hillard, ed., *Memoir and Correspondence of Jeremiah Mason* (Cambridge, Mass., 1873), 239–40; "Southern Views," *Niles Weekly Register*, 16 Apr. 1831; *Emancipator*, 15 Sept. 1842 and 12 Jan. 1843; John Gorham Palfrey, *Papers on the Slave Power: First Published in the Boston Whig*, 2d ed. (Boston, 1846), 14; and [Leonard Marsh], *A Bake-Pan for the Dough-Faces . . .* (Burlington, Vt., 1854), 59.

38. Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 207–11 and JR to John Brockenbrough, 24 Feb. 1820, in Shorey, ed., *Collected Letters*, 26–27 (quotation).

39. JR to JMG, 4 Mar. 1826, JR Papers (quotation). See also JR to [Elizabeth Tucker Coalter], 27 July 1825, *ibid.*, and JR to Theodore Dudley, 17 Jan. 1822, in Dudley, *Letters of John Randolph*, 234–35. When Quincy published his memoir in 1883 he seemed to recognize that the Slave Power image and the Civil War still shaped northern perceptions. He observed that "The time has not yet come to estimate with impartiality the class of Southern gentlemen to which Randolph belonged" (Josiah Quincy, *Figures from the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* [1883; repr., Boston, 1910], 212–13, 228). For Randolph's favorable description of Quincy's visit, see Randolph to Josiah

Quincy, 20 Feb. 1826, in Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy*, 421 and JR to JMG, 21 Feb. 1826, JR Papers.

40. *Register of Debates 19th Congress—1st Session* [cited hereafter as *Register of Debates*, Congress number—Session number, that is, *Register of Debates 19:1*], 117–22, 401 (quotation).

41. “The Mask Off,” republished from the *New York Commercial Advertiser* in *New York Spectator*, 7 Mar. 1826; *Rhode Island America*, 10 Mar. 1826; *Vermont Watchmen*, 21 Mar. 1826; *Register of Debates 19:1*, 118–19 (fourth quotation), 130–31 (first and second quotation); “Southern Interests,” *Niles Register*, 6 May 1826; and Andrew Shankman, “Neither Infinite Wretchedness Nor Positive Good: Mathew Carey and Henry Clay on Slavery and Political Economy During the Long 1820s,” in Hammond and Mason, eds., *Contesting Slavery*, 247–66. The *National Gazette* expressed a similar view in the form of a satire about how Randolph would have reacted in the opposite fashion if Adams had opposed the Panama mission (*National Gazette*, 4 Apr. 1826).

42. William Wiecek, *The Sources of Antislavery Constitutionalism in America, 1760–1848* (Ithaca, 1977), 141; JR to John Brockenbrough, 20 Feb. 1826, in Shorey, ed., *Collected Letters*, 67–68 (first quotation); and *Register of Debates 19:1*, 118–19 (second quotation).

43. Bruce, *John Randolph*, 2:51 (second quotation) and “Extract to the Editor,” *Carolina Observer* (Fayetteville, N.C.), 17 May 1826 (third quotation). Randolph elaborated that the slaveholder who spoiled their slaves with little work actually hurt them: “His slave was unprovided with necessaries, unless pilfered from his master’s neighbors; because the owner could not furnish them out of the profits of the negro’s labor—there being none. And at the master’s death, the poor slaves were generally sold for debt (because the philanthropist had to go to Bank, instead of drawing upon his crop), and were dispersed from Carolina to the Balize; so that in the end the superfine master turned out, like all other *ultras*, the worst that could be for the negroes” (JR to John Brockenbrough, 20 Feb. 1826, in Shorey, ed., *Collected Letters*, 67–68).

44. Bruce, *John Randolph*, 2:53–55, 257–58; Powhatan Bouldin, *Home Reminiscences of John Randolph of Roanoke* (Richmond, 1876), 101–15, 125; JR to John Brockenbrough, [1832], in Shorey, ed., *Collected Letters*, 139 (quotation); and Frank F. Mathias, “John Randolph’s Freedmen: The Thwarting of a Will,” *Journal of Southern History* 39 (1973): 263–72. In another letter on the Nullification controversy, Randolph observed that “I sometimes distrust my own judgment in my present diseased condition” (JR to John Brockenbrough, [16 Dec. 1832], in Shorey, ed., *Collected Letters*, 144). For a third-hand account of Randolph berating his slaves for their ingratitude, see Bouldin, *Home Reminiscences*, 86.

45. *Congressional Globe* 25:2, 55 (first quotation) and Remarks on Abolition Petitions, Senate, 6 Feb. 1837, in Clyde N. Wilson et al., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (28 vols.; Columbia, S.C., 1959–2003), 12:391 (third quotation), 13:390 (second quotation). Another resolution called for the acquisition of Florida and Texas as slave states. On Rives’s thinking on slavery, see McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers*, 350–59. On the rise of immediatist abolitionism, see Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, 2002). On the proslavery response, see Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 481–536. This is not to say that abolitionists (or historians) ignored Jefferson’s failures and limitations in regards to slavery. As Merrill Peterson has shown, William Lloyd Garrison and others always felt some ambivalence about Jefferson but highlighted his antislavery ideals over his expression of racial prejudice (Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* [1960; repr., New York, 1970], 171–74,

188–192, 199–209). For examples of Randolph represented as the forerunner to the Slave Power, see *Emancipator* (New York), 15 Sept. 1842, 12 Jan. 1843, and 25 Feb. 1846; [Liberty Party], *The Slave Power* (Hartford, Conn., [1844?]), 3; and “Traitors and Doughfaces,” *New Hampshire Statesmen*, 16 June 1854.

