

Ct. Courant? .....From The Observer

Farmington, March 23d, 1841

Messrs., Editors—

An article copied from the New Haven Herald, appeared in the Hartford Courant, of last week respecting the Africans of the Amistad, representing them as being unwilling to work, and as “divested of any moral principle” that, if not sustained by private charities, our almshouses or prisons must soon receive them.: This is not the first time that they have been noticed by the Herald, as destitute of morals, indolent, etc. Having been their teacher for the last six months, an opportunity has been given me of knowing something of their character and habits. It is true that they did not go into “ecstasies” at the news of their pardon, for the result was such as they had been taught by their friends to expect. But could their anxiety been witnessed by the public, for the two months preceding the trial, and up to the time that Mr. Baldwin made his great argument, they would have no doubt of their ability to appreciate the balm of freedom. Daily, during the pendency of the trial, until the pleadings were finished, would Cinquez come to me, and with a tone and look, as if he believed *life* or *death* hung upon the answer, inquire “What the Grand Court say? Tell me.” He was quite indignant at that part of the Herald’s notice which represents the Africans as saying that they would not work. “My people” said he, “work for Pendleton plenty and he never pay. We no work? Man no work, he no eat—he die, he no work. We all work, if men pay; but no pay, we no work. We no work any more for Mr. Pendleton *if* he pay; we work for Mr. Tappan and Mr. Townsend without pay, because they good friends.: Some of them have worked for the jailor much of the time for nothing. They have cut their own wood, done their own cooking and washing, and so valuable did their work appear to Mr. P that, as Sokomah testified in Court, he was not willing to let him wash his clothes on the week day, but told him to wash on Sunday. And when Sokomah remonstrated against working on the Sabbath, Mr. P. replied. “What does a ‘nigger’ care for Sunday? So far from being unwilling to work, on the first evening of their arrival at Farmington, Cinque said to the committed who provided a comfortable place here, “To-morrow we go and work for you.” In passing, perhaps it might be pleasing to the editor of the Herald to learn that “they are” *not* to be placed on the farm of Mr. Williams until capable of taking care of themselves,” as his paper of the 20<sup>th</sup> inst. states, but they are provided with comfortable lodgings, and a room which they occupy as a school room, where they spend most of their time in study and in receiving instruction. They take their meals at a boarding house provided for them at a distance of one hundred rods from their sleeping room, and have *for the first time* adopted the customs of civilized life, all sitting down at a table and using knives, forks, etc., the government, or its agents, having been too poor to provide them with either, while they were under its *paternal care*.

What then, is the state of their morals? 1<sup>st</sup>. They never get drunk, nor even drink that which will intoxicate them 2d. They never use profane language. 3d. They never lie, nor prevaricate. 4<sup>th</sup>. They are great disbelievers in *common fame*, or to use their own language, “we always say *this man*, Kinna, or Banna, or Mulu—we never say “some people say so, some people are liars—we never believe what *some people* say.” Thus in

four important particulars they “are found wanting.” ...But this is not all; for they have a perfect abhorrence of drunkenness, lying and profanity. I have never known one of them to tell a lie. They take great delight in reading the Bible, and have a strong desire to *understand* what they read. They are very devout. Morning and night they have prayers in their room; in the absence of their teacher, sometimes one, and sometimes another leading in prayer. They listen with great eagerness to all that is said about God, eternity, future retribution, the Bible and their personal relations to the world to come. They forgive and pray for their enemies. Said Foole, one of the most intelligent of their number, “If a man do me good I love him; if he do me bad I pray for him, and forgive him.” They are very grateful to their friends, and are willing to do anything to oblige them. Now I would ask the editor of the Herald, if in this delineation he can see no proof of moral principle, what his ideas of morality are. And though they might have been “incapable of ‘defining their position’” when the editor penned his article concerning them, yet if he will visit them in their present comfortable quarters, I can assure him they will be able to define their position with great accuracy.

S.M. Booth