

NORTON – TAPPAN

Farmington, February 27, 1841

My Dear Sir,

Mr. Jocelyn called here yesterday & left late at night intending to sleep at Brother Williams & start early this morning for Middletown to consult Judge Storrs. Many of the good friends here are very desirous to get the Africans out of the hands of their oppressors at once, and some are willing to go so far as to shoulder a musket, or to turn Mohawks for this purpose. There was much talk on the subject, and there seems to be many practical difficulties in the way especially at this season of the year. Still if it was on the whole deemed best to undertake to deliver them in this way, these difficulties, and even much greater might undoubtedly be overcome. My opinion however is, that considering the possibilities or if you please _____, of a favorable decision, & then the remaining resort of a habeus corpus in case of an unfavorable one, with the uncertain delay? of an attempt to get them off & moreover the loss of sympathy & of confidence which a failure would occasion & which all success would occasion, if the decision of the court should after all be favorable, I say taking all into view, I am of the opinion that it would be best to keep still until after the decision is known.

I know you do not contemplate interfering in this way & I write to you on the subject that you may address others in case you are of the same opinion as myself. The cause of Abolition will gain greatly if these men are delivered solely by pursuance? in the path of law & justice & and on the contrary, the enemies of the Cause at the North, and the Lynchers of the South, will gain an advantage if the Abolitionists depart from the principle they have contended for. Providence seems to have thrown these men here for various purposes & one of these purposes may have been to test Abolitionists & to exalt their principles. If the decision of the Court should be unfavorable, how it will tend to open the eyes of good men to the designs of the South & to their influence in preventing justice- and if the poor Africans should be given to Spain what an outcry would there be throughout the country & the world. Everything must be done that justice & truth will warrant & God will finally vindicate himself & his truth.

The existing arrangements do not seem to be such as will secure speedy action. If you depend on me to procure a "habeus corpus" a day's delay will almost assuredly occur. Will it not be well therefore in case prompt & speedy action shall be necessary to have _____ one all in readiness. Mr. Jocelyn left the blanks prepared by Gov. Ellsworth in my hands I sent a copy this day to N. Jocelyn. Will _____ agreeably to the request of Mr. S.S. Jocelyn.

Yours very truly

John T. Norton

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