

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION 2: "Flight to Freedom"

Free Soil Party Platform (1848)

In 1848, a new political group, the Free Soil Party, formed in upstate New York to oppose the expansion of slavery. Unlike its predecessor the Liberty Party, the Free Party focused on stopping the spread of slavery in western states and territories, rather than abolishing slavery where it currently existed.

Whereas, We have assembled in Convention, as a union of freemen, for the sake of freedom, forgetting all past political differences in a common resolve to maintain the rights of free labor against the aggressions of the Slave Power, and to secure free soil to a free people.

And Whereas, The political Conventions recently assembled...have dissolved the National party organizations heretofore existing, by nominating for the Chief Magistracy of the United States, under the slaveholding dictation, candidates, neither of whom can be supported by the opponents of Slavery Extension without a sacrifice of consistency, duty and self-respect;

And whereas, These nominations so made, furnish the occasion and demonstrate the necessity of the union of the people under the banner of free Democracy, in a solemn and formal declaration of their independence of the slave power, and of their fixed determination to rescue the Federal Government from its control;

Resolved, therefore, That we, the people here assembled, remembering the example of our fathers, in the days of the first Declaration of Independence, putting our trust in God for the triumph of our cause, and invoking his guidance in our endeavors to advance it, do now plant ourselves upon the National platform of Freedom in opposition to the sectional platform of Slavery.

Resolved, That Slavery in the several States of this Union which recognize its existence, depends upon State laws alone, which cannot be repealed or modified by the Federal Government, and for which laws that government is not responsible. We therefore propose no interference by Congress with Slavery within the limits of any State.

Resolved, That the Proviso of Jefferson, to prohibit the existence of Slavery after 1800, in all the Territories of the United States, Southern and Northern; the votes of six States and sixteen delegates, in the Congress of 1784, for the Proviso, to three States and seven delegates against it; the actual exclusion of Slavery from the Northwestern Territory, by the Ordinance of 1787, unanimously adopted by the States in Congress; and the entire history of that period, clearly show that it was the settled policy of the Nation not to extend, nationalize or encourage, but to limit, localize and discourage Slavery; and to this policy, which should never have been departed from, the Government ought to return...

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Resolved, That in the judgment of this Convention, Congress has no more power to make a Slave than to make a King; no more power to institute or establish Slavery than to institute or establish a Monarchy: no such power can be found among those specifically conferred by the Constitution, or derived by just implication from them.

Resolved, That it is the duty of the Federal Government to relieve itself from all responsibility for the existence or continuance of slavery wherever the government possesses constitutional authority to legislate on that subject, and it is thus responsible for its existence.

Resolved, That the true, and in the judgment of this Convention, the only safe means of preventing the extension of Slavery into Territory now Free, is to prohibit its extension in all such Territory by an act of Congress.

Resolved, That we accept the issue which the Slave power has forced upon us; and to their demand for more Slave States, and more Slave Territory, our calm but final answer is, no more Slave States and no more Slave Territory. Let the soil of our extensive domains be kept free for the hardy pioneers of our own land, and the oppressed and banished of other lands, seeking homes of comfort and fields of enterprise in the new world.

Resolved, That the bill lately reported by the committee of eight in the Senate of the United States, was no compromise, but an absolute surrender of the rights of the Non-Slaveholders of all the States; and while we rejoice to know that a measure which, while opening the door for the introduction of Slavery into Territories now free, would also have opened the door to litigation and strife among the future inhabitants thereof, to the ruin of their peace and prosperity, was defeated in the House of Representatives, its passage, in hot haste, by a majority, embracing several senators who voted in open violation of the known will of their constituents, should warn the people to see to it, that their representatives be not suffered to betray them. There must be no more Compromises with Slavery; if made they must be repealed.

Source: Horace Greeley and John F. Cleveland, eds., *A Political Text-Book for 1860* (New York: Tribune Association, 1860), 17-18.