

Congress and Human Trafficking in 1812

Document 2. Excerpt from the Memorial of the Society of Friends,* November 20, 1811; Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives.

– Read and referred to U.S. Senators Smith of Maryland, Taylor (SC) and Tait (GA) (United States Senators)

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled.

This memorial of the representatives of the Religious Society of Friends of the Yearly Meeting held in Baltimore for the Western Shore of Maryland, the adjacent parts of Pennsylvania and Virginia and the State of Ohio.

Respectfully showeth,

That while our hearts are impressed with gratitude to the Great Disposer of events, for the signal evidence of his favor, in having inclined the councils of our Country, to put an end to the African Slave Trade in these United States, we are engaged to state to Congress, that there has for some time past an extensive traffic been carried on in Negroes, and People of Color, from the middle to the Southern States; and it is with deep concern your memorialists feel themselves constrained to represent, that many of the persons engaged in this trade, are so far destitute of every principle of honesty, that instances frequently occur of their clandestinely carrying off People of Color, who by the laws of the State in which they reside, are entitled to freedom.

Your memorialists are altogether satisfied, that it will only be necessary to disclose to the Legislature of their country a knowledge of the atrocious outrages which these people are in the practice of committing in order to draw the attention of the Government to this important object. . . .

*Note: “Friends” refers to the Quaker religion, and the term was used by members of the sect to address one another.