

To the Honourable the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled.

The Inhabitants of Colour of the District of Marshpee beg leave to offer with the utmost deference and respect the following observations to the consideration of the Honourable Legislature.

Ever since the settlement of this Country, the aboriginals, and those who claimed under them have been deemed the legal proprietors of the territory comprized within said District, the same having never been transferred or ceded to the whites. The Government of the late Province of Massachusetts Bay notwithstanding assumed the right of controuling in a peculiar manner the property & economy of said District, and imposed Restraints on the Inhabitants, which were ever considered by them as an infringement of that freedom to which as men they were justly entitled. At the Commencement of the late Revolution, when a high sense of civil liberty, and the oppressive policy of an arbitrary Court roused the Citizens ^{of America} to noble and patriotic exertions in defence of their freedom, we anticipated the time when a liberal and enlightened spirit of philanthropy should extend its views and its influence to the increase of liberty and social happiness among all ranks and Classes of ^{Mankind}

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We supposed a just estimate of the rights of man would teach ^{them} the value of those privileges of which we were deprived, and that their own sufferings would naturally lead them to respect and relieve ours. Impressed with these sentiments, and animated by a portion of that ardent sense of freedom and love of independence, which characterized our Ancestors, we voluntarily entered the encrimsoned ~~fields of~~ fields of battle, & freely mingled our blood with that of the early martyrs to the Cause of this Country. The sentiments and anticipations which animated us to the conflict were farther confirmed by that august and magnanimous declaration of American Independence which appalled a british ministry and astonished all Europe. In this, these truths are

solemnly stated as self evident "that all men were created equal; that they were endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The adoption of the Constitution of this Commonwealth was a still farther confirmation of our hopes. The first Article in the Bill of Rights which declares that "all men are free and equal, and, have certain natural, essential, & unalienable rights, amongst which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing and protecting property; in line that of seeking and obtaining their safety & hap-

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happiness," we expected would in future be the broad basis of freedom to all the inhabitants of the Commonwealth.

At the Close of a long & successful war, in which we had been honourably distinguished & had profusely bled, how are we disappointed! how are our pleasing anticipations blasted! How could we conceive it possible that a people who were exhibiting such illustrious proofs of their attachment to freedom, & so enlarged ideas of the principles of civil liberty & of the original design of Government should not respect tho[*torn*] ^{Rights} in others which they so warmly contended for themselves. Let the acts passed previous ^{& subsequent} to the late Revolution, respecting the Marshpee Tribe be compared together, & how humiliating a comparison results. By the former we had the miserable privilege of choosing our own Masters. By the latter even that is taken away. Strange! that under an hereditary Monarch, (and ^{formerly} considered in this Country an arbitrary one) we should

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enjoy more liberty than when connected with a Republican Government. Instead of one Master, we have now as many as there are free Inhabitants in the Commonwealth, who by their Representatives can make what

Laws for us they please. We cannot alienate a single inch of our Land, nor indeed enjoy it, as the Government have undertaken to modify, & apportion ^{it} as they think proper - We are legally incapable of making any contract to the amount of a shilling without the approbation of our Guardians, and in the ^{choice} [*torn*] of these we have not the privilege ~~of~~ [*crossout*] allowed by law to ^{white} infants of fourteen Years of age. We can institute no action in our own names for the recovery of our demands. We are governed by laws enacted by a Legislature where we have no Representative. ~~In fact we are as completely slaves as the subjects of Eastern Despotism.~~ It is a fact which can be easily authenticated that one half the Inhabitants of Marshpee fell honourable victims to the Cause of liberty in the late Contest. And many who

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now remain & subscribe this can shew the traces of many a wound received in facing the enemies of this Country. Indeed the District of Marshpee was the common Reservoir, whence the adjacent Towns drew their Recruits for the late Armies of the United States. When we view our bodies lacerated & maimed in a struggle for the liberty & happiness of others, & view our own detestable thralldom, what must be our feelings! ~~Where the widow deploras the loss of her husband & her son, who were the solace & the stay of her declining years, [*torn*] orphan of his father & his brother who were the guide & companion of his Youth, what consolation can they find in the consequences of their exertions? Our public securities, owing to a want of credit in the Government, vanished into air, & "like the baseless fabrick of a vision left not a wreck behind."~~ It is pretended by those who forge our shackles, that we are not capable of enjoying liberty, that we should dispose of our property without proper consideration & become chargeable to the Community -- that the

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Government takes care of our property, and imposes restraints upon our conduct merely from motives of mercy and compassion. This is but a solemn mockery of our wrongs. How it is possible that a people who are constantly depressed by a mortifying consciousness of the inferiority of their Condition, who have no incentives to industry or improvement, and who every day experience that the whites view them as objects of contempt & derision, should make any considerable figure in life. Indeed we venture to affirm that no adequate means have yet been adopted for the civilization & improvement of the Aborigines of America. They have ever been taught by those who pretended a wish for their improvement that they regarded them as beings of an inferior Class to that of their more polished Neighbours, as designed merely to complete the nice gradation from the most sagacious of the Brute Creation to Intelligent Man. If this has not been the language of their theory, it certainly has been of their practice. The Progress of Civilization among the aborigines has been very little beneficial to the subjects of it, or con-

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-ducive to their happiness. We are only taught enough to see & to deplore our forlorn condition. We have lost that independence of character and sentiment, that high sense of personal liberty, that happy equality, and that simplicity of manners which distinguishes rude tribes without acquiring the privileges of civilized societies. Rob a man of his liberty, and you destroy the best part of his Nature. Give us an opportunity to dilate & extend our views in the occupations & pursuits of social life; in the projects of ambition; & the acquisition of wealth; ^{inform} [torn] our minds with rational science; teach us by bestowing some marks of regard on us to respect ourselves; let us enjoy some portion of civil liberty, and we believe that we should act no inglorious part on the Theatre of action. Even disputed as

we are at present we flatter ourselves
 that we are not uselefs members of
 the Community. With the Lance and
 the Harpoon we wage war with the mighty
 Monsters of the deep; alternately scorching
 beneath the equatorial heat of the sun, &

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 shivering in the frozen Regions of the North
 to increase the wealth & the Commerce of
 this Country.

We will not, however, longer
 take up the time of the Legislature. We sub-
 -mit the above to their wise consideration,
 relying on the Justice & the equity of their
 future arrangements respecting us. If we can have
 no more, we can at least ask to be restored to as free a
 government as [^]that were subject to before the
 Revolution. And as in duty bound fhall
 ever pray &c. [*torn*]

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