

in a

# Word™

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## IN A WORD REMEMBERS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Read a letter written in 1865  
from a former slave to his old master.

Photo by: Father James Fawlicki, SVD



**Letter from a Freedman to his Old Master.**

The following is a genuine document. It was dictated by the old servant, and contains his ideas and forms of expression. (Cincinnati Commercial.)

DAYTON, Ohio, August 7, 1865.

To my Old Master, Col. P. H. Anderson, Big Spring, Tennessee.

Sir: I got your letter and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this for harboring Robt. they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Col. Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Alon, Esther, Green and Leo. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well now; I get \$25 a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable house for Mandy (she tells her call her Mrs. Anderson), and the children, Billy Jane and Grindly, go to school and are learning well; the teacher says Grindly has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday School, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated; sometimes we overhear others saying, "Them colored people were always down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks, but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Col. Anderson. Many darkeys would have been proud, as I used to was, to call you master. Now, if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free papers in 1861 from the Provost-Marshal-General of the Department at Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you are sincerely disposed to treat us justly and kindly—and we have concluded to test you, shortly by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years, at \$25 a month for me, and \$2 a week for Mandy. Our earnings would amount to \$11,000. Add to this the interest for the time our wages has been kept back and deduct what you paid for our clothing and three doctor's visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams Express, in care of V. Winters, esq., Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Master has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night, but in Tennessee there was never any pay day for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his due.

In answering this letter please state if there would be any sister for my Mally and Jane, who are now grown up and both good looking girls. You know how it was with poor Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve and die if it come to that than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood, the great desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them turn virtuous habits.

From your old servant, JOURDON ANDERSON.  
P. S.—Say lowdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting

**Spiritualism vs. Orthodoxy—Metropolitan Hall—The Mystery of Writing Mediums Explained—Speeches by Prof. Matteson, Dunn, Lambert and Others.**

In consequence of the voluminous reports given to the meetings of the Spiritualists in Metropolitan Hall, by T. J. Furness, during the past three weeks, the hall on Sunday was filled to overflowing by a large audience.

Mr. Dunn, in opening the debate, said that he believed in the phenomena of Spiritualism. That he believed the wonderful things said to be done by spirits were actually done by them; but that they were the spirits of Dablow, or wicked persons.

He gave a very beautiful argument, founded on philology, the bible, and the off-recurring phenomena in Christ's day of persons possessed with devils (Dæmons).

This word, he showed, meant "possessed with the spirit of our deanness."

His discourse showed a thorough knowledge of the ancient writers, and more especially the early fathers, whom he used a little too freely to be either rightly understood or appreciated.

He was followed by Prof. Matteson, alluding in a pleasant manner to the unfortunate circumstances of having a name nearly similar to that of an

clergyman he did not wish anyone would think of him on account of it. He would occupy time in showing up the mystery of mediums. This he said he could do best by them a little story. "A few years ago,"

"I was engaged in my shop, and a friend of mine began telling me some stories about a medium he had seen, and knowing I was a wanted my opinion. My opinion, said I, is the besting. How can that be he inquired? I answered, promising to a man going past: you know personally acquainted with him; no one here to-morrow, at one o'clock I will tell you precisely what he is. Promptly at 1 o'clock he appeared, and I, sitting in my hat for a moment, assured him that Sharpe was sitting in his back room in an easy smoking a cigar and reading the TRIBUNE. He straight but for Mr. Sharpe's house and found exactly the position I had described. How did you, ever enough, I saw Mr. Sharpe the day before, told him the fix I was in, and asked him to do what he did, by telling me what he was doing at living at 1 o'clock, and promising to do for me." This the Professor held was the way mediums did. He brought many cases to prove that any medium to allow him to apply any simple tests they did as glibly with a confidence.

Mr. Lambert made an excellent speech, all

AGES.	
Under 1 year.....	23
1 to 2 years.....	17
2 to 3 years.....	30
3 to 4 years.....	16
4 to 5 years.....	16
5 to 10 years.....	25
10 to 15 years.....	3
15 to 20 years.....	17
20 to 25 years.....	16
25 to 30 years.....	3
Total.....	217

ACTIVITIES.	
Austria.....	1
British America.....	1
England.....	6
France.....	3
Germany.....	49
Holland.....	1
Italy.....	1
Total.....	63

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.	
Alms-house, Blackwell's Is-land.....	23
Bellevue Hospital.....	15
City Hospital.....	2
Colored Home Hospital.....	1
Island Hospital.....	1
N. Y. N. Soldiers' Home.....	3
Surgery and Child's Hospital.....	1
Madras Island Nursery.....	1
Hospital.....	1
St. Luke's Asylum.....	1
Emigrant Home.....	1
Total.....	57

Britannia.....	1
Edinb.....	1
North Star.....	1
Boatland.....	1
China.....	1
Monterey.....	1
New York.....	1
London.....	1
Calcutta.....	1
Pekin.....	1
India.....	1
Pennsylvania.....	1
Africa.....	1
Europe.....	1
Japan.....	1
Scotia.....	1
Asia.....	1
Religion.....	1
City of Lima.....	1
Pekin.....	1
C. of Wauke.....	1
North Amer.....	1
Asia.....	1
Scotia.....	1



A group of escaped slaves in Virginia in 1862. (All photos from the Library of Congress.)



In August of 1865, a Colonel P.H. Anderson of Big Spring, Tennessee, wrote to his former slave, Jourdon Anderson, and requested that he come back to work on his farm. Jourdon — who, since being emancipated, had moved to Ohio, found paid work, and was now supporting his family — responded by way of the letter seen in this newspaper article of 1865.

The letter is also found in *The Freedmen's Book*, by "L. Maria Child" (Lydia Maria Child), published in 1865. It was intended for use by recently freed African Americans, who were flocking to whatever schools they could find in order to learn to read.

Source: *The Freedmen's Book*;

# A Letter from a Former Slave to his Old Master

Dayton, Ohio,

August 7, 1865

To My Old Master, Colonel P.H. Anderson, Big Spring, Tennessee

Sir: I got your letter, and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this, for harboring Rebs they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Colonel Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again, and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me that Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here. I get twenty-five dollars a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy,—the folks call her Mrs. Anderson,—and the children—Milly, Jane, and Grundy—go to school and are learning well. The teacher says Grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday school, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated. Sometimes we overhear others saying, "Them colored people were slaves" down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks; but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Colonel Anderson. Many darkeys would have been proud, as I used to be, to call you master. Now if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free papers in 1864 from the Provost-Marshal-General of the Department of Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you were disposed to treat us justly and kindly; and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years. At twenty-five dollars a month for me, and two dollars a week for Mandy, our earnings would amount to eleven thousand six hundred and eighty dollars. Add to this the interest for the time our wages have been kept back, and deduct what you paid for our clothing, and three doctor's visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams's Express, in care of V. Winters, Esq., Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past, we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night; but in Tennessee there was never any pay-day for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

In answering this letter, please state if there would be any safety for my Milly and Jane, who are now grown up, and both good-looking girls. You know how it was with poor Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve—and die, if it come to that—than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood. The great desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them form virtuous habits.

Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

From your old servant,

Jourdon Anderson.



# in a word or two



**The Archdiocese of New Orleans' CYO Youth & Young Adult Ministry Office and the Office of Black Catholic Ministries will hold the 5th Annual Youth and Young Adult Revival on March 4, 2012.**

Theme of the revival is "Souled Out Praise"  
**The event will take place at** St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church in New Orleans, Louisiana.  
For more information, please contact Ansel Augustine at [aaugustine@archdiocese-no.org](mailto:aaugustine@archdiocese-no.org)  
**Phone:** 504-836-0551 ext. 3226

**Sister Jennie Jones, SSF, principal of St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans, is one of nine Catholic education leaders who was honored at the White House as Champions of Change for their service to their communities and the nation.**



Sister Jennie was instrumental in the effort to rebuild St. Mary's, her alma mater, after the campus, at 6905 Chef Menteur Highway, was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Under her leadership, the school was expanded to include classes from kindergarten through eighth grades to accommodate students and families displaced by the hurricane.

The Champions of Change program was created as a part of President Obama's Winning the Future initiative. Each week, a different sector is highlighted and groups of Champions, ranging from educators to entrepreneurs to community leaders, are recognized for the work they are doing to serve and strengthen their communities.

Sister Jennie Jones has been a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family order for 42 years. She has served as a school principal for 27 years at various Catholic schools.

St. Mary's opened on Chartres Street in 1867 and moved in 1881 to the Orleans Avenue building that housed the Quadroon Ballroom. After a year in the St. Louis Cathedral School on St. Ann Street, the school relocated to eastern New Orleans in September 1965, the month that Hurricane Betsy struck.

Nearly 40 years later, Katrina struck, forcing school officials to evacuate. After the storm, St. Mary's combined with St. Augustine High School and Xavier Preparatory High School as part of the MAX School. From January

through May 2006, St. Mary's held classes on Xavier Prep's Uptown campus.  
In August 2006, as part of a gift from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, St. Mary's moved to what had been the Gentilly campus of St. James Major School, located at 3774 Gentilly Blvd.  
St. Mary's returned to its Chef Menteur Highway campus — and modular buildings — in the fall of 2007.  
In April, the rebuilt school was opened on Feb. 21 and was dedicated in April 2011.

**Cynthia Capen has finished a documentary that is titled simply "Father Tony."** It is

a documentary about Father Tony Ricard, noted revivalist and priest in New Orleans, Louisiana.

"There are a lot of films out there where Catholic priests, their images are a bit blurred, or there are scandals," said Capen, the "Father Tony" executive producer, writer and director. "It's just time to have a movie, or a documentary, or something out there in the media about a really good priest who does really good things."

Capen shot 250 hours of film over six years, distilling it into a one-hour look at the man who is the priest and what guides Father Tony, from the months after Katrina, to being the New Orleans Saints Catholic Chaplain, to speaking across the United States and Canada 15-times a year to crowds of up to 25,000 people.

"He ignites your faith, he keeps it alive, he keeps you believing," said Capen.

"It shows the vocation of, you know, somebody that gets up every day, and truly enjoys what he does," said Capen.

"I think the greatest message that could come out of the documentary is first, just how much fun it is to be a servant of God, and to be a Roman Catholic. I love being a part of this church," said Father Tony.



For a closer look at what happened to the "former slave that wrote his old master" go to a study of the ancestry of Jourdan Anderson at <http://kottke.org/12/02/what-happened-to-the-former-slave-that-wrote-his-old-master>

**Divine Word Missionaries** is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

**IN A WORD** is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; Father Brendan Murphy, SVD consultant.

Correspondence to Media Production Center, 199 Seminary Drive, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520, 228-467-1097, Cell phone 504-908-6343. Electronic messages to our Internet address, [editor@inaword.com](mailto:editor@inaword.com).

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