

## Preserving slavery and the Union

The people that I have the honor in part to represent, have not been seized with this frenzied madness which has seized our friends in other parts of the Commonwealth, to induce them—brave and gallant though they may be—to adopt a cowardly—I use this language because I have no other, for I have never been inside a school house to learn since I was fourteen years of age—to adopt a cowardly course, to run away and give up all their inheritance in this great country; because of our own divisions we allowed about one third of the voters of the Union, numbering a little more than one half of the votes in the non slave-holding States, to succeed in elevating to the Presidency of the United States, one who is objectionable to us. Sir, we know we have the protection of our Common Constitution; we know that that flag is ours; we know that the army is ours; we know that the navy is ours; we know that in any battle in defence of our rights, fifteen hundred thousand gallant voters in the non-slaveholding States will rush to our assistance, and under the stars and stripes will hurl from power any and all who dare to take advantage of the position they have obtained to our injury or oppression. We cannot reconcile secession with our notions of Virginia's chivalry and Virginia's courage. But we know, Mr. President—and no man upon this floor has denied it—that this Government we are called upon to destroy has never brought us anything but good. No injury has it ever inflicted upon us. No act has ever been put upon the statute book of our common country, interfering with the institution of slavery in any shape, manner or form, that was not put there by and with the consent of the slave-holding States of this Union. As I remarked upon a former occasion, in this Convention, when we did put an act there, when we drew the line of demarcation across the common territory that belonged to us, and claimed it as a Southern triumph, we were saved from its injustice by the act of the Federal Government; and yet we are now called upon, in hot haste, to destroy the Government that shielded us from the injurious consequences of our own mistaken conduct. It did so by declaring that act of ours a nullity, and guaranteed to us the right to go to any and all the Territories of this Union with our slave property, if we desired to do it. That is the Government which we are called upon to destroy—a Government which protects us even against our mistakes—a Government which has quadrupled the area of slave territory since it had an existence—a government in which we have to-day the right to make five more slave States, if we



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had either the whites or negroes to occupy them; but we have neither—and it is because we have neither that we do not have to-day 19 slave States in the Union. We have had the right to occupy them ever since 1845; and yet we want expansion in northern latitudes, where all the legislation and stimulants on earth could not keep the negro for a week, even if we were to take him there. This question of African slavery is regulated by climate, by soil, by products, and by interest. . . .

I have been a slaveholder from the time that I have been able to buy a slave. I have been a slaveholder, not by inheritance, but by purchase; and I believe that slavery is a social, political and religious blessing. . . . Believing that the institution of slavery is essential to the preservation of our liberties, I desire above all things to continue it.

How long, if you were to dissolve this Union—if you were to separate the slaveholding from the non-slaveholding States—would African slavery have a foothold in this portion of the land? I venture the assertion, that it would not exist in Virginia five years after the separation, and nowhere in the Southern States, twenty years after. How could it maintain itself, with the whole civilized world, backed by what they call their international law, arrayed for its ultimate extinction?—with this North that is now bound to stand by us, and to protect slavery, opposed to us, and united with England, France and Spain, so to control the destiny of the slaveholding Republic as to work out the ultimate extinction of the institution? Think you that ever another square mile of territory can be acquired by a purely slaveholding Republic You would have not only the North to prevent you, but England, France and Spain. I have looked forward to the day when Cuba, that gem of the ocean, would fall into our lap. I have never advocated any harsh or violent measure to procure it, but if we remain together, that island is destined to be ours. The commercial interests of the non-slaveholding States make them as anxious—more anxious—to procure it than we are; and nothing can prevent its addition to our Union but our own separation and dissolution.

Look at Virginia, to-day, standing in the centre of this Confederacy, by far the most powerful nation upon the globe, with the most prosperous and the most happy government on earth. A government that has gone on in a career of greatness, of glory, of power, and of prosperity in a manner that is almost too much for the human mind to realize. This government that has conferred upon us blessings innumerable, and nothing but blessings, is to be destroyed, dissolved, not because of any act of its own, not that it is resisted; not because of any intolerable



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oppression, for it has never oppressed us; but because a portion of its citizens, residing in a particular section of the Union, have so far forgotten their duty to their brethren of the same family, as to entertain hostile opinions of an institution belonging to the other section. . . .

But dissolve the Union, and hitch her on to the tail of a Southern Confederacy, to stand guard and play patrol for King Cotton, and where would she be? What son of Virginia can contemplate this picture without horror?

"O, but," our friends say, "if you don't unite in a Cotton Government, they will not buy our negroes." I say they cannot get them anywhere else. I have no fear of their ever re-opening the African slave trade. No, sir, no slaveholding Republic will ever be permitted to do it. England will not allow it, France will not allow it, Spain will not allow it, nor would a Northern Confederacy allow it. Even now, great and powerful as we are, with a large portion of our territory dedicated—as the Black Republicans call it—to freedom; even now, great as we are, dictating upon almost every other subject, our treaties with other nations upon our own terms, we are compelled to keep up a force, at an expenditure of millions of dollars, to prevent this African slave trade. They are bound to buy our negroes. They could never coerce me into any act which my judgment disapproved of, by threatening that they would not buy my negroes.

Sir, is not language like this, employed by these secessionists with the design of influencing the minds of the people of Virginia, an insult to the honor, and the intelligence, and the patriotism of our people? "But, oh, our honor is at stake, our rights are denied," we are told by some. Pray, gentlemen, wherein has your honor suffered, or is likely to suffer? Tell me, if you please, wherein any thing infringed upon Virginia's honor as been attempted, much less executed? What right has ever been denied? Haven't you equal rights in the Territories? Has not this very Government, that you are going to overthrow, declared that you have? Haven't you equal rights, as States, in the Federal Government? Has not the little State of Florida, with its forty-seven thousand white inhabitants, and its twenty-three millions of property, an equal share in this Government with the great State of New York, with its three millions of white inhabitants, and its thousands of millions of property? Has not the State of South Carolina, with a white population not half as large as the single city of Philadelphia, and equal voice in the control of this Government with the whole great State of Pennsylvania, with her two million five hundred thousand inhabitants? Then what has been denied you? Put your finger upon the right that has



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been taken away from you. What right has been denied in this Government? Wherein does this inequality consist? May it not be, gentlemen—and I ask it with all kindness—may it not be that you have mistaken party platforms for the Constitution of the United States, and the action of individual parties for the action of the Federal Government. . . ?

And now, Mr. President, in the name of our own illustrious dead, in the name of all the living, in the name of millions yet unborn, I protest against this wicked effort to destroy the fairest and the freest government on the earth. And I denounce all attempts to involve Virginia to commit her to self murder as an insult to all reasonable living humanity, and a crime against God. With the dissolution of this Union, I hesitate not to say, the sun of our liberty will have set for ever.

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**Citation:** Excerpts from a speech of John Snyder Carlile in the Virginia Convention on March 7, 1861, printed in George H. Reese and William H. Gaines, Jr., eds., *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1965), 1:458–459, 468–470, 476–477.