

## letter from fugitive slave Joseph Taper, 1840

DEAR SIR,

I now take the opportunity to inform you that I am in a land of liberty, in good health. . . . I have paid 50 dollars rent this year: next year I expect to build. The Queen of England has granted 50 acres of land to every colored man who will accept of the gift, and become an actual settler. Also a yoke of oxen and plough, for every two families. This is a very great encouragement to those who have come here for the liberty which God had designed for them. . . .

Since I have been in the Queen's dominions I have been well contented, Yes well contented for Sure, man is as God intended he should be. That is, all are born free and equal. This is a wholesome law, not like the Southern laws which puts man made in the image of God, on level with brutes. O, what will become of the people, and where will they stand in the day of Judgment. Would that the 5th verse of the 3d chapter of Malachi were written as with the bar of iron, and the point of a diamond upon every oppressor's heart that they might repent of this evil, and let the oppressed go free. . . .

We have good schools, and all the colored population supplied with schools. My boy Edward who will be six years next January, is now reading, and I intend keeping him at school until he becomes a good scholar.

I have enjoyed more pleasure within one month here than in all my life in the land of bondage. . . . My wife and self are sitting by a good comfortable fire happy, knowing that there are none to molest [us] or make [us] afraid. God save Queen Victoria. The Lord bless her in this life, and crown her with glory in the world to come is my prayer,

Yours With much respect  
most obt, Joseph Taper

### Questions

1. How does Taper's letter reverse the rhetoric, common among white Americans, which saw the United States as a land of freedom and the British empire as lacking in liberty?
2. What aspects of life in Canada does Taper emphasize as elements of his new freedom?