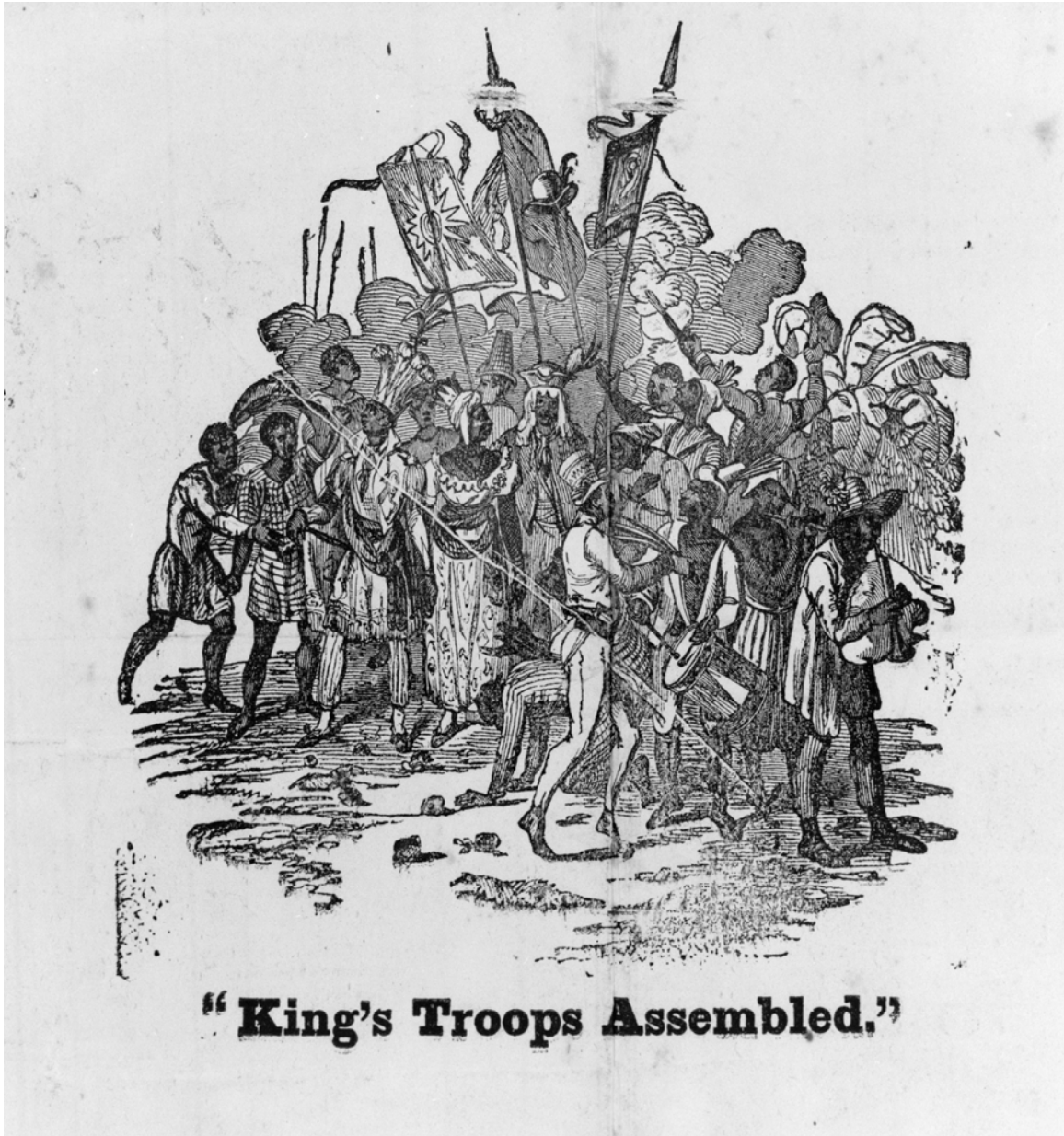


Citizens All



Citizens All

Introduction

Rhode Island, unlike the other colonies, did not write a state constitution after ratifying the U. S. Constitution. In fact, until 1842, the state continued to govern under the Charter of 1663 that was granted by King Charles II of England. Chattel slavery had been outlawed in Rhode Island by gradual emancipation in 1784, yet it was over forty years before there were no longer any slaves in Rhode Island. Long after abolition, discriminatory laws repressed and oppressed the citizenship of African Americans. One of these laws passed in 1822 denied them suffrage, or the right to vote.

The voting laws in Rhode Island restricted the vote to white males who owned property worth at least \$134.00. The denial of suffrage was also part and parcel of the anti-immigrant sentiment of the day. The issue of suffrage would plunge Rhode Island into an armed rebellion between the People's Party led by Thomas Wilson Dorr and the Law and Order Party of the established government led by Governor Samuel Ward King.

Standards

RI K-12 GSEs for Civics & Government and Historical Perspectives/RI History **High School Proficiency Grades 9-12**

HP 1: History is an account of human activities that is interpretive in nature.

HP 1–1 Students *act as historians*, using a variety of tools (e.g., artifacts and primary and secondary sources) by...

- a. formulating historical questions, obtaining, analyzing, evaluating historical primary and secondary print and non-print sources
- b. explaining how historical facts and historical interpretations may be different, but are related
- c. identifying, describing, or analyzing multiple perspectives on an historical trend or event

HP 1–2: Students interpret history as a series of connected events with multiple cause-effect relationships, by

- a. explaining cause and effect relationships in order to sequence and summarize events, make connections between a series of events, or compare/contrast events
- b. interpreting and constructing visual data (e.g., timelines, charts, graphs, flowchart, historical films, political cartoons) in order to explain historical continuity and change

HP 2: History is a chronicle of human activities, diverse people, and the societies they form

HP 2– 1: Students connect the past with the present by

- a. explaining origins of major historical events
- b. identifying and linking key ideas and concepts and their enduring implications
- c. analyzing and evaluating how national and world events have impacted Rhode Island and how Rhode Island has impacted national and world events

HP 2 – 2: Students chronicle events and conditions by...

- a. creating narratives based on a particular historical point of view
- b. synthesizing information from multiple sources to formulate an historical interpretation

HP 2– 3: Students show understanding of change over time by...

- a. tracing patterns chronologically in history to describe changes on domestic, social, or economic life
- b. documenting various groups and their traditions that have remained constant over time

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Document #1

According to the 1830 census, the black population of Rhode Island was small. There were about 3,561 blacks compared to 93,621 whites. The majority of the black population lived in Providence. In the 18th century very few people of African descent had owned property, and tax assessors often did not bother seeking out property owned by African-Americans because the assessors assumed there wouldn't be any. But, by 1830 a number had acquired real estate, and this did not go unnoticed by the town officials. In the 1830's Providence decided to tax black property owners, yet these same African-American men were not allowed to vote. The following selection is from *The Life of William J. Brown*, the autobiography of a free African American published in 1883.

After the feeling was understood by those who had spoken, they appointed a committee to meet the next general assembly, and inform them of their disapproval to meet the tax, for they were unwilling to be taxed and not allowed to be represented. Some of the members of the house said it was perfectly right; if the colored people were to be taxed they should be represented. But the members of the house from Newport were bitterly opposed to colored people being represented, saying: Shall a N..... be allowed to go to the polls and tie my vote? No, Mr. Speaker, it can't be. The taxes don't amount to more than forty or fifty dollars; let them be taken off.

Assignment:

No Taxation without Representation was the rallying cry of the American Revolution; this message was often the subject of pamphlets, and broadsides that addressed the concerns of the early colonists. Create a broadside using this message as it applies on the issue of enfranchisement that was addressed by William J. Brown and other black property owners in the 1830s.

Grades 9-12

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No Taxation without Representation

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or additional notes. The box has rounded corners and occupies the lower two-thirds of the page.

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Document #2

At the same time that William Brown and other members of the black community were seeking suffrage, a number of white workingmen were trying to end the property requirement. This brought about the formation of the Rhode Island Suffrage Association in 1840. At the start, the Suffrage Association included black participation in their events, but as the movement grew in popularity the question of universal suffrage caused confrontation. By the fall of 1841, one Suffrage Association assembly excluded black participants. These contrary opinions are expressed in the following documents.

Much fault has been found with the Association by some cavaliers, because upon their own principals they do not seem inclined to admit our colored brethren to an equal participation in suffrage. It is said, if "all men are born free and equal," if, "the right to vote be a natural and inalienable right,"....why does mere accident of color make a difference?

A scene occurred on Christian Hill, in this city growing out of the exclusion of a respectable colored man from voting at the election of delegates to the People's Convention, which gave much cause for regret to some friends of free suffrage, and which, it seems to us, might easily been avoided by a little more caution in wording of the call on the part of the association. The call certainly included our colored friends, and in some wards of the city a few of the lighter colored were allowed, there being no objection, to vote. But we know that, as a general rule, the Association thought it might be too great a shock to public sentiment to allow colored men the privilege, although as a matter of consistency, and to avoid giving offense to our abolitionist friends, the call was so worded to include them.....

You cannot be helped now, but you have everything to expect from this movement hereafter....know then your friends. Be united and wait.

Town Born

Providence Journal, September 15, 1841

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Document #3

The following response to “Town Born” ran in the *Providence Journal* on September 17, 1841.

From some of the views expressed by “Town Born” in his last number, I am compelled to dissent. If I do not misunderstand him, he is disposed in accommodation to the unreasonable prejudices of the country, to exclude, even under the new dispensation, the approach of which he hails with so much delight, our colored fellow citizens from the right to vote and be elected to office. To be sure, he encourages them with the prospect of redress, at a different day, when the full blessings of universal suffrage shall come to be felt throughout our borders. In this matter however, I would submit to no delay, consent to no compromise.

Grades 9-12

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Document Analysis

1. Rewrite document # 2 in your own words.

2. Rewrite document #3 in your own words.

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For the Teacher Only**

*This is a sample answer
Document #2*

In this passage “Town Born” states that the Suffrage Association is not true to the principals of free suffrage, since they were not admitting people of color to their ranks. Although at the beginning of the movement, it seemed like the association would welcome everyone. Many presumed that if “all men were born free and equal”, it would follow that every man would be entitled to a vote. It was not until the People’s Party held a vote that they realized people of color were excluded from voting. A respectable man of color was turned away at one ward and this caused a scene. This policy was inconsistent and some lighter colored men were allowed to vote in some wards causing more confusion. “Town Born” believes the ambiguity on the issue of color was deliberate, because the Association did not want to offend the abolitionists.

“Town Born” advises those who have been denied suffrage to stick together and if they wait and things will get better.

*This is a sample answer
Document #3*

In the response to “Town Born” the writer expresses disagreement with the advice that men of color need to wait for suffrage. He understands that this recommendation is made because the country and not just Rhode Island is not ready for universal suffrage. He emphatically states, that compromise on this issue is not an option and neither is waiting.

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DBQ Question

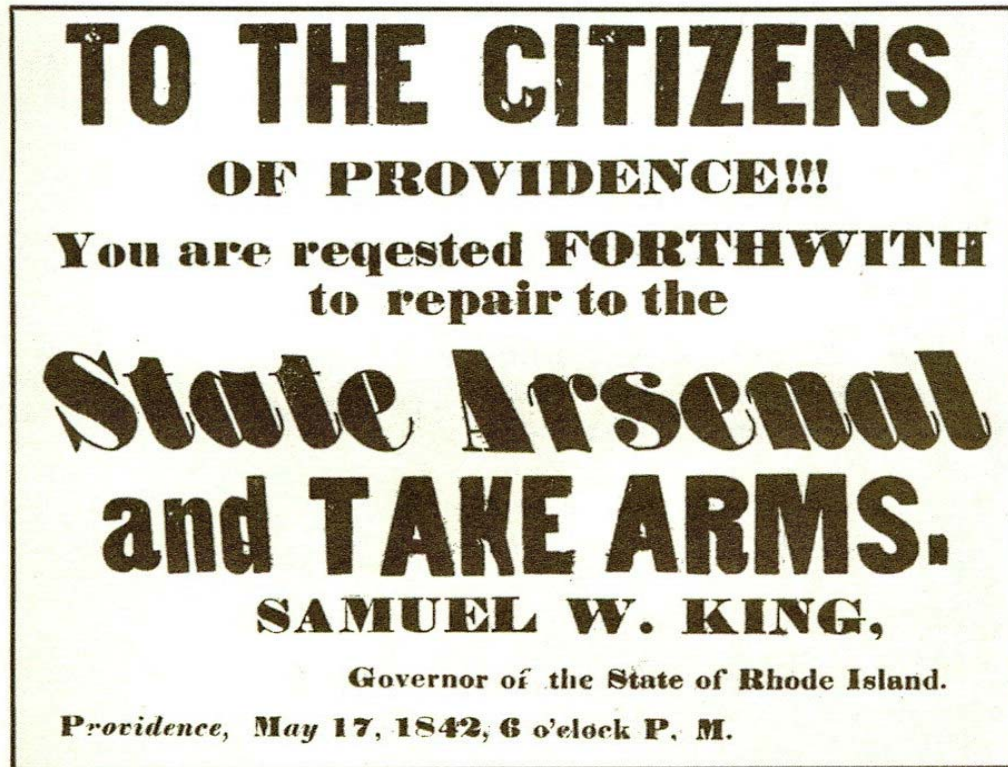
In Document #2, *Town Born* questions the fact that the Suffrage Association holds a People's Convention and excludes a particular group of people although the original intent of the association was to be inclusive. Document #3 is a rebuttal to the statements of *Town Born* and questions the exclusion.

Write a 1-2 paragraph editorial in response to this exclusion. Be sure to use evidence from the document. It may be helpful to answer the following questions before writing the editorial.

- a. Why was this group excluded from the convention?
- b. There was a notable exception to the rule, what was the basis of the exception?
- c. Why was a mixed message sent by the Suffrage Association?
- d. What advice does *Town Born* give to those who have been excluded by the Suffrage Association?
- e. Should any citizen have to wait for suffrage?

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Document #4



RIHS Collection
(RHi X3 669)

1. Who issued this broadside?
2. What is the purpose of this broadside?
3. Who is the intended audience?
4. Is this ad inclusive?

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Document #5

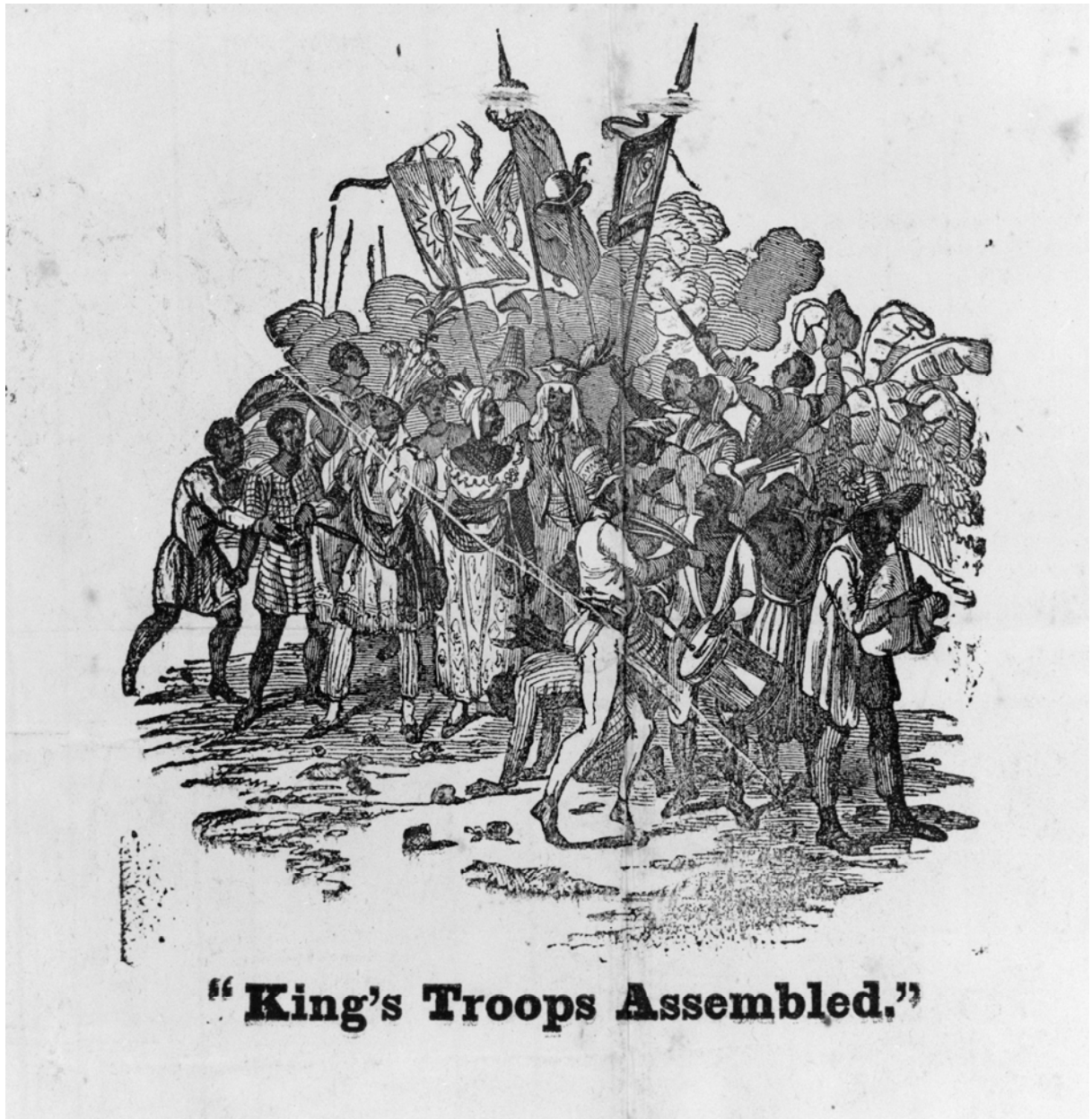


Illustration from *Governor King's Extra*
1842 Dorrite Broadside

RIHS Collection (RHi X3 4528)

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Document Analysis

Document #5 was a broadside created by the followers of Thomas Wilson Dorr and the Suffrage Association (People's Party) in reaction to Governor Samuel Ward King's call to the citizens of Rhode Island to take up arms and protect the state arsenal from attack. This call to arms was inclusive and included all citizens including men of color.

1. When was this broadside created and what do you know about the status of people of color in the United States at that time?
2. What event(s) does the broadside depict?
3. Would you consider the representation of the people and the objects in this image as stereotypical?
4. Why do you think this broadside was created and who was the audience for this document?

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Document #6

THE PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTION

(Voted on December 1841 and Certified January 1842)

ARTICLE II.

Of Electors and the Right of Suffrage.

1.

Every white male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty- one years, who has resided in this State for one year, and in any town, city, or district of the same for six months, next preceding the election at which he offers to vote, shall be an elector of all officers who are elected, or may hereafter be made eligible by the people.

THE FREEMEN'S CONSTITUTION

(Voted on & Defeated February 1842)

ARTICLE II.

Of the Right of Suffrage.

SEC. 2.

Hereafter, every white male native citizen of the United States, or any territory thereof, of the full age of twenty-one years, who shall have had his actual permanent residence and home in this State for the period of one year, and in the town or city in which he may claim a right to vote six months next preceding the time of voting, and shall be seized in his own right of a freehold real estate in such town or city, of the value at least of one hundred and thirty-four dollars over and above all in- cumbrances, shall, therefrom, have the right to vote in the election of all civil officers, and on all questions in all legal town or ward meetings.

CONSTITUTION of the STATE OF RHODE ISLAND and PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS.

(Ratified in November 1842 and became effective in May 1843)

ARTICLE II.

Of the Qualifications of Electors.

SECTION 1.

Every male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who has had his residence and home in this state for one year, and in the town or city in which he may claim a right to vote, six months next preceding the time of voting, and who is really and truly possessed in his own right of real estate in such town or city of the value of one hundred and thirty - four dollars over

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DBQ Questions

By 1842 the People's Party (Suffrage Association) had declared Thomas Wilson Dorr the governor of the state, yet Samuel Ward King was sitting in the State House with the support of most of the ruling class. In an effort to establish power, Dorr and his followers set out to attack the state arsenal; Governor King sent a call to the militia companies throughout the state to muster in Providence in defense of the arsenal. The Providence home guard was joined by 200 African-Americans in response to this crisis. Dorr was stopped and his party lost; a new constitution was written and ratified in November of 1842. Write a news article of 2-3 pages analyzing the results of this test of government. Include evidence from the documents and be sure to address at least the following issues before you write the essay.

- a. Rules of enfranchisement before and after the Dorr War.
- b. Taxation of black property owners.
- c. Suffrage Association treatment of African-Americans.
- d. The call to take arms by Governor King included all citizens.
- e. Winners and losers.