

SOUTH CAROLINA'S DECLARATION OF SECESSION

Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union, December 20, 1860

...Thus, were established the two great principles asserted by the Colonies...the right of a State to govern itself; and the right of a people to abolish a Government when it becomes destructive of the [reason] for which it was [created]...

...We maintain that in every compact between two or more parties, the obligation is mutual; that the failure of one of the contracting parties to perform a...part of the agreement, entirely releases the obligation of the other.... We assert that fourteen of the States deliberately refused...to fulfill their constitutional obligations....

The Constitution of the United States, Article IV, provides as follows:

"No person held to service or labor in one State, under [its] laws, escaping into another [state] shall, [where slavery is illegal], be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, [to the person who claims them as property]."

For many years these laws were executed. But an increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the Institution of slavery has led [them] to [ignore] their obligations....

...Those [non-slaveholding] States...have denied the rights of property established in [the slaveholding] States and recognized by the Constitution; they have [criticized] as sinful the institution of Slavery; they have [allowed] the...establishment [of groups that are against slavery]. They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes; and those who remain, have been [encouraged] by [leaders], books and pictures to [rise up in rebellion].

For twenty-five years this agitation has been steadily increasing, until it has now secured to its aid the power of the [National] Government.... A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery....

...The guarantees of the Constitution will then no longer exist; the equal rights of the States will be lost. The slaveholding States will no longer have the power of self-government, or self-protection, and the Federal Government will have become their enemy....

The following excerpts have been shortened and adapted for clarity. Brackets indicate explanatory language added by the lesson authors. Source: U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. (n.d.). Primary source material: Secession and the Senate. <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/sites/default/files/documents/lesson-plan/primary-source-material/secession-civil-war-psm.pdf>