

**The Settlement of Liberia - I**

**Lead: The first colony of the United States was an unofficial way of dealing with the problem of black slavery: send them back to Africa.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: One of the nagging problems left for future resolution by the Founders was what to do about the millions of black slaves. The Second Continental Congress did debate the issue, but, over Thomas Jefferson's protests, the premier accomplishment of this body, the Declaration of**

**Independence, with all its elegance and high-flying rhetoric, failed to make the obvious connection between principle and practice. It read as if the slaves did not exist. At least the Constitutional Convention of 1787 recognized their presence, but the solution there was muddled and revealed once again that on the question of black slaves the Founders were bitterly divided. For the purpose of representation in the new House of Representatives, each slave was counted as three-fifths of a human being. It was not the infant republic's finest hour.**

**Many of America's leaders thought slavery would just go away with the passage of time and to help this process, to their credit, a provision was**

**placed in the Constitution bringing an end to the importation of slaves in 1808, but that failed to resolve the question. American white society began the 1800s seriously divided. A rather large majority was in favor of continuing slavery. They were committed to idea of white superiority and, for them slaves were property to be exploited for economic reasons. There was a tiny minority which was in favor of complete abolition, but they had little influence. A third group tried to chart a course between these two extremes. They were troubled by slavery and its cruel practices, but not willing to free the slaves to become a part of white American society. They advocated sending the slaves back to**

# **Africa. Next time: the founding of Liberia.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

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## **Resources**

**Beyan, Amos J. *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991.**

**Miller, Randall M., ed. *Dear Master: Letters of a Slave Family.* Ithaca, NY Cornell University Press, 1978.**

**Shick, Tom W. *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth-Century Liberia.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.**