



The Library Company OF PHILADELPHIA

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THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA HOLDS FOUR-WEEK SEMINAR ON ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

PHILADELPHIA – July XX, 2006 – In 1893, Frederick Douglass predicted that only far in the future would historians write the definitive history of the abolitionist movement. At the Library Company of Philadelphia, a group of scholars are responding to Douglass' challenge.

Two seminar co-directors and fifteen high school teachers from around the country are presently engaged in a four-week seminar, studying key scholarly readings and primary documents on the abolitionist movement between the American Revolution and Civil War. Teachers from California to Massachusetts to Kansas to nearby Fort Washington have come together with a common passion of learning, debating, and ultimately enriching the education experience of their students back home. Participants are examining the evolution of the abolitionist movement, from its beginnings during the Revolutionary era in Philadelphia through its radicalization in the years leading to the Civil War.

The seminar is directed by Richard S. Newman, a historian at Rochester Institute of Technology, who specializes in the study of the abolitionist movement. Newman has written *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*, which details abolitionism in Philadelphia, and he is finishing a biography titled *Richard Allen, Black Founder*.

Speaking of the seminar, Newman says, "This program is truly significant in that it takes a serious and extensive look at Philadelphia's role in the creation of abolitionism. The opportunity to see and experience primary documents for the early abolitionist movement makes this seminar especially unique and enriching for the teachers involved."

The main goal of this seminar for school teachers is to integrate new scholarly perspectives on abolitionism into classic interpretations of the movement, with a central focus on the use of original documents in the classroom. The seminar examines four main themes in abolitionist history, each with readings from both classic and recent studies of the movement, as well as a rich array of primary documents. In addition, there will be on-going scholarly debates and site visits to some of the abolitionist movement's most significant locales in the Philadelphia area.

The Library Company is located in the heart of the city of Philadelphia, the ideal locale for studying abolition between the Revolution and Civil War. Philadelphia served as abolitionism's birthplace in the 1770s and 1780s. Philadelphia also contained the largest concentration of black activists during the antebellum era, and it became a key stop on the Underground Railroad, during the 1840s and 1850s.

The seminar, which began on July 10, concludes on August 4, at which time the teachers will depart with exciting pedagogical models for bringing abolitionism to life in their own classrooms.

The Library Company of Philadelphia, founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, is an independent research library encompassing over half a million rare books, prints, and photographs documenting every aspect of American history and culture from the 17th through the 19th centuries. It is a research center serving a national and international constituency of scholars and presents exhibitions and programs for the public. The Library Company is located at 1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107, and is open free of charge from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Library Company can be found online at www.librarycompany.org.

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