

**Original Text of Belinda's Petition to the Massachusetts General Court,
February 14, 1783 (RHA files).**

The Petition of Belinda an Affrican, humbly shews: that seventy years have rolled away, since she on the banks of the Rio de Valta received her existence—the mountains Covered with spicy forests, the valleys loaded with the richest fruits, spontaneously produced; joined to that happy temperature of air to exclude excess; would have yielded her the most compleat felicity, had not her mind received early impressions of the cruelty of men, whose faces were like the moon, and whose Bows and Arrows were like the thunder and the lightning of the Clouds. – The idea of these, the most dreadful of all Enemies, filled her infant slumbers with horror, and her noontide moments with evil apprehensions! – But her affrighted imagination, in its most alarming extension, never represented distresses equal to what she hath since really experienced – for before she had Twelve years enjoyed the fragrance of her native groves, and e'er she realized, that Europeans placed their happiness in the yellow dust which she carelessly marked with her infant footsteps – even when she, in a sacred grove, with each hand in that of a tender Parent, was paying her devotions to the great Orisa who made all things – an armed band of white men, driving many of her Countrymen in Chains, ran into the hallowed shade! – could the Tears, the sighs and supplications, bursting from Tortured Parental affection, have blunted the keen edge of Avarice, she might have been rescued from Agony, which many of her Country's Children have felt, but which none hath ever described, -- in vain she lifted her supplicating voice to an insulted father, and her guiltless hands to a dishonoured Deity! She was ravished from the bosom of her Country, from the arms of her friends – while the advanced age of her Parents, rendering them unfit for servitude, cruelly separated her from them forever!

Scens which her imagination neer conceived of – a floating World – the sporting Monsters of the deep – and the familiar meetings of Billows and clouds, strove, but in vain to divert her melancholly attention, from three hundred Affricans in chains, suffering the most excruciating torments; and some of them rejoicing, that the pangs of death came like a balm to their wounds.

Once more her eyes were blest with a Continent – but alas! how unlike the Land where she received her being! here all things appeared unpropitious – she learned to catch the Ideas, marked by the sounds of language only to know that her doom was Slavery, from which death alone was to emancipate her. – What did it avail her, that the walls of her Lord were hung with Splendor, and that the dust troden underfoot in her native Country, crowded his Gates with sordid worshipers – the Laws had rendered her incapable of receiving property – and though she was a free moral agent, accountable for her actions, yet she never had a moment at her own disposal!

Fifty years her fiathful hands have been compelled to ignoble servitude for the benefit of an Isaac Royall, untill, as if Nations must be agitated, and the world convulsed for the preservation of that freedom which the Almighty Father intended for all the human Race, the present war was Commenced – The terror of men armed in the Cause of freedom, compeeled her master to fly – and to breathe away his Life in a Land, where, Lawless domination sits enthroned – pouring bloody outrage and cruelty on all who dare to be free.

The face of your Petitioner, is now marked with the furrows of time, and her frame feebly bending under the oppression of years, while she, by the Laws of the Land, is denied the enjoyment of one morsel of that immense wealth, apart whereof hath been accumulated by her own industry, and the whole ugmented by her servitude.

WHEREFORE, casting herself at the feet of your honours, as to a body of men, formed for the extirpation of vassalage, for the reward of Virtue, and the just return of honest industry – she prays, that such allowance may be made her out of the estate of Colonel oyall, as will prevent her and her more infirm daughter from misery in the greatest extreme, and scatter comfort over the short and downward path of their Lives.

of the mark Belinda

**Document 2. Belinda’s petition to the Massachusetts House of Representatives
1787 (original manuscript, MHC)**

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Memorial of Belinda, an African, formerly a Servant to the late Isaac Royal Esq an Absentee

Humbly sheweth

That the year 1783 she peitioned the General Court for a maintence out of the income of the said Royall Estate, she being thro’ age & infirmity unable to support herself, & that the Hon. Court were pleased to pass the following Resolve in her favour, Dated Feb. 19, 1783

“Resolved that there be paid out of the Treasurey of this Commonwealth, out of the Rents & Profits arising from the Esate of the late Isaac Royal Esq an Absentee Fifteen pounds twelve Shillings per annum to Belinda an aged servant to the late Isaac Royal Esq an Absentee, until the further Order of the Genl Court for reasons set forth in the said Belinda’s Petition.”

That your Memorialist afterwards received out of the Treasure £15.12/ for one year’s allowance, & no more & that she never could obtain any more to this day tho she often applied to the Governour & Council to grant her an Order upon the Treasurer for the same. She is now advised to lay her distressed Case before your hon^{rs}, and she humbly prays that y^r Hon^{rs} would be pleased to take her case into consideration & to grant that she may receive the annual pension made unto her as above mentioned, & your Memorialist as in duty bound shall ever pray

Witnesses

Willis Hall
Nath^l Hall

her
Belinda Mark

**Document 3. Resolve of the Massachusetts House of representatives
November 7, 1787 (Original manuscript, MHC)**

Commonwealth of } In the House of Representatives Nov^r 7, 1787
Massachusetts

ON the Memorial of Belinda an African Woman, praying for payment of her
Annual Pension

Resolved that ~~Governour and Council be & they are hereby Authorised to grant a
Warrant on the Treasurer of this Commonwealth in favour of~~ thereby allowed & grant out
of the Treasury of the Commonwealth to Balinda, formerly a Servant to the late Isaac
Royal Esquire an absentee, for fifteen pounds twelve Shillings, being one year's pension
agreeably to a Resolve passed Feby 19, 1783

Sent for Concurrence

In Senate Nov. 17, 1787

[signed] I. Warren Sq...[illegible]

Read and concurred with amendments

At A & E

Sent down for concurrence

[signed] S. Adams ...[illegible]