

Hi, my name is Deborah Kraft and I live in Burlington, Vermont. Today's date is April 4th. This email is intended to provide testimony for PR 2.

I moved to Vermont in the summer of 2016. One of the first things I did after moving here was take a day trip to Montpelier. I wanted to explore the city as a whole, but I was most excited about touring the state house and learning more about Vermont's history. While on the tour, I was told that Vermont was the first area in all of the America's to outlaw slavery, and that this idea was one of the founding principles of the Republic of Vermont. I thought this was so admirable and I remember sharing this information over and over again with friends and family, stating how proud I was to live in such a forward-thinking state that had their priorities straight even centuries ago.

I have never been very involved in local politics, but I decided to change that after this most recent Town Meeting Day. I got to know my recently elected city councilor, Jack Hanson, and he told me about some groups around Burlington that I could get involved with if I wanted to know more about the political process and activism in Vermont. That's how I found out about Justice for All and started attending their meetings.

Well, imagine my surprise when at the first Justice for All meeting that I attended, I found out that Vermont was not the first state to fully abolish slavery. In fact, I found out that in certain circumstances, slavery is still LEGALLY ALLOWED in Vermont according to the state constitution. At first I was in disbelief, but my own research after the meeting proved it to be true. When Vermont "abolished slavery" in 1777, it only applied to men over the age of 21, women over the age of 18, and citizens without debts or fines to pay. This portion of the constitution has not been updated since the 1920s, when the age that women could legally be held as slaves until was raised to 21.

To me, this is outrageous and unacceptable. There is no reason to have such outdated language in our constitution that explicitly allows slavery. Slavery should be clearly and completely prohibited in the state constitution. This is why I support PR2. The slave-holding actions of our ancestor are unforgiveable, and how can we claim to have made strides as a nation when we refuse to explicitly and vehemently prohibit slavery in our own state constitution? Our nation still has plenty of work to do in terms of equality and reparations for the past (and current) oppression of people of color and people of low socioeconomic status, but this is one place to start.

A constitution is designed to be an evolving document. History can be preserved in other ways if the constitution is updated to reflect current values.

Abolish slavery, period. No asterisks. No loopholes. No limitations.

Thank you for your time,

Deborah