

A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair

Calvin Goddard, "Argument of Calvin Goddard, in the case of the State of *Connecticut vs. PRUDENCE CRANDALL* [excerpt]." Delivered before the Supreme Court of Errors of the State of Connecticut, July, 1834.

The questions involved in the decisions of this case are of immense magnitude and I regret that circumstances make it necessary to discuss them here and particularly at this time. It is singular indeed that occasion has never risen since the existence of our constitution in which the question whether the free, native inhabitants of the United States were citizens and been judicially decided. The circumstances that no such question has arisen, is to my mind high evidence that their rights to the privileges of citizenship are unquestionable; for numerous occasions have risen in which those privileges have been exercised...

I do not come to advocate the claims of either of the great parties who are engaged in the business of emancipation, although the plan of educating free colored persons, and planting a colony on the shores of Africa; of sending thither free, intelligent and virtuous instructors to diffuse through a continent the blessings of liberty, science and religion; of commencing the work of renovating that continent, and in some measure repairing the wrongs which its colored inhabitants have suffered from the whites, is a plan which I have always considered grand in all its features; nor is it for me to say whether its execution has been thus far equal to its conception. But whether the views of those who adopt this plan be or be not more correct than the views of those who suppose that the cause of humanity as well as justice will be best promoted by the continuance of these people in the country of their birth, and elevating them to the condition of all other citizens is, for the purpose of this immaterial, as education lies at the foundation of both, and the adoption and execution of such laws as that against which we contend, will forever extinguish the benevolent exertions and hopes of all... This statute prohibits their being instructed — it takes away from them the privilege of being taught to read and write — it deprives them of all opportunity to acquire that knowledge and those habits which may render them good citizens, useful to each other and their country...

It was the intention of those who framed the law to put down the school...