

While white men complained, black slaves ran. Some fled to the District of Columbia, where the abolition of slavery in April 1862 further weakened it in Maryland. Other enterprising escapees found refuge in the camps of the Union army, working as laborers and, in 1863, taking up arms as the United States Colored Troops. Union recruiters scouring the Maryland countryside for black men enlisted freemen and defied government policy with creative ways of absorbing slaves into the ranks of the black troops (in whose six Maryland regiments more than eight thousand seven hundred blacks would fight). These circumstances enabled Lincoln and his Maryland allies to transform the slavery debate from slaveholder compensation to constitutional abolition. Poignant letters of escaped Maryland slaves to loved ones still in bondage and the unctuous complaints of slaveholders to military and elected officials projected their own brand of emotional power.

When Maryland's new constitution banning slavery took effect on November 1, 1864, many slaveholders refused to accept the new social order. Compliant judges of county orphans' courts readily invoked a provision of the state's black code that allowed them to bind black children as apprentices to white masters if the judges determined that parents were unable to provide adequate care. Although some indentures were legitimate, abuse was widespread. Many whites, military authorities, and the Freedmen's Bureau vigorously opposed these indentures, whose pervasiveness in parts of Maryland for several years after emancipation perpetuated de facto slavery.

*Maryland Voices of the Civil War* helps puncture the enduring myth that Maryland ever stood at the abyss of secession. It illuminates how dramatically the issues of secession and Civil War affected men and women from all walks of life and sheds direct light on the poignancy of the African American experience of becoming free. Marylanders felt the effects of events between 1860 and 1865 as did few other Americans. Here are their stories.



Johnson and Ward) MdHS.

ssion—the latter seemed, such was not the case in ies demanded protection ment of the Fugitive Slave rd, a Unionist elected in g constituents. In March s to Lincoln that rejected ould look askance at any nstitutions of the States; or tendency of which is, t responded craftily. His ruitment of black troops to trigger the death rattle jective of keeping Mary- lty while simultaneously sated emancipation.