

Maryland slave-owning constituency, Wallace's widely circulated order publicized the plight of these new citizens. Black parents—often mothers whose husbands were in the Union army—bombarDED military and civilian officials with letters and affidavits detailing their futile battles with judges and masters in attempts to recover their children. Though the apprentice system was certainly used to the benefit of both parties, abuses would last well into 1868.¹¹

White radicals, the Freedmen's Bureau, military authorities, and Maryland's new black citizens gradually coalesced into a force to remedy the misuse of apprentice laws. Though the state legislature in January 1865 failed to overturn them, the 1866 federal Civil Rights Act enabled Maryland agents of the Freedmen's Bureau to mount legal challenges in specific cases. In the autumn of 1867, the U.S. District Court in Baltimore ruled that Maryland's laws were unconstitutional, though almost another year would pass before most apprenticed black children were released.¹² The struggle for freedom in Maryland would continue well beyond 1868, with the old planter aristocracy arrayed against a coalition of radical Unionists, compassionate judges, federal military authorities, and the Freedmen's Bureau. Freedom, so long in coming, would for many remain elusive.

The Federal Writer's
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