

U.S. History

Semester 2

The woman who wrote a book of Change

1853

Dear Journal,

Uncle Tom's Cabin has sold about a million copies so far, and they are still being bought all over the place. I really hope that others will be able to relate with my Uncle Tom, my little Eva or even Topsy as they read their story. I feel like I have been able to portray the characters well enough from my times in Cincinnati, Ohio. I saw so many of those slaves being treated terribly. I was so disgusted by this treatment, that I was motivated to write a story about it. Most of the situations in the book had happened at one point when I was in Ohio. That was how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* came to be. And now, at 42, I have written a book that has sold one of the largest amount of copies.

I had had little contact, well directly anyway, contact with any blacks. Though I had heard the stories about their treatment and I was shocked. To think, these people weren't being treated as such, but as property! If that were to happen to any of us there would be another revolution! Though up where we were in the North, we had outlawed such a cruel fate, it was rampant in the South. I never agreed with slavery much as a child, but there was one story that had made that disagreement set in stone. It was after my aunt had married a plantation owner from the West Indies. He had more than a dozen children that he had had with his slaves back

at his old home. He had considered the slaves his property only and that there was nothing wrong with him breeding slaves as he would livestock. To think of such a thing being overlooked! The gall! The audacity! My aunt was so furious at such an attitude that she moved back home to Connecticut and there she died. She was overcome with shame for him and herself. That was when I had decided to never, ever think that slavery was okay or just there. My first real contact with slavery was back in 1832. I was twenty-one years old.

Looking back on that time, I remember how shocked I was at the difference between the two halves of the country. They were two completely different worlds, and it seemed like we were two countries, the way our beliefs had differed. I remember that I had some comfort in the fact that Cincinnati was one of the major spots on the Underground Railroad and that there were so many slaves that tried to escape through there. Though we didn't actually help, we didn't give them away either. Then there was the time that we went to Kentucky and visited an actual plantation. I was so disgusted with the way these people worked. They were treated like animals or worse! These men and woman may be from a different company, but they are actual people and to see them treated so has made me so outraged! However, I kept this to myself while I taught there, but only for the time being.

I was soon writing articles for the magazines and I had written a geography book during my time in Ohio. I had soon become close friends with Eliza Stowe, the wife of one Calvin Stowe. Calvin was a colleague of my fathers and we had met on such an occasion. I stayed very close friends with Eliza, and when she died in 1834, I was devastated. I was never alone in my grief though, I always had Calvin. We became close friends in our grievances, then even closer, and

then on January 6th of 1836 we were married. I was then spending all of my time taking care of my seven children, six of which are all grown up. However, I always made time from my writing and reading of other such articles. I was able to do something that I enjoyed to help my family and I was glad to. However, my writing had ignored anything about the highly debated topic of slavery.

In May of 1850 I moved to Brunswick, Maine. It was so good to be back in New England. I was home again and now I could share my antislavery views with others that would agree with me. Soon I was unable to keep my anger towards slavery to myself anymore. The Fugitive Slave Act was passed which made us northerners assist the southern slave owners with the recapture of their slaves. Others became active and helped the slaves anyway by taking them to Canada to live free. But I didn't and I wanted to help with the fight. Soon my family encouraged me to write a book about slavery. So the idea of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was born. To make it as realistic as possible, I began to read books by abolitionist authors like Theodore Dwight Weld, and Frederick Douglass. Then I was ready to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

After writing it I finally felt that I was doing my part to put an end to slavery. People in the North were shocked and outraged. Soon there were many more abolitionists than before and I was the reason for it. However, the South wasn't very pleased with the book. They considered me a traitor and an enemy of the South. Though I may lose some friends from the south, I am not sad or angry, but proud to have helped with something that I was against. And after today, I am even happier to see the source of my pride spread so much and cause such a change. In the end I have no regrets about writing this book.

Sincerely yours,

Harriet Beecher-Stowe