

gives support to my point of the hypocrisy that rules the hour. As the retreat began, two regiments were left behind to cover the rest of the Federal army that began to flee back to Jacksonville. It is more than ironic that the two regiments chosen to cover this retreat, and thus suffer horrendous loss to human life as a result, were the only two colored regiments engaged.

At times, my tenacious attempt to kill anyone in a blue uniform simmered into a lull as I witnessed the suffering of those few left behind to cover the retreat of their white comrades. True, I aimed my musket just the same. Yet, the origin of my malice was not the color of their skin, but the color of their uniform. We do not feel hatred towards men fighting to be free, for such is innate in us all. Our recent fight was not against negroes who we attempted to suppress into bondage, but against a foe who wished to kill, steal, and destroy our families and our land. Our fight was to push back the invader who had come to oppress us - regardless of their color.

As I initially affirmed, I do in fact agree that this institution of slavery should be now and forever abolished everywhere. Yet, I will not hang my head in shame as I clad my uniform and pick up my rifle in defense of my home. We all share the blame for our current state, both North and South. However, my fight is not a fight to perpetuate said system, but to fight off the trespasser of my fireside for the sake of my home and my family. For this act, Mr. Douglass, surely not even you can condemn. What more do we, who suffer first hand this terrible war, fight for? My mind retreats to the day that I said goodbye to my wife and children to fight for our cause. The sad faces which looked into my eyes as if it were the last time still haunt until now. The faces that I recall seeing that day, I now long to see more than anything else in this world.

It causes me to wonder: what power could cause a man to leave such a beautiful sight as a wife and two precious daughters? What influence could persuade a man to leave the loving arms of those who depend on him for life's sustenance? A better question, in order that the point is made, is this: Do we abandon those we love more than anything else in order that we ensure the safety and perpetuation of the institution of slavery? Has these last three years of brutality, bloodshed and suffering happened as a result of the Southern man's struggle to control the plight of the negro? I say that it would be a farce to even entertain such a notion.

I have watched men die over and over again. I have witnessed young boys scream and cry out for their mothers only moments before succumbing to death. I have experienced the absolute horror of men killing each other without remorse as lines charged lines over and over again. I have seen the blank faces of our soldiers in arms as the sound was heard for a charge that most feared would certainly be their last. But what were they to do? Their only recourse would have been to cower and run. And what would have been that result? They could have then expected to be branded a coward, even if allowed to live. They could have expected to return home where they would be forever known as one who sacrificed his family to a murderous invader. No sir! When a man is invaded, he must face his enemy until one or both unlock death's door. Any action taken other than this would not be taken by a man, but a being less deserving of the title.

In defense of our cause I must say to you that I am proud that at this very moment our government has in the halls of its Congress the notion that may well resolve the issue of our brave army facing a foe much larger than itself. It is my hopes that these discussions will result in the proposed idea to enlist negroes into the army in exchange for their freedom and the freedom of their immediate family. I see this as a solution to two major problems facing our new nation.

The need for man power is well documented by our generals in military service who often beckon Richmond for more troops in whom she has not the troops to send. Meanwhile, our Northern foe has more man power than he needs and is quite willing to expend them in his attempt to suppress us. In the same vein, negroes willing to fight would not only force our foe to face a much larger force, thus then having to consider the consequences of his movements, but offer the slave an opportunity to fight for his freedom and the freedom of his family.

I need not remind you that the South is the home of both the white man and the black. It is our home that we now fight to defend. I believe that my negro comrades will fight with as much tenacity as I myself have over these last three years. I also believe that it will result in the freedom for us both. Men in bondage would then have the choice of fleeing to a land which

does not welcome him, or fight for his home in return for his freedom. I speculate that most would choose the latter. May God grant it to be thus!

Whence seeing you last month I could not help but wonder as to your musings as you watch gray rank pressed against rank marching to the battlefield at Ocean Pond. I suspect that your cordiality and nods of salutation were but mere masks concealing the truth of your opinions. At the risk of misjudging you, I furthermore suspect that you even abhor the very existence of an army which you conceive as the instrument, or the very chains, that secure your people to a life of bondage. For this, I initially have no blame to label you. For, if I were in your position, I might be inclined to have the same sentiments.

But, I challenge you to consider our plight not as the plight to ensure the bondage of others, but the plight to set ourselves free. Consider the names honored amongst us during our glorious Revolution just less than one century ago in which we were victorious against an over-powering central Crown wishing to persuade us through arms that we had no rights, and that we would succumb to a traitor's death if we thought otherwise. Names like Washington, Jefferson, and Henry come to mind when mentioning the initiators of that "rebellion". Their hallowed names are now and forever affixed with the "rebellion" that resulted in our freedom. These men did not fight and die so that African slavery, then in its infancy, could be allowed to perpetuate. What they fought for was the same idea we now fight for: the freedom of self determination. The "noble" and "just" cause for which the forefathers of our glorious past fought for is the same fight which we now take up on this sovereign soil of Florida and her sister Southern states.

Yes, I take offense in taking up the same fight, yet instead of being given a heroes honor, I am labeled a traitor and a thief. Yes, sir, to this I take offense. These labels of convenience are given and omitted for the sole use of politicians in Washington who fight for their own gains and agendas. One man is a hero and the other is a rebel. Yet, both men fight the same fight. Once again, these words rear the hideous head of irony and hypocrisy.

It was these aforementioned individuals and their comrades in arms who came to the same conclusion which we have just three years prior. The notion that a central government, which no longer holds the affections of a population of its people, or have the best interest in mind for these same

people, must therefore be dissolved. The Constitution of the United States affirm that it be so. The quandary of Southern States should be of no surprise. This land of ours is no stranger to secession. For such were the premises that this nation was given birth. The notion of secession which is now considered an evil that must be squelched is the same secession that we celebrate each and every 4th day in the month of July.

Less than one century ago, we fought on this sacred soil to repel an invader who attempted to force us into a union which we removed ourselves by way of peaceful ballot. The years of the 1860s are not dissimilar from the years of the 1770s. By way of convenience, the central forces in Washington now have refused to recognize this lucid parallel. Instead, they wage war on those who dare defy the all-powerful central government of the United States. As the British Crown did not have the colonist's best interest in mind, so does this current administration in Washington disregard the desires of its Southern countrymen. Those in that Northern territory wish to control the South and its revenue which is then funneled to Washington for the financing of their government.

No sir, this is not a war to set men free, but a war of control over the country's bread basket. I wish that our Northern neighbors could see themselves in the true light as aggressors in this unnecessary war, and certainly not the victims which they portray. We, the Southern states, have only asked to be left alone to determine our own fate. However, this right has been denied us. This right has not only been denied us, but we are engaged in a war to defend ourselves against an army set out to coerce us by force to accept our position in a union which we have grown to detest.

Although our sovereign Southern states individually voted by way of popular vote to secede from a union which no longer held its affections, we are now in a great struggle to defend our right to do so. One must see the parallel in the two mentioned struggles. Likewise, as our forefathers were not initially given much hope by the rest of the world looking on its fight for freedom, we now share this same position by those who now gaze upon our struggle. However, we have resolved in our hearts and minds that just as

those brave men of the past, we will experience the same victory, in this, our Second War of Independence.

In closing, Mr. Douglass, I want to wish you well in your toil. Yours is the cause of freedom and I tip my hat to your efforts in hopes that Divine Providence grant you favor. Meanwhile, it is that same Providence who we, as Southern soldiers, summon when we hear the beat of the drum which calls on us to assemble to face our enemies to the point of death. Sir, ours is a kindred struggle. I then beseech you: The next time your eyes fall upon the fluttering colors of the Southern Cross and the gray ranks that align to its defense, remember that we fight for the same purpose. Resist the temptation of emotions of malice for those boys in gray, for they are fighting for their land, their homes, and their loved ones - just as you. With respect for you and the causes for which we both fight, I now bid you adieu and wish you Godspeed. May God give freedom to your people, and may God give freedom to the South.

Your Obedient Servant,
Wayne A. Alonzo
Rebel Soldier

