

RESPONSES TO THE DEDICATION OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

SOURCE A

GROVER CLEVELAND'S REMARKS

"This token of the affection and consideration of the people of France demonstrates the kinship of republics, and conveys to us the assurance that in our efforts to commend to mankind the excellence of a government resting upon popular will, we still have beyond the American continent a steadfast ally. We are not here today to bow before the representation of a fierce and warlike god, filled with wrath and vengeance, but we joyously contemplate instead our own deity keeping watch and ward before the open gates of America..."

SOURCE B

THE DAILY TIMES, RICHMOND VA

"The island was surrounded all the morning by row boats, yachts, sailing vessels, tugs, steamers, and craft of every propelling power imaginable, steam, sails and oars contributing to satisfying the national curiosity."

SOURCE C

THE CLEVELAND GAZETTE

"Shove the Bartholdi statue, torch and all, into the ocean, ... until the 'liberty' of this country is such as to make it possible for an inoffensive and industrious colored man in the South to earn a respectable living for himself and family, without being ku-kluxed, perhaps murdered, his daughter and wife outraged, and his property destroyed. The idea of the 'liberty' of this country 'enlightening the world,' or even Patagonia, is ridiculous in the extreme."

SOURCE D

SUFFRAGETTE PROCLAMATION

"In erecting a Statue of Liberty embodied as a woman in a land where no woman has political liberty, men have shown a delightful inconsistency which excites the wonder and admiration of the opposite sex"



TAGS: *Statue of Liberty*

American Identity

Inequality

THE DEDICATION OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY – 1886

SOURCE

Source A: Grover Cleveland spoke at the dedication of the Statue of Liberty in October of 1886

Source B: *The Daily Times* of Richmond Virginia reports on the dedication of the Statue of Liberty.

Source C: This article was published in the *Cleveland Gazette*, an African American Newspaper, on November 27th, 1886

Source D: This proclamation in response to the Statue was signed by almost 200 suffragettes in October of 1886

BACKGROUND

Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus" linked the Statue to immigration. But just a few years after she wrote it, people had forgotten the poem. When the statue was installed in October of 1886, President Grover Cleveland led a huge celebration. But no mention was made of immigration, and no mention of Lazarus's poem. The celebrations focused on liberty, patriotism, and the technological feat of the Statue.

While it was "liberty" that was celebrated, there were also people who pointed out that liberty was applied inequitably in America. The Woman Suffrage Association chartered a boat and took it into the harbor, where they could hear the ceremony (only two women had been invited to Bedloe's island for the ceremony). More important, they felt it was hypocritical to have "a Statue of Liberty embodied as a woman in a land where no woman has political liberty." African American also questioned the concept of liberty the statue celebrated. Though Congress had passed the 13th (1865), 14th (1868) and 15th (1870) amendments, racism embedded in American systems and attitudes severely limited social, political and economic opportunities throughout the country.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

As you read the source consider how it informs these questions:

- How has the meaning of the Statue changed over time?
- How does the story of the Statue of liberty tell us something about American Identity?
- What do you think "liberty" means? Who gets to define what it means?
- How does learning about the history of the Statue change how you view it?