

**Thomas Jefferson to John Lynch, January 21, 1811,
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TO JOHN LYNCH J. MSS.

Monticello, January 21, 1811.

Sir, —You have asked my opinion on the proposition of Mrs. Mifflin, to take measures for procuring, on the coast of Africa, an establishment to which the people of color of these States might, from time to time, be colonized, under the auspices of different governments. Having long ago made up my mind on this subject, I have no hesitation in saying that I have ever thought it the most desirable measure which could be adopted, for gradually drawing off this part of our population, most advantageously for themselves as well as for us. Going from a country possessing all the useful arts, they might be the means of transplanting them among the inhabitants of Africa, and would thus carry back to the country of their origin, the seeds of civilization which might render their sojournment and sufferings here a blessing in the end to that country.

I received, in the first year of my coming into the administration of the General Government, a letter from the Governor of Virginia, (Colonel Monroe,) consulting me, at the request of the Legislature of the State, on the means of procuring some such asylum, to which these people might be occasionally sent. I proposed to him the establishment of Sierra Leone, to which a private company in England had already colonized a number of negroes, and particularly the fugitives from these States during the Revolutionary War; and at the same time suggested, if this could not be obtained, some of the Portuguese possessions in South America, as next most desirable. The subsequent Legislature

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approving these ideas, I wrote, the ensuing year, 1802, to Mr. King, our Minister in London, to endeavor to negotiate with the Sierra Leone company a reception of such of these people as might be colonized thither. He opened a correspondence with Mr. Wedderburne and Mr. Thornton, secretaries of the company, on the subject, and in 1803 I received through Mr. King the result, which was that the colony was going on, but in a languishing

condition; that the funds of the company were likely to fail, as they received no returns of profit to keep them up; that they were therefore in treaty with their government to take the establishment off their hands; but that in no event should they be willing to receive more of these people from the United States, as it was exactly that portion of their settlers which had gone from hence, which, by their idleness and turbulence, had kept the settlement in constant danger of dissolution, which could not have been prevented but for the aid of the Maroon negroes from the West Indies, who were more industrious and orderly than the others, and supported the authority of the government and its laws. I think I learned afterwards that the British Government had taken the colony into its own hands, and I believe it still exists. The effort which I made with Portugal, to obtain an establishment for them within their claims in South America, proved also abortive.

You inquire further, whether I would use my endeavors to procure for such an establishment security against violence from other powers, and particularly from France? Certainly, I shall be willing to do anything I can to give it effect and safety. But I am but a private individual, and could only use endeavors with private individuals; whereas, the National Government can address themselves at once to those of Europe to obtain the desired security, and will unquestionably be ready to exert its influence with those nations for an object so benevolent in itself, and so important to a great portion of its constituents. Indeed, nothing is more to be wished than that the United States would themselves undertake to make such an establishment on the coast of Africa. Exclusive of motives of humanity, the commercial advantages to be derived from it might repay all its expenses. But for this, the national mind is not yet prepared. It may perhaps be doubted whether

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many of these people would voluntarily consent to such an exchange of situation, and very certain that few of those advanced to a certain age in habits of slavery, would be capable of self-government.

This should not, however, discourage the experiment, nor the early trial of it; and the proposition should be made with all the prudent cautions and attentions requisite to reconcile it to the interests, the safety and the prejudices of all parties.