

Union College, Nov. 5th 1838

Dear Brother Duryee

Agreeably with your request I have here-  
with send you the 25 Addresses you desired —

You will doubtless perceive that the execution of them  
is not in all respects as ordered — Why this is so I have not  
enquired of Mr. Riggs, not having seen him since they were  
finished — I have left as you requested, the remaining  
75, minus one for my own use, for the disposal of Mr. &  
Miss Groot — I received in time your line, mailed at  
N. Hampton, & had as you will, <sup>perhaps</sup> the alterations made,  
except the capitals suggested at the end of the address;  
these being not type enough for the whole —

I know not what success the friends have in selling —  
Our singing school bids fair for prosperity — a good degree  
of interest felt generally — No pains shall be spared  
on my part to benefit the people on that point —

But, dear brother, I have something more to say to you.  
Except by some special intervention of Providence, whose wisdom  
alone can overrule the weaknesses & imperfections of men,  
the abolitionists in this section of country, at least have  
or are about to place the suicidal knife to our cause —

This day they commence & the closing up of the third day  
of election will have accomplished the merger of the cause  
for which so many of the dear friends of humanity have en-  
dured so much toil & persecution, into one of the political pro-  
slavery parties of our State — Yes, the abolitionists in this city

P.S. I will send the package to Colburn postpaid

Excellent Letter on Abolitionist Issues in 1838 NYS Election

(African Americans – Abolition) Young, A. J., **Autograph Letter Signed, Union College, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1838, to Isaac G. Duryee, Andover Theological Seminary, Andover, Massachusetts, on the Abolition Movement**

quarto, 4 pages, formerly folded, else in very good, clean, and legible condition.

An excellent letter discussing the issues facing Abolitionists during the 1838 New York State gubernatorial election between William H. Seward and William L. Marcy, held from November 5-7, 1838.

The issues of slavery and abolition were among the chief topics of the campaigns. Abolitionists asked both candidates for their stands on the following issues: 1) "the right of blacks to a jury trial when seized as fugitive slaves; 2) a law freeing slaves-in-transit the moment they were brought into the state by their masters; and 3) equal suffrage for blacks."

Incumbent Democrat William Marcy and his running mate were described as doughfaces, not supporting the abolitionist proposals. During the campaign, Seward said that he did not support the latter two proposals, noting that a change to suffrage required a constitutional amendment to be changed.

Thus, while abolitionists endorsed Luther Bradish, the Whig candidate for lieutenant governor, who supported all three, some activists recommended voting against Seward.

After winning election, Seward demonstrated considerable support for African Americans, signing legislation during his two terms to guarantee jury trials to alleged fugitive slaves, to repeal the nine-month allowance for slaveholders bringing slaves into the state, to give state support to efforts to gain freedom for free blacks kidnapped and sold into slavery, and establish public education for all children.

“Dear Brother Duryee,

Agreeably with your request I have here with send you the 25 Addresses you desired – You will doubtless perceive that the execution of them is not in all respects as ordered – Why this is so I have enquired of Mr. Riggs, not having seen him since they were finished. I have left as you requested, the remaining 75, minus one for my own use, for the disposal of Mrs & Miss Groot – I received in time your line, mailed at N. Hampton, & had as you will perceive the alterations made, except the capitals suggested at the end of the address; there being not type enough for the whole.

I know not what success the friends have in selling – Our singing school bids fair for prosperity – a good degree of interest felt generally – No pains shall be spared on my part to benefit the people on that point.

But, dear brother, I have something more to say to you. Except by some special intervention of Providence, whose wisdom alone can overrule the weaknesses & imperfections of mind, the abolitionists in this section of country at least have or are about to place the suicidal knife to our cause – This day they commence & the closing up of the third day of election will have accomplished the mergence of the cause for which so many of the dear friends of humanity have endured so much toil & persecution, into one of the political pro slavery parties of our Sate – Yes, the abolitionists in this city and in Albany have sacrificed their boasted Anti Slavery principles & are now en masse going for a pro-slavery candidate for Governor.

Duryee, I stand here, “solitary & alone”, without a sympathizing voice in city or college, to proclaim my consistent adherence to those principles with which I commenced my abolition career & with which I shall close it – Has it come to this, that the strong footing which the abolitionists have gained under the kicks & cuffs of both political parties shall now be yielded & the whole be bartered away for the paltry consideration of a very doubtful expediency? – Why the poisonous dose of Wm. H. Seward with a mere trifle of sweet mixed with it, proves a sufficient bait to lure our most wary abolitionists into the trap of political policy – The Whigs having had the forecast to see that persecution would not whip us out of our principles into their ranks have actually, by the little pretended kindness they have shown us within a few months past won us over – They have unwittingly, not intentionally chosen candidates for office some of which are a little less opposed to us than those of the other party & here is the bait – “We will go for one set of pro -slavery men because a little less hostile to us than the other”

Now this compromise with sin I cannot away with – This rash thrusting of the hand into futurity, grasping at some seeming good, will if persevered in, inevitably unhinge the whole system of abolition. The predictions of both political parties are now most amply fulfilled. The avowals of adherence to our principles have now been tested, & they have failed. Hence, hereafter the party that nominates candidates for office the least opposed to us, no matter how much that is, obtains our votes. –

Now, unless there is a redeeming influence in other parts of the state, of which I seriously stand in doubt, the abolitionists have put themselves into the extended arms of the Whig party, which will not only hug them with an unyielding embrace, but will draw out their very life & soul of abolition – it is evident the very moment we swerve in the least from our principles & form an alliance with either political party, unless they “go our entire load” in electing anti slavery men, that moment we are annihilated – We must stand aloof from either, except so far as they are directly in favor of our cause, or we are gone & all our labor lost.

In expostulating with Fisher the other day relative to his inconsistency in sacrificing his principles in voting for a pro-slavery man, he denied that it was a sacrifice of principle in voting for the least hostile of two enemies of abolition. Thus; voting for Seward, Marcy being an abolitionist, would be a sacrifice of anti-slavery principles, but Seward remaining unchanged, & Marcy being what he is, it is no sacrifice at all. This is the strongest and most logical of the fallacious arguments I have had to contend with since the candidates have replied to our questions. The fact is, our friends will find that they have “sold themselves & their cause for nought” – I have scarcely been able to appear in the streets for several days past without encountering a score or less whigs; yes, many who six & not even three months ago would have prostrated the abolition cause if they could, are now shedding their “crocodile tears” over the impending ruin which I & such as go with me, in other parts of the state, are about to inflict upon it ~~the abolition cause~~ Their sincer[ity] however, I think, is rather to be tested by what they have done than by what they now express. The Young Men’s A. S.S. at Albany have issued circulars requesting votes for Seward; several of which were sent to this place. I replied in as strong terms as I could to one sent to me; though it would do no good yet I determined they should not thus insult me with impunity – Yet, Duryee, we must treat kindly those who differ with us on this point – They doubtless act conscientious, but they are duped; we may reclaim them – I hope so at least – Our cause is in the hands of One who will carry it on in spite of human weakness – I discover more than ever the need of prayer for wisdom to direct; for God to control the minds of men & overrule their errors for the ultimate good of the cause –

But I must stop; - It has truly given me satisfaction to communicate my views to one who I am confident will sympathize with me – I have none here, Emperor Wright & all have gone – The doctrine “of two evils choose the least,” not a bible doctrine by any means, has carried them all away.

What the abolitionists at the west will do I cannot tell, but I fear – the mere matter of voting for Seward is not so much, but that any should prove recreant to our principles pains me – I had rather they had all come out directly & first renounced all pretensions to abolitionism; then our cause would have remained unsullied. But now what are we – I am ashamed if they are to be called abolitionists, to be recognized as one – But it is all for the best, doubtless; perhaps, after being sifted, we shall have occasion to rejoice in the event. I have long thought we needed a sifting of some kind. You know in Temperance, the first step, discarding only Ardent Spts. Multitudes were willing to follow; but the next step, many drew back. I the cases somewhat analogous, & perhaps we may profit by a reference to them. .. The town abolition Soc. Had a meeting on Saturday night to exchange views on the subject of voting – but the views are all on one side – I do not see, therefore, the need of it. It is rather amusing after all to hear them argue. “Why”, say they to me, “if Marcy should be elected through your withholding your vote for Seward the cause would be immensely retarded if not completely upset” – Yes “V. Buren will then be reelected President & our cause will go to ruin” – The poor dupes don’t consider how we have actually prospered under our present circumstances, against all opposition. – I hear the most heart rending stories from Oneida & Oswego – Why Gerrit Smith it is said by even an abolitionist from that quarter, will doubtless be a candidate for the lunatic asylum within 12 months. He will not even use Alabama sugar or molasses in his tea!!! ... “

\$ 450.00

