

# Charles Lennox Remond Biography

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# Biography

Charles Lennox Remond (1810-1873), African American leader, was one of the first black abolitionists and a delegate to the World Antislavery Convention held in London in 1840.

Charles Lennox Remond was born in Salem, Mass., on Feb. 1, 1810, the son of a free West Indian barber who had voluntarily emigrated to the United States. Remond was well educated and, like many of the free, middle-class African Americans of his day, was an ardent abolitionist and a major figure in the Antislavery Convention movement that served as a forum for black Americans after 1830.

Remond was one of the original 17 members of America's first Antislavery Society. The first African American to become a regular lecturer for the Massachusetts Antislavery Society, he was an ardent supporter of William Lloyd Garrison. In 1838 Remond was elected secretary of the American Antislavery Society and vice president of the New England Antislavery Society.

For several years Remond was the most distinguished black abolitionist in America. When his uniqueness was challenged by Frederick Douglass, Remond reacted bitterly. While he never got over his jealousy of Douglass, on several occasions the two found themselves allied. One occasion was the national antislavery convention at Buffalo, N.Y. (1843), at which Henry Highland Garnett challenged the slaves to liberate themselves by any means necessary. Remond and Douglass led the opposition that rejected the address as the sentiment of the convention. Neither man was at this time committed to violence, or even to political action, as a means of liberation.

As time passed, Remond grew increasingly frustrated over the injustice of color discrimination. He protested segregated travel in Massachusetts and was so incensed by the Dred Scott decision (1857) that he felt he could "owe no allegiance to a country ... which treats us like dogs." For African Americans to persist in claiming citizenship under the U.S. Constitution seemed to him "mean-spirited and craven." Eventually he moved very close to the radical position of the fiery Garnett. Speaking at the State Convention of Massachusetts Negroes in New Bedford (1858), he urged that the convention promote an insurrection among the slaves, declaring that he would rather see his people die than live in bondage.

During the Civil War, Remond recruited for the Negro 54th Massachusetts Infantry. After the war he served as a clerk in the Boston customhouse until his death on Dec. 22, 1873.