

JOHN KERRY
MASSACHUSETTS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION
FINANCE
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SMALL BUSINESS

One Bowdoin Square
Tenth Floor
Boston, MA 02114

July 6, 2010

Gary Clayton
Concord Community Preservation Committee
141 Keyes Road, First Floor
Concord, MA 01742

Dear Mr. Clayton:

Through the dedicated efforts of the Drinking Gourd Project, Concord is embarking upon memorializing an important, yet lesser known, chapter of local, state and national historic importance. Long known as the cradle of U.S. independence, Concord is now unearthing and telling the story of the African American struggle for freedom beginning with the American Revolution era, and of the abolitionists, particularly women, who supported them during the Civil War era. In particular, in 1780, a Revolutionary War Veteran and African, Caesar Robbins, built a home near the North Bridge where the first battle of the war was won by Minutemen against the Red Coats. Mr. Robbins built his home as a free man during an era of slavery, five years after the historic Battle of Concord; the same year Massachusetts passed the Bill of Rights in 1780.

More than five generations of Mr. Robbins's descendants lived in that home before the house passed into the hands of the descendants of European ancestry and the home was moved across town. Mr. Robbins descendants were instrumental in creating a strong community, including his daughter, Susan Garrison, who hosted at least one Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society meeting, and Peter Hutchinson, Caesar's son-in-law, who was the first African American to be registered to vote in Concord in 1881.

Recently, Concord residents were able to save this historic house from demolition. The Drinking Gourd Project, the group supporting this effort, is waging a campaign to return the house near the North Bridge, as well as restore, preserve, and adapt the house into an educational center on African and Abolitionist history, teaching the lessons of the impact of defending civil liberties. The House would be an added attraction for thousands of visitors to the Minute Man National Historical Park.

Already, the story of this house and the period it represents has touched people from across the country. For example, high school students from Virginia wrote that the importance of the Caesar Robbins house reminds them of Monticello and Bull Run. There is no other house like it, built by an African in the 18th Century in Concord, MA, that can tell the story of free, enslaved and self-emancipated residents during such a turbulent time.

I strongly support the efforts of the Town of Concord and the Drinking Gourd Project to establish the Caesar Robbins House as an educational center. I encourage the Committee to dedicate funding to return this reminder of our shared national heritage to its rightful place and status as an important educational center on African and Abolitionist History from the 17th through the 19th Centuries.

I thank you for giving this request your most serious consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John F. Kerry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

United States Senator