



THE THOREAU SOCIETY®  
Founded 1941

August 6, 2010

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To Whom It May Concern,

The Thoreau Society is writing you today in enthusiastic support of the Drinking Gourd Project's proposal to place engraved stone benches in historic Walden Woods to mark the homes of three former slaves who lived there. In the great American classic, and internationally renowned, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, author Henry David Thoreau immortalizes the stories of Cato Ingraham, Zilpah White, and Brister Freeman in a chapter titled "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors." Two of the benches will be placed near present day Route 126, within the Walden Pond State Reservation, and the other within the Concord Town Forest.

It is fitting that The Thoreau Society lends its full support to the project, as Thoreau lived from 1817-1862, during a time of sectional crisis, when the country was sharply divided over slavery. Thoreau actively supported the abolition of slavery in the United States, and was a vocal supporter of freedom. He spent a famous night in jail for refusing to pay his poll tax in protest of slavery and the War with Mexico. He later wrote his essay *Civil Disobedience*, which has served as an inspiration to many around the globe, including Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr.

Founded in 1941, The Thoreau Society is the oldest and largest organization devoted to an American author, with members throughout the United States and around the world. The Society exists to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau's life, works, legacy and his place in his world and in ours, challenging all to live a deliberate, considered life. In 2001, the Society was designated the official Friends of Walden Pond, in support of visitor services, conservation projects, and park operations at Walden Pond State Reservation.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation and The Thoreau Society work jointly in carrying out an annual program on Martin Luther King Day at the Tsongas Gallery, educating the public about Thoreau's essay on *Civil Disobedience* and its significance to the Civil Rights Movement.

I would be happy to discuss or answer any questions you may have regarding The Thoreau Society's support for the placement of the memorials. Call my direct line: 978-369-5319.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Frederick  
Executive Director