

Certificate of enslavement of Native peoples, authorized by Josiah Winslow, Governor of the Colony of Plymouth, 9 August 1676

Context: In the 17th century, Native communities fought wars with colonists to defend their homelands and maintain their sovereignty. In both the Pequot War of the 1630s and the War for the Dawnland in the 1670s, colonial New England governments enslaved Native peoples as a form of punishment for fighting against their militias. In August and September 1676 the Governors of the Plymouth and Mass Bay colonies signed certificates to enslave a total of 180 Wampanoag and Nipmuc people and forcibly transport them to the Caribbean on the ship *Seaflower*, captained by Thomas Smith. The certificates condemn all of the enslaved to “perpetual slavery.”

To all Christian people to whom these presents shall come greeting: Be it known and manifest that whereas Phillip sachem and heathen Prince habiting upon the Continent in New England within the Colony of New Plimoth hath formerly subjected himself and People to the government and obedience of our Sovereign his Majesty the King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland and the dominions and plantations thereunto belonging and particularly hath subjected to the Laws and authority established in his Majesty's said Colony of New plimoth but having now of late [??] Roused and Rebelled; hath most Barborously committed many nefarious and execrable Murders, villainies, and outrages: and by conspiracies with other heathen Princes endeavored to strengthen himself and totally destroy, extirpate & expel his said Majesty's subjects within the Colony and upon the Continent aforesaid; and, whereas, many of the said Heathen People have lately been taken and Captivated by the Armies of his said Majesty's subjects and [committed?] for conspiring with and actually abetting and assisting the said Philip in his said Rebellion and have themselves been the authors of Many inhumane cruelties and injuries to the Persons and estate of his said Majesty's subjects; that therefore by due and Legal procedure the said Heathen Malefactors – men, women and children – have been sentenced and condemned to Perpetual servitude and slavery: and with special license the said captives are transported for sale in any of his said Majesty's Dominions or the dominions of any other Christian Prince or state and to the end that this [Instrument? Testament?] may be an absolute and [effectual?] evidence for the warrant to Capt. Thomas Smith commanded of the ship *Seaflower* for the transportation of one hundred and ten of the said Slaves. I have hereunto caused to be affixed the Public Seal of the said colony Dated at New plimoth in New England the ninth day of August in the year of our Lord 1676
[??] Josiah Winslow, Governor

**Note: For clarity, spelling has been standardized and punctuation has been added.*

See the original on the MHS website: [Certificate from Josiah Winslow, Governor of the Colony of Plymouth issued to Thomas Smith, 9 August 1676](#)