

Noor Issa

Mr. Mahoney

Pre- AP U.S. & World History II & III

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History Walk Script: Anthony Burns

ANTHONY B. : Good day to ya, sirs and ma'ams. My name's Anthony Burns, but Tony is fine. I'm here to tell y'all the story of my life, hopin' to teach you somethin', an' maybe y'all won't make mistakes like me. I started off real good an' lucky for a black man like myself, over in Alexandria, Virginia where I grew up with Master, Sir Charles Suttle. Many actually say I was a "privileged slave", though in my opinion there ain't no way those two words can match in a sentence togetha'. But still, I was doin' okay, Master even let me do other jobs an' such so long as I payed him an' all. I got to be a clothing store clerk an' even a preacher in my town an' everything, an' I'm forever thankful. But there was jus' somethin missin', ya know? From my life, I mean. I jus' knew I was meant to be more an' do bigger things, not jus' stay the property of another man.

That was my first mistake. Tryna' bend the laws of nature, believin' that a black man like myself could be anythin' more than a slave. But still, ever since I was ten all the way till then when I was nineteen, I felt my Lord was tellin' me that there was a Christ who came to make us free. That's when I began to hear about a North, an' to feel the necessity for freedom of my soul an' body. An' I listened to my thoughts an' in 1854, I done ran away, boarded a ship to Boston, and finally found freedom. I still know damn well today that that day in March when I got there

was the happiest day of my life, I ain't ever felt so happy and so right. But right after that was when everythin' started goin' straight to hell. I made the foolish, life ruinin' mistake of sendin' my brother a letter that showed my address, an' even though I was real careful to make sure it was sent through Canada an' all, it still got in the hands of Master somehow. That's when he sent everyone up here to start lookin' for me, an' I thought I was safe 'cuz Boston's supposed to be safe and all, but I learned later that somethin' called the Fugitive Slave Act from some compromise made four years earlier meant that the government had to be on Master's side. On May 24, I was caught and sent to prison. It was the worst time I ever had in my life, I remember it like a movie playin' in my head. I was held in the third floor of the courthouse, and when Master came an' visited me, I remember I ain't ever felt so angry in my life. I remember he tipped his hat at me, said "How do you do, Mr. Burns?" all fancy-like, and then asked me why I even ran, sayin', "Haven't I always treated you well, Tony?" To this day it baffles me that someone ever thought I could be content with that typa' situation. But mad as I was, I came to find out that these groups of abolitionists- lots were white, some was black- was plannin in Faneuil Hall for days that they was gonna bail me out, and one day about two thousand people, lead by a kind man named Thomas Wentworth Higginston, tried to break in an' all. Even though it never worked, I was an' still am real thankful that so many people would try an' do that for me. But after that, things got real worse, and the president was tryna' enforce his act and all so he sent military people an everything to watch me. That whole time was jus' miserable, and on June 2 that year they convicted me as a fugitive slave, as if I had done somethin' so terrible, and sent me back to Virginia on a military ship. I was so sad and angry for that portion of my life, treated like a criminal just for wantin' my freedom. But it wasn't all over yet. In less than a year, things

looked up again, and a black church did somethin' real kind and raised a whole lotta money and freed me again! I went to Boston again an' it was the second happiest day of my life knowin' I'd be free forever, and so far, I've loved my new life. If there's anythin' I learned in my years, it's never stop fighting for your freedom, and I hope yall learned that listenin' to me today.