



An Act to Prevent the Importation of Slaves into the State of New-Jersey, and to Authorize the Manumission of Them Under Certain Restrictions, and to Prevent the Abuse of Slaves, 2 March 1786.

Whereas the Principles of Justice and Humanity require, that the barbarous Custom of bringing the unoffending Africans from their native Country and Connections into a State of Slavery ought to be discountenanced, and as soon as possible prevented; and sound policy also requires, in order to afford ample Support to such of the Community as depend upon their Labour for their daily Subsistence, that the Importation of Slaves into this State from any other State or Country whatsoever, ought to be prohibited under certain Restrictions; and that such as are under Servitude in the State ought to be protected by Law from those Exercises of wanton Cruelty too often practised upon them; and that every unnecessary Obstruction in the Way of freeing Slaves should be removed; therefore,

- Sect. 1. BE IT ENACTED. . . That from and after publication of this Act, it shall not be lawful for any Person or Persons whatsoever to bring into this State, either for Sale or for Servitude, any Negro Slave brought from Africa since the Year Seventeen Hundred and Seventy-six. . . .
3. Provided always . . . That Nothing in this Act contained shall be construed to prevent any Person who shall remove into the State, to take a settled Residence here, from bringing all his or her Slaves without incurring the Penalties aforesaid, excepting such Slaves as shall have been brought from Africa since the Year first above-mentioned, or to prevent Foreigners or others having only a temporary Residence in this State, for the Purpose of transacting any particular Business, or on their Travels, from bringing and employing such Slaves as Servants, during the Time of his or her Stay here, provided such Slave shall not be sold or disposed of in this State. . . .
5. And be it further Enacted. . . That it shall and may be lawful for any Owner, Master or Mistress of any Negro or Mulatto Slave, to manumit and set free such Slave by executing a Writing under Hand and Seal, certifying such Manumission, and also obtaining a Certificate, signed by two of the Overseers of the Poor of the Township, and any two Justices of the Peace of the County wherein the said Master or Mistress may reside. . . .

Source: Clement Alexander Price, ed. *Freedom Not Far Distant: A Documentary History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey* (Newark, 1980), 73-75.