

North Carolina

AN ACT TO PREVENT ALL PERSONS FROM TEACHING
SLAVES
TO READ OR WRITE, THE USE OF FIGURES EXCEPTED

Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write, has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion, to the manifest injury of the citizens of this State;

Therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That any free person, who shall here-after teach, or attempt to teach, any slave within the State to read or write, the use of figures excepted, or shall give or sell to such slave or slaves any books or pamphlets, shall be liable to indictment in any court of record in this State having jurisdiction thereof, and upon conviction, shall, at the discretion of the court, if a white man or woman, be fined not less than one hundred dollars, nor more than two hundred dollars, or imprisoned; and if a free person of color, shall be fined, imprisoned, or whipped, at the discretion of the court, not exceeding thirty-nine lashes, nor less than twenty lashes.

II. *Be it further enacted,* That if any slave shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any other slave to read or write, the use of figures excepted, he or she may be carried before any justice of the peace, and on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to receive thirty nine lashes on his or her bare back.

III. *Be it further enacted*, That the judges of the Superior Courts and the justices of the County Courts shall give this act in charge to the grand juries of their respective counties.¹

¹ Source: "Act Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at the Session of 1830-1831" (Raleigh: 1831). Reprinted in Manning Marable and Leigh Mullings, Eds., Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal, An African American Anthology, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, pp 41-42.