

From *The Mirror*

(The punctuation and spelling are as they appeared in the original document.)

**June 14, 1865**

Hd. Qtrs. Military Sor. District  
Lynchburg, Va.,  
May 18th, 1865.

GENERAL ORDERS,  
No. 2

**I.** The delusion which many Colored persons, formerly slaves, are laboring under concerning their rights and privileges having been in many instances produced of evil, and giving prospect of much trouble in the future both to themselves and their former masters, has deemed necessary to correct it and explain what are the true relations their changed condition places them in towards the Government and their former masters, as well as what their own duties and responsibilities are. Their error consists mainly in the belief that with their liberty they acquire individual rights in the property of their former masters, and that they are entitled to live with and be subsisted by them, without being obliged to labor or give any remuneration for their support. Many even believe that the entire property of their former owner belongs now to themselves, and that the owner remains with them only by their sufferance. This mistake has been originated and sustained in many instance by thoughtless, ignorant or mischievous soldiers.

It is therefore, stated for the information and guidance of Negroes, formerly slaves, and for the benefit of themselves, their former masters and society where they live, that the operation of existing laws is to make them *free*, but not to give them any claim whatever upon, or right in connection with, the property of their former owners. They are at liberty to make any contract or agreement concerning themselves that a white man may, and equally bound to abide by it.

Their former master has the right to refuse them anything that he might deny to a perfect stranger, and is no more bound to feed, clothe, or protect them than if he had never been their master. They may remain with him if he and they both desire it and agree on the terms, in which case, each party is equally bound by the contact.

The fact must in time be learned by all Negroes, and the sooner the better for themselves and all concerned, that they must work for their support now, the same as before they were free, in some instances, perhaps, even harder. The difference between then and now, being that now they have the entire wages of their labor to themselves.

The destitute ration will not be issued to any persons whatever, who are able to labor, unless they can show that they have made efforts and found it impossible to obtain work.

Lieut. Col. Richard F. Mason is hereby appointed employment agent, whose duty it shall be to keep a register of all colored persons to whom the destitute rations is issued, and of all others who may desire employment, classifying them according to sex, and trade, or occupation, with a short descriptive list of each.

All persons desiring to hire servants or laborers of any kind, are requested to call at the office of the employment agent, in Lynchburg, where they will be permitted to examine the register and select from it such persons as they wish to hire, stating the compensation they are willing to give, which must be fair and reasonable, to be determined by the employment agent. The person selected will then be notified, and if willing, will be employed and dropped from the list. If not willing to work, such persons will not be permitted to draw another ration.

All colored persons living in the country, are informed that it is much better for them to remain there than to come to the already overstocked city, and they will not be permitted to come here for work or subsistence unless they cannot obtain them where they are.

By command of  
Brevet, Brig. Gen'l GREGG