

May 20th, 1773

Dear Aunt Ann,

I forever appreciate you accompanying me to New York to fund my education. Reaching New York was a wonderful feeling, and I am eternally excited about my possibilities here. I am ever so grateful for the opportunity you have graced me with. I wonder why there are so many guards at the border here, but I'm sure I will be reunited with you soon. I will not throw away my shot. I know the world is gonna know my name.

My interests are peaked by the number of newspapers here that share constant political news. Other boys in here have an interest in politics and we have decided to come together to write eighty-five essays about our ideas for the future of this country. The other boys will write thirty-four and I will write the other fifty-one. They say here that I write like I'm running out of time. The truth is, I do not know what else to do with my time.

The center where they're keeping me is not what I expected. It reminds me of a zoo, crammed with children and infants, and they give us mats, as though we're going to be staying here for a long time. So many kids here are so young, quite a few are looking scrappy, and everyone is constantly hungry. We all share the hope that we will make it into the country soon to make it the nation we believe it can become.

I will see you soon, my dear aunt. I hope this letter meets you with ease.

Forever grateful,

AH

June 17th, 1773

Dearest Ann,

It has been a rather long four weeks. I like to believe that my letters are reaching people, that the essays may be published somewhere, that there is something to working a lot harder, that it is possible to be a self-starter. I fear that this is not the case. The officers at the border are brutal. They believe that I have nothing to offer this country, but I have been studying the ideas more and more in the time I've spent at this place. I do not wish to label this place falsely, but it feels almost like a prison. I feel dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot, left to suffer. The room is kept so cold that one young girl caught a cold and is now getting nose bleeds because it has gone untreated. Other children are bound by their hands and feet and called "thieves", although I have no idea what they could have stolen. They seem to have all been separated from their parents.

I have tried to communicate with some of the children here, but most of them don't speak English. I try to talk to them, to hear a testament to their pain, but language bars me from coming closer to understanding their devastation. I still feel that they understand what the officers call them. I believe that the officers' cruel words are the hardest to withstand. I am shocked by the blatant threats and insults of the officers; one of them spits at me as I write this letter, "Why do you assume you're the smartest in the room?"

I have not given up. The suffering here drives me to rise up above this place and take a stand, even though I am completely outgunned, outmanned, outnumbered, and outplanned.

All my heart,

AH

February 7th, 1774

Dear Ann,

I fear that my letters are not reaching you for I have yet to receive any reply. Still, I wish to communicate with you just in case this does reach you.

I have not hitherto done my duty to you, and I regret that I may never be able to. Although I wish I could repay the great Favor you have given to me, I'm afraid I will not be able to enter this country, nor will I be able to leave it without you. They have changed my location so many times, I do not wonder why you have not been able to find me. I am now kept in a tent with what seems like thousands of other boys and girls, and it is so extremely cold. They say that they may place me with a "sponsor", but I fear that this will not apply to someone of ambiguous race like me. I have heard there is a detainment center where they provide classes, but I wonder if that was a tale we tell each other for comfort. I feel so trapped and I can't help thinking about the million things I haven't done.

I have met so many people who need help. Although we all came from different places, we all share the feeling that the world has turned upside down. Many of the smaller children here are suffering from nightmares, anxiety, and stomach aches. One of the boys I have become friends with has been separated from his family who was seeking asylum from assassins in their home country. He has lost an eye to a bullet that was meant to kill him. He tells me he is afraid they will deport him without warning because he knows he will be murdered if he is deported.

Another girl has told me of her family that relies on her to get into the United States to make enough money to save them from the violence that has torn apart their village. She is the most beautiful girl and she brings out a different side of me. She honestly makes me feel like I could be a new man, even when in her presence I feel completely helpless. She reminds me what I came to America for, she reminds me to look around, she reminds me to appreciate so many miracles of my life. I want her to have a better life than this.

I'm past patiently waiting. We must Rise Up. I've been here for what feels like a fifty years, so there will be a revolution in this century. Another boy here tells me that the situation is fraught and that if I attempt anything, I'll get shot. He warns me against any action. Still, I feel that history has its eyes on me.

Love,

AH

April 7th, 1774

Dear Ann,

I hope my last letter reached you. If you have written to me, I have never received any letters, so do not be offended by my infrequent or sparse replies. I have to write to you today because I'm afraid terrible things have occurred and I don't know what else to do. I will start by explaining the events of the months since my last letter.

I have been communicating with the other immigrants. Many of them have heartbreaking stories of fear and loss, and I was driven in February to inspire them to fight back. Here is a speech I wrote to rouse them:

"My brothers and sisters,

We have all come to make a change here, not to be chained here. We gotta make an all out stand.

I will fight for this land. Will you fight with me? Rally the guys, master the element of surprise for we must fight for our freedom and rise to the occasion to make this our new nation. Even if we do not live to see our glory, we will tell the story of tonight, where we have fought for a better life for the immigrants that will come after us. We will fight and kill for the notion of a nation we now get to build. For once in your lives, take a stand with pride.

Tell your brother that he's gotta rise up. Tell your sister that she's gotta rise up. Every day's a test of our camaraderie and bravery. If you chose not to stand with me, I'll see you on the other side of the war. Let me just remind you that we are immigrants, so we will get the job done!"

At this point, the officers got through the crowd to me and dragged me away to place me in a solitary, cold room with no light. It was the day I was released from there that I heard the news:

This speech inspired the girl I described to you last time - her name, I can share with you now, was Eliza. She got together with the boy I told you about in my last letter and a few others and decided to attack the officers with some objects they managed to steal from the officers. Eliza was closest when the officer reached for his weapon, and he shot her through her head. Her last words to me were "Just stay alive, that would be enough." She was twenty-years-old.

I now imagine death so much it feels more like a memory. I have fallen sick in the confinement they've kept me in, and I have no hope of receiving any sort of aid for my sickness. I wonder when's it gonna get me. I've been writing like tomorrow won't arrive, but truly I've been writing because I need it to survive. I have nothing else, no one else. I only have the hope that things will soon change.

Your loving, lonely nephew,

Alexander Hamilton

September 18th, 1774

Alexander -

*I have just found your three letters. I had to get them from an officer at the border who was in control of mail - they were a few in a stack of hundreds. There seemed to be no intention in sending them to anyone.*

*I am glad to hear about this girl, Eliza. I hope she brings you so much joy for a long time.*

*Upon entering the United States with you, they informed me that you were to be taken to a separate room to be bathed. I agreed - how I hate so much that I agreed - not knowing that I would not see you again after. The guards immediately put me on a ship back to the West Indies. There is no clear path to reunite with you. I have tried contacting many different detention centers, but it seems to be a chaotic, labyrinthine system. Many of the people I contacted told me that I was to go to court and plead guilty because of my attempt to "enter illegally" into the country. I submitted to this advice after a month of trying to find an alternative solution that wasn't so costly, but I was then informed that we are on separate legal tracks and that your case will take much longer to process.*

*I cannot fight their court systems any longer. I have spent all of the money left from selling my estate and have been denied the inheritance my father left to me, which was 2/7ths of all he possessed. I have suffered every hardship incident to poverty, and I fear more now that you will be sent back to the West Indies than I fear you entering the country alone.*

*Oh, my dear nephew. It breaks my heart that I cannot help you now. If only I knew someone, anyone, in the country that could take sponsorship of you, and then you would be able to go to school. Another school year is starting, and I cannot stand to think that your potential is rotting away in a cold detainment center. I can only hope that some higher power will listen to my prayers and grant you the happiness and opportunity you deserve.*

- Ann Mitchell