

# AM I NOT A MAN?

## THE DRED SCOTT STORY

**A**n illiterate slave, Dred Scott, trusted in an all-white, slave-owning jury to declare him free. But after briefly experiencing the glory of freedom and manhood, a new state Supreme Court ordered the cold steel of the shackles to be closed again around his wrists and ankles. Falling to his knees, Dred cried, "Ain't I a man?" Dred answered his own question by rising and taking his fight to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mark L. Shurtleff attended Brigham Young University, University of Utah College of Law, and University of San Diego School of Law. He began his legal career by serving four years in the United States Navy Judge Advocate Corpse (JAG), then as a lawyer in Southern California.



Mark then moved back to Utah and worked as a Deputy County Attorney and as Commissioner of Salt Lake County. He later became an Assistant Attorney General for the state of Utah. He was elected Attorney General in November 2000, and was re-elected in 2004 and 2008. He is the first Attorney

General in Utah to win re-election for a third term. Mark is married with five children. He is an Eagle Scout and is fluent in Spanish.

"Illuminating, sensitive, and powerful, Shurtleff's fictional take on Dred Scott asks some timely questions of race and prejudice that have still not been answered."

— Robert Fleming, African American Literature Book Club

"After five years of deep and extensive research into Dred Scott's life and times, this distinguished lawyer's own sense of the hunger of all for justice gives Am I Not a Man gripping authenticity."

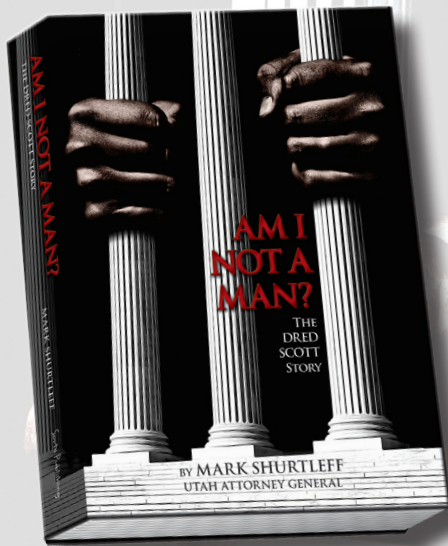
— D.C. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

"It will renew your faith in the power of the human spirit."

— Thurbert E. Baker, Attorney General of Georgia

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| <b>TITLE</b>        | Am I Not A Man   |
| <b>SUBTITLE</b>     | The Dred Scott Story   |
| <b>AUTHOR</b>       | Mark L. Shurtleff  |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b>    | Sortis Publishing  |
| <b>ISBN</b>         | 978-0-9827986-1-4  |
| <b>CATEGORY</b>     | Historical Novel   |
| <b>PAGES</b>        | 528  |
| <b>RETAIL PRICE</b> | \$24.95  |
| <b>SIZE</b>         | 6"x9"  |
| <b>BINDING</b>      | Hardcover  |
| <b>CONTACT</b>      | <b>Mike Webb</b><br>mwebb@sortispublishing.com<br>Phone (866) 375-9744<br>Fax (480) 287-8318 |





# AM I NOT A MAN? THE DRED SCOTT STORY

African American Literature Book Club

Reviewed by Robert Fleming

“**W**hat a curious book to be written by Mark L. Shurtleff, Utah’s Attorney General!

This well-researched historical novel, *Am I Not A Man?* goes into the mind of Dred Scott, an illiterate slave who endured the agony of bondage and all of its cruelty from his early days in Virginia until his classic legal battles to over-turn the restrictive laws of slavery. Shurtleff, a white author, never lets us forget these black men and women were human beings. He shows the reader that Dred and his wife, Harriet, were loving, caring people. He takes us into their minds and hearts and trusts us with their unrelenting humanity.

For those unfamiliar with the indecent American institution of slavery, Shurtleff includes a brief history of some of its landmarks of the political, commercial, and legal highlights through the years. The recreated dialogue with James Madison and Thomas Jefferson of the strategies of possessing Blacks as chattel is on par with any of the top-notch practitioners of current historical fiction. Although the novel is sometimes confusing in bouncing around in its narrative timeline, Shurtleff paints a balanced picture of the morally conflicted framers of the Constitution and the creation of the flawed democracy they envisioned. It provides a historical context for the Dred Scott tragedy.

However, the central character is Dred Scott, the young man working in the cotton fields of Southern Virginia, employed later as a house slave, and later retained as an assistant with soldiers. Some Blacks forget the importance of the abolitionist movement, including Harriet Beecher Stowe’s anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, of which the sympathetic Blow family, owners of Dred and Harriet, made

it possible for the Scotts to sue for their freedom. The legal fight was difficult. In January 1850, a jury of whites, including some slave owners, declared Dred and his wife were forever free under the law of Missouri.

Some of the most stirring moments in the novel are the legal war-of-words before the white Justices in the High Court by Roswell Field, a firebrand abolitionist lawyer and defender of fugitive slaves. The abolitionists were determined to push the white political elite to confront the evil of the slavery issue.

*‘I would humbly request that each of you, at some point during your deliberations, consider for just a moment what it would be like to lose your freedom. What it would feel like to be a slave, the chattel of another? What it would do to you to have the majority of those around you consider you as something less than a man? I believe that doing so, you will be at peace and able to fully and fairly do justice for the man who placed fifty years of trust in the system, and you are it.’*

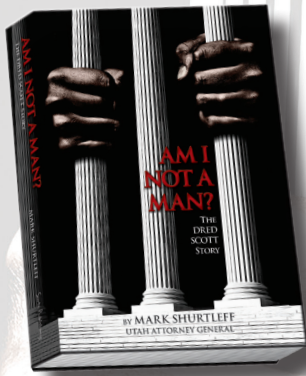
When the justice ruled against Dred and overturned the decision of the jury, returning the Scotts to slavery, it is to Shurtleff’s credit as a writer to portray the very real feelings of Dred and Harriet as they learn of the judgment. After the verdict, the sheriff cuffed Dred and said his jailing has to be because the law doesn’t know what to do next. Still, the Scotts survive the shattering ruling. Dred’s death is used by the abolitionists to win liberty for slaves and to influence President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.

“Illuminating, sensitive, and powerful, Shurtleff’s fictional take on Dred Scott asks some timely questions of race and prejudice that have still not been answered.”



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“Mark has recounted a spectacular and riveting story of American heroism and human triumphs, unbounded by race, color, or gender. The founders’ dream for a single, egalitarian society has meant cultivating it continually with love, courage, sacrifice, perseverance and patriotism. No one has made a bigger contribution to the realization of this dream than Dred Scott. His inspiring story serves as an example of how personal conviction and alliances of the hopeful can ultimately achieve the founders’ vision. From precious Dred Scott to Barack Obama, there are still rivers to cross and corners to turn before justice, and thus freedom, is ours.”

— Dennis Courtland Hayes, former Interim President & CEO, Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Corporation Secretary for the NAACP, Inc.

“There may be no better way to capture the dramatic story of the life of the remarkable slave, Dred Scott, than through a novel in the hands of a gifted and daring writer. More than 150 years after Taylor Blow freed him from bondage, Dred Scott has found that writer in Mark Shurtleff. After five years of deep and extensive research into Dred Scott’s life and times, this distinguished lawyer’s own sense of the hunger of all for justice gives *Am I Not a Man* gripping authenticity.”

— D.C. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

“More than anything else, *Am I Not A Man?—The Dred Scott Story* is about a religious man clinging to faith, holding onto a trust in God instilled in him by his mother. That Mark Shurtleff would tell this story in the theological voice common to the African-American experience gives the read credence, authenticity with echoes very familiar today.”

— Albert C. Jones, Publisher,  
[www.americadiversityplace.com](http://www.americadiversityplace.com)

“*Am I Not A Man* is as majestic a work as the Mississippi River is to the landscape of this novel, and as empowering as the spirit of Dred Scott. Mark Shurtleff proves to be a master storyteller, weaving together an extraordinary tapestry of human, naturalistic, and historical events that reveal the providence of Dred Scott’s life and its significance in birthing the nation that we live in today. You will not find the breadth and beauty of this story in the history books. It does not exist. Mark was uniquely gifted in delivering this remarkable story to the world. He exposed how the courage of one man, along with the support of other just and courageous men, overcame the scourge of injustice and altered the course of American history. It will renew your faith in the power of the human spirit.”

— Thurbert E. Baker, Attorney General of Georgia

“Attorney General Shurtleff has used his exceptional gift for writing to bring to life the mind, heart, and passion of my great-great-grandparents in a moving and hard-to-put-down novel of great excellence. His ability to portray the dignity of all human beings through the characters is extraordinary. Mark’s sincere love for these heroes manifests in the detail he exhibits as he personifies many heart-wrenching and joyful moments they experienced on their road to freedom. This story is a masterful achievement in allowing us to be there beyond the legal aspects and feel with, and for, the Scotts....and you will!”

— Lynne M. Jackson, Great-great granddaughter of Dred & Harriet Scott, President and Founder of The Dred Scott Heritage Foundation

“*Am I Not a Man? – The Dred Scott Story* refreshes our memories of a sad time in America’s history. In familiar language, we get details with clarity and passion while showing the depths of familial love and commitment to positive change. It is written in a readable, engaging style and every person should take the time to learn from it.”

— Pastor France Davis, Calvary Baptist Church

Through the inspiring story of Dred Scott’s courageous legal battle for freedom, your book conveys an important message about the meaning of justice. When used to promote a just cause, the judicial system can serve as an effective platform to bring to light democratic principles, such as equality and liberty. Although the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case ran counter to the principles we consider fundamental today, the efforts of Dred Scott, and the team of lawyers who fought for his emancipation, undoubtedly played a vital role in disseminating the violation of liberty inherent in the institution of slavery, and thereby contributing to the eventual prohibition of slavery in the United States....I hope that through cooperation and mutual understanding, we will be better able to promote the use of the law to uphold the democratic principles we share, as embodied by the Dred Scott case.

— Yaakov Neeman, Minister of Justice, State of Israel



Dennis Courtland Hayes



Pastor France Davis



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Eleanor Holmes Norton