

From: Phil Lapsansky <phil@librarycompany.org>
Sent: Monday, February 7, 2022 12:12 PM
To: Michael Barsanti <mbarsanti@librarycompany.org>
Subject: Re: Jennings Question

First thing: I'm delighted that Liberty inspires controversy and discussion. Good for her! Over my years I discussed the painting with many scholars and it stimulated a lot of scholarly work. See for example essays in my Appreciations book by Jenna Gibbs and Ashli White; and Laurent Dubois appreciated it for his study of the banjo. (What fun!). Liberty is a beautiful artifact of the limits of Revolutionary Era progressive thought on race: patronizing paternalistic patrician racist and antislavery. It is of a piece with other antislavery images of the period such as "Am I Not a Man and a Brother" a kneeling slave begging whites for his freedom rather than rising up and taking it a la Haiti. Liberty is what she is, no apologies necessary. So let the discussion and controversy flow, incorporating into the interpretation and celebrate her power to generate all this agitation. Don't let woke become insomnia.