

DAVID WALKER

c. 1785/96 – 1830

First published in 1829, David Walker's *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* was among the most controversial publications of the antebellum period. Written in language as impassioned as it is deliberate, the pamphlet is an incisive condemnation of the institution of slavery and all who profited from it, calling for immediate emancipation and for the rise of a nationwide racial consciousness among both enslaved and free African Americans. Perceived by many at the time as dangerously radical, the *Appeal* was immediately vilified by Southern slaveholders as well as by moderate Northern abolitionists, its author deemed by detractors to be at best misguided and at worst a threat to the very foundations of American society. To threaten and overthrow those cruel and unjust foundations, however, was one of Walker's primary aims. The *Appeal*, which helped usher in abolitionism as one of the most important concerns of nineteenth-century America, has been influential in the struggle for racial justice ever since its publication, and echoes of it can be heard in the work of Maria W. Stewart, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X, among others.

Though Walker's father had been enslaved, his mother was free and therefore Walker himself was born into freedom. Nevertheless, the legal and social restraints experienced by even free African Americans in the antebellum South were severe. At an unknown date he left his native North Carolina for Charleston, South Carolina, where he joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church—a leading force in the fight for racial justice throughout the nineteenth century—and likely encountered the formerly enslaved Denmark Vesey, whose radical, revolutionary approach to abolitionism would see echoes in Walker's later work. After traveling numerous Southern and Western states, Walker settled in Boston, where, though black people continued to experience severe discrimination and outright violence, there was nonetheless a flourishing black intellectual and political community. Here he purchased a used-clothing store and married Eliza Butler. Walker joined the influential Prince Hall Masonic Lodge, which advocated for black education rights among other causes; helped found the Massachusetts General Colored Association, before which he frequently lectured; wrote for and helped distribute *Freedom's Journal*, the first African American-owned newspaper in the country; and used his shop and home as a shelter, often for those escaping slavery via the Underground Railroad.

Published in 1829, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles, together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, was a consummation of years of antislavery thought, calling upon African Americans to recognize and resist the oppression under which they lived, and invoking ancient and biblical examples of slavery to demonstrate the historically exceptional injustice of the American institution. In part, Walker's text was a response to Thomas Jefferson's influential *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787)—often considered a foundational expression of American political culture—in which Jefferson defends slavery on the basis of the “real distinctions which nature has made” between black and white people, and claims that African Americans should, if free, be “removed beyond the reach of mixture” with whites. Walker addresses the way this latter infamous claim had recently been taken up by the American Colonization Society, which advocated for the deportation of black people to Africa; from the 1820s to the 1840s the Society sent thousands of African Americans to colonize Liberia, where more than half died.

Though *Walker's Appeal* was not the first standalone publication of its sort—a number of abolitionist tracts had, for instance, been previously published by Boston's African Society—it was among the most ambitious. Anticipating the negative response his pamphlet would likely elicit among white authorities if distributed conventionally, Walker used a varied network of supporters to circulate the *Appeal* among people who would otherwise have been unable to access it, and to read it aloud to those who were illiterate; this network may have included sympathetic sailors and ship workers—a large proportion of whom were free blacks—as well as activists and ministers to whom Walker mailed crates of the pamphlet

directly. The pamphlet soon reached thousands of people around the country, with copies found as far south as New Orleans. In 1830 the work was already in its third revised edition, with each revision featuring additional material, as well as a shift towards increasingly radical language.

By this point the pamphlet had attracted the notice of many outraged Southern slaveholders, who took quick action to suppress knowledge of the text among the people they enslaved. Southern newspapers reported on the pamphlet extensively, and proslavery Southerners called for Walker's capture and execution—with a large reward offered to those willing to do the deed. Georgia's Governor Gilmer accused Boston of harboring "highly inflammatory" literature and demanded that the pamphlet's circulation be brought to an end (the city's mayor declined to take such action). The legislature of North Carolina met secretly about the *Appeal* and passed harsh laws forbidding anyone from teaching enslaved people how to read or write, and from circulating what was considered seditious literature. On the whole, many Southern states saw a surge in racist legislation during the early 1830s, likely in part as a response to the increasingly vigorous antislavery resistance represented by texts like the *Appeal*. White abolitionists, too, were disturbed by the forceful language of the pamphlet: Benjamin Lundy, for instance, declared the *Appeal* "a labored attempt to rouse the worst passions of human nature, and inflame the minds of those to whom it is addressed," while William Lloyd Garrison commented that "We deprecate its circulation, though we cannot but wonder at the bravery and intelligence of its author." (Though Garrison's personal response to the *Appeal* was mixed, the text appears to have influenced his own growing support for immediate abolition—and his rejection of the aims of the American Colonization Society.)

Despite the attempts to suppress its influence, Walker's *Appeal* was an important catalyst for the explosion of abolitionist culture throughout the country in the post-1830 era. It had a profound influence on the abolitionist and feminist work of Walker's protégé Maria Stewart, who built upon Walker's rhetoric of racial uplift even while rejecting his controversial endorsement of violent means. The slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in 1831—a struggle for freedom in which rebels killed fifty-five whites, widely depicted as a massacre in the South—reflected Walker's revolutionary rhetoric, though we cannot be certain that Turner himself had encountered Walker's work. While the *Appeal* was somewhat forgotten over the following decade, it experienced a revival in 1848, when it was republished by black Northern abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet, who wrote in his brief "Sketch" of the author, "They said that he went too far, and was making trouble. So the Jews spoke of Moses." Walker's fiery rhetoric, and his openness to armed revolt as an appropriate response to slavery, have led some historians to see his work as influential in the development of the later Black Power and Black Nationalist movements.

Walker died unexpectedly not long after the release of the *Appeal's* third edition. The cause of his death has long been disputed and never resolved—many in Boston's Black community believed he had been murdered, though the official cause of death was recorded as tuberculosis. Walker's only child to live to adulthood, Edward Garrison Walker, was born after his father's death; in 1866 he became one of the first black men elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT: The text of the work presented here is based on the third edition of the *Appeal*, the last edition published during Walker's lifetime, with the full title *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles, together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of The United States of America* (1830). Spelling and punctuation have been modernized in accordance with the practices of this anthology. Inconsistencies in the use of American and British spelling conventions have not been corrected.



Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles

APPEAL, ETC.

My dearly beloved Brethren and Fellow Citizens.
 Having travelled over a considerable portion of these United States, and having, in the course of my travels, taken the most accurate observations of things as they exist—the result of my observations has warranted the full and unshaken conviction, that we (coloured people of these United States) are the most degraded, wretched, and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began; and I pray God that none like us ever may live again until time shall be no more. They tell us of the Israelites in Egypt, the Helots in Sparta,¹ and of the Roman Slaves, which last were made up from almost every nation under heaven, whose sufferings under those ancient and heathen nations, were, in comparison with ours, under this enlightened and Christian nation, no more than a cypher²—or, in other words, those heathen nations of antiquity, had but little more among them than the name and form of slavery; while wretchedness and endless miseries were reserved, apparently in a phial, to be poured out upon our fathers, ourselves and our children, by *Christian* Americans!

These positions I shall endeavour, by the help of the Lord, to demonstrate in the course of this *Appeal*, to the satisfaction of the most incredulous mind—and may God Almighty, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, open your hearts to understand and believe the truth.

The *causes*, my brethren, which produce our wretchedness and miseries, are so very numerous and aggravating, that I believe the pen only of a Josephus or a

Plutarch,³ can well enumerate and explain them. Upon subjects, then, of such incomprehensible magnitude, so impenetrable, and so notorious, I shall be obliged to omit a large class of, and content myself with giving you an exposition of a few of those, which do indeed rage to such an alarming pitch, that they cannot but be a perpetual source of terror and dismay to every reflecting mind.

I am fully aware, in making this appeal to my much afflicted and suffering brethren, that I shall not only be assailed by those whose greatest earthly desires are, to keep us in abject ignorance and wretchedness, and who are of the firm conviction that Heaven has designed us and our children to be slaves and *beasts of burden* to them and their children. I say, I do not only expect to be held up to the public as an ignorant, impudent and restless disturber of the public peace, by such avaricious creatures, as well as a mover of insubordination—and perhaps put in prison or to death, for giving a superficial exposition of our miseries, and exposing tyrants. But I am persuaded, that many of my brethren, particularly those who are ignorantly in league with slaveholders or tyrants, who acquire their daily bread by the blood and sweat of their more ignorant brethren—and not a few of those too, who are too ignorant to see an inch beyond their noses, will rise up and call me cursed—Yea, the jealous ones among us will perhaps use more abject subtlety, by affirming that this work is not worth perusing, that we are well situated, and there is no use in trying to better our condition, for we cannot. I will ask one question here. Can our condition be any worse? Can it be more mean⁴ and abject? If there are any changes, will they not be for the better, though they may appear for the worst at first? Can they get us any lower? Where can they get us? They are afraid to treat us worse, for they know well, the day they do it they are gone. But against all accusations which may or can be preferred against me, I appeal to Heaven for my motive in writing—who knows that my object is, if possible, to awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of

¹ *Israelites in Egypt ... in Sparta* Historical examples of slavery. The Israelites' enslavement to the Egyptians, and their subsequent emancipation through the intervention of God, is the primary subject of the Book of Exodus. The Helots were a class of people in Spartan society; their exact status has been the subject of historical debate, with some uncertainty as to whether they were fully considered slaves by the Spartans or whether they occupied a status between slave and citizen.

² *cypher* Literally, the digit zero; i.e., of no comparative importance.

³ *Josephus* Roman-Jewish scholar (37–100 CE) best known for his works on Jewish history; *Plutarch* Influential Greek essayist and biographer (46–120 CE).

⁴ *mean* Base, impoverished.

inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this *Republican Land of Liberty!!!!!!*

The sources from which our miseries are derived, and on which I shall comment, I shall not combine in one, but shall put them under distinct heads and expose them in their turn; in doing which, keeping truth on my side, and not departing from the strictest rules of morality, I shall endeavour to penetrate, search out, and lay them open for your inspection. If you cannot or will not profit by them, I shall have done *my* duty to you, my country and my God.

And as the inhuman system of *slavery* is the *source* from which most of our miseries proceed, I shall begin with that *curse to nations*, which has spread terror and devastation through so many nations of antiquity, and which is raging to such a pitch at the present day in Spain and in Portugal.¹ It had one tug in England, in France, and in the United States of America;² yet the inhabitants thereof, do not learn wisdom, and erase it entirely from their dwellings and from all with whom they have to do. The fact is, the labour of slaves comes so cheap to the avaricious usurpers, and is (as they think) of such great utility to the country where it exists, that those who are actuated only by sordid avarice only, overlook the evils, which will as sure as the Lord lives, follow after the good. In fact, they are so happy to keep in ignorance and degradation, and to receive the homage and labour of the slaves, they forget that God rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, having his ears continually

¹ *And as ... in Portugal* Walker is referring to the theory that slavery, as a morally corrupt institution, would inherently lead to dissolution and unrest within the societies that upheld it; as an example, he alludes to the bloody civil conflicts and economic crises that occurred in the formerly slave-trading countries of Spain and Portugal in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. (Both countries also lost possession of slaveholding colonies in the early decades of the nineteenth century; though in most cases these colonies were established as non-slaveholding nations, the formerly Portuguese colony Brazil did not abolish slavery until 1888.)

² *It had one tug ... of America* The Atlantic slave trade was abolished by the United Kingdom in 1807, and in the United States the importation of enslaved people was banned that same year. Slavery was abolished, re-instated, and then re-abolished by France between 1794 and 1826. Though considered an important victory by abolitionists, the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade did not ban the actual possession and sale of enslaved people within the U.S. or within British and French colonies, nor did it stop the illegal importation of enslaved people into the country.

open to the cries, tears and groans of his oppressed people; and being a just and holy Being will at one day appear fully in behalf of the oppressed, and arrest the progress of the avaricious oppressors; for although the destruction of the oppressors God may not effect by the oppressed, yet the Lord our God will bring other destructions upon them—for not unfrequently will he cause them to rise up one against another, to be split and divided, and to oppress each other, and sometimes to open hostilities with sword in hand. Some may ask, what is the matter with this united and happy people? Some say it is the cause of political usurpers, tyrants, oppressors, &c. But has not the Lord an oppressed and suffering people among them? Does the Lord condescend to hear their cries and see their tears in consequence of oppression? Will he let the oppressors rest comfortably and happy always? Will he not cause the very children of the oppressors to rise up against them, and oftentimes put them to death? “God works in many ways his wonders to perform.”³ ...

All persons who are acquainted with history, and particularly the Bible, who are not blinded by the God of this world, and are not actuated by avarice—who are able to lay aside prejudice long enough to view candidly and impartially, things as they were, are, and probably will be—who are willing to admit that God made man to serve Him *alone*, and that man should have no other Lord or Lords but Himself—that God Almighty is the *sole proprietor* or *master* of the *WHOLE* human family, and will not on any consideration admit of a colleague, being unwilling to divide his glory with another—and who can dispense with prejudice long enough to admit that we are *men*, notwithstanding our *improminent noses* and *woolly heads*, and believe that we feel for our fathers, mothers, wives and children, as well as the whites do for theirs. I say, all who are permitted to see and believe these things, can easily recognize the judgments of God among the Spaniards. Though others may lay the cause of the fierceness with which they cut each other’s throats, to some other circumstance, yet they who believe that God is a God of justice, will believe that *SLAVERY is the principal cause*.

³ *God works ... to perform* Paraphrase of the opening lines of English poet William Cowper’s abolitionist hymn “Light Shining Out of Darkness” (1773).

While the Spaniards are running about upon the field of battle cutting each other's throats, has not the Lord an afflicted and suffering people in the midst of them, whose cries and groans in consequence of oppression are continually pouring into the ears of the God of justice? Would they not cease to cut each other's throats, if they could? But how can they? The very support which they draw from government to aid them in perpetrating such enormities, does it not arise in a great degree from the wretched victims of oppression among them? And yet they are calling for *Peace! Peace!!* Will any peace be given unto them? Their destruction may indeed be procrastinated awhile, but can it continue long, while they are oppressing the Lord's people? Has He not the hearts of all men in His hand? Will he suffer one part of his creatures to go on oppressing another like brutes always, with impunity? And yet, those avaricious wretches are calling for *Peace!!!!* I declare, it does appear to me, as though some nations think God is asleep, or that he made the Africans for nothing else but to dig their mines and work their farms, or they cannot believe history, sacred or profane. I ask every man who has a heart, and is blessed with the privilege of believing—Is not God a God of justice to *all* his creatures? Do you say he is? Then if he gives peace and tranquility to tyrants, and permits them to keep our fathers, our mothers, ourselves and our children in eternal ignorance and wretchedness, to support them and their families, would he be to us a God of *justice*? I ask, O ye *Christians!!!* who hold us and our children in the most abject ignorance and degradation, that ever a people were afflicted with since the world began—I say, if God gives you peace and tranquility, and suffers you thus to go on afflicting us, and our children, who have never given you the least provocation—would he be to us *a God of justice*? If you will allow that we are MEN, who feel for each other, does not the blood of our fathers and of us their children, cry aloud to the Lord of Sabaoth¹ against you, for the cruelties and murders with which you have, and do continue to afflict us. But it is time for me to close my remarks on the suburbs, just to enter more fully into the interior of this system of cruelty and oppression.

ARTICLE I.

OUR WRETCHEDNESS IN CONSEQUENCE OF SLAVERY.

My beloved brethren: The Indians of North and of South America—the Greeks—the Irish, subjected under the king of Great Britain—the Jews, that ancient people of the Lord—the inhabitants of the islands of the sea—in fine,² all the inhabitants of the earth (except however, the sons of Africa) are called *men*, and of course are, and ought to be free. But we (coloured people) and our children are *brutes!!* and of course are, and *ought to be* SLAVES to the American people and their children forever!! to dig their mines and work their farms; and thus go on enriching them, from one generation to another with our *blood* and our *tears!!!!*

I promised in a preceding page to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the most incredulous, that we (coloured people of these United States of America) are the *most wretched, degraded* and *abject* set of beings that *ever lived* since the world began, and that the white Americans having reduced us to the wretched state of *slavery*, treat us in that condition *more cruel* (they being an enlightened and Christian people), than any heathen nation did any people whom it had reduced to our condition. These affirmations are so well confirmed in the minds of all unprejudiced men, who have taken the trouble to read histories, that they need no elucidation from me. But to put them beyond all doubt, I refer you in the first place to the children of Jacob,³ or of Israel in Egypt, under Pharaoh and his people. Some of my brethren do not know who Pharaoh and the Egyptians were—I know it to be a fact, that some of them take the Egyptians to have been a gang of *devils*, not knowing any better, and that they (Egyptians) having got possession of the Lord's people, treated them *nearly* as cruel as *Christian Americans* do us, at the present day. For the information of such, I would only mention that the Egyptians, were Africans or coloured people, such as we are—some of them yellow and others dark—a mixture of Ethiopians and the natives of Egypt—about the same as you see the coloured people of the United States at the present day. I say, I call your attention then, to the children

¹ *Lord of Sabaoth* Lord of Hosts or God of armies; used to refer to God in his capacity as a military leader of the heavenly host.

² *in fine* To summarize.

³ *the children of Jacob* I.e., the Israelites; Jacob is an Israelite patriarch also referred to by the name "Israel."

of Jacob, while I point out particularly to you his son Joseph,¹ among the rest, in Egypt.

“And Pharaoh, said unto Joseph, thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.”²

“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.”³

“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”⁴

Now I appeal to heaven and to earth, and particularly to the American people themselves, who cease not to declare that our condition is not *hard*, and that we are comparatively satisfied to rest in wretchedness and misery, under them and their children. Not, indeed, to show me a coloured President, a Governor, a Legislator, a Senator, a Mayor, or an Attorney at the Bar. But to show me a man of colour, who holds the low office of a Constable, or one who sits in a Juror Box, even on a case of one of his wretched brethren, throughout this great Republic! But let us pass Joseph the son of Israel a little farther in review, as he existed with that heathen nation.

“And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.”⁵

Compare the above, with the American institutions. Do they not institute laws to prohibit us from marrying among the whites?⁶ I would wish, candidly, however, before the Lord, to be understood, that I would not give a *pinch of snuff* to be married to any white person I ever saw in all the days of my life. And I do say it, that

¹ *Joseph* One of Jacob’s twelve sons, Joseph is sold into slavery to a man named Potiphar by his jealous brothers. The Book of Genesis narrates the story of Joseph’s rise from slavery to the status of vizier, second only to the Pharaoh in power.

² [Walker’s note] See Genesis, chap. xli. v. 40.

³ [Walker’s note] v. 41.

⁴ [Walker’s note] v. 44.

⁵ [Walker’s note] v. 45.

⁶ *Do they not ... the whites?* Numerous anti-miscegenation laws were in place in the United States in this period in both the South and the North (Massachusetts, for instance, first enacted legislation barring black people from intermarrying with whites in 1705, and did not repeal the law until 1843).

the black man, or man of colour, who will leave his own colour (provided he can get one, who is good for any thing) and marry a white woman, to be a double slave to her, just because she is *white*, ought to be treated by her as he surely will be, viz: as a NIGER !!!⁷ It is not, indeed, what I care about inter-marriages with the whites, which induced me to pass this subject in review; for the Lord knows, that there is a day coming when they will be glad enough to get into the company of the blacks, notwithstanding, we are, in this generation, levelled by them, almost on a level with the brute creation: and some of us they treat even worse than they do the brutes that perish. I only made this extract to show how much lower we are held, and how much more cruel we are treated by the Americans, than were the children of Jacob, by the Egyptians.—We will notice the sufferings of Israel some further, under *heathen Pharaoh*, compared with ours under the *enlightened Christians of America*.

“And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee:

“The land of Egypt is before thee: in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.”⁸

I ask those people who treat us so *well*, Oh! I ask them, where is the most barren spot of land which they have given unto us? Israel had the most fertile land in all Egypt. Need I mention the very notorious fact, that I have known a poor man of colour, who laboured night and day, to acquire a little money, and having acquired it, he vested it in a small piece of land, and got him a house erected thereon, and having paid for the whole, he moved his family into it, where he was suffered to remain but nine months, when he was cheated out of his property by a white man, and driven out of door! And is not this the case generally? Can a man of colour buy a piece of land and keep it peaceably? Will not some white man try to get it from him, even if it

⁷ *niger* As the context here suggests, the “n word” had by this time firmly established itself in the vernacular as an emphatically pejorative alternative to the then-more neutral term “negro.” This spelling (with a single g) remained in occasional use until the mid-nineteenth century.

⁸ [Walker’s note] Genesis, xlvii.—v. 5–6.

is in a *mud hole*? I need not comment any farther on a subject, which all, both black and white, will readily admit. But I must, really, observe that in this very city, when a man of colour dies, if he owned any real estate it most generally falls into the hands of some white person. The wife and children of the deceased may weep and lament if they please, but the estate will be kept snug enough by its white possessor.

But to prove farther that the condition of the Israelites was better under the Egyptians than ours is under the whites. I call upon the professing Christians, I call upon the philanthropist, I call upon the very tyrant himself, to show me a page of history, either sacred or profane, on which a verse can be found, which maintains, that the Egyptians heaped the *insupportable insult* upon the children of Israel, by telling them that they were not of the *human family*. Can the whites deny this charge? Have they not, after having reduced us to the deplorable condition of slaves under their feet, held us up as descending originally from the tribes of *Monkeys*, or *Orang-Outangs*? O! my God! I appeal to every man of feeling—is not this insupportable? Is it not heaping the most gross insult upon our miseries, because they have got us under their feet and we cannot help ourselves? Oh! pity us we pray thee, Lord Jesus, Master. Has Mr. Jefferson declared to the world, that we are inferior to the whites, both in the endowments of our bodies and of minds?¹ It is indeed surprising, that a man of such great learning, combined with such excellent natural parts, should speak so of a set of men in chains. I do not know what to compare it to, unless, like putting one wild deer in an iron cage, where it will be secured, and hold another by the side of the same, then let it go, and expect the one in the cage to run as fast as the one at liberty. So far, my brethren, were the Egyptians from heaping these insults upon their slaves, that Pharaoh's daughter took Moses, a son of Israel for her own, as will appear by the following.

¹ *Mr. Jefferson ... of minds?* Here and throughout the text Walker refers to Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787). A work of political commentary on subjects such as the separation of church and state, individual liberty, and freedom of speech, the book also expresses Jefferson's racialist scientific theories on what he considered to be the "natural" inequality of white and black people. Jefferson presents these theories to support his argument that Virginia should not yet emancipate its enslaved people.

"And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, [Moses' mother] take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages. And the woman took the child [Moses] and nursed it.

"And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said because I drew him out of the water."²

In all probability, Moses would have become Prince Regent to the throne, and no doubt, in process of time but he would have been seated on the throne of Egypt. But he had rather suffer shame, with the people of God, than to enjoy pleasures with that wicked people for a season. O! that the coloured people were long since of Moses' excellent disposition, instead of courting favour with, and telling news and lies to our *natural enemies*, against each other—aiding them to keep their hellish chains of slavery upon us. Would we not long before this time, have been respectable men, instead of such wretched victims of oppression as we are? Would they be able to drag our mothers, our fathers, our wives, our children and ourselves, around the world in chains and hand-cuffs as they do, to dig up gold and silver for them and theirs? This question, my brethren, I leave for you to digest; and may God Almighty force it home to your hearts. Remember that unless you are united, keeping your tongues within your teeth, you will be afraid to trust your secrets to each other, and thus perpetuate our miseries under the *Christians!!!!* ✨ ADDITION.—Remember, also to lay humble at the feet of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, with prayers and fastings. Let our enemies go on with their butcheries, and at once fill up their cup. Never make an attempt to gain our freedom or *natural right*, from under our cruel oppressors and murderers, until you see your way clear³—when

² [Walker's note] See Exodus, chap. II. v. 9, 10.

³ [Walker's note] It is not to be understood here, that I mean for us to wait until God shall take us by the hair of our heads and drag us out of abject wretchedness and slavery, nor do I mean to convey the idea for us to wait until our enemies shall make preparations, and call us to seize those preparations, take it away from them, and put everything before us to death, in order to gain our freedom which God has given us. For you must remember that we are men as well as they. God has been pleased to give us two eyes, two hands, two feet, and some sense in our heads as well as they. They have no more right to hold us in slavery than we have to hold them, we have just as much right, in the sight of God, to hold them and their children in slavery and wretchedness, as they have to hold us, and no more.

that hour arrives and you move, be not afraid or dismayed; for be you assured that Jesus Christ the King of heaven and of earth who is the God of justice and of armies, will surely go before you. And those enemies who have for hundreds of years stolen our *rights*, and kept us ignorant of Him and His divine worship, he will remove. Millions of whom, are this day, so ignorant and avaricious, that they cannot conceive how God can have an attribute of justice, and show mercy to us because it pleased Him to make us black—which colour, Mr. Jefferson calls unfortunate!!!!!! As though we are not as thankful to our God, for having made us as it pleased himself, as they (the whites) are for having made them white. They think because they hold us in their infernal chains of slavery, that we wish to be white, or of their color—but they are dreadfully deceived—we wish to be just as it pleased our Creator to have made us, and no avaricious and unmerciful wretches, have any business to make slaves of, or hold us in slavery. How would they like for us to make slaves of, and hold them in cruel slavery, and murder them as they do us? But is Mr. Jefferson's assertion true? *viz.*¹ “that it is unfortunate for us that our Creator has been pleased to make us *black*.” We will not take his say so, for the fact. The world will have an opportunity to see whether it is unfortunate for us, that our Creator *has made us* darker than the *whites*.

Fear not the number and education of our *enemies*, against whom we shall have to contend for our lawful right; guaranteed to us by our Maker; for why should we be afraid, when God is, and will continue (if we continue humble) to be on our side?

The man who would not fight under our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in the glorious and heavenly cause of freedom and of God—to be delivered from the most wretched, abject and servile slavery, that ever a people was afflicted with since the foundation of the world, to the present day—ought to be kept with all of his children or family, in slavery, or in chains, to be butchered by his *cruel enemies*. ✎

I saw a paragraph, a few years since, in a South Carolina paper, which, speaking of the barbarity of the Turks, it said: “The Turks are the most barbarous people in the world—they treat the Greeks more like

brutes than human beings.” And in the same paper was an advertisement, which said: “Eight well built Virginia and Maryland *Negro fellows* and four *wenches* will positively be *sold* this day, *to the highest bidder!*” And what astonished me still more was, to see in this same *humane* paper!! the cuts of three men, with clubs and budgets² on their backs, and an advertisement offering a considerable sum of money for their apprehension and delivery. I declare, it is really so amusing to hear the Southerners and Westerners of this country talk about *barbarity*, that it is positively, enough to make a man *smile*.

The suffering of the Helots among the Spartans, were somewhat severe, it is true, but to say that theirs, were as severe as ours among the Americans, I do most strenuously deny—for instance, can any man show me an article on a page of ancient history which specifies, that, the Spartans chained, and hand-cuffed the Helots, and dragged them from their wives and children, children from their parents, mothers from their suckling babes, wives from their husbands, driving them from one end of the country to the other? Notice the Spartans were heathens, who lived long before our Divine Master made his appearance in the flesh. Can Christian Americans deny these barbarous cruelties? Have you not, Americans, having subjected us under you, added to these miseries, by insulting us in telling us to our face, because we are helpless, that we are not of the human family? I ask you, O! Americans, I ask you, in the name of the Lord, can you deny these charges? Some perhaps may deny, by saying, that they never thought or said that we were not men. But do not actions speak louder than words? Have they not made provisions for the Greeks, and Irish?³ Nations who have never done the least thing for them, while *we*, who have enriched their country with our blood and tears—have dug up gold and silver for them and their children, from generation to generation, and are in more miseries than any other people under heaven, are not seen, but by comparatively, a handful of the American people? There are indeed, more ways to kill a dog, besides choking it to death with butter. Further—The Spartans or Lacedemonians, had some frivolous pretext, for enslaving the Helots, for they

¹ *viz.* Abbreviation for the Latin *videlicet*, meaning “namely” or “that is to say.”

² *cuts* I.e., woodcuts; engravings; *budgets* Leather bags.

³ *made provisions ... Irish* I.e., provided them with rights.

(Helots) while being free inhabitants of Sparta, stirred up an intestine¹ commotion, and were, by the Spartans subdued, and made prisoners of war. Consequently they and their children were condemned to perpetual slavery.²

I have been for years troubling the pages of historians, to find out what our fathers have done to the *white Christians of America*, to merit such condign³ punishment as they have inflicted on them, and do continue to inflict on us their children. But I must aver, that my researches have hitherto been to no effect. I have therefore, come to the immovable conclusion, that they (Americans) have, and do continue to punish us for nothing else, but for enriching them and their country. For I cannot conceive of anything else. Nor will I believe otherwise, until the Lord shall convince me.

The world knows, that slavery as it existed among the Romans, (which was the primary cause of their destruction) was, comparatively speaking, no more than a *cypher*, when compared with ours under the Americans. Indeed I should not have noticed the Roman slaves, had not the very learned and penetrating Mr. Jefferson said, “when a master was murdered, all his slaves in the same house, or within hearing, were condemned to death.”⁴ Here let me ask Mr. Jefferson, (but he is gone to answer at the bar of God, for the deeds done in his body while living), I therefore ask the whole American people, had I not rather die, or be put to death, than to be a slave to any tyrant, who takes not only my own, but my wife and children's lives by the inches? Yea, would I meet death with avidity far! far!! in preference to such *servile submission* to the murderous hands of tyrants. Mr. Jefferson's very severe remarks on us have been so extensively argued upon by men whose attainments in literature, I shall never be able to reach, that I would not have meddled with it, were it not to solicit each of my brethren, who has the spirit of a man, to buy a copy of Mr. Jefferson's “Notes on Virginia,” and put it in the hand of his son. For let no one of us suppose that the refutations which have been written

by our white friends are enough—they are *whites*, we are *blacks*. We, and the world wish to see the charges of Mr. Jefferson refuted by the blacks *themselves*, according to their chance; for we must remember that what the whites have written respecting this subject, is other men's labours, and did not emanate from the blacks. I know well, that there are some talents and learning among the coloured people of this country, which we have not a chance to develop, in consequence of oppression; but our oppression ought not to hinder us from acquiring all we can. For we will have a chance to develop them by and by. God will not suffer us, always to be oppressed. Our sufferings will come to an *end*, in spite of all the Americans this side of *eternity*. Then we will want all the learning and talents among ourselves, and perhaps more, to govern ourselves. “Every dog must have its day,” the American's is coming to an end.

But let us review Mr. Jefferson's remarks respecting us some further. Comparing our miserable fathers, with the learned philosophers of Greece, he says: “Yet notwithstanding these and other discouraging circumstances among the Romans, their slaves were often their rarest artists. They excelled too, in science, insomuch as to be usually employed as tutors to their master's children; Epictetus, Terence and Phaedrus,⁵ were slaves—but they were of the race of whites. It is not their *condition* then, but *nature*, which has produced the distinction.”⁶ See this, my brethren!! Do you believe that this assertion is swallowed by millions of the whites? Do you know that Mr. Jefferson was one of as great characters as ever lived among the whites? See his writings for the world, and public labours for the United States of America. Do you believe that the assertions of such a man, will pass away into oblivion unobserved by this people and the world? If you do you are much mistaken—See how the American people treat us—have we souls in our bodies? Are we men who have any spirits at all? I know that there are many *swell-bellied* fellows among us, whose greatest object is to fill their stomachs. Such I do not mean—I

¹ *intestine* Internal, as in a civil conflict.

² [Walker's note] See Dr. Goldsmith's *History of Greece*—page 9. See also, Plutarch's *Lives*. The Helots subdued by Agis, king of Sparta.

³ *condign* Deserved; fitting.

⁴ [Walker's note] See his *Notes on Virginia*, page, 210.

⁵ *Epictetus* Greek stoic philosopher (c. 55–135 CE) who was born enslaved in Phrygia but later became free; *Terence* Roman playwright (c. 195–159 BCE), enslaved by a Roman senator and later freed; *Phaedrus* Probably Gaius Julius Phaedrus, a first-century Roman writer of fables who was born enslaved and likely freed under the reign of Augustus.

⁶ [Walker's note] See his *Notes on Virginia*, page 211.

am after those who know and feel, that we are MEN, as well as other people; to them, I say, that unless we try to refute Mr. Jefferson's arguments respecting us, we will only establish them.

But the slaves among the Romans. Everybody who has read history, knows, that as soon as a slave among the Romans obtained his freedom, he could rise to the greatest eminence in the State, and there was no law instituted to hinder a slave from buying his freedom. Have not the Americans instituted laws to hinder us from obtaining our freedom? Do any deny this charge? Read the laws of Virginia, North Carolina, &c. Further: have not the Americans instituted laws to prohibit a man of colour from obtaining and holding any office whatever, under the government of the United States of America? Now, Mr. Jefferson tells us, that our condition is not so hard, as the slaves' were under the Romans!!!!!!

It is time for me to bring this article to a close. But before I close it, I must observe to my brethren that at the close of the first Revolution in this country, with Great Britain, there were but thirteen States in the Union, now there are twenty-four, most of which are slave-holding States, and the whites are dragging us around in chains and in hand-cuffs, to their new States and Territories to work their mines and farms, to enrich them and their children—and millions of them believing firmly that we being a little darker than they, were made by our Creator to be an inheritance to them and their children forever—the same as a parcel of *brutes*.

Are we MEN!!—I ask you, O my brethren! are we MEN? Did our Creator make us to be slaves to dust and ashes like ourselves? Are they not dying worms as well as we? Have they not to make their appearance before the tribunal of Heaven, to answer for the deeds done in the body, as well as we? Have we any other Master but Jesus Christ alone? Is he not their Master as well as ours? What right then, have we to obey and call any other Master, but Himself? How we could be so *submissive* to a gang of men, whom we cannot tell whether they are *as good* as ourselves or not, I never could conceive. However, this is shut up with the Lord, and we cannot precisely tell—but I declare, we judge men by their works.

The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority. We view them all over the confederacy of Greece, where they were first known to be anything (in consequence of education) we see them there, cutting each other's throats—trying to subject each other to wretchedness and misery—to effect which, they used all kinds of deceitful, unfair, and unmerciful means. We view them next in Rome, where the spirit of tyranny and deceit raged still higher. We view them in Gaul, Spain, and in Britain. In fine, we view them all over Europe, together with what were scattered about in Asia and Africa, as heathens, and we see them acting more like devils than accountable men. But some may ask, did not the blacks of Africa, and the mulattoes of Asia,¹ go on in the same way as did the whites of Europe. I answer, no—they never were half so avaricious, deceitful and unmerciful as the whites, according to their knowledge.

But we will leave the whites or Europeans as heathens, and take a view of them as Christians, in which capacity we see them as cruel, if not more so than ever. In fact, take them as a body, they are ten times more cruel, avaricious and unmerciful than ever they were; for while they were heathens, they were bad enough it is true, but it is positively a fact that they were not quite so audacious as to go and take vessel loads of men, women and children, and in cold blood, and through devilishness, throw them into the sea, and murder them in all kind of ways. While they were heathens, they were too ignorant for such barbarity. But being Christians, enlightened and sensible, they are completely prepared for such hellish cruelties. Now suppose God were to give them more sense, what would they do? If it were possible, would they not *dethrone* Jehovah and seat themselves upon his throne? I therefore, in the name and fear of the Lord God of Heaven and of earth, divested of prejudice either on the side of my colour or that of the whites, advance my suspicion of them, whether they are *as good by nature* as we are or not. Their actions, since they were known as a people, have been the reverse, I do indeed suspect them, but

¹ *mulattoes of Asia* Though the term "mulatto" (which is today considered archaic and offensive) generally referred to people of mixed black and white parentage, it would occasionally be used to refer more vaguely to persons of other ethnicities perceived to have a skin tone between black and white.

this, as I before observed, is shut up with the Lord, we cannot exactly tell, it will be proved in succeeding generations. The whites have had the essence of the gospel as it was preached by my master and his apostles—the Ethiopians have not, who are to have it in its meridian¹ splendor—the Lord will give it to them to their satisfaction. I hope and pray to my God, that they will make good use of it, that it may be well with them.² ...

ARTICLE IV.

OUR WRETCHEDNESS IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE COLONIZING PLAN.³

My dearly beloved brethren: This is a scheme on which so many able writers, together with that very judicious coloured Baltimorean,⁴ have commented, that I feel my delicacy about touching it. But as I am compelled to do the will of my Master, I declare, I will give you my sentiments upon it. Previous, however, to

¹ *meridian* Highest; zenith.

² [Walker's note] It is my solemn belief, that if ever the world becomes Christianized, (which must certainly take place before long) it will be through the means, under God of the *Blacks*, who are now held in wretchedness, and degradation, by the white *Christians* of the world, who before they learn to do justice to us before our Maker—and be reconciled to us, and reconcile us to them, and by that means have clear consciences before God and man. Send out Missionaries to convert the Heathens, many of whom after they cease to worship gods, which neither see nor hear, become ten times more the children of Hell, than ever they were, why what is the reason? Why the reason is obvious, they must learn to do justice at home, before they go into distant lands, to display their charity, Christianity, and benevolence; when they learn to do justice, God will accept their offering (no man may think that I am against Missionaries for I am not, my object is to see justice done at home, before we go to convert the Heathens).

³ *THE COLONIZING PLAN* The American Colonization Society, founded by a group of white politicians in 1816, aimed to deport free African Americans to the newly established colony of Liberia. The society's leaders included both supporters of slavery and abolitionists; though its supporters claimed that colonization would benefit black people, many black activists, and later some white abolitionists, were strongly opposed to the endeavor, believing it to be a means of protecting the institution of slavery from the influence of free African Americans. The mortality rate in the colony of Liberia was extremely high.

⁴ *coloured Baltimorean* William Watkins (1801–58), antislavery and anti-colonization speaker who wrote numerous articles for the abolitionist newspapers *The Liberator* and *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* under the alias “The Colored Baltimorean.”

giving my sentiments, either for or against it, I shall give that of Mr. Henry Clay, together with that of Mr. Elias B. Caldwell,⁵ Esq. of the District of Columbia, as extracted from the *National Intelligencer*, by Dr. Torrey, author of a series of “Essays on Morals, and the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.”

At a meeting which was convened in the District of Columbia, for the express purpose of agitating the subject of colonizing us in some part of the world, Mr. Clay was called to the chair, and having been seated a little while, he rose and spake, in substance, as follows: says he⁶—“That class of the mixt population of our country [coloured people] was peculiarly situated; they neither enjoyed the immunities of freemen, nor were they subjected to the incapacities of slaves, but partook, in some degree, of the qualities of both. From their condition, and the unconquerable prejudices resulting from their colour, they never could amalgamate with the free whites of this country. It was desirable, therefore, as it respected them, and the residue of the population of the country, to drain them off. Various schemes of colonization had been thought of, and a part of our continent, it was supposed by some, might furnish a suitable establishment for them. But, for his part, Mr. C. said, he had a decided preference for some part of the Coast of Africa. There ample provision might be made for the colony itself, and it might be rendered instrumental to the introduction into that extensive quarter of the globe, of the arts, civilization, and Christianity.” [Here I ask Mr. Clay, what kind of Christianity? Did he mean such as they have among the Americans—distinction, whip, blood and oppression? I pray the Lord Jesus Christ to forbid it.] “There,” said he, “was a peculiar, a moral fitness, in restoring them to the land of their fathers, and if instead of the evils and sufferings which we had been the innocent cause of inflicting upon the inhabitants of Africa, we can transmit to her the blessings of our arts, our civilization, and our religion. May we not hope that America will extinguish a great portion of that moral debt which she has contracted to that unfortunate continent? Can there be

⁵ *Mr. Henry Clay ... Elias B. Caldwell* White politicians who were involved in the establishment of the American Colonization Society.

⁶ [Walker's note] See Dr. Torrey's *Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States*, page 85, 86.

a nobler cause than that which, whilst it proposes, &c. ***** [you know what this means.]¹ contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized life, and the possible redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted quarter of the globe?”

Before I proceed any further, I solicit your notice, brethren, to the foregoing part of Mr. Clay’s speech, in which he says, (☞ look above) “and if, instead of the evils and sufferings, which we had been the innocent cause of inflicting,” &c. What this very learned statesman could have been thinking about, when he said in his speech, “we had been the innocent cause of inflicting,” &c., I have never been able to conceive. Are Mr. Clay and the rest of the Americans, innocent of the blood and groans of our fathers and us, their children? Every individual may plead innocence, if he pleases, but God will, before long, separate the innocent from the guilty, unless something is speedily done—which I suppose will hardly be, so that their destruction may be sure. Oh Americans! let me tell you, in the name of the Lord, it will be good for you, if you listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost, but if you do not, you are ruined!!! Some of you are good men; but the will of my God must be done. Those avaricious and ungodly tyrants among you, I am awfully afraid will drag down the vengeance of God upon you. When God Almighty commences his battle on the continent of America, for the oppression of his people, tyrants will wish they never were born.

But to return to Mr. Clay, whence I digressed. He says, “It was proper and necessary distinctly to state, that he understood it constituted no part of the object of this meeting, to touch or agitate in the slightest degree, a delicate question, connected with another portion of the coloured population of our country. It was not proposed to deliberate upon or consider at all, any question of emancipation, or that which was connected with the abolition of slavery. It was upon that condition alone, he was sure, that many gentlemen from the South and the West, whom he saw present,

had attended, or could be expected to co-operate. It was upon that condition only, that he himself had attended.” That is to say, to fix a plan to get those of the coloured people, who are said to be free, away from among those of our brethren whom they unjustly hold in bondage, so that they may be enabled to keep them the more secure in ignorance and wretchedness, to support them and their children, and consequently they would have the more obedient slaves. For if the free are allowed to stay among the slaves, they will have intercourse together, and, of course, the free will learn² the slaves *bad habits*, by teaching them that they are MEN, as well as other people, and certainly *ought* and *must* be FREE. ...

The Americans of North and of South America, including the West India Islands—no trifling portion of whom were, for stealing, murdering, &c. compelled to flee from Europe, to save their necks or banishment,³ have effected their escape to this continent, where God blessed them with all the comforts of life—He gave them a plenty of every thing calculated to do them good—not satisfied with this, however, they wanted slaves, and wanted us for their slaves, who belong to the Holy Ghost, and no other, who we shall have to serve us instead of tyrants. I say, the Americans want us, the property of the Holy Ghost, to serve them. But there is a day fast approaching, when (unless there is a universal repentance on the part of the whites, which will scarcely take place, they have got to be so hardened in consequence of our blood, and so wise in their own conceit). To be plain and candid with you, Americans! I say that the day is fast approaching, when there will be a greater time on the continent of America, than ever was witnessed upon this earth, since it came from the hand of its Creator. Some of you have done us so much injury, that you will never be able to repent. Your cup must be filled. You want us for your slaves, and shall have enough of us—God is just, *who will give you your fill of us*. ...

¹ &c. ... [you know what this means.] Clay’s original 1816 speech here reads, “... whilst it proposes to rid our own country of a useless and pernicious, if not a dangerous portion of its population.” In Walker’s source for this passage, Jesse Torrey—a white supporter of colonization—euphemistically omits this portion of the sentence and replaces it with “&c.” Walker himself added the asterisks and bracketed comment.

² *intercourse* I.e., interactions, communication; *learn* Teach.

³ *The Americans ... banishment* Walker is referring to the practice of penal transportation, whereby people convicted of crimes in their home countries (especially Britain) were deported to one of that country’s colonies. (This practice ceased in the United States after the American Revolution.)

I shall now pass in review of the speech of Mr. Elias B. Caldwell, Esq. of the District of Columbia, extracted from the same page on which Mr. Clay's will be found. Mr. Caldwell, giving his opinion respecting us, at that ever memorable meeting, he says: "The more you improve the condition of these people, the more you cultivate their minds, the more miserable you make them in their present state. You give them a higher relish for those privileges which they can never attain, and turn what we intend for a blessing into a curse." Let me ask this benevolent man, what he means by a blessing intended for us? Did he mean sinking us and our children into ignorance and wretchedness, to support him and his family? What he meant will appear evident and obvious to the most ignorant in the world. ✂ See Mr. Caldwell's intended blessings for us, O! my Lord!! "No," said he, "if they must remain in their present situation, keep them in the *lowest state of degradation and ignorance*. The nearer you bring them to the condition of brutes, the better chance do you give them of possessing their *apathy*." Here I pause to get breath, having laboured to extract the above clause of this gentleman's speech, at that colonizing meeting. I presume that everybody knows the meaning of the word "*apathy*"—if any do not, let him get Sheridan's Dictionary, in which he will find it explained in full. I solicit the attention of the world, to the foregoing part of Mr. Caldwell's speech, that they may see what man will do with his fellow men, when he had them under his feet. To what length will not man go in iniquity when given up to a hard heart, and reprobate mind, in consequence of blood and oppression? The last clause of this speech, which was written in a very artful manner, and which will be taken for the speech of a friend, without close examination and deep penetration, I shall now present. He says, "surely, Americans ought to be the last people on earth, to advocate such slavish doctrines, to cry peace and contentment to those who are deprived of the privileges of civil liberty, they who have so largely partaken of its blessings, who know so well how to estimate its value, ought to be among the foremost to extend it to others." The real sense and meaning of the last part of Mr. Caldwell's speech is, get the free people of colour away to Africa, from among the slaves, where they may at once be blessed and happy, and those who we hold in slavery,

will be contented to rest in ignorance and wretchedness, to dig up gold and silver for us and our children. Men have indeed got to be so cunning, these days, that it would take the eye of a Solomon¹ to penetrate and find them out. ...

God will show the whites what we are, yet. I say, from the beginning, I do not think that we were natural enemies to each other. But the whites having made us so wretched, by subjecting us to slavery, and having murdered so many millions of us, in order to make us work for them, and out of devilishness—and they taking our wives, whom we love as we do ourselves—our mothers, who bore the pains of death to give us birth—our fathers and dear little children, and ourselves, and strip and beat us one before the other—chain, hand-cuff, and drag us about like rattle-snakes—shoot us down like wild bears, before each other's faces, to make us submissive to, and work to support them and their families. They (the whites) know well, if we are *men*—and there is a secret monitor in their hearts which tells them we are—they know, I say, if we *are* men, and see them treating us in the manner they do, that there can be nothing in our hearts but death alone, for them, notwithstanding we may appear cheerful, when we see them murdering our dear mothers and wives, because we cannot help ourselves. ... Consequently they, themselves, (and not us) render themselves our natural enemies, by treating us so cruel. They keep us miserable now, and call us their property, but some of them will have enough of us by and by—their stomachs shall run over with us; they want us for their slaves, and shall have us to their fill. *We* are all in the world together!! I said above, because we cannot help ourselves, (*viz.* we cannot help the whites murdering our mothers and our wives) but this statement is incorrect—for we can help ourselves; for, if we lay aside abject servility, and be determined to act like men, and not brutes—the murderers among the whites would be afraid to show their cruel heads. But O, my God!—in sorrow I must say it, that my colour, all over the world, have a mean, servile spirit. They yield in a moment to the whites, let them be right or wrong—the reason they are able to keep their feet on our throats. Oh! my coloured brethren, all over the world, when shall we arise from this death-like apathy?—And be men!! You will notice, if

¹ *Solomon* Ancient King of Israel, known for his great wisdom.

ever we become men, I mean *respectable* men, such as other people are, we must exert ourselves to the full. For remember, that it is the greatest desire and object of the greater part of the whites, to keep us ignorant, and make us work to support them and their families.—Here now, in the Southern and Western sections of this country, there are at least three coloured persons for one white, why is it, that those few weak, good-for-nothing whites, are able to keep so many able men, one of whom, can put to flight a dozen whites, in wretchedness and misery? It shows at once, what the blacks are, we are ignorant, abject, servile and mean—and the whites know it—they know that we are too servile to assert our rights as men—or they would not fool with us as they do. Would they fool with any other people as they do with us? No, they know too well, that they would get themselves ruined. Why do they not bring the inhabitants of Asia to be body servants to them? They know they would get their bodies rent and torn from head to foot. Why do they not get the Aborigines of this country to be slaves to them and their children, to work their farms and dig their mines? They know well that the Aborigines of this country, or (Indians) would tear them from the earth. The Indians would not rest day or night, they would be up all times of night, cutting their cruel throats. But my colour, (some, not all,) are willing to stand still and be murdered by the cruel whites. In some of the West-India Islands, and over a large part of South America, there are six or eight coloured persons for one white.¹ Why

¹ [Walker's note] For instance in the two States of Georgia, and South Carolina, there are, perhaps, not much short of six or seven hundred thousand persons of colour; and if I was a gambling character, I would not be afraid to stake down upon the board FIVE CENTS against TEN, that there are in the single State of Virginia, five or six hundred thousand coloured persons. Four hundred and fifty thousand of whom (let them be well equipt for war) I would put against every white person on the whole continent of America. (Why? why because I know that the Blacks, once they get involved in a war, had rather die than to live, they either kill or be killed.) The whites know this too, which makes them quake and tremble. To show the world further, how servile the coloured people are, I will only hold up to view, the one Island of Jamaica, as a specimen of our meanness.

In that Island, there are three hundred and fifty thousand souls—of whom fifteen thousand are whites, the remainder, three hundred and thirty-five thousand are coloured people! and this Island is ruled by the white people!!!!!! (15,000) ruling and tyrannizing over 335,000 persons!!!!!!—O! coloured men!! O! coloured

do they not take possession of those places? Who hinders them? It is not the avaricious whites—for they are too busily engaged in laying up money—derived from the blood and tears of the blacks. The fact is, they are too servile, they love to have Masters too well!! ...

... Will any of us leave our homes and go to Africa? I hope not.² Let them commence their attack upon us as they did on our brethren in Ohio,³ driving and beating us from our country, and my soul for theirs, they will have enough of it. Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country, than it is the whites'—we have enriched it with our *blood and tears*. The greatest riches in all America have arisen from our blood and tears—and will they drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our *blood*? They must look sharp or this very thing will bring swift destruction upon them. The Americans have got so fat on our blood and groans, that they have almost forgotten the God of armies. But let them go on. ...

men!!! O! coloured men!!!! Look!! look!!! at this!!!! and, tell me if we are not abject and servile enough, how long, O! how long my colour shall we be dupes and dogs to the cruel whites?—I only passed Jamaica, and its inhabitants, in review as a specimen to show the world, the condition of the Blacks at this time, now coloured people of the whole world, I beg you to look at the (15000 white,) and (Three Hundred and Thirty-Five Thousand coloured people) in that Island, and tell me how can the white tyrants of the world but say that we are not men, but were made to be slaves and Dogs to them and their children forever!!!!!!—why my friends only look at the thing!!!! (15000) whites keeping in wretchedness and degradation (335000) viz. 22 coloured persons for one white!!!!!!) when at the same time, an equal number (15000) Blacks, would almost take the whole of South America, because where they go as soldiers to fight death follows in their train.

² [Walker's note] Those who are ignorant enough to go to Africa, the coloured people ought to be glad to have them go, for if they are ignorant enough to let the whites *fool* them off to Africa, they would be no small injury to us if they reside in this country.

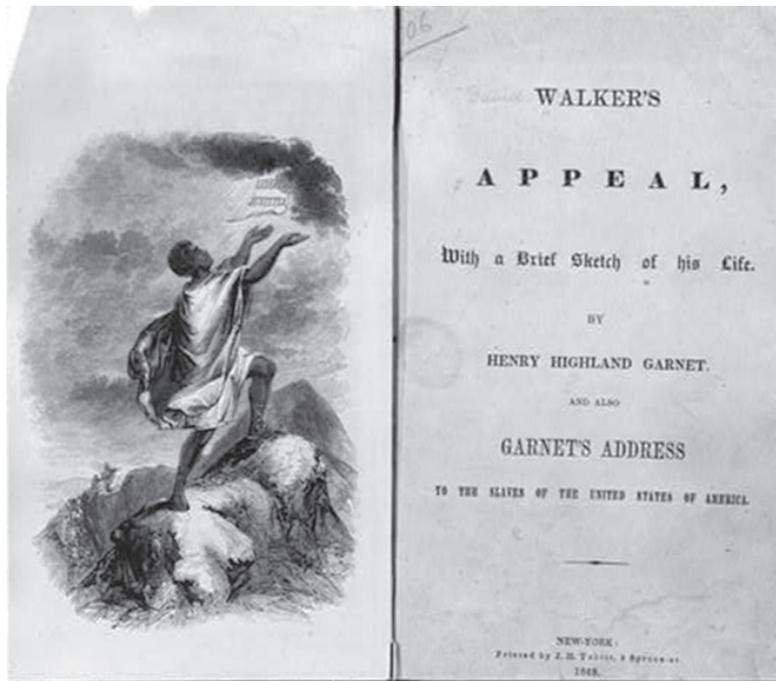
³ *Let them ... in Ohio* Although Ohio had been established as a free state in 1803, shortly thereafter the state passed laws known as “Black Codes” or “Black Laws,” severely restricting black immigration into the state as well as the movement and employment of free black people within the state. Free black people found in the state without free papers and other such documents (which could cost as much as \$500 to obtain) would be subject to severe prosecution. The year 1829 in particular saw a rise in anti-black violence, and a number of riots resulted in the burning down of numerous black communities.

And now, brethren, having concluded these four Articles, I submit them, together with my Preamble, dedicated to the Lord, for your inspection, in language so very simple, that the most ignorant, who can read at all, may easily understand—of which you may make the best you possibly can.¹ Should tyrants take it into their heads to emancipate any of you, remember that your freedom is your natural right. You are men, as

well as they, and instead of returning thanks to them for your freedom, return it to the Holy Ghost, who is our rightful owner. ...

—1829, 1830

NOTE: The full text of *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles* is included in the online component of this anthology.



Walker's Appeal was reprinted by black abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet in 1848, in an edition that also featured Garnet's *Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*. That edition also included this engraving as a new "frontispiece" to Walker's pamphlet. The identity of the artist is not known.

¹ [Walker's note] Some of my brethren, who are sensible, do not take an interest in enlightening the minds of our more ignorant brethren respecting this Book, and in reading it to them, just as though they will not have either to stand or fall by what is written in this book. Do they believe that I would be so foolish as to put out a book of this kind without strict—ah! very strict commandments of the Lord? Surely the blacks and whites must think that I am ignorant enough. Do they think that I would have the audacious wickedness to take the name of my God in vain? Notice, I said in the concluding

clause of Article 3—I call God, I call Angels, I call men to witness, that the destruction of the Americans is at hand, and will be speedily consummated unless they repent. Now I wonder if the world think that I would take the name of God in this way in vain? What do they think I take God to be? Do they suppose that I would trifle with that God who will not have his Holy name taken in vain? He will show you and the world, in due time, whether this book is for his glory, or written by me through envy to the whites, as some have represented.