

David Walker: “The Pen as the Sword”

Below are five excerpts from Walker’s *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*¹. We will delve a little deeper into these excerpts and welcome your contributions to the conversation! As you read them, think about:

- Walker’s message
- Who might be his intended audience?
- What themes or tools does Walker use to make his message come across more powerfully?
- Try reading it aloud to yourself: what more might you notice?

THE EXCERPTS

(Please note that all spelling, emphasis, and punctuation are Walker’s own)

From the Preamble: "I will ask one question here.--Can our condition be any worse?--Can it be more mean 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 inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this *Republican Land of Liberty*!!!!!!"

From Article I: "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 condign 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 immoveable 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 ever believe otherwise, until the Lord shall convince me."

From Article II: "Men of colour, who are also of sense, for you particularly is my APPEAL designed. Our more ignorant brethren are not able to penetrate its value. I call upon you therefore to cast your eyes upon the wretchedness of your brethren, and to do your utmost to enlighten them--*go to work and enlighten your brethren!*--Let the Lord see you doing what you can to rescue them and yourselves from degradation."

¹ Walker, David. *David Walker's appeal to the coloured citizens of the world*. Edited by Peter P. Hinks, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

From Article III: "What the American preachers can think of us, I aver this day before my God, I have never been able to define. They have newspapers and monthly periodicals, which they receive in continual succession, but on the pages of which, you will scarcely ever find a paragraph respecting slavery, which is ten thousand times more injurious to this country than all the other evils put together; and which will be the final overthrow of its government, unless something is very speedily done; for their cup is nearly full.--Perhaps they will laugh at or make light of this: but I tell you Americans! that unless you speedily alter your course, *you and your Country are gone!!!!!!*. . . I warn you in the name of the Lord, (whether you will hear, or forbear,) to repent and reform, or you are ruined!!! Do you think that our blood is hidden from the Lord, because you can hide it from the rest of the world, by sending out missionaries, and by your charitable deeds to the Greeks, Irish, &c?"

From Article IV: "Throw away your fears and prejudices then, and enlighten us and treat us like men, and we will like you more than we do now hate you*, and tell us now no more about colonization, for America is as much our country, as it is yours. . . . But Americans, I declare to you, while you keep us and our children in bondage, and treat us like brutes, to make us support you and your families, we cannot be your friends. You do not look for it, do you? Treat us then like men, and we will be your friends. And there is not a doubt in my mind, but that the whole of the past will be sunk into oblivion, and we yet, under God, will become a united and happy people.

" *You are not astonished at my saying we hate you, for if we are men, we cannot but hate you, while you are treating us like dogs."