

# David Walker, “An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World”



**ABOUT THE READING** The publication in 1829 of David Walker’s “An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World” was one of the most important inspirations for the antislavery crusade. Walker was a freed slave living in Boston. He attacked the racist argument that Africans were less than human and therefore not entitled to full rights.

## VOCABULARY

**incredulous** unbelieving

**abject** lowly

**heathen** non-Christian

**elucidation** explanation

**philanthropist** donor



*As you read think about how Walker distinguishes American slaves from other oppressed people.*

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 short], 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** lowly set

Source: *From* David 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. D. Walker, 1829.

of beings that *ever lived* since the world began, and that the white Americans having reduced us to this 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 who 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. . .

**Walker argues that anyone who has studied history would agree that slaves in the United States have been treated worse than slaves anywhere else.**

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? . . . 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 [other] one. . .

**According to the Bible, Jews—the “children of Israel”—were forced to work as slaves in Egypt.**

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*.

Walker believes that anyone unwilling to fight for freedom should remain enslaved.

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

1. What does Walker say about the condition of African Americans in the United States?

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2. Why does Walker state that white Americans are far worse than any heathen nations that have had slaves?

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3. How do you think Walker wanted readers to respond to his appeal? Why?

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