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**Walker's Appeal, with a Brief
Sketch of His Life And Also
Garnet's Address to the Slaves of
the United States of America**

David Walker

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WALKER'S
APPEAL,
WITH A BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.
BY
HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET.
AND ALSO
GARNET'S ADDRESS
TO THE SLAVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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PREFACE.

Such is the very high esteem which is entertained for the memory of David Walker, and so general is the desire to preserve his "Appeal," that the subscriber has undertaken, and performed the task of re-publication, with a brief notice of his life, having procured permission from his widow, Mrs. Dewson.

The work is valuable, because it was among the first, and was actually the boldest and most direct appeal in behalf of freedom, which was made in the early part of the Anti-Slavery Reformation. When the history of the emancipation of the bondmen of America shall be written, whatever name shall be placed first on the list of heroes, that of the author of the Appeal will not be second.

Troy, N.Y., April 12, 1848.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF DAVID WALKER.

It is generally the desire of the reader of any intellectual production, to know something of the character and the life of the author. The character of *David Walker* is indicated in his writings. In regard to his life, but a few materials can be gathered; but what is known of him, furnishes proof to the opinion which the friends of man have formed of him—that he possessed a noble and a courageous spirit, and that he was ardently attached to the cause of liberty.

Mr. Walker was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, Sept. 28, 1785. His mother was a free woman, and his father was a slave. His innate hatred to slavery was very early developed. When yet a boy, he declared that the slaveholding South was not the place for him. His soul became so indignant at the wrongs which his father and his kindred bore, that he determined to find some portion of his country where he would see less to harrow up his soul. Said he, "If I remain in this bloody land, I will not live long. As true as God reigns, I will be avenged for the sorrow which my people have suffered. This is not the place for me—no, no. I must leave this part of the country. It will be a great trial for me to live on the same soil where so many men are in slavery; certainly I cannot remain where I must hear their chains continually, and where I must encounter the insults of their hypocritical enslaver. Go, I must."

The youthful Walker embraced his mother, and received a mother's blessings, and turned his back upon North Carolina. [pg vi.] His father died a few months before his birth; and it is a remarkable coincidence, that the son of the subject of this Memoir, was a posthumous child.

After leaving home, David Walker travelled rapidly towards the North, shaking off the dust of his feet, and breathing curses upon the system of human slavery, America's darling institution. As might be expected, he met with trials during his journey; and at last he reached Boston, Mass., where he took up his permanent residence. There he applied himself to study, and soon learned to read

and write, in order that he might contribute something to the cause of humanity. Mr. Walker, like most of reformers, was a poor man—he lived poor, and died poor.

In 1827 he entered into the clothing business in Brattle street, in which he prospered; and had it not been for his great liberality and hospitality, he would have become wealthy. In 1828, he married Miss Eliza ——. He was emphatically a self-made man, and he spent all his leisure moments in the cultivation of his mind. Before the Anti-Slavery Reformation had assumed a form, he was ardently engaged in the work. His hands were always open to contribute to the wants of the fugitive. His house was the shelter and the home of the poor and needy. Mr. Walker is known principally by his "Appeal," but it was in his private walks, and by his unceasing labors in the cause of freedom, that he has made his memory sacred.

With an overflowing heart, he published his "Appeal" in 1829. This little book produced more commotion among slaveholders than any volume of its size that was ever issued from an American press. They saw that it was a bold attack upon their idolatry, and that too by a black man who once lived among them. It was merely a smooth stone which this David took up, yet it terrified a host of Goliaths. When the fame of this book reached the South, the poor, cowardly, pusillanimous tyrants, grew pale behind their cotton bags, and armed themselves to the teeth. They set watches to look after their happy and contented slaves. The Governor of Georgia wrote to the Hon. Harrison Grey Otis, the Mayor of Boston, requesting him to suppress the Appeal. His Honor replied to the Southern Censor, that he had no power nor disposition to hinder Mr. Walker from pursuing a lawful course in the utterance of his thoughts. A company of Georgia men then bound themselves by an oath, [pg vii.] that they would eat as little as possible until they had killed the youthful author. They also offered a reward of a thousand dollars for his head, and ten times as much for the live Walker. His consort, with the solicitude of an affectionate wife, together with some friends, advised him to go to Canada, lest he should be abducted. Walker said that he had nothing to fear from such a pack of coward blood-hounds; but if he did go, he would hurl back such thunder across the great lakes, that would cause them to tremble in their strong holds. Said he, "I will stand my ground. *Somebody must die in*

this cause. I may be doomed to the stake and the fire, or to the scaffold tree, but it is not in me to falter if I can promote the work of emancipation." He did not leave the country, but was soon laid in the grave. It was the opinion of many that he was hurried out of life by the means of poison, but whether this was the case or not, the writer is not prepared to affirm.

He had many enemies, and not a few were his brethren whose cause he espoused. They said that he went too far, and was making trouble. So the Jews spoke of Moses. They valued the flesh-pots of Egypt more than the milk and honey of Canaan. He died 1830 in Bridge street, at the hopeful and enthusiastic age of 34 years. His ruling passion blazed up in the hour of death, and threw an indescribable grandeur over the last dark scene. The heroic young man passed away without a struggle, and a few weeping friends

"Saw in death his eyelids close,
Calmly, as to a night's repose,
Like flowers at set of sun."

The personal appearance of Mr. Walker was prepossessing, being six feet in height, slender and well proportioned. His hair was loose, and his complexion was dark. His son, the only child he left, is now 18 years of age, and is said to resemble his father; he now resides at Charlestown, Mass., with his mother, Mrs. Dewson. Mr. Walker was a faithful member of the Methodist Church at Boston, whose pastor is the venerable father Snowden.

The reader thus has a brief notice of the life and character of David Walker.

WALKER'S
APPEAL,
IN FOUR ARTICLES,
TOGETHER WITH
A PREAMBLE,
TO THE
COLORED CITIZENS OF THE WORLD,
BUT IN PARTICULAR, AND VERY EXPRESSLY TO THOSE OF
THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Written in Boston, in the State of Massachusetts, Sept. 28, 1829.

APPEAL. &c.

PREAMBLE.

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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 unshakened conviction, that we, (colored 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, 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 cypher—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, can well enumerate and explain them. Upon subjects, then, of such incomprehensible [pg 12] 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 slave-holders 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 mean and abject? If there are any changes, will they not be for the better, though they may appear for the worse 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 [pg 13] the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of enquiry 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 endeavor 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. It had one tug in England, in France, and in the United States of America; 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 labor 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 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 the labor of the slaves, they forget that God rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, having his ears continually 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 [pg 14] 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 enlightened 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 oftimes put them to death? "God works in many ways his wonders to perform."

I will not here speak of the destructions which the Lord brought upon Egypt, in consequence of the oppression and consequent groans of the oppressed—of the hundreds and thousands of Egyptians whom God hurled into the Red Sea for afflicting his people in their land—of the Lord's suffering people in Sparta or Lacedemon, the land of the truly famous Lycurgus—nor have I time to comment upon the cause which produced the fierceness with which Sylla usurped the title, and absolutely acted as dictator of the Roman

people—the conspiracy of Cataline—the conspiracy against, and murder of Cæsar in the Senate house—the spirit with which Marc Antony made himself master of the commonwealth—his associating Octavius and Lipidus with himself in power,—their dividing the provinces of Rome among themselves—their attack and defeat on the plains of Phillipi the last defenders of their liberty, (Brutus and Cassius)—the tyranny of Tiberius, and from him to the final overthrow of Constantinople by the Turkish Sultan, Mahomed II., A.D. 1453. I say, I shall not take up time to speak of the *causes* which produced so much wretchedness and massacre among those heathen nations, for I am aware that you know too well, that God is [pg 15] just, as well as merciful!—I shall call your attention a few moments to that *christian* nation, the Spaniards, while I shall leave almost unnoticed that avaricious and cruel people, the Portuguese, among whom all true hearted christians and lovers of Jesus Christ, must evidently see the judgments of God displayed. To show the judgments of God upon the Spaniards I shall occupy but little time, leaving a plenty of room for the candid and unprejudiced to reflect.

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 solely 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 they 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 circumstances, yet they who believe that God is a God of justice, will believe that Slavery is the *principal cause*.

While the Spaniards are running about upon the field of battle cutting each other's throats, has not the Lord an afflicted and suffer-

ing 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 [pg 16] each others 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 Sabbath 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.

[pg 17]

