

David Walker: Abolitionist

David Walker as a free black who in 1829 published a pamphlet called "Appeal," in Four Articles which decried slavery and exhorted slaves to resist their masters. He died under mysterious circumstances a year later. The pamphlet, the first extended political tract written by an African-American, was attacked by Southerners who attempted to limit its distribution. Walker encouraged the use of violence to achieve freedom. It was blamed for causing the 1831 Nat Turner insurrection.

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, handcuff and drag us about like rattlesnakes - shoot us down like wild bears, before each other's faces, to make us submissive to and work to support them and their families.....

We may appear cheerful, when we see them murdering our dear mother and wives, because we cannot help ourselves...but this statement is incorrect - for we can help ourselves; for, if we lay aside abject [wretched] servility [submissiveness], and be determined to act like men, and not brutes - the murderers among the whites would be afraid to show their cruel heads.

The whites have had us under them for more than three centuries, murdering, and treating us like brutes;.....they want us for their slaves, and think nothing of murdering us in order to subject us to that wretched condition — therefore, if there is an *attempt* made by us, kill or be killed. Now, I ask you, had you not rather be killed than to be a slave to a tyrant, who takes the life of your mother, wife, and dear little children? Look upon your mother, wife and children, and answer God Almighty; and believe this, that it is no more harm for you to kill a man, who is trying to kill you, than it is for you to take a drink of water when thirsty;

Friendly Questions:

1. Why do you hate the white man?
2. Why do you encourage the use of violence to achieve freedom and equality?

Unfriendly Questions:

1. You were born free. How do you know what slavery is like?
2. Do you believe violence is the way to achieve freedom? The slaveowners have all the guns. Slaves would have no chance of winning.