

energy and self-denial of a free people, which would rather renounce an enjoyment in itself lawful, than see it drive thousands of weak persons to bodily and spiritual ruin.

To those, whose in America only the land of unbridled radicalism and of the wildest fanaticism for freedom, I take the liberty to put the modest question: In what European state would the government have the courage to enact such a prohibition of the traffic in all intoxicating drinks, and the people the self-denial to submit to it?

### Questions

1. How does Schaff believe Christianity influences American understandings of freedom?
2. Why does Schaff have reservations about the "Maine law" prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquor?

## 72. David Walker's Appeal (1829)

Source: *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles... to the Coloured Citizens of the World...* (3rd ed.: Boston, 1830), pp. 3-5, 9, 22-24.

A pioneering document of militant abolitionism, David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* condemned the hypocrisy of a nation that proclaimed its belief in liberty yet every day violated its professed principles. Born free in North Carolina, Walker moved to Boston, where he became a used clothing dealer and an outspoken critic of slavery. At a time when most opponents of slavery called for a peaceful, gradual end to the institution and the "colonization" outside of the country of those who became free, Walker insisted that blacks had as much right to live in the United States as whites, and spoke of the possibility of armed struggle against slavery. Walker also challenged racism by invoking the achievements of ancient civilizations in Africa, and he urged

black Americans to identify with the black republic of Haiti, an early example of internationalism in African-American thought. When free black sailors were found carrying copies of Walker's pamphlet, southern states issued a reward for his arrest or death. Walker died, apparently of natural causes, in 1830, but his words inspired a generation of black abolitionists.

HAVING TRAVELED 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, 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 cipher—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... to be poured out upon our fathers, ourselves and our children, by Christian Americans!... 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!!!!!!...

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, 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!!!!...

When we take a retrospective view of the arts and sciences—the wise legislators—the Pyramids, and other magnificent buildings—the turning of the channel of the river Nile, by the sons of Africa..., among whom learning originated, and was carried thence into Greece, where it was improved upon and refined. Thence among the Romans, and all over the then enlightened parts of the world, and it has been enlightening the dark and benighted minds of men from then, down to this day. I say, when I view retrospectively, the renown of that once mighty people, the children of our great progenitor I am indeed cheered. Yea further, when I view that mighty son of Africa, Hannibal, one of the greatest generals of antiquity, who defeated and cut off so many thousands of the white Romans or murderers, and who carried his victorious arms, to the very gate of Rome, and I give it as my candid opinion, that had Carthage been well united and had given him good support, he would have carried that cruel and barbarous city by storm. But they were dissuited, as the coloured people are now, in the United States of America, the reason our natural enemies are enabled to keep their feet on our throats.

Beloved brethren—here let me tell you, and believe it, that the Lord our God, as true as he sits on his throne in heaven, and as true as our Savior died to redeem the world, will give you a Hannibal, and when the Lord shall have raised him up, and given him to you for your possession, O my suffering brethren! remember the divisions and consequent sufferings of Carthage and of Hayti... But what need have I to refer to antiquity, when Hayti, the glory of the blacks and terror of tyrants, is enough to convince the most avaricious and stupid of wretches?

## Questions

1. Why does Walker address his pamphlet to "the coloured citizens of the world" and not just the United States?
2. What lessons does Walker think black Americans should learn from the history of the ancient world and that of Haiti?

## 73. Frederick Douglass on the Fourth of July (1852)

Source: *Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York, 1855), pp. 441-45.

The greatest oration on American slavery and American freedom was delivered in Rochester, New York, in 1852 by Frederick Douglass. Speaking just after the annual Independence Day celebration, Douglass posed the question: What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July? He answered that July Fourth festivities revealed the hypocrisy of a nation that proclaimed its belief in liberty yet daily committed "practices more shocking and bloody" than any other country on earth. Like other abolitionists, however, Douglass also laid claim to the founders' legacy. The Revolution had proclaimed "the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in [the] Declaration of Independence," from which subsequent generations had tragically strayed. Only by abolishing slavery and freeing the ideals of the Declaration from the bounds of race could the United States, he believed, recapture its original mission.

FELLOW-CITIZENS, PARDON me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of