

RICHARD ALLEN (1760–1831) AND ABSALOM JONES (1746–1818)
A NARRATIVE OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE BLACK PEOPLE (1794)

An Address to Those Who Keep Slaves, and Approve the Practice

We believe if you would try the experiment of taking a few black children, and cultivate their minds with the same care, and let them have the same prospect in view, as to living in the world, as you would with for your own children, you would find upon the trial, they were not inferior in mental endowments.

We do not wish to make you angry, but excite your attention to consider, how hateful slavery is in the sight of God . . . Would you not suppose the Israelites to be utterly unfit for freedom, and that it was impossible for them to attain to any degree of excellence? Their history shows how slavery had debased their spirits. Men must be wilfully blind and extremely partial, that cannot see the contrary effects of liberty and slavery upon the mind of man; we freely confess the vile habits often acquired in a state of servitude, are not easily thrown off; the example of the Israelites shows, who with all that Moses could do to reclaim them from it, still continued in their former habits more or less; and why will you look for better from us?

If you love your children, if you love your country, if you love the God of love, clear your hands from slaves, burden not your children or country with them.

To the People of Colour

To you who are favoured with freedom, let your conduct manifest your gratitude toward the compassionate masters who have set you free, and let no rancour or ill-will lodge in your breasts for any bad treatment you may have received from any . . .

There is much gratitude due from our colour towards the white people, very many of them are instruments in the hand of God for our good, even such as have held us in captivity, are now pleading our cause with earnestness and zeal; and we are sorry to say, that too many think more of the evil, than of the good they have received, and instead of taking the advice of their friends, turn from it with indifference; much depends upon us for the help of our colour more than many are aware; if we are lazy and idle, the enemies of freedom plead it as a cause why we ought not to be free, and say we are better in a state of servitude, and that giving us liberty would be an injury to us, and by such conduct we strengthen the bands of oppression, and keep many in bondage who are more worthy than ourselves; we entreat you to consider the obligations we lay under, to help forward the cause of freedom, we who know how bitter the cup is of which the slave hath to drink, O how ought we to feel for those who yet remain in bondage? Will even our friends excuse, will God pardon us, for the part we act in making strong the hands of the enemies of our colour.

Taken from Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, during the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1794), 23–28.