



Title page of the second edition of Walker's Appeal.

to white Christians. His language is certainly more incendiary than Phillis Wheatley's, but there is a basic similarity in their respective arguments as they both highlight the contradictions between Christian theology and slaveholding. And this will be a theme that continued in the writing of later abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and William Lloyd Garrison.

Walker draws attention not just to spiritual failures of white Americans, but also to how they have betrayed the political ideals of their nation's founding. As such, when he addresses his community as "Fellow

Citizens," he is being both sincere and ironic. He is sincere insofar as he asserts that African Americans should have exactly the same citizen rights as other Americans, but he is being ironic insofar as his book provides an extensive survey of all the ways that people of African descent—free and enslaved—are deprived access to citizenship. Indeed, he compares the condition of African people to other subjugated groups—"The Indians of North and of South America—the Greeks—the Irish . . . the Jews. . . the inhabitants of the islands of the sea," but observes that while these others are "called men . . . we, (coloured people) and our children are *brutes!!*" He bewails the experience of African Americans who "are the most wretched, degraded, and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began" and also excoriates the white community, charging them with committing more historical degradations than any other community in history.

Notably, Walker constructs his attack on the false democracy of the United States by engaging one of the most famous democratic writers in American history, Thomas Jefferson, who penned the famous line from the Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal." Walker, however, turns not to Jefferson's writing in the Declaration, but rather to his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (the same text from which the earlier passage from Chief Logan is drawn). As we discussed earlier, Jefferson in *Notes* makes a claim for the oratorical and intellectual capacity of indigenous Americans. Jefferson, however, conversely argues for the intellectual inferiority of people of African descent. Indeed, Jefferson mentions Phillis Wheatley by name, declaring that her work is not real poetry.

When Walker refers to "Mr. Jefferson's very severe remarks on us," he is reflecting on these racist claims from *Notes*. And Walker demands that black writers and thinkers "refute" these charges. He wants the black community to provide a loud and detailed denunciation of Jefferson's prejudice and of the endemic racism in both the northern and southern United States. He specifically mobilizes the jeremiad form when he observes how the nation has become even more prejudicial as time has passed: "[A]t the close of the first Revolution . . . there were but thirteen States in the Union, now there are twenty-four, most of which are slave-holding States, and the whites are dragging