
Ignorance And Betrayal Of Blacks By Other Blacks

Though there are several passages that discuss-in many forms-the effects of black ignorance as a betrayal of blacks by other blacks (through dis-unity and actions based on circumstance) in David Walker's "Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World." Walker's first example of betrayal of blacks by other blacks is through the ignorance of the strength of unity. Walker uses two examples to portray how unity (or dis-unity) affects the success of breaking free from oppression in America.

The first example used is that of the unexpected success of Hannibal in Carthage, "...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 dis-united, 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," through this example, Walker elaborates on how unity creates power and fuels success for efforts of freedom, while remaining in dis-unity (ignorant to the power that unity holds), allows for the cycle of oppression to continue (127). Walker directly addresses his black audience by using this example to explain how the outcome could have been more successful if the people of Carthage came together and recognized the strength in unified numbers-similarly to how blacks must be enlightened enough to consider themselves as a unified group to create tangible change in America. This idea is best represented through the prediction, "...let twelve black men get well armed for battle, and they will kill and put to flight fifty whites," here, Walker affirms the power enlightened, united black people could potentially have if they were no longer ignorant in the power of unity; and by remaining in dis-unity, the act of betrayal of black by other blacks (knowingly or not) occurs (130).

The second example of how Walker conceives blacks betraying other blacks is through ignorance of circumstance and incorrect action taken; this is elaborated on using the real-life "Affray and Murder" occurrence that took place in Portsmouth, Ohio in 1829 (129). In this passage, Walker criticizes the black men and one woman in this story for not recognizing the circumstance and acting accordingly. For the black men in the story, Walker critiques, "The black men acted like block-heads. Why did they not make sure of the wretch? He would have made sure of them, if he could," to elaborate on how-by leaving Gordon alive after he has stripped them of their dignity and chained them like "brutes" with the intention of subjecting them to (and profiting from their) slavery for the entirety of their lives-they have betrayed their fellow black brothers and sisters by allowing him to live to perpetuate the cycle (and take them to an [unfair] trial) (130). When Walker writes, "...for we must remember that humanity, kindness and the fear of the Lord, does not consist in protecting devils," he expects his audience to recognize the devilish behavior of the white man enough, to the point where when opportunity through "the help of God" presents itself, correct action must be taken and no mercy shown (130). In the same story, Walker openly labels the woman who helped Gordon as "ignorant and deceitful" because, through her actions of helping Gordon "escape" death, she has betrayed herself and her people in a similar manner by never being allowed to escape bondage in this situation (130).

Their "allowance" for perpetuation of oppression when the opportunity to act accordingly (i.e. seize the opportunity to show no mercy to those who have not and would not in a similar

circumstance) presented itself—to end at least one cycle—is the ultimate betrayal of blacks by other blacks as a result of unenlightened black ignorance (130). It is through what Walker conceives as black ignorance (to the strength in unity and correct action) that he elaborates on the betrayal of blacks by other blacks in his Appeal.

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