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### The Abolishment of Slavery

In a letter written to Thomas Jefferson in 1791 during the time of slavery, Benjamin Banneker sets out to contend against his hypocrisy, having been part of writing the Declaration of Independence which states that “all men are created equal,” by urging him to remember his previous efforts for freedom, realize the current pain of slavery, and to do the right thing by ending it once and for all.

From the beginning, Banneker goes back into history to remind Jefferson of the pain that British control brought the country. For instance, he says “...*you cannot but acknowledge that the present freedom and tranquility which you enjoy you have mercifully received and that is the peculiar blessing of Heaven,*” to remind Jefferson, through emotional appeal, of his own struggle for freedom from the British, and to remind him of what that pain felt like. He also repeats the use of “you” in order to set an assertive tone, which allows him to express his view in a direct, but respectful way. Such statements as “*suffer I me to recall to your mind,*” “*I entreat you on the variety of dangers to which you were exposed,*” and “*you clearly saw into the injustice of a state of slavery,*” are used by Banneker to be fully blunt with Jefferson, which allows him to get straight down to the point so that he clearly knows his stance on the matter.

Once Jefferson is familiar of his past actions, Banneker goes on to make him aware of the current issue, and the great pain that it causes. He uses nouns such as “*injustice*” and “*horrors*” to highlight the horrid state of slavery. Banneker goes on to mention Jefferson’s “*abhorrence*” to that horrid state of slavery, which through this connotation allows him to convey his strong feeling of repugnance towards this. Keep in mind here, Jefferson at the time owned slaves, despite the fact of what was said in the Declaration of Independence in which he helped draft, which states “*all men are created equal.*” This means that no matter who you are, you are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as everyone else. Yet despite that, he continues to own slaves, not allowing them full access to those “entitled rights.”

Banneker ends his letter off by calling on Jefferson to do the right thing, act to abolish slavery once and for all. Using alliteration by saying “*neither shall I presume to prescribe,*” he establishes his plead to Jefferson to get rid of it. He concludes his letter by saying “*you need neither the direction of myself or others, in what manner to proceed herein.*” Specifically, he does not need others to tell him what to do, he knows what he needs to do to give freedom to the slaves.

In the end, Banneker is just one of many people in history who has petitioned for the freedom of others. Freedom is a human right, that all are entitled to. To have others rip it away for any given reason is completely absurd. Freedom allows one to live their life they way they want to, not to the standard set by one person or entity. Without freedom, we would live a life of fear and insecurity. Without freedom, we would not have a functioning society within our country. And without freedom, the world would fall apart as we know it.

Works Cited

Banneker, Benjamin. "AP English Language and Composition 2010 Free-Response Questions."

*College Board*, [secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap10\\_frq\\_eng\\_lang.pdf](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap10_frq_eng_lang.pdf).