

BETWEEN THE COVERS RARE BOOKS

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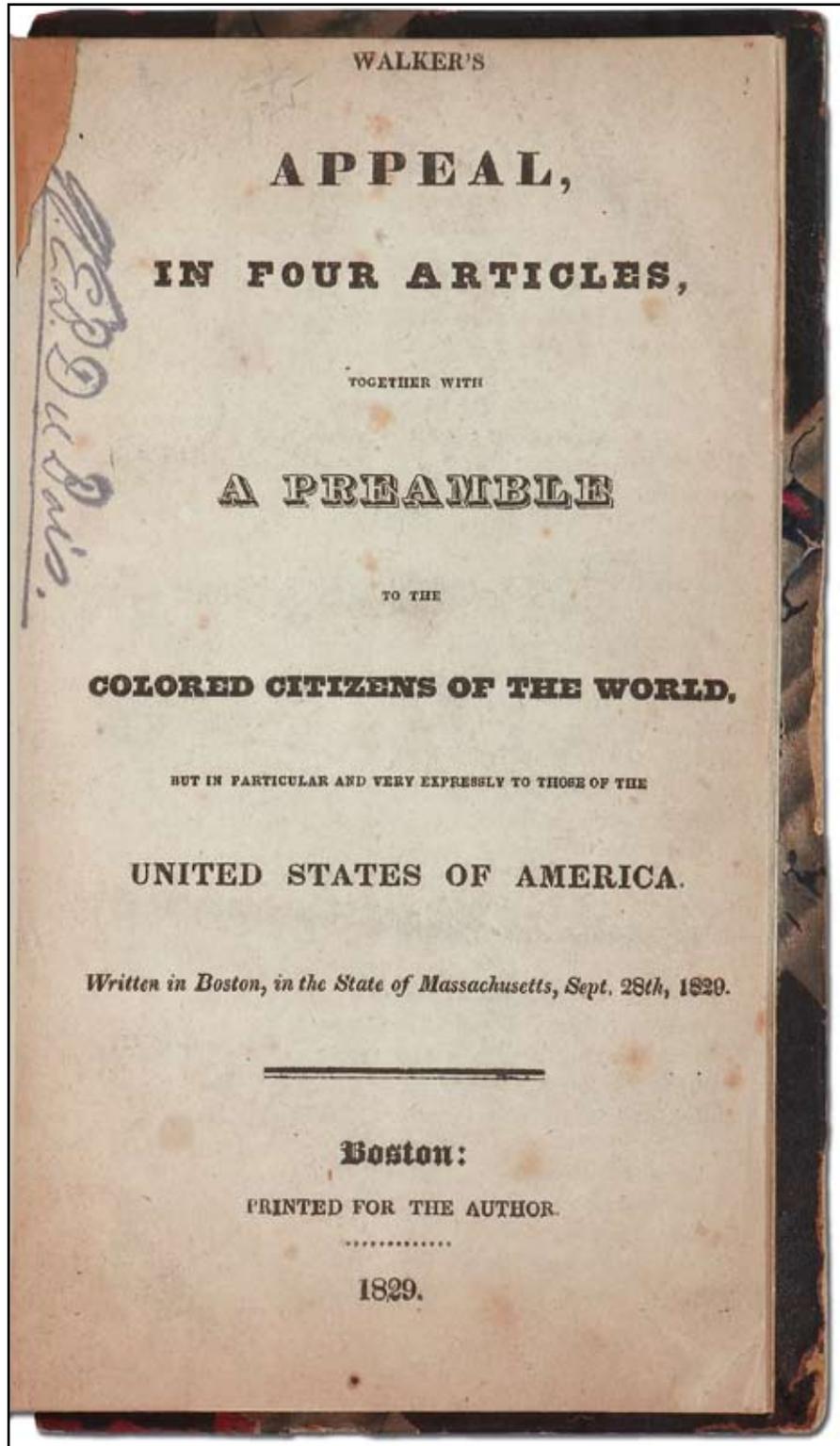
W.E.B. Du Bois' Copy

David Walker

Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles, Together with A Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, But in Particular, and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America

Boston: David Walker 1829

\$300,000

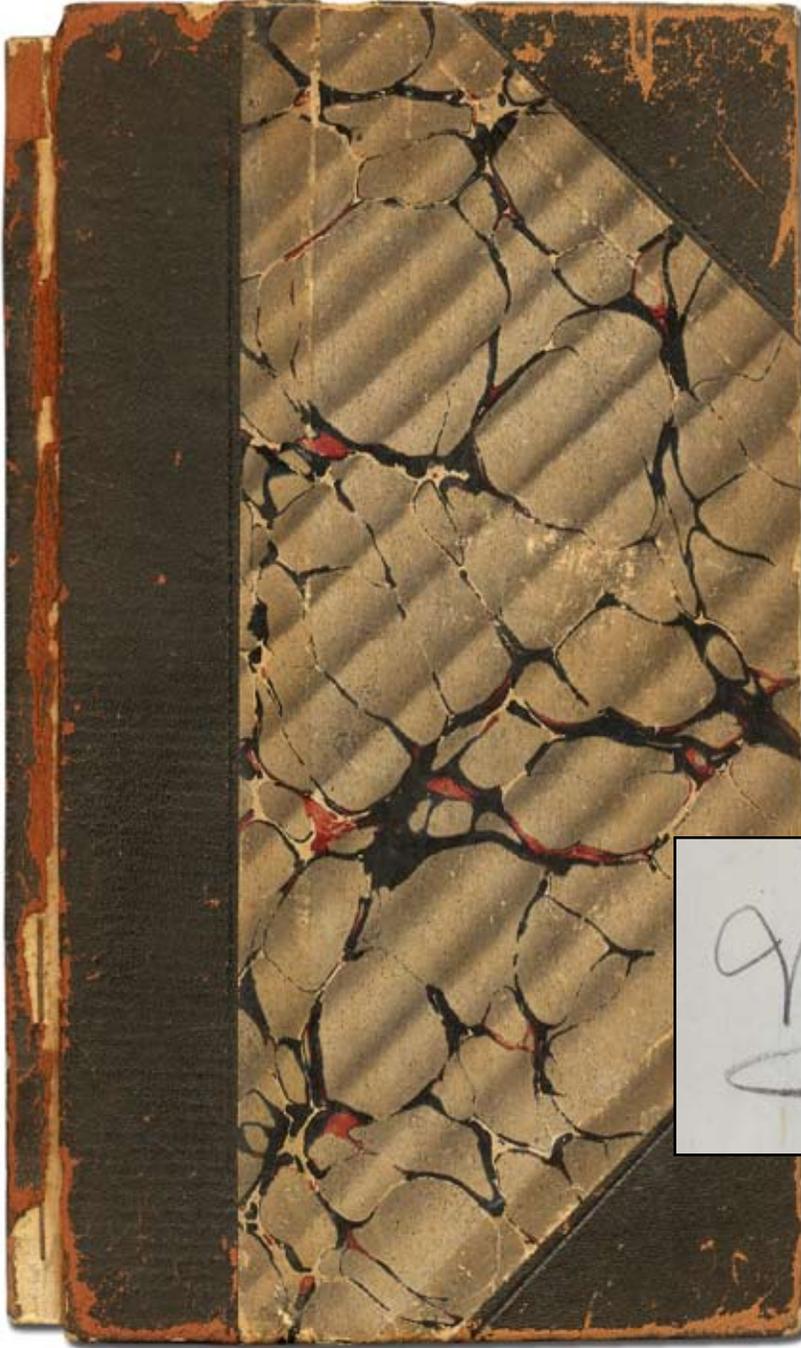


First edition. Quarto. 76pp. Early contemporary blue half leather and marbled papercovered boards, titled in gilt on the spine (originally issued in wrappers). Spine and gutters chipped, leather a bit rubbed and powdery, a small chip at the bottom corner of title page and a smaller one on the next leaf, small brown paper repair to one corner of the title page, modest foxing throughout, trimmed a little close by the binder affecting a few words on one page, inner hinges internally reinforced at an early date with cloth, but overall very good or better copy.

This is the copy of W.E.B. Du Bois with his stamped ownership signature on the title page, his holograph Signature on the front fly (the page supplied by the binder when the pamphlet was bound up), and with his extensive marginal markings in the text. Du Bois has scored nearly two dozen long passages along the margins in pencil, many of them incendiary in nature.

Du Bois called *Walker's Appeal* "that tremendous indictment of slavery" in his autobiography *Dusk of Dawn*, recognizing its importance as the first "program of organized opposition to the action and attitude of the dominant white group (and included) ceaseless agitation and insistent demand for equality." An idea adopted by Du Bois in contrast to Booker T. Washington's dominant policy of accommodation and conciliation with white America, and incorporated into his Niagara Movement Manifesto, which demanded "every single right that belongs to a freeborn American, political, civil and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America."

The rare first edition of one of the most important documents in African-American history – *Walker's Appeal* was so radical and revolutionary in its call to arms that even abolitionists condemned it. As Peter J. Hinks summarizes in his introduction to one of the many reprint editions available, Walker's message was that "American slavery embodies one of the greatest moral abominations in the history of the world, that blacks must refuse to submit to slavery any longer, and that whites must abolish it immediately if they are to avoid the swift, certain, and terrifying judgment of God." Never before had these sentiments been combined, nor expressed so eloquently or forcefully, never in print, and most amazingly set in print by a self-educated and self-financed African-American.



The publication of *Walker's Appeal* was a major cornerstone in the African-American experience. Whereas a few other African-Americans had been published before him (the pious poetry of Phillis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon), and white abolitionists had reasoned and petitioned for an end to slavery, Walker's incendiary, self-published essays called for open and justified rebellion, arguing that since slavery was killing African-Americans, both literally and figuratively, militant opposition was nothing more than self-defense. Furthermore, he rejected the colonization movement because he saw it as inherently racist, and he denounced white Christian Americans for their hypocrisy. He was greatly inspired by the Declaration of Independence but even took Thomas Jefferson to task for the latter's published views on the racial inferiority of Africans. He urged black self-education and called for unity among people of African descent around the world.

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature reads 'W. E. B. DuBois' in a cursive, flowing script. The signature is written on a light-colored, possibly white, background. The letters are well-defined and connected, with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the signature.

before his enslaved countrymen and used networks of African-Americans, including black seamen, to get copies into the hands of Southern slaves, where it could be read aloud in secret to small groups. He also rapidly reprinted the pamphlet in second and third editions which he expanded to make his arguments even more forceful (this first edition is important not only for its primacy, but also as it differs textually from the more readily available reprints). Southern governments, both state and local, were horrified by the *Appeal* and reacted by arresting and even lynching slaves and free blacks suspected of owning the pamphlet. All found copies were destroyed. The governor of Virginia demanded that the mayor of Boston arrest Walker and send him south for trial. Savannah, Georgia banned black sailors from coming ashore. Several states quickly enacted strict laws to prohibit literacy and education of African-

Americans, and slave-owners put up a bounty of \$1000 for Walker's assassination and \$10,000 for his capture and return to the South. Walker was found dead in his Boston home on June 28, 1830, three months after the publication of the third edition of his pamphlet. The official cause of death was consumption, which had claimed many Bostonians at the time (including Walker's infant daughter), but the suspicion that Walker was poisoned has surrounded his death ever since. His son, Edward G. Walker, born shortly after his death, became the first African-American elected to the Massachusetts state legislature.

Walker's Appeal had a direct and obvious influence on every successive important African-American writer and leader including Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. Reportedly John Brown was not only familiar with it but paid to have it reprinted.

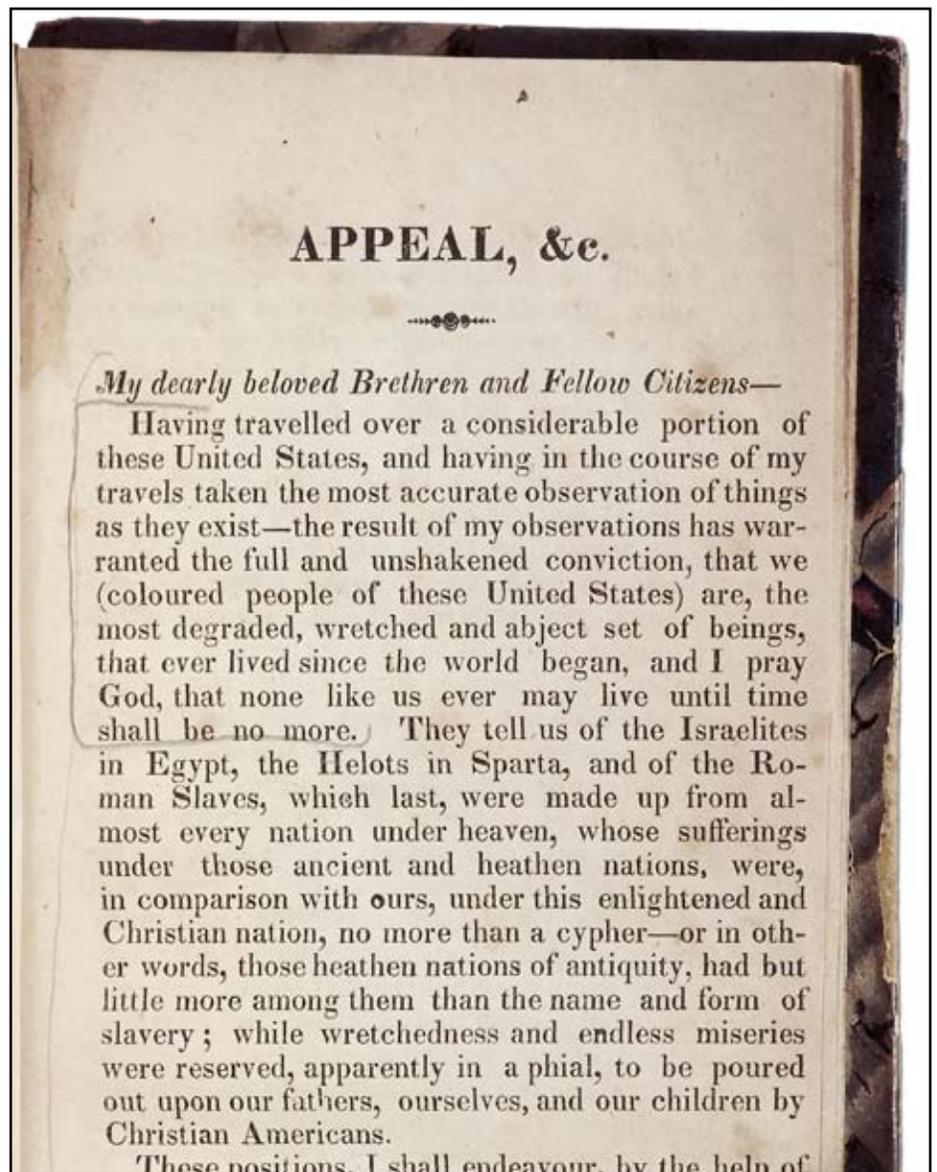
According to Herbert Aptheker in his 1965 book-length study of the pamphlet, *One Continual Cry* "Walker's Appeal is the first sustained written assault upon slavery and racism to come from a black man in the

United States. This was the main source of its overwhelming power in its own time; this is the source of the great relevance and enormous impact that remain in it, deep as we are in the twentieth century. Never before or since was there a more passionate denunciation of the hypocrisy of the nation as a whole... And Walker does this not as one who hates the country but rather as one who hates the institutions which disfigure it and make it a hissing in the world."

The Library Company of Philadelphia, which acquired their copy in 1984, describes the first edition as, "exceptionally rare" and "perhaps the single most important black political tract in American history." The only copy to surface since, the University of Virginia copy, was sold to them by us in 2010. *National Union Catalog* locates four copies (Boston Public Library, Harvard, New York Historical Society, and The Ohio State University); *OCLC* adds the two most recently discovered copies (The Library Company of Philadelphia and the University of Virginia), for a total of six. By comparison another notable rarity of the period, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* from 1831 is located in twenty copies. As a locus of rarity and significance, probably no other early African-American publication can rival this document.

Further this is an unparalleled association copy, the copy that unquestionably influenced Du Bois and enhanced his own great rippling influence on the future of African-Americans. Quite probably the best copy extant.

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prehensible magnitude, so impenetrable, and so notorious, I shall be obliged to omit a large class of, and content myself with giving you an exposition of a few of those which do indeed rage to such an alarming pitch, that they cannot but be a perpetual source of terror and dismay to every reflecting mind.

I am fully aware, in making this appeal to my much afflicted and suffering brethren, that I shall not only be assailed by those whose greatest earthly desires are, to keep us in abject ignorance and wretchedness, and who are of the firm conviction that heaven has designed us and our children, to be slaves and beasts of burden to them and their children.—I say I do not only expect to be held up to the public as an ignorant, impudent and restless disturber of the public peace, by such avaricious creatures, as well as a mover of insubordination—and perhaps put into prison or to death, for giving a superficial exposition of our miseries, and exposing tyrants. But I am persuaded, that many of my brethren, particularly those who are ignorantly in league with slave-holders or tyrants, who acquire their daily bread by the blood and sweat of their more ignorant brethren—and not a few of those too, who are too ignorant to see an inch beyond their nose, will rise up and call me cursed.—Yea, the jealous ones among us will perhaps use more abject subtlety, by affirming that this work is not worth perusing; that we are well situated and there is no use in trying to better our condition, for we cannot. I will only ask one question here—Can our condition be any worse? Can it be more mean and abject? If there are any changes, will they not be for the better, though they may appear for the worst at first? Can they get us any lower? Where can they get us? They cannot treat us worse; for they well know the day they do it they are gone. But against all accusations, which may or can be prefer-

red against me, 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 enquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this *Republican land of Liberty!!!!*

The sources from which our miseries are derived, and on which I shall comment, I shall not combine in one, but shall put them under distinct heads and expose them in their turn; in doing which, keeping truth on my side, and not departing from the strictest rules of morality, I shall endeavour to penetrate, search out, and lay them open for your inspection. If you cannot or will not profit by them, I shall have done *my* duty, to you, my country and my God.

And as the inhuman system of slavery, is the source from which most of our miseries proceed, I shall begin with that curse to nations; which has spread terror and devastation through so many nations of antiquity, and which is raging to such a pitch at the present day, in Spain and in Portugal. It had one tug in England, in France, and in the United States of America, yet the inhabitants thereof, do not learn wisdom, and erase it entirely from their dwellings and from all with whom they have to do. The fact is, the labor of slaves comes so cheap to the avaricious usurpers, and is of such great utility to the country where it exists, that those who are actuated only by sordid avarice, overlook the evils, which will as sure as the Lord lives, follow after the good. In fact, they are so happy to keep in ignorance and degradation, and to receive the homage and labor of the slaves, they forget that God rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, having his ears continually open to the cries, tears and groans of his oppressed people. And being a just and holy Being will at one day appear fully in behalf of the oppressed, and arrest the progress of the avaricious oppressors; for although the destruction of