

JUNIOR HISTORIANS

Colonization: John B. Hepburn

Transcript

To His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln,
President of the United States of America.

Honored Sir,

Excuse, I pray, the liberty I take in addressing one so highly placed as yourself, by intruding upon your valuable time, every moment of which is fraught with business in which the destiny of millions born and unborn, depend; for humbly and respectfully asking permission to thank your Excellency most sincerely for your noble and most judicious efforts in behalf of my unfortunate race and which has resulted in the liberation of the oppressed descendants of africa, hitherto slaves, in the district of Colombia. This act of Justice was aimed at more than thirty years ago, by the efforts of a number of gentlemen and philanthropists, in various shapes, but to no effect; but it has finally been reserved for you, under Divine Providence, to bring this great disederatum to a close: all the praise, all the honor and all the thanks, honored Sir, for such a noble action, belong to you. And when I humbly take into consideration, the conflicting elements by which such a thing of necessity must have been surrounded,—by conflicting interests, diversion of opinions,—no doubt honorable to all, according to the convictions of either party, of right or wrong, superadded by pecuniary interests, the mobile of human actions, the difficulty must have been doubly great and the consummation superlatively grand and glorious for the great american people and disinterested humanity.

Honored Sir, Mr. Jefferson said that “he trembled for his country when he reflected that God was Just and His Justice would not sleep for ever”—What a Sublime thought! And it has been reserved for you and your noble coadjutors to prove that God’s Justice has awakened and that the great work of african redemption, whenever it is possible to be done, will be done, through peaceful and legitimate means, alike honorable to the United States as also to the enslaved; that, in the end, both may have cause to bless you, and bless you as the Father of the country and as the benefactor of the africans.

Honored Sir, The house of Burgesses, of the colony of Virginia, remonstrated against George the Third because he continued to send slaves to the colonies, because they foresaw it would be a curse to their descendants;—and has not this curse fallen on the great american people?

Honored Sir, The humble individual who has the honor to address you these lines, is a man of color, born in Fairfax county, near Alexandria, but now a citizen of Haiti. From my earliest youth I was in favor of african colonization and was about starting for Liberia, but finally decided to locate in Haiti and I have no cause to regret my choice individually, yet I am of opinion that the americo-african people, by their habits, language and religion, would be better off in Liberia than here.

I pray Your Excellency to accept my eternal gratitude and may Almighty God preserve your valuable life to see the accomplishment of the great good which has been reserved for you under His Providence.

Permit me, Your Excellency, to subscribe myself, Your most humble & obedient Servant

John B. Hepburn

Port-au-Prince (Haiti) 7th May 1862.

