

# Benjamin banneker argument

[Politics](#)



Decades before the Civil War, even when the nation was but a few years old, slavery played quite a controversial role in the United States. While writing the Declaration of Independence, exclusions of all references made to slavery avoided conflict in an attempt to hold the fragile young nation together during the critical period leading up to its independence. However, the leaders of the country knew the subject would pop up again. Just a few short years later, as the country began to envision its future, the issue of slavery made another appearance.

Many people, including free African-Americans such as Benjamin Banneker, argued against slavery. In his letter to Thomas Jefferson, Banneker argues in favor of abolition with respect and passion through his mastery of powerful diction, impassioned and reverent tone, and emotional appeal. Throughout the piece, Banneker reminds Jefferson of the struggle for independence. He recalls for Jefferson how discontented the colonies felt with King George's tyranny. He supports his argument with key words from the Revolution, speaking of the "rights and privileges" bestowed upon the former colonists.

He quotes Jefferson himself, pulling an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence which states that "all men are created equal." However, many thought slaves simply property and not men, so did not seem applicable to the situation in their eyes. Banneker warns against hypocrisy, stating with loaded words such as "groaning captivity and cruel oppression" that Jefferson and the others would be just as tyrannical as King George should they just stand by and let slavery continue. Banneker feels quite passionately about this, something reflected by his tone.

He feels obligated to act, because “ so numerous a part of [his] brethren” were experiencing carnal treatment and abhorrent horrors and all he could do to help included sending a strongly-worded, yet most likely ineffective, letter to a political official. Banneker knows that unfortunately, despite his pedantic diction due to his extensive education, he holds less credibility than a white man during this point in time. So despite his passionate argument, the letter as a whole reflects respect.

Banneker addresses Jefferson as “ sir,” uses panegyrics, and towards the end of the letter he attempts flattery by stating “ your knowledge of the situation... is... extensive. ” This respect played a key role in Banneker’s letter being seriously considered. Banneker’s tone fuels his use of the appeal pathos. Banneker speaks of the times when “ human aid appeared unavailable” to the colonies, when they seemed to have no hope. He attempts to evoke feelings of altruism from Jefferson by insisting that he possesses the ability to do what the French did for the colonies- help win the fight for freedom.

Banneker reminds Jefferson how much he enjoys his freedom from England, something undeniable and labeled by Banneker as a “ blessing of Heaven. ” Banneker uses Jefferson’s intense value and love for liberty and equality to point out the urgency with which his brethren should be given rights and privileges “ equal and impartial” to those of white men. Banneker’s fervent desperation for the freedom of his brethren seems almost tangible. The hypocrisy of the situation must have been understandably frustrating, but eventually, despite almost a century of waiting, slaves became emancipated in the United States.