

Benjamin banneker rhetorical analysis

Business



Teddy Park Mr. Valassidis Period 1, AP English Language & Composition
September 29, 2012 Banneker Rewrite In 1791, Benjamin Banneker, the lowly son of former slaves, wrote to Thomas Jefferson, the great framer of the Declaration of Independence and advocate for equality, urging Jefferson to see the hypocrisy and injustices of slavery in the colonies.

During this post-Revolutionary time, slavery was still prevalent in the colonies which bewildered many as America embedded its roots in the “inalienable” rights given to “all” men, who were all created “equally”.

In such a paradoxical situation, Banneker appeals to Jefferson’s logic and morality to instill a sense of unity between the enslaved and the slave owners as well as to convince Jefferson that the only just resolution to the issue is freedom. To bridge the divide between Black slaves and White slave owners, Banneker calls forth memories of the Revolution, in which Jefferson considered himself to be subjugated to a state of slavery himself.

In providing this recollection of pre-Revolutionary circumstances, Banneker reminds Jefferson of his time suffering underneath the oppressive rule of the British Crown, his “state of slavery”. This apt choice of diction connects Jefferson to Banneker and his enslaved brethren, binding them in the misery of involuntary servitude.

Banneker then juxtaposes this state of slavery with the current state, that of liberty and individual rights for White men. He shows Jefferson how his subjugation by the British State pushed Jefferson to act as he had in the name of inalienable rights.

In doing so, Banneker also attempts to relate Jefferson's former position with the current position of Black slaves in the colonies, hoping to evoke an empathetic response for Jefferson to act upon in the name of universal freedom. Using empathy to relate to Jefferson, Banneker attempts to mentally bond Jefferson with Black slaves in order for him to see the irony in his actions and written declarations. Following his assertions of congruity between Jefferson and current slaves, Banneker reveals his own disappointment towards Jefferson's inaction as the inalienable rights he had declared for all equally created men were flagrantly taken from many black men. He then essentially presents a choice for Jefferson to either "be found guilty" of slavery and injustice which they had just fought so valiantly to defeat or declare true equality for all, foreign imports included.

In doing so, Banneker attempts to trap Jefferson within his own dogma, funneling his choices to universal freedom or hypocrisy. He then calls Jefferson to act, asking through Biblical allusion for Jefferson to redeem himself by seeing as the slaves would see, as he himself had seen not over two decades ago.

Utilizing Jefferson's pride of his own dogma and moral compass, Banneker narrows Jefferson's spectrum of choice, allowing him to either continue contradicting his most famous contribution to society or to embrace his own dogma and universal, inalienable rights. Through his relation of Jefferson to black slaves and his reminder to Jefferson of his most famous work, the Declaration of Independence, Banneker effectively argued for his case, the case for the abolition of slavery.

Essentially, Banneker exploited Jefferson's pride, indirectly calling Jefferson a hypocrite and perhaps betrayer of the ideologies of the Revolution. Banneker's application of unification in conjunction with morality effectively reminds Jefferson of his role as framer of the Declaration of Independence as well as the expected qualities of said framer, calling on Jefferson's pride to fulfill said role and compelling him towards the road to universal freedom.