

Philadelphia, Jan. —, 1800.

WHEN the hand of sorrow presses, heavy on us, and the generality of mankind turn un pitying from our complaints, if one appears who feels for and commiserates our situation, and endeavours all in his power to alleviate our condition, our bosoms swell with gratitude, and our tongues instinctively pronounce our thanks for the obligation.

We therefore, sir, Africans, and descendants of that unhappy race, respectfully beg leave to thank you, for the philanthropic zeal with which you defended our cause when it was brought before a part of the general government, by which only we can expect to be relieved from our deplorable state, we interested ourselves in the business, because we knew not but ere long we might be reduced to slavery; it might have been said that we viewed the subject through a perverted medium, if you, sir, had not adopted and nobly supported those sentiments, which gave rise to our petition. Though our faces are black, yet we are men—and though many amongst us cannot write, because our rulers have thought proper to keep us in ignorance, yet we all have the feelings and passions of men, and are as anxious to enjoy the birth-right of the human race, as those who from our ignorance draw an argument against our petition; when that petition has in view the diffusion of knowledge amongst the African race, by unfettering their thoughts, and giving full scope to the energy of their minds. While

Some Sir consider us as much property as

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an house or a ship, and would seem to insinuate, that it is as lawful to hew down the one as it is to dismantle the other, you, sir, more humane, consider us as a part of the human race, and were we to go generally into the subject, would say that by principles of natural law our thralldom is unjust—judge what must be our feelings, to find ourselves treated as a species of property and levelled with the brute creation—and think how anxious we must be to raise ourselves from this degrading state.

Unprejudiced persons, who read the documents in our possession, will acknowledge that we are miserable! Humane people will wish our situation alleviated! Just people will attempt the task! And powerful people ought to carry it into execution.

Seven hundred thousand of the human race were concerned in our petition; their thanks—their gratitude to you, they now express; their prayers for you will mount to heaven; for God knows they are wretched, and will here their supplications!

A deep gloom now envelopes us; but we derive some comfort from the thought that we are not quite destitute of friends—that there is one, who will use all his endeavours to free the slave from captivity; at least render his state more sufferable, and preserve the *Free Black* in the full enjoyment of his rights.

This address cannot encrease the satisfaction you must derive, from your laudable exertions in the cause of suffering humanity, but it serves to shew the grati-

**itude and respect of those whose cause you
espoused.**

G. JAMES FORTEN.

*The hon. George Thatcher,
member of congress.*
