

1841. Ruggles on Negro Disunity (Aptheker 211)

The Liberator, September 24, 1841.

In 1840, under the leadership of David Ruggles, a short-lived organization called the American Reformed Board of Disfranchised Commissioners was formed. At the anniversary meeting September 8, 1841, in New York, David Ruggles made some significant remarks on the problem of Negro disunity:

While every man's hand is against us, our every hand is against each other. I speak plainly, because truth will set us free. Are we not guilty of cherishing, to an alarming extent, the sin of sectarian, geographical, and complexional proscription? The spirit abroad is this: Is that brother a Methodist? He is not one of us. A Baptist? He is not one of us. A Presbyterian? He is not one of us. An Episcopalian? He is not one of us. A Roman Catholic? He is not one of us. Does he live above human creeds, and enjoy the religion of the heart? He is of Beelzebub.

Again. Is that brother from the east? He is not of us. From the west? He is not of us. From the north? He is not of us. From the south? He is not of us. From the middle States? He is not of us. Is he a foreigner? He can never be of us. But, forsooth, is that brother of a dark complexion? He is of no worth. Is he of a light complexion? He is of no nation. Such, sir, are the visible lines of distinction, marked by slavery for us to follow. If we hope for redemption from our present condition, we must repent, turn, and UNITE in the hallowed cause of reform.