

1843. Garnet On Patronizing Friends (Aptheker 234-236)

In the temporary absence of Garrison, *The Liberator* was edited by a well-known Abolitionist writer and poet, Mrs. Maria Weston Chapman. This lady condemned the 1843 speech of Garnet (Document 94) in severest but patronizing terms. The latter feature of her remarks drew a sharp rebuke from Garnet in a letter dated Troy, N.Y., November 17, 1843:

Respected Madam: Some time ago you wrote an article in the *Liberator*, condemnatory of the National Convention of colored people, which was held in the city of Buffalo, in the month of August last. I should have sent a reply, ere this time, had I not been engaged so much in the cause of freedom, since the appearance of your article. I must confess that I was exceedingly amazed to find that I was doomed to share so much of your severity, to call it nothing else. And, up to this moment, I have not been able to understand the motives which led you to attack my character as you have in the paper referred to. I am a stranger to you, comparatively, and whatever of my public life has come to your notice, you have seen nothing impeachable. I was born in slavery, and have escaped, to tell you, and others, what the monster has done, and is still doing. It, therefore, astonished me to think that you should desire to sink me again to the condition of a slave, by forcing me to think just as you do. My crime is, that I have dared to think, and act, contrary to your opinion. I am a Liberty party man-you are opposed to that party-far be it from me to attempt to injure your character because you cannot pronounce my shibboleth. While you think as you do, we must differ. If it has come to this, that I must think and act as you do, because you are an Abolitionist, or be exterminated by your thunder, then I do not hesitate to say that your abolitionism is abject slavery. Were I a slave of the Hon. George McDuffie, or John C. Calhoun, I would not be required to do anything more than to think and act as I might be commanded. I will not be the slave of any person or party. I am a Liberty party man from choice. No man ever asked me to join that party; I was the first colored man that ever attached his name to that party, and you may rely upon my word, when I tell you I mean "to stand."

You likewise adopt all that E. M. Marsh, of Buffalo, has said of the Convention and myself.* I shall not attempt to say anything more than this, in regard to him. My friend, Mr. Marsh, is a man of a very unstable mind. He is one thing today, and another thing to-morrow. He was once a Liberty man, but he is now a no-church and no-government man. I never saw such an unfair statement penned by a man calling himself a Christian. Every thing that he has written, is either false, or exaggerated. I have no more to say of him-I leave him alone in his glory. But I am sorry that you have echoed his false allegations. I am sorry that all the old organization journals have likewise echoed that libellous report.

But the address to the slaves you seem to doom to the most fiery trials. And yet, Madam, you have not seen that address-you have merely heard of it; nevertheless, you criticised it very severely. You speak, at length, of myself, the author of the paper. You say that I "have received bad counsel."

You are not the only person who has told your humble servant that his humble productions have been produced by the "counsel" of some Anglo-Saxon. I have expected no more from ignorant slaveholders and their apologists, but I really looked for better things from Mrs. Maria W. Chapman, an antislavery poetess, and editor pro tem. of the *Boston Liberator*. I can think on the subject of human rights without "counsel," either from the men of the West, or the women of the East. My address was read to but two persons, previous to its presentation at Buffalo. One was a colored brother, who did not give me a single word of counsel, and the other was my wife; and if she did counsel me, it is no matter, for "we twain are one flesh." In a few days hope to publish the address, then you can judge how much treason there is in it. In the meantime, be assured that there is one black American who dares to speak boldly on the subject of universal liberty.

The Liberator, December 3, 1843.