Lydia Maria Child, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833)

In this excerpt from her book on abolition, Lydia Maria Child presented a sharp and unflinching attack on the colonization movement. Many white Americans and even some abolitionists hoped that the terrible social violence of slavery might be healed by returning the millions of African-American slaves to Africa. The more radical abolitionist movements opposed colonization on both practical and moral grounds. As you examine Child's argument, consider what she proposes as alternatives to colonization.

An error often and urgently repeated is apt to receive the sanction of truth; and so it is in this case. The public take it for granted that slavery is a "lamentable necessity." Nevertheless there is a way to effect its cure, if we all join sincerely, earnestly, and kindly in the work; but if we expend our energies in palliating the evil, or mourning over its hopelessness, or quarreling about who is the most to blame for it, the vessel, crew, passengers, and all, will go down together.

I object to the Colonization Society, because it tends to put public opinion asleep, on a subject where it needs to be wide awake.

The address above alluded to, does indeed inform us of one thing which we are at liberty to do: "We must go to the master and adjure him, by all the sacred rights of humanity, by all the laws of natural justice, by his dread responsibilities,—which in the economy of Providence, are always coextensive and commensurate with power,—to raise the slave out of his abyss of degradation, to give him a participation in the benefits of mortal existence, and to make him a member of the *intellectual* and moral world, from which he, and his fathers, for so many generations, have been exiled." The practical utility of such a plan needs no comment. Slave owners will smile when they read it.

I will for a moment glance at what many suppose is still the intention of the Colonization Society, viz. gradually to remove all the blacks in the United States. The Society has been in operation more than fifteen years, during which it has transported between two and three thousand *free* people of color. There are in the United States two million of slaves, and three hundred thousand free blacks; and their numbers are increasing at the rate of seventy thousand annually. While the Society have removed less than three thousand,—five hundred thousand have been born. While one hundred and fifty *free* blacks have been sent to Africa in a year, two hundred *slaves* have been born in a day. To keep the evil just where it is, seventy thousand a year must be transported. How many ships, and how many millions of money, would it require to do this? It would cost 3,500,000 dollars a year, to provide for the safety of our Southern brethren in this way! To use the language of Mr Hayne, it would "bankrupt the treasury of the world" to execute the scheme. And if such a great number could removed annually, how would the poor fellows subsist? Famines have already been produced, even by the few that have been sent. What would be the result of landing several thousand destitute beings, even on the most fertile of our own cultivated shores?
And why *should* they be removed? Labor is greatly needed, and we are glad to give good wages for it. We encourage emigration from all parts of the world; why is it not good policy, as well as good feeling, to improve the colored people, and pay them for the use of their faculties? For centuries to come, the means of sustenance in this vast country must be much greater than the population; then why should we drive away people, whose services may be most useful? If the moral cultivation of negroes received the attention it ought, thousands and thousands would at the present moment be gladly taken up in families, factories, And, like other men, they ought to be allowed to fit themselves for more important usefulness, as far and as fast as they can.

There will, in all human probability, never be any decrease in the black population of the United States. Here they are, and here they must remain, in very large numbers, do what we will. We may at once agree to live together in mutual good will, and perform a mutual use to each other—or we may go on, increasing tyranny on one side, and jealousy and revenge on the other, until the fearful elements complete their work of destruction, and something better than this sinful republic rises on the ruins. Oh, how earnestly do I wish that we may choose the holier and safer path!