

Henry Highland Garnet and the Weims Family Purchase

On Sept 27, 1852, Charles Ray wrote to Garnet seeking assistance for John Weims, a Washington, D.C. free black whose family was in slavery. The Weims family included John Weims's slave wife and seven slave children. An eighth child, daughter Stella Weims, had escaped and was living with the Garnets in Britain.

In 1852, John Weims went to New York City to raise money to purchase his family out of slavery. While he was raising the money, the family was sold for \$3300 to a Washington slave trader, who resold two children and held the others to sell into the deep south. John Weims desperately tried to raise the money to purchase his remaining family. By 1852, he was able to purchase his wife and two younger sons, but his three older boys had already been sold to slave traders. By 1855, the other two daughters were also free.

*New York, New York
September 27, 1852*

Rev. Henry Highland Garnet

Dear Sir:

I write to you in behalf of John Weims, the father of the young woman who is residing with you. While seated by his side, a few days since, I promised him to write to you, and make a statement of his case. I think it was late in March, or early in April, that he arrived in this city, on his way to Canada, or elsewhere, in search of his daughter and her uncle, whom she accompanied from the South. His object, doubtless, was to see if he could depend upon his daughter to raise anything to help him to purchase her mother and the children, as he had always been promised by the old master, now deceased, and recently by his heirs, that he should have the privilege of purchasing them at a very low price, and towards this object he had begun to raise the money. Will you believe, that when Weims returned, he found his wife and children in the slave-pen, the heirs having sold them to the traders for 3,300 dollars! We can judge his feelings, but cannot describe them. He immediately went to work to negotiate for them. Mr. _____, of Washington city, offered to loan him 1,600 dollars, if he could get the balance. After a little, he found this impossible in the time allotted him. They then offered him his wife and youngest child for 900 dollars. This he attempted to raise; and after having got together about 200 dollars, leaving a balance of 300 to raise for the purchase of the mother and the young child. The other children, five boys and a beautiful girl of sixteen, will have to go. Mr. _____, of Washington, and others, will endeavour to keep their eyes upon them, and see into whose hands they fall, with the hope of getting them back when the means shall be raised. Will you lay this case before British abolitionists and solicit a little assistance? Yours truly,

Charles B. Ray

President of the New York Committee

Of Vigilance for the Aid of Fugitive Slaves.