Sir -- I was surprised and flattered to receive your letter asking my opinion about the Slavery of the Negroes, but I assume that you truly want to know my answer, so I will tell you what I think about the most important question in the universe.

As a member of the society which has recently taken up arms against the nation that established it, you must agree that there are such things as Right and Justice, which apply to the whole human species.

Every individual in the universe possesses certain rights, which no one can take away. If someone tries to deprive another person of those rights, he is a tyrant and an oppressor. Anyone who tries to deny this would have to prove that some part of the human species doesn't deserve the same rights as the other part.

You, Sir, say you have several slaves. Therefore I ask of you: what right do you claim over them? Do you have the right to torture them when they've done nothing wrong? Do you have a right to kill them for entertainment? Who gave you that right?

Men must be consistent and apply their beliefs to everyone. You and your fellow Americans have a problem: you have to admit that your negroes have rights, or you have to give up your own rights. If there are certain natural and universal rights, as your Declaration of Independence claims, I wonder why Africans don't get those rights too. Is there something special about English-Americans that gives them more rights than Africans? Is it just that they are black, and you are white? Or that you have long hair, while theirs is short?

You Americans have taken up arms against the government that established and protected you. As you are no longer English, I hope you will admit to being men, and therefore acknowledge that the entire human species shares in your inalienable rights.