

“Our misery and despair” by Denis Kearney (1878)- excerpt

Directions: Read the following piece 3 times:

1. 1st time- **Number** the paragraphs of the text; read silently to get a general sense of the text, no highlighting or circling
2. 2nd time- read aloud by teacher; **circle** words you don't know or understand.
3. 3rd time- read silently again. **Highlight** terms or phrases that show the author's attitude toward the Chinese.

...To add to our misery and despair, a bloated aristocracy has sent to China- the greatest and oldest despotism in the world- for a cheap working slave. It rakes the slums of Asia to find the meanest [cheapest] slave on earth- the Chinese coolie- and imports him here to meet the free American in the Labor market, and still further widen the breach [gap] between the rich and the poor, still further to degrade [put down] white Labor.

These cheap slaves fill every place. Their dress is scant and cheap. Their food is rice from China. They hedge twenty in a room, ten by ten. They are whipped curs [dogs], abject [miserable] in docility, mean [inferior], contemptible [despicable], and obedient in all things. They have no wives, children, or dependents.

They are imported by companies, controlled as serfs, worked like slaves, and at last go back to China with all their earnings...

We are men, and propose to live like men in this free land, without the contamination of slave labor, or die like men, if need be, in asserting the rights of our race, our country, and our families.

California must be all American or all Chinese. We are resolved that it shall be American, and are prepared to make it so. May we not rely upon your sympathy and assistance?

With great respect for the Workingman's Party of California

Dennis Kearney, President

Analysis

1. a. What is Kearney's claim in the text? b. What support does he provide for that claim? (Provide textual evidence to back up your statements.)
2. Examine how Kearney use the terms “slaves” and “free” in the text. Why does he pick those terms to contrast the Chinese with other Americans?
3. a. How would you describe the tone that Kearney uses in the text? b. Provide a couple phrases from the text that clearly show that tone.
4. Summarize Kearney's speech in your own words (no more than 2 sentences).