

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Connecticut State Convention,

OF

COLORED MEN,

HELD AT

NEW HAVEN,

ON

SEPTEMBER 12th AND 13th, 1849.

NEW HAVEN:  
WILLIAM H. STANLEY, PRINTER.

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STATE COMMITTEE.

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S. M. AFRICANUS,  
H. FOSTER,  
H. NOTT,  
ISAAC CROSS, } *Hartford.*

JEHIEL C. BEMAN, *Middletown.*

AMOS G. BEMAN,  
SAMUEL T. GRAY, } *New Haven.*

GEO. W. FRANCIS,  
J. EMERY BARR,  
L. COLLINS, } *Bridgeport.*

D. GORDON, *Norwich.*

L. BLACK, *Stonington.*

A. J. MORRISON, *New Milford.*

L. H. PETERS, *Danbury.*

## PROCEEDINGS.

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The Colored Men of the State of Connecticut, assembled at New Haven, in Convention, on Wednesday, Sept. 12th, at three o'clock, P. M., in the Temple street Church, in pursuance with the following call:—

### A CALL TO THE COLORED MEN OF CONNECTICUT.

*“Brethren:—*We propose to meet you in Convention, in the city of New Haven, on Wednesday, the 12th day of September, 1849, to consider our Political condition, and to devise measures for our elevation and advancement.

Action on our part is imperatively necessary to secure the acknowledgment of our rights, and the enactment and administration of impartial laws affecting us, by the proper State authorities.

Now as a body, we have no political existence. We are dead to citizenship—struck down by an unrighteous State Constitution, and our life spark quenched by a cruel and unreasonable prejudice. But a voice is sounding through all lands, quickening and energizing the slumbering millions! Shall we not hear it and live also?

The shouts of hosts battling for Freedom, are wafted to us continually over the waves. Shall we not swell the sounds? The hearts of all true lovers of Liberty and Human Progress, are beating high with hope; shall we alone sit desponding and inactive? We have reason to believe that the night is far spent, and an auspicious day is dawning upon us. Evidences of progress are numerous and increasing in our own State; shall we not prepare for the crisis?

We bid you come, then, from the four corners of the State—from the vallies of the Housatonic and the Connecticut—from the borders of free Massachusetts and the western bounds of impartial Rhode Island! Let the dwellers on our

southern shores who witness daily the mighty pulsations of old Ocean, come up as bold and irresistible, and roll on the tide wave of liberty.

Let resolute and hopeful men of every profession and occupation come. Age and youth—the sons of ease and the sons of toil—the landholder and the landless—there's a welcome and a work for all! Come in the strength and fear of God, and in the certainty of ultimate success by His blessing on our united efforts.

*Hartford.*—Rev. Levin Smith, Henry Nott, Isaac Cross, Henry Foster, S. M. Africanus.

*Middletown.*—George Garrison, R. C. Huntington, Charles Daniels, Leverett C. Beman, Jehiel C. Beman.

*Bridgeport.*—George W. Francis, Leonard Collins, J. Emery Burr, Charles Hubbard, Philander Pitts, William Allen, Tunis Green, Henry Davis, J. Demming.

*New Haven.*—A. C. Luca, Robert J. Cowes, Paul Hall, Thomas Cisco, H. S. Merriman, John Turner, Edward Galpin, T. B. Potter, William Thompson, Samuel T. Gray, Amos G. Beman.

*Norwich.*—Samuel Ellis, William Spellman, James L. Smith, Uriah W. W. R. R. Pelham, Pelam M. Williams, David Gordon, George L. Williams.

*New London.*—William Anderson, George Fairweather, and others.

*New Milford.*—A. J. Morrison, Mason Gauson, Jacob Coggs well."

The Convention was called to order by Rev. A. G. Beman, of New Haven; the call was read by S. M. Africanus of Hartford. A hymn of solemn praise to God was sung, and the Scriptures read, and followed by prayer by the Rev. LEONARD COLLINS of Bridgeport.

George W. Francis of Bridgeport, was appointed chairman *pro tempore*, and S. M. Africanus of Hartford, Secretary, *pro tempore*.

A committee of five were appointed to prepare a list of delegates; viz: Messrs. Gordon, Burr, Posey, Williams, and L. C. Beman.

Names of delegates enrolled:

*Hartford*—Henry Foster, S. N. Africanus, Henry Nott, Alexander Posey, Perry Davis, B. Randall, Isaac Cross.

*Middletown*—G. Garrison, E. C. Freeman, G. Snipes, H. A. Thompson, J. C. Beman, L. C. Beman.

*Bridgeport*—G. W. Francis, Leonard Collins, J. Emery Burr, Charles Hubbard, Henry Davis, William Allen, Prince W. West, Tunis Green.

*New Haven*—Amos Gerry Beman, Samuel T. Gray, Thos. Cisco, Paul Hall, H. S. Merriman, Edward Galpin, William Thompson, Charles Williams, R. J. Cowes, Minius Lyman, Francis Cisco, Peter Osborn, Thomas B. Potter, Wm. F. Bouchet, John Turner, and Robert M. Park.

*Norwich*—Pelman M. Williams, David Gordon, Samuel Ellis, William Spellman.

*Stonington*—Leonard Black, J. Scott, Abraham Morrison, Nathaniel Holland.

*Danbury*—Lyman H. Peters.

*Saybrook*—Stephen Wright.

*New London*—John B. Clarke.

*New Milford*—Henry Berrian.

#### HONORARY MEMBERS.

Rev. George A. Spywood, *Springfield, Mass.*

Rev. Elymus P. Rogers, *Newark, N. J.*

Henry Bibb, *Detroit, Michigan.*

On motion, voted, to appoint a nominating committee; the following named gentlemen were appointed:

J. E. Burr, D. Gordon, L. Collins, A. G. Beman, S. T. Gray, and B. Randall.

The nominating committee reported a list of officers for the Convention; their report was accepted, and unanimously adopted; viz:

*For President*—JEHIEL C. BEMAN, of Middletown.

*For Vice Presidents.*—Henry Foster, of Hartford.

G. Garrison, of Middletown.

Leonard Collins, of Bridgeport.

Robert J. Cowes, of New Haven.

Leonard Black, of Stonington.

P. M. Williams, of Norwich.

*For Secretaries.*—S. M. Africanus, of Hartford.

J. Emery Burr, of Bridgeport.

Leverett C. Beman, of Middletown.

On the announcement of the vote, the chairman elect was conducted to the stand, and proceeded to address the Convention.

Mr. Beman expressed his high appreciation of the honor thus unexpectedly conferred upon him; he received with much diffidence the appointment to the most prominent part in the Convention, being aware of the presence of many of superior qualifications—but he would not shrink from duty and responsibility, especially in an emergency like the present, when the liberty and the hopes of the people are at peril upon the issue. He hoped that the deliberations over which he was called to preside, would be conducted in a spirit of prudence and gentlemanly concession,—with dependance upon the Divine guidance and blessing.

Mr. S. T. Gray of New Haven was introduced to the Convention, and briefly addressed the house, in behalf of New Haven City, welcoming the delegations and expressing the sympathy and co-operation of the inhabitants.

On motion, a Business Committee was elected; viz:

A. G. Beman, Leonard Collins, E. C. Freeman, George W. Francis, Henry Nott, Samuel T. Gray, David Gordon, H. A. Thompson, A. Morrison, Lyman H. Peters, and John B. Clarke.

The committee retired; during the absence of the committee, the Convention was addressed by the Rev. Mr. Spywood.

The business committee reported the following Rules for the government of the Convention, which were adopted.

#### RULES.

"1. That each session of the Convention be opened by addressing the Throne of Grace.

"2. Upon the appearance of a quorum, the President shall take the chair and call the Convention to order.

"3. The minutes of the preceeding session shall be read at the opening of each session, at which time mistakes, if there be any, shall be corrected.

"4. The President shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal of the Convention.

"5. All motions and addresses shall be made to the President, the member rising from his seat.

"6. All motions, except those of reference, shall be submitted in writing.

"7. All Committees shall be appointed by the chair unless otherwise ordered by the Convention.

"8. The previous question shall always be in order, and until decided shall preclude all amendments and debate, of the

main question and shall be put in this form, 'Shall the main question be now put?'

"9. No member shall be interrupted while speaking, except when out of order, when he shall be called to order by or through the chair.

"10. A motion to adjourn shall always be in order, and shall be decided without debate.

"11. No member shall speak more than twice on the same question without the consent of the Convention, nor more than ten minutes at each time.

"12. No resolution, except of reference, shall be offered to the Convention, except it come through the business committee; but all resolutions rejected by the committee may be presented directly to the Convention, if the maker of such wishes to do so.

"13. Sessions of the Convention shall commence at nine o'clock, P. M., and shall close at one o'clock, P. M., and at six o'clock, P. M."

They also recommend that the Convention hear the reports from delegates, on the condition and prospects of the people in their several towns. The delegates from Hartford, Middletown, Bridgeport, New Haven, Norwich, New London, and Stonington, reported very cheering intelligence of progress in their several places.

The business committee recommended the appointment of a Committee on Finance; whereupon,

Messrs. George W. Francis, H. S. Merriman, Henry Nott, George Snipes, and Lyman H. Peters were appointed.

*Voted*, That when we adjourn, we adjourn to meet at 7½ o'clock, at this place.

Adjourned; closed with the Doxology.

#### EVENING SESSION,—WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 12th, 1849.

Convention met according to adjournment; prayer by Rev. Mr. L. BLACK. The minutes of the preceding session were read and approved.

The business committee offered the following resolution;

*Resolved*, That we will urge upon our people the importance of cultivating intelligence, and sound morality as vital

to all our interests and hopes ; and to refuse their countenance or support of those who claim to be teachers, either in schools or the ministry, who are inferior to the mass of the people, in literary attainments, and therefore disqualified to be their instructors and guides.

This resolution was thoroughly and ably discussed by Messrs. Williams of Norwich, Black of Stonington, Francis of Bridgeport, Gray of New Haven, Collins of Bridgeport, Hall of New Haven, Thompson of Middletown, and Posey of Hartford, and was unanimously adopted.

Adjourned to meet at the Temple, on Thursday morning, September 13th, at 9 o'clock, A. M.

MORNING SESSION,—THURSDAY SEPT. 13th, 1849.

Convention met in the Temple ; called to order by the President, and opened with prayer by Rev. Mr. Posey. The minutes of the preceding session were read and approved.

The business committee reported resolutions for the consideration of the Convention, which were read. Whereupon, it was

*Voted*, That the resolutions be accepted, and that they be taken up separately and in the order of their presentation.

Resolution, No. 1, adopted.

No. 2, was discussed by Messrs. Collins, Spellman, Gray, and John Emery Burr, in a most able and eloquent manner, and unanimously adopted.

Resolution, No. 3, read ; on motion unanimously adopted without debate.

Resolution, No. 4 ; upon this resolution remarks were made by Messrs. Posey, Gray, Spywood, and Spellman. The resolution was adopted.

Resolution, No. 5, was supported by Messrs. Ellis, Francis, and Black, and was unanimously adopted.

It was here agreed upon to hear a statement from the Finance Committee.

Resolution, No. 6, was read ; supported by Mr. Rogers of Newark. Mr. Rogers remarked, that this was his native State, and he was gratified after a long absence to return and find his brethren engaged in a work so proper and important.

In support of the resolution, he said, "We must do as other citizens do; and pursue the same paths of respectability. Property is every where respected in this country. The gentleman urged the people to acquire possession of the soil, even at the expense of many little luxuries."

Messrs. Ellis and Spywood succeeded him, presenting similar considerations.

Adjourned; the Doxology was sung.

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### AFTERNOON SESSION.

The Convention was called to order by the President, and opened with prayer by Rev. Mr. Rogers.

The minutes of the morning session was read and approved. The roll of delegates was called.

Resolution, No. 8, was adopted without debate.

Resolution, No. 9, occasioned considerable discussion; which was participated in by Messrs. Collins, Bibb, and Ellis. It was amended and adopted.

Resolution, No. 10, was then taken up, and sustained at length by Messrs. Gordon of Norwich, and Spellman.

Mr. Collins directed the attention of the Convention to the good effects of correct moral deportment, and the constant and persevering practice of virtue, upon a people, and earnestly recommended the perseverance in such a course.

Mr. Francis also, spoke of education in general, and the duties and influence of mothers over young and expanding minds. Mr. Gray followed him, and sustained the sentiments of the resolution in a powerful and eloquent speech, which elicited the frequent applause of the large assembly of people. The resolution was adopted.

Resolutions, No. 13, 14 and 15, were here called up, and advocated by S. M. Africanus, with great ability and interest. They were also ably and fully discussed by several other members of the Convention, and adopted.

Resolution, No. 11, was called up and discussed by Messrs. Francis, Bibb, Gray and Collins, and adopted.

The business committee reported resolutions as follows:

*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to prepare an Address to the legal voters of the State, in behalf of

In support of the resolution, he said, "We must do as other citizens do; and pursue the same paths of respectability. Property is every where respected in this country. The gentleman urged the people to acquire possession of the soil, even at the expense of many little luxuries."

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The business committee reported resolutions as follows:

*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to prepare an Address to the legal voters of the State, in behalf of

the colored people, and that it be published with the minutes of this Convention.

The resolution was adopted by the Convention, and a committee accordingly appointed, consisting of Messrs. A. G. Beman, George W. Francis and Samuel T. Gray.

*Resolved.* That a committee of three be appointed to prepare an Address to the colored people of the State, and that it be also published with the minutes. Resolution unanimously adopted; S. M. Africanus, H. Nott and H. A. Thompson, appointed Committee.

The committee also recommended the appointment of a State Central Committee, with power to state the time, and issue the call for a State Convention in 1850, and to act in the interval of time, in the conduct of measures adjudged for the advancement of our political interests. Their recommendation was concurred in, and the measure adopted. The following gentlemen were appointed said committee:

*Hartford*, S. M. Africanus, H. Foster, H. Nott, and Isaac Cross; *Middletown*, Jehiel C. Beman; *New Haven*, Samuel T. Gray and Amos G. Beman; *Bridgeport*, J. Emery Burr and G. W. Francis; *Norwich*, D. Gordon; *Stonington*, L. Black; *New Milford*, A. J. Morrison; *Danbury*, Lyman H. Peters.

*Voted*, That the doings of this Convention be signed by the President and Secretaries, and published in a pamphlet.

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EVENING SESSION,—THURSDAY, SEPT. 13th, 1849.

Meeting called to order by the Chairman, at whose request the Rev. Mr. Thompson addressed prayer to God.

The minutes of the Afternoon's Session were read and adopted. The roll was called and the rules read.

Business as reported from the business committee was then taken up.

*Voted*, That a Committee of two be appointed in each place represented, whose duty it shall be to co-operate with the State Central Committee in promoting the objects of this Convention.

The appointments were then made as follows:

CORRESPONDING COMMITTEE.

*Hartford*, A. Washington and A. Posey.  
*Middletown*, L. C. Beman and H. A. Thompson.  
*Bridgeport*, Leonard Collins and Henry Davis.  
*New Haven*, R. J. Cowes and H. S. Merriman.  
*Norwich*, J. L. Smith and D. Gordon.  
*Stonington*, L. Black and J. Scott.  
*Danbury*, W. Peters and N. Thatcher.  
*New London*, J. B. Clarke.  
*New Milford*, A. J. Morrison.

*Voted*, That the report of the Committee on Finance, be published with the minutes of the Convention.

*Voted*, That S. M. Africanus, J. Emery Burr, L. C. Beman, G. W. Francis, A. G. Beman and S. T. Gray, be a Committee to publish the minutes of the Convention, and that all funds in the hands of the Finance Committee, after the expenses of the Convention are paid, be appropriated towards the expenses of the publication.

*Voted*, That the Committee on publishing the minutes furnish a suitable petition to the Legislature, praying for the right of the Elective Franchise and publish the same in the minutes.

Mr. BIBB was here introduced to the audience, and spoke upon the subject of giving the Bible to the Slaves. The following remarks by the Editor of the New Haven Palladium will give the reader an impressive view of Mr. Bibb's manner. The Preamble and Resolution which he introduced is mislaid or they would appear in this place.

"In the course of the evening, Mr. Bibb of Michigan, was called out. He offered a Resolution approving of the circulation of the Bible in those States in which there was no prohibitory statute law. He made a very eloquent speech, and in the course of it remarked, that he had been a slave many years of his life. This was surprising to us, for his color was almost a clear white, and he had the air of an experienced professional man. He maintained that the free circulation of the Scriptures was not only promotive of spiritual freedom but also of political and personal rights. He was a man of uncommon talents and evidently has improved them to the utmost since he obtained his freedom."

*Resolved*, That the thanks of the Delegates to this Convention be and hereby are presented to the President and other Officers of the Convention, for the faithful discharge of their several duties.

*Resolved*, That the Delegates of this Convention present their thanks to the citizens of New Haven for the kindness and hospitality with which they have greeted them.

Mr. A. G. Beman being called, briefly addressed the Convention.

*Voted*, That the Convention now adjourn to meet at the call of the State Central Committee.

The Doxology was sung by the whole audience standing, to the tune of Old Hundred, and the Chairman declared the Convention adjourned.

JEHIEL C. BEMAN, *President*.

S. M. AFRICANUS,

J. EMERY BURR,

L. CARTER BEMAN,

} *Secretaries*.

## RESOLUTIONS.

No. 1. *Resolved*, That we regard the right of the Elective Franchise as one of the most valuable and sacred rights of man, and at once the glory and the shield of civil Government.

No. 2. *Resolved*, That to deprive any class of men of this invaluable and inalienable right, and for a pretext release their property from a State Tax, when at the same time they must bear their part of the expenses of the general Government, is not to be considered as a favor; but is rather a measure calculated to fix upon them more deeply the mark of political degradation.

No. 3. *Resolved*, That the Constitutional disability under which colored men labor in the State of Connecticut, being founded upon that color with which the Almighty Creator has clothed them, is impious before Heaven—unjust and cruel to those effected by it—abhorrent to the religion

of JESUS CHRIST—insulting to humanity—a dishonor to the State, and an obstacle in the way of that spirit of Freedom which is abroad in the earth, struggling to redeem man the world over, and should therefore be speedily removed.

No. 4. *Resolved*, That we believe that the day has now come, when the people of our beloved State of Connecticut should remove this blot from her Constitution, and proudly and nobly take her place with that of every other State in New England, in giving to all their citizens the right of Suffrage.

No. 5. *Resolved*, That we pledge ourselves to each other, to use all honorable means to induce the good people of this State to arise in their moral strength, and in the majesty of their political dignity, and remove from the State's escutcheon that blot which now identifies her with the spirit of political tyranny.\*

No. 6. *Resolved*, That we rejoice in the efforts and progress which our brethren have made and are making to procure property, especially land, in this and various other States, and that we regard this as one of the signs of the coming of that day, when, as a people, we shall hold an eminent and dignified position in Society.

No. 7. *Resolved*, That we are encouraged by the partial success which has crowned the efforts of our brethren and the friends of freedom, without distinction of party in Ohio, and congratulate her citizens and the world on the repeal of her "Black Laws," and hope the day will speedily come when the Statute Books of every State in the Union shall be purified from all unjust and oppressive Laws.

No. 8. *Resolved*, That our interests are the same as those of our brethren in bonds, and that while we sympathize with them in their deeper afflictions, we will, to show that we "remember them as bound with them," advocate and pursue a virtuous course of conduct, that our example may have a tendency to hasten the day of our own elevation and their emancipation.

No. 9. *Resolved*, That we request every Minister of the Gospel to preach at least once in every three months, upon the important subject of total abstinence from the use of all intoxicating liquors; and thus exert a living influence against the direful evils of Intemperance.

No. 10. *Resolved*, That we recommend to all an earnest and zealous interest in the education of their children, and that they use their best endeavors to give them a thorough *mental* and *moral* training, and then introduce them into the mechanic arts, and thus prepare them to develop and sustain a virtuous and honorable station in Society.

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\* See the Speech of Hon. Mr. Clingman of North Carolina, in the last Congress.

No. 11. *Resolved*, As there appears to be a crisis in our condition as a people, it is our duty to regard carefully the position of those who, in this cause, identify themselves with us; and those among us, who deny their identity with us, should be looked upon in the light of Tories and enemies to the social and universal freedom of man.

No. 12. *Resolved*, That notwithstanding we are deprived of the right of the Elective Franchise, and deprived the privileges of citizenship, we will use our utmost endeavors to cultivate the principles of a pure morality and high intellectual attainments and by industry and economy gain property.

No. 13. *Resolved*, That this Convention deem it advisable and expedient to present the claims of the colored citizens of Connecticut to equal rights to the body of the people by the means of Lecturers. Discussed by Messrs. GRAY, SPELLMAN, and WEST, and adopted.

No. 14. *Resolved*, That those Lecturers should be colored men of intelligence and ability, residents in this State, and should be sustained by our contributions; adopted.

No. 15. *Resolved*, That the Central State Committee be, and are hereby instructed to perfect this plan of effort, and employ a sufficient number of men properly qualified, and apportion the expense among the Districts represented in this Convention.

# AN ADDRESS

## TO THE COLORED MEN OF CONNECTICUT,

*From the State Convention, held at New Haven, September 12th and 13th, 1849.*

BRETHREN:—

It is unnecessary to set forth before your minds the particulars of our political condition in the State of Connecticut. We are wronged; and our wrongs are matter of daily and humiliating experience. We are disfranchised. Our manhood and Citizenship, thus are assailed at a vital point. And this was done by the authority of the State. When freemen, irrespective of color, had enjoyed on equal terms, the elective franchise for one hundred and fifty years, under the Charter of a King, a line was drawn proscriptive, unnatural and unjust, under a republican State Constitution. But no authority can sanctify injustice and oppression. The drapery of the Law, cannot conceal their monstrous forms, nor shield them from the darts of truth. Thirty years have we been disfranchised. But our disfranchisement, odious enough in itself is the prolific source of other forms of proscription. It is a monster that multiplies itself upon us in each new form increasingly repulsive, obtruding in our very path of enterprise, knowledge, Virtue and Religion, until many have turned backward in despair from all the highways of progress. Two years ago, when Justice uttered her voice throughout Connecticut, and Liberty held her rendezvous in every town, but five thousand heeded the cry, and rallied to the standard.

What then? shall we despair? shall we cease all efforts? shall we heed those who discouragingly say "you can accomplish nothing," "it will do no good?" A moments consideration, and every one must be convinced, that hopelessly to yield the struggle is an unwise and ruinous course. "It is an eternal law of God that whosoever abandoneth himself, will the Lord forsake." They are false to nature, blind to duty, treacherous to the interests of the present, and unmindful of coming generations, who advise us to bear unresistingly the burthen of oppression.

It is no doubtful right for which we contend. It lies at the foundation of our republican government. The doctrine is prominently set forth in our countrys Constitution that "all just governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed." The People are the recognized source of power. This is the distinctive feature both of our National and State Governments. But the foundation is overthrown, if the expression of choice or consent is trammelled, or suppressed, by, prohibitory enactments. There are exceptions to the general law as in the case of women, minors, aliens,

adoption to any considerable extent, must secure comfort, open the way to competence, and result in stability and independence of character.

The deep injuries we have inflicted on ourselves by partaking of the deadly intoxicating draught were not there forgotten. Our clergymen are called upon to bring the hallowed influences of religion to bear upon this subject, so thoroughly connected with all our hopes and aspirations. Every man should be careful to maintain a proper degree of self respect, as the infallible method of commanding the respect of others. But let no man think to exalt himself by standing aloof from his people; but on the contrary, everywhere identifying himself with them, and laboring earnestly and patiently for the elevation and welfare of all. In the spirit of resolution, No. 11, let each recognise, honor, and defend his proscribed and oppressed brother, and in all lawful ways seek his advancement.

The subject of education received as it justly deserved, particular attention, and assumed a prominent place in the discussions of the convention. True our educational advantages are not great, and on that account should they be more highly prized, and no opportunity to improve them lost. We find the doors of the high schools, academies and seminaries generally closed against our children. But there is now no statutory prohibition. No teacher need now fear *arrest, fine, and imprisonment*, for his labor of love in teaching a colored child. No colored young lady need tremble at a town's threatening of "ten stripes on the naked back" for presuming to enter Connecticut in the pursuit of knowledge.

Let it be remembered brethren, that these and other measures are proposed in answer to the general question, "What shall be done?" and not as a means necessary to entitle us to enfranchisement. Our title to that is perfect, already; for did we, as a mass, possess every qualification requisite to the good citizen in the highest perfection, nothing material would be added to the strength of our claim to the franchise. Our only argument for that is, and must ever be, the broad and conclusive one, that it is OUR RIGHT, as native born MEN, Citizens of this great Republic, and members of the Commonwealth of Connecticut. The value and wisdom of the measures recommended to you, are seen in their tendency to increase our strength, to multiply the number of our friends, and as a means of enabling us to wield more intelligently and effectively the

"Weapons that come down as still  
As snow-flakes fall upon the sod,  
But executes a Freeman's will,  
As lightning does the will of God."

And furthermore, we must labor directly, continually, and unitedly, to accomplish our object. It has been asserted by a great and philosophic mind, that "there is nothing that hath any spark of God in it but the more it is suppressed the more it rises." Let us verify, in ourselves the truth of the maxim. Let us arise in our might, and scatter the living coals of Truth upon the consciences of our fellow citizens of Connecticut;—let us repeat the story of our wrongs, in their ears, until it shall affect their hearts, and influence favorably their votes. Let there be no hesitancy to make sacrifices, to sustain and vindicate our cause. What there is of resolution and vigor—what we possess of manliness and energy, must be brought to bear upon the question of our rights, with unwavering hope,

and firm reliance upon the irresistible arm, that will turn and overturn, until Justice, and Judgment are prevalent throughout the earth.

We need not fear the result. *We must succeed!* "It is an eternal law that whosoever assists himself, him will the Lord assist." The issue is fairly between principle and prejudice—between well founded right, and blind perversity—between reason and passion; can it be doubted which shall conquer in such a contest? The people can be reached. Their hearts are not enclosed within impregnable walls. "Connecticut," says one of her many eminent sons, "though slow to move, moves sure and strong, when she is aroused; she is cautious and prudent, but when she sees the reason for a change, she will change in earnest." She will perceive that Righteousness exalts a nation. That it is the true foundation of national advancement and prosperity. Righteousness towards God in the acknowledgment of His divine claims and the practice of piety and duty; and righteousness toward man by the establishment of *justice* and *equity*, and the recognition of the universal brotherhood.

Then shall her righteousness break forth as the light, and her glory as the noonday sun.

S. M. AFRICANUS,  
HENRY NOTT,  
HENRY A. THOMPSON.

TO THE

VOTERS OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

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FELLOW CITIZENS:—

The undersigned were appointed, at the Convention of colored men, held in the city of New Haven, Sept. 12th and 13th, 1849, "for the purpose of considering the political disabilities" under which we labor, a Committee to address you upon that important subject—a duty which we would now respectfully perform.

We know that in your hands, under God, are found the keys of our political destiny—that it is for you to say whether we shall enjoy the same rights and privileges which other men enjoy, and whether the invidious mark of political degradation shall be removed or not. We approach you, believing that you are to be influenced by truth and reason,—that you are alive to the interests and honor of the State—that the spirit of freedom has still an altar in your hearts and a home in your bosoms—in the light of which you recognize and respond to the great truth of the American Independence—"that all men are created free and equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—a declaration which your Fathers' wrote, and with ours sealed with their patriot blood on the fields of battle in "days that tried men's souls;" and while you are unwilling to write *hypocrite* upon their tombs—we are unwilling longer to remain silent and disfranchised, upon that soil from which the blood of our Fathers is crying to us to awake and secure a participation in those rights for which, either as Slave, or soldier-slaves, they toiled to gain for this country.

Duty to ourselves and to our children, fidelity to the great principles of impartial justice and a deep regard for the dignity of the State, compels us to seek a redress of our grievances at your hands.

It is true that some may oppose us and cry silence; but what would they have us do in this day and age of the world, with the history of this country and especially of New England before us, teaching us that "the soul is dead that slumbers"—what would they have us do when the glorious spirit of freedom is abroad in the earth with its quickening energies, inspiring the hearts of men with the sacred fire of that liberty which cannot be quenched—whose power every man must feel. To all "those who would repress all tendencies to liberty and emancipation," we would remark in the language of one,\* whose name and influence will endure as long as this Republic remains, that they must "go back to the era of our

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\* Hon. Henry Clay, 1837.

Liberty and Independence, and muzzle the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return. They must revive the slave trade with all its train of atrocities. They must suppress the workings of British philanthropy, seeking to meliorate the condition of the unfortunate West Indian slaves. They must arrest the career of South American deliverance from thralldom. They must blow out the moral lights around us, and extinguish that greatest torch of all which America presents to a benighted world, pointing the way to their rights, their liberties, and their happiness. And when they have achieved all these purposes, their work will be yet incomplete. They must penetrate the human soul, and eradicate the light of reason and the love of liberty. Then, and not till then, when universal darkness and despair prevail, can you perpetuate slavery, and repress all sympathies and all humane and benevolent efforts among freemen."

We ask you to appreciate and honor such noble sentiments, and remove from us that mark of political degradation which was unjustly fixed upon us at the time when the present State Constitution was adopted.

"The rights of man do not depend upon the accidents of his birth, or color, or clime—man's rights are those which God and nature have established, and are therefore called natural rights—such as life and liberty, and need not the aid of human laws to be more effectually invested in every man than they are: neither do they receive any additional strength, when declared by the municipal laws to be inviolate; on the contrary, no human Legislature has power to abridge or destroy them unless the owner himself shall commit some act which amounts to their forfeiture."\*

But how can the rights of any class of men be safe, or secure, when they have no voice at the ballot-box? when they are stripped of the freeman's helmet, sword and shield—the elective franchise? Who shall guard their interests, when those in whom the spirit of prejudice and injustice is found, make and administer all the laws by which the wronged and oppressed are to be governed?

No one will pretend that we have by any crime forfeited our rights. In the providence of God we are here. Our fathers were torn from their native country and brought to this land by the cruel hand of oppression—here they died the victims of outrage and cupidity, and now, we, their descendants, say in that language which your Pilgrim Fathers thought and expressed in this their then wilderness home, when surrounded by the storms of Winter, and the yells of the Savage, "*Qui transtulit, sustinet.*"

Ours is the claim of *humanity*. We are aware that the spirit of infidelity denies our claim to the privileges of a common brotherhood; and that it sometimes finds an utterance in places where reason would teach us to expect better things. We are sensible of the influence which appeals and declarations like the following exert when addressed to the prejudices of men. "Who," says the writer, "shall respect a people who do not respect their own blood? If it is to be seen a few ages hence, that the blood of the Miltons, the Hampdens, the Hookers and the Winthrops, has every where drunk of the muddy waters of the Niger, the profanation will declare itself in a people dulled in their wits, without manhood or spiritual force."†

\* Sir Wm. Blackstone.

† Rev. Dr. Bushnell's Oration before the Society of Phi Beta Kappa in Yale College, 1837.

We do not say with what grace this comes from one anointed to preach the truth of that God, who "hath made of *one blood* all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."\* But how cruel to reproach those whose fathers were slaves for years, and whose descendants are still denied all their political rights—the foundation and security of all other rights in the civil compact—denied access to the advantages of Colleges and Seminaries of learning—the victims of a prejudice which knows neither reason or mercy—continually mocked and insulted with impunity by a corrupt public sentiment; and when they turn their almost despairing eyes to the minister of Christ, instead of hearing a triumphant vindication of God's eternal truth, are greeted with the raven cry of infidelity, and stigmatized and scorned as "a people dulled in their wits, without manhood or spiritual force."

What has literature and science ever done for us in this land, with the consent and co-operation of many who now taunt and reproach us?

Would not a familiarity with the minds of the MILTONS, the LOCKES, the BLACKSTONES and COKES, the NEWTONS, and KEPLERS, the EDWARDS and DWIGHTS, expand and enrich our intellectual powers? Were the gates unbarred and the obstacles removed from the path which leads to that "summit from whence fames proud temple shines afar"—are there not many among us who would rejoice to "trim the mid-night lamp, and then write their names in honor upon the walls of that Temple? Give us the same rights and advantages—present us with the same motives for action which now operate upon other minds in the community, and then see if we are "a people dulled in their wits—without manhood or spiritual force;" but why chain the lion and then beat him because he does not run—why clip the wings of the Eagle and then scorn him because he does not soar?

We feel that we have a claim upon this State, and a right to be treated as other citizens are treated—and we have the opinions of some of the most eminent men in the State to sustain us. "Need I tell this honorable Court," says one of the most respectable names of Connecticut, and one whom the State has delighted to honor, "that we owe a debt to the colored population of this country which we can never pay—no, never, never, unless we can call back oceans of tears, and all the groans and agonies of the middle passage, and the thousand and millions of human beings whom we have sent, and are sending ignorant, debased, and undone to eternity." †

We might point to a long list of the brightest names in this and various other States, who have been our faithful friends—without distinction of sect in religion, or *parties* in politics.

What evils would result to the State if free suffrage was granted? What is our condition and numbers? Without undertaking to prove to a christian people that it is always safe to do right—in behalf of our people we desire to say that

1st. As a class they have been and are rapidly increasing in intelligence. We know of but few, very few, who are not able to read and write, and of no families that are not endeavoring to educate their children in the rudiments of those branches taught in our Common Schools; and

\* Acts 17, 26.

† Gov. Wm. W. Ellsworth's plea for Miss Crandall.

some of them are bestowing upon their children a knowledge of the higher branches of an English education.

2d. There has been a great addition in the amount of property held by them, within a few years. The precise amount held, we have not the means of knowing, but from investigations which have been made—(and our attention has been called to this subject at all the annual meetings of the Society,)—we know that the amount has largely increased, and as far as we can judge, is more than three hundred thousand dollars.

3d. The same improvement is manifested in our moral condition. As a people we have made steady progress in the principles and practice of temperance. In some respects we have been in advance of the white population;—we formed the *first* State Temperance Society upon the principle of Total Abstinence from the use of all intoxicating drinks, and have held a greater number of annual and semi-annual meetings of the Society than any other State Society in the United States, and our efforts have not been in vain, as the rapid spread of Temperance principles among us, and the flourishing condition of our auxiliary Societies abundantly prove. Having to a great extent succeeded in banishing the use of intoxicating drinks, our social and domestic happiness has been greatly promoted.

4th. A similar progress has been made in our religious improvements. At the time the Constitution was adopted, but few of our people were professors of religion. They had no places of worship of their own, and no ministers of religion to teach and guide them;—now they have fourteen places of worship, and in most of them they have Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes, which are a means of great good. Besides this, there are a large number of our people in different parts of the State who worship with white congregations, and are communicants in their churches.—This shows how great their improvement in this respect has been since the adoption of the provision in the Constitution of which we complain, and which we hope will now be removed.

In view of these facts, showing as they do, such a marked improvement in our physical, mental, social and moral condition, we ask: Why should we not be allowed to vote? That the few who live in this State would corrupt its politics, is an objection that has not enough of truth in it to save it from ridicule. What are nine thousand people among three hundred and twelve thousand, or 1,600 voters among 65,000?—and what is there in our character which warrants the apprehension of evil to the people of this State, should they extend to us the right of suffrage?

It is asked—why we wish for the right of the elective franchise when we have made such improvements without it? We answer: we have made this improvement not *because* of this deprivation of our civil rights, *but in spite of it*, under the discouraging influences which always attend such a deprivation, and we have therefore shown ourselves worthy of the rights we ask at your hands. Political disfranchisement tends to political, social and moral degradation, just as truly as the possession and exercise of political rights tends to elevate the political, social and moral condition of a people. We are your fellow citizens—native born and with you we must live and die. You have an interest then whether you feel it or not, in our welfare; in our being intelligent, virtuous and good citizens. We cannot be ignorant, vicious and degraded without an injury to yourselves. It is for your good as well as our own, that we should be attached to the Government and have confidence in the equity of its laws, and in the justice of its administration. But the surest way to degrade us, is to disfran-

chise us; the most direct way to make us bad citizens is to treat us as aliens.

We do not wish to be pointed at as a degraded class in the community. Neither do we believe that the color of the skin is any indication either of virtue, wisdom, or justice any more than it is of personal degradation; but we regard it as a physical manifestation for which an ALL WISE CREATOR is alone responsible. We ask the right of suffrage upon the same principles upon which the men of the revolution fought the battles of their country, that "Taxation and Representation should go together." True, we have been exempted from a State tax, by an Act of the Legislature. But this does not exempt us from paying our proportion of the expenses of the General Government.

The State tax is not probably one twentieth the amount of the indirect tax collected through the medium of the National Revenue. On every tarified article we consume, we are taxed. Of this we do not complain. We have never *asked* to be relieved from our portion of the burdens of government. We only ask to be allowed to discharge the duties, and exercise the rights of freemen. We appeal to the good citizens of this State, now to arise and do us justice—to blot out this unjust distinction from the fundamental law of the State, and no longer crush a people, who are making every effort in their power to do their part nobly in life's race.

We are determined to pursue the "even tenor of our way," improving our minds and morals, and increasing the amount of our property.

We are determined to plead for our political rights in the name of justice and humanity, inspired by the spirit of the age and the example of every other State in New England.

We are determined to do this with our pens and our voices, and all the humble means in our power as long as there is a thought in our minds, or a pulsation in our hearts; we shall plead with you, if need be, as long as there is a rock in our mountains or a wave on our shores. To this purpose we have "bound ourselves as with hooks of steel."

We appeal to you in the sacred name of justice and ask: Is it right to disfranchise us when our fathers either as slaves, toiled away their lives in your service, or as soldiers in the "tented field" of bloody conflict, battled until the Independence of this country was achieved?

We appeal to you as Christians, and ask you in the name of Christians, Is it Christ-like to treat the "the heir of a common salvation" thus invidiously?

We appeal to you in the behalf of the tarnished honor of this State, and ask you to wipe off this stain from her escutcheon, and place her nobly by the side of her sister New England States that she may be an example to the Union of Freedom, Justice, and an impartial administration of her Government, as she ever has been of Industry, Intelligence, Virtue and Religion.

We ask it that when your sons shall come up to fill your honored places, they may not feel that you, their Fathers, neglected or refused to do an act of Justice which you might have performed with so much glory to yourselves, and usefulness to others.

We ask it in the name of all our people who are striving with all the energy and devotion in their power, to promote their Moral, Intellectual, Social and Religious elevation.

In the full confidence of the justice of our cause and the certainty that Truth and Reason will ultimately triumph, we submit the foregoing in behalf of the Colored People of Connecticut.

AMOS G. BEMAN.  
GEO. W. FRANCIS.  
SAM'L. T. GRAY.

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF FINANCE.

DR.		CR.	
Cash paid Postage and Paper,	\$1.90	Cash received, New Haven,	\$22.44
“ printing papers, contingencies, State Lecturer, &c. - - - - }	47.34	“ Hartford, - -	14.00
“ Stationery, - - - - }	.34	“ Bridgeport, - -	11.00
“ for Temple, - - - - }	8.00	“ Middletown, - -	7.37
“ Sexton, - - - - }	.75	“ Norwich, - -	6.00
“ on hand towards paym't for Printing the Proceedings this Conven. }	49.98	“ Stonington, - -	3.00
		“ Danbury, - -	1.00
		“ Saybrook, - -	1.50
		“ J. B. Clarke, N. L.	2.00
		“ Mr. N. of N. H.	1.00
		“ Collections, - -	39.00
	\$108.31		\$108.31

GEORGE W. FRANCIS, *Chairman.*

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*To the Honorable, the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:*

The undersigned, inhabitants of the State of Connecticut, pray your Honorable Body to take such legal and proper measures as may be necessary to have the word “white” erased from the qualification for Electors, in the sixth Article and second Section of the Constitution.

And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.