

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW ENGLAND CONVENTION (1859)

On August 1, 1859, a New England Colored Citizens Convention met in Boston. Delegates from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maine, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Canada were in attendance. The Convention assembled to take into consideration "the best means of promoting" the "moral, social and political elevation" of blacks within New England and throughout the free states. Because the Fugitive Slave Law and the Dred Scott decision had "distracted and unsettled" blacks and made inroads upon their rights, it was necessary that "they come together that they may compare notes, talk over the cause of their sufferings, and see if any thing can be done to better their condition."

In general, the Convention reiterated the themes of the black convention movement throughout the period. It attacked the program of the American Colonization Society and its newer black version, the African Civilization Society. It condemned "ignorance and intemperance" and urged blacks to educate their children in the "professions or trades" that they might thereby gain "wealth and influence." While the Convention praised Massachusetts for allowing blacks to vote, in a ringing resolution it lamented the caste system and discrimination against free blacks in the North.

This prejudice pervades every grade and contaminates every portion of society with its pestilential effluvia; that there has not been exemplified, in the treatment we have received in the evangelical church, any evidence of vital piety; that the prejudice against our color finds admission in the habitations of rich and poor, the noble and ignoble, the peasant and the peer, the philosopher and the divine; it hovers over the courts of judicature; it visits periodically the pulpit and executive chair; it resides in the merchant's palace and the yeoman's cot; it is depicted upon the lawyer's physiognomy, the politician's and the poet's brain, and the itinerant scribbler's closet is its welcome habitation. It is the barrier to our elevation, and has a crushing and blighting influence upon the hopes and happiness of the rising generation; and we will never cease our denunciations against it, while our race is the victim of its unhallowed and debasing effects.

The Convention supported those endeavoring to secure equal school rights for blacks in Rhode Island "because it is a blow in the right direction, inasmuch as its success is so desirable as an example to other States, and as a means to the elevation of our people in the land." The remainder of the Convention was given over to a discussion of the program of the African Civilization Society.

NEW ENGLAND COLORED CITIZENS' CONVENTION AUGUST 1, 1859

Pursuant to Call, a Convention of the Colored Citizens of New England, to take into consideration the best means of promoting their moral, social and political elevation, gathered in the Meionaon, in Boston, on Monday morning, Aug. 1st, 1859.

Large delegations were in attendance from New Bedford, Springfield and Worcester, Massachusetts; from Rhode Island, Connecticut and Maine. New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Canada, and other sections of the Union, were also represented.

The stand of the President and the tables of the reporters were graced with elegant bouquets, presented by the ladies.

Before the transaction of any business, the audience sang a hymn commencing:--

'Ho! children of the brave,
Ho! freemen of the land,
That hurled into the grave
Oppression's bloody band!
Come on, come on, and joined be we
To make the fettered bondman free!'

The Convention was called to order at 10 o'clock, A.M., by Wm. Wells Brown, who read the call. It was then temporarily organized by the choice of Rev. Amos G. Beman, of Maine, as Chairman, and Bela C. Perry, of New Bedford, as Secretary.

The following were appointed a Committee on Permanent Organization:-- John W. Lewis,¹ Maine; Lewis Hayden, Henry O. Remington, Mark R. De Mortie, James Jefferson.

Prayer was offered by Rev. J. N. Gloucester, of New York.²

A resolution fixing the basis of representation, and requesting each member of the Convention to pay a dollar towards the expenses, was debated and adopted.

A Committee on Rolls was then appointed, as follows:--Henry Weeden, Jeremiah Harvey, Edward M. Bannister, J. N. Gloucester.

Charles Lenox Remond remarked that this Convention would be regarded as something of a curiosity, even in old Boston, and many people would look in upon its deliberations from motives of curiosity, and from other motives; but he hoped that colored people would not stand in the doors, and look in upon the Convention as upon a menagerie. If they had no interest here, they had better go somewhere else, (Hear, hear, and applause.) The throngs at the door did not diminish.

An original song, by Wm. Wells Brown, was then sung in a fine manner, to the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne.' The following is the first stanza:--

'Fling out the anti-slavery flag
On every swelling breeze;
And let its folds wave o'er the land,
And o'er the raging seas,
Till all beneath the standard-sheet
With new allegiance bow,
And pledge themselves to onward bear
The emblem of their vow.'

In the absence of the Nominating Committee, Wm. Wells Brown addressed the Convention, as follows:

Mr. President and Fellow-Citizens:--The propriety of holding a Convention of the colored citizens of the New England States has been questioned. Some think that the time has gone by for having such a Convention; others are of opinion that the time has not arrived. I confess that I am unfavorable to any gathering that shall seem like taking separate action from our white fellow-citizens; but it appears to me that just at the present time, such a meeting as this is needed. The colored people in the free States are in a distracted

and unsettled condition. The Fugitive Slave Law, the Dred Scott Decision, and other inroads made upon the colored man's rights, make it necessary that they should come together that they may compare notes, talk over the cause of their sufferings, and see if any thing can be done to better their condition. Our old enemy the Colonization Society has taken advantage of the present state of feeling among us, and is doing all in its power to persuade us to go to Africa; the Emigration scheme has new life, and another enemy, under the name of the African Civilization Society,³ has sprung into existence, and beckons us to a home in a foreign land. Now, Mr. President, if this Convention shall do nothing more than to inspire our people with confidence in themselves, and cause them to resolve never to leave this their native land, it will have accomplished a good work. Our right to live here is as good as the white man's, and is incorporated in the Declaration of Independence, in the passage which declares 'that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' Then let us remain here, and claim our rights upon the soil where our fathers fought side by side with the white man for freedom. Let us remain here, and labor to remove the chains from the limbs of our brethren on the banks of the Mississippi. Yes, let us stay here, and vindicate our right to citizenship, and pledge ourselves to aid in completing the Revolution for human freedom, commenced by the patriots of 1776, and see our country as free as the air we breathe.

We must take a manly stand, bid defiance to the Fugitive Slave Law, Dred Scott Decision, and every thing that shall attempt to fasten fetters upon us. We will let our white fellow-citizens see that we know our rights, and, knowing, will maintain them.

I hope, Mr. President, that this Convention will stimulate our people to self-elevation. 'They who would be free themselves must strike the blow,' means something more than striking at our fellow-man. We must free ourselves from ignorance and intemperance, and show that we respect ourselves, and this will wring respect from our enemies. We must educate our children, give them professions or trades, and let them have a capital within themselves, that shall gain them wealth and influence. We must recommend to our people to become possessors of the soil, to leave the large cities, take to farming, and make themselves independent. And lastly, we must try to stir within them more interest in the Anti-Slavery cause. It is a lamentable fact, that colored men take too little interest in Conventions called by our white fellow-citizens. Had they gone into those meetings and taken part, as they should, this Convention would have been somewhat out of place.

Mr. Brown's remarks were cut short by the return of the Nominating Committee, who, through John W. Lewis, reported the following list of officers for the permanent organization of the Convention:--

President
GEORGE T. DOWNING, of Rhode Island.⁴

Vice Presidents--Ezra R. Johnson, Samuel Harrison, and John T. Hilton, of Massachusetts; Amos G. Beman, of Maine; Isaac Rice, of Rhode Island; William Anderson, of Connecticut; A. N. Freeman, of New York; William Still, of Pennsylvania; Jared Gray, of Illinois; J. Sella Martin,⁵ New York; Lewis Clark, Canada.

Secretaries--Charles H. Gardner, Boston; A. G. Jourdain, Jr., New Bedford; John T. Waugh, Providence; Wm. H. Leonard, New York.

On motion of Mr. Brown, a committee of two was appointed to wait on the President, and conduct him to the chair. He was received with much applause. He was met by the Chairman *pro tem.*, who presented him, in behalf of the ladies of the Convention, with a beautiful vase of white roses, fucias, and other flowers, as a token of their appreciation of his noble labors in behalf of school rights in Rhode Island. The presentation was accompanied with a very neat speech.

The following Business Committee was then appointed:--William C. Nell, Harry O. Remington, John W. Lewis, George Allen, James Jefferson, Bela C. Perry, Lewis Hayden, J. N. Gloucester, Edward B. Lawton, Wm. Wells Brown, Mrs.

Ruth Rice Remond, Mark R. DeMortie, Robert Gordon, Mrs. Eliza Logan Lawton, Henry Johnson.

The President then delivered the following address:--

A few days ago, a friend wrote to me, and said that it was the intention of some of my friends to present my name for the Presidency of this Convention. He urged me to be present. I felt a delicacy, because of a consciousness of my inability to properly discharge the trust that might be imposed; or rather, because I thought that there would be those present who would discharge the same with greater credit to themselves, and to the Convention. But my friends urging, I finally consented to serve, should the Convention manifest a desire that I should do so. So the honor you have conferred upon me in electing me your President is not altogether a surprise. But this unexpected surprise--the bouquet presented through you, kind sir, by the ladies of Boston, is more than I had any reason to expect. You say that they present it as a testimonial in appreciation of my efforts in Rhode Island, in behalf of equal school rights. It is true that I have labored for the same, but I have done no more than my duty. I have labored in this direction, because to me it seemed that in it lay the path of duty; that in it I might not only serve justice and right, but my people and myself--my little ones.

Allow me to assure you, that whilst I have found the path rugged, difficult, and in many cases unpleasant, yet ever and anon I have encountered bright spots. I have ever felt that I had, as my companions cheering me, justice, right and truth; and I am proud to receive these garlands at your hand to encircle their brows; for unto them it is mete to award the praise.

Gentlemen, I have not left the plough to come into counsel, as did some men of old; but I have, I may say, stolen away from engagements in my calling, to have the advantage of being with you to-day, upon matters pertaining to our rights as men, and as Americans.

The great consideration that presses upon me is, What may we do to make ourselves of more importance in community--necessary, indispensable? To sustain such a relation as this to community, (and it is possible,) is to secure, beyond a question, all the respect; is to make sure the enjoyment of all the rights that the most deferred to of the land enjoy. Society is deferential; it defers to power. Learning and wealth and power are most potent in society. It is not necessary that many men and women of us be wealthy and learned, before we can force respect as a class; but it is necessary that we exhibit a proportionate representative character for learning and wealth, to be respected. It is not numbers alone, it is not universal wealth, it is not general learning, that secures to those, known by a distinction in society as whites, that gains them power; for they are not generally wealthy, not commonly learned. The number of these among them, as in all communities, is limited; but that number form a representative character, some of whom excel; hence they have power--the class enjoy a name.

There is another sense of power in community, which, though silent, has its weight--it should be most potent: that power is moral character. This also, like the other powers of which I have spoken, need not be universal to have an effect favorable to a class. I think that I am not claiming too much for the colored people in asserting that we have a decent representation in this respect; a most remarkable, and, considering all the depressing influences which the present and preceding generations have had to struggle up under. Happily, this power on community is not growing less; it is on the increase. An illustration of the correctness of my position as to the power of a representative character for wealth and learning in commanding respect, is forcibly exhibited in the Celts in our midst, who come among us poor and ignorant, and who, consequently, fill menial, dependant positions. They are the least respected of all emigrants. In speaking thus, I am simply dealing with facts, not intending to be invidious. The German element, mingling into the general element which comes among us, representing a higher intelligence, more wealth, with great practical industry, is silently stealing a hold, a power in the nation, because of these possessions, at which native America will yet start. Now, gentlemen, if these be facts, is it not well for us, as sensible men here assembled, to consider our best interest--to have in view these sources of power? Would it not be well to consider these--to fall upon some plan by which we may possess or excite to the possession of them--rather than

devote much of our time in a discussion as to the injustice of our fellow-countrymen in their relation to us? Of this they know full well, and we too bitterly.

The ballot is a power in this country, which should not be lost sight of by us. Were it more generally exercised by the colored people, the effect would be very perceptible. Those of them, residents of the States that deny them the privilege of the elective franchise, should earnestly strive to have the right and the power secured to them; those who have it, should never let an occasion pass, when they may consistently exercise it, without doing so. We know that the government and the States have acted most unfairly in their relation to us; but that government and the States, in doing so, have clearly disregarded justice, as well as perverted the legal interpretation of the supreme law of the land, as set forth in its Constitution; which facts alone require that we exercise the right to vote, whenever we can, toward correcting this injustice. Were it known on election day that any colored man would deposit a vote, that there would be a concert of action in doing so, the effect would be irresistible. Cannot such a vote be passed at the approaching Presidential election? Will the Republican party, (a party which is entitled to credit for the service it has rendered to the cause of Freedom,) put in nomination, in 1860, a man for whom we can, with some degree of consistency, cast our ballots? It has such men in its ranks--prominent men of the party--men who are available.

I would have it noted, that we cannot vote for a man who subscribes to the doctrine, that, in struggling for freedom in a Presidential or any other election, he ignores the rights of the colored man.

There is an increased as well as an increasing respect for us in community. This is not simply because we have friends, (all praise to them,) who speak out boldly and uncompromisingly for the right: in fact, the most of their efforts have been directed towards relieving the country of the blight and of the injustice of slavery; but it is because our character, as a class, is better understood.

I was at school a pupil, when a colored boy was locked-up in a recitation room to produce a composition on a given subject, that the incredulity of the visitors might be satisfied; they doubting the capacity of a colored boy to produce a composition. Such an idea would, at present, be scouted; such a reflection would now, by the boy, be indignantly resented. At that day, if a colored person went to collect a bill, he was inquired of, 'Can you write your name?' Now it is taken for granted. In all of our various marts may be seen colored men and boys, computing thousands without pencil or paper, with the rapidity of thought. These acquirements do not stop here, which fact is beginning to be known; but these are common ones, with which community is becoming familiar, and all of which are creating respect.⁶

I will read some testimony from one of the papers of this city, the *Boston Courier*, a paper which I have heard styled Boston's pro-slavery organ. Whether it be a misnomer or not, I leave the Boston delegation to say; but this I do know,--I have read in its columns something that looked like a stealing of Anti-Slavery thunder. It said, not long ago, speaking in reference to the abolition of caste in the public schools of Boston, that--

'The abolitionists did set this ball in motion, and are fairly entitled to the credit of it. We may here say that we contemplate the change with unmingled satisfaction. We rejoice that colored men are not set apart in our churches from their white brethren, and that children of the two races sit side by side upon the same benches at school.

'This can do us no harm, but only good. If we are the superior race as we claim to be, we can in no way better show our superiority than by helping the inferior race to share in our progress.'

At another time it said that--

'The colored population of Boston, during the last twenty-five years, has made very distinct and decided progress, and such progress is most honorable to them. They lead more moral and reputable lives; they are possessed of more property, and live more comfortably; they are more anxious to improve their own minds, and to educate their children--indeed, their anxiety to have

their children well educated, and the honest pains and sacrifices they are at to have them neatly dressed, are most creditable to them. These things show that they are entirely worthy of the boon which has been bestowed upon them, now in every town and city in the State, of having their children educated at the same schools with the whites.

'We are glad of this progress; we are also glad of the gradual melting away of the prejudices once entertained by their white brethren towards them. Certainly there never was any thing more unchristian than the spectacle which we can remember in the parish churches of New England, of a few colored worshippers stuck up in a sort of swallow's nest pew under the eaves, as if they were lepers or pariahs. The man whose devotions are disturbed by having a family of well-behaved and decently dressed colored persons in the pew next to him may know much of the doctrines of Christianity, but is very little imbued with its spirit. We think Massachusetts is honorably distinguished by its bearing towards its colored population, not merely by giving them equal political privileges with the whites, but by the increasing willingness of its people to recognize their social rights, and to deal with them in a spirit of humanity and Christianity.'

Thus you see that we have a hopeful, and I will add, an inseparable, providential identity with this country; with its institutions, with the ideas connected with its formation, which were the uplifting of man--universal brotherhood. The Congress of the Confederation said in April, 1783, 'Let it be remembered, finally, that it has ever been the pride and boast of America, that the rights for which she contended were the rights of human nature. By the blessings of the Author of these rights on the means exerted for their defence, they have prevailed against all opposition, and form the basis of thirteen independent States.' We are the life of the nation's existence; a nation must have issues to exhibit vitality. All of the great principles of the land are brought out and discussed in connection with the Negro. But for him, there would be a sameness; the great principles, the great ethical school of the times, would be closed for the want of a subject. We are the alphabet; upon us, all are constructed. We, the descendants, to a great extent, of those most unjustly held in bondage, whose forefathers in Africa lived through ages of ignorance and superstition, against whom the world has been in arms; these were the most fit subjects to be selected to work out in perfection the realization of a great principle, the fraternal unity of man. This is AMERICA'S MISSION. We suffer in the interim; but we can, as is abundantly proven, endure. We can and do hope. We are not, and cannot be, unmindful of Fugitive Slave Laws, Dred Scott decisions, American Colonization Societies, and the latest, the African Civilization Society; these we can see through and endure. They may be regarded as sequences; they do annoy, but cannot permanently affect us. We will not be driven off; we will rear and educate our children here, in this our native land, around our sacred altars; altars which our children's children will gaze upon here, and, if needs be, reconstruct; in a climate and a home congenial to us, and to the development of mind and manhood. All of the injustice and wrong that has, or may be heaped upon us--and it may come heavier--will not crush out that heaven-giving part of our nature, patriotism, love of home, of our native hills, of our verdant valleys.

The African slave trade will be opened. The effect will be the further introduction into the country of the African element--a needed element. Aside from this providential idea linking us with the country, which forbids our leaving it, even to engage in the Herculean task of going to Africa to take upon our shoulders a hundred and fifty millions of people, residents of another country, of a strange, and to us murderous land, to civilize and enlighten them; I think that we have not yet developed, or even had the chance to develop, the character necessary for such an undertaking. Such a character must grow out of the experience that begets wealth from learning, together with keen moral perceptions. Have we such a character? Twenty-five to thirty years is no unusual length of time for a man favorably situated, after he has begun to realize the true importance of wealth and intelligence, to acquire a reputation in these respects. That which is true of individuals, is most likely to be true of a class. Have we been thus favorably circumstanced? Have we studiously realized the importance of wealth and intelligence? Has

not the studied policy of our oppressors been to ignore our manhood, crush out all aspirations? Go back with me twenty-five years. Do we not observe that the colored man enjoyed the advantages that he did, rather as favors than as of right? Did there seem to be a perfect conception of his rights as a man? Is not this even too true of to-day? I know that, in legislation, in administration, when our government was formed, that the government acknowledged the citizenship of the colored man of the country. The Constitution guaranteed it: which citizenship is, or should be, the basis of our national rights. It is further known that the States acted upon the same; as is satisfactorily seen by their having colored citizens along with white citizens, through representatives selected by them, to make laws for the government of the same. It is also true that some colored men, conscious of their manhood, that they were natives of the country, that they had stood side by side with their white fellow-countrymen in the battles that secured the freedom and rights of a common country, felt, demanded and exercised the prerogatives of American citizenship. Yes, as I have asserted, we have not yet developed the necessary character to go among a people, to christianize, civilize, and teach them the science of government. Nor is the fault entirely ours. We have our men, but not a single representative man to spare. The debased, the indifferent, should not be shipped off to Africa. Africa is crying out already, 'Send us no more of such.'

I wish it to be most emphatically noticed, that WE DO NOT DESPAIR—that we are scanning the bright future. Our hope is in the rising generation. We look to the public school. This is the great tutor, here, where mind jostles with mind, where consciousness of equality is taught; in the public school, where our children are being educated to confident manly contact.

When we shall have worked out our redemption here, when we shall not be chargeable with cowardice in fleeing from difficulties that can and should be overcome, then may many of us, with our fellow-countrymen, take up the missionary cross, in other missionary fields. But let us first get wealthy, intelligent and wise here in our native land. As for slavery, it is doomed. Whether it is to end by peaceful or bloody means, I cannot say—I hope by the former.

A resolution which the famous Committee of Thirteen in the city of New York, composed of colored men, adopted in 1850, now occurs to me.⁷ It said that many of the ablest men of the country, both in and out of Congress, were racking their brains to conceive some compromise by which the question of slavery could be settled; but it was their deliberate opinion that it would not be settled, or have any rest, until slavery was abolished. Does not nine years' experience strengthen the conviction which these thirteen colored men entertained in 1850.

A planter in one of the British West India Islands, previous to the abolition of slavery, despatched at night-fall one of his slaves, in great haste, on a commission to a distant plantation. The journey occupied some time. When the slave arrived at the plantation, fatigued and sleepy, and had delivered his despatch, and was waiting for a reply, he leaned against the door-case, and dozed. The planter's slave in attendance chided him for sleeping in the presence of his master, when the slave replied, 'Sleep knows no master.' Since that time, this conception of freedom has been realized universally in every British West India island, not only in its application to sleep, but as a realization enjoyed each wakeful moment. No small share of the interest that attends this gathering is the recollection of the fact, that on this day, twenty-five years ago, eight hundred thousand men and women realized not only that sleep knows no master, but that they should not be obliged to recognize, in any situation, the title as existing between them and any man.

History has its record of living events long ago enacted, which will live through time: this event, this British act, among the brightest of Britain's act, is to be classed with such; an act reanimating by a decree hundreds of thousands of imbruted beings; an act acknowledging the Divine image in man. The English act, with others as bright, makes England stand out as Humanity's hand-maid, with a Queen guiding. We carry about us in our imagination the sainted forms of those good men and women of Britain, who labored so long, so faithfully and so well for the event which casuses a halo of light to encircle the first of August in Freedom's calendar. 'Sleep knows no master.'

We hope and believe that, soon, no slave represented in a hypocritical church, or a sycophantic North, licking the dust for office, will stand ready to chide those who would enjoy freedom, either sleeping or awake, on American soil. When this shall be, it will not be long before another glorious day shall be specially set apart as sacred to Liberty.

William C. Nell from the Business Committee then reported in part--

Without being wedded to separate Conventions, yet believing that from agitation in various phases grows information, conviction and repentance; and that Conventions do assist in creating public opinion, as well as to concentrate and express that opinion, being a medium through which we can protest against the obstacles retarding our moral, social, and political elevation, compare notes one with another,--stimulating ourselves each and all to renewed efforts, we have convened to-day in this place, within a stone's throw from the spot where fell the colored man Crispus Attucks, the first martyr in the American Revolution, March 5th, 1770, and within eight rods from his yet unmonumented grave, to do our part in obtaining for ourselves and posterity the full measure of blessings and rights, which the example and influence of his foresight, love of liberty, patriotic leadership and martyr death should long since have secured.

In accordance therewith, the Business Committee respectfully beg leave to submit for the consideration of this Convention the following resolutions:

Resolved, That this Convention sends its greeting to the multitudes in America, England, West Indies, Canada, and wherever else assembled, whose grateful songs and eloquent words unite in celebrating this, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the day, luminous in the world's calendar, when 'Britannia's justice, wealth and might,' severed the chains from 800,000 men, women and children in her 'beautiful isles of the sea,' which on that glorious 1st of August, 1834, 'welcomed freedom as an angel from above.' But while we rejoice with those who, although in a monarch's domain, have abundant reason for rejoicing, our joy is mixed with sorrow: we must weep with those who, in Republican America, 'our own loved but guilty land,' this day weep, because slavery's galling fetters yet clank upon their limbs--whose aspirations by day and dreams by night are a blended offering to the God of freedom that they too may soon greet their day of jubilee.

Whereas, The Austrian Empire, whose usurpations against Italy have just caused the fields of Lombardy to be reddened with human blood, yet retains an imperial edict, 'that any slave, from the moment he treads on the soil of her royal dominions, or even merely steps on board of an Austrian vessel, shall be free:' and

Whereas, Our sister State, Vermont, has, by her last year's legislation, so far emulated Austria, that any slave reaching her soil shall be as secure from the clutch of his self-styled owner as are the bases of her everlasting Green Mountains: and

Whereas, Desirous that the old Bay State shall be as free from the sin and shame of slavery, that never more from Barnstable to Berkshire, there shall be occasion for such scenes as the Latimer war,⁸ the William and Ellen Craft excitement, the rescue of Shadrach, the rendition of Thomas Sims and Anthony Burns,⁹ and last, but far from least, the recent one of a Cape Cod captain sending back to slavery a man who had escaped in his vessel; therefore,

Resolved, That this Convention do endorse and urge the masses to sign the petition of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, asking the Legislature 'to put an end to slave-hunting in Massachusetts.'

Whereas, It being the settled policy of the Administrators of the United States Government to keep in chains the millions now held as slaves in the Southern States, and to oppress and degrade the free colored people of this country, and to build up barriers and create distinctions between the different races; therefore be it

Resolved, That we hold it to be a self-evident truth, that all men, irrespective of color or condition, have a natural, indefeasible right to life, liberty, and the possession of property, without proscription or hindrance; and every species of involuntary servitude, except for the punishment of

crimes, is in direct contravention to every principle of humanity, justice and patriotism.

Resolved, That it is the legitimate purpose of all governments exercising jurisdiction over men, whether they be State or National, to protect each individual member in the full enjoyment of every natural or conventional right, which is not required or surrendered for the good of society in general.

Resolved, That the decision of Chief Justice Taney and his slaveholding associates of the United States Supreme Court, in the Dred Scott case, is marked by a brutality of spirit, a daring disregard of all historical verity, a defiant contempt of State sovereignty, a wanton perversion of the Constitution of the United States in regard to the rights of American citizens, an audacious denial of all the principles of justice and humanity; and justly calls for the condemnation of the friends of human liberty throughout the world.

Whereas, The Anti-Slavery movement, moral and political, rests upon the basis of equality and of justice to the colored man, bond and free, of the whole country; it can have no other foundation, and can have no success worthy of the name when this principle is disavowed or neglected; therefore,

Resolved, That ever ready to acknowledge the faithfulness of those leaders of the Republican party who have exerted themselves in favor of the colored man's equality, we have had cause to regret many departures from this standard--including the vote given in Congress by Hon. Linus B. Comins and Hon. Eli Thayer¹⁰ for the admission of Oregon into the Union with a Constitution containing prohibitive clauses against the citizenship of colored Americans.

Resolved, That we pronounce such votes to be against justice, against equality, and against the principles by which the Republican party professes to be guided, and by which alone it can be made worth sustaining.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention are due, and are hereby expressed, to Hon. Henry L. Dawes,¹¹ of the 11th Congressional District, for his speech in opposition to the odious and unconstitutional provision of the Oregon Constitution, and to him and those of his colleagues who voted against the admission of that State into the Union.

Resolved, That in view of the fact, that in several States of the Union where the Republican party is in the ascendant, the elective franchise of colored citizens is denied or its privileges abridged, we would earnestly call upon the party to take a manly position upon this and co-relative questions, that they may deserve what they would undoubtedly receive--the suffrages of all voters who love the cause of freedom.

Resolved, That this Convention would recommend colored voters to press these claims upon the Republican party, that, if defeated, it may not be by any fault of theirs.

The following were accepted as Committee on Finance:--John J. Smith, Nelson L. Perkins, Lloyd H. Brooks, Ellen Shearman, George W. Lowther, Anne E. Gray, George Allen.

Committee on Rules and Orders:--Wm. Wells Brown, Nelson L. Perkins, Charles A. Pervis.

The Committee on Rules and Orders reported. A rule limiting speakers to fifteen minutes was opposed by Charles Lenox Remond, who hoped no man would speak who had nothing to say; and in following out another theme, complained that colored men were not sufficiently aggressive when their rights were in question; they smiled when they ought to frown.

Wm. Wells Brown defended the rule. It was calculated to give a chance to those members of the convention who were usually kept silent by two or three eloquent gentlemen who talked all the time.

The rules were adopted.

A resolution requiring collections in the forenoon and afternoon, and an admission fee to the evening session to all but delegates, elicited more discussion. Mr. Remond complained of the penurious policy of the colored people, and several delegates from abroad objected to the admission fee.

The resolution was adopted. At a quarter before 1 o'clock, the Convention adjourned until half-past 2 o'clock.

After the adjournment, the slave Maria, who was taken from Plymouth on a writ of habeas corpus, came upon the stand, and received the congratulations of her friends.

Second Session.

The Convention re-assembled at 2½ o'clock. A song entitled, 'Free the Bondman,' by James H. Dean, was sung to the air: 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled.'

On motion of Mr. William Wells Brown, from the Committee on Rules and Orders, a committee, consisting of T. W. Steamburg, of Boston, and Henry Johnson, of Cambridge, was appointed, to direct those attending the Convention to seats.

Mr. Nell read the series of resolutions which was submitted during the morning session, and the President announced them as before the Convention for discussion.

Mr. Nell then brought forward a rather antiquated looking paper, the *Boston Gazette or Weekly Journal*, dated Tuesday, November 20, 1750, from which he read the following advertisement:--

'Ran away from his master, Wm. Brown, Framingham, on the 30th of September last, a Mulatto Fellow, about 27 years of age, named Crispus, well set, 6 feet 2 inches in height, short Curled Hair, Knees nearer together than common, had on a light colored Buckskin Coat, brown Fustian Jacket, new Buckskin Britches, blue yarn stockings, and a checked shirt.'

Mr. Nell said--"It will be remembered that at the Faneuil Hall commemoration of the Boston massacre, (March 5th, 1858), Samuel H. Brown, Esq., a grandson of the above William Brown, was present, and narrated to several persons the traditions extant in the family relating to Crispus Attucks,--of his bobblet, powder-horn, &c.

"It seems that Crispus was imbued with the spirit of liberty in thus declaring independence of his master. He subsequently came to Boston, and worked in a ropewalk at the North end, where he rallied the men to the attack of the English forces in King street, himself being the first martyr, though a slave, in that struggle which resulted in liberty to these United States--securing to them the boon they have denied to his race.

"It is somewhat remarkable that, although the impetus to the American Revolution was undeniably given on the 5th of March, 1770, and so regarded by the orators and writers of those times, yet by some persons, at the present day, this great fact is wholly ignored. For instance: F. O. C. Darley,¹² a well-known artist, has recently drawn a fine American historical picture of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, with the caption, 'First Blow for Liberty'; and in the Doric Hall of the State House is to be seen the cannon dedicated to Major John Buttrick and Capt. Isaac Davis for their services at Concord Bridge, April 19th, 1775, on which is inscribed, 'This was the beginning of a contest in arms that ended in American Independence.'

"Now, without the least desire to disparage the influence of the battles of Lexington and Concord upon the revolutionary struggle, they cannot with justice be called the scenes of the first blow for liberty, unless the 19th of April, 1775, precedes in the calendar March 5th, 1770."

A motion was made to reconsider the resolution adopted during the morning session, making the payment of one dollar the basis of membership of the Convention.

Mr. Henry Johnson, delegate from New Bedford, objected to the imposition of a tax upon each individual member of the Convention, preferring that those alone who were delegates should bear the expenses as well as the responsibilities of the Convention. The New Bedford delegation had come prepared to do their part.

The Chairman called the attention of the Convention to the call, which did not specify the Convention to be one of delegates alone, but of the colored citizens of New England.

Several other speakers participated in the discussion, which waxed warm. At length, it was terminated, under loud calls for the 'question,' which being taken, resulted in a defeat of the motion to reconsider.

Rev. J. Sella Martin, of Buffalo, was introduced by the President. He said this was the anniversary of West India emancipation, and therefore of much interest. He was well aware that many people looked upon this Convention as did the children of Israel upon the people of Babylon,¹³ but hoped the members had come up to the Convention with all the solemnity which the subjects to be considered demanded. They should turn to the down-trodden millions of the South, and say to them 'that when we forget their interests, may our right hands forget their cunning.' He urged with earnestness the establishment of means to elevate individual members of the free colored race, contending that as yet there had been no local, systematized effort to correct the evils which existed in colored communities, or to elevate the individual. Something was needed to encourage young men to embark in new enterprises. The only hope existing for the elevation of the colored race was to make the young men feel that they were an integral part of the community. He saw no reason why they should not feel that they were citizens of Boston, and a part of Massachusetts.

Charles L. Remond followed in an earnest speech, directed especially towards the white persons present. He sharply rebuked those who were in attendance, and who dared not come forward, and avow their opinions upon the platform which the Convention had erected. He hoped that no person would feel himself excluded from speaking by the mean processes by which they, the colored people, were excluded from participating in the deliberations of white assemblies. They (the colored people) were to-day in the majority. This was their Fourth of July, and the man was an arrant coward who refused to speak boldly for freedom. Their cause was dragged into the newspapers, the pulpit, on 'change, and everywhere formed the engrossing topic of discussion. He went for the immediate, unconditional emancipation of the slaves of the South, and the unconditional equality of the white and black races of the North and, God helping, every slave would yet be free in the South, and he would yet be a free man in Massachusetts.

Rev. Thomas H. Jones, of Worcester, was the next speaker. They had found themselves in Tremont Temple, in Convention assembled, in this nineteenth century. The Convention had been called for the purpose of elevating the colored people of New England. It had been said that there was no need of it, and every mode of action, while four millions of blacks were in bondage. It had also been said that when a fugitive slave came to Boston, he trembled, but he was a fugitive slave, and had never trembled. He wanted no security for liberty. The time had come when the colored people must strike for liberty. They must assert their own independence. It had been said there were saloons kept by colored people, into which colored people were not allowed to enter. He hoped the time would come when no white man would enter such.

At the conclusion of Mr. Jones's remarks, the President announced a social levee to be held at Chapman Hall.

Rev. J. N. Mars, of Springfield, was the next speaker. It was, to his mind, the business of the Convention to fix upon something that would go further than words to elevate the colored race, among whom he thought there was ability enough, and energy enough, to accomplish every thing. What they most required was a moral stimulus, an incentive to elevate them morally. The doors of the schools of the Commonwealth were now flung open, and all the barriers of caste were removed, so that parents could give their children an education. This obtained, they should seek the rich fields of agriculture in the West. There was something more honorable in store for the rising generation than shoe-blackening and waiting. Many had spent their lives in scraping the faces of white men, and yet they were as poor as poverty. He spoke enthusiastically of emigration, not to foreign countries, but to the West, and contrasted the independent life of the farmer with that of the servile attendant upon the caprices of metropolitan life.

Mr. Lewis Clark, of Canada, was introduced. He was glad to hear that Agriculture had been laid before the meeting as the best means of supporting one's self. He heartily approved of it. He had settled in Canada, and knew the condition of things there. If any one of the present Convention should go there, he should be sure and taken money—money was what was most needed there. Buxton, a town in Canada, settled by fugitives, was, fifteen years ago, nothing but a dense forest. Now there were over 850 families there. He said he would not work for a man who would not work for him. He related an

anecdote in illustration of this principle, in which he himself had figured. He laid down a rule, which he hoped all would live up to, in point of morality.

He wished to see the colored man respect himself, then he would be more respected by others. All resolutions on paper would be unavailing, unless there was action accordingly. He gave an account of the way he had lived at home, which created considerable laughter.

Upon a vote being taken, it was decided to assemble in the large hall in the evening, and after singing the following hymn in the tune of Old Hundred, the Convention adjourned:—

'Let Mammon hold, while Mammon can,
The bones and blood of living men;
Let Despots scorn, while Despots dare,
The shrieks and writhings of despair.'

Third Session, Monday Evening.

While the audience were assembling, Mr. Lewis Clark, of Canada, enlarged upon the remarks which he offered during the afternoon session. It was a mistake, he said, to suppose that the colored people of Massachusetts enjoyed as many rights as their brethren in Canada. He spoke with earnestness upon the advantages of a life in the backwoods. He urged parents to send their sons out from the contaminating influences of large cities to the wholesome atmosphere of agricultural districts. Upon young men, he pressed the importance of correct habits, temperance, and honorable intercourse with the opposite sex.

The Convention, after being called to order, was addressed by Rev. J. W. Lewis, of Maine. He had been for thirty years engaged in the anti-slavery cause. There was an important contest going on in this country, and it was for the interest of the colored people to enter it. On a political allusion, he said he did vote a Whig ticket once, for 'Tippecanoe and Tyler too,' but God took away Tippecanoe, and the Whig party swallowed Tyler, who was harder to get rid of than Jonah was to the whale.¹⁴ (Laughter.) Alluding to the position of the church in relation to the slavery question, he said the American pulpit was too docile. The church had not proved herself the light of the world. She has taken the position that we must submit to the law. The Bible did not justify the abhorrent system of slavery; if he thought it did, he would burn it. Should Gabriel come into his room with a parchment containing the Fugitive Slave Law, signed by the Almighty, he would believe he was no longer God. He told some anecdotes, and made some sharp criticisms upon political parties.

Rev. J. W. Loguen, of Syracuse, was the next speaker. Desiring never to be called idle, he had consented to make a few remarks. When he remembered that but a few years since, he was an obscure slave in Tennessee, he felt embarrassed in the presence of the brilliant and talented men before him. He had long ago come to the conclusion that there was more necessity for action than for talking. The time for action had come. Men were oftener prepared to talk on this subject than to lift a finger to advance the movement. He had therefore placed himself in a position where he could do something for humanity. He had been called the conductor of an 'underground railroad,' and in this connection, the speaker sketched, in a touching strain, many affecting incidents of his captivity and freedom. His earnest and unpretending manner won for him the sympathies of his hearers.

At the conclusion of the remarks of Mr. Loguen, the President, in behalf of the Committee of Arrangements, extended an invitation to Mr. Wm. Lloyd Garrison to speak in a Convention set apart for colored men.

Mr. Garrison, on taking the platform, was received with loud applause. He said in the outset that he should be very sorry if, in order to show him any courtesy, the programme of the Convention should be interrupted. He accepted the invitation with a full heart, but had much rather some other white man, who had not expressed himself upon this question, should take the platform. He had been a long time identified with the anti-slavery movement, and nothing had gratified him so much as the reputation which he had gained of being a black man, and so long as slavery should exist on the face of the earth, he begged to be regarded as thoroughly one of their color. 'To this

complexion had it come at last,' that color was no protection against the encroachments of the Slave Power; whites as well as blacks were alike slaves upon the plantation. It was absurd for any to suppose that color would protect them from being made slaves. He thought it time to put a stop to the 'Underground Railroad,' and was for making Canada of all the Northern States. He thought we were very near the event of having Massachusetts a free State. They would have had security for the slave at the last session of the Legislature, but for the interposition of potential influences in high places.

At the close of the remarks of Mr. Garrison, a lad presented him with a bouquet of flowers, in behalf of the ladies, whom the recipient thanked.

Mr. John T. Waugh, of Providence, was introduced as one of the right hand men in Rhode Island in behalf of equal schools. He claimed for 'Little Rhode' high conventional honors, but regretted that there was not more union among the colored people of that State. He spoke encouragingly of the progress of education there, and promised to speak at greater length in the Convention.

He was followed by Rev. Mr. Twiss, of New Bedford, who was succeeded by Charles L. Remond, of Salem. The latter spoke dispassionately and with eloquence, and his remarks called forth generous applause.

This closed the session, and the Convention adjourned, to meet again in the Meionoon at 10 o'clock next morning.

SECOND DAY

The Convention reassembled at 10 o'clock on Tuesday, and was called to order by the President. A hymn entitled 'Free the Bondman,' was sung, and prayer was offered by Rev. Samuel Harrison, of Pittsfield.

The resolutions reported by the Business Committee yesterday were again read, and announced to be open for discussion.

Charles L. Remond said he could endorse them, but he would like to subscribe to something which covered broader ground. He was desirous of hurling defiance at slavery. He wanted a resolution pledging themselves to trample the Dred Scott decision under foot.

John Banks, of Providence, succeeded in obtaining the floor, and recommended moderation. He showed how the colored population of New England had progressed during the present century, and urged judicious work rather than a noisy declaration of rights.

Mr. Nell, from the Business Committee, stated that several letters had been received, (among them, an interesting letter from Mrs. Bannister,) and read extracts from the correspondence with colored citizens of Worcester, John M. Langston, Oberlin, Ohio, H. O. Wagoner, Chicago, Ill., J. H. Townsend, Hudson, Stephen Myers, Jr., Albany, and Frederick Douglass, Rochester, N.Y., which were listened to with interest. Did our limits permit, most gladly would we give these letters a place in our report.

In order to show that the condition of the colored people in New England and elsewhere in the United States had much improved within the past twenty-five years, there were reports from various localities, with details and statistics, which it was stated would be submitted before the Convention adjourned.

The following resolutions were presented by the Business Committee:--

Resolved, That this Convention recommend to the colored people throughout the country, the principle of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as a means of their moral, social and political elevation, and a powerful lever for the overthrow of slavery in the United States.

Resolved, That owing to causes not wholly under the control of colored people themselves, their habit of congregating in cities retards rather than promotes their elevation; therefore, we would respectfully recommend an agricultural life to those whose profession or business is not now or prospectively lucrative, and those who are not city freeholders, as calculated to develop the character, moral, mental and physical, and as one of the best roads to family independence.¹⁵

Whereas, there has long prevailed the hunker-American idea, that knowledge is a dangerous element in the brain of a colored man; nevertheless,

our own theory and practice should be to strive for its possession, as essential to our safety and freedom; and,

Whereas, throughout New England, and pre-eminently in the city of Boston, the Tree of Knowledge is planted, and all, without distinction of color or class, are invited to pluck the fruit from its bending branches; therefore,

Resolved, That we would earnestly impress upon colored citizens and their children the importance of availing themselves of the golden opportunities now more generally afforded than ever before, of lectures, libraries, schools, and other literary institutions.

Resolved, That though our brethren of Connecticut, in their long continued efforts for the elective franchise, have experienced many defeats, we would exhort them to 'pick their flints, and try again,' feeling assured that the onward march of reform is their guaranty of victory.

Resolved, That while we deeply regret that there can be found in the State of Rhode Island any colored persons disposed to throw obstacles in the path that leads to the equal school rights of their children, we feel proud to note the intelligent zeal and perseverance which others have exhibited during the protracted and complicated struggle for justice and equality.

Resolved, That great as is our joy in view of the recent release from jail of the gallant and unflinching Oberlin rescuers, that joy is modified by the fact, that while some of their number were punished as criminals, the actual kidnappers escaped a trial. Yet, as the plea of *nole contendere* was offered by the government, the result is to be accepted as a virtual defeat of the Slave Power, and the triumph of Oberlin Higher Law.

Resolved, That notwithstanding the studied misrepresentation of the proslavery American press with regard to the island of Hayti, we know that the Haytiens are the only people who achieved their independence by the sword, unaided by other nations; and that they have maintained it to the present hour, through their various revolutions, (which have been progressive steps towards Republicanism,) is full confirmation of their capacity for self-government.¹⁷

Resolved, That we agree in the sentiment expressed by one who had been a slave, that 'the minister who can preach and pray twelve months without speaking for the slave must be college made, money called, and devil sent.'

Whereas, from the year 1817, when the American Colonization Society was organized by slaveholders to get rid of the free people of color and superannuated slaves, the colored people of the United States have never ceased to denounce and protest against it, repelling the idea, come from whatever quarter it might, that colored Americans are under any more obligations to emigrate to Africa than white Americans to return to the lands of their ancestors; therefore,

Resolved, That though we do not regard it as within our sphere of duty to dampen the ardor of our brethren who would establish commercial relations or missionary operations in Africa, we feel bound to put forth words of caution against any presentation that may induce a belief in the community that the colored people of the United States are becoming so discouraged and restless as to desire to emigrate to Africa or elsewhere.

Resolved, That, in the language of our brethren in Cincinnati, 'we say to those who would induce us to emigrate to Africa or elsewhere, that the amount of labor and self-sacrifice required to establish a home in a foreign land would, if exercised here, redeem our native land from the grasp of slavery; therefore, we are resolved to remain where we are, confident that truth is mighty, and will prevail.'

The Business Committee also reported the following resolutions, with a recommendation that they be referred to a Central Committee, which it was hoped would be appointed by the Convention:--

Resolved, That this Convention appoint a Committee, who shall immediately confer with prominent men of color in every town and city in the free States, and whose duty it shall be to get the signatures of the colored people of those States to petitions which shall be sent to Congress, praying that body to remove the disabilities under which we now labor, on account of the unrighteous Dred Scott Decision.

Resolved, That in consideration of the many difficulties that surround those colored men who attempt to enter into trade, the mechanic arts, and the liberal professions, it is our duty as an oppressed people struggling to elevate ourselves, to give as much of our patronage as we can to those who are laboring in their various departments to elevate themselves and their race.

Resolved, That on account of our great want of means to stimulate the industrious and to encourage the worthy, this Convention appoint a Committee to draft some plan for a permanent organization, which shall have for its object the encouragement of worthy colored men in business.

Whereas, we are fully convinced that the prejudice against us is not on account of our condition alone, but that a deep-settled hostility exists against our complexion, and those who would be willing to extend the hand of sociality are intimidated by a corrupt public sentiment, that stigmatizes them as amalgamationists; therefore,

Resolved, That, in our opinion, this prejudice pervades every grade and contaminates every portion of society with its pestilential effluvia; that there has not been exemplified, in the treatment we have received in the evangelical church, any evidence of vital piety; that the prejudice against our color finds admission in the habitations of rich and poor, the noble and ignoble, the peasant and the peer, the philosopher and the divine; it hovers over the courts of judicature; it visits periodically the pulpit and executive chair; it resides in the merchant's palace and the yeoman's cot; it is depicted upon the lawyer's physiognomy, the politician's and the poet's brain, and the itinerant scribbler's closet is its welcome habitation. It is the barrier to our elevation, and has a crushing and blighting influence upon the hopes and happiness of the rising generation; and we will never cease our denunciations against it, while our race is the victim of its unhallowed and debasing effects.

The Business Committee announced the following series of resolutions from the colored citizens of Newport, R.I., which, though embracing, in part, matter previously submitted, were, as a matter of courtesy, read to the Convention:--

Resolved, That while we leave our representatives free to use their judgment upon all matters that may be presented for deliberation, yet we deem it fit and proper to express our well-considered and full-determined opposition to any concerted effort looking to the migration of the colored people to Africa, or any where else, from this their native land: whether under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, the African Civilization Society, or any of their colonizing auxiliaries.

Resolved, That the organization of the African Civilization Society at this time (when so many of the American people are being moved to grant us our rights) is a deplorable fact, because it tends to feed the American mind with the idea that we may be induced to go to Africa; thereby causing our oppressors to be less disposed to grant us our rights here, because it tends, in a measure, by deceptive inducements, to unsettle, to some extent, minds naturally restive under oppression, but for whom, to the discerning, there is every hope here, in their native land.

Resolved, That while we are conscious of and deplore the fact, that Africa needs to be civilized and enlightened, and while we rejoice at all honest efforts for her elevation, and would most willingly aid to bring it about, yet we do not feel it to be a duty especially imposed upon us to go to Africa, even on such a mission, believing that we have a large and appropriate field at home, which demands our first efforts.

Resolved, That Africa is an inviting, profitable field for missionaries, inspired with the self-sacrificing spirit of Christ, and we invite thereto those honestly looking to missionary fields, whether they be black or white.

Resolved, That we applaud the effective efforts being earnestly and sincerely put forth in Europe by Mr. Clegg and others to establish legitimate business relations between native Africans and Europeans, and that we regard with great hope the evangelizing and civilizing influence reflectively growing therefrom.

Resolved, That two great agencies of power in the community are wealth and intelligence, and if we would have power, we must struggle to possess

these agencies; that it is because we have not had a proportionate representative character in these respects that we occupy the position we do in community.

Resolved, That the effort being so earnestly pressed in Rhode Island in behalf of equal school rights, commends itself to the earnest and thankful consideration of every colored man, both in and out of that State, because it is a blow in the right direction, inasmuch as its success is so desirable as an example to other States, and as a means to the elevation of our people in the land.

Resolved, That notwithstanding the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island inhibits slavery within its borders, it has an existence there in the fact, that some colored men are bought or intimidated into servitude--being bought or intimidated to oppose the effort for equal school rights.

Resolved, That the *Providence Journal*, the only paper in Rhode Island that opposes the effort for equal school rights, may be justly styled the proslavery organ of the State, which, in representing, as it does, that the working of equal school rights in the city of Boston is a failure, betrays either shameful ignorance or something much worse.

Resolved, That it is our duty and interest on all occasions to exercise at the polls the political franchise that is ours.

Resolved, That a general fund should be raised by the people toward thoroughly educating a number of persons evincing talent, to the end of securing a representative character for learning.

Resolved, That we urge upon our people the study of political economy; that they give honorable encouragement to those engaged in commanding business pursuits; that we recommend them to engage more generally in trades, commercial, agricultural, and other dignified callings.

Resolved, That we are and will remain untiring in our efforts to abolish caste in the administration of our public schools.

The Business Committee further submitted the following resolutions:--

Resolved, That this Convention appoint a Central Committee of two persons from each State represented in the Convention, outside of Massachusetts, to devise ways and means for executing the plans or suggestions contained in resolutions or recommendations acted upon at this Convention.

Resolved, That each State not represented in this Convention be requested to appoint an equal representation on said Committee.

Resolved, That a majority branch of said Committee shall be located in the city of Boston.

The appointment of this Committee was made the subject of considerable discussion. It was opposed by Messrs. Smith of New Bedford, J. G. Mowbray of Worcester, and other. Mr. Downing, the President, favored the suggestion of this Committee, with a view to expediting the business of the Convention. There was an important subject, upon which he felt deeply, to be considered--that was, the African Colonization Society. This could not be done, and still pass upon the plans submitted to the Convention.

Rev. Mr. Jackson, of New Bedford, was proceeding with a denunciation of the African Colonization Society, when a point of order was raised.

The Chair decided that he was in order.

Mr. Remond appealed from the decision of the Chair, and Mr. Jackson took his seat.

William C. Nell remarked that some members were laboring under an erroneous impression as to why the Central Committee was recommended, and what its duties were, it being simply, as he understood it, a Committee of Ways and Means on Unfinished Business--a centre from which might radiate throughout New England and elsewhere, much of the good influence which had been here generated. It was, in fact, giving a practical point to the deliberations of this Convention, having power to avail themselves of any and every facility of time, place and persons to promote: for instance, Rhode Island equal school rights and Connecticut equal suffrage. It would also do its best to secure opportunities for young men and women to acquire suitable trades, and gain for them admission into institutions of learning, and thus through these, and all other available channels, aim to promote the elevation of colored Americans.

The resolution appointing the Committee was finally adopted.

Rev. Samuel Harrison, of Pittsfield, and a member from Worcester whose name has not reached us, spoke in favor of resolutions 6, 7 and 8, commending Hon. Henry L. Dawes and condemning Hon. Eli Thayer and Hon. Linus B. Comins, for their action in Congress on the Oregon question; when, on motion, they were adopted.

The African Civilization Society was agreed upon as the question for discussion at the next session. Adjourned.

Afternoon Session.

The Convention reassembled at half past two o'clock, and was opened by the customary prelude of singing.

The regular business of the Convention, involving the consideration of a resolution deprecating the emigration of the colored people of this country to Africa, and denouncing the African Civilization Society, was then taken up.

Mr. William Wells Brown was the first speaker. He said they ought to look with suspicion upon any movement like this, which held out inducements for colored men to leave this country. He disliked any movement tending to urge emigration to Africa, unless such inducements as commercial intercourse and industrial enterprises were held out to the people. The African Civilization Society was not based upon a satisfactory plan; it degraded their people in the eyes of the white public. He was not opposed to civilization, but he looked with suspicion upon this Civilization Society, because it tended to the expatriation of colored people from the United States.

Rev. J. Sella Martin defended the emigration movement. He regarded the plan of the African Civilization Society as one which should commend itself to their people, as one of the best means to break a link that binds England to this country with such subserviency that she cringes before the great 'Cotton King,' but for the influence of which, England would long ago have thrown off the yoke of restraint. But for this cotton influence, England would never have submitted to the sending home of her minister, or played the part of the fawning sycophant to this country, proud and influential as is that nation. He advised emigration as the only avenue left open for the enterprise of the colored people. He felt confident that colored men could go out to Africa, and develop the culture of cotton. If the African chiefs could be induced to turn their slaves into cotton fields, instead of shipping them to this country, the slave trade would be broken up. Cotton could be raised in Africa and sold in England for one third less than it could be sent from the South.

Edward Garrison Walker, of Charlestown, took strong ground against the African Civilization Society, which he regarded as another attempt to blind the eyes of the colored people. He did not intend to be duped, and he hoped it would go out from this Convention that they refused to endorse the Society.

Rev. Mr. Gloucester, of Brooklyn, N.Y., favored the civilization movement.

Rev. John B. Smith, of New Bedford, said he had supposed that this Convention was called for the purpose of deliberating upon the moral and political condition of the colored citizens. But he had discovered that the grand object was to denounce the African civilization proposition. Mr. Smith urged that colored men should pay some deference to the opinions of one another, or they would lose the respect of their enemies. He proceeded to advocate the civilization project, declaring it to be one for evangelizing as well as for civilizing Africa; and the charge that the Society advocated or meditated the exodus of the colored people to Africa, *en masse*, he pronounced false, and declared that when the charge was made, the person who made it knew that it was false! (Sensation.) Mr. Smith contended that the object of the Civilization Society was to elevate Africa in the scale of civilization and evangelical knowledge, and by developing her resources, and the infusion of a spirit of commercial enterprise and progress into her people, eventually succeed in placing her in an honorable position among the nations of the earth.

President Downing took the floor, and spoke forcibly against the project. He quoted from the Constitution of the American Colonization Society to show that the objects of that Society purported to be 'to evangelize and civilize Africa'—and so far as professions went, the Colonization Society was as good as the Civilization Society. Mr. D. stated that the advocates of the civil-

ization movement had declared that this country was no place for the colored man—that the colored man here was 'a magnolia out of its place.' Furthermore, the Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, President of the Society, had declared that 'a place should be set apart for the colored people.'

Rev. Mr. Smith denied that Mr. Garnet had ever made such an assertion. Mr. Downing referred the gentleman for a substantiation of his remark to the columns of the New York *Express*, and particularly to a sheet which was his (Smith's) especial favorite, the New York *Herald*. (Applause.)

One of the Vice Presidents declared that he had heard Rev. Mr. Garnet say what had been attributed to him.

The Rev. Mr. Smith—who, by the way, is the agent of the Civilization Society—appeared staggered at this accumulation of proof against his denial, but not convinced that he was in error.

The audience, a majority of whom were anti-civilizationists, appeared to enjoy highly this discomfiture of the advocate of the civilization cause.

President Downing proceeded at considerable length to denounce the civilization movement. He regarded it as a money-making movement; and although he would not say, yet he was afraid his friend Smith had a money-interest in the undertaking. It was charged against him, however, and he must say that the circumstances against him looked rather black.

Mr. Smith—"It is a black operation." (Laughter.)

Mr. Downing—"It is black indeed!" Mr. D. continued in a strain of vigorous remark against colored people leaving this country, and triumphantly asked where there was one colored man who would go to Africa?

Mr. Smith—"Here's one!"

Mr. Downing—"Then the sooner you go the better!" (Boisterous laughter.) "And if you had gone before, there probably would not have been any necessity for discussing the question in this Convention." Mr. Downing continued his remarks, answering at length the arguments of those who advocated the undertaking.

Rev. J. S. Martin spoke for the second time on the subject, and with much ability.

Thomas Jones, of Worcester, addressed the Convention, in opposition to the project of the Civilization Society. Adjourned until 8, P.M.

Evening Session.

The Chairman of the Business Committee submitted the entire set of resolutions for the action of the Convention. Many of them were read by their titles only, others were read in full.

The discussion was resumed by John T. Waugh, of Providence, who made a very acceptable speech, and one that told well on the audience. He denounced the civilization movement, and said he would leave his bones in this land. If he could not live in one section of the country, he would go to another. He spoke of the troubles in Providence in relation to the school exclusion which was attempted upon colored people. He took great interest in the subject. When he was a slave in the South, and attempted to gain his freedom, he had no idea of living to see his son excluded from a Rhode Island school.

Mr. W. condemned the Republicans of Rhode Island for proscribing the colored race here in the school regulations of the State. He depicted the position of the body-guard of Gen. Greene in the Revolution, composed of colored men, and he asked why it was that their descendants should at this day be proscribed by the party they had helped to elevate to power? He put the blame upon the Republicans, and their organ, the *Providence Journal*. He asked, What shall the colored people do in 1860. For himself, he would say that he should vote for the man who nearest approximated to the principles of freedom.

Mr. James Jefferson, of Providence, very intelligently depicted the burthens under which the colored people of Rhode Island labored in regard to the proscriptive policy of the Republicans in the State. He went from Maryland, a slave State, to Rhode Island, a free State, and he had found Republican rule as oppressive in Rhode Island, as he had experienced in Maryland.

At this juncture, President Downing stated that he wished here to declare, and he hoped the declaration would appear in all the Boston papers,

that he charged upon the Republican party in Rhode Island, that being the dominant party, the denial to the colored men of their rights in that State. Richard Winsor, one of the Oberlin rescuers, just released from eighty-five days' confinement in the jail at Cleveland, was called upon, and gave a brief history of the rescue of the fugitive slaves at Oberlin, and the subsequent trial and imprisonment of the rescuers. His remarks were listened to with profound attention, and called forth loud bursts of applause.

Rev. J. N. Mars, of Springfield, who took the floor to discuss the proslavery church resolution, was, during his remarks, interrupted by the President, who told him that he was wandering from the subject under discussion. Mr. Mars remarked that he liked freedom among black men as well as white. The President replied that true freedom consisted in its exercise, without infringing upon the rights of others.

The Finance Committee were instructed to pay the expenses of the Convention out of the funds, and to place the remainder in the hands of the Publishing Committee, to defray the expenses of publishing the minutes of the Convention.

Miss Harriet Garrison was introduced as one of the most successful conductors on the Underground Railroad. She denounced the colonization movement, and told a story of a man who sowed onions and garlic on his land to increase his dairy productions; but he soon found the butter was strong, and would not sell, and so he concluded to sow clover instead. But he soon found the wind had blown the onions and garlic all over the field. Just so, she said, the white people had got the 'niggers' here to do their drudgery, and now they were trying to root 'em out and send 'em to Africa. "But," said she, "they can't do it; we're rooted here, and they can't pull us up." She was much applauded.

Rev. Mr. Smith, of New Bedford, and another member, rose simultaneously, and a question was raised as to who had the floor. It was decided in favor of Mr. Smith, who was rather personal in his remarks.

Mr. Remond next took the floor, and expressed regret that any hard feeling should be indulged, or any impression should go out that there were hostile feelings in the Convention. He intended to deal with the question of African civilization fairly and honorably, and he should cooperate with others in carrying on the great work of improving the condition of the colored race in this country.

Henry Johnson, of New Bedford, Mr. Westlon, of St. Johns, N. B., and Mr. Downing followed in some interesting remarks.

The resolutions submitted by the Business Committee were then adopted, with the exception of the series which they recommended should be referred to the Central Committee, which was so referred.

On motion of Wm. Wells Brown, delegates were requested to hand in the names of members of the Central Committee, and the following were submitted: Massachusetts--Wm. C. Nell, John J. Smith, Lewis Hayden, Boston; Ezra R. Johnson, New Bedford.

Rhode Island--George T. Downing, Newport; Joseph Jefferson, Providence, Connecticut--Wm. Anderson, New London; David Gordon, Norwich.

Maine--John W. Lewis, Warren; H. A. Chandler, Bath.

The Publications Committee was appointed as follows:--Wm. C. Nell, Wm. Wells Brown, John J. Smith.

On motion of William Anderson, of Connecticut, a vote of thanks was tendered to the President for the able, impartial, dignified and courteous manner in which he had performed his duties. This being seconded in an eloquent speech by Ezra R. Johnson, of New Bedford, a bouquet was presented from the ladies, and (Vice President Beman in the chair,) the President responded in a neat and appropriate speech. A bouquet was also handed to Charles Lenox Remond, who gracefully acknowledged the ladies' compliment.

J. Sella Martin moved a vote of thanks to the ladies for their hospitality to the strangers, which was passed, and the Convention then adjourned, *sine die*.

The Finance Committee report their receipts and expenditures:--

| | |
|---|----------|
| Collections, in full | \$180.08 |
| Paid out for hall hire, printing, and other expenses. | 144.59 |

| | |
|---|----------|
| Balance for publication and incidental expenses | \$ 35.49 |
|---|----------|

The Publication Committee report that, had the admission fee been charged on the last evening of the Convention, their intention of printing the proceedings in pamphlet form would have been promptly executed. A disposition has been manifested by some to contribute towards a fund for the purpose, but as the Committee could not be certain of raising the requisite amount, they did not deem it advisable to wait. Whenever the necessary sum is collected, the Committee stand ready to issue the proceedings in pamphlet form, with the correspondence and statistical reports; in the mean time, as all the Committee are able to do at present, every contributor to the Convention will be supplied with the newspaper account. Should any one fail to receive them, they will be forwarded on notification being given to the Committee.

The Liberator, August 19, 26, 1859.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. John W. Lewis was a well-known New England black who in February 1839 became agent for the New Hampshire Anti-Slavery Society. In this capacity he raised \$565.37, all within ten months after assuming his post, so that the Society was highly pleased with his work.

2. John N. Gloucester, a pioneer black clergyman and former slave, had also purchased his wife and their four children from bondage. In 1807, he became pastor of the First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. When the first assembly of blacks met at Philadelphia in 1817 to voice their views on colonization, Gloucester played a conspicuous role in its proceedings. Later, during the 1840's, he pastored a church in Brooklyn.

3. The African Civilization Society, founded by Henry Highland Garnet, had as one of its aims opening up commerce between Africa, the United States and Great Britain. Opponents of emigration were particularly critical of Garnet because the African Civilization Society accepted support from members of the Colonization Society. For Douglass' criticism of Garnet and the African Civilization Society, see "African Civilization Society," *Douglass' Monthly*, Feb. 1859, reprinted in Foner, *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, II, 541-547.

4. George T. Downing (1819-1903) was a leading black figure in New York City during the 1840's and early '50's. His father, Thomas Downing, was one of the wealthiest Negroes in the city, whose Oyster House was patronized by whites. Downing played an influential role in the Negro Convention movement and in the struggle of blacks to regain the suffrage in New York. An operator on the Underground Railroad, he used his home at Broadway and Wall Streets to aid escaping slaves. In 1855, Downing settled at Newport, Rhode Island, and became an active spokesman for the Negro community there.

5. J. Sella Martin was a slave who escaped to the North in 1855, became pastor of the Joy Street Baptist Church in Boston, and was one of the best-known Negro ministers in the North.

6. The *Liberator*, for example, in its issue of November 10, 1854, gave an interesting account of "A Negro Calculating Boy." It noted: "At the U.S. Hotel, a short time since, was stopping a colored boy, named William Marcy, whose extraordinary mathematical powers have greatly astonished all who have witnessed his demonstrations. He will add up columns of figures of any length, divide any given sum, multiply millions by thousands, within five minutes of the time the figures are given him and with such exactness as to render it truly wonderful. Yesterday noon, in the presence of a party of

gentlemen, he added a column of figures eight in line, and 108 lines, making the sum total of several millions, in about six minutes. The feat was so astounding, and apparently incredible, that several of the party took off their coats, and, dividing the sum, went to work, and in two hours after they commenced, produced identically the same number. The boy is not quite seventeen years of age; he cannot read or write, and in every other branch of an English Education is entirely deficient. His parents reside in Kentucky, near Louisville."

7. The Committee of Thirteen was a watchdog organization formed to represent the interests of blacks in New York City and Brooklyn. The following men constituted the committee in 1852: John J. Zuille, George T. Downing, Philip A. Bell, William J. Watson, T. Joiner White, Robert Hamilton, Ezekiel Dias, Jeremiah Powers, James McCune Smith, Junius C. Morrell, Thomas Downing, John T. Raymond and William Barnett. For references to this well-known committee, see *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Jan. 15, 1852, and the *New York Tribune*, Jan. 7, 1852.

8. George Latimer, a runaway slave from Norfolk, Virginia, was arrested in Boston in October 1842. The case, however, provoked nationwide attention. Abolitionists rallied to his defense. When an attempt to get him released through a writ of *habeas corpus* failed, they went to the public. Meetings were held throughout the state, and a huge petition consisting of 51,862 signatures was presented to Massachusetts Congressman Charles Francis Adams in Washington. So great was the outpouring of support for Latimer that his owner, James B. Gray, fearful of the reaction the case had engendered throughout New England, decided to sell him for \$400.

After Latimer's purchase, the abolitionists presented a petition to the state legislature praying that fugitive slaves should never again be arrested by town or city officials, nor held as prisoners in the jails of Massachusetts, and that the state constitution should be "so amended as shall forever separate the people of Massachusetts from all connection with slavery." The petition, signed by 60,000 persons headed by Latimer himself, was presented on February 17, 1843, to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. It resulted in the passage of a law, with very few dissenting votes, making it a penal offense for any magistrate or executive officer of the state to assist in the arrest or delivery of any person claimed as a fugitive slave and prohibiting those having care of the jails and other places of confinement to use them for his detention. See the *Latimer Journal and North Star*, Nov. 23, 1842; *Twelfth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society* (Boston, 1844), p. 45.

9. Anthony Burns had escaped from Richmond in February 1854 and was hiding in Boston. He was arrested on May 24, 1854. The next morning he was about to be delivered to his master when black and white abolitionists attacked the court house to free Burns. During the attack, James Batchelder, a truckman serving a United States marshal, was killed. President Pierce ordered out federal troops to force Burns' return to his master, and an army carried him down State Street and flung him, manacled, into the hold of a vessel bound for Virginia.

10. Eli Thayer (1819-1899) was an educator, congressman and originator of the Emigrant Aid Company (1854), a group which sought to make the Kansas-Nebraska Territory free from slavery through Northern colonization. He was elected to Congress from Massachusetts and served from 1857 to 1861.

11. Henry L. Dawes (1816-1903), Massachusetts congressman and senator, served in the House of Representatives from 1857 to 1875 and in the latter year began his senate career, serving continuously until 1892. He was the author of the famous Dawes Act of 1887, which conferred United States citizenship upon the Indians and granted homesteads of 160 acres to heads of families and smaller parcels to others.

12. Felix Octavius Carr Darley (1822-1855), American illustrator and caricaturist, was the son of John Darley, a comedian, and his wife Elenora Westray, at one time a popular actress. In 1843 his *Scenes in Indian Life*, etched on stone, attracted favorable attention. Later in 1848, the American Art Union commissioned what subsequently became his famous *Rip Van Winkle* and *Legends of Sleepy Hollow*, two superb drawings. A prolific and versatile artist, his works were later exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1867 and at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876.

13. This is probably a reference to the Babylonian Captivity, a period in the history of Israel which saw the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and the reconstruction in Palestine of a new Jewish state (after 538 B.C.). The implication is that, as in the case of the ancient Jews, black people in the United States too were laboring under the yoke of oppression.

14. The reference is to the campaign slogan used by William Henry Harrison (1773-1841), hero of the War of 1812, and John Tyler (1790-1862), candidates for president and vice-president of the United States respectively in the election campaign of 1840. Harrison died within a month of his inauguration.

15. As early as March 1851, Dr. James McCune Smith of New York City (1813-1865), the noted Negro leader and physician, wrote a paper entitled "The Social Condition of the Colored Race" in which he attempted to deal with the question of city life. It was an elaborate, fact-laden document. Smith first addressed himself to the advantages and disadvantages of city life. Though recognizing some of the former, the overall portrait he drew was dismal. He found that for the majority of black families "our lives are much shortened. Look at the preponderance of widows and children among us. They far exceed the calamities of mere sickness, that our benevolent societies have been obliged to cut off the widows and orphans, in order to help the sick." Then followed what was perhaps the most incisive factor in his whole analysis: "City life shuts us from general mechanical employment, while journeymen in the cities refuse to work with us, and colored bosses have either too little capital, or too little enterprise, to bring up and employ apprentices and journeymen."

Although Smith had urged a movement of blacks from the city to the country with the object of bettering their lot by engaging in agricultural pursuits, very few of his people followed his advice. One obvious reason for their reluctance was simply because they lacked sufficient capital to make such a transition. See the *New York Daily Tribune*, March 20, 1851. See also George Walker, "The Afro-American in New York City, 1827-1860," p. 49.

16. The reference is in part to the "Hunkers," who constituted the "conservative" party regulars within the Democratic Party during the late 1840's. They were decidedly pro-slavery, favoring, after the election of Polk in 1844, the annexation of Texas and the extension of slavery into the territories. Their counterparts within the party, the anti-annexationist, non-slavery extension Barn-burners, were the radical reform wing of the Democracy. Led by Martin Van Buren, they walked out of the New York State Convention of the party in 1847 over these issues, and the following year, they helped form the Free Soil Party, with Van Buren as its presidential nominee.

17. The reference is to the insurrection of the slaves in the French island of Saint Domingue which began in August 1791 and led to the establishment of the Republic of Haiti.