

GENTLEMEN OF THE NATIONAL BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS:

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN—According to the provisions of the Constitution, we have met in the first Annual Council of the Board, to interchange opinions pertaining to the interests of our race, and we wish that it were in our power, to bring before you such suggestions, as might be adequate to the importance of this great and now all-absorbing subject; a subject fraught with considerations of greater magnitude, whether relating to our domestic or foreign relations—for such we have indeed—than all other combined; although but seldom if ever so considered by those termed the leading Colored men in the United States, simply because they suffer their interests to be swallowed up in common with those of their oppressors, and content themselves with vociferating the claims that they are part and parcel of the body politic—the sovereign people of this country—and it would seem, judging from their continual acts, desire not to know nor acknowledge a difference.

This most unfortunately is one of those political errors and blunders, so long committed by our political leaders in the different States, especially the free, until it has become the leading established policy among them, though fatal everywhere, in its consequences and results.

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amid the world of matter that should be at our commands, we have but little at hand in this department, to present in a tangible form before you.

We shall first call your attention to the Southern or Slave States.

The Constitutions of Texas and Arkansas prohibit slavery forever from being abolished, thus perpetuating slavery within their boundaries. In neither of these States has the free colored man any privileges, but those permitted by the merest sufferance.

Louisiana has provided by law, for the education of her colored children, and also acknowledges the competency of a colored person as a witness in a Court of Justice. Yet the same State denies the right of a free colored person entering the State as a sojourner, even as a passenger on the public highway of the great Mississippi. Should they do so, they are seized and imprisoned to await the terrors of the law.

South Carolina also, though her Governor recommends the establishment of the marriage rites among the slave population, and a law prohibiting the separation of families by purchase. Nevertheless, here, as in Louisiana, a free colored person from the free States, whatever may be the business which calls him hither, though he be an American born, or a British subject, cannot enter that State without imprisonment during the stay, should he be employed on a vessel, and the

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risk of being sold into perpetual slavery if not connected with a vessel.

Georgia, too, a State proverbial for its acts of oppression, and inseparable connection with the slave trade, as associated in the early memory of every colored person in the country, has, during the current year, recommended through her officials the education of the slaves, so that by teaching them to read the Bible, they may be prevented from engendering a spirit of insubordination and insurrection. But in all other respects, she is as despotic and hostile to the interests of the free colored people, as any other slaveholding confederates.

Virginia opposes the amelioration of the condition of the slave in any respect, but strongly recommends Colonization to Liberia, and the passage of a law, forcibly to expel from the State, every free colored person. This State also, by custom and example (if not by expressed law) encourages distinctions to be made on account of color admixture of blood, among the colored people, by impressing them with the idea of superiority of the mixed blood, on account of its proximity to white—provided it is more than what is called “half blood.” She, as also does Maryland, prohibits the ingress of free colored persons, or even the return of one who may have been a native resident, if intending to remain out of the State over fifteen days. Nor can a colored person pass out of either

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of those States, on any kind of conveyance, without first obtaining the assurance of some white, that he or she is not the escaping slave of some Southern "master" or "mistress."

For a violation of these provisions, they hazard the penalty of being "publicly whipped at the post," imprisoned and sold into slavery at discretion.

Delaware has refused to abolish slavery from her deteriorating soil, and prohibits by a barbarous provision, free colored persons from going into the State, under severe and cruel penalties. During the current year, a free woman was sold for life, for being found in the State contrary to law.

Nor does the Western division of the slave propagating States, present a more favorable aspect in the political horizon. Here the tempest seems to rage unabated, if not increased fury.

Kentucky, the State once full of hope and expectation, has repudiated the idea of a contemplated act of Emancipation, adopted a new Constitution, providing strongly against the abolition of slavery, with no reasonable hope of a better state of things for ages to come, and now sustains a most ultra pro-slavery legislature, with scarcely a press in the State, which utters a sentiment in favor of freedom. Nor is Tennessee behind Kentucky in her march of retrogradation. And although we cannot refer to any recent acts of newly devised oppression, yet so steeped

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is she in the elements of despotism, that her march is equal to that of her contiguous Northern sister.

Mississippi still stands a living reality of American infamy. With a constitution also, which prohibits forever the emancipation of the slaves, it has for years been the great barracoon state or slave pen receptacle of all human cattle which embark down the Mississippi valley, where they are gathered in droves preparatory to their final exhibition for the Auctioneer's hammer, or a last resort, the slave bazaar in New Orleans. Missouri vies with the last named State in recent acts of despotism. By cruel enactments she prohibits the ingress of free colored persons from other states and also expels from the State, those of her free colored residents. Forced by measures the most stringent and extreme, the colored inhabitants of that State, especially those resident in St. Louis, have been driven and compelled to fly in every direction.

California by three successive acts of the legislature, has granted to slave-holders the right to take their slaves into the State, for and during the term of three consecutive years; and now seriously contemplates its permanent establishment, which doubtless will be consummated during the next year. In this state the colored people are deprived of the right of testimony in the courts or any case of litigation, wherein their evidence conflicts with that of a white person. By this

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despotic provision, many of the native Californians, who were a part of the independent sovereign people under Mexico, have been degraded to the humiliating condition of political nonentities. And by a recent decision of the supreme court of that State, given in a case growing out of a suit in which a Mongolian's evidence conflicted with that of a white man's, in which a demurrer was entered; the Chinese stand in the same political position as the black man. He too is degraded to the level of a slave.

Colored children in this State, like that of Louisiana, have to a certain extent, the benefit of funds for the Public Schools.

The non-slaveholding States next claim our attention. In Maine, the people stand on a political level, there being no political distinctions known in her civil code.

Vermont occupies the same proud political position, with the enactment of a personal protection bill by her legislature, which annuls all and every conflicting United States law. In neither of these states it is thought, would be permitted, an execution of the insufferable Fugitive Slave Law. This, however, has yet to be tested, and upon this point, let us not be too sanguine, and expect more than can be warranted.

Massachusetts has twice trailed her lofty Banner in the dust, by yielding obedience to the despotic slave power. But during the

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last session of her General Court—Legislature—she has somewhat wiped out the stain which so defiled her, by the passage of the “Personal Liberty Bill” an act which teaches the menacing impudence of the Central Government of Washington, that the consuming fire of Seventy-Six has not yet been extinguished by the dampening showers of the engines of the United States Navy.

Rhode Island too stands untrammelled in regard to the rights of suffrage; in this particular all stand on a political equality. But in other departments of her municipal provisions, we are not so well advised.

Connecticut still lingers under the “Blue Law” influence of witchcraft superstitions, many laws still existing against the colored people, which are both disgraceful and cruel. None of the political privileges exercised and enjoyed by the colored people in the foregoing states—as we are advised of—are exercised and enjoyed by the colored people in this state. There prejudice is a growing ulcer, which seems fast to be penetrating the vitals of the body politic. The colored inhabitants, with praiseworthy efforts, hold state Conventions for the removal of restrictions; but deaf to all entreaties, she still holds with iron grasp her colored brother by the throat.

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equality. There too have they been industrious and assiduous, calling State Conventions, getting up Petitions, and even in several instances, sending delegates of their own people to the Capitol to urge their claims in person before their rulers. This year they also hold one, for the same political object. In this state the Public school privileges are great—greater perhaps than in any other in the Union—except Massachusetts—but unlike the last named state, they are based on complexional principles, the “Colored school” system prevailing.

New Jersey is still a Slave State, no act of emancipation having passed the legislature consequently the colored people who enjoy freedom there, do so simply by *passive* indifference on the part of the whites. Of course they have not even the poor privilege of suffrage, and what other privileges politically they enjoy, we are not advised.

In Pennsylvania where at one time colored men did exercise the poor privileges of suffrage—balloting into office their peer and superior—by an alteration of the constitution in 1838, they were totally deprived of that privilege. In 1847, as an offset to the Act of 1793, a law passed the legislature, to protect the free colored people, by prohibiting the discretionate seizure of that class of people, and thereby put a stop to kidnapping. In 1851 a Bill was introduced in the same

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body, to prohibit colored person from coming into the state from any direction whatever. The next year, 1852, a Bill passed appropriating two thousand dollars to aid the state Colonization Society. This was a bold stagger toward falling on their knees before the uplifted lash of their Southern masters. During the last legislature, by the assiduity and perseverance of the colored people in different parts of the state, and the liberality of several members of that body, a Bill was introduced asking an amendment of the Constitution, and removing the word *white*, so as to extend equal unqualified suffrage. In this we failed; and notwithstanding the many county and state Conventions held by the colored people of this commonwealth, with the most urgent and thrilling appeals for justice, the political heart and conscience appear to be hardened and seared against every claim relative to their manhood. In this state we are still permitted to testify as competent witnesses in courts of litigation. The "Colored school" system also pervades, and in the eastern and interior countries, a stupid prejudice exists against the colored people, which is only equaled by the ignorance of those who manifest it. Notwithstanding all this, there are those among us who cling to Pennsylvania as to a Paradise.

In Ohio, the colored people are acknowledged by law, as competent witnesses in the *Courts*, the disability under which they labored, being removed some three or four years

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ago, a provision has also been made for the education of their children—the “Colored school system” and a person of more than half white has the right of suffrage. There, as in several other states mentioned, they hold almost annually State Conventions, for the purpose of obtaining their stricken down rights, but with no more hope of success than their Eastern brethren; although the advantages which they now enjoy may be attributed to their own efforts; the whites having extended such privileges as they conceive might be enjoyed by the blacks may grant no more.

In some of the school Districts, as in Cincinnati, they have their own directors—a body of colored men holding a subordinate position to the white Directors—and although having no discretionary or primary power, they have not the privilege of voting for themselves, but must be elected by the whites.

Humiliating as this is, a large portion of them, bow to it with pleasurable acceptance.

The barbarous laws of Indiana and Illinois still continue to disgrace their statutes,—especially the former, which prohibits blacks and mulatto’s from entering the state, on any pretext, provided they are free.

A slaveholder may with impunity pass into the state with his slaves, and meet everywhere with courtesy, smiles and protection.

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But after clearly establishing his freedom by the testimony of an officer-holder under the United States Government in Georgia, the United States Court before which he was tried, compelled him to bear the whole expense of litigation,—a sum amounting to considerable above one thousand dollars.

Nor are the Territories free from the curse of oppression. Oregon has instituted a law, prohibiting a colored person from testifying against a white, and also from setting in the Territory. And those who may now reside there, do so by the merest suffrance

The outrages in Kansas, are familiar to every one. To crown their acts of infamy a law has recently passed the legislature making it a crime, punishable with *death*, to take into or carry out of that territory, any person held as a slave for the purpose of freeing them. Here upon this point comment would be an idle waste of words and time. It will hereafter be seen whether or not the policy laid down by the Cleveland Convention, of which you are but the agents, was that of political sagacity, and well-advised intellect, guided and directed by intelligent forethought, wisdom, and prudence; or as those who claim to be alone competent

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to lead and advise us to assert a policy pernicious in its tendency, and destructive in its results to us as a people. We are satisfied that our position is the only tenable ground, and our policy the only feasible scheme or plan of operation, by which to accomplish our elevation from degradation, and redemption from thralldom as a race

Foreign relations next claim our attention. In this direction there is a hope; if not the genial rays of a sun, to gladden our hearts and brighten our pathway—at least we may descry the twinkling of a distant star to direct our weary footsteps in our onward march on this long and tiresome journey.

The long anticipated annexation of the Sandwich Islands to the United States, has proved a failure, the scheme being overthrown by the far-sightedness and wise precaution of Prince Kamehameha the III. king of the country. This nobleman has not yet forgotten the insults received by him in various parts of this country, while on a mission as Minister Plenipotentiary, Envoy Extraordinary, from the government of his country to the cabinet of Washington. He is a gentleman of distinguished attainments, a shrewd politician, and will never consent to the suicidal scheme of annexation.

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ple, but, in the total extinction of every right and privilege belonging to that people, the whole being usurped and swallowed up by the impudent assumption of "white superiority." The Sandwich Islands, then, for the present, may be regarded as safe; and it is hoped, the people never will so far forget their own national dignity, nor undervalue their own native sovereignty, as to yield to any terms so disparaging and degrading. This may not be feared, while the influence of the excellent man, now their sovereign head, pervades their councils.

The deep seated scheme for the invasion of Hayti has been signally overthrown, and the wretch who was sent as the accredited agent of the White House conclave at Washington, to the Dominican part of the Island, has been driven away dejected and despised; and his American masters at the Federal City, covered with disgrace. Rather than the consummation of such a design—the subjugation of Hayti by the United States—would we see that splendid Isle sunk beneath the swelling waves of the Carribean Sea forever. But you need entertain no fears in this direction, as the Haytien people are too intelligent and too conversant with the outlandish prejudices of the Americans, for a moment to entertain any such proposition, however pretending, emanating from the whites of this country. And with such men at their head as the distinguished

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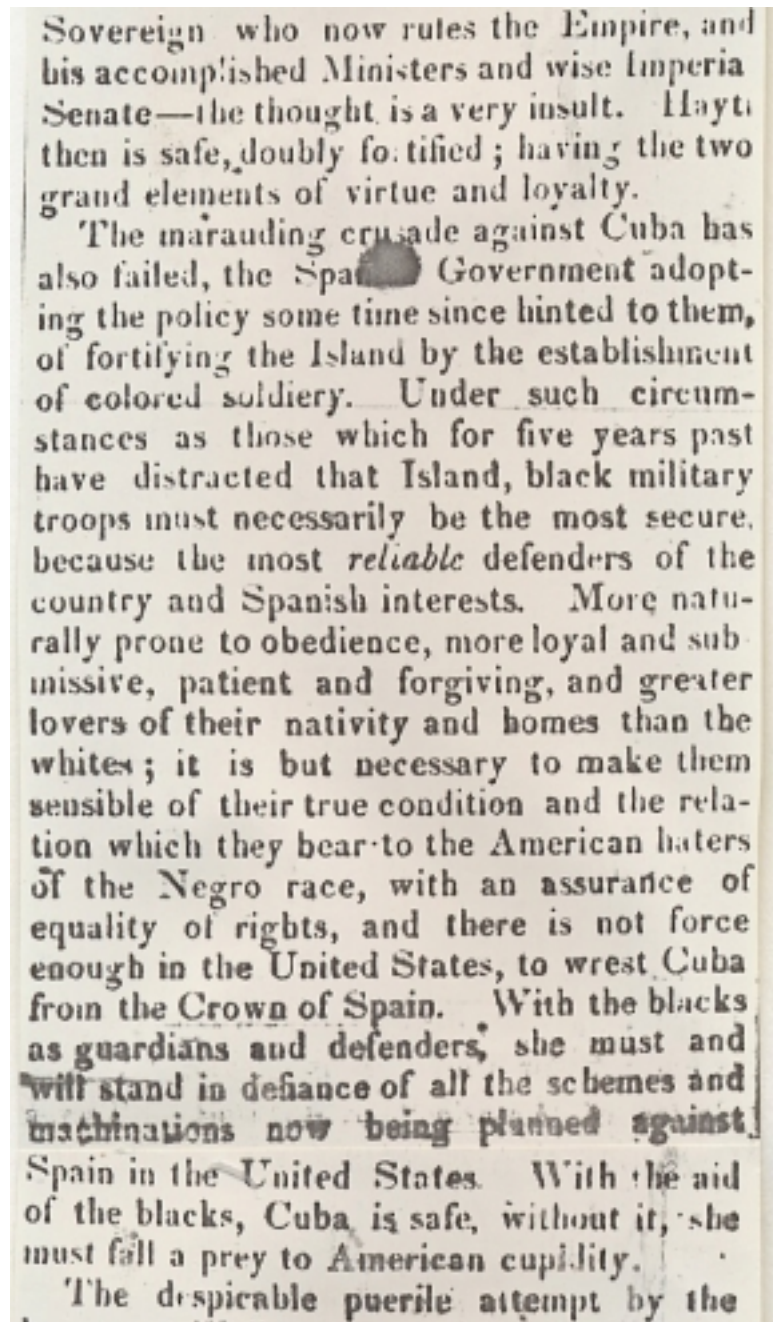
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Sovereign who now rules the Empire, and his accomplished Ministers and wise Imperia Senate—the thought is very insult. Hayti then is safe, doubly fortified; having the two grand elements of virtue and loyalty.

The marauding crusade against Cuba has also failed, the [Spanish] Government adopting the policy some time since hinted to them, of fortifying the Island by the establishment of colored soldiery. Under such circumstances as those which for five years past have distracted that Island, black military troops must necessarily be the most secure because the most *reliable* defenders of the country and Spanish interests. More naturally prone to obedience, more loyal and submissive, patient and forgiving, and greater lovers of their nativity and homes than the whites; it is but necessary to make them sensible of their true condition and the relation which they bear to the American haters of the Negro race, with an assurance of equality of rights, and there is not force enough in the United States, to wrest Cuba from the Crown of Spain. With the blacks as guardians and defenders, she must and will stand in defiance of all the schemes and machinations now being planned against Spain in the United States. With the aid of the blacks, Cuba is safe, without it, she must fall prey to American cupidity.

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Sovereign who now rules the Empire, and his accomplished Ministers and wise Imperia Senate—the thought is a very insult. Hayti then is safe, doubly fortified; having the two grand elements of virtue and loyalty.

The marauding crusade against Cuba has also failed, the Spanish Government adopting the policy some time since hinted to them, of fortifying the Island by the establishment of colored soldiery. Under such circumstances as those which for five years past have distracted that Island, black military troops must necessarily be the most secure, because the most *reliable* defenders of the country and Spanish interests. More naturally prone to obedience, more loyal and submissive, patient and forgiving, and greater lovers of their nativity and homes than the whites; it is but necessary to make them sensible of their true condition and the relation which they bear to the American haters of the Negro race, with an assurance of equality of rights, and there is not force enough in the United States, to wrest Cuba from the Crown of Spain. With the blacks as guardians and defenders, she must and will stand in defiance of all the schemes and machinations now being planned against Spain in the United States. With the aid of the blacks, Cuba is safe, without it, she must fall a prey to American cupidity.

The despicable puerile attempt by the

buccaneer Walker, to overthrow the governments of Lower California and Nicaragua, has resulted in a most signal chastisement of the temerity and impudence of that [marauder] by the countries against which he directed his expeditions. But he was not without encouragement from high quarters, as the government of the United States doubtless in anticipation fully devised—had forestalled this crusade of Walker, by a barbarous attack upon San Juan or Greytown, but a few months previous, in which an unarmed people without military defence, were stormed, sacked, being cut to pieces by a naval force of the United States.

Nor have they yet done, since through the same national agency, another piratical expedition under one Captain Kinney, a Pennsylvanian, has within a few weeks past, sailed for Nicaragua. Reports inform us, that he and party have reached their destination, doubtless under the protection of the United States; as Wheeler the recently appointed Minister from the Court at Washington to that government, is a slaveholder from North Carolina, who it is but reasonable to suppose, goes under full instructions concerning this expedition, and all other matters pertaining to American interests, whether legitimately the province of his mission or not. But we are informed that the Nicaragua Government, is fully advised of their designs, and fully prepared to meet them. We trust this may be so, since the

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sole object of the Americans is desiring a foot hold in foreign territories, is the servitude and enslavement of the African and colored races.

Already has there been carried on within the last twelve months, a commerce by the enslavement of the Chinese, and Yucatan Indians. These have been principally carried into Cuba, and purchased by the parties in league with the filibusters. The Chinese are destroyed under the pretext of apprenticeship, and the Yucatecoes openly sold as prisoners of war.

An advisory Correspondence is now being opened and carried on with foreign countries. On the tenth day of July last an official commissioner sailed from the United States to the dominions of His Imperial Majesty, Faustin I., Emperor of Hayti, as the representative of the colored people of the United States, fully instructed on the subject of his mission. He also holds a discretionary commission, to Jamaica, St. Thomas, Nassau, Martinique, Guadaloupe and Central America. He is a black gentleman of distinguished qualifications, literary acquirements and political sagacity. One who doubtless will fill his mission with honour and credit, and we may henceforth hope for a medium of communication to be opened between the colored people of the United States and their brethren of foreign countries, never before

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dreamed of. By this communication will be established the much needed organization if intermediate communication between all of the colored races on the Western Continent. This is a [desideratum] in the political prospects of our race, "a consummation devotedly to be wished for." Without it, we may hope for little; with it we may expect much.

Emigration strictly, is neither domestic nor foreign, but a policy which belongs to both aspects of our political advancement. And while anxiously contemplating the vista in this direction, the threatening storm of oppression is seen giving way, the lowering clouds of despair dispersing, the sunbeam of hope to radiate in every direction, and the clear unobscured sky of promise and joy, spreading fully to our view, dissipating every doubt as to the future prosperity and successful elevation of our race.

The Canadas, from their near proximity, and easiness of access, are made the point of emigration by the colored people of the United States; and notwithstanding the studied opposition made against it by a class of colored gentlemen known and acknowledged as leaders and great men among their people in various parts of the country, those who prefer this country to going elsewhere; the principles of Emigration are fast becoming the leading policy among our people in this country. We are happy to lay before you the intelligence that the common

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people generally have entered into this measure with might and main, and whether the "leading and great men," go with us or not—we have fully accomplished our object. We have opened an avenue to the portals of political equality, without which man is but a cipher anywhere.

From every direction, East, West, North and South, our people are flocking into this beautiful country, and substantially settling themselves down by becoming possessors of the soil, as loyal British subjects. There is more real estate owned at this time by the colored people of the Canadas, the greater part of which has been obtained within three years, and since the propagation of the principles of emigration by our agencies, than by all the balance of the colored people in North America together. These are indisputable facts, which figures will demonstrate.

The only successful remedy for the evils we endure, is to place ourselves in a position of potency, independently of our oppressors. All intelligent political economists and historians know this, our oppressors know this, and hence their strenuous opposition to our settlement in the Canadas. And it is fallacy to talk of remaining here in the United States for the sake of the slave. Our influence must be tenfold greater when forming a part of the sovereign people of any country whether as an independent people or the constituent part of another nation,—hence the

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desire to seize upon Hayti, and prevent the emancipation of Cuba. Hence also, the burning jealousy existing in the United States against the British and French West Indies. We would that our political leaders and great men could be made to see these things.

It will be as fulsome ere long, to see or hear a colored person in this country opposing emmigration as a measure of elevation to political equality, as to see or hear a white American opposing his own national Independence.

God surely is in the work—and how singularly is his declaration verified, that he will choose the “poor and ignorant of this world, to teach the great and wise”—and with much thankfulness to Him who rules and presides over the destiny of nations, we give all the praise and glory—sensible that he has originated so great a project, with the humble and obscure.

We present you not the result of any hasty conclusion, but the work and sequel of serious study, reflection, and experience of years of intelligent maturity.

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