

FELLOW CITIZENS—It is with no small degree of pleasure we give our consent to preside over the deliberations of this patriotic assembly; because we believe that it is the duty of every citizen of whatever complexion, however humble, to throw the whole weight of his influence on the side of the government under which he lives; because, notwithstanding the invidious distinctions so prevalent all over the country against our race, “for no color of crime, but for the crime of color,” we equally feel the burden of our country’s trouble in common with our other heretofore highly favored fellow-countrymen; because the signs of the times clearly indicate that the non-slave-owning States are now reaping the bitter fruits of their base-servility to the interests of the Slave Power; because, to use the language of another, “If you fasten a chain on the ankle of another, a retributive Providence will surely fasten the other end around your own neck.” If the doctrine of enforced, unrequited labor “is a holy and wholesome thought,” then it is right to enslave white as well as black men. “What’s sauce for the goose is most certainly sauce for the gander.” If it is right to enslave black men in *South Carolina*, under the U. S. Constitution, then it is right to enslave white laborers in *Massachusetts*, and put them, their wives and their children, on the auction-block, and sell them to the highest bidder. The *Richmond Enquirer* thus speaks on this topic:—

“Until recently, the defence of slavery has labored under great difficulties, because its apologists (for they were mere apologists) took half-way ground. They confirmed the defence of slavery to mere negro slavery; giving up the slavery principle, and admitting other forms of slavery to be WRONG.

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The line of defence, however, is now changed. The South maintains that slavery is RIGHT, natural and necessary, and does not depend upon differences of complexion. The laws of the slave States SUSTAIN the holding of WHITE MEN in bondage."

Ex-Senator Downes, of Louisiana, thus speaks:—

"I call upon the opponents of slavery to prove that the *white laborers* of the North are as happy, as contented, or as comfortable, as the slaves of the South. In the South, the slaves do not suffer one-tenth of the ills endured by the white laborers of the North. Poverty is unknown to the Southern slaves, for as soon as the master of slaves becomes too poor to provide for them, he sells them to others who can take care of them. This, sir, is one of the excellencies of the system of slavery, and this the superior condition of the slave over the Northern WHITE laborer."

Such, fellow-citizens, are the declared purposes of the lords of the lash. We, as uncompromising Abolitionists, contend that chattel slavery is a violation of man's inherent, God-given right; that no system, custom, tradition, usage, precedent framed into law, except for crime, is a justification for the enslavement of any of God's children. The election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency is only a pretext for secession; the great contest now going on all over the country, disguise it as we may, is between Slavery and Freedom—"Slavery sectional, Freedom national." Also the disintegration of this American Union, now almost divided North and South—the one by God's blessing to be forever free, and the other, slave only for a season, till the negro Goths and Vandals, like the white slaves of classic Rome, wipe out the accursed sin in rivers of blood. Of course, we are all deeply sensible of the existence of this terrible war—ter-

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rible in its brutality as well as destructive in its ravages. The Revolution of 1776 was nothing in comparison with this of 1861. Then, it was only against a 3 ½ d. impost duty levied on tea, and the Stamp Act, insignificant of themselves, which the colonies successfully resisted. Now, the final struggle is, that the South slave States, not satisfied with the pro-slavery guarantees of the U. S. Constitution, which, for eighty-two years, has secured to them their property in human flesh, now demand greater security for the preservation of negro slavery, and that the re-opening of the African slave trade shall be legalized all over the American continent by unalterable law forever!

Never in the history of our unfortunate country have the Stars and Stripes been held in greater veneration by Abolitionists, even by colored men, than now. For one, I must confess that, heretofore, I have held in utter contempt the United States flag, because it gave us no protection, and have often exclaimed, in the language of the poet Campbell—

“United States, your banner wears  
Two emblems—one of fame:  
Alas! the other that it bears  
Reminds us of your shame.  
The white man’s liberty in types  
Stands blazoned by your stars:  
But what’s the meaning of your stripes?  
They mean your negro’s scars.”

But now the Stars and Stripes, with the exception of fifteen slavery stars, which are rapidly approximating to the sun’s centre of the world’s political progress, and soon to be forever lost in the immensity of Freedom’s space, never looked more beautiful, more hopeful. It represents, in this fearful crisis, the express will of the free States, the total annihilation of

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negro slavery.

Fellow-citizens, I believe that God's own time, long wished for, has now come; slavery *must* come to an end, and that speedily. Whether by bloody massacre, exterminating the slave-owner, or by peaceful means, God only knows; but by whatever means, in God's name, let it come!

The great change now witnessed all over the free States is truly encouraging. Pro-slavery flunkeyites, old line Whigs, Democrats, Political Abolitionists, Garrisonians, Republicans, disfranchised colored Americans, and non-resistants, all vie with each other in support of the government, and look up to the Stars and Stripes as the John the Baptist of the slaves' coming redeemer, and will defend it, in whatever way their own convictions of duty may dictate, to the bitter end.

We regret the necessity which calls this extraordinary distinctive meeting. It should not be so. It is no fault of ours that we are not this day *mixed* "in this imminent deadly breach." It is no fault of ours that we are not standing shoulder to shoulder in battle array with the men of the North, "to put down the rebellion of the South." It is no fault of ours that we are standing still, with folded arms, whilst government is straining every nerve in the maintenance of its legitimate constitutional authority. We stand now on the same "broad ground of our common humanity," where our fathers stood in 1776 and 1812, and are ready and willing to follow their illustrious patriotic example. But why should government stand halting between two opinions? Why hesitate, and

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stoop to pander to the sickly sentimentalities of "conscience and the Constitution"? If custom makes law, then the past history of the country's struggles fully justifies government calling into active service every muscle, without regard to the texture of the hair which adorns the head, or the color of the cuticle which covers the body. We are not begging this question; neither do we mean to rummage among the musty pages of history to find a precedent upon which to hang a doubt. Neither do we care for legal or illegal technicalities, or constitutional prohibitions: these all sink into insignificance as compared to the fearful exigencies into which the country is now plunged.

There is a law,—a higher law, if you please, a law as old as the Bible,—viz: *Inter arma silent leges*: "In time of war, there is no law." This law should more particularly be now enforced to the very letter, because the nation is at war *with itself*, to put down high treason, backed up by 800,000 slave-owning rebels, against 27,700,000 freemen, and the constituted authorities. In time of war there is now law, only the law of superior force. It is only when the rebels are whipped into submission and sue for peace, that their "sober second thought" will be made to obey the powers that be, ordained in form of physical force. Hence we advocate this law of necessity, because it obviates the slow process of doubtful legislation. Proclaim this law, and 50,000 able-bodied men of our race will not wait to be asked to take up arms to defend the liberties of the country. Proclaim this law of liberty, and four millions of our race will rise up as from the sleep of death, and leap into the front ranks of freemen. Proclaim this law of strength, and our country will not present the shameful spectacle to

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the sneering gaze of the world, as being too weak to defend herself without foreign aid. Proclaim this law of retaliation, and we shall have given the rebels in exchange "a Roland for an Oliver." Proclaim this law of righteousness, and this afflicted, but, we trust, repentant nation will then have vindicated the cause of truth, justice and liberty.

[Mr. Powell's remarks were received with considerable applause.]

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