

January 21-23, 1857

Langston, C. H.

*Proceedings of the State Convention of the  
Colored Men of the State of Ohio Held in Columbus  
Presscopy – Harvard University – Anti-Slavery Pamphlets*

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—I arise in obedience to a call of this Convention, to perform the solemn and melancholy duty of saying a few words on the life, labors and death of our departed brother and fellow laborer, Lorenzo Dow Taylor.

Although it is a painful task for us to dwell upon the death of the great and good, and to contemplate the loss which the world has sustained in their death, yet we may with profit, pleasure and delight meditate upon their goodness, their virtue and their benevolence, and hold up to ourselves those sublime characteristics as a burning light to lighten our pathway to usefulness and renown. For

“Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Foot-prints on the sand of time;  
Foot-prints that perhaps another  
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.”

Mr. Taylor was born in the western part of the State of Virginia, about the year 1815, and was therefore at the time of his death (April 25th, 1856,) about forty-one years of age. Of his early history I can say but little, for it is concealed in that black and impenetrable obscurity in which Slavery always seeks to envelope itself and its victims. Notwithstanding the same commonwealth which gave birth to the honored champions of human liberty, Washington, Henry and Jefferson, gave birth to Mr. Taylor, yet the latter was born a *Slave*. Although Henry had shouted, “Give me *liberty* or give me death,” and Jefferson had declared that “all men are created *free* and *equal*,” and Washington had led the hosts of *Liberty* from conquering unto conqueror, still in their native State, the galling fetters of the bleeding bondman were not broken, and the Old Dominion still produces its thousands of infant Slaves. Mr. Taylor, in his youth, was, of course, surrounded by all the blighting influences which crowd upon the fiendish institution of Slavery. His native State is remarkable for its pretended love of liberty, and its real love of despotism. It is re-

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nowned for its slaveholding, its slave-breeding and its slave-trading.

It is famed for its ignorance and its odious laws, which forbid, under heavy penalties, the teaching of colored children to read their own names, the name of the God who made them, or of the sun which gives them light.

Under these degrading circumstances, and these odious and damning laws did our demised friend begin life, and in this deplorable and wretched condition spent many of his early years.— By some unforeseen but kind providence he was emancipated from this state of thralldom—the relation of master and Slave being abrogated—and he joyfully removed with his parents to the free State of Ohio. He here commenced the cultivation of his mind, and having left the dominion of human Slavery, he had fondly hoped to enter the schools of learning unrestrained, and thereby prepare himself for future usefulness. But, alas! he was doomed to the saddest disappointment. In this free and otherwise liberal State he encountered a bulwark of prejudice more formidable than Alpine steeps—those mighty barriers which the hand of nature has lifted up as a limit to human ambition. This colossal mountain of negro hate, “rearing its lofty head to Heaven,” bade defiance to every attempt to ascend its rugged cliffs. This pro-slavery spirit closed the doors of schools, colleges and seminaries, not only against Mr. Taylor, but against every colored man, woman and child in the State. This accursed prejudice became embodied in a code of enactments known as the “Black Laws of Ohio.” At the very threshold of the State Mr. Taylor was met by this heathenising code, and denied a legal residence in the State, as well as every other immunity enjoyed by its citizens. By these laws, the public schools withheld from him their invaluable blessings. This adamant wall of prejudice and negro hate propped and supported by statutory and constitutional enactments required an almost superhuman energy and perseverance in a colored man to scale its summit, triumph over its power and influence, and rise to moral and intellectual eminence. L.D. Taylor did possess this energy and perseverance. He did triumph over these almost insurmountable obstacles, and rose to a high eminence of morality and

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intelligence.

As a father, Mr. Taylor was kind and indulgent, yet never forgetting the admonitions of Scripture, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." As a husband, his distinguishing characteristics were love and devotion. Being ever under the influence of these God-like traits of character, he made every sacrifice to render his family comfortable and happy, always remembering that "he who neglects to provide for those of his own household is worse than an infidel." As a citizen, his life and conduct were the purest exemplification of the deep and abiding faith which he possessed in that glorious and divine truth which says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." As a scholar, he very far surpassed thousands whose opportunities for mental culture were much superior to his own. While he did not so much excel in the knowledge of letters, he seems to have fully appreciated the wise man's advice when he says, "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all they getting get understanding." As a philanthropist and reformer, Mr. Taylor had those invaluable elements of character without which no reformatory enterprise can be pushed to a successful and speedy termination; namely, a fixed and unyielding determination, a "dauntless spirit," and an active and self-sacrificing energy. To convince him that any reform was in accordance with the immutable principles of rectitude, at once enlisted him in its support and advocacy, and when once engaged in any cause, his self-consistency, his inflexible will and his indefatigable exertions made him a mighty champion in its support. For twenty years Mr. Taylor was not only an active and untiring advocate of the cause of temperance, but a consistent temperance man having never been known to taste one drop of ardent spirits during that time. He was a barber, and as such was expected, in accordance with a prevalent as well as a profitable custom, to follow his ordinary avocation on the Sabbath day. But so determined was he in his course of moral duty, that neither the prevalence nor the profit of the custom had any

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The labors of Mr. Taylor, in the cause in which we are now engaged, must not be overlooked or forgotten. The moral, intellectual and political elevation of the colored people was a cause ever dear to his heart. He labored constantly and earnestly for its promotion.

This, I believe, is the first State Convention of colored men ever held in Ohio without his presence. He has always been with us in these efforts for self-elevation, and we have always been proud to honor him as one of our greatest benefactors. But he is gone. His warning voice will no more be heard in our assemblies, and while we are forced to grieve over the loss which his family, the cause of the slave and our own cause has sustained in the death of this great and good man, we are happy to know that he has so LIVED and so acted as not only to hand his name down to posterity with undying honor and unsullied fame, but has been admitted to that celestial habitation above, where he shall spend a glorious eternity in the immediate presence and favor of the great architect of the universe. Then while we are meditating upon his death, let us determine to imitate his life, and so be a blessing to the world, and an honor to our creator.

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