

February 8-10, 1865

Green, A[lfred] M.

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the Colored People of Pennsylvania*

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Sergeant-Major A. M. Green was loudly called for and addressed the Convention as follows: He had endeavored last evening to present a legal argument in favor of our demands. Thus far, this evening's speeches have tended to show, upon moral principles and natural rights, the title of the colored man to liberty and equality before the law. I will, said he, throw aside these arguments and take those which God is pleased to be showing throughout the land in events now transpiring. He then presented the part which the colored American had taken, the suffering he had endured, and the labor he had performed in saving the government and institutions of this country.

He asserted that Daniel Webster had years ago said, that this anti-slavery principle would force itself into respect, and that he knew nothing in the Union which was secure against its advance. The speaker believed that the two principles admitted in the administration of our government are in direct opposition, they must conflict, slave and free labor are irreconcilable, and freedom has for years been making concessions to the slave power;— in the purchase of Louisiana¹² and Florida,¹³ in waging the Mexican war,¹⁴ in forming and repealing the Missouri Compromise¹⁵ and in giving the Dred Scott decision, slavery had received what she demanded. But after a few years the conflict took another phase, and John Brown began it at Harper's Ferry, and it was now being continued in the midst of a sea of blood. He proceeded next to show the changes which had taken place in the character of the war, and said if Pennsylvania asked colored men to enlist in the United States service, let us ask Pennsylvania to grant us our rights. We have the common good in view and are willing to fight for equal rights and privileges. Colored men cannot now be asked to go south to free their brethren, Jefferson Davis¹⁶ himself admits that slavery is dead; let us then demand another plea when we are invited to the field.

We ask that when the colored man returns from the field of battle, he will not be turned from your ballot box, your railroad cars, your hotels and schools, thereby renewing in the bosom of his white fellow soldier who has fought side by side with him, all the old prejudices which existed before the war. Let us demand that our pensions and back pay may not be so generally neglected as is the case west. Let our white fellow citizens remember that God will make fruitless all efforts for peace until we acknowledge that truth embodied in the principle of the Law of the Prophets,—“thou shalt love the Lord will all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself,” then shall we have a permanent and secure peace.

The speech was eloquently delivered and well received.

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