

Mr. HENRY BIBB,—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. In response to the call to speak on this resolution, I would remark that it was not my expectation to be called on to add anything to what would be said this evening; but when I came here it was to hear rather than to be heard. But upon a question of such importance to us, as a people, as the one under consideration, I am always ready and willing, and I trust I ever shall be, to speak my sentiments when called on. I am in favour of the resolution which has been offered and discussed by the gentleman who has preceeded me. I hope it will not only be adopted but that you will give it a loud and hearty response.

On almost all questions religious or political, it is our lot to differ. Nothing is more common than for human beings to differ on almost every subject. But with regard to the present subject which has called us together there seems to be but one prevailing opinion. All are ready to hold up their hands and utter their voices against the schemes of the American Colonization Society. I know but little about that Society; it is one to which I have never given much thought. I always knew however that it emanated from Slavery and slaveholders. The fathers of the parent society were slaveholders—negro haters;—those who had always striven to do all they could to destroy and to annihilate the African race when they could not enslave them. It was from this source that this colonization scheme emanated. What then, as coloured freemen, should we expect to flow from such a source?

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In the first place they never proposed to colonize slaves, their object has always been to colonize the free people of colour, to remove that part of the intelligence supposed to exist among the coloured population from

their midst, in order that they might hold their slaves more securely in their chains.

The resolution under consideration speaks something about appeals being made to the people, for their contributions. I have known this to be the case. In travelling about as an humble advocate in the cause of human freedom, I have found my way somewhat hedged up in many places where I have gone to advocate the immediate abolition of Slavery: for when I have asked the people who profess so much sympathy and regard for the African, in his native land, to give something to enlighten the benighted Africans of our own land, they have retorted by saying; "You never can become anything in this country; you must be sent off to your own land." Mr. Chairman we come down to hair splitting, so to speak. What would they do with me? I suppose the class of people proposed to be colonized are what is called the black population—the African race, when in fact there are but few of the true, full-blooded Africans in this country. What would they do with such men as myself? I am neither of the one nor the other race. If they set strictly according to the declaration put forth by the Society, that every man should be colonized into his native land, I do not know whether I should be sent to Africa, to England, Ireland or, to Scotland. (Laughter). It is so too with most of my hearers. And on the other hand if men were to be enslaved who have a drop of African blood flowing in their veins, I think we should be very apt to seize hold of some of our greatest statesmen who pass for white. (Applause.) I have discovered a great many times men of that character among whites; for it is very difficult to deceive me in this matter: I know my own people when I see them. (Applause). Only a few

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days ago I discovered a coloured man who held the office of clerk in the County Court in a village not far from this city. He was much darker than myself, yet he passes for a white man. You can find a great many such in the country who pass current for white men, and I do not question that if I should search out the Statesmen in our country I should find many who are tinged with African blood. (Applause.)

Sir, I take the ground that this country is my native country. America gave me birth and I know of no other fatherland. If the object of the Colonizationists is to make us free, they utterly fail in their purpose. What would American white people think if there should be a law passed in their respective States prohibiting any man from going out of his native State. That would not be freedom at all. But to talk about freedom and then to drive me from my country is not philanthropy, is not benevolence; and the man who says such an object is philanthropic towards the African, has that kind of love toward him that the hawk for the chicken—he loves him for what he can get out of him. (Applause). And when they come round and make these appeals under the plea of philanthropy and love, it reminds me of an anecdote of a little boy who when out with his father to hunt game. They caught a rabbit and when they returned home they commenced to skin and dress it; in doing so they threw several pieces to the dog, who wagged his tail and [cut] capers, so that the boy asked his father what made the dog jump and wag his tail so? The father said, because he was tickled. The next day they went a fishing, and they caught a number of eels and among them a very large one. When they returned home the boy was impatient to skin the big eel; he could not wait for it to die but hung

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it up alive and commenced skinning it. The eel of course kept up a terrible twitching about, lashing his tail to and fro. The father came up and seeing what was going on, severely reprov'd the boy for his cruelty to the animal. O, it does not hurt him father, said the boy, it only *tickles* him! (Laughter.) It is to a considerable extent the case in relation to this subject: while the Society is making these appeals on the score of philanthropy to those who would perhaps be the friends of the coloured people, and while they are tickling you with the idea of your being somebody when you arrive at the colony, they are skinning you like the boy skinning the eel. (Applause.)

But let me take another view of the subject. We have never found those persons who profess to have so much benevolence towards us, ready to put their hands into their pockets and give money to help the fugitive slave to escape, and to go into a land of freedom. There is a kind of colonization that I am in favour of. There is a colony just across our northern boundary, a colony more congenial to our health and prosperity than that of Liberia. It is just beyond the borders of Michigan in the British possessions, a colony where coloured people, slaves more especially, may go without the large expenditure required to colonize them in Africa. But go to those men who are so benevolent ... such a regard for our people] and ask them to give a dollar to help a poor fugitive slave who has escaped to go into Canada, where he may enjoy the privileges of the gospel and have his liberty, and you will find them clinching a sixpence till it would almost scream murder, before they will help you. (Applause.) Why, they are willing to fit out ships to send us across the Atlantic ocean to a country of which we know no more than they do, and from what we are able to gather we know no

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good of it; but to send us to Canada—oh no! they want to get us farther away from them. Now if I must advocate the principles of colonization I will advocate that feature of it that is best adapted to the condition of the coloured population, I say send them where it can be done with as little expense as possible; and if the colonizationists will go for colonizing in Canada I will hold up both hands for it. Put them on the *underground railroad* and send them there where we know that they will be well provided for.

[Mr. Remond (interposing) inquired of his friend if there was not danger in recognizing the right to colonize into Canada, of sanctioning the right of colonizing to any other country? For himself he was opposed to the colonization of coloured persons into Canada.]

This does not embrace the same features as that of African Colonization. This is rather a voluntary thing, in cases where slaves escape from bondage and whose masters are unwilling to let them go free. I say then if people want to give their money to benefit the coloured people let them do it in this less expensive way and where it will produce greater good. But let them not be led into this scheme of African Colonization whose object is to drive them there. The men who support the American Colonization Society are many of them men that would be more willing to seize and recapture, than to consent even to the escape of a slave into Canada.

I have no fears Mr. Chairman, of this Colonization scheme so long as the coloured people will stand united, so long as we can see them come out as they have to-night to hear and discuss this subject and express such sentiments as have been here expressed, I have no fear of this scheme. The Society will not be able to accomplish much while

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such a spirit is manifested by our people. But when we shall find a change in their sentiments with regard to the colonization scheme—when we shall find them believing it to be a noble philanthropic movement, then is the time for us to take warning—then is the time for us to speak out and counteract their tendency. I found in your own city a coloured man of intelligence who in a conversation with me admitted that his mind had undergone some change recently with regard to the scheme. It is enough to know that some few among us are willing to lend their sanction and encouragement to this nefarious enterprise, to lead us to rebuke such a spirit and let the world know that such are not our sentiments as a body. It is our duty to do it, and if we fail to speak out we are recreant to our people.

I learn that a ship is about being fitted out from South Carolina with some two or three hundred coloured persons on board, and among others a very intelligent one whom I saw a few days ago in the Colonization office. I understand that a member of the Society said, that one man like that was worth more to their society than a representative would be to the legislature of this State. Such is the estimate placed upon an intelligent coloured man where they can get them to favour their scheme.

Fellow citizens, I think it is time for us to wake up when we find men of intelligence misrepresenting us and giving encouragement to a scheme that purposes to crush, to keep down, and to annihilate a struggling people like ourselves. I think there never was such a villainous scheme started under such auspices. Never was so much villany couched in the same number of words as may be found within the Colonization scheme—a proposition to drive us from our own country after having originally brought us here and

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enslaved us, after having found that we are, according to the inevitable laws of population, destined to work out our own salvation. When the proud, aristocratic slaveholder sees his own likeness, living in the image of his child, then he sees the spirit of freedom—a spirit ready to act itself out; and he knows that the numbers of his victims is multiplying so fast that the only way to keep this spirit down is to colonize them. I verily believe that if it were not that the intelligent portion of them are continually running away to Canada, instead of remaining there, that the sons of every insolent, overbearing slaveholder would rise up against them, and free themselves, even if it required the slaughter of their fathers. And this they very well know. They look back with terror to the St. Domingo tragedy, fearing lest the same be reenacted in their midst.— They look forward to the time when the same tragedy must be enacted in this country. When they hear the voice of freedom coming over from Europe—when they see crowned heads falling and the people breaking the chains of their oppressors, and then look at their own sons and see many of them in spite of all they can do running away and escaping, they tremble and think that something must be done. Some scheme must be formed to get them away.

For one I am disposed to love and die in the land that gave me birth; and although the laws of my country have taken away my rights, although they have enslaved and scourged me, although they have deprived me of my dearest friends, many of whom are now toiling on Southern plantations, notwithstanding all this, I am disposed to make America my home and my final resting place. No inducement, no force will compel me to leave this my native country. If they carry me to the shores of Africa they carry my lifeless body. (Great applause.)

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