

GENTLEMEN: You are assembled to fulfill the duties imposed on you by a Convention of the colored people, assembled at Rochester in July, 1853, by which Convention you were duly appointed "for the purpose of improving the character, developing the intelligence, maintaining the rights, and organizing a Union of the colored people of the free States." The hundred and seventy thousand souls who compose the free colored people of the free States occupy a position in regard to human progress, of greater importance and responsibility than any like number of individuals on the face of the globe. The great question of human brotherhood is brought to a direct test in our persons and position; the practicability of democratic institutions, their ability to overcome the last vestige of tyranny in the human heart, the vincibility of caste by Christianity, the power of the gospel, the disenthralment of three millions of [enmeshed] and bleeding slaves; all these issues lend their weight and rest their decision very greatly if not entirely on the free colored people of the free States. This weight of responsibility is enough to make men shrink therefrom; but we cannot avoid it if we would. The influence of our land and its institutions reaches to the uttermost parts of the earth; and go where we may, we will find American prejudice, or at least the odor of it, to contend against. It is easiest, as well as manliest, to meet and contend with it here at the fountain head; nor can we cease from affecting these great issues by inactivity; the case is going on, whether we labor or not; and our inactivity will only help deciding it against us and these, and true principles,

GENTLEMEN: You are assembled to fulfill the duties imposed on you by a Convention of the colored people, assembled at Rochester in July, 1853, by which Convention you were duly appointed "for the purpose of improving the character, developing the intelligence, maintaining the rights, and organizing a Union of the colored people of the free States." The hundred and seventy thousand souls who compose the free colored people of the free States occupy a position in regard to human progress, of greater importance and responsibility than any like number of individuals on the face of the globe. The great question of human brotherhood is brought to a direct test in our persons and position; the practicability of democratic institutions, their ability to overcome the last vestige of tyranny in the human heart, the vincibility of caste by Christianity, the power of the gospel, the disenthralment of three millions of enmeshed and bleeding slaves; all these issues lend their weight and rest their decision very greatly if not entirely on the free colored people of the free States. This weight of responsibility is enough to make men shrink therefrom; but we cannot avoid it if we would. The influence of our land and its institutions reaches to the uttermost parts of the earth; and go where we may, we will find American prejudice, or at least the odor of it, to contend against. It is easiest, as well as manliest, to meet and contend with it here at the fountain head; nor can we cease from affecting these great issues by inactivity; the case is going on, whether we labor or not; and our inactivity will only help deciding it against us and these, and true principles.

which it would seem in the Providence of God that we are set apart to uphold.

Although we may not readily see it, our position is not a hopeless one; it is full of promise.— It sometimes happens in great moral, as in great physical battles that certain divisions of men, by simply maintaining a fixed position, even without striking an active blow, will conduce to the victory; in like manner, by simply maintaining our numbers, and our senses, and our Christianity under the waves of oppression and practical infidelity that have vainly beaten against us, we have done our appointed service in the land where we dwell. But the hour has come for us to take a direct and forward movement. We feel and know it. Just as in 1817 there was a spontaneous movement among our brethren of that generation, with one voice to oppose the Colonization movement, so in this year 1855, throughout the length of the land, do we feel roused to take an active and energetic part in the great question of Liberty or Slavery. We are awakened, as never before, to the fact that if slav'y and caste are to be removed from the land, we must remove them, and move them ourselves;— others may aid and assist us if they will, but the moving power rests with us. Gentlemen, the direction of this newly-awakened power rests greatly with you. Untrammelled by any of the influences that curb or straiten other benevolent or deliberative organizations, you may bring forward, discuss and adopt such plans of movement as may seem best. One or two primary considerations are

which it would seem in the Providence of God that we are set apart to uphold.

Although we may not readily see it, our position is not a hopeless one; it is full of promise.— It sometimes happens in great moral, as in great physical battles that certain divisions of men, by simply maintaining a fixed position, ~~even~~ without striking an active blow, will conduce to the victory; in like manner, by simply maintaining our numbers, and our senses, and our Christianity under the waves of oppression and practical infidelity that have vainly beaten against us, we have done our appointed service in the land where we dwell. But the hour has come for us to take a direct and forward movement. We feel and know it. Just as in 1817 there was a spontaneous movement among our brethren of that generation, with one voice to oppose the Colonization movement, so in this year 1855, throughout the length of the land, do we feel roused to take an active and energetic

part in the great question of Liberty or Slavery. We are awakened, as never before, to the fact that if slav'y and caste are to be removed from the land, we must remove them, and move them ourselves;— others may aid and assist if they will, but the moving power rests with us. Gentlemen, the direction of this newly-awakened power rests greatly with you. Untrammelled by any of the influences that curb or straiten other benevolent or deliberative organizations, you may bring forward, discuss and adopt such plans of movement as may seem best. One or two primary considerations are

all I will venture. First, it is important that you thoroughly organize all the colored people; we cannot spare the aid of a single man, or woman, or minor capable of thinking. Then you should adopt means to lay your plans of organization or co-operation before every individual among our people. This can be done by the agency of lectures and the press. We must distinctly keep before the people the fact that our leaders consist in something beside the declaration of sentiments. We must act up to what we declare. And so closely does oppression encompass us that we can act consistently in behalf of our cause by simply maintaining for ourselves the rights which the laws of the land guarantee to us in common with all citizens. From the mere act of riding in public conveyances, up to the immediate and entire abolition of Slavery in the slave States, the laws of the land and the Constitution of the country are clearly on our side. And that man is a traitor to Liberty and a foe to our Humanity who maintains or even admits that we or any other human beings may be held in slavery on account of the color of skin, or for any reason short of the committing of crime. And from the mere act of riding in public conveyances, up to the liberating of every slave in the land do our duties extend—embracing a full and equal participation, politically and socially, in all the rights and immunities of American citizens. If these our duties are weighty, we have the means to perform them. Our cause is inseparably wrapped up with every genial reform moving over the land.

all I will venture. First, it is important that you thoroughly organize all the colored people; we cannot spare the aid of a single man, or woman, or minor capable of thinking. Then you should adopt means to lay your plans of organization or co-operation before every individual among our people. This can be done by the agency of lectures and the press. We must distinctly keep before the people the fact that our leaders consist in something beside the declaration of sentiments. We must act up to what we declare. And so closely does oppression encompass us that we can act consistently in behalf of our cause by simply maintaining for ourselves the rights which the laws of the land guarantee to us in common with all citizens. From the mere act of riding in public conveyances, up to the immediate and entire abolition of Slavery in the slave States, the laws of the land and the Constitution of the country are clearly on our side. And that man is a traitor to Liberty and a foe to our Humanity who maintains or even admits that we or any other human beings may be held in slavery on account of the color of skin, or for any reason short of the committing of crime. And from the mere act of riding in public conveyances, up to the liberating of every slave in the land do our duties extend—embracing a full and equal participation, politically and socially, in all the rights and immunities of American citizens. If these our duties are weighty, we have the means to perform them. Our cause is inseparably wrapped up with every genial reform moving over the land.



Freedom, hand in hand with labor,  
Walketh strong and brave;  
On the forehead of his neighbor  
No man writeth slave!

The States which have legislated in behalf of the temperance reform have also made movements toward recognizing our rights as citizens thereof. But efforts on our own part have helped toward this good result; in Massachusetts, mainly by efforts of some colored citizens, one a member of this council, the last vestige of caste in Public Schools has been abolished. In Connecticut, on petition of her colored citizens, led by a member of this Council, both Houses of the Legislature have done their share toward granting us equal suffrage, and the Governor strongly recommended the same. In New York, through the efforts of a member of this Council, and the President of our State Council, aided by the moving eloquence of another member of our Council, the Legislature passed a vote of equal suffrage—a vote for which during the last twenty years we have petitioned and struggled in vain. In Pennsylvania a strong and able effort has been made to obtain the franchise by our colored brethren, and not without some signs of success. Even in Illinois, hitherto covered with deeper infamy in caste than any other State, there are signs that the labors of her intelligent and energetic citizens have not been in vain. Gentlemen, these cheering and grand results have followed the almost isolated labors of less than a hundred colored men; I had almost said of five. What may we not do if we secure the hearty, earnest and steady co-operation of ten thousand such men? If a hundred men have struck these blows

Freedom, hand in hand with labor,  
Walketh strong and brave;  
On the forehead of his neighbor  
No man writeth slave!

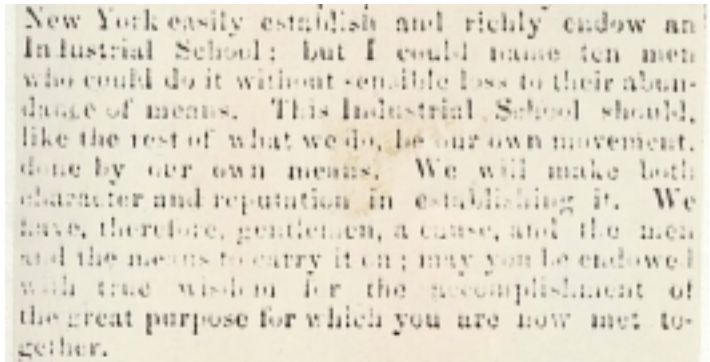
The States which have legislated in behalf of the temperance reform have also made movements toward recognizing our rights as citizens thereof. But efforts on our own part have helped toward this good result; in Massachusetts, mainly by efforts of some colored citizens, one a member of this council, the last vestige of caste in Public Schools has been abolished. In Connecticut, on petition of her colored citizens, led by a member of this Council, both Houses of the Legislature have done their share toward granting us equal suffrage, and the Governor strongly recommended the same. In New York, through the efforts of a member of this Council, and the President of our State Council, aided by the moving eloquence of another member of our Council, the Legislature passed a vote of equal suffrage—a vote for which during the last twenty years we have petitioned and struggled in vain. In Pennsylvania a strong and able effort has been made to obtain the franchise by our colored brethren, and not without some signs of success. Even in Illinois, hitherto covered with deeper infamy in caste than any other State, there are signs that the labors of her intelligent and energetic citizens have not been in vain.

Gentlemen, these cheering and grand results have followed the almost isolated labors of less than a hundred colored men; I had almost said of five. What may we not do if we secure the hearty, earnest and steady co-operation of ten thousand such men? If a hundred men have struck these blows

under which Slaveocracy reels and staggers, how easily will ten thousand overthrow that atrocious system. We have the men and the spirit, and a favorable public sentiment; let us address ourselves to the work of organization. The time is come when our people must assume the rank of a first-rate power in the battle against caste and Slavery, it is emphatically our battle; no one else can fight it for us, and with God's help we must fight it for ourselves. Our relations to the Anti-Slavery movement must be and are changed. Instead of depending upon it we must lead it. We must maintain our citizenship and manhood in every relation—civil, religious and social—throughout the land. The recognition of our manhood throughout this land *is* the abolition of Slavery throughout the land. One of the means of elevation left in your care by the Rochester Convention is an Industrial School; and a plan by which our rising youths may forsake menial employments for mechanical and mercantile pursuits. The accomplishment of both these objects is within our ability. Among the wants which we labor under as a class, there is not the want of money. We do not even in half our proportionate numbers occupy the Alms-houses in the free States. During the profound distress which existed during the past winter we were not in any degree the distressed or starving class. And statistics will be presented to this Council showing that as a mass, in the free States, we occupy a middle position between the rich and the poor. Not only could the hundred thousand free colored people of Pennsylvania and

under which Slaveocracy reels and staggers, how easily will ten thousand overthrow that atrocious system. We have the men and the spirit, and a favorable public sentiment; let us address ourselves to the work of organization. The time is come when our people must assume the rank of a first-rate power in the battle against caste and Slavery, it is emphatically our battle; no one else can fight it for us, and with God's help we must fight it for ourselves. Our relations to the Anti-Slavery movement must be and are changed. Instead of depending upon it we must lead it. We must maintain our citizenship and manhood in every relation—civil, religious and social—throughout the land. The recognition of our manhood throughout this land *is* the abolition of Slavery throughout the land. One of the means of elevation left in your care by the Rochester Convention is an Industrial School; and a plan by which our rising youths may forsake menial employments for mechanical and mercantile pursuits. The accomplishment of both these objects is within our ability. Among the wants which we labor under as a class, there is not the want of money. We do not even in half our proportionate numbers occupy the Alms-houses in the free States. During the profound distress which existed during the past winter we were not in any degree the distressed or starving class. And statistics will be presented to this Council showing that as a mass, in the free States, we occupy a middle position between the rich and the poor. Not only could the hundred thousand free colored people of Pennsylvania and

New York easily establish and richly endow an Industrial School; but I could name ten men who could do it without sensible loss to their abundance of means. This Industrial School should, like the rest of what we do, be our own movement, done by our own means. We will make both character and reputation in establishing it. We have, therefore, gentlemen, a cause, and the men and the means to carry it on; may you be endowed with true wisdom for the accomplishment of the great purpose for which you are now met together.



New York easily establish and richly endow an Industrial School; but I could name ten men who could do it without sensible loss to their abundance of means. This Industrial School should, like the rest of what we do, be our own movement, done by our own means. We will make both character and reputation in establishing it. We have, therefore, gentlemen, a cause, and the men and the means to carry it on; may you be endowed with true wisdom for the accomplishment of the great purpose for which you are now met together.