

*Fellow Members of the Convention:*

The high obligations committed to your care, through the confidence of your constituents, are about to be dissolved. Your labors, as a representative body, legislating for the advancement of the condition of an oppressed people is nearly closed. The record of your proceedings stands here for the examination of the critical, and as a comparison with the works of any other assemblage that has convened together upon the Pacific shores. To many of us the honor of members in a Convention have never before been enjoyed, and consequently the want of experience in such deliberations was greatly felt; but where conception failed to penetrate great difficulties, the impulses of the heart aroused internal sense of our wrongs, and directed our energies to the accomplishment of one great end—the right of oath. If evidences of respectability and intelligence, wealth and probity are sufficient guarantees of the privileges we deserve, it will not require much other effort to obtain it. It is true that the spirit of selfishness may for a period retard our progress, but the men in this State whose minds are capable of higher sensations, will not dedicate themselves to an ignoble work. The age in which we live is a progressive one; the elements of refinement form the basis of all well regulated society, and in proportion as any people inculcate and disseminate these principles of civilization, in the same proportion do they receive and enjoy its immunities. The time has arrived when we must act in accordance with the sentiment which governs other men; not as a *nation* of menials controlled by arbitrary will, but as a community of equals, participating in every blessing, and contributing to the perpetuity of every honorable avocation. We are not debased on account of any repugnance to our complexion, nor are we disfranchised in consequence of natural inferiority—human actions are often prompted by motives contrary to the elevated spirit of pure virtue, and so long as we continue to alleviate the burthens of others, we must expect to wear the odium of its conditions. Brethren, we have initiated a great work, and it seems to be essential that we must not only be superior in mental endowments to those we are to mingle with, but it is also required, that we be devoid of other men's vices. Every small folly of our lives, every error of judgment, and every thoughtless, intemperate word of speech

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is magnified into positive reasons why we are incapable to enjoy the rights we ask. The disadvantages we are compelled to encounter are of such a magnitude that almost any other people would be appalled at its mere contemplation—deprived of protection for the safety of our families, taxed for the support of education, and yet the doors of the common school-house closed against our children; denied the exercise of the elective franchise, and subjected to be governed by laws in which we had no hand in framing. Every position of emolument and honor that our country has to bestow, our claims as native born citizens are overlooked, and the ignorant foreigner or the most degraded American citizen is awarded the preference.

These considerations are humiliating to our manhood, and should rouse the latent energies of the mind to activity. In conclusion, let us go home, gentlemen, deeply impressed with the necessity of each and every one performing the active duties which the subjects we have considered demanded. In retiring from amid the excitement of political life, we are conscious of having done out duty to *God*, to ourselves, and to our fellow men, and though we feel this self-congratulation, let it be remembered that without diligence and constant effort, the great measures we have matured will be futile in their operations. I would urge each one of you to consult and instruct our less favored brothers, both colored and white, remove their prejudices in regard to our true condition, induce our colored brethren to cease prattling about being the equals of our oppressors, until they present the mental, pecuniary, and other necessary evidence of being such. Converse with our ignorant white brethren, those who despise the poor negro because he is a negro, and convince them that their social condition and ours are alike degraded, and whatever political measures afflict us, are none the less severe upon them. Reason and argue with those who hold power within their fingers upon the injustice with which we are treated. Convince them of our capabilities in a moral and social point of view. Revert their minds back to the days of childhood when neither knew any difference, neither felt any compunctions, but when each heart mingled its grateful

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Hall, R.

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