

JOHN MERCER LANGSTON, Esq., counsellor from [Oberlin,] was then introduced as one whose efforts and [eloquence] had been active in behalf of the suffrage for colored citizens of Ohio—in the enlistment of colored soldiers—and as President of the National Equal Rights League.

After a few preliminary remarks, Mr. Langston proceeded to say:—

He was not forgetful of the fact, that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States declared, that no person should be deprived of his liberty, &c.; but he recollected that South [Carolina] declared that she would interpret the Constitution as she pleased, and as far as American liberty was concerned we had only a pro-slavery rule, which ordered things as they found fit, to keep up the accursed institution.

In 1844, citizens of Massachusetts had been seized and sold in Charleston, S.C. He instanced Sam[uel] H[ar]ar, a man by no means black—and read several [resolu]tions of the South Carolina Legislature, touching white and colored men. Their logic was, that [colored] people were a nondescript class, and they [had a] right to sell them. That was the spirit of South [Carolina] caught from the devil, and underlying the [rebellion.] But South Carolina did not stop there; [she] arrested white men interfering, and expelled white [men] on suspicion from the State. Where should [South] Carolina have got these laws? It is extraordinary that she educated her people to treat white [men as] if they were not free; that a white man going to Louisiana and South Carolina were treated to [this] shape!

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It is well known that no white man nor woman had free speech. Now, take William Lloyd Garrison, the greatest man—because the true friend of the negro and liberty. (Cheers.) Why, twelve years ago, he dared not have gone to Washington. That was the condition of white men before the war. There was a counterpart law in Illinois which had come to his notice a few days ago. This jewel of legislation said—“Any person being a mulatto or negro,” who shall come into the State, and remain twelve days, shall be guilty of misdemeanor, and be sold at auction, and any justice of the peace who refused to commit, WAS to be punished, etc. To cap the climax, the proceeds of sale of such mulatto or negro—“after paying to the prosecution his expenses”—were to be kept as a public fund. Could any one [guess] what this fund was to be called? It was to be called “a charity fund,” to benefit the poor whites of Illinois. The colored man is accused because he won’t settle—because he won’t go there and work. Why does not the negro go there? Because he would be sold. A colored man accumulates money; he has his children, and wishes to farm; he is advised to go to Illinois; but this legislation prevents him—and yet he has voted for Illinois, but he dare not go. They would say, “We like you mighty well—but at a distance. You’re a negro.” But when the first gun thundered from Sumter, God thundered, and we were prepared to say with Wendell Phillips: “Is liberty to die in this country? Has God Almighty scooped out the Mississippi Valley for its grave? Has he piled up the Rocky Mountains for its monument? Has he set Niagara to hymn its requiem?” No, liberty is not to die in this country! The Mississippi Valley

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is to be the cradle of American liberty! The Rocky Mountains are to be the stony tablets on which are to be written its grand achievements! Niagara is not set to hymn its death-dirge, but its triumphant [song.]

The speaker then cited instances of the patriotism of colored men in the four war periods of the nation:—

The first man who gave his blood to America in the Revolution, on the 5th of March, 1770, was Crispus Attucks, a black man. Bunker Hill monument lifts up her historic head to the memories of the great, the [lofty,] and the good. In the Valley of the Mississippi are the monuments of the heroism of colored men; and may the last man who sheds his blood in this war—may the last man who falls before the walls of Richmond—be, to the honor and glory of America, a black man!

The lecturer related his personal experience with [the Governor] of his State, in the matter of enlisting [colored] men, who volunteered under circumstances [highly] creditable to them, and went to the ranks, where 90 per cent of men would have returned to [peaceful] homes under the circumstances. These men [were] part of the justly celebrated and second to none [5th] U. S. Colored Troops; and he referred with enthusiasm to their deeds at Petersburg and elsewhere. He related the incident of the wounded white troops refusing to be moved from the field of battle before or without the colored wounded soldiers, and held up this [nobility] of soul as an example to all white men.

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Gen. Lee arm 200,000 negroes. Then would the Northern men find that God had written on the heart of every black man, "Stick to Abraham Lincoln and the United States!" The negro will come right over! There are no traitors there! God never cased a traitor in ebony! Go to Port Hudson—to Wagner—to Charleston. Yes, said the lecturer, and now go to Richmond, and see the colored man. In the name of these things, in the name of our manhood, in the name of our loyalty, we ask you for freedom. We ask you not to let emancipation be a mockery; we ask you to receive and treat us well, as we have proved ourselves to you to be faithful, true and brave.

When the war is over, your necessity for the negro will not have ceased. You will have traitors all over the South. You will need the black men with the ballot as you have with the bayonet; and when you want him, you know he is ready to cry, "Here I am."

Mr. Langston said he believed that, before long, the courts of our country would decide that you cannot estimate a man's rights according to the color of his skin. He believed Salmon P. Chase would so decide it, and he hoped that some man of color would have nerve enough to take that question up, and get it decided.

One step more is wanting, and our nation will be a democracy. Are you prepared to take that step? Are you prepared to say to the free negro of the North, and the emancipated negro of the South, "Take the ballot! You have handled the musket!" The white man demanded this right to cast his vote by right of his manhood. Will any one deny that the black man

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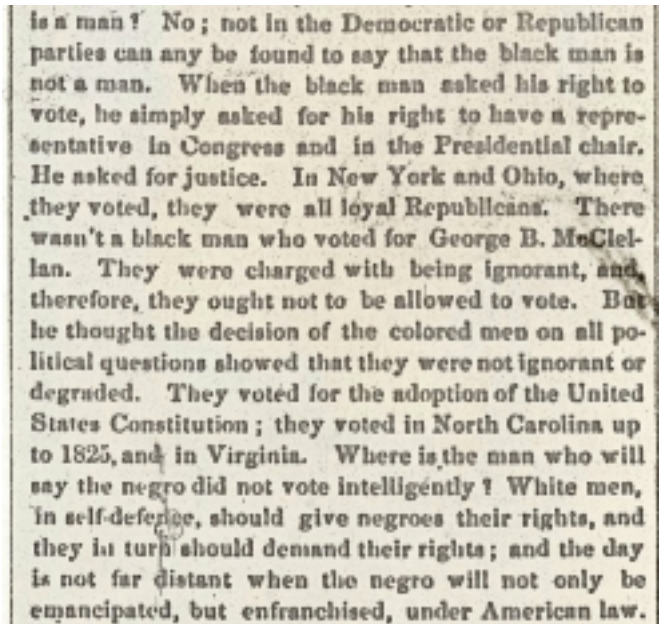
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