

RESOLUTIONS

ADOPTED AT

A PUBLIC MEETING HELD IN WASHINGTON CITY JANUARY 5, 1872,

IN FAVOR OF

The passage of the bill (S. 99) supplementary to an act entitled "An act to protect all citizens of the United States in their civil rights, and to furnish the means for their vindication," passed April 9, 1866.

JANUARY 8, 1872.—Ordered to lie on the table and be printed.

ADDRESS.

To the people of the United States :

The cause we plead finds no parallel in history. The colored American, now emancipated, made a citizen of the United States, invested with the ballot, and made eligible to official place in the State and National Governments, is, nevertheless, denied equality before the law. Legally considered, his condition is indeed nondescript.

Emancipated in his own country, his nativity gives him at once citizenship and home, and yet he is denied that legal recognition accorded upon reasonable conditions to those of foreign birth. A tax-payer, he is entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities thrown about the citizen by the common law and the Constitution of his country; yet these are persistently withheld. Intelligent, possessing a keen appreciation of all that pertains to the welfare of his country, its material prosperity and moral growth, he is denied not only the enjoyment of citizenship in its largest sense, but the opportunity of contributing to the greatest good of the nation.

Called to bear arms in the service of his country, his loyalty tested under Washington, Jackson, and Grant, at Bunker Hill, New Orleans, and Fort Wagner, he has ever shown himself faithful and brave; but in disregard of his courage and devotion, he has been left to suffer from unjust and unreasonable legal discriminations.

The colored citizen is denied the usual accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges furnished by common carriers and inn-keepers, and this in violation of the plainest rules and principles of the common law. Upon this subject Blackstone, Kent, Story, and all the recognized authorities speak with one voice. The rule, as stated by Parsons, with regard to the common carriers of passengers is: "It is his duty to receive all passengers who offer; to carry them the whole route; to demand no more than the usual and established compensation; to treat all his passengers alike; to behave to all with civility and propriety; to provide suitable carriages and means of transport. With regard to inn-keepers

it was decided in the infancy of the common law that "an inn-keeper cannot lawfully refuse to receive guests to the extent of his reasonable accommodations; nor can he impose unreasonable terms upon them." And a more recent authority adds that, "he cannot so refuse unless his house is full and he is actually unable to receive them; and if on false pretenses he refuses he is liable to an action." These rules of law tolerate no distinction on account of color. If the colored man be reasonably clad and well-behaved, and able and willing to pay reasonable compensation, he is entitled to receive from the common carrier and inn-keeper the same accommodation provided for others.

The colored citizen is further denied fair treatment in the theater and other public places of amusement, in the lecture hall, in the church, and in benevolent and charitable institutions. Thus, in general gatherings of the people for purposes of amusement, instruction, devotion, and the enjoyment of charity, he alone is excluded from an equal participation, and this solely on account of his color. Is such treatment reasonable? is it just?

He is further denied burial by cemetery associations; and this also on account of his color. No argument need be made to show the utter heartlessness as well as unreasonableness of this treatment; it is alike opposed to justice, humanity, and Christianity. Against such treatment Thaddeus Stevens, the noble American vindicator of human rights, dying, bore emphatic protest—refusing to be buried in a graveyard where such distinction was tolerated.

The colored citizen is also deprived of the advantages, privileges, and opportunities afforded by common schools and other public institutions of learning. This exclusion from school and educational advantages works a denial of privileges for which the colored man, as a tax-payer, makes ample compensation—the same compensation made by others; it deprives him of the benefits of the common school—a school common to all classes of people, and which should be in reality what its name imports; it deprives him of the benefits of those institutions which upon the battle-field he fights to conserve; it fosters caste and perpetuates prejudice, instilling into the minds of the rising generation, on the one side hatred, and on the other feelings of degradation and servility, while it imposes upon the State double expenses. On the other hand, we maintain that the highest good of the people demands that both classes be educated together. For, being citizens of a common country, interested in the conservation of one government, their feelings and purposes should be the same. When the colored citizen is denied common school privileges he cannot be given a substitute which can, by any possibility, prove an equivalent therefor; and it is a fortunate thing for the country that he esteems as above all price the equal and impartial enjoyment of common school privileges. This exclusion, defended on the ground of race, color, and previous condition of servitude, cannot be justified by considerations of justice, expediency, or law.

Such, substantially, is the condition of four millions of colored people. Even in New England, in Boston, the colored traveler is denied equal admission to the public inn.

Forgetting this sad condition of so many loyal intelligent tax-paying citizens, whose numbers aggregate millions, and whose wrongs and sufferings cannot longer be ignored, certain distinguished republican Senators, while they essay to speak for the colored people of this country, press the amnesty of a few thousand rebels, deprived only of the right to hold office, but neglect our imperative and just claims. The measure of amnesty is urged as a means of reconciliation; but

there can be no reconciliation while millions are deprived of their legal rights, rights especially dear, because those deprived of them are made to feel most keenly, hourly, this deprivation. Such Senators speak, in this instance, without authority. Their words do not reflect our judgment. While we say nothing against amnesty, we would cultivate justice, first, to the loyal, before making exhibitions of generosity to rebels who but yesterday were engaged in attempts at the murder of the nation. Any utterance of Senator or other in which we are represented as desiring to have our claims postponed to the passage of any amnesty measure is wholly unwarranted, and contrary to our convictions and sentiments.

The mission of the republican party will not be accomplished till full measure of rights and privileges be accorded to the colored American, till he be given the equal and impartial enjoyment of every accommodation, advantage, and facility furnished by the common carrier and inn-keeper, or offered in the theater or other public places of amusement, the lecture-hall, the church, benevolent and charitable institutions, public cemeteries, common schools, and other public institutions of learning, and the same guaranteed to him by law. It is the duty of the great leaders of this party to see that this work is accomplished. Of this great party we ask complete legal equality. Its past history gives us assurance that our demand will be fully met. In justice to ourselves, in justice to our country, we can be satisfied with no equivalent, no substitute.

It is objected that we ask social equality. The equality which we seek is such only as affects our legal rights. We are not insensible to the distinction existing between society and these rights. We concede to every one the regulation of his own associations, so long as the rights of others are not infringed. We sue for admission to no man's home. Legal rights and privileges accorded us, we propose to stand upon our worth, satisfied that society will regulate itself according to the instincts, the taste, the judgment, and interests of mankind.

In closing this address we appeal to you in the words, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." For these words contain all that is genuine in democracy, all that is valuable in patriotism, all that is excellent in philanthropy, all that is sacred and binding in Christianity as regards the conduct of man towards his fellow.

RESOLUTIONS.

Resolved, That all citizens of the United States are entitled to the equal and impartial enjoyment of all accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges furnished by common carriers and inn-keepers; by owners, managers, and lessees of theaters and other places of public amusement; by trustees, commissioners, superintendents, teachers, or other officers of common schools and other public institutions of learning; by trustees or officers of church organizations, cemetery associations, and benevolent institutions; and this right ought not to be denied or abridged on any pretense of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Resolved, That no person should be disqualified for service as juror in any court, national or State, by reason of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, and no officer or other person charged with any

duty in the selection or summoning of jurors should exclude or fail to summon any person for such reason.

Resolved, That every law, statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom, whether national or State, making discriminations against persons on account of color, by the use of the word white, should be repealed and annulled.

Resolved, That we earnestly request and urge all republican Senators, members of the House of Representatives, the republican press throughout the country, and all friends of equality before the law, white or colored, not only to give their influence, but their most earnest support and vote in favor of the bill now pending in the Senate, and known as the bill supplementary to the civil rights act.

Resolved, That we call especially upon all Senators and members of Congress, elected to their several positions by the votes of white and colored republicans of the South, to give their influence, their support, and their votes to this measure, which is sustained by considerations of humanity, justice, and the plainest principles of the common law, which is demanded by the interests of the entire country, conservation and stability of republican institutions.

Resolved, That we tender to Hon. Charles Sumner our grateful thanks for the introduction of this bill, and for his able, eloquent, and determined advocacy of its passage, and to him and other Senators favorable thereto, the pledge of our earnest sympathy and support.

Resolved, That the address and resolutions considered and adopted by this meeting, duly signed by the president and secretary thereof, be presented, through the Hon. Charles Sumner, to the Senate of the United States, as expressive of the sense and judgment of the colored people of the country with respect to the subject referred to therein, and containing our prayer in that regard.

The undersigned hereby certify that the foregoing address and resolutions were considered and adopted at a meeting of colored citizens held in Washington City, D. C., on the 5th instant; that the same are in all respects correct, and are herewith respectfully forwarded to the Hon. Charles Sumner, with the request that they be presented to the Senate according to resolution adopted by the meeting.

JNO. M. LANGSTON,

President of the Meeting.

HENRY JOHNSON,
Secretary.

WASHINGTON CITY, D. C., *January 8, 1872.*