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1920

AN APPEAL

FROM THE

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COLORED MEN OF PHILADELPHIA

TO THE

President of the United States.

FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON.

PHILADELPHIA:

AUGUST, 1862.

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AN APPEAL

TO THE PRESIDENT.

In the purity and goodness of your heart, and as we believe, through a willingness to serve the cause of humanity, you have been pleased to hold an audience with a Committee of colored men, brethren of ours—kindred in race.

The object was to acquaint them with the fact that a sum of money had been appropriated by Congress for the purpose of Colonization, a cause which you were inclined to favor, and dear to the hearts of many good men.

Among the prominent reasons given for colonizing us, is the one most common throughout our enslaved country, that of color. Admitting this distinction to be of great disadvantage to us, the cause of many tears and much anguish, as we pass along this rugged life of ours; yet, we believe that most of this prejudice grows out of the Institution of Slavery.

Benighted by the ignorance entailed upon us, oppressed by the iron-heel of the master who knows no law except

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE SEMI-WEEKLY CLARION.

1862.

Orders received at the Office of Wynkoop, Hallenbeck & Thomas, 113 Full

that of worldly gain and self-aggrandizement, why should we not be poor and degraded?

If, under the existing prejudices, adverse laws, and low degree of general education, a few become respectable and useful citizens, there is truly hope for the many. We pray for a more liberal and enlightened public policy. We regret the ignorance and poverty of our race. We find, however, in this great city a parallel in the white, and however degraded a part of us may be, there is, under the circumstances surrounding each, a deeper degradation still. Our fathers were not, of their own free will and accord, transferred to this, our native land. Neither have we, their descendants, by any act of ours, brought this country to its present deplorable condition. If there is in the heart of any, claiming by virtue of their color and predominance, a desire to persecute and oppress, no such unhallowed motives govern us.

We can find nothing in the religion of our Lord and Master, teaching us that color is the standard by which He judges his creatures, either in this life nor the life which is to come. He created us and endowed us with the faculties of the man, giving us a part of the earth as an habitation, and its products for our sustenance. He also made it sufficient in compass and fruitfulness to provide for the wants of all, and has nowhere taught us to devour each other, that even life itself might be sustained.

Thus, humbly, have we presented our cause in some of its moral aspects.

Permit us, in further response to your generous efforts in our behalf, to present another, and possibly, a more selfish view, embracing pecuniary and political matters, not more important to ourselves than to others.

We know that the problem of American Slavery has been a difficult one to solve; that statemen hesitate, politicians ignore, and the people even now evade the serious reality of a most bloody war, caused solely by the dealers in our flesh. We have not sought such a solution, nor asked a sacrifice so great, without being willing to drink of the same bitter cup.

The blood of millions of our race cries from the ground, while millions more are yet enslaved.

They have produced much of the wealth of this country. Cotton, the product of their labor, while it should have proven a blessing to mankind, has well nigh overthrown the Nations dependent upon it, and is now denominated "King."

Thus has the master of the slave enslaved the world. While colonization, in many of its features might be advantageous to our race, yet were all of us to be sent out of the country, the population of the United States would be reduced nearly one-sixth part. It is doubtful whether the people seriously desire a depletion of this kind, however much they may wish to separate from us.

If statistics prove anything, then we constitute, including our property qualifications, almost the entire wealth of the Cotton States, and make up a large proportion of that of the others. Many of us, in Pennsylvania, have our own

houses and other property, amounting, in the aggregate, to millions of dollars. Shall we sacrifice this, leave our homes, forsake our birth-place, and flee to a strange land, to appease the anger and prejudice of the traitors now in arms against the Government, or their aiders and abettors in this or in foreign lands? Will the country be benefited by sending us out of it, and inviting strangers to fill our places?

Will they make better citizens, prove as loyal, love the country better, and be as obedient to its laws as we have been? If God has so ordained it, we shall yet be free. In His providence, He may gather us together in States, by ourselves, and govern us in accordance with His laws. Will the white man leave us alone, when so gathered?

We believe that the world would be benefited by giving the four millions of slaves their freedom, and the lands now possessed by their masters. They have been amply compensated in our labor and the blood of our kinsmen. These masters "toil not, neither do they spin." They destroy, they consume, and give to the world in return but a small equivalent. They deprive us of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

They degrade us to the level of the brute. They amalgamate with our race, and buy and sell their own children. They deny us the right to gain knowledge or hold property; neither do they allow us to have the avails of our own industry.

They requite our labor by stripes, manacles and torture. They have entailed upon the poor whites of the South a

despotism almost equaling that inflicted upon us. By unjust and arbitrary laws they have driven honest white men from their midst, or imprisoned them in their dungeons.

By falsehood and political cunning they have corrupted the politics of the people in all the States. Finally, they have rebelled against their Government.

Having set all laws, both human and divine, at naught, what does a just Government owe them in return? Would it be too great a penalty to deprive them of the labor of their slaves, and compel them to earn their own subsistence by honest means; to permit us to be free, to enjoy our natural rights, to have the avails of our own industry; to live with and have our own wives and children; to have the benefit of the school, the church, and salutary laws, that we may become better men and more valuable citizens; to give the slave an opportunity to increase the wealth of the people, while he consumes the more of the world's products? All of this is not too much to ask. We would reciprocate by increasing commerce, and proving to the world that we were worthy of being freemen.

Beyond this, our humble appeal, we are almost powerless in our own great cause.

God, in his providence, has enlisted in our behalf some of the most noble men of the age. May their efforts be crowned with success. In the President of these United States we feel and believe that we have a champion, most able and willing to aid us in all that is right. We ask, that by the standard of justice and humanity we may be

weighed, and that men shall not longer be measured by their stature or their color.

That the Ruler over all, in his infinite mercy and goodness, will keep and protect you, and cause your administration to triumph, in justice, over all its enemies, is the prayer of the Colored men of Philadelphia.

[SIGNED,]

J. C. DAVIS,
 REV. JAMES UNDERDUE,
 ROBERT ALLEN,
 AMOS B. SAYERS,
 JOHN C. BOWERS,
 JOHN AUGUSTA,
 WILLIAM COOPER,
 JOSHUA D. KELLEY,
 REV. JONATHAN C. GIBBS,
 URIAH H. KELLEY,
 THOMAS H. DAVIS,
 DAVID TROUT,
 AND OTHERS.

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