

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST CONVENTION OF THE COLORED CITIZENS
OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, CONVENED AT THE CITY OF CHICAGO,
THURSDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6th, 7th and 8th, 1853

PROCEEDINGS

Morning Session, Chicago, Thursday, Oct. 6th, 1853, 10 o'clock, A.M.

Pursuant to public notice, by circular and through the press, a number of delegates convened in Warner's Hall. The Convention was called to order by J. D. Bonner, of Cook, and on his motion, Rev. R. J. Robinson, of Madison, was appointed President *pro tem.*, and A. H. Richardson, of Jo. Daviess, and Henry Brown, of Edgar and Coles, were appointed Secretaries, *pro tem.*

Call read by J. D. Bonner.

On motion, the delegates were requested to report their names to the Secretaries by credentials or otherwise.

On motion of Augustus Dobbins, of Peoria, W. L. Barnes and Thomas Mason were appointed as members of the Convention.

On motion of Rev. Byrd Parker, H. Ellsworth and A. Ellsworth were admitted as members of the Convention.

On motion of R. J. Robinson, Job Vinient was admitted as a member.

On motion of Byrd Parker, the Rev. T. Roberts, of Indiana, was admitted as honorary member.

On motion of Wm. Johnson, all colored resident citizens of the State, who may be present, were admitted as honorary members of the Convention, by reporting their names to the Secretaries.

The following names were then reported:

Cook County

H. O. Wagoner,
William Johnson,
E. Gordon,
William Smith,
Alex Smith,
C. W. Campbell,
R. H. Rollins,
William T. Watson,
S. Sparrow,
Geo. Mead,

Bennet Johnson,
John Jones,
Rev. Byrd Parker,
J. D. Bonner,
Lewis Isbell,
J. H. Barguet,
B. Smith,
A. T. Hall,
L. Johnson,
E. A. Fulton.

Will County

Augustus Hill,

William Liverse.

Morgan County

A. W. Jackson,

B. Henderson.

Jo. Daviess County

A. H. Richardson

R. H. Cain.

*Madison County*R. J. Robinson,
H. Ellsworth,A. Ellsworth,
Job Vincint.*Peoria County*

Augustus Dobbins,

W. L. Barnes.

T. Y. Mason,

St. Clair County

William Smallwood.

Edgar and Coles County

H. Brown.

Sangamon County

S. Donagan,

W. H. Butler.

William Robinson,

McLean County

William J. Davis.

On motion of J. D. Bonner, a committee of seven, consisting of A. H. Richardson, of Jo. Daviess, B. Henderson, of Morgan, William Robinson, of Sangamon, W. H. Smallwood, of St. Clair, Augustus Dobbins, of Peoria, Alex. Smith, of Cook, Job Vincint, of Madison, and Henry Brown, of Edgar and Coles, were appointed a committee to nominate permanent officers for the Convention.

In the absence of the committee, the Convention was addressed by R. J. Robinson, William Smith and A. W. Jackson.

The Committee on Nominations reported as follows:

President: John Jones, of Cook.¹

Vice Presidents: Alex. Smith, of Cook, A. M. Ellsworth, of Madison, B. Henderson, of Morgan, R. H. Cain, of Jo. Daviess, H. Brown, of Edgar and Coles, Augustus Dobbins, of Peoria, and William Smallwood, of St. Clair.

Secretaries: H. O. Wagoner,² of Cook, W. L. Barnes, of Peoria, A. H. Richardson, of Jo. Daviess, and J. H. Barguet, of Cook.

Prayer by Rev. A. W. Jackson.

On taking the chair, the President made the following remarks:

Gentlemen of the Convention: The honor which you have seen fit to confer upon me was unexpected--believing it to belong to one of more experience than myself in parliamentary laws. But, gentlemen, I thank you for the honor conferred upon me; and, to the best of my ability, will cheerfully serve you. And in the performance of the duties which will devolve upon me, I hope to have your assistance. The subjects which claim the consideration of this Convention are of great importance to us. The Education of our children--the Repeal of the "Black Laws" of the State--the Agricultural interests of our people--the Temperance movement--and, indeed, all the Reforms of the time, demand our attention. Again, gentlemen, I thank you.

On motion of J. D. Bonner, a committee of five was appointed by the chair, to report business for the action of the Convention, consisting of J. D. Bonner, William Johnson, Byrd Parker, R. J. Robinson and Rev. A. W. Jackson.

Afternoon Session.

Met at 2 o'clock. President in the chair. Prayer by Rev. R. J. Robinson.

The following rules for the government of the Convention were reported by the chairman of the Business Committee, and adopted:

Rules

- I. That each session of the Convention be opened with prayer.
- II. Upon the appearance of a quorum, the President shall take the chair, and call the Convention to order.
- III. The minutes of the preceding session shall be read at the opening of each session, at which time mistakes, if there be any, shall be corrected.
- IV. The President shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the Convention.
- V. All motions and addresses shall be made to the President, the member rising from his seat.
- VI. All motions, except those of reference, shall be submitted in writing.
- VII. All committees shall be appointed by the chair, unless otherwise ordered by the Convention.
- VIII. The previous question shall always be in order, and until decided shall preclude all amendments and debate of the main question, and shall be put in this form: "Shall the main question be now put?"
- IX. No member shall be interrupted while speaking, except when out of order, when he shall be called to order by, or through the chair.
- X. A motion to adjourn shall always be in order, and shall be decided without debate.
- XI. No member shall speak more than twice on the same subject, without the consent of the Convention, nor more than ten minutes at each time.
- XII. No resolution, except of reference, shall be offered, to the Convention, except it come through the Business Committee; but all resolutions rejected by the committee may be presented directly to the Convention, if the maker wishes to do so.
- XIII. The morning sessions of the Convention shall commence at 9 o'clock.

On motion of Byrd Parker, a committee of five on Finance was appointed, consisting of Lewis Isbell, W. T. Watson, Alex. Smith, E. A. Fulton and E. Morris.

On motion of H. O. Wagoner, a committee of five was appointed to report an Address to the people of the State of Illinois. The chair then appointed H. O. Wagoner, William Smith, William Robinson, Thomas Mason and H. Brown said committee.

On motion of A. W. Jackson, a committee of three was appointed by the chair to report an Address to the Colored People of the State, consisting of A. W. Jackson, of Morgan, S. Donagan, of Sangamon, and H. Ellsworth, of Madison.

On motion of R. J. Robinson, a committee of five was appointed by the chair to report upon *Education*, consisting of R. J. Robinson, J. H. Barguet, R. H. Cain, C. W. Campbell and H. Brown.

On motion of William Johnson, a committee of five was appointed by the chair to report upon *Agriculture*. William Johnson, W. H. Butler, H. Ellsworth, Job Vincent and William Smith were appointed said committee.

On motion of J. H. Barguet, a committee of five was appointed by the chair to report upon *Mechanics*. A. H. Richardson, W. T. Watson, A. T. Smith, Burgundy Smith and J. H. Barguet were appointed said committee.

On motion of Byrd Parker, a committee of five, to report on *Colonization*, consisting of John Jones, H. Bradford, R. H. Rollins, A. Dobbins and William Smallwood, was appointed.

The chairman of the Business Committee then reported a preamble and resolutions. They were taken up by sections. The first section was taken up and adopted. The second was taken up and ably discussed by J. D. Bonner, R. J. Robinson and J. H. Barguet in the affirmative, and Byrd Parker in the

negative; after which Byrd Parker moved an amendment, which was adopted. The third was adopted without discussion.

On motion of Wm. Johnson, the chairman of the Business Committee read letters from the following gentlemen: Hon. Horace Mann, of Ohio, William H. Seward, of New York, C. M. Clay, of Kentucky, Lewis Tappan,³ Gerrit Smith, David Paul Brown⁴ and Chas. Durkee. These letters all breathing a humane and Christian spirit, and setting forth the course we should pursue under existing circumstances.

R. J. Robinson then took the stand, and addressed the Convention in relation to the condition of the Agricultural portion of our people in the southern section of the State.

Five o'clock having arrived, the Convention adjourned.

Evening Session.

Met at 7 o'clock. President in the chair. Prayer by Rev. Byrd Parker; music by the choir. Roll called. Proceedings of the previous sessions were read, corrected and adopted; after which A. H. Richardson being called for, came forward and addressed the Convention. Music by the choir.

Byrd Parker was then called for; he came forward and addressed the Convention in a very amusing and effective manner. At the conclusion of his remarks, music by the choir.

A letter from the Hon. Horace Greeley⁵ was then read by the chairman of the Business Committee. It was a cheering letter. The chairman himself said after reading it that he could not leave the stand without making a few remarks, which were happily expressed and well received.

J. H. Barguet was then called for. He took the stand and made a most eloquent and convincing speech, which was well received; at the conclusion of which, music by the choir.

Byrd Parker then made a few laughable remarks in regard to taking up a collection. The plate was then passed, while the choir sang; amount raised, \$26.40.

William Johnson then took the stand and made a short speech, in which he alluded to Frederick Douglass' failure to arrive as had been expected, and sympathized with the immense crowd which had assembled to hear Mr. Douglass.

Mr. Coddling was then called for. He came forward, though reluctantly, as he said; but, notwithstanding, he made a few convincing remarks, founding them upon the Christian injunction of duty to God and love to man; after which, music by the choir.

The Convention then adjourned.

Morning Session, Friday, Oct. 7th.

Met at 9 o'clock. President in the chair. Prayer by the Rev. R. H. Cain.

On motion of Byrd Parker, the Convention then took a recess of half an hour to receive Frederick Douglass, who had just arrived.

At this moment Mr. Douglass made his appearance in the hall, after which Byrd Parker, in behalf of the Convention, then welcomed Mr. Douglass in a brief though eloquent speech.

The "colored man eloquent" then took the stand, and made a few happy and appropriate remarks, which were enthusiastically received by the Convention.

The Secretary then read the proceedings of the previous afternoon and evening sessions, which were corrected and adopted.

On motion of William Johnson, Frederick Douglass was admitted as honorary member of the Convention.

Mr. J. Davis then came into the hall, presented his credentials, and enrolled his name as a member of the Convention from McLean county.

A number of resolutions on Colonization were then presented, the first of which was read and adopted.

The second and third were also read, and laid over for afternoon session.

William Johnson, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, then read his report, which was received, and after a few remarks by R. J. Robinson, it was adopted.

Twelve o'clock having arrived, the Convention adjourned.

Afternoon Session.

Met at 2 o'clock. Rev. H. Brown, Vice President, in the chair. Prayer by Rev. B. Parker. Ode by the choir.

The second and third resolution on Colonization were then taken up, discussed, amended and adopted.

A resolution was then offered by J. D. Bonner, complimentary of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe⁶ after which a few very happy remarks from R. J. Robinson and H. Brown. The resolution was then adopted.

The chairman of the Committee on Mechanics, A. H. Richardson, then reported, and on motion, the report was adopted.

The resolution which was offered by J. D. Bonner in the forenoon, in regard to appointing a central committee of ten, and laid over for 3 o'clock, was then taken up, and after a few remarks by Byrd Parker, it was indefinitely postponed.

A resolution endorsing the action of the National Convention in regard to the National Council was then read, and explained by J. D. Bonner and H. O. Wagoner, and unanimously adopted.

At the instance of the Rev. R. J. Robinson, J. D. Bonner then went into a detailed account of matters touching the National Council, and also the State Council.

The chairman of the Business Committee then read a letter from E. D. Holton, of Wisconsin, and another from Dr. Snodgrass, of New York.

On motion of William Johnson, all the letters just read were referred to the Business Committee, to be published with the regular proceedings.

On motion of Byrd Parker, it was moved that the evening session be occupied in hearing the report on colonization, and in hearing an address from our esteemed friend and brother, Frederick Douglass.

R. H. Cain was then called for. He took the stand, and made a very sensible speech of half an hour.

The hour of 5 having arrived, the Convention adjourned, to meet at 7 o'clock.

Evening Session.

Met pursuant to adjournment. President in the chair. Prayer by the Rev. R. J. Robinson. Song by the choir.

On motion, the chairman of the Committee on Colonization, John Jones, made his able report, which, on motion, was received.

On motion of J. D. Bonner, a series of resolutions on Colonization were called up. On the adoption of the first resolution a discussion arose. It was ably supported by J. D. Bonner and J. H. Barguet, and opposed by Messrs. Wagoner, Parker, Robinson, Douglass, of New York, Donagan and Newsom. It was finally referred back to the committee for modification. The resolution was as follows:

Resolved, That we regard all schemes of colonizing the free colored people of the United States to Africa, or any other foreign land, as most wicked attempts of Southern slaveholders and their Northern abettors to force us from our native homes, and by that means perpetuate slavery in this country.

The second and third were taken up and adopted. The Convention then adjourned.

Morning Session, Saturday, Oct. 8.

President in the chair. Prayer by Alexander Smith, of Chicago. The Secretaries not being ready to report, the report on Colonization was taken up, and on motion, adopted.

The Business Committee reported several resolutions, which, after remarks by William Johnson, H. O. Wagoner, and others, were adopted by section.

On motion of H. O. Wagoner, Dr. R. L. Cooper, of Michigan, was admitted as an honorary member of the Convention.

The Chairman of the Committee on Education, R. J. Robinson, made his report, which was received. Remarks by Byrd Parker, Alexander Smith,

Frederick Douglass, A. H. Richardson, J. D. Bonner, R. J. Robinson, and others.

Pending the adoption of this report and resolutions, Frederick Douglass offered the following additional resolution: Whereupon, the report and resolutions were adopted as a whole.

Resolved, That while we adopt this plan for the education of our children, we desire to have it distinctly understood, that we do so from necessity; and, further, that we neither assent to the wisdom, nor acknowledge the justice, of the laws which force this necessity upon us; and that we have protested, and shall continue to protest, against those unjust, unconstitutional, and undemocratic laws by which we and our children are proscribed.

Resolved, That we are citizens and tax-payers, and that we, as citizens and tax-payers, have a right to the advantages arising out of the existence of the School Fund, equal to that of any other class who contribute to that fund; and that we have faith to believe that the sense of justice and the feeling of magnanimity of our fellow citizens will yet compel them to acknowledge this right.

On motion, the Convention adjourned to meet at 2 o'clock.

Afternoon Session.

President in the chair. Prayer by William Smallwood. Proceedings of the forenoon session read, corrected and adopted.

R. J. Robinson, chairman of the Committee on Education, then made his report, setting forth the many obstacles which colored children meet with in the State of Illinois, in their efforts to gain entrance to the school-houses; and recommending a system of education which would, in the opinion of the committee, answer???in the present emergency, and until more liberal and humane sentiments gain consideration in our Legislature.

The report was, after an animated discussion by Messrs. Bonner, Parker, Robinson, Douglass, Barguet, and others, adopted.

Sundry resolutions were then offered by J. D. Bonner, chairman of the Business Committee, in relation to the pro-slavery sentiments of the churches and clergy, Mrs. H. B. Stowe, the *Aliened American Newspaper*, etc., all of which were read and adopted.

H. O. Wagoner, chairman of the Committee on an Address to the Citizens of the State, then came forward and read his Address, which was able and convincing.

The Committee on an Address to the Colored People of the State then reported, through their chairman, A. W. Jackson, which was adopted.

Three o'clock having arrived, the Convention adjourned.

Evening Session.

President in the chair. Prayer by A. W. Jackson. Proceedings of afternoon session read and adopted.

After the adoption of a number of resolutions of thanks to the officers of the Convention, to C. W. Campbell and his choir, etc., and the election of officers of the School Board, the immense crowd becoming impatient to hear Frederick Douglass, there was one deafening shout throughout the hall for Douglass. He came forward, and made one of his happy and soul-stirring speeches, which was listened to with much interest by the people, and sat down amid the plaudits of the whole house.

The choir, with its enchanting power, then sang, in an animated manner--

FREEDOM'S GLORIOUS DAY

Let waiting throngs now lift their voices,
As Freedom's glorious day draws near;
While every gentle tongue rejoices,
And each bold heart is filled with cheer," &c., &c.

The Convention then adjourned *sine die*.

JOHN JONES, *President*.

H. O. Wagoner,	}	<i>Secretaries.</i>
W. L. Barnes,		
A. H. Richardson,		
J. H. Barguet,		

RESOLUTIONS

The following were the resolutions adopted by the Convention:

I. *Resolved*, That we regard all schemes for colonizing the free colored people of the United States in Africa, or in any other foreign land, originating in whatever motive, as directly calculated to increase pro-slavery prejudice, to depress our moral energies, to unsettle all our plans for improvement, and finally to perpetuate the wicked and horrible system of slavery.

II. *Resolved*, That in opposing all attempts of African colonizationists or others to expatriate us from the land of our birth, we will adopt the language of the late National Convention of colored freemen, viz: "We will plant our trees in American soil, and repose in the shade thereof."

III. *Resolved*, That we are opposed to the call of a National Emigration Convention, as put forth by M. R. Delany and others, and discover in it a spirit of disunion which, if encouraged, will prove fatal to our hopes and aspirations as a people.

IV. *Resolved*, That the cruel and unnatural prejudice which exists against the colored people of the United States is not against color, but condition, and that we must change that condition, by using economy, amassing riches, educating our children, and being temperate.

V. *Resolved*, That the enactment known as the Illinois Slave Law, passed by the last session of the Legislature of the State, is in direct conflict with the Constitution of Illinois and of the United States, and at war with every principle of justice and equity, and repugnant to the principles of humanity.

VI. *Resolved*, That it is the duty of every Christian and philanthropist --of all lovers of freedom and free institutions, as well as of all who claim to be civilized, who may be in anywise involved in this sin, to free themselves from it without delay, by instructing their Legislators to vote for its repeal.

VII. *Resolved*, That we heartily approve of the most prominent acts of the late National Convention of colored men, held in Rochester, N.Y.,⁷ and especially the formation of the National and State Councils in the free States; and we hereby agree, so far as we are able, to carry out the provisions of said Councils.

VIII. *Resolved*, That in order to carry out successfully the provisions of the above resolution, we will hold an election throughout the State on the 15th of November next, for the election of twenty members to our State Council.

IX. *Resolved*, That the State Council, when organized, be authorized to act as a State Central Committee, and they are hereby empowered to issue calls for State Conventions annually, if they deem it proper or wise to do so.

X. *Resolved*, That we most especially recommend to our people throughout the State to become owners of land, to build houses, and cultivate the soil, as the surest means of making themselves and families independent and respectable.

XI. *Resolved*, That all State or Legislative enactments, which tend to obscure and fetter the intellectual progress of any portion of its citizens, are unwise and unjust, and fosters and encourages every species of vice and immorality which are prevalent among the uninformed.

Whereas, Wealth is desirable to any people, and certainly to none more than to the colored people of the United States; therefore,

XII. *Resolved*, That this Convention recommend to the colored people of the State of Illinois, as a practical means to gain wealth, that they form joint stock companies whenever it can be done advantageously.

XIII. *Resolved*, That this Convention recommend to the colored people of the State of Illinois to form *Lyceums* in every locality of colored persons, for the discussion of important subjects; and that the *Lyceums* be kept in active operation from the 21st September to the 21st March of each year.

XIV. *Resolved*, That in order to *promote union*, and render our *action* more efficient, we organize the State by appointing committees of three, called auxiliary committees, for each county here represented, whose duty it shall be to collect all important facts and *statistics* concerning the colored people; and to transact any other business which they may deem proper and advisable.

XV. *Resolved*, That the State Council, when organized, shall forthwith appoint a State Commissioner, whose duty it shall be to carry out the provisions as recommended in the report on Agriculture.

Whereas, Taxation without representation is contrary to the genius and spirit of our republican institutions; and

Whereas, The colored people of the State of Illinois are taxed for the support of the Public Schools, and denied by the laws of the State the right of sending their children to said schools; therefore,

XVI. *Resolved*, That we regard it as a gross and flagrant violation of justice toward the colored citizens of Illinois, which calls loudly for reform, and this Convention do hereby recommend to the colored people and their white friends throughout the State to send in petitions to our Legislature, asking the repeal of said law.

XVII. *Resolved*, That in the opinion of this Convention, the *gospel*, when preached in its purity, is designed to correct all social evils, and to destroy sin in all its forms; and we regard it as the Christian duty of all ministers of the gospel to inculcate such principles in their teachings, that, with the blessing of God, they may awaken the moral sense of the people in relation to the great sin of SLAVERY, and of producing the speedy abolition of this great wrong; and we earnestly and affectionately urge upon our ministers throughout the State to treat this as all other sins of great magnitude, and to use the influence and power which their high position has given them to destroy the same.

XVIII. *Resolved*, That we regard all ministers who have it in their power to preach against slavery, and fail to do so, as our enemies; as likewise all ministers of the *gospel* who, in their preaching, fail to condemn and denounce, in positive terms, the great wrongs done the colored race in the United States.

XIX. *Resolved*, That we regard the right to testify in the courts of justice as one of the most sacred and inestimable rights of man, and to be deprived of this safeguard at once disables us from pursuing any honorable and profitable calling in competition with white men.

XX. *Resolved*, That to deprive us of this invaluable right, under any pretext whatever, is treating us with the most flagrant and cruel injustice.

XXI. *Resolved*, That the constitutional disability under which the colored man labors in this State calls loudly for redress, and the code of Black Laws existing on our statutes is unjust to the colored citizen, insulting to humanity, and disgraceful to the State of Illinois.

XXII. *Resolved*, That these laws greatly retard the moral and mental improvement of the colored man, and are calculated to destroy in him that noble spirit of liberty which so justly belongs to all freemen.

XXIII. *Resolved*, That this age of reform is the auspicious moment for the lawmakers of Illinois, in the wisdom of their deliberations, to erase from their statutes all laws making distinctions among men on account of their color.

XXIV. *Resolved*, That this Convention do most earnestly recommend to the colored people of this State the propriety of getting an interest in the soil, whenever it is in their power to do so, and to cultivate and improve the same, believing that this step will be one of the most powerful means of our elevation in this country.

XXV. *Resolved*, That we recommend to the serious consideration of all parents and guardians in this State the thorough education of their children and wards, and also to put them to some useful trade, and thus fit them for useful members of society.

XXVI. *Resolved*, That notwithstanding we are unjustly denied the rights of citizenship in this State, there is no good reason why we should not try to become, in an eminent degree, *religious, moral and intellectual* men and women, and by this means rebuke our oppressors.

XXVII. *Resolved*, That wealth and education are the great levers by which we hope to improve ourselves; and we will use all our efforts to obtain these desirable ends.

XXVIII. *Resolved*, That in all our efforts to elevate and to improve our condition as a people, we invite the co-operation of woman, regarding her, in all moral, as well as in other relations of life, the God-given helpmeet of man; and as mother, wife and sister, she is the natural guardian of education, virtue and good manners.

XXIX. *Resolved*, That having watched with much diligence and with deep interest the course pursued on all questions affecting the well-being of the free colored people, and the emancipation of the enslaved of this country, by Frederick Douglass during the last twelve years, both as a lecturer and an editor, we are prepared to commend him and the able paper which bears his name to the cordial support of the colored people of Illinois, and of the friends of freedom generally, as the able, persevering and unswerving advocate of all the just rights of man.

XXX. *Resolved*, That this Convention recommend the "Aliened American," published by William H. Day, at Cleveland, Ohio, to the patronage of the colored people of the State of Illinois.

XXXI. *Resolved*, That we recognize in Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, the distinguished authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," an able and constant advocate of human rights; and our memories recur with grateful recollections to the perusal of the pages of those soul-stirring works (the "Cabin" and "Key") as an antidote to the thousands of political speeches, ecclesiastical harangues, and penny-a-liner writers of the past and present age, which have struggled so zealously to poison the public mind, and thereby destroy the hopes and aspirations of the colored people of the United States.

XXXII. *Resolved*, That her efforts to ameliorate the condition of the down-trodden colored freemen of the United States, by aiding in the establishment of an institution or institutions where colored youth can obtain thorough educations, should endear her name to the lovers of free institutions, and to colored people most especially, throughout the world.⁸

XXXIII. *Resolved*, That this Convention appoint a Board of nine Trustees, who shall have power to appoint agents, and take full charge of the school fund, and report their proceedings to the next annual Convention.

XXXIV. *Resolved*, That the thanks of this Convention are hereby tendered to the firm of D. B. Cooke & Co., Publishers and Booksellers, at 135 Lake street, for a gratuitous supply of all stationery used by the Convention.

XXXV. *Resolved*, That we tender our grateful thanks to the editors of the different journals of the city, for the friendly and favorable manner in which they have noticed this Convention.

XXXVI. *Resolved*, That the thanks of this Convention are due to the officers of the Convention, for their services, and the gentlemanly and courteous manner of intercourse between them and the Convention.

XXXVII. *Resolved*, That this Convention tender their sincere thanks to the citizens generally of Chicago, for the interest and attention which they have manifested in this Convention.

NAMES AND POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF MEMBERS OF THE CONVENTION

Names	Peoria County	Post Office Address
Thomas Mason, Augustus Dobbins, W. L. Barnes,	}	Peoria.
William Smallwood,		Bellville.

A. W. Jackson, B. Henderson,	Morgan County }	Jacksonville.
Augustus Hill, William Liverse,	Will County }	Joliet. Lockport.
R. J. Robinson, A. M. Ellsworth, H. Ellsworth,	Madison County }	Alton.
A. H. Richardson, R. H. Cain,	Jo. Daviess County }	Galena.
Spencer Donagan, William H. Robinson, W. H. Butler,	Sangamon County }	Springfield.
Rev. Henry Brown,	Edgar and Coles County	Paris.
H. O. Wagoner, J. D. Bonner, John Jones, J. H. Barguet, William Johnson, Alex Smith, William Smith, R. H. Rollins, E. Gordon, C. W. Campbell, William T. Watson, S. Sparrow, Geo. Mead, Bennet Johnson, Rev. Byrd Parker, Lewis Isbell, B. J. Smith, L. Johnson, E. A. Fulton, A. T. Hall,	Cook County }	Chicago.
William J. Davis.	McLean County	

Copy in the Chicago Historical Society.

ADDRESS OF THE COLORED STATE CONVENTION TO THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF
ILLINOIS, OCTOBER, 1853

Fellow Citizens:--We have here assembled as delegates representing the colored people of the State of Illinois, in the capacity of a State Convention, to confer together and to deliberate upon our intellectual, moral, industrial, civil, and political condition, and particularly our condition, as effected by the "Black Law" of the State,--to declare our sentiments, and to devise ways and means which may, through the blessing of God, tend to our improvement, elevation, and progress--fully believing that our cause is one that commends itself to all good men throughout the civilized world--that it

is the sacred cause of truth and righteousness,--and that it particularly appeals to those professing to be governed by that religion which teacheth to "do unto all men as you would that all men should do unto you." These principles we conceive to embody the great duty of man to his fellow man; and as men, we ask only to be included in a practical application of this principle.

We feel that it would be hypocritical in us to apologize for thus addressing you, because we believe that a little serious reflection on your part, would at once discover to your intelligent Anglo-Saxon minds, that the justness of our cause is a sufficient apology for our course at this time. We feel, however, inclined to confess that we have too long remained supinely inactive, and apparently indifferent to our oppressed and degrading condition; and that we have leaned too much upon others, and thus we have done little or nothing ourselves in the great work of our redemption. But we have now resolved to come forward; and, like men, speak, and act for ourselves. And we fully recognize the truth of the maxim, that "God helps those who help themselves." And in making this appeal, we here adopt the language of the late "National Convention of Colored Freeman," held at Rochester, N.Y., as our platform of principles:

"That all men are created equal; that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the rights of all; that taxation and representation should go together; that Governments are to protect, not to destroy the rights of mankind; that the Constitution of the United States was formed to establish justice, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to all the people of this country; that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God,--are American principles and maxims; and together they form the constructive elements of the American Government."

We think we fully comprehend and duly appreciate the principles and measures which compose this platform; and all we desire or ask for is, to be placed in a position that we could conscientiously and legitimately defend, with you, those principles, against the surges of despotism to the last drop of our blood.

We have not come together in battle array to "assume a boastful attitude," and to talk loudly of high sounding principles or of unmeaning platitudes; nor do "we pretend to any great boldness for we know your wealth and greatness, and our poverty and weakness"--and though we feel keenly our wrongs, still we come together, we trust, in a spirit of meekness, and of patriotic good will to all the people of the State. But yet it is some consolation to know, and it inspires us with hope, when we reflect that our cause is not alone the cause of four millions of oppressed people in this country, we are fully alive to the fact that it is also the cause of oppressed man in other parts of "God's beautiful earth," who are now struggling to be free, and "God and nature are pledged to its triumph."

We are Americans by birth, and we assure you that we are Americans in feeling; and in spite of all the wrongs which we have long and silently endured in this country, we would yet exclaim, "with a full heart, Oh, America! with all thy faults, we love thee still."

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand!

Thus, we would address you, not as rebels, or as enemies, but as friends and fellow-countrymen, who desire to dwell among you in peace, and whose destinies are interwoven and linked with those of the American people, and hence must be fulfilled in this country.

As descendants of a race feeble and long oppressed, we might with propriety appeal to a great and magnanimous people, like the Americans, for special favors and encouragements, on the principle that the strong should aid the weak, the learned should teach the unlearned. But it is for no such purpose that we raise our voices to the people of Illinois, on this occasion. We ask for no special privileges or peculiar favors--we ask only for even

handed Justice, or for the removal of such positive obstructions and disabilities as past legislators have seen fit to throw in our way, and heap upon us. Without any rational cause or provocation on our part, of which we are conscious we as a people, have been virtually, and with very few exceptions, practically excluded from the schools of the State, (notwithstanding we are tax-payers,) thereby denying our children the most sacred right of a national being, namely, the cultivation of that intellect which the Creator has endowed them.

We are denied the right of giving our testimony in like manner with that of our white fellow-countrymen, in the courts of the State, by which our persons and property, are subject to every species of violence, insult, and fraud, without any redress, even from the common law.

We are also, by law, not only denied the right of citizenship, the inestimable right of voting for those who rule over us in the land of our birth, but, by the so-called "*Black Law*," we are denied the right enjoyed by the meanest rebel that treads the surface of the earth, the right to live and possess a peaceful home on the broad and beautiful prairies of this noble State.

We would particularly remind you of the late enactment of your Legislature, which was an attempt to strike down at a single blow, the rights of all persons having African blood in their veins, who shall come into the State to seek a peaceful home, and an honorable employment. And yet you invite all others to come freely into the State and possess it, and they shall be protected by your Republican laws. But if any colored person shall come into the State, for the very same purpose which you commend as praiseworthy in others, your Legislators have seen fit to condemn such colored persons as having committed a high crime against the State for which they shall be punished, not with death, but with that which Patrick Henry declared to be worse than death, namely, SLAVERY.

What! is it possible that men, women, and children are to be doomed to life-long Slavery for the simple act of coming into the State of Illinois, peacefully to reside, and to gain an honest living by cultivating the soil, or as the case may be? Can such monstrous injustice as this, be the will of the People? If so, would it not be more honorable in the Legislature of Illinois, to appoint a day upon which, every colored man, woman, and child should be murdered, and thus set the matters at rest? Do you not perceive that were this act carried into practical execution, (as all laws founded in justice should be,) that there are no bounds to the cruelties which it would produce? Are we to be forever proscribed, harassed, annoyed, and persecuted in this way?

Is it possible that men of correct *moral principles* can so far forget themselves as quietly to stand by and see their fellow-man divested of every *national right*, without raising their voices, almost *en masse*, against such lawless and ungodly proceedings?--What! is liberty to the colored man in Illinois about to languish and die? Think for a moment, of the death struggles of a people; for "there are no death struggles like those of expiring liberty."

We have now stated some of the most prominent features of our *disabilities* (to call them by no harsher name) of which we complain. And we call on you to-day to consider seriously and candidly whether they are worthy of a great and free people, like yourselves. Consider to-day, candidly, whether we, as a portion of your fellow countrymen, have done anything that should justly subject such laws--that should make us legal outcasts in a State that requires but a few months residence to make the most *ignorant* and *abandoned* subject of the Ottoman Empire an American citizen, with all the sacred right belonging to that world renowned title?

Is it our people who fill your poor houses, your jails, and your prisons? Is it our people that multiply pauperism, crime, and death, by keeping grogshops, gambling houses, and haunts of vice? No! an exhibition of the inmates will clear us from any special charge of guilt in any of these things. Then why are we singled out and made the subject of laws so cruel and so degrading and so contrary to every principle of Republicanism; and of every provision of that declaration which is so justly styled the palladium, and the chart of American liberty.

We have still faith to believe that our present political disabilities are not the result of the well understood wishes of you, the people; and we, therefore, appeal distinctly to you, who, are, in truth the rightful sovereigns of the State, to instruct your Legislators to vote for the repeal of those enactments of which we so justly complain. And last, though not least, we appeal to the *Press*, that mighty engine and swift-winged intelligence, to use its great power and influence in behalf of the oppressed and downtrodden of Illinois in particular, and of the country in general.

H. O. Wagoner,

William Smith,

Wm. Robinson,

Thomas Mason,

Henry Brown.

Frederick Douglass' Paper, October 28, 1853.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. John Jones was a prosperous black Chicago tailor and abolitionist. He used his home to lodge runaway slaves preparatory to their settlement in Canada. Jones was also a vigorous spokesman, during this period, against the program of African colonization.

2. H. O. Wagoner was a noted Chicago black abolitionist and a frequent contributor to Douglass' paper, the *North Star*. Later, he moved to Denver, Colorado, from which city he continued to send letters to Douglass' paper.

3. Lewis Tappan (1788-1873) was a wealthy New York merchant, philanthropist and abolitionist. Along with his well-known brother Arthur, he played a prominent role in the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. In 1840, owing to such divisive issues as the relationship of the church to slavery, participation of women in antislavery activities, and political action, the Tappan brothers broke with William Lloyd Garrison, president of the Society, and founded the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (New York, 1969), *passim*.

4. David Paul Brown (1795-1872), eminent Philadelphia lawyer and abolitionist, frequently used his services defending runaway slaves. Louis Ruchames pointed out (*Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* [Cambridge, Mass., 1971], II, 364) that "abolitionism was but one of his numerous reforms." See his reminiscences, *The Forum, or Forty Years Full Practice at the Philadelphia Bar* (Philadelphia, 1856).

5. Horace Greeley (1811-1872) founded the *New York Tribune*, a successful and influential antislavery organ, and later became one of the foremost Republican editors.

6. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), American humanitarian and novelist, was the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly*. This work was first published as a serial (June 5, 1851-April 1, 1852) in the *National Era*, an antislavery paper in Washington, D.C., and as a book in two volumes on March 20, 1852. It achieved international acclaim and sold into the hundreds of thousands.

7. This convention met July 6-8, 1853.

8. In late February 1853, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe invited Frederick Douglass to her Andover, Ohio, home to discuss what means could be found to help elevate the free colored people of the United States. Mrs. Stowe had received substantial sums of money from the sale of her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and was shortly preparing for a tour of England, where a huge testimonial was to be given in her honor. She informed Douglass that the monies obtained from her English trip would be used in seeking to ameliorate the condition of blacks in this country.

After this interview, Douglass wrote a very long letter to Mrs. Stowe, dated March 8, 1853, in which he requested that any money Mrs. Stowe might contribute to his people be used for the establishment of an industrial college where black youth could learn mechanic skills in order to prepare them for a livelihood. Upon her return from England, however, Mrs. Stowe had apparently reconsidered her plans for an industrial school. Douglass was embarrassed by her about-face and noted that "her change of purpose was a

great disappointment, and placed me in an awkward position before the colored people of this country, as well as to friends abroad, to whom I had given assurances that the money would be appropriated in the manner I have described."