

20th Congress,
1st Session.

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No. of REPS.

PENNSYLVANIA.

MEMORIAL

OF

CITIZENS OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA,

Praying for the enactment of a law, that all

COLORED CHILDREN, BORN IN THE DIS'T. OF COLUMBIA,

AFTER A CERTAIN DAY, SHALL BE FREE.

JANUARY 21, 1828.

Referred to the Committee for the District of Columbia.

WASHINGTON :

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1828.

MEMORIAL.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled :

The memorial of the undersigned, citizens of the State of Pennsylvania.

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS :

That they, in common with their fellow-citizens, greatly deplore the rapidly growing evil of African Slavery, which pervades a large portion of our otherwise happy country. There being at least two millions of a colored population in the United States, most of them held in a state of abject slavery, in such a degraded situation as is more likely to make them enemies, than friends to our Government; and nearly doubling in number very 25 years. These are considerations sufficient to rouse the energies of every true patriot, to unite in adopting suitable measures to remove the evil, before it becomes too great to admit of a remedy. The slave trade was declared piracy in the early part of the present century, by the united declaration of the American States; and certainly the crime can be no less to deprive our natural born citizens of their freedom, than persons born on the coast of Africa. If the Africans had been reduced to slavery as a punishment for crimes, of which they had been fairly and legally convicted, that could not have affected the rights of their offspring: for our Constitution declares that "no attainder" even of "treason, shall work corruption of blood, or forfeiture, longer than during the life of the person attainted." And seeing it is a duty enjoined on us by the highest authority, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us, which clearly implies that our rights and privileges are equal, it is evidently a continuation of the same piratical practice, to deprive our American born citizens of that state of liberty and equality, which the unanimous declaration of the United States has declared to be their unalienable right.

The system of slavery is extremely unjust and impolitic in another point of view: by permitting one of our citizens to hold any number of these degraded creatures in such a situation as to make them become the natural enemies of our Government and institutions, and thereby laying as many of our white citizens liable, every day of their lives, to be called to arms, in order to awe or compel them to remain in subjection. Many of the latter having no interest in the system which lays them under that liability; and receiving no equivalent for the dangers and difficulties of their situation.

And seeing that this system of oppression is tolerated to a considerable extent in the District of Columbia, which is placed under

the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress ; in this spot, which, above all others, ought to be dedicated to freedom, and purged from all unwarrantable oppression ; in the District, where the Representatives of a free Republican People meet in council ; where travellers from distant parts, and Ambassadors from foreign Nations, come to transact business at the Capitol or Temple of Liberty : that they should find the District, not only abounding with this species of oppression, but also made the mart, or emporium of slavery, is highly disgraceful to the American People.

For these reasons, and many others that might be given, your memorialists solicit the attention of Congress to the subject, praying for the enactment of a law, that all children born in the District of Columbia, after a certain day, shall be free. And as the law prayed for, only applies to unborn posterity, to prevent more persons from being enslaved and debased ; to persons unto whom the claim of purchase can by no means extend, and far less any principle of right, it can, therefore, of course, be no infringement of right.

The undersigned, therefore, earnestly entreat your honorable body to take this subject under serious consideration, and adopt such measures for removing the evil, as its importance demands.