

MEMORIAL

OF

INHABITANTS OF MUSKINGUM COUNTY, OHIO,

For the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia.

APRIL 7, 1834.

Referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia, and ordered to be printed.

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

We, the subscribers, citizens of the United States, and inhabitants of the county of Muskingum, and State of Ohio, being deeply impressed with a consideration of the evils arising from the existence of slavery in this otherwise free and happy nation, and with special reference to the District of Columbia as the seat of Government of this boasted land of freedom, beg leave respectfully to represent that we hold the truth asserted by our fathers, and set forth in the Declaration of our Independence, "to be self-evident, that all men ('without distinction of clime or color,') are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Yet, in open violation of these plain and righteous principles, which have been published to the world as the first article in our political creed, and consecrated as the corner-stone of our national liberties, in the District of Columbia, at the very seat of Government, human beings are born almost daily, whom the existing laws pronounce to be, from their very birth, not 'equal' to other men, and not entitled to 'liberty,' and who are, without any crime on their part, deprived for life of the natural right of freely pursuing 'happiness.' Moreover, this District, in which, as citizens of the United States, we all have a common interest, and over which, as our Representatives, your honorable body exercises "exclusive jurisdiction in all cases whatsoever," is a common market for the traffic in human beings! where men, women, and children are bought and sold like beasts of the field!!

We fully recognize the sovereignty of each State to legislate exclusively on the subject of slavery which is tolerated within its own limits, and conceive that Congress, under the present national compact, has no right to interfere with any of the slave States in relation to this momentous subject. But we are of opinion that the evils arising from the domestic slave trade between the several slave-holding States, and from the existence of slavery and the slave traffic in some of the Territories belonging to the United States,

are no less under the control of Congress than are the same evils in the District of Columbia. Therefore, we maintain that, while these things are tolerated by laws framed by the Representatives of all the States, we are, in the face of all the world, a slave-holding and slave-trading nation! and so long as these outrages upon our published principles of independence are practiced, it is in vain for us, with a brow of brass and a heart of steel, to assert that our country is "the home of the free and the asylum of the oppressed."

We therefore respectfully pray your honorable body to take this subject under immediate consideration, and enact such laws and adopt such measures as in your wisdom shall be deemed necessary for the earliest possible abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and for the entire removal of all the other evils complained of.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.