

MEETING OF COLORED CITIZENS

At a meeting of the colored citizens of Boston, held pursuant to public notice, in the Balknap-street meeting-house, on Monday evening, Feb. 4, 1845, Solomon R. Alexander was called to the chair, and Jonas W. Clark and Joel W. Lewis were chosen Vice-Presidents, and Robert Morris, Jr. and Chas. A. Battista Secretaries. The following resolutions and memorial were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, it is expressly guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, that the citizens of one State shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of citizens of the several States; and

Whereas, it is proclaimed by Massachusetts, in her Bill of Rights, that all men are born free and equal; and by her laws, she knows nothing of caste or complexion among her people,—so that an insult or outrage done to any one of her inhabitants, by any other State or nation, is done to them all; and

Whereas, by the existence of slavery in a large portion of this country, the rights and liberties of the free colored citizens of Massachusetts, as well as of other States, are frequently violated, and always placed in imminent peril; and

Whereas, the States of South Carolina and Louisiana have enacted laws, alike unconstitutional and atrocious, which they rigidly enforce, subjecting all colored seamen or travellers, who may come into their ports, or be found on their soil, to imprisonment as felons, and subsequently to be sold as slaves to the highest bidder, in case their jail fees are not paid, and they transported in the vessels from which they were tyrannically taken; and

Whereas, those States have recently banished from their limits, in an ignominious manner, the Hon. Samuel Hoar and the Hon. Henry Hubbard, who were sent thither under the authority of the Legislature and Executive of this Commonwealth, and in obedience to the voice of the people, in order to insure the protection of the colored citizens of Massachusetts within their borders, as far as it might legally be done, and to test the constitutionality of the slave laws aforesaid, by an appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States; and

Whereas, since the expulsion of those official agents, the Legislatures of South Carolina and Louisiana have enacted laws, making the residence on their soil of any person, holding a similar commission, a high misdemeanor, to be punished with fine and imprisonment; and have avowed their determination not to regard any decision of the U. S. Supreme Court conflicting with their municipal regulations; but still at all hazards, as hitherto, to imprison, or, if necessary, enslave all free colored citizens

of the non-slaveholding States who may be caught within their limits; and

Whereas, this is virtually to abrogate the Constitution of the United States, and to declare war against the North; therefore,

Resolved, That at a crisis so alarming, it behooves the people of the North to let their voices be heard in thunder tones against this most extraordinary and despotic procedure—to present an unbroken front to those perfidious and lawless States—to throw aside all party variances and sectarian animosities, and demand prompt and ample redress, a repeal of the oppressive laws alluded to, and a fulfilment of their constitutional obligations, on the part of South Carolina and Louisiana.

Resolved, That this is a question which in a special manner concerns the free colored citizens of the North,—as they are the victims intended to be sacrificed on the altar of Southern jealousy and wrath,—and therefore they are called upon distinctively to enter their protest against such an unwarrantable persecution, to devise all proper means for their personal security, to appeal to their white fellow-citizens to stand by them in this time of peril, and to memorialize the Government for succor and redress.

Resolved, That we, the colored citizens of Boston, assembled on this occasion, do most respectfully and earnestly call upon the Legislature and Executive of Massachusetts, in behalf of the colored citizens of the State, not to consent to our sacrifice because we happen to constitute a small portion of the population, and are identified by complexion with such of our unfortunate countrymen as are held in chains and slavery at the South;—but to vindicate the Constitution of the Commonwealth,—her self-respect and honor,—her freedom, independence and sovereignty as a State,—the rights of all her people as equally sacred; to yield nothing to Southern dictation; to make no compromise in this conflict with the fierce demon of slavery; and to maintain 'free trade and sailors' rights.'

Resolved, That these proceedings, signed by the Chairman and Secretary of this meeting, be presented to the Legislature now in session in this city, together with the following Memorial to that body:

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

The memorial of the undersigned, colored men, citizens of Massachusetts, respectfully sheweth,

That, while trusting that the recent action of the Senate, striking from the statute-book the last relic of any distinction on account of color, will soon become law, they look with pride and satisfaction on the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth, and

wait patiently till a more tolerant and liberal state of public feeling shall secure to them the full enjoyment of all the rights which impartial laws have conferred; they view alike with alarm and indignation the recent enactments of Louisiana and South Carolina, in relation to any persons who shall, either living or coming there, attempt to bring to judicial investigation the laws of those States, by which such colored seamen as are employed in the vessels of the State, are subjected to fines, imprisonment, and disgraceful restraints in southern ports.

They entreat your Honorable bodies to remember that in all the burdens of the State, they share equally with others; that in times of public danger, their exertions have been equally called for and freely offered; and that on every account they are entitled, as useful and good citizens, to the protection of Government in all the rights of citizenship.

They ask to have it remembered, that the free exercise of those callings, against which these Southern laws are pointed, is necessary to many of them for procuring subsistence, and that the same pretences which, in defiance of the United States Constitution, forbid such employments to them, would result in the same effects to any other class when fitting occasion may arise. They do not either affirm or deny that their exclusion from Southern ports is necessary for the security of slave masters; but, seeing that such exclusion is plainly unconstitutional, if any one affirms it to be necessary for the existence of slavery, then it follows that slavery and the Constitution cannot exist together, and your memorialists will not permit themselves to doubt which Massachusetts in such

case would prefer. Finally, your memorialists ask that their case may not, on account of a distinction of color, be separated from the general interests of the whole mass of citizens, but that all may stand or fall together—and therefore protesting against all this kind of southern legislation, both in relation to themselves and Messrs. Hoar and Hubbard, as utterly unconstitutional and void, they ask that, by application to the President of the United States, or by such other means as your wisdom shall suggest, this grievous evil may be removed.

Resolved, That the position, which our esteemed pioneer of Liberty, WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, took in the Anti-Texas Convention in Faneuil Hall—his calm and fearless expression of his principles as to the course proper for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to take, in case Texas is annexed—is, in our opinion, the only position which a State can take, which holds the laws of God paramount to any enacted by man.

Resolved, That the President of this meeting, with John T. Hilton and Wm. C. Nell, be a committee to inform Thomas Clarkson of Ipswich, George Thompson of London, Richard D. Webb of Dublin, and William Staal of Glasgow, of the fact that the colored seamen of Great Britain are subjected to imprisonment in Southern ports; and urge the abolitionists of that land to take proper action in the premises.

Voted, That the various city papers be respectfully requested to give these proceedings an insertion in their columns.

SOLOMON R. ALEXANDER, *Chairman.*

ROBERT MORRIS, JR. }
CHARLES A. BATTISTE, } *Secretaries.*