

INTRODUCTION.

The following circular and call were fully promulgated through the State of New York and neighboring territory:

NEW YORK, *July 1, 1863.*

You are respectfully requested to call the attention of the Friends of Freedom and Union in your vicinity, to the Convention of Colored Citizens, and their known Friends, to be held at Poughkeepsie, N. Y., on Wednesday and Thursday, 15th and 16th of July.

Among subjects to be considered by the Convention, will be the duties and opportunities of the hour, with special reference to the Organization of a large force of Colored Troops, to be commanded by leaders in sympathy with the movement, and upon the condition that the rights of remuneration and protection shall be guaranteed to them, the same as those secured to white soldiers. It is designed to make up the response of the colored men of the North to the call of the Government.

You will receive a supplementary communication in due season, enclosing the formal call for the Convention. At present you are requested, with as little delay as possible, to make practical the following suggestions—

Appoint a Local Committee to superintend the movement in your immediate vicinity, and to cause similar action in your surrounding country.

Enlist the white friends of the movement in your vicinity in active co-operation with the colored Citizens in this matter.

Cause a delegation (the number to be determined by your own direction) to be appointed to represent your vicinity in the formal meetings of the Convention. This to be done at a meeting, held with sufficient publicity to warrant the representative character of the delegates. In addition, secure the attendance of as many of your people at the Mass Assemblages, to be held each day in the beautiful grounds selected for that purpose, where addresses may be expected by the ablest champions of the cause.

Cause lists to be sent through your Delegation of the names of those willing to join such a force on the assurance of the conditions stated. *Let there be earnest work in this direction.* In addition, you are requested to authorize any respectable colored man to get up a list of forty men, capable of bearing arms, who are willing to join the service as above contemplated, under the command of the person designated, as a Commissioned Officer.

Respectfully, your obedient servants,

EDWARD GILBERT,	} <i>Sub-Committee of Com-</i>	
LEWIS FRANCIS,		} <i>mittee of City of N. Y.</i>
JAMES FAIRMAN,		

Please forward the name and address of the Chairman of your Local Committee at the earliest convenience to Edward Gilbert, 111 Broadway, N. Y.

Persons attending the Convention can expect every attention from the Local Committee of Poughkeepsie.

To Arms! To Arms!!

GRAND MASS CONVENTION
OF
COLORED CITIZENS.

COLORED MEN ONE AND ALL!

We invite you to attend *A Grand Mass Meeting* to be
held in the

CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE,

On the banks of the Noble Hudson,

WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY, *July 15th and 16th*, 1863.

The Object of this Meeting of *Colored Men* is to show the Government and People their willingness to aid in the suppression of the Rebellion, by organizing a large force of Colored Volunteers for the War, to be under the command of Leaders known to be in sympathy with the movement, and upon the assurance that they will get the remuneration and *protection* which belongs to a Citizen Soldier of the Union.

The Local Committee of Poughkeepsie will make every arrangement for the comfort of Delegates and Visitors.

Let this be one of the *Greatest Demonstrations* ever held by Colored Citizens.

Let all come and *Swell* the numbers for *Union and Liberty*.

J. H. TOWNSEND, New York.

ROBERT VOSBURGH, “

Rev. J. N. GLOUCESTER, Brooklyn.

Rev. C. B. RAY, New York.

P. W. DOWNING, “

A. J. ALDRIDGE, Jersey City.

WILLIAM RICH, Troy.

POUGHKEEPSIE CONVENTION.

Pursuant to a general call addressed to the Colored Citizens of the State of New York, a somewhat numerous and highly respectable delegation, representing the entire State, assembled in Poughkeepsie, at 10 A. M., of July 16, 1863. Having been duly called to order, the Convention proceeded to business by electing the following officers:

The Rev. J. W. C. Pennington, of Poughkeepsie, *President*; N. P. Thompson, Buffalo, and W. C. Marshall, Poughkeepsie, *Vice-Presidents*; Dr. P. B. Randolph, Utica, *Secretary*; Chas. E. Vermong, Poughkeepsie, *Assistant Secretary*.

After various patriotic speeches had been made, the following Manifesto and Resolutions were offered by Dr. P. B. Randolph, and, on the motion of the Delegate from Binghamton, were unanimously adopted by the Convention:

MANIFESTO OF THE COLORED CITIZENS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, IN CONVENTION ASSEMBLED:

The war now raging so fiercely over the broad and fertile acres of this, the best heritage ever enjoyed by man, is not a "fratricidal conflict," as many deem it, but, on the contrary, by reason of the momentous issues at stake and involved therein, is one of the most justifiable wars that was ever inaugurated beneath the smiling,

radiant dome of all the broad heavens. It is one of the most sacred which the earth has ever groaned under or mankind ever witnessed, for the reason that it is a combat for the sacred rights of Man against the myrmidons of Hell itself. It is a battle for the right of self-government, true Democracy, just Republicanism, and righteous principles, against anarchy, misrule, barbarism, human slavery, despotism and wrong. On the one side is arrayed the hosts of Belial, backed by Wilfulness, Injustice, Usurpation, Anger and Passion; on the other, in serried ranks, stand Honor, Human Liberty, Justice, Truth and Honesty. This is not a battle of boys, but a struggle of giants. Let the North be conquered, and the salt tears of the oppressed will water the ground for many a long decade of years, and many a hecatomb will uprear its head, and many a sod be nurtured by the blood of liberty-loving human beings. The strife now waging is not between North and South—is not only in behalf of the negro; but the greatest principles the world has ever known constitute the two halves of the *casus belli*—barbarism and freedom—civilization and slavery; it is a death-struggle between the feudal ages and the nineteenth century; and every drop of blood shed from Northern veins is a sacrifice on the holy altars of human freedom, and those forever consecrate to the ever-blessed Redeemer of Mankind! The impending issues are such that if the representatives of human liberty yield the battle, and retire ingloriously beaten, the age will recede a century, and the hands upon the clock of Progress will cease to move across the face of Time. Let the cohorts of freedom be beaten and disgraced, and not only all true lovers of the race will suffer, but every lover and true worshiper of the living God, will mourn over the desolation.

This contest is one in which every son and daughter of the land is, and of necessity must be, interested. It is the bounden duty of us all—all who are not craven

cowards—all in whom the warm blood leaps, and all who feel what a terrible thing is HUMAN SLAVERY—to up and struggle for God and the Right.

Defeat in this momentous epoch of human history means more than a rout upon the battle-field, inasmuch as such defeat will not only rivet our chains still firmer than of yore, but will forever stand as the synonym of American disgrace, and will be the record of our perpetual disfranchisement, and be the *bouleversement* of human society, civilization and Democratic Republican institutions, from progress and health, to anarchy, decay and final ruin—a ruin utter, total and complete; for the common sense of mankind cannot fail to see that if the cause of freedom fails now, human advancement will be something read about in books, instead of being a living, ever-present fact; and in the reign of tyranny thence ensuing, the human heart must of necessity become chilled and frozen; art, science and religion, must go out, like oilless lamps; darkness must collapse the light; the garden of the mind run to waste and weeds; human genius be vagabond, stifled and dumb as of old, and the spirit of misrule will sweep the fair green earth with the besom of destruction, scattering desolation far and wide, and inaugurating such a reign of horror as never yet has been known on earth. Let the cohorts of freedom now yield an inch, and the blood of Jesus will almost have been shed in vain; for in their defeat, Christianity itself must suffer; the sacrifice of Calvary prove a failure, the spontaneity of the human soul be chilled and frozen; human genius be stifled, talent be warped, and eloquence be dumb, as in the dead years of the far-off past. Great God! What a spectacle in this nineteenth century! A million of men arraying themselves in arms against liberty! and in favor of their own degradation!

Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.

That the movers of this Rebellion are mad, utterly insane, no reasonable man can doubt, else whence the horrible blasphemy—not in words, but in bloody deeds, and still more bloody intent, now expressed by millions? else whence the spirit which has prompted rational men to the suicidal policy of shattering to pieces the fairest fabric of human liberty ever erected on the soil of earth? else whence the perfect frenzy which sets men on in the face of the age, and before high heaven, to trail the banner of this proud nation, this hope of the world, this blessed refuge of the oppressed of all lands, in the dust? Aye, truly, the devil is the masterly engineer of this awful work of spoliation, ruin and disaster, else deluded men would never have dared to hurl an iron-rain at the flag of the free, as it floated over Sumter's ramparts. Lone flag of liberty! whose folds offered a shelter to all whose limbs have ever felt the gyves of European tyranny. Father of Mercy, what a spectacle! Men in arms battling for what mankind have ever fought against since the world began! Tyranny, despotism and human slavery! The banner whose blazonry is the stars of heaven, to fall tattered to the dust before the sulphurous hail of treason's cannonry!—a treason, too, more foul and despicable than aught ever before witnessed by His starry eyes looking down from the deep-blue sky!

Such being the case, and their disease having proved to be incurable by ordinary means, such as Reason; Justice, Patriotism: therefore,

1. *Resolved*, That more effective remedies ought now to be *thoroughly* tried, in the shape of warm lead and cold steel, duly administered by two hundred thousand black doctors, more or less, under the direction of Surgeon-General John Charles Fremont, or such other person, fit for the office, as might be selected.

2. *Resolved*, That we, the colored citizens of this State, are LOYAL and TRUE to the Government; that our fortunes rise or fall with it; that we are ready, anxious and willing to demonstrate that truth and loyalty on the field of battle, or wherever else we can aid in restoring the nation to its integrity and prosperity; that we firmly and confidently rely on the Government for the protection and treatment due to civilized men, and believe we shall receive it.

3. *Resolved*, That in this perilous condition of our country, whoever is not for her is against her, and ought to be attended to in such a manner as to prove that the Government has not yet exhausted all her strength, but has abundant power left, not only to protect its children, but to punish treason and traitors wherever they may be found.

4. *Resolved*, That in the success of the Union arms, we, the colored citizens of the United States, behold the first bright, unmistakeable gleam of hope for ourselves and our kindred the wide world over. But, on the contrary, with the success of Southern despotism, our rising sun will forever set in a night and gloom that may never know an ending. In it we see the certainty of a still further riveting of the chains and gyves of slavery on the limbs of us who, by every law of God and man, ought to be free. With the success of the Rebellion will inevitably come the loss to us of all that man holds dear; the perpetual degradation of labor, of our race and order, and of those who shall inherit our places. With the success of that bad cause will come the perpetuation of ignorance among us, and the total disfranchisement of all of us who, in the face of obstacles greater and more formidable than men of any race on earth have ever yet confronted and surmounted, have achieved education, property, and some little consideration in community.

5. *Resolved*, That the twaddle about the "unconstitutionality of the means" resorted to, and depended on to wipe out this Rebellion and the Rebels, is on a par with that of the footpad who, when worsted by his intended victim, exclaimed, "Oh! you've kicked in a tender spot, hit below the belt, knocking the wind clean out of me, which you know isn't fair!"

6. *Resolved*, That no man is fit for liberty who is unwilling or afraid to fight for it, if need be, to the bitter end; and that colored men, as well as others, have, by nature, certain inalienable rights, among which is that of fighting for the land that gave them birth, for the banner that floats over us, for our wives and little ones, and for the freedom of the generations that shall succeed us.

7. *Resolved*, That we stand in the door of the dawn; that the spirit of Liberty is abroad in the land; that her benignant eye is fixed upon the four million blacks of this country, and that her flight is toward them!

8. *Resolved*, That the soldiers of the Union armies are *not* contending for a party, nor for the spoils of war, but Empire—for universal Human Right and Liberty—to maintain intact the heritage bequeathed to the ages by the men of '76; to make this continent in very truth the same refuge for the oppressed of all lands in spite of caste, complexional differences, wealth, poverty, sect or creed. And, as the Nation in this perilous hour of her existence, calls for our aid, it is our duty to grandly give it, and that immediately.

9. *Resolved*, That Liberty is more than the golden vision of the poet; more than the creeds of scholasts and dogmatists; more than the dream of the enthusiast; more than the plaything of tyrants and knaves; and our charter to its possession Time has not annulled, Force has not

abrogated, Usurpation has not falsified, Heaven has not revoked it, Earth has not erased, Hell has not filched, and if we do our duty, the time is not far distant when the world will gladly concede it!

10. *Resolved*, That recent events have demonstrated that men of negro lineage hold the balance of power in this contest, and that we should prove recreant to all that constitutes manhood did we fail instantly to throw our weight for the Government, not alone in words, but by sturdy blows. We should strike, and strike hard, to win a place in history, not as vassals, but as men and heroes, never forgetting that God, as ever, strikes for the right, ever helping those most who help themselves. Let us do this, and posterity, reading of our achievements in centuries yet to be, shall say, while pointing to the record we shall have left behind us:

" These were the great old masters,
These were the men sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Down the corridors of Time."

J. W. C. PENNINGTON, Poughkeepsie,
President.

P. B. RANDOLPH, Utica, *Secretary.*

The Convention also unanimously adopted the following:

Resolved, That this Convention recommend the General Committee of the Fremont Legion, New York, through its Chairman, to issue this series of resolutions in the form of a manifesto, addressed to the colored people of this and other States, believing that great and permanent good will result therefrom.

Resolved, That this Convention recommend the im-

mediate appointment of trusty and able men of color to canvas the entire State for recruits; that such persons be enabled to call meetings, address and enlist men; such agents to be duly and properly commissioned by the authorities, State or National, so as to win the confidence of the people, and prove that the inducements held out to them are *bona fide* and real.

Resolved, That this Convention appoint a State Central Committee, having power to fill its own vacancies, and to appoint Sub-Committees, whose duty shall be that of enrolling and organizing colored troops, as set forth in the call of the General Committee of the Fremont Legion.

Resolved, That the Central Committee shall have the power to call a State Convention of colored men whenever it shall be deemed necessary to do so, or the exigencies of the case may require.

Resolved, That Dr. P. B. Randolph, of Utica, be President of the New York State Central Committee, and that the following-named persons be Vice-Presidents of said Central Committee: John Van Pelt, Glen's Falls; J. M. Loguen, Syracuse; N. D. Thompson, Buffalo; J. H. Townsend, New York; C. B. Ray, New York; J. N.

Gloucester, Brooklyn; Wm. Crocker, Binghamton; Wm. Rich, Troy; N. Gibbs, Little Falls; A. Bolin, Poughkeepsie.

Resolved, That the journals known as *Principia*, edited by Wm. Goodell, and the *Anglo-African*, edited by Robert Hamilton, both in the City of New York, be, and are hereby selected, and henceforward recognized as the official organs of the colored people and their cause in this State.

All of which was unanimously adopted by the Convention.

J. W. C. PENNINGTON, *President.*

P. B. RANDOLPH, *Secretary.*

POUGHKEEPSIE, July 16, 1863.

Resolved, That the Central Committee, through its Chairman be, and hereby is duly empowered to appoint persons in each Congressional District to superintend the enrollment of the forces they may severally be enabled to collect.

Resolved, That agents shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Central Committee in each Assembly District, to superintend the enrollment of troops, and report to the Chairman of the State Central Committee; and that measures be taken to print and circulate, throughout the State, the Manifesto, Resolutions and directions from the Central Committee to the various Sub-Committees and enrolling agents, and that such Sub-Committees report, as speedily as possible, with the Chairman of the Central Committee.

Colored men all over the State are called upon to enroll themselves at once, and to cause lists of the enrolled to be made out and transmitted forthwith to the Chairman of the Central Committee. And colored females are requested to form themselves into Colored Soldiers' Aid Societies all over the State, reporting at once to J. A. Jackson and C. E. Vermong, Poughkeepsie, who have been appointed Chief Stewards of this part of the grand and patriotic movement.

(Official.)

P. B. RANDOLPH.

Resolved, That the Chairman of the Central Committee be authorized to appoint one member of the said

Committee to co-operate in each Congressional District in the State of New York, such District member being empowered to appoint one auxiliary in each Assembly District within the Congressional District in which he acts, the aggregate number in each Congressional District constituting a Local Committee, with full power to conduct the movement in all respects calculated to further the completion of the enrollment.

LETTER OF THE HON. CHAS. SUMNER.

BOSTON, July 13, 1863.

DEAR SIR:—It will not be in my power to take part in the proposed meeting at Poughkeepsie. But I am glad that it has been called, and I trust that it will be successful.

To me it has been clear from the beginning that the colored men would be needed in this war. I never for a moment doubted that they would render good service; and thus far the evidence in their favor is triumphant. Nobody will now question their bravery or their capacity for discipline. All that can be said against them is that they are not white.

But they have a special interest in the suppression of this Rebellion. The enemies of the Union are the enemies of their race. Therefore, in defending the Union they defend themselves even more than other citizens. And in saving the Union, they save themselves.

I doubt if in times past our country could have justly expected from colored men any patriotic service. Such service is the return for protection. But now that protection has begun, the service should begin also. Nor should relative rights and duties be weighed with nicety. It is enough that our country, aroused at last to a sense of justice, seeks to enrol colored men among its defenders.

If my counsels could reach such persons I would say: Enlist at once. Now is the day and now is the hour. Help to overcome your cruel enemies now battling against your country, and in this way you will surely

overcome those other enemies hardly less cruel, here at home, who still seek to degrade you. This is not the time to hesitate or to higggle. Do your duty to our country, and you will set an example of generous self-sacrifice which will conquer prejudice and open all hearts.

Accept my thanks for the invitation with which you have honored me, and believe me, dear sir,

Very faithfully, yours,

CHARLES SUMNER.

EDWARD GILBERT, Esq.

LETTER OF THE HON. WILLIAM WHITING,
Solicitor to the War Department,
 TO THE FREMONT LEAGUE.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
 WASHINGTON CITY, D. C., July 10, 1863.

DEAR SIR:—Your letter, under date of the 8th of July, has been received, in which you have done me the honor to invite me, on behalf of the Fremont Legion, to address the grand mass Convention of Colored Citizens, to be held at Poughkeepsie, on the 15th and 16th instants; and in which you desire me to answer certain inquiries in relation to troops of African descent. Other engagements render it impossible for me to be present on that occasion, but I avail myself of this opportunity of expressing my respect and sympathy for those who now, for the first time within the present century, have determined to vindicate their right to be treated as patriots, sharing in the toils, dangers and sacrifices of that great nation, of which they constitute so important a part.

Courage, endurance and disinterested heroism are qualities of all brave men, whatever may be their lineage. No names yet stand upon the roll

of honor more brilliant or illustrious than those of Hannibal and Touissant L'Overture. Give to those Americans who claim as their fatherland the continent that gave birth to the conqueror of Rome, the arms and the discipline of the well trained soldier, and they will give back to the cause of the country all the elements of military power. Such is the teaching of history; such the testimony of experience.

What has the Africo-American to fight for? He fights for that land which, now about to be freed from the curse of slavery, will be to him "his country." In rallying round the flag of the Union, he adds strength and support to the noble armies of the West and of the East, who, on the fields of Vicksburg and Gettysburg, have added fresh laurels to their imperishable fame.

Not alone for his country's honor, not for empire, not for conquest, not alone for the crushing of Rebellion is the African's blade unsheathed. He fights for the honor and manhood of his race, for justice, humanity and freedom. When love of country and of fame, when thirst for justice and a sense of wrongs yet unavenged, shall nerve the arm and fire the blood already kindled by the flames of freedom, how is it possible that the soldier can be otherwise than brave and terrible in battle, when slavery and death are behind him, and life and liberty lie only in the path to victory? Let history answer this question. Read your answer in the bloody battles of the Revolution, where negro soldiers bore a part so noble that

General Washington publicly, and at the head of his army, acknowledged their gallantry. Remember the honor paid by General Jackson to the heroic regiment of colored men who aided in the defense of New Orleans. Let the battles on the Atlantic coast and the storming of forts on the Mississippi answer. Their bravery recalls the memory of the world-renowned battle of Marathon, in which one-tenth of those who fought and won imperishable honor were slaves "unchained from the doorposts of their masters."

Will the colored men respond to the invitation of the Government?

They are now springing up, like dragon's teeth, from the soil into which they have been crushed. Masters of the ground they tread upon, they are sweeping forward in steady solid legions. Forty thousand strong, are already in the service. They are destined to wield the sword of just retribution; to teach their former masters, on many a bloody battle field, by many a rout and swift pursuit, which of them is "of the superior race."

The military organization of colored troops, removing all danger of insurrectionary movements, will regulate, control and utilize the physical force of the only "genuine Union men" in the Gulf States. The greatest war power of treason will become the most efficient defense of the Union, and while it will smother rebellion, it will destroy the curse that caused it.

On the 22d of May, the War Department issued a general order (No. 143) establishing a bureau in

the Adjutant-General's office for the organization of colored regiments, whereby the system of employing them as part of the forces of the United States has become the fixed and permanent policy of the Government. That policy, sanctioned by Congress, carried into practical effect by the Government, has been approved by the general consent of wise and patriotic men. The country cannot afford to lose the aid of its best and chief supporters in the South.

The employment of colored troops, it is true, was in the beginning experimental. The law of 1862, which first authorized them to enter the service, provided no means of payment.

The second law, which permitted their employment, authorized them to be paid ten dollars per month and one ration per day. This law was, however, made with reference to those who by force of arms, or by provisions of statutes, had been recently freed from bondage.

The important class of colored soldiers from the Free States were probably not in the contemplation of Congress when framing these Acts. But now, while colored men are admitted to be citizens of several of the Northern States and of the United States, and since the Conscription Act makes no distinction between white and colored citizens, but requires them equally to be enrolled and drafted in the forces of the United States, there seems to be no reason why such citizens should not, when volunteering to serve the country,

be placed upon the same footing with other soldiers as regards their pay and bounty.

The attention of Congress will be directed to this subject, and from the generous manner in which they have treated the soldiers heretofore, it cannot be doubted that they will honor themselves by doing full justice to those of every color, who rally round the Union flag in time of public danger.

But I do not forget that the colored soldiers are not fighting for pay. They will not let their enemies reproach them with being mean, as well as cowardly. They will not lose this, their first chance, to vindicate their right to be called and treated as men. Pay or no pay, they will rally round that banner of freedom which shall soon float over a country that contains no slave within its borders.

The policy of the Government is *fixed* and immovable. Congress has passed the irrevocable Acts of Emancipation. The Supreme Court of the United States have unanimously decided that, since July 13, 1861, we have been engaged in a territorial civil war, and have full belligerent rights against the inhabitants of the rebellious districts. The President has issued proclamations under his hand and seal. Abraham Lincoln takes no backward step. A man once made free by law cannot be again made a slave. The Government has no power, if it had the will, to do it. Omnipotence alone can re-enslave a freeman. Fear not that the Administration will ever take the back track.

The President wishes the aid of all Americans of whatever descent or color, to defend the country. He wishes every citizen to share the perils of the contest, and to reap the fruits of victory.

Very respectfully,

your obedient servant,

WILLIAM WHITING.

EDWARD GILBERT, Esq.,
New York City.