

Neglected Voices

Speeches of African-American Representatives Addressing the Civil Rights Bill of 1875

Representative Alonzo J. Ransier, responding on February 7, 1874, to arguments raised against the constitutionality of the Bill, and commenting on the desirability of the Bill among African-Americans:⁽¹⁾

Mr. RANSIER. Mr. Speaker, but for some remarks made by the gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. Harris,] the gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. Robbins,] and the gentleman from New York, our learned and genial friend, [Mr. Cox] during the protracted debate on civil rights, made before and subsequent to the recommittal of the bill on the subject to the Judiciary Committee, which in my judgment call for a specific reply, I would not again ask the attention and indulgence of the House for myself.

Statements have been made by one or all of these gentlemen, and others who oppose such a bill, as many of us think ought to pass, that ought not to go to the country uncontradicted, and a condition of affairs pictured by them as likely to follow its enactment into law which if true or likely to occur ought to go far toward the defeat of such a measure. If, on the other hand, these statements are shown to be untrue and to rest upon no foundation in point of fact, and that the enactment of such a law by Congress will be of benefit to all classes of our people and promotive of the ends of justice, of concord, and harmonious relationships, as we think we can show, then we cannot pass this measure a day too soon.

Mr. Speaker, this measure has been presented to us in masterly efforts in its constitutional aspects, and we are asked to consider it now in the light of practical statesmanship. We are asked to consider what would be the effect of its operation as to our school system and upon the relationships between the races. To these inquiries I propose to address myself as briefly as possible, and to this end I ask the indulgence of the House.

Before proceeding I desire to express my regret that anything should have occurred calculated to create ill-feeling between members of this House during this debate, and which the press of the country has characterized as contravening the legitimate limits of parliamentary courtesy.

It were far better if grave questions such as are involved in the consideration of a measure like this could be discussed in a spirit of fairness, and without passion or indulgence in such allusions as are calculated to give offense to members personally. Each of the friends of the measure, however, can say truthfully, "thou canst not say, I did it: never shake thy gory locks at me."

Mr. Speaker, the honorable gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. Harris,] in his speech on the bill, said:

I am satisfied, Mr. Speaker, that a very large majority of the republican members of this House do not understand the true condition of affairs in the South. For if they did, and are sincere in their avowals of solicitude for the welfare of the country, and especially for the prosperity and advancement of the colored race, I am very sure that they would indicate it in some better way than the adoption of legislative enactments which in my judgment, when tried, will not only prove unacceptable to the masses of colored people at the South, but alike destructive of the harmony and great interests of both races.

Now, sir, I am sure that a very large majority of the republican members of this House do know the true

condition of affairs in the South, hence the desire on their part for the passage of such a measure. As to the remark that such enactments, "when tried, will not only prove unacceptable to the masses of colored people at the South, but alike destructive of the harmony and great interests of both races," he evidently misunderstands the situation himself. He is not the only member who has said during this debate that the colored people, the masses of them, are not asking for the passage of such a bill. The gentleman from Texas suggested the same thing.

THE COLORED PEOPLE A UNIT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS.

Mr. Speaker, there are organizations in nearly every State in the Union the object of which, in part at least, is to endeavor to secure for the colored people of the country their equal rights. They have been asking this of the country, through individuals with delegated authority to act, through State and county organizations, and through national conventions assembled for the purpose. In this connection I quote from the Journal of the proceedings of the convention of colored men held at Columbia, South Carolina, October 18, 1871; which convention was composed of regularly elected delegates from nearly every Southern State:

To the People of the United States of America:

Fellow Citizens: The colored people of the States of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and the District of Columbia, have delegated to us, their representatives, assembled in convention, authority to give expression to their purposes, desires, and feelings, in view of the relation they sustain to the Government and people of the United States, under the course of events that has arisen since, and as a consequence of, the war of rebellion.

We owe to Almighty God and the spirit of liberty and humanity that animates the great body of the people of this country the personal liberty and the rights of citizenship that we enjoy, and shall, under the promptings of duty, labor for the permanence and perfection of the institutions that have served as the great instrument of consummating this act of justice.

In seeking more perfect recognition as members of the great political family to which the interests of humanity have been peculiarly committed, we desire to recognize our obligations and responsibilities as members of this great family, and to assure the American people that we stand among them imbued with a national spirit; with confidence in and devotion to the principles of representative popular government, and with ideas of policy that embrace every individual and interest of our common country.

We ask of you that you will give to the Government the fullest measure of moral support, to enable it to complete that which is so auspiciously begun, and that minor differences of sentiment and policy may be hushed while the nation is gathering up its strength to purge the land of the foulest crimes by the sword of justice. When the nation was threatened with division, political differences yielded to the necessity of maintaining its territorial integrity. Now, that it is again threatened from the vortex of passion and crime affiliated, let the same devotion to right and justice induce equal efforts to preserve its moral integrity.

While there remains anything to be accomplished, in order to secure for ourselves the full enjoyment of civil and political right, we shall have class interests calling for the united efforts of persons of color. The moment these ends are secured, the motives for separate action will cease, and, in common with all other citizens, we can take our places wherever the interest of the Government, industry, or humanity may appoint, recognizing only one standard of duty, interest, or policy for all citizens.

We do not ask the Government or people of the United States to treat us with peculiar favor, but that, in the policy of the laws, our interest may be grouped with those that receive the consideration of our legislative bodies, and that, in the administration of the laws, no invidious distinctions be made to our prejudice.

We affirm that the colored people of the States represented by us have no desire to strike out a line of policy for their action involving interests not common to the whole people.

While we have, as a body, contributed our labor in the past to enhance the wealth and promote the welfare of the community, we have, as a class, been deprived of one of the chief benefits to be derived from industry, namely the acquisition of education

and experience, the return that civilization makes for the labor of the individual. Our want, in this respect, not only extends to general education and experience, such as fits the man to adorn the society of his fellows, but that special education and experience required to enable us to enter successfully the departments of a diversified industry.

The growth of this nation has shown that its institutions are capable of blending into a harmonious brotherhood all nationalities and all interests and industries. In all other instances than that of the accession of our race to citizenship, the accretion of the elements of its population has been gradual, giving time to complete the process of assimilation. In our case we are well aware that there was much to alarm the apprehensions of those careful statesmen who hesitated to speculate as to the strength of our institutions much beyond what was demonstrated by the precedents in parallel cases in Europe and in our own country. The instantaneous embodiment of four million citizens who had for years looked upon the Government as not only denying them citizenship, but as preventing them from acquiring that capacity under any other national existence, was it must be admitted, a startling political fact.

But we are happy to point to the proof of the wisdom of those who regarded that course the safest that was indicated by the demands of justice. We are proud to be able to point to the history of our people since their admission to citizenship as proof that they understand what is due from the citizen to the Government owing him protection. Although they have suffered much at the hands of those who would deprive them of their rights, they have appreciated the difficulties and embarrassments that necessarily surrounded the attempts of the Government to vindicate their rights, and have waited uncomplainingly until relief could be afforded although many times they could have found instantaneous relief by imitating their oppressors and taking the law into their own hand.

A convention subsequently held at new Orleans, Louisiana, which was composed of delegates from all parts of the country, issued a similar address as did the one recently held in this city. I have similar papers from meetings held all over this country to the same import. I will call attention to the following, which has been adopted by the Legislature of my own State; and be it known that in that Legislature there are about thirty-five democrats. The News and Courier newspaper, published in the city of Charleston, where I live, one of the leading democratic organs of the South, commenting upon the adoption of these resolutions, says that the democratic members, with a single exception, in both houses, voted for them. The following are the resolutions:

SUMNER AND CIVIL RIGHTS.

The following preamble and resolutions were adopted almost unanimously, only one vote being in the negative.

Whereas the recent introduction of the civil rights bill in the Senate of the United States, by Hon. Charles Sumner, Senator from Massachusetts, shows that he is determined to crown a series of inestimable services to the cause of freedom and equal rights in America by removing the last vestige of the late barbarism, and placing the capstone of equal civil rights on the dome of the reconstructed Union; and whereas the State of South Carolina, ever mindful of the rights of all her citizens, and watchful for their privileges, has placed on her statute-book a bill to protect them in their civil rights within her domain; but is aware of its inadequacy to protect them when outside her limits; and whereas both by a common line of policy and by the solemn pledges of the Philadelphia convention, by the noble words of the last inaugural, and by the sentiments of our dominant party, the national and State republicans, and the honored Chief Magistrate, have placed themselves on record as favoring the passage of such a bill; and whereas a large party of the loyal citizens of this State and of the nation irrespective of their intelligence, wealth, or position, whether they are private citizens or public officials, are discriminated against, in public travel and in places of general entertainment, to the degradation of their manhood and the violation of their rights as human beings; Therefore be it

Resolved. That we instruct our Senators and request our Representatives in Congress assembled to sustain, by their influence and by their votes, the bill introduced by Senator Sumner to attain the equality of civil rights before the law.

Resolved. That we sympathize with the movement on the part of the large class of citizens whose rights are thus willfully and persistently outraged to unite in a convention on the 9th of December, 1873, to memorialize Congress on this subject; and in view of the near approach of the meeting aforesaid, we, representing the people of the State of South Carolina, authorize those of our Representatives who may be identified with the class whose rights are thus daily violated to attend the said convention and represent our State.

Resolved, That copies of these resolutions be engrossed and forwarded to Hon. Charles Sumner, his excellency the President of the United States, and to our Representatives in Congress, and to the president of the equal rights convention.

I call the attention also to the following, a copy of which has just been presented in another body:

Atlanta, Georgia, *January 26*, 1874

Whereas Hon. A. H. Stephens, in his speech before Congress January 5, 1874, said that colored people of the State of Georgia did not desire the passage of the civil-rights bill; and whereas the Georgia Legislature has also adopted resolutions informing the Congress of the United States that the colored people of Georgia do not desire the passage of said civil-rights bill; and whereas the allegations of Mr. Stephens and the Georgia Legislature are without foundation in fact: Therefore,

Resolved, That we, a portion of the colored citizens of Georgia, do most solemnly deny both the speech of A. H. Stephens and said resolutions of the Georgia Legislature, so far as they relate to the colored citizens of this State being adverse to the passage of said civil-rights bill.

Resolved, that some arrangement be made by this meeting to deny the fact of the said assertions of Mr. Stephens and the Georgia Legislature.

Resolved, That we, the citizens of the city of Atlanta, Georgia, immediately inform the Congress of the United States that we desire a speedy passage of the civil-rights bill, and that we claim it as a right they owe us as members of the republican party, and more particularly as citizens of the United States.

Resolved, That we most heartily congratulate and thank Mr. Elliott for his able and pointed speech, January 6, 1874, in the House of Representatives of the United States, in behalf of the passage of the civil-rights bill, and in vindicating the ability and patriotism of the colored citizens of the country.

J. B. FULLER

Chairman.

J. O. WIMBISH,

W. D. MOORE,

Secretaries.

Therefore, we a committee appointed at a mass-meeting of the colored citizens of the city of Atlanta, Georgia, held on the 26th day of January, 1874, with power to forward the above expression of 11,000 of the colored citizens of this city, do make this petition:

To the honorable Senate and House of Representatives;

We, the undersigned committee, do hereby respectfully petition your honorable bodies to speedily pass the civil-rights bill, now under consideration in Congress as the earnest request of the above-stated citizens, with the further request that your honorable bodies will, in view of the unjust manner in which we are now treated by the Legislature and judicial tribunals in the State, enact such laws as, in your wisdom, are necessary to secure each citizen in the United States, without regard to race, color, or previous condition of servitude, equal civil and political rights, privileges, and immunities before the law.

And we your petitioners will ever pray.

H. E. BAULDIN,

ROMULUS MOORE,

C. WIMBISH,

C. H. MORGAN,

JAS. A. TATE.

Committee.

I affirm, Mr. Speaker, that, so far from the masses of the colored people not desiring civil rights, no man could, having made known his object, obtain without intimidation or coercion in some form the signatures or assent of one hundred colored men in any State of the Union against the passage of a full and complete civil-rights bill by Congress, or to indicate a disapproval of it "when tried."

The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. Harris] suggests that such a measure "will not only prove unacceptable to the masses of the colored people at the South, but alike destructive of the harmony and great interests of both races." Just here he thinks, and very properly so, is a wide field for practical statesmanship.

Mr. Speaker, not only since the rebellion, passing through some terrible scenes during and since reconstruction, (if indeed that work is completed,) and during the terrible four years when the country groaned amid the throes of rebellion, but during the entire two hundred and fifty years, whether as slave or freeman, has the black man in our country exhibited a patience under long suffering, a forbearance under most provoking circumstances, and a forgiving and friendly disposition, that make him at once a good and peaceable citizen and perhaps a study.

He is taunted for his conduct during the war by the honorable gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. Robbins,] because he did not lay in ashes the home of his master and murder the women and children while he (the master) was engaged in that which the gentleman seems to glorify. He says:

Look at one more fact. Nearly three years before the war ended the four million negroes of the South knew that its result involved the question of their liberty. Yet while the continent shook with the earthquake of war, and nobody was at home but old men and boys to keep them in order, those negroes seized no weapon and struck no blow. I do not mention it as a reproach to them. It merits rather the thanks of southern men. I mention it only to show that the negro is not like the white man. What race of white men would have remained quiet under the same circumstances? When the proclamation of emancipation was issued the peculiar patrons of the negro in the North expected him to rise and throw off the yoke and butcher our wives and children; and in the abundance of their philanthropy and humanity they hoped so, too.

Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to say in reply to those remarks as to the conduct of the colored people during the rebellion. Upon this and some other points he has been answered by my colleague, [Mr. Cain,] except that if (and I say this in the kindest spirit) those with whom the gentleman acts politically had shown during the years of the agitation of the question of slavery in this country, especially in the past fifteen years or so, that patience, Christian spirit, and I might add good sense, exhibited by the negro during the rebellion, the country would not have been called upon to mourn the loss of three hundred thousand of her sons, cut off by the casualties of war, and to groan today under a debt of over \$2,000,000,000.

Nor is this all. The gentleman from North Carolina uses language that is calculated to keep alive whatever of sectional feeling there may be existing between the people of the North and the people of the South, which it is the business of the statesmanship of today to allay and to bury in the oblivion of the past, if possible, in the interest of both sections and of all classes and colors. This language I shall not repeat; it is found in the concluding sentence of the extract of his speech just quoted.

Mr. Speaker, when I plead for the passage of a full and complete civil-rights bill that shall seek to prevent and punish discriminations against the citizen, I know that I speak for five million people, and ask for that which is a necessity to them; and when I say that these five million people desire to live on terms of amity with their white fellow-citizens, I know that I correctly represent them. The negro desires to forget the wrongs of the past, and has imposed no disabilities upon those who held him as a slave, when and where he

has been in a position to do so; and he rejoices today, both from motives of patriotism and self-interest that the bitter feeling against him in the South, especially on the part of those who were his owners which found expression in acts of violence and butchery, is fast dying out; that a better state of feeling exists, which must increase as he becomes educated, and, therefor, better acquainted with his duties and responsibilities as a citizen, and as the other unlearns some of the teachings of the past.

THE NEGRO DESIRES HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL OTHER RACES.

Mr. Speaker, if I believed with the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. Harris] that such a measure as the bill we are now discussing would be "destructive of the harmony and great interest of both races," I, for one, would not insist upon its passage. I insist upon it, sir, not only because it is right in the abstract, but also because I feel that it will remove from the field of politics that which goes far to array one class against the other, in the South especially, I mean those class and caste distinctions, and would go far to disarm the mere political demagogue who is ever on the alert to use the colored vote, indifferent as to the ultimate results, so long as their selfish purposes can be best served thereby. It will increase his opportunities for learning and make him a more intelligent and independent voter, and make him feel a deeper interest in those questions affecting his material welfare and that of the community in which he lives. He will then have no animosities to feed or nourish, or at least no occasion for any, and as he advances in the scale of intelligence and usefulness, and acquires wealth through the unobstructed avenues to the schoolhouse and to the industrial marts, and finds his undisputed way to the witness-box, the jury-box, and the ballot-box, which is his right, then the prejudices against him will melt as does the snow under a burning sun. Then, and not until then will a more harmonious relationship be brought about between him and his more favored brother, the Caucasian, to whose interest it is, especially in the South, that this desirable result should be brought about. Sir, permit me to say we want peace and good-fellowship in the South and throughout the country; we want race lines and sectional feelings blotted out and buried forever. We want new life and vigor infused into the arteries of our industries in the South; we want assistance in the direction of developing out vast and hidden material resources, and to rebuild our waste places, and to this end I ask, in the name of the black man and in the name of the white man of the South alike, the generous aid and encouragement of the powerful North, the great and liberal East, and the sturdy and growing West.

VINDICATION OF THE COLORED MAN AS A SOLDIER DURING THE WAR OF THE REBELLION.

Mr. Speaker, the honorable gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. Robbins] said in his speech the other day, in which he compared the colored man to somebody's "merry-andrew," referring to the dissimilarity of the races, that "this is a question which has puzzled the brains of scientists for centuries," and that--

If we were in a lyceum discussing ethnology, I would enlarge upon and fortify it. Here I merely throw out the hint, to be laughed at by fools, but to be pondered by those who realize the mystery and (as Carlyle says) "the deep tragedy of human life."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I doubt not that if that gentleman undertook to discuss that subject, "which has puzzled the brains of scientists for centuries," in a lyceum, he would find as many fools, judged by his standard, among his audience as he must have noticed here when he made this modest exhibition of his prodigious attainments in the direction indicated.

I desire to call attention to another remark he made in the speech referred to. The honorable gentleman said:

Despite all that we have heard on that subject, the negro is no fighter. To prove that he is, we are pointed to the records of the recent war between the States. Yes; infuriated with whisky, he was brought to the scratch a few times, only to be sacrificed without result.

He said also:

Even here on this floor (and I mean no disrespect to any fellow-member by this remark) he does nothing, he says nothing, except as he is prompted by his managers; even here he obeys the bidding of his new white masters, who move him like a puppet on the chess-board.

As to this remark, Mr. Speaker, I beg to refer the honorable gentleman to the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and to call his attention to the terrible fate of the persons therein spoken of, (Ananias and Sapphira.) The gentleman is indeed fortunate in having escaped a similar fate while uttering the words just quoted from his speech.

As to the other remark that the negro is no fighter, in proof of which he says that only fifteen hundred of them were killed in action during the rebellion, I have a word to say.

I cannot, Mr. Speaker, within anything like the time allowed, read over or quote the opinions of those who have made this very question raised by the gentleman a matter of study at any considerable length. I quote the following, however, from a book entitled Military Services of General David Hunter, United States Army, during the War of the Rebellion, pages 18 and 19, which while it is complimentary to the colored soldier, also shows the animus underlying such statements as those made by this impartial "scientist" and others like him:

Executive Mansion, *Washington*, April 1, 1863

My Dear Sir: I am glad to see the accounts of your colored force at Jacksonville, Florida. I see the enemy are driving at them fiercely, as is to be expected. It is important to the enemy that such force shall not take shape, and grow, and thrive in the South; and in precisely the same proportion it is important to us that it shall; hence the utmost caution and vigilance is necessary on our part. The enemy will make extra efforts to destroy them and we should do the same to preserve and increase them.

Yours, truly,

A. Lincoln

Major-General Hunter

I also quote from the same book, pages 26 and 27, being in part reply by General Hunter (who first employed colored men in the South as soldiers during the rebellion) to resolutions of the United States Senate inquiring as to the authority for so employing these people.

The general says:

The experiment of arming the blacks, so far as I have made it, has been a complete and marvelous success. They are sober, docile, attentive, and enthusiastic, displaying great natural capacities in acquiring the duties of the soldier. They are now eager beyond all things to take the field and be led into action, and it is the unanimous opinion of the officers who have had charge of them that, in the peculiarities of this climate and country, they will prove incalculable auxiliaries, fully equal to the similar regiments so long and successfully used by the British.

Nor was the conviction that the colored men could be employed to advantage as soldiers during the rebellion confined to the officers of the Union Army. The confederate government passed an act approved March 30, 1865, authorizing the employment of negroes as soldiers. A copy of this act is printed in the report of the Secretary of War, first session Thirty-ninth Congress, pages 139 and 140. It reads as follows:

An act to increase the military forces of the Confederate States, & c.

That if under the previous sections of this act the president shall not be able to raise a sufficient number of troops to prosecute the war successfully and maintain the sovereignty of the States and the independence of the Confederate States, then he is hereby authorized to call on each State, whenever he thinks it expedient, for her quota of three hundred thousand troops in addition those subject to military service under existing laws, or so many thereof as the president may deem necessary for the purposes therein mentioned, to be raised from such of the population, irrespective of color, in each State, as the proper authorities thereof may determine.

This law was never put in force, the rebellion having collapsed before colored men were mustered in that service *vi et armis*.

This action is the one remarkable instance where the southern people were perhaps a unit in favor of the doctrine of no discrimination on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

A study of the opinions expressed by one hundred and fifteen surgeons engaged in the examination of both black and white recruits and substitutes goes to substantiate an idea which is common among ethnological authorities, namely, that no race is equally adapted to all circumstances of life; that mankind obey the same general laws that govern the distribution of florae and faunae upon the earth; and that the isotherms between which are limited the health and development of the negro do not comprehend less space upon its surface than those within which the others are confined.

It may be confidently affirmed that the statistics of the Medical Bureau, which refer principally to physico-geographical influences and to the effects of the intermixture of blood upon the negro, when taken in connection with those parts of the Surgeon-General's forthcoming report in which he is regarded as amenable to the vicissitudes of war, will form a more complete and reliable physical history of this race than exists at this time.

It would not be in accordance with the plan of this report to enter upon a discussion of the comparative aptitude for military service exhibited by the two types of mankind of which I have been speaking without the accompanying tables as evidence of the data upon which my opinions were based.

It appears, however, that of the surgeons of boards of enrollment five have given their opinion that the negro recruits and substitutes examined by them were physically a better class of men than the whites; nineteen that they were equal; two that they were inferior. A favorable opinion as to their fitness for the Army is expressed by seventeen; a doubtful one, because of insufficient data on which to ground the decision, by forty-three; an unfavorable opinion by nine; and by twenty a statement of not having come to any conclusion upon this subject. The question of the prevalence of disease among the negro inhabitants of different sections of the country is one upon which, at present, no specific opinion can be expressed. As in the case of the white race it may be shown hereafter that their maladies conform to those general principles which have been heretofore established. The discussion of the physical characteristics of the negro, as involving the propriety of his use in war, only belongs to this department. It is difficult and, in the present state of science, most uncertain to erect upon any general characteristics of organization anything but the most general rules concerning the effect of that structure upon the moral and intellectual nature. It may be said, however, that there are not more instances of disqualifying causes of this nature among the negroes in proportion to the numbers examined than are to be found in the records of exemption among the white race.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the total number of white troops, regulars and volunteers, in service during the rebellion in the Union Army is put down at 2,041,154. Of this number 42,724 are reported killed in action, 1½ per cent.

The total number of colored troops in service during the rebellion was 180,000. Of that number 1,514 are put down as killed in action; to which number are added 896 reported missing by competent authority, who were evidently killed, making 2,410 or about 1 1/8 per cent., showing on the whole a difference of about

1/6 of one per cent. When it is considered that the colored soldier participated in no battle, because he was not admitted into the service, until some of our heaviest battles were fought, is it not fair to strike off this difference of 1/6 of one per cent.? This done, would it not be fair to say that the white and the colored troops in the Union Army during the rebellion, in the direction indicated by the gentleman from North Carolina, stand upon about the same footing?

But, Mr. Speaker, enough of this. All of us might read the following lines, which are found in the works of Charles Sumner, volume 2, page 34, to advantage. It appears that they were written by Edmund Waller:

Earth praises conquerors for shedding blood:

Heaven, those that love their foes and do'em good.

It is terrestrial honor to be crowned

For strewing men, like rushes, on the ground:

True glory 'tis to rise above them all,

Without the advantage taken by their fall

He that invite diminishes mankind

Does no addition to his stature find:

But he that does a noble nature show,

Obliging others; still does higher grow:

For virtue practices such an habit gives

That among men he like an angel lives;

Humbly he doth and without envy dwell,

Loved and admired by those he does excel.

Mr. Speaker, that which seems to be most objectionable to many gentlemen, some of whom are in favor of the bill in other respects, is the provision prohibiting discriminations in the public schools on account of color or race. It is feared, and so said by some gentlemen who favor the bill, that to incorporate this feature in the bill, and to attempt to enforce it, will destroy the school systems in the South especially, and operate as a check upon the education of the children of both races.

Mr. Speaker, it does not seem to me that these fears are well founded. About the same line of argument was urged by many good people as to the abolition of slavery and clothing the colored man with the elective franchise, and at every step in the grand march toward freedom. Yet, sir, in nearly every instance these objections and apprehensions vanished, and were in a great part lost sight of upon trial. Then, too, sir, the principle upon which you concede, if you please, the right of the colored man to the privileges of the car, the inn, the theater, the witness and the jury box, apply in this case as well.

Sir, the learned gentleman from New York, [Mr. Cox] whose speeches are always to be read with interest and profit, well said in a speech delivered here recently:

Is it not irrefragable that if the right to the inn, railroad, theater, and cemetery be conceded to the black (as provided in the civil-rights bill) to the same extent as to the white to enjoy them, (though the enjoyment of the graveyard is perhaps a

melancholy hilarity,) that the same right should be extended to them as to the schools? The colored members are correct in their reasoning, assuming these premises. Indeed, all the *amis des noirs* who have spoken, if right at all, are right in demanding equality alike in school and inn, in cemetery and car. When you debar them from the school you as much keep up the bar sinister as by keeping them from the playhouse. Would it not be a craven logic, unworthy of the struggling blacks and their admirers, to insist on the one and not the other?

NON-PROSCRIPTIVE SCHOOLS PROMOTIVE OF HARMONY.

Sir, as to the practical working of non-proscriptive schools, or, in other words, schools where black and white are taught in the North and East as well as in the South, it does not appear that either race is injured, or that the cause of general education suffers. At Yale, Harvard, Wilberforce, Cornell, Oberlin, the testimony is that both races get along well together. Nor is the South without such schools. In Madison, Kentucky, there is the Berea College, a notice of which I read from *The American Missionary*, for November 1873, pages 243 and 244. It reads as follows:

Less than thirteen years ago sixty-five armed men drew themselves up in line before Professor Rogers's house, close to the spot where now stands this new building, and notified the professors and trustees that they must leave the State within ten days. Less than six years ago half the whites left the school because black men were admitted to its privileges; but the white students came back in time and some of those who participated in mobs are not ashamed now to be recognized as friends. * * * * * Here are gathered from twelve to fifteen hundred people from the mountains and from the Blue Grass country, literate and illiterate, rich and poor, white and colored, farmers, mechanics, and professional men; a very mingled crowd, but a very attentive and orderly audience.

It is an interesting sight, that large number under the green roof, listening eagerly through the morning and evening. But the fact that southern-born whites and blacks, in nearly equal proportion and in large numbers, have, for the past six years, recited together and in perfect harmony, makes this institution typical of what may be accomplished throughout the nation, and makes it of more than local importance. It requires no argument to show how much the colored people will be benefitted by such an education. There is nothing like just such a school as this to teach mutual respect and forbearance, to dignify labor, to enforce a regard for the person and property of all classes, and to take away some of the arrogant superciliousness of caste and race.

I also call attention to the following from the *New York Independent*, January 22, 1874, headed "Civil Rights and Yale College:"

Where the principles of impartiality have been brought to bear, whether in reference to schools, cars, churches, or hotels, there has always been first a huge outcry from the whole herd of white tyrants; then, upon the first trial, an ostentatious repugnance on the one hand, and a visible sensitiveness on the other, but finally both repugnance and sensitiveness forgotten in general acquiescence and oblivion. If Mr. Harris has forgotten it, will he please listen to a chapter in the history of Yale College?

In the year 1831 there was an effort put forth to secure a college for colored youth. At that time even the crumbs which fell from the mental boards of the various colleges were denied these people. It was proposed to locate this college in the city of New Haven. But when this plan became known a violent opposition at once arose. The officers of the city called a public meeting. The city hall was densely packed, and the whole afternoon was given to the consideration of the matter. The following is the public record of the result:

At a city meeting, duly warned and held in the city hall, in the city of New Haven, on Saturday, September 10, 1831, to take into consideration a project for the establishment in this city of a college for the education of colored youth, the following preamble and resolutions were by said meeting adopted, namely:

"Whereas, in the opinion of this meeting, Yale College, the institutions for the education of females, and the other schools already existing in this city, are important to the community and the general interest of science, and as such have been deservedly patronized by the public, and the establishment of a college in the same place to educate the colored population, is incompatible with the prosperity, if not the existence, of the present institutions of learning, and will be destructive of the best interests of the city: Therefore

"Resolved, by the mayor, aldermen, common council, and freemen of the city of New Haven in city meeting assembled. That

we will resist the establishment of the proposed college in this place by every lawful means

"DENNIS KIMBERLY, *Mayor*.

"Elisha Monson, *Clerk*."

It is needless to add that the danger was averted by this prompt and imposing array of force, and Yale College was saved to New Haven, and Connecticut, and the country. In 1831 the delicate nerves of Yale College could not endure the shock of seeing black boys educated a mile away; now she takes them to her own arms and bids them call her *alma mater*, and to our notion she looks quite as fair and buxom as ever. We are not a bit surprised to hear Mr. Harris, of Virginia, talk in the same wild strain as did Mayor Kimberly in 1831; for we know him to be forty-three years behind the times.

Again, the following from *Old and New* for February, 1874, a respectable monthly published in Boston, Massachusetts, and written by C. G. Fairchild, a writer not unknown to fame, will be read with interest by all thoughtful persons. It is headed "Non-proscriptive Schools in the South." The writer says:

The question of non-proscriptive schools at the South takes us at once to the fountainhead of a formative influence, to that which in itself begets force, which is noiseless and imperceptible, but which is as pervasive as sunlight, and as powerful to build up that against which tempests may waste their energies in vain. "Whatever you would have appear in a nation's life, that you must put into its schools," was long since a Prussian motto. Powerful as Prussia has proved this influence to be in fostering a love of country, it is far more powerful in the more subtle work of strengthening or allaying social prejudices. Are non-proscriptive schools, therefore, desirable; and can they be secured?

Few can understand, without careful and extended personal observation, how essentially different was the construction of society in the South from that in the North. It recognized two distinct classes--the laboring class and the cultured class; classes as distinct as the roots and the fruitage of a tree. The one class needed only the shelter of the hut, as the horse has his stable; for the other, no mansion within the reach of their means could be too spacious or elegant. Theoretically all labor was to be performed by slaves; while the fruits of labor were to raise to the highest culture and perfection the ruling class. Such a society had no place for an industrious, self-respecting middle class. Slave labor placed its own badge of servile degradation upon all labor. The white man whose hands were roughened in the strife for his daily bread was despised even by the negro slave. No southern conception was more natural than that northern society was composed of "mud-sills." Universal labor meant nothing else to them.

How, then shall this exploded idea of civilization be overcome? In times past the negro race has been the exponent of labor at the South; and it is, for many years to come, to be closely associated with it. If, therefore, this race is to be separated from all others in the public schools, and even the youngest children are made to feel that the race is set apart for its special mission and destiny in society, how can we hope to make labor respectable? The old badge of servile degradation will attach to it not only for the black man but for the white man. To place blacks and whites in the same school is not to say that the races are equal or unequal. It is to animate all the individuals with a common purpose, with reference to which color or nationality has nothing to do. If color or nationality has anything to do with social affinities, non-proscriptive schools will not affect their natural and healthy influence. But color and nationality have nothing to do with labor. That is a matter of capacity and necessity. This fact a truly common-school system will impress constantly and effectively upon society, and thus relieve labor from a most unnatural and damning stigma put upon it by slavery.

The class distinctions perpetuated and taught by class schools infuse a detrimental influence into politics. Black men, no less than white men, should differ on public questions. But such difference cannot show itself in political action to any great extent as long as there is perpetuated a distinction so fundamental between the white man and the black as that, the children of the latter cannot go to school with those of the former. In such a case class interests will predominate over those interests which are more general and less personal.

The same writer, in noticing an institution at Marysville, Tennessee, where black and white children and youths are taught, says:

If all the facts bearing upon this point could be collated, not only the enemies but the friends of non-proscriptive schools would be astonished.

Let the doors of the public-school house be thrown open to us alike, sir, if you mean to give these people equal rights at all, or to protect them in the exercise of the rights and privileges attaching to all freemen and citizens of our country.

THE COLORED VOTE.

It is true, sir, that these people, the colored people of our country, compose a very small minority of the American people, yet they contribute largely toward its industrial interests and at times play an important part in political affairs. For instance, President Grant's popular majority in the last presidential election was 762,991. The total colored vote is put down at 900,000. Now, allowing 10,000 of this vote to have been cast for Mr. Greeley, and 50,000 of these voters as not voting at all, which I am satisfied is in excess of the number of this class not voting, making 60,000, then deduct the 60,000 from the 900,000, and the result will show a colored vote polled of 840,000 for General Grant; yet the popular majority of General Grant as taken from the Tribune Almanac for 1873 was not more than 762,991, as already stated.

To the curious in such matters, and to those who seriously consider our institutions in this respect, this might be considered as not unworthy of a passing notice.

1. 2 Cong. Rec. 1311-1314 (1874).