



THE COLORED CONVENTIONS

By: Seneb and Raborn. Black Politics in the 1800s



THE COLORED CONVENTIONS

- The Colored Convention Movement began officially on a local, state, and federal level before the civil war. Delegates came from all stations within the black community. Religious leaders, businessmen, abolitionist and formerly enslaved.
- This movement allowed the strategic structure and cohesiveness of the black community against the white supremacy and terrorism it faced.
- With the victory of the Civil War, Blacks had the ability to fashion policy that not only ameliorated Blacks but humanely dealt with the deleterious poor white populations.

COLORED CONVENTIONS

- The first documented convention was assembled in 1830 at Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia. Presided over by the great Richard Allan, founder of the Free African Society. Primarily, this convention task was to debate the idea of buying land and emigrating to Canada.
- Majority of the conventions were held in the North, where the attitude toward abolition wasn't as offensive. Locations ranged from New York, Ohio, Troy, Albany, Syracuse, and even Western cities like California.
- Men like William Still, Fredrick Douglas, Henry Highland Garnet, and Lewis Hayden attended.

COLORED CONVENTIONS

- Conventions were called also to discuss and plan ways to combat the violence that plagued Black society. The Cincinnati riots of 1829 and the New York riots of 1839 were perfect examples of the brutality faced by Blacks at that time.
- The moral uplift ideology of early Black leaders ultimately had little effect on the “peculiar institution” of the South. Change would only happen by policy and force.
- The Convention Movement continued after the Civil War, with nearly 4 million newly emancipated African Americans now being able to participate in local, state, and nation politics.

FREEDOM'S JOURNAL.

DEVOTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE COLOURED POPULATION.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK, D. CEMBER 30, 1828.

SOLE NO. 50.

THE WINNEBAGOES AT THE CAPITAL.

The interview between the Winnebagoes and the President is described very handsomely by a correspondent of the National Intelligencer. The address of the old Chief to the President is highly poetical. We copy as much of the article as our columns will admit.

An old chief stepped forth into the centre of the room, with a long uncouth pipe in his hand, which after a brief ceremonial not precisely intelligible, he brought near the President and waved over his head. It was the calumet of peace. Holding it then before him, and pointing to it, he began an harangue in low guttural tones, accompanied with much earnest gesture. He spoke in short paragraphs an Indian half blood reporting them in French, and a second interpreter conveying them in English.

"Father, I am glad to see you. I hold out the pipe, and I take your hand in friendship."

"Father, a cloud has been between us. It was thick and black. I thought once it would never be removed. But now I see your face. It looks upon me pleasantly."

"Father, a long way stretched between us.—There were those who told me it was blocked up.—They said the Red Men could not pass it. I attempted it. It is like the plain path which conducts to the Great Spirit."

"Father, when I came in sight of your home, it looked white and beautiful. My heart rejoiced.—I thought now I should talk with you."

"Father, the Great Spirit gave to his children, the Winnebagoes, a pleasant plant. It is good to smoke. I have it here,"—touching with his finger the bowl of the pipe—"I give it you in peace."

"Father I am as old as you. My heart is true. They told me your heart was black. It is not so. We salute in friendship."

"Father, I say no more. My talk is little. I am a chief among my people. But one is here who will speak to you soon, and tell you better our thoughts."

The address being ended, a young Winnebago advanced in obedience to a signal from the old warrior, and lighted the pipe with fire struck from a flint. The pipe was then presented to the President, the chief still holding its stem; he inhaled a few puffs, and as the smoke curled gently upward, the savage group gazed with inattention and uttered a low murmur of satisfaction. The chief then handed the calumet to all the spectators in order, and lastly, to each of his tribe. It was next made over in form to the President, to be retained; who, requesting the Indian to lay one hand upon it again, while he pledged him with the other, proceeded to dictate to the interpreter his reply.

"Say to this Chief, I rejoice to see him. He and his brethren are welcome to me and my children."

"Tell him it has grieved me that a cloud has been between us; but I am pleased equally with him that it has been dissipated. It is dispersed like the fumes of the pipe we have smoked. May it never close down upon us more!"

"Say—I am glad that he and his companions meet me on this propitious day. Bid him look to the face of the heavens. No cloud is there.—The sun shines brightly upon us. The Great Spirit looks down and smiles upon our meeting."

"Say—I hope the same sun will light his path in peace to the abodes of his fathers. When he is gone, I will look upon this pipe with pleasure and should I hear ever after that in place of pacific, any hostile disposition break forth among his nation toward my brethren and children, I will say it is impossible. For I have the word of a Winnebago, which must be true, that his people pledge their amity with mine, and have left this pipe in token of sincerity."

"Say—I yesterday beheld, with satisfaction, the sports of himself and his associates, as they practised their ancient war dance upon the green beneath my windows. But a higher pleasure I now experience—and one, the memory of which will endure—in cordially greeting him within these walls, and reciprocating assurance of plighted concord."

Each of these periods, as soon as interpreted, drew forth a hoarse plaudit from the savage auditors. Once it swelled to a deafening howl, in acknowledgment of the compliment paid to the inviolate integrity of their word.

(From the Morning Courier.)
SESSIONS COURT.

Manslaughter.

William Miller, a black, aged 14, was put to the bar on an indictment of manslaughter, for killing Thomas Foot, another black near the Five Points. It appeared that the prisoner had struck, with a stick, a girl by the name of Hannah Everston, in consequence of having pawned for a shilling a pair of his trowsers; that Foot interfered and asked the prisoner if he was not ashamed of such conduct, and kicked the prisoner, who then went to the house of the person with whom his trowsers had been pawned, from which he was turned out by the occupant. As he left the house he was met by Foot, who on the prisoner's calling him some harsh name, seized him by the collar and again kicked and then beat him. The deceased in a short time was heard to say that he was stabbed. The prisoner ran through Little Water street pursued by the sister of the deceased, who swore that Miller cut her apron and cut off its string, while she was attempting to cure him. The prisoner, in his exar-

tion, which was read, admitted that he had had a knife, with which he had been cutting a stick, but said that he had not had it out of his pocket after leaving the house of the person where his trowsers had been pawned, supposed he lost it when Lawget, one of the witnesses, and the deceased had him down, and were beating him; and accounted for the blood on his hands, by saying that these men had hurt him. The prisoner stated his age to be 14 years, though he had the appearance of being 20; is a short good looking black, born in New Brunswick. He has lived in New York 7 years, and first with Mr. Mott, a mustard manufacturer. The District Attorney said there were but two points in the case. 1st, as to the fact of the wound being inflicted by the prisoner, and 2d, whether it was inflicted under circumstances that would justify him. The jury, after being out 15 minutes returned a verdict of Guilty.

John Davis, about 45 years of age, pleaded guilty to an indictment of petit larceny. He handed a statement to the Court, that he had a large family, that in a state of intoxication, he had taken the property mentioned in the indictment. Sentenced to 30 days in the City Prison.

William Buckle, alias Joseph Condon, was arraigned on a charge of obtaining \$20 under false pretences, by exhibiting a letter authorising him to receive the same. The prisoner is said to have been one of the earliest tenants of the State Prison, having been originally sent there from the old Hall. He pleaded not guilty of forgery, supposing he should be sent to the State Prison if convicted thereof; but when informed it was only a Penitentiary offence his countenance suddenly brightened; and he pleaded Guilty.

EXTRACT

From Wood's Inaugural Address.

The infant enters on life in profound ignorance of his powers and destinies, and of the whole material universe. He endeavours alike to grasp the near flame which would consume him, and the distant orb which settles its way in yonder heavens. He is not more dependent on others for the aliment which is to nourish his body, than for the instruction which is to give growth and maturity to the mind.—It is the ordinance of heaven, confirmed by every injunction to an ancient patriarch to teach his children, and his children's children; and by the command of Him who said, "Go and teach all nations," that man is to be the instructor of his fellow man. Where this high ordinance is contravened, where no lights of knowledge are furnished, man can never rise above a mere animal existence. He may have the elements of mind; but they must remain without firm and void, and surrounded by darkness as deep and impenetrable as that which brooded over chaos before the first creation of light. In him may be the germ of a great intellect, which may be made to spread its opening branches, and to bear the fruit of wisdom and patriotism.

PRECURSOR TO CONVENTIONS

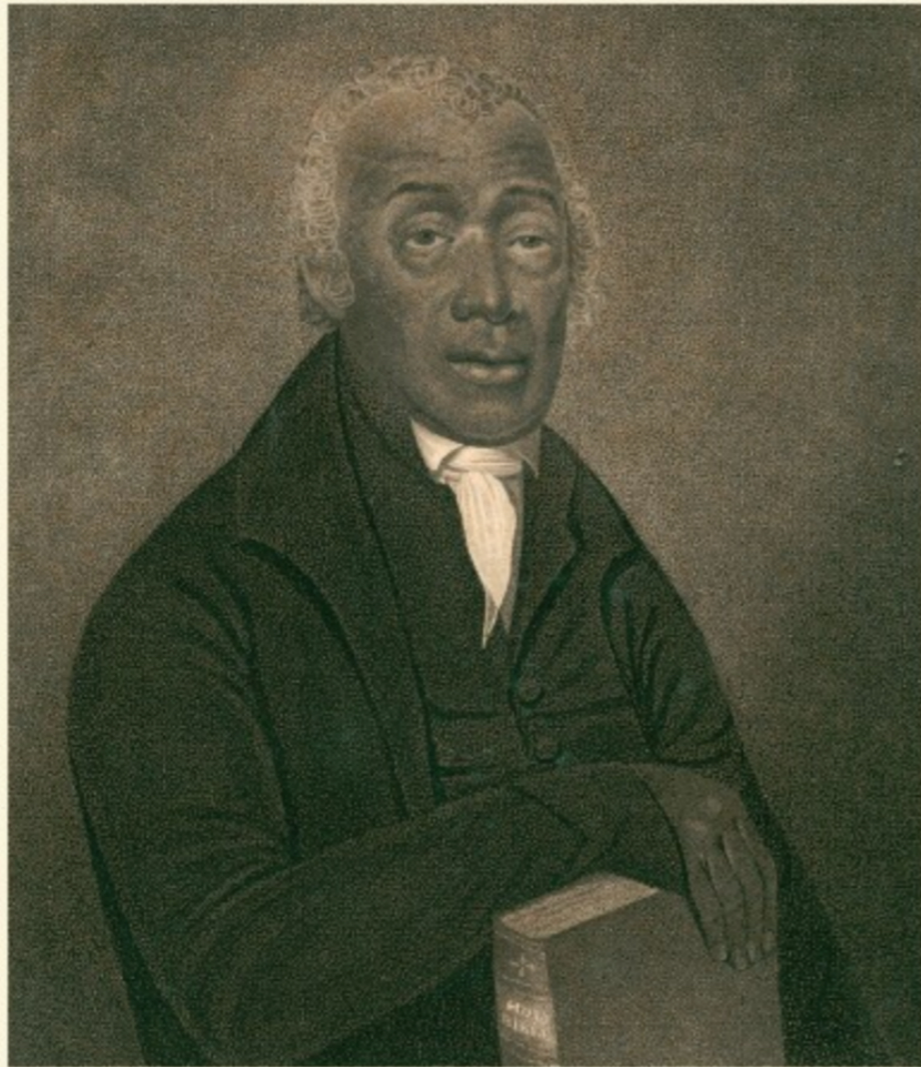
➤ Freedom's Journal was the first newspaper in the United States to be owned and operated by African. It began circulating in 1827 in New York. John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish

➤ this paper outlined plans for Black organizing on the state-level and also detailed a vision for national organizing

➤ Source: <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/pdfs/la/FreedomsJournal/v2n38.pdf>

➤ <http://coloredconventions.org/exhibits/show/convention-of-1830/the-origins-of-the-1830-convention/other-precursors-to-the-convention>

FREEDOM'S PROPHET



Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church,
and the Black Founding Fathers

Richard S. Newman

ORIGIN OF COLORED CONVENTION

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- The origin of the idea of the national convention of 1830 came from Hezekiah Grice
- Hezekiah Grice, a Baltimore native. Grice was born free in Ohio but sensed as a young man that racial discrimination prevented him from gaining meaningful employment and status as a citizen, and wondered if emigration to Canada would be the best opportunity for him to live with basic human rights.
- in April, 1830, sent letters to many prominent African American men in the free states, requesting their opinions on the idea of organizing a national meeting to discuss the subject of mass emigration
- Richard Allen was the first to respond and called for the meeting

1830 COLORED CONVENTION DETAILS

- The question of emigration to Canada West, after an exhaustive discussion which continued during the two days of the convention's sessions, was recommended as a measure of relief against the persecution from which the colored American suffered in many places in the North.
- Strong resolutions against the American Colonization Society were adopted.
- The formation of a parent society with auxiliaries in the different localities represented in the convention, for the purpose of raising money to defray the object of purchasing a colony in the province of upper Canada.
- Source: The Early Negro Convention Movement. BY JOHN W. CROMWELL.

THE FIRST 40 OF THE COLORED CONVENTION OF 1830

PENNSYLVANIA—Richard Allen, Belfast Burton, Cyrus Black, Junius C. Morell, Benjamin Paschall, James Cornish, William Whipper, Peter Gardiner, John Allen, James Newman, Charles H. Leveck, Frederick A. Hinton.

NEW YORK—Austin Steward, Joseph Adams, George L. Brown.

CONNECTICUT—Scipio Augustus.

RHODE ISLAND—George C. Willis, Alfred Niger.

MARYLAND—James Deaver, Hezekiah Grice, Aaron Willson, Robert Cowley.

DELAWARE—Abraham D. Shadd.

[Pg 6] VIRGINIA—Arthur M. Waring, William Duncan, James West, Jr.

In addition to these there were honorary members as follows:

PENNSYLVANIA—Robert Brown, William Rogers, John Bowers, Richard Howell, Daniel Peterson, Charles Shorts.

NEW YORK—Leven Williams.

MARYLAND—James P. Walker, Rev. Samuel Todd, John Arnold.

OHIO—John Robinson.

NEW JERSEY—Sampson Peters.

DELAWARE—Rev. Anthony Campbell and Dan Carolus Hall.

AFRICAN OR AMERICAN?

Black Identity and Political Activism
in New York City, 1784–1861



EMIGRATION AND COLONIZATION

- Emigration: was a movement that had been initiated by black people! Paul Cuffe and Peter Williams Jr. Who thought that they would never achieve full equality in the United States wanted to seek freedom elsewhere (Haiti, Sierra Leone, Liberia etc)
- Colonization: was the idea of white people who did not want to interact with free black blacks on an equal basis and plotted to forcibly remove blacks from the states before they gained American citizenship and posed a real threat to southern slavery!
- One group of whites in the ACS were wealthy slaveholders and they hoped the removal of free blacks would increase the value of their slaves and stop them or discourage them from running away.
- The other group were northern whites who feared free blacks would dominate the political, economic, and social system.
- 68,69

CONSTITUTION
OF THE
AMERICAN SOCIETY

OF
FREE PERSONS OF COLOUR,

**FOR IMPROVING THEIR CONDITION IN THE UNITED STATES;
FOR PURCHASING LANDS; AND FOR THE ESTABLISH-
MENT OF A SETTLEMENT IN UPPER CANADA.**

ALSO

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONVENTION,

WITH THEIR

ADDRESS

TO

THE FREE PERSONS OF COLOUR

IN THE

UNITED STATES.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY J. W. ALLEN, NO 26, STRAWBERRY-ST.
1831.

CANADA

ARTICLE I

- This Society shall be called "The American Society of Free Persons of Color, for their condition in the United States; for purchasing land for the establishment of a settlement in the Province of Upper Canada and shall consist of such Persons of Colour as shall pay not less than twenty five cents entering, and thereafter a quarter and eighteen three quarter cents.

WHY CANADA

- In 1793, the Upper Canada legislature passed an act that granted gradual abolition and any slave arriving in the province was automatically declared free. Fearing for their safety in the United States after the passage of the first *Fugitive Slave Law* in 1793, over 30,000 slaves came to Canada via the Underground Railroad until the end of the American Civil War in 1865. They settled mostly in southern Ontario, but some also settled in Quebec and Nova Scotia. Many returned to the United States to fight in the Civil War and rejoin their families after its end
- <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/Pages/blacks.aspx>

CONVENTION BACKS THE WILBERFORE COLONY OF CANADA

- The Wilberfore colony was founded by free blacks from Ohio who were forced to leave their homes due to a 1804 law, entitled: "An Act to Regulate Black and Mulatto Persons"
- This law was served as a fugitive slave measure inasmuch as it specified that no black or mulatto could settle or reside in the state unless he could furnish a certificate of freedom. Those already within the state were required to register, and pay a fee of twelve and one-half cents per head. It was a penal offense, punishable by fine, to hire a black person without such a certificate
- The first serious attempt to enforce these laws took place in Cincinnati in 1829. On June 29th of that year a Proclamation was issued to the public, signed by three Trustees of Cincinnati.
- This sparked the race riot of 1829 where the competition of jobs played a key role in it just as much as there racism. There business were burnt, homes and lives on both sides were took.
- Source: The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Oct., 1973), pp. 427-440

THE EARLY NEGRO
CONVENTION MOVEMENT
THE AMERICAN NEGRO
ACADEMY, OCCASIONAL
PAPERS NO. 9

CROMWELL, JOHN WESLEY, 1846-1927

CONVENTION BACKS THE WILBERFORE COLONY OF CANADA

- Austin Steward was elected the , vice president of the 1830 conven- tion in Philadelphia, was an early resident of the Wilberfore Colony
- The committee convened and resolved in 1832 800 acres of land had already been secured, two thousand individuals had left the soil of their birth, crossed the line and laid the foundation for a structure which promised an asylum for the colored population of the United States. They had already erected two hundred log houses and 500 acres of land had been brought under cultivation. But hostility to the settlement of the Negro in that section had been manifested by Canadians, many of whom would sell no land to the Negro.

MINUTES
OF THE
NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
COLORED CITIZENS:

HELD AT BUFFALO,

On the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th of August, 1843.

FOR THE PURPOSE OF

CONSIDERING THEIR MORAL AND POLITICAL CONDITION

AS AMERICAN CITIZENS.

NEW-YORK:
PIERCY & REED, PRINTERS, 9 SPRUCE-STREET.
1843.

COLORED CONVENTION 1843

- The National Colored Convention in 1843 was held in Buffalo, New York. Leaders in the African American community like Fredrick Douglas, William Wells Brown, Charles B Ray, and Henry Highland Garnet were present.
- The Resolutions approved consisted of putting the name “Christian” in Church titles, denouncing “Christian” churches who advocated slavery as “Synagogues of Satan”, abolishing Slavery, and establishing a National paper to express the sentiments of the Conventions going forward.
- Fun Fact: This Conventions presiding official, Charles B Ray had a Paper called “The Colored American” with Samuel Cornish and James McCune Smith.

COLORED CONVENTION 1843

- Opening statement made by orator Rev James Fountain..
“Proscription is not in accordance with equal rights, no more than is oppression with holy freedom, or slavery with the spirit of free institutions. The present system of laws in this country, enacted in reference to us the oppressed and downtrodden descendants of Africa...”
- Rev Fountain paying reverence to his mother land gave a speech detailing the horrors of slavery and called for the assistance of the Convention in condemning and the eradication the peculiar institution.

COLORED CONVENTION 1843

- Henry Highland Garnet was the star of the Convention and drew stark criticism over his proposal to add an Address he penned to the slaves in American. His opponents expressed timidity against the fierce language. Fredrick Douglas and others feared the address would spark insurrection.
- Charles Ray agreed but called on Garnet to change some of the verbiage, which of course Garnet refused.
- Mr. Garnet arose to reply, and said “that the most the address said in sentiment, and advised the slaves to go to their masters and tell them they wanted their liberty, and had come to ask for it; and if the master refused it, to tell them, then we shall take it, let the consequence be what it may.”

➤ Excerpts from “An Address To The Slaves Of The United States”

- Brethren, it is as wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery, as it was for the man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors when the bloody foot prints of the first remorseless soul thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland. The humblest peasant is as free in the sight of God as the proudest monarch that ever swayed a sceptre. Liberty is a spirit sent out from God, and like its great Author, is no respecter of persons.
- Fellow men! Patient sufferers! behold your dearest rights crushed to the earth! See your sons murdered, and your wives, mothers and sisters doomed to prostitution. In the name of the merciful God, and by all that life is worth, let it no longer be a debatable question whether it is better to choose Liberty or death.
- Labor for the peace of the human race, and remember that you are FOUR MILLIONS.

COLORED CONVENTION 1843

- Henry Highland Garnet speech despite the support of some lost by only one vote but the message was clear. There was a small majority of Africans Americans that were prepared to fight for their freedom. Unfortunately leaders such as Fredrick Douglas and others seemed to lack the bellicose for such action. Apprehensions can be understood depending upon individual beliefs when put into context of the times.

