

ADDRESS
OF THE
AMERICAN CONVENTION
FOR
PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, &c.
TO THE
CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES.

The American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and improving the condition of the African race, now convened in the city of Baltimore, most respectfully takes the liberty of addressing you on the important subject of the gradual extinction of Slavery in the District of Columbia.

It is doubtless well understood, by our fellow citizens generally, that this District is *the property of the nation*—that the laws for the government thereof emanate from the representatives of the people, in Congress assembled, and that all who are entitled to the elective franchise in every State of the Union, have an equal right to express their sentiments, and urge the adoption of measures, relative to the abolition of the system of Slavery therein.

We are well aware that some will contend for the *legality* of Slavery, as tolerated in some parts of the United States, and insist that the question of its abolition should be left to the decision of the people of the District, themselves. When we consider that slaves are, generally, viewed as *property*, this kind of reasoning assumes a specious appearance: yet it must be borne in mind, that the inhabitants of the District of Columbia *are not represented in any legislative body*; but that the sovereignty over that particular section of the country is vested in the people of the States—And when we reflect, that the question has long since been settled whether a legislative body possesses the right to enact laws for the prohibition or extinction of Slavery—that it has indeed been *acted on*, by several of

the State Legislatures, and also by Congress—we think that no reasonable doubt can be entertained as to the expediency of the measure in the present case. It is well known that a very large proportion of the citizens of the United States are inimical to the system of Slavery; and it is believed by many intelligent persons, who are themselves residents of the District of Columbia, that a great majority of the inhabitants thereof are desirous for its total abolition. Viewing the subject in this light, we cannot, for a moment, hesitate in urging your attention to it.

The friends of Universal Emancipation, in several of the States, viz. North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, &c. have for several years memorialised Congress upon this important subject; but as a few, comparatively speaking, were thus heard to express their sentiments, little notice has yet been taken of their petitions. At the last session, a memorial, against the perpetuation of the cruel system, was presented to that body, by the people of the District themselves. This memorial was signed by about one thousand of the most respectable portion of the inhabitants, among whom were several of the Judges of the District Courts, and even some holders of slaves. Whatever may have been the doubts or scruples entertained by some of our citizens heretofore, respecting the propriety of urging this subject upon the attention of the National Legislature, we conceive that there is no longer cause for hesitation, since a very respectable number of the people of the District have themselves raised their voice in its favour; and, as we have before stated, it is also believed that by far the greater number are favourably disposed towards it.

That the discussion of this question may excite a lively interest, both in and out of Congress, and that whatever measures may be proposed, for promoting the object in view, will meet with violent opposition, from the advocates of Slavery, we are well aware. All past experience teaches us that this is to be expected. Not only the opponents of emancipation in the south may

be expected to throw impediments in our way, but the prejudice against the unfortunate and degraded Africans, and the self-interest of many others will also be arrayed against us. Yet we would calmly and dispassionately appeal to the good sense of the people of this nation—to those who exercise the sovereign authority in this great republic—this boasted land of freedom and equal rights—and recommend the serious consideration of this very important subject. We most earnestly beseech them to weigh well the consequences of tolerating within the limits of this District, a system that has uniformly proved destructive to every nation that long permitted its continuance. But most especially, we would appeal to them as Christians and Philanthropists; and urge them by all the feelings of humanity and benevolence—by all the ties of social affection that binds man to his fellow man—by a due regard to the immutable principles of justice, mercy, and consistency—and by every desire for the perpetuation of our free institutions and the peace and happiness of our posterity,—to come forth in their might, and exert every moral energy to arrest the march of this gigantic evil, ere it overwhelms us, and precipitates us into the vortex of corruption and despotism.

Not only do we consider the honor of the nation as implicated by the toleration of Slavery in the District of Columbia; but the example has a most deleterious and pernicious effect even upon those whose education and habits have opposed it, when they come within the range of its influence. As a proof of the correctness of this opinion, we need only advert to the conduct of sundry persons who have acted in the capacity of representatives to Congress from non-slave holding states. We have reason to believe that they have thus in some instances become so insensible of the evils of the anti-christian practice as to disregard the will of their constituents, and join with its advocates in the adoption of measures for its extension and perpetuation. And we fear that this state of things cannot be remedied until the people of the United States in general turn their

attention to the subject, and adopt measures for the extinction of the odious system, wheresoever it can be done, consistently with the Constitution of the Republic.

From statements submitted to this Convention, we are glad to find that this subject has already arrested the attention of a respectable portion of our fellow citizens, in different parts of the Union. Petitions and memorials, we learn, are preparing in many places for signatures, which will, in due season, be laid before Congress. It is also understood that efforts will soon be made by some of the members of that body, to effect the great and desirable object. Let, then, all who are sincerely desirous to wipe from our moral escutcheon this crimson stain, come forward at this interesting crisis, and raise their voice in favour of the great principle of universal liberty, and the inalienable rights of man.

Signed by direction of the Convention,

THOMAS SHIPLEY, *President pro tem.*

EDWIN P. ATLEE, *Secretary.*

Baltimore, November, 1828.

