

## WILL THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PUT DOWN

## CASTE SCHOOLS?

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RESPECTED SIR: The colored people of the cities of Providence and Newport, and of the town of Bristol, feel that they are unjustly denied a portion of their just rights, and APPEAL to you, dear Sir: they respectfully ask that you enquire into their case and defend them, if you think their request a just one; they appeal to you as a member of the General Assembly, knowing that you can, as such, defend them.

We feel that we stand, before Rhode Island laws equal; that which is the right of any other citizen of the State as such, is our right, and that we should enjoy the same without proscription; that this is the spirit of our laws.

Our grievance is, that the local school powers of the three places above mentioned have given us indifferent school houses, with but partial accommodations as compared with the other school houses; that they have given us indifferent teachers: but aside from all this, even had these parties given us all the accommodation they give others—as good school houses, as good teachers and the like, still would we complain and deny the right of these parties to select us out—set us apart, make us a proscribed class, and thereby cause us to feel that we have separate interests and not alike concerned and interested in whatever pertains to the interest of the State; and thereby cause us to be regarded in the eyes of the community as an inferior, a despised class to be looked down upon; and thus blunt our patriotism—thus impair those noble and manly aspirations that induce a man to strive to be something; to labor on and upward with other men; that induce a parent to say to his child strive, “*strive* my son, an inviting and honorable field of promotion is before you.”

We are in the matter of Education, refused our full rights, and for no just cause; we stand ready and willing to do whatever may be required of any other citizen of the State. We are taxed alike with others for the support of Public Schools—we feel as we know you would feel, were you taxed in common for the support of Public Schools, and then had your children inconvenienced and forced to go

only to a particular school, because you are a mechanic and not a professional man; because you are a farmer or tradesman and not a retired gentleman; because you are a poor man and not a millionaire; because you are a Methodist and not a Baptist, or a Presbyterian and not an Episcopalian; and therefore we feel a degree of confidence in appealing to you; we know that you cannot but feel proud of us as Americans, for resenting such an indignity.

We mention the fact with pride as Rhode Islanders, that this Anti-Republican, this Anti-Democratic proscription is to be found no where else in the State except in these places; further, that we are glad to know that some of the delegation from these very places are opposed to it; at the same time we have reason to know that others are likely to wage a most desperate opposition to us; as an exhibition of what we may expect, we give the following:

One of the undersigned approached a gentleman last winter who was then a member of the General Assembly, from Providence, and asked him to support our memorial; he said he was opposed to it; the person replied, will you be opposed to it in the face of facts? Yes, replied he, I am opposed to it *in toto*. Therefore, dear sir, we seek you with the hope of finding in you a friend that will stand by right and the constitution, one that will *take facts into consideration*.

There are some points in this matter to which we invite your attention: First: That in 1842, the question was submitted separately and distinctly to the people of Rhode Island:—Shall the colored people of the State be proscribed? When the people in their noble majesty said "No!" The constitution then adopted and based upon this just platform is governed in all its provisions thereby; any action that contravenes this, as does this proscriptive school arrangement, wars with the spirit of the constitution and should be done away with.

The article of the constitution upon Education, says: "The diffusion of knowledge, as well as of virtue among the people, being essential to the preservation of their rights and liberties, it shall be the duty of the General Assembly to promote Public Schools, and to adopt all means which they may deem necessary and proper to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of education. (Art. 12: Sec. 1.) Mark the expression—"Secure to *the people* the advantages and opportunities of Education;" not to a part of the people—not with *partiality*, not *proscribingly*. It is the duty of the General Assembly to promote Public Schools, says the constitution; *not caste schools*—not schools set apart for particular classes, to the exclusion of others, as are these schools which we are opposed to.

Art. 12: Sec. 4, says: "The General Assembly shall make all necessary provisions by law for carrying this article into effect," therefore, if in your opinion these schools of which we complain are *caste* and not Public Schools, you have clearly the constitutional power to interpose and declare that they shall be Public Schools. The city of Boston established such caste schools; the Legislature of the State interposed and declared that they must be Public Schools. The schools which we charge with being caste schools are supported by funds from the General Treasury, voted by the General Assembly; and as the General Assembly supports them, it controls them; then again, the

General Assembly has over and over again by repeated acts exercised a controlling power over these schools. It is true that special powers have been given to the city of Providence, yet the General Assembly has not given up its control over this large, wealthy and influential city. The special power granted is in these words. "The Public Schools in said city shall continue as heretofore to be governed according to such ordinances and regulations as the proper city authorities may from time to time adopt." Is it not fair that the General Assembly demand that such "ordinances and regulations," be in accordance with the spirit of the constitution and when they are not, to order accordingly? Further, you retain the power to revoke, if needs be, this special power. Then we invite your attention to the fact that no special powers have been given to Newport and Bristol. All that we ask is that you pass a law to this effect: *That in no City, Town or District of the State shall any scholar be refused admission into any Public School thereof because of his race, color or religious opinions*. This we think no unreasonable request; and we ask what have we done or refused to do that it should be denied us? Have we refused to pay taxes? Have we done anything to forfeit our rights as citizens? Have we not stood ready to defend? Yes! has not our blood been freely spilt in defence of the State? Then why in the name of the constitution—in the name of justice and honor between men are we proscribed and refused our just rights?

The securing of the advantages and opportunities of a public education by the State is because it is the interest of the State to have all its inhabitants educated; for as such they become intelligent and good citizens—as such become aware of and feel the equal relation of laws and their amenability thereto. For this to have full and proper force, all the inhabitants of the State must feel that they have within their reach and control, equally, impartially without proscription, all of the public advantages of being educated. *We do not feel that we have such*. Allow us to submit in justice—that if any part of the people are refused the same by an action of the State, whether they should be held equally amenable before the law?

To effect this general education, taxes are demanded of all, hence all become doubly interested, and it becomes doubly unjust to proscribe any inhabitant of the State, in the matter of Public Education.

We desire to impress the fact upon your attention that this proscriptive policy is dangerous, that it is growing to an alarming extent; *nor is it directed alone against colored men*; by and by we may see schools established "exclusively" for the working man's son, for the farmer and mechanic's son, then another school for the rich man's son, each to be supported by the public fund. We are assured by a member of the School Committee of Providence, that this spirit manifests itself already in the High School of that city; that poor men's children are snubbed, that they cannot fully hold up their heads under what they have to endure in this school, because poor; we were told this to deter us from asking for our rights—our informant said, "*This, poor white children have to endure, what would your children do!*" You find no necessity for any such proscription in the schools of your towns, there, all go together—rich and poor—white and colored, and no one feels themselves hurt, or any the worse for it. How much better are the people of these three places, than those of the rest of the State, that they must have exclusive schools?

that they must be supported by the rest of the State in establishing invidious distinctions, destructive of the leading idea in the formation of our government—the equality of man.

Some important facts showing the practical injustice we have to submit to under this arrangement, and our feelings in relation thereto, we give in two series of Resolutions, passed in the city of Providence, one in 1856, the other this winter at public meetings of the colored citizens:—the meetings were large and harmonious.

We believe that the justice of our demand is admitted, even by our opponents; but they affirm that it is not best to do as we wish, for the following reasons, which we will answer. If they have any other reasons beside these, which we are about to answer, they have not given us the benefit of the same, that we might reply thereto. They say that the whites will withdraw their children from the schools if the colored are admitted: this we deny. The same was said furiously in Boston, when the colored people were striving there three years ago, for the same right, when it was granted, the whites did not, as they said they would, withdraw their children, neither would they in Providence. A little buzz might be created in consequence of the change, such as is consequent upon almost all changes; but it would last but a day or two, and the novelty being over, the change would not further excite notice or remark. They meet and play together in the streets now, in peace and harmony, why may they not study together in like peace and harmony in the school room, under a proper teacher? But on the other hand, should some withdraw their children, it would be their right so to do, also the true course for them to pursue, (if they desire to educate their children in exclusive schools,) *but let the Public School be a PUBLIC SCHOOL.*

It is said “that our children would be badly treated in the white schools; that we must wait a little longer, sentiment is changing;” but we feel that now is the time when our children should be admitted; we are willing to risk all our opponents’ fears: it will be our look out. This same argument was used in Boston, but its anticipation of evil, did not prove true in fact.

Again, they say that our children are not regular in their attendance at school. In reply to this we would state, that there are laws as regard absentees; let these be enforced against all alike. The colored parent *can* and should make as many sacrifices to educate his child as do white parents. This idea that they require more lenity in this respect than others, is wrong, it has arisen, we think, in the idea that a good education is not as important to the colored as to the white person. Colored parents are as well to do as are the body of poor white parents. The whites have to come under the law as to absentees, why not the colored parent? No; it is because they have been allowed to send their children just when they were inclined or when most convenient, knowing that their children would be admitted whenever they came; but if they were made to know that their children would not be admitted if they did not attend regular any more than the whites, they would see that their children attended as regularly as do others. By encouraging this looseness, this indifference, this want of promptitude on the part of these children, you rear them up to the same looseness in their future business relations, for it is the habits formed during school years that most govern a child in his after life;

it is the allowing of this indifferent, partial catching at an education that begets that kind of education that leads to disgrace and ruin; it illustrates that “a little learning is a dangerous thing.”

Some of the irregularity in attendance on the part of the colored as compared with the whites, is because the whites, all of them, have schools in their wards and districts in their vicinity, while the colored child has to go by the school of his ward and district, of his vicinity, at all seasons, in all weathers, from the remotest points to one and a particular Grammar School. Now is it fair to make this distinction? Is it fair to make this difference among tax payers? Is it fair to use as an argument the comparison as to an irregularity of attendance as between the colored and white, when so great a reason as this exists for that difference? Then the thirty or forty per cent. of absentees, let them suffer, if needs be, the effects of their remissness or necessities, but do not make the sixty or seventy per cent. of those that do attend suffer for the acts of a few.

Our children are as decently and as cleanly clad as are the children of the whites in the same circumstances; further, by allowing them to mingle with others better clad a new pride will be infused, and they may take even more pains with their appearance.

It is the limited, proscribed education, and no education at all on the part of many of the colored people, that is much of the reason why colored men have not been anything else than menials, that they have not been producers, developers, leading to a development of the State’s interest. Let them be educated alike, let all public institutions be alike accessible to them, and some developer will be produced of whom the State will be proud. The liberal feeling that has grown in their behalf within a few years, has had the effect with other causes of producing among the colored people a refinement, an amount of information, acquisitions in wealth and other possessions, that are but little known, to know of which you must seek them out. All the colored people are not to be judged of by what you may see of them at the corners of the streets and about, any more than you would judge of all the whites by a similar class of whites to be seen at such corners and about. It is the improvement of the colored people which produces their present dissatisfaction, how natural it is, seems to have been truly conceived by our Commissioner of Public Schools. He says in a Report published this year: “When men are completely sunk in degradation, they are apt to be content with their lot. But raise them a few degrees, and they immediately grow dissatisfied with their state, and are wretched indeed, if they are not daily rising higher.” This same Commissioner further remarks, and as it would almost seem providentially, and certainly conclusive as fixing the propriety and justness of our demand: “But the most profitable influence,” says he, “of large public schools, where there is a sufficiency of good teachers, is in blending the community into one kindred. Here the children of the rich and the children of the poor meet together, and each class exerts a good influence upon the other. The higher class will learn to know and respect and to admire those of the other, and the lower class will be raised in manners and refinement, and will become ambitious and improve their condition. They will learn more of neatness, more of skill, and will be elevated in their own ideas of what they can do, and will also be stimulated to attempt more than they

otherwise would have done. Thus the lower half of the community will be every day feeling the expansive force and power of higher thoughts, and will of course do far more to make the nation intelligent and prosperous, while no one will suffer in the least by their attempts to elevate themselves."

It is said that if this change takes place, colored teachers will be thrown out of employ. It should not be; they should not be thrown out if most competent, because they are colored. Then, again, a whole class should not be proscribed, inconvenienced, denied their rights, that one or two families of a town may receive two or three hundred dollars a year. Further, if the Committee were anxious to have us believe them to be in earnest in this respect, they should employ none but colored teachers, whereas, in all the places where they have these colored schools, they have white teachers. The fact is, that one white gentleman alone, who is over the colored Grammar School of the city of Providence, receives as much for his services as do all the colored teachers of these three places put together.

It is said that the colored people of the State do not desire the change. This is not true. The intelligent, the wealthy and the respectable of the colored people do desire it. They have said so in public meetings, they have said so through their pulpits, they say so in their daily intercourse. It is true that some may be timid, and perhaps seemingly passive, when some one may approach them in a domineering manner, saying "What do your people want? Do we not give you schools? How much better things are than they were. You must not press this matter. We want to be your friends," and the like. We say that some colored persons will, when thus approached, and perhaps more harshly, since like most of those that have been educated in dependence will, but the desire is there nevertheless. Some employers have even gone so far as to attempt to intimidate. Some few who reap two or three hundred dollars a year as a salary may strive to magnify their opposition to a mountain. Some few colored persons that have their children in white schools, think it their interest to oppose the movement, though not all, hoping to secure the good will of committees, that their children may be kept in such schools. Some say that while they wish the change, they are opposed to some of the men moving in the matter. In fact, as you know in all such matters, some opposition will manifest itself; but as we said before, the well-informed, the tax payers, the respectable of the colored people, desire the change; in proof of which we refer you to the names on our Memorial. Then, again, if some wish to be proscribed, let them ask for the distinction of being proscribed; but let such as would, enjoy their rights freely, and not proscribedly, do so. They say, in Providence we have given you as good a teacher as has any school: grant it, but then you have given us but this one, while it is our right to have the benefit of any of the good teachers in our respective wards, as do others. We are taxed for a High School, but its doors are barred against us; the sons of the rich and others enjoy its advantages, we in part pay for its teachers and the like, but cannot pass its threshold. Then even in this Meeting Street Grammar School, so much spoken of, we receive what we do, seemingly from begrudging hands. We have not the same tidy, clean school houses that the whites have; we have no recitation rooms like they have; we have no regular assistants like the whites; some scholar

takes a class in the entry, without regard to weather, while several other scholars are hearing different classes in the one and main school room, causing noise and confusion, such as is obviated in the white schools by having recitation rooms, with a number of regularly examined assistants.

Our Resolutions speak of many inconveniences, still not all; but aside from all of them, we are opposed to these separate schools from principle, as proscriptive, depressing, degrading, as not carrying out the idea of a public school. One of the ideas that had to do in establishing public schools, was the educating of the poor. The rich have the means to send their children to seminaries and colleges, and in proscribing us, in denying us the full advantages of the public schools, you deny the class who they were started most to benefit,—the poor class.

One of the School Committees of Providence, in an annual report, has used language and truths so opportune as embodying our views and feelings in this matter, that we give them. It is signed by the Hon. Amos D. Smith, W. C. Snow and William Gammell, Esqs., and was written, we believe, by the Superintendent of Public Schools. It says among other good things: "When free schools are made better than others, they will be patronised, even at the sacrifice of personal feeling. In fact, it is the reciprocal influence of these different classes of children, the one upon the other, that gives to the public school their peculiar value. The exterior manners of the uncultivated and less favored, are refined and polished by contact with children from cultivated families; while the effeminacy of the latter, is quickened into a more sturdy manliness by daily association with the former. No one class makes up the whole of Society. The public school develops and brings out talent wherever found. Many there are, now rising from a humble lot in life to stations of honor and distinction, whose cheerful and grateful testimony to the elevating influence of our public schools is a perpetual proof of the wisdom and skill which first originated, and has since sustained and improved them. Many a young man whose whole career through life, but for a gratuitous education in these schools, had been one of obscurity and poverty, if not of degradation, will take rank among the most useful and influential of our citizens."

Much more might be said in our behalf, but what more need be said after the above testimony?

There is one other point we would refer to. It has been remarked, Why do you not in Providence appeal to your City Council? We will answer: the grievance of which we complain is not confined to Providence alone; then it is a grievance that overrides the principles of the Constitution itself, and the *State* should take such action as would not only relieve the present case, but guard against any similar case may occur; that the very fact that they continue to refuse colored children admission to the public schools of their wards, is evidence that we might be put to expense, trouble and delay in battling with them, while with the *State*, from its disinterestedness in the matter, we might with confidence look for justice.

With great respect for you, sir, we who were appointed a Committee to urge this matter upon the attention of the General Assembly, would state, that though we represent an humble class, an abused

class, yet for loyalty, for that due respect which the law should ever command, they will challenge comparison with any.

Annexed are some extracts of letters from Boston, and other places in Massachusetts, showing how favorably the plan which we are asking for here, works there, also our Resolutions alluded to, and our Memorial.

With Respect,

GEO. T. DOWNING,  
 ICHABOD NORTHUP,  
 JAMES M. CHEEVES,  
 REV. PETER ROSS,  
 JOHN BANKS,  
 WALTER BOOTH,  
 WM. H. C. STEPHENSON,  
 JAMES JEFFERSON,  
 JOHN JOHNSON,  
 HENRY BROWN,  
 DAVID A. BALLOU.

} Committee.

PROVIDENCE, Dec., 1857.

For any further information, please address the Chairman of the Committee, GEO. T. DOWNING, 149 Benefit street, Providence R. I.; he will be happy to receive any response from you.

## EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

An extract from the report of the school committee of Worcester, for the year 1855, speaking of the abolition of a colored school which had existed, but was abolished, during which time colored children were admitted to all the schools, says: "The older colored children in the separate schools have always compared unfavorably with colored children of the same age in other schools, simply for the want of the stimulus of companionship in their studies." The committee also state that the colored school "had always an efficient and devoted teacher."

The report of the Cambridge school committee says: "In the Broadway primary school a singular fact was noticed, viz: the mixture of *four different races* among the pupils—the Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic, Celtic, and the African; but, by the influence of teacher and of habit, there exists perfect good feeling among them, and there is no apparent consciousness of a difference of race or condition.

John F. Emerson, Esq., teacher of the high school of New Bedford, says:—"My pupils are from all classes in the community. Many of them from families of the highest respectability. I have had *no instance of any difficulty arising from the admission of colored children*. They have uniformly been treated with courtesy and kindness by the other scholars. \* \* I have noticed no difference in the aptitude to learn between them and the whites. \* \* \* I should think the average attendance of this class, in proportion to the whole number belonging to the schools, was equal to the whites from the same condition in life.

Hon. John H. Shaw, of Nantucket, says: "Early in February last, the present committee took charge of the schools, and decided to admit the colored children; there were then twenty-seven of them attending the colored school: there are now fifty in the various public schools—well behaved, orderly children. *Not a single complaint* has been made to the committee thus far, from any teacher, respecting any one of them. \* \* \* I have not the power to give you the exact number of scholars in the private schools at the same period of time, first February and first July, but can say positively that the number is much diminished."

Hon. Mr. Slack, one of the school committee of the city of Boston, in a letter dated Feb. 9, 1857, says: "So far as I can observe, or learn, the colored children have all the treatment, respect, or attention, that is bestowed upon the white scholars. One or two indignant fathers, who said their children should not go to school with "niggers," did, it is true, take them from the *public* schools and sent them to *private* schools, but the presentation of two quarters' bills for tuition, brought them to considerations of economy, if not of decency and natural right, and their children were speedily restored—so I have been informed. \* \* \* I think our experiment a complete success, and one which may be quoted with approbation, and encouraged elsewhere."

Rev. Henry Upham, editor of the Christian Watchman and Reflector, and one of the school committee of the city of Boston, in a letter dated Feb. 17, 1857, says: "On the morning that the colored children were admitted, our grammar and primary schools were thronged with colored children, all happy, cleanly, and well clothed. \* \* \* The change has worked well. \* \* \* Not more than three or four white scholars left our schools, even temporarily, on account of this matter. If there are any persons who now complain of colored scholars attending school with white ones, I don't know who they are, and do

not believe there are any. The colored scholars are as well behaved, as intelligent and as cleanly as white children."

The Rev. Wm. Howe, one of the school committee of the city of Boston, in a letter dated Feb. 10, 1857, says: "At first some few parents seemed dissatisfied with the admission of colored children, but they were soon satisfied that no harm was done to their children, and I have not heard of but one or two children that have been taken from school on this account. I am not aware that the 'reform' has in the least affected the prosperity of our schools. They are as popular and fully attended as before the change was made."

Mr. I. A. Page, teacher of the Dwight school of Boston, says, in a letter dated Feb. 9th, 1857: "In my own school, the Dwight, where we have three, only, of that class, not the least objection has ever been made by either parent or scholar. They sit side by side with other children, recite in the same class, and are among our brightest and best.

In some of the schools they number as many as thirty, but I have never learned that the effect was not good on either parties interested.

My opinion is, that the change will be vastly beneficial to the colored pupil, and no injury to the other."

Mr. Joshua G. Wilbur, a teacher of one of the public schools of Boston, says, on the 10th inst: "In my judgement the abolition of the Smith school has been productive of none but good results, and I think a majority of the citizens of Boston would now sanction it at the polls, if called upon to do so."—The Smith school alluded to, was the colored school.

Mr. Wm. C. Nell, a colored gentleman of Boston, who is as conversant with the feelings of his people in Boston as any one, and who takes a very lively interest in this matter, writes, on the 10th, as follows: "I am familiar with several instances where the colored children are progressing rapidly in studies, and becoming favorites both with teachers and pupils. They appear to be arranging upon their proper levels, irrespective of complexion, and this is all that any intelligent person can ask. The colored boys and girls in Boston daily furnish me with the most encouraging facts. If there has been a single case to warrant dissatisfaction, I have not heard of it. No complaints against the equal school system here has been urged from any quarter."

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS,  
BOSTON, Feb. 27, 1857. }

Mr. GEORGE T. DOWNING:

Dear Sir:—Your letter of the 16th did not come to hand till last evening, and I now cheerfully embrace the earliest opportunity to reply to it.

You desire testimony respecting the "results of the abolition of colored schools in this city." My personal knowledge of the matter is necessarily limited, as this is the first time my attention has been especially called to it, and my official relation to the school system of the city is of very recent date.

Perhaps the most material result to be ascertained is that which has been produced in respect to the *attendance* of the two classes affected by the change. If the attendance of colored children is better than under the former arrangement, then it would be fair to conclude that the change is a benefit to that class. If, on the other hand, the attendance of the white children has not, by the change, been diminished, it will be reasonably inferred that no serious injury has resulted to that class.

I regret that our educational statistics afford no accurate information respecting this point. I give you such facts as I possess.

Previous to the reception of your letter I had visited the two schools which embrace most of the colored children who attend the grammar schools of the city, I then took occasion to inquire of the masters and some other teachers of these schools respecting the effect of the introduction into their classes of colored children. According to the best of my recollection the uniform reply was, that no evil effect has been experienced. In most of the other grammar schools, where a few colored children were found, similar inquiries were made and similar replies received. My impression is that one teacher complained of the irregular attendance of the colored children in comparison with the attendance of the white children, and expressed doubts as to whether the former attended better than when they had separate schools, but no one stated that white children had been withdrawn or kept from the schools in consequence of the admission of colored pupils, or that any sort of difficulty had been encountered in bringing together in the same school room, children of different colors. My own observations in these schools revealed to me no unfavorable results from the abolition of "caste" schools, nor have I heard from others any dissatisfaction with the measure.

With my present information on the subject, I have no hesitation in saying, that in my judgment, the colored schools in Boston were not disbanded too soon.

Perhaps I may be permitted a word on my own experience as a pupil and a teacher touching this subject.

As a boy, I had a colored school-mate, who was afterwards a pupil, and now a respectable and respected friend. In college I had a colored fellow student in the class before my own, and no member of either class was a more respectable and exemplary gentleman. He was the late master of the colored school in this city.

In the Normal school of a neighboring State, recently under my charge, one of the most talented and respectable of the pupils, was a colored gentleman; he has graduated from the institute with honor. He was a universal favorite in the school, both as a pupil and as a teacher in the schools of practice, where he was much liked by his white pupils.

Very respectfully yours,

JOHN D. PHILBRICK.

## RESOLUTIONS

Passed in Providence, in 1856.

Resolved, That we feel it to be our right to enjoy equally with all other citizens, the public school advantages of the respective school districts in which we reside, and not to have forced upon us an equivalent; that which the city has, lacks the element of fairness; that of the forty-eight public schools of the city, there are but three, two in Meeting street and one in Pond street, where colored children are admitted.

Resolved, That being denied our rights in this matter, we ask for them, as would those we appeal to, were they like us, inconvenienced and proscribed.

Resolved, That we ask for this right, *not of a party, BUT OF THE PEOPLE*. We cannot see how any part of the people can consistently oppose it. The Democrat should not, from a reverence for Thomas Jefferson; the Republican because of his hostility to Slavery; the Native American because he does not deny to the foreigner that which we *natives* are asking for.

Resolved, That being citizens, bearers of our share of the expenses of the State, among those that have done the State some service in time of peace as well as in war, the glaringness of this injustice stands out.

Resolved, That the constitution of our State and its laws war against this system of caste; we appeal to our citizens to away with it.

Resolved, That the interest of the State in view of justice and of wise policy, demands the abolition of these exclusive schools; first, they sorely lessen respect for a part of the community; they fill another part with a spirit, which, if fostered, will pull down our institutions and government; they are a financial burden; they foster crime, for in proportion as obstacles are thrown in the way of the fullest opportunity to diffuse universal education, will crime be fostered; crime and ignorance being close relatives.

Resolved, That it is not only self-respect that induces us to urge this matter; we believe that the very nature of "caste" schools implies inferiority.

Resolved, That we present the example of Massachusetts in this matter, the entire State, save Boston, having acted on the above principle, viz: to admit its children, without regard to color, to all of its schools. Boston has lately done so; the result is universal satisfaction, no evils as to contact. We pray that Rhode Island shall be no less just, no less disposed to elevate her poor than was her nearest sister State, Massachusetts.

Resolved, That we are happy in being able to state that we have in this movement the warm sympathy of a number of very intelligent and highly influential citizens, that we shall continue to appeal to them, to Christians, to all our fellow citizens until this right is awarded to us; that if we fail now, we will continue to agitate, and "try again."

A large and enthusiastic meeting of colored persons opposed to proscribed schools, was held on Tuesday evening, Dec. 8th, 1857, in Zion's Church, Gaspee street. The following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That in reviewing our course to obtain our rights in the matter of public education, we see nothing to regret, but much to encourage us; that we re-affirm the resolutions just read, which were adopted by us last winter, and would urge their truthfulness upon those who can give them force, in the councils of the State.

Resolved, That relying confidently upon the unanswerable truths and facts given by President Wayland, the author of our memorial, believing that no intelligent person can in honor deny the justise of our demand; we call upon all to command the moral courage that will override the fallacious arguments of inexpediency advanced, (and by some honestly entertained,) which arguments are identically the same as those that were presented by committees and others, and before the Legislature in Boston, when the same subject was being agitated there. We call attention to the fact that more than two years of practical working in Boston of what we ask for here, has demonstrated that the opponents were wrong there, and are wrong here; that the idea of inexpediency advanced, is like the evil one of whom it came—false; that no party is inconvenienced in Boston; that there are is no falling off in attendance either on the part of the white or colored.

Resolved, That as further evidence against the argument of inexpediency adduced by our opponents, we present the fact that various literary societies of this city, composed almost exclusively of whites, as well as the young men of our city in christian association assembled, have, after full and repeated consideration of the subject, decided that, in their opinion, it was right and expedient to abolish all proscription in public education; further, that in the several instances in which colored children, known by all parties to be such, have been and are now enjoying, through favoritism, the advantages of the public schools of their district in this city, along with whites, no feeling is entertained, none of the fears imagined, realized. Another point we would present is, that the *Post*, the *Tribune*, and the *Transcript*, leading daily papers of this city, representing all the parties of the State, and its real worth and strength, have spoken out loud and unequivocally in behalf of the change.

Resolved, That we desire to be the judges, as free men and women, of our own rights and interests in connexion with our children's education, like all others in the community, and would therefore express our displeasure at others assuming to judge for us.

Resolved, That we regard the employer of this city, or any place, that would attempt to coerce an employee in expressing his wish and feelings in this school or any other matter effecting his rights, as base; a specimen of shrivelled humanity;—at heart akin with a Georgia slaveholder.

Resolved, That the charge as to irregularity of attendance at school on the part of our children, may in a great degree be traced to the committees having the matter in charge; further, that we have not had a fair trial—give us our rights—give us a fair trial; then reprove and taunt us if you may.

Resolved, That it is with deep regret that we state, that while the prescribed duties of our Superintendent of Public Schools are well defined, he throws the weight of his office outside of those prescribed duties against us, as a partizan in this matter.

Resolved, That as evidence of the indifference which will naturally be manifested in every case where a class are put to themselves from prejudice or any form of proscription, we give the following facts as regards Providence.

\*Indifferent teachers have invariably been placed over the colored schools of this city; that as a general thing not more than half as much salary has been given to such, as was given at the same time to the teachers of the white schools; that the same talent could not consequently be demanded for the colored; that the exception in the Meeting Street Colored Grammar School, dates only from the time since we have striven to have its proscriptive character destroyed. That it is an *imperative* arrangement in this city that every Grammar School, except the colored, shall have "a male principal and three or more female assistants," the principals receive \$1200—assistants between \$200 and \$300—the colored Grammar School has *but* the male principal. It is true that since the present fall term two of the *scholars* of said school have assisted the principal, after the old monitorial system, and are receiving, in view of the above, and in consideration of partially neglecting their studies, the sum of \$25 per quarter. That this Meeting Street (so called) Grammar School, with its one principal and no assistant, is in reality an intermediate, a Grammar and in part a High School; that the principal has to go down to the studies of an intermediate, as he does up to some of those legitimately confined to the High School, at the expense of the prescribed studies of a Grammar School. It is the duty of the principal of each Grammar and of each intermediate school to communicate monthly with the parent of each child, as to the child's conduct and progress in school, with an account of his absences, &c. This the committee have not exacted of the teacher of the poor Meeting Street school. That by an imperative arrangement, "lessons of one hour each week in the elements and science of music," are to be given by a competent teacher in each intermediate and Grammar School; the Meeting Street School receives but half its right in this matter. That our children's health is subjected to danger by the fact that the school room is crowded nightly with not the most cleanly persons attending the public evening school; leaving an unpleasant effluvia and disease for our children to inhale on each succeeding day, and that these are but a part of our grievances.

Resolved, That a copy of the above as the action of this meeting be sent to the General Assembly about to assemble, to whom our Memorial has been submitted, as a further appeal in behalf of the same.

Messrs. George T. Downing, Ichabod Northup, James M. Cheevers, Rev. Peter Ross, John Banks, Walter Booth, William H. C. Stephenson, James Jefferson, John Johnson and Henry Brown, were appointed a Committee to urge the matter upon the General Assembly.

*Statement*

\*The last ~~meeting~~, in this resolution, receives its enormity from the fact, that the School Committee having the matter in charge have two school houses in the same district and vicinity, each capable of accommodating two hundred persons, which school houses they keep closed, and use the Meeting street one, intended to accommodate only eighty-four persons; notwithstanding hundreds that desire to be instructed do nightly turn their backs upon this school house, for the want of accommodation.

The following Memorial was presented to the last General Assembly, and referred over to the one about to convene; it is now in possession of the Committee on Education.

To the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island,

THIS MEMORIAL RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH:

That the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island acknowledges no distinction among its citizens, but places all men, who obey the laws and fulfil the duties of citizenship, on the ground of indiscriminate equality.

That the colored people of this State bear their full proportion of every public burden, are peaceable and law-abiding, and that, anxious to perform all the duties of citizens, they feel themselves entitled to all the privileges belonging to that relation.

That nevertheless, under the present administration of schools in some of the towns and cities of this State, they are subjected to serious and peculiar inconveniences. The school houses, exclusively appropriated to them, are, in many instances, so far removed from the residences of the parents, that the attendance of the pupils is of necessity irregular, and their education imperfect; and that they therefore do not enjoy an equal participation of the advantages for which they contribute their equitable proportion.

That, by the establishment of a distinction founded on the principle of caste, their children suffer from a feeling of social degradation, and lose the benefit which arises from equal and honorable emulation. The effect of this distinction is unfavorable to their intellectual and moral improvement, and consequently to the best interests of the community at large. As parents, as fellow-citizens, as children of the same Father of all, as members of the great brotherhood of Christianity, they respectfully ask that these disabilities may be removed.

They are not only anxious to perform all the duties of citizens, as they state above, but they would, as should all good citizens, make all sacrifices *necessary* for the common good; but the matter of which they complain does not demand any such sacrifice, the educational interest of the State cannot be impaired by extending educational facilities alike to all. They are prepared to show, by the most conclusive evidence, that the law for which they petition has been carried into effect in Boston, without the smallest injury to the schools in that city.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully ask that a law may be enacted, by which their children, as pupils of the common schools, may be placed in all respects in the same position as the children of their fellow-citizens.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.