

of but little use to any of us, unless we can, like the tailor of Campillo, afford to work for nothing, and find thread.

Friends, I ask you to look into this matter. You can assist the colored man, but you cannot elevate him; this must be done by his own exertions. Every colored man who succeeds is an unanswerable argument in favor of emancipation. The encouragement of one colored man stimulates others. Now, we have nothing to stimulate our youth. They see many of us struggling against fearful odds, without friends or even kind words, and they become discouraged. The success of such a man as Frederick Douglass is worth more to the race than a pile of resolutions and speeches high as Bunker Hill monument. Had it not been for the Abolitionists, the brilliant genius of Mr. Douglass would probably have died with him. All honor to those noble men and women, who had the courage to do what they did! His success is our success, is the success of a great cause. (Applause.)

It is in this way that we ask our friends to help open to us these thoroughfares, through which all others are encouraged to pass, and in this manner breathe into the anti-slavery movement the breath of life. Then we will become educated and wealthy; and then the roughest looking colored man that you ever saw, or ever will see, will be pleasanter than the harmonies of Orpheus; and black will be a very pretty color. (Laughter and applause.) It will make our jargon, wit, our words, oracles; flattery will then take the place of slander, and you will find no prejudice in the Yankee whatever. (Laughter.)

We desire to take part in this contest, and when our Government shall see the necessity of using the loyal blacks of the free States, I hope it will have the courage to recognize their manhood. It certainly will not be mean enough to force us to fight for your liberty, (after having spurned our offers)—and then leave us when we go home to our respective States to be told that we cannot ride in the cars, that our children cannot go to the public schools, that we cannot vote; and if we don't like that state of things, there is an appropriation to colonize us. We ask for our rights. Hardships and dangers are household words with us. We are not afraid to dig or to fight. A few black acclimated regiments would shake the Old Dominion. When will there be light enough in the Cabinet to see this? (Applause.) ■

65

LINCOLN'S COLONIZATION PROPOSAL IS ANTI-CHRISTIAN

Isaiah C. Wears



On August 14, 1862, President Lincoln met with five African American men from the District of Columbia to enlist their support for his plan for colonizing the black population of the United States in Central America and other countries. He told the five that racial differences between black and white made it impossible for them to live as equals and promised them governmental assistance if they would recruit colored families to settle in Central America. Complete separation of the races was the only solution, he said. "But for your race among us," he emphasized, "there could not be war, although many men engaged on either side do not care for you one way or the other. Nevertheless, I repeat, without the institution of slavery, and the colored race as a basis, the war could not have an existence. It is better for us both, therefore, to be separated."

Accounts of this interview were widely publicized in the Northern press and infuriated many African Americans. The Statistical Association of the Colored People of Philadelphia met on August 15, and in a speech, Isaiah C. Wears (1822-1900), association president, voiced black opposition to Lincoln's plan. The speech by Wears, a barber and Republican politician, was then sent to the committee of African Americans who had visited President Lincoln to assist them in framing their reply to the chief executive. "No previous time, in our humble judgment," the letter declared, "has ever presented itself for a committee of colored men by a bold, judicious, manly and righteous decision to make an impression on the enlightened and civilized mind of the world as in this instance." The correspondence was signed by Wears and William Still, corresponding secretary of the association. Both Wears and Still were prominent Philadelphia leaders, and both were active in the city's Vigilance Committee to aid fugitive slaves.

Wears's answer to President Lincoln's proposal is excerpted from the Christian Recorder (Philadelphia), August 23, 1862.

TO BE ASKED, after so many years of oppression and wrong have been inflicted in a land and by a people who have been so largely enriched by the black man's toil, to pull up stakes in a civilized and Christian nation and to go to an uncivilized and barbarous nation, simply to gratify an unnatural wicked prejudice emanating from slavery, is unreasonable and anti-Christian in the extreme.

history of this country, with the history of slavery, with the rebellion and its merciless outrages, yet are apparently totally ignorant of the true cause of the war—or, if not ignorant, afraid or ashamed to charge the guilt where it belongs.

Men profess to believe in God and the Bible, justice and humanity, but notwithstanding numerous examples in every age's history vividly showing how cruel has been the oppressor's rule and how invariably his heinous practices have brought on wars and destruction, with God's sore displeasure and heavy judgments—it is easy, nevertheless, to find excuses to ignore truth, to defy God's vengeance and trample on his creatures.

Says the President: The colored race are the cause of the war. So were the children of Israel the cause of the troubles of Egypt. So was Christ the cause of great commotions in Judea, in this same sense; and those identified with Him were considered of the baser sort, and really unfit for citizenship. But surely the President did not mean to say that our race was the cause of the war, but the occasion thereof.

If black men are here in the way of white men, they did not come here of their own accord. Their presence is traceable to the white man's lust for power, love of oppression and disregard of the plain teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose rule enjoins upon all men to "do unto others as they would be done by." Although a man may have had the misfortune to fall among thieves and become wounded and distressed by the wayside, the great Exemplar would not recognize the right of either the Levite or priest to shield themselves behind their prejudices or selfishness and thus leave him to suffer.

But it is not the Negro that is the cause of the war; it is the unwillingness on the part of the American people to do the race simple justice. It is not social equality to be made the equal of the white man, to have kind masters to provide for him, or to find for him congenial homes in Africa or Central America that he needs, but he desires not to be robbed of his labor—to be deprived of his God-given rights.

The effect of this scheme of colonization, we fear, will be to arouse prejudice and to increase enmity against us, without bringing with it the remedy proposed or designed.

Repentance is more needed on the part of our oppressors than anything else. Could a policy that would lead to this wholesome course be adopted, some bright hope might be seen for the triumph of freedom and justice.

If the African race are not of a color most pleasing to their fairer-skinned brother, let the fault be charged upon the Creator, as the same hand that made the white man made the black man also. God has revealed no distinction in His word, touching the color of a man's skin.

But we are to leave this country on the score of selfishness to make room for our selfish white neighbor to sail smoothly, it was intimated.

True, enactments of terrible severity may be passed calculated to ostracize us—it will be strange if the President's suggestions do not directly invite persecutions of an aggravating character. But in our sober reflections, let us remember that Great Britain has got possessions adapted to our people, both

of Southern and Northern birth in the Canada, and the West Indies, that are free for all colors—governed by laws that recognize no difference of a complexional character—admit all as equal citizens who will support the government. The humblest fugitive slave as well as those of noblest blood alike find protection on British soil.

The panting bondmen have always found a sure refuge in Canada, and yearly our labor has been sought by Englishmen for the West Indies. The doors, therefore, are wide open in these civilized lands, thank God. Under the laws of Great Britain, colored men are neither debarred from citizenship nor soldier's rights and duties when their services are required.

That it is hard for those who have all their lives been submitting to the wrongs heaped upon the black man, or identified with parties oppressing him, now in this fearful crisis to make the marvelous change that justice demands, none can question.

A very appropriate paragraph occurs in a letter from a friend, which came to hand months back, which I will here quote:

"Has slavery so paralyzed the arm of the nation, that there is no strength to grapple with it? Is there not a story told of a man who fell asleep in an abode, to whose entrance came a snake so surcharged with venom that the man died poisoned by its breath? Does not the state of our country suggest a parallel case, poisoned to its heart's deep core by its guilty contact with slavery?"

In these remarks, though coming from one of the race considered to be inferior, lies in a nutshell the grand secret of all the nation's trouble. And it seems reasonable to infer that the nation shall not again have peace and prosperity until prejudice, selfishness and slavery are sorely punished in the nation. ■

66

THE NEGROES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Sarah Parker Remond

iii During the Civil War, Sarah Remond's public lectures in Britain encouraged her audiences to avert possible diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy. Union blockades of Confederate ports had effectively diminished Southern cotton exports, thus threatening some British textile mills. Remond and others sought to cultivate popular sympathy