

As the State advanced in age, intelligence and population, augmented in wealth, and extended in resources, the call went forth for the extension of the franchise right. In accordance with the will of the people thus expressed, a convention was held in the city of Albany in 1821-2.

We beg that it may be remembered, that the convention was called for the purpose of extending the suffrage right. We would also call your attention to the fact, that the votes by which many of the delegates were elected to that convention, were cast by colored voters. And more especially would we remind you, that during the proceedings of that convention, in its reports, addresses, &c., a peculiar deference is ever paid to the republican features of our common country, and its democratic tendencies. Yet in that convention, that portion of the citizens of the State whom we here represent, were shut out from an equal and common participation in the prerogatives of citizenship, in the operations of both State and National Governments, and thus placed under the operation of laws and statutes without our agency, and to which we are subjected without acquiescence.

We, the Colored Citizens of the State, in Convention assembled, representing 50,000 of the population, do ask your earnest attention, your deep reflection, your unbiassed and conscientious judgment in this matter. We ask you, as a matter in which YOU are deeply concerned, to come forward and restore the fountains of political justice in this State to their pristine purity. We ask you to secure to us our political rights. We call upon you to return to the pure faith of your republican fathers. We lift up our voices for the restored spirit of the first days of the republic--for the great principles that then maintained, and that regard for man which revered the characteristic features of his nature, as of more honor and worth than the form and color of the body in which they dwell.

For no vested rights, for no peculiar privileges, for no extraordinary prerogatives, do we ask. We merely put forth our appeal for a republican birth-right. We wish to be something more than political serfs and slaves. We fully believe in the fundamental doctrines set forth in the Declaration of Independence. We acquiesce in the sentiment that "governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed." And we say it is injustice of the most aggrieved character, either to deprive us of a just and legitimate participation in the rights of the state, or to make us bear the burdens, and submit to its enactments, when all its arrangements, plans, and purposes, are framed and put into operation utterly regardless of us, in their incipient state, than if we were nonentities; but which, in their practical operation, act upon us with destructive tendency, eat away our soul, and destroy our life. We ask for a living manifestation of belief in the above doctrine; we know already too much of its dead letter.

Fellow citizens! the Colored Citizens of this State, through us their representatives, respectfully and earnestly ask at your hands, the speedy adoption of such plans, and the formation of such measures, as may soon lead to the erasure of the odious proscriptive act of which we complain--be secured an equal suffrage, and the State freed from a stain upon its character.

A. Steward, Pres.

C. L. Reason,	} Secretaries
H. A. Garnet,	
Wm. H. Topp,	

Colored American, December 19, 1840.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. John J. Zuille was a prominent Negro leader in New York City, active both in the convention movement and in the struggle by blacks to regain the suffrage.

2. Alexander Crummell (1819-1898), grandson of an African prince, was born free in New York, where he attended the African Free School. After graduation from Oneida Institute, he was refused admission to New York's General Theological Seminary because he was black. He completed his studies