Because conventions of the people are in themselves harmless, and when made the means of setting forth greater real or fancied, they are the safety-valves of the republic, a wise and safe substitute for violence, dynamite, and all sorts of revolutionary action against the peace and good order of society. If they are held without sufficient reason, that fact will be made apparent in the proceedings, and people will only smile at their weakness and pass on to their usual business without troubling themselves about the empty noise they are able to make. But if held with good cause and by wise, sober and earnest men, that fact will be made apparent, and the result will be salutary. That good old maxim, when you come down to us from revolutionary times, that error may be safely tolerated, while truth is left free to combat it, applies here. A bad law is all the sooner repealed by being executed, and error is sooner dispelled by exposure than by silence. So much we have deemed it fit to say of conventions generally, because our resort to this measure has been treated by many as if there were something radically wrong in the very idea of a convention. It has been treated as if it were some ghastly, seer, conclavistic, sitting in darkness to devise strife and mischief. It is, in fact, the only serious feature in the argument against us, which respects color. We are asked not only why hold a convention, but, with emphasis, why hold a colored convention? Why keep up this odious distinction between citizens of a common country and the same alliance to the color line! It is argued that, if colored men hold conventions, based upon color, white men may hold white conventions based upon color, and thus keep open the chasm between one and the other class of citizens, and keep alive a prejudice which we profess to deplore. We state the argument against us fairly and frankly, and will answer it candidly and we hope cogently. By that answer it will be seen that the force of the objection is, after all, more in sound than in substance. No reasonable man will ever object to white men holding conventions in their own interests, when we are in the condition and we in theirs, when they are oppressed and we the oppressors. In point of fact, however, white men are already in convention against us in various ways and at many important points. The practical construction of American life is a convention against us. Human law may know no distinction among men in respect of rights, but human practice may. Examples are painfully abundant.

The border men hate the Indians; the Californian, the Chiricahua; the Mohammedans, the Christian; vice versa. In spite of a common nature and the sympathy felt by the law, this hate works injustice, of which each in their own name and under their own color may justly complain. The apology for observing the color line in the composition of our State and National conventions is in its necessity and in the fact that we must do this for the sake, for if we move our color is recognized and must be. In the same manner, in the exceptional relation we sustain to the white people of the country. A simple statement of our position vindicates at once our convention and our cause.

It is our lot to live among a people whose laws, traditions and prejudices have been against us for centuries, and from these they cannot get free. To assume that they are free from these evils simply because they have changed their laws is to assume what is utterly unreasonable and contrary to facts. Large bodies move slowly. Individuals may be converted on the instant and change their whole course of life. Nations never. Time and events are required for the conversion of nations. Not even the character of a great political organization can be changed by a new platform. It will be the same old snake