

the soil, in developing its vast resources, and contributing to its wealth and importance. Those who are the least acquainted with the history of the State, cannot but grant, that in this respect, we have contributed more than our proportionate part.

In times when patient toil and hardy industry were demanded, it will thus be seen, we have ever been present and active. Not only so. *In times of peril has our aid been called for, and our services as promptly given.* When the country, its interests, its best and most cherished rights and institutions, have been assailed, not unavailingly have we been looked to. When the shrill trumpet call of freedom was heard amid the mountains and the rocks, and along the rivers of the north, and a reverberating reply was heard from the broad fields and pine forests of the South; when the whole country, aroused by the injustice of British policy, arose as one man, for the maintenance of natural and unprescriptable rights; the dark browed man stood side by side with his fairer fellow citizen, with firm determination and indomitable spirit. During that memorable conflict, in severe and trying service, did they contend for those principles of liberty set forth in the Declaration of Independence, which are not of partial or local applicability, but which pertain alike to every being possessed of those high and exalted endowments that distinguish humanity.

Their blood is mingled with the soil of every battle field, made glorious by revolutionary reminiscence; and their bones have enriched the most productive lands of the country. In the late war of 1812, our people were again called upon to defend their country. The splendid naval achievements on Lake Erie and Champlain,<sup>17</sup> were owing mostly to the skill and prowess of colored men. The fame of Perry<sup>18</sup> was gained at the expense of our disfranchised people. Not inconsiderably is it owing to them, that Americans of the present day can recur with pleasurable emotions, and pride of country, to the battle fields of Plattsburgh and Sacketts Harbor.

*We are Americans.* We were born in no foreign clime. Here, where we behold the noble rivers, and the rich fields, and the healthful skies, that may be called American; here, amid the institutions that now surround us, we first beheld the light of the impartial sun. We have not been brought up under the influence of other strange, aristocratic, and uncongenial political relations. In this respect, we profess to be American and republican. With the nature, features and operations of our government, we have been familiarized from youth; and its democratic character is accordant with the flow of our feelings, and the current of our thoughts.

We have thus laid before you, fellow citizens, some considerations why we should never have been deprived of an equal suffrage, and why a just and impartial guarantee of this right, should soon be made.

But bating all these, we lay our claim on still higher ground. We do regard the right of our birthdom, our service in behalf of the country, contributing to its importance, and developing its resources, as favorable considerations--considerations adapted to banish all thought of proscription and injustice, from the power holding body of the country, and to lead them to a hearty and practical acknowledgment of the claims and rights of a disfranchised people.

Yet for these alone, we do not ask for the extension of the elective franchise. We would not, we do not predicate any right to it from any such basis. We would not fall into the error of basing rights upon grounds so untenable. We object to others placing our rights upon complexion. We ourselves would not lay our claims to consideration on this or any similar ground.

We can find no system of moral or political ethics in which rights are based upon the confirmation of the body, or the color of the skin. We can find no nation that has the temerity to insult the common sense of mankind, by promulgating such a sentiment as part of its creed. However individuals or nations may act, however they may assail the rights of man, or wrest from him his liberties, they all equally and all *profess* regard for natural rights, the protection and security of which they claim as the object of the formation of their respective systems.

Rights have an existence, aside from conventional arrangements or unnatural partialities. They are of higher origin and of purer birth. They are inferrable from the settled and primary sentiments of man's nature. The