FELLOW-CITIZENS—Charged with the responsibility and duty of doing what we may to advance the interest and promote the general welfare of a people lately enslaved, and who, though now free, still suffer many of the disadvantages and evils derived from their former condition, not the least among which is the low and unjust estimate entertained of their abilities and possibilities as men, and their value as citizens of the republic; instructed by these people to make such representations and adopt such measures as in our judgment may help to bring about a better understanding and a more friendly feeling between themselves and their white fellow-citizens, recognizing the great fact as we do, that the relations of the American people and those of civilized nations generally depend more upon prevailing ideas, opinions and long established usages for their qualities of good and evil than upon courts of law or creeds of religion. Allowing the existence of a magnanimous disposition on your part to listen candidly to an honest appeal for fair play, coming from any class of your fellow-citizens, however humble, who may have, or may think they have, rights to assert or wrongs to redress, the members of this National Convention, chosen from all parts of the United States, representing the thoughts, feelings and purposes of colored men generally, would, as one means of advancing the cause commanding them, most respectfully and earnestly ask your attention and favorable consideration to the matters contained in the present paper.

At the outset we very cordially congratulate you upon the altered condition both of ourselves and our common country. Especially do we congratulate you upon the fact that a great reproof, which for two centuries rested on the good name of your country, has been blotted out; that chattel slavery is no longer the burden of the colored man's complaint, and that we now come to rattle no chains, to clank no fetters, to paint no horrors of the old plantation to shock your sensibilities, to humble your pride, excite your pity, or to kindle your indignation. We rejoice also that one of the results of this stupendous revolution in our national history, the republic which was before divided and weakened between two hostile and irreconcilable interests, has become united and strong; that from a low plain of life, which bordered upon barbarism, it has risen to the possibility of the highest civilization; that this change has started the American Republic on a new departure, full of promise, although it has also brought you and ourselves face to face with problems novel and difficult, destined to impose upon us responsibilities and duties, which, plainly enough, will tax our highest mental and moral ability for their happy solution.

Born on American soil in common with yourselves, deriving our bodies and our minds from