

tion, enterprise and improvement in physical, political, intellectual and moral sciences; and, whereas, among our white neighbors every exertion is continually being made to improve their social and moral condition, and develop their intellectual faculties; and, whereas, it is a duty which mankind, (colored as well as white,) owe to themselves and their Creator to embrace every opportunity for the accomplishment of this mental culture, and intellectual development, and general social improvement; and, whereas, we, the free colored people of the State of Maryland, are conscious that we have made little or no progress in improvement during the past twenty years, but are now sunken into a condition of social degradation which is truly deplorable, and the continuing to live in which we cannot but view as a crime and transgression against our God, ourselves and our posterity; and, whereas, we believe that a crisis in our history has arrived when we may choose for ourselves degradation, misery and wretchedness, on the one hand, or happiness, honor and enlightenment on the other, by pursuing one of the two paths which are now laid before us for our consideration and choice; may we not, therefore, hope that our people will awaken from their lethargic slumbers, and seek for themselves that future course of conduct which will elevate them from their present position and place them on an equality with the other more advanced races of mankind—may we not hope that they will consider seriously the self-evident proposition that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with the same privilege of exerting themselves for their own and each other's benefit; and, whereas, in view of these considerations, and in order to commence the great and glorious work of our own moral elevation, and of our social and intellectual improvement, we are of the opinion that an organization of the friends of this just and holy cause is absolutely necessary for effecting the object so much to be desired, and we are therefore—

Resolved, That we will, each and every one, here pledge ourselves to each other and to our God, to use, on every and all occasions, our utmost efforts to accomplish the objects set forth in the foregoing preamble; and that we will, now, and forever hereafter, engraft this truth in our prayers, our hopes, our instructions to our brethren and our children—namely, that degradation is a sin and a source of misery, and it is a high, an honorable and a blessed privilege we enjoy, the right to improve ourselves and transmit to posterity happiness instead of our misery—knowledge instead of our ignorance.

Resolved, That while we appreciate and acknowledge the sincerity of the motives and the activity of the zeal of those who, during an agitation of twenty years have honestly struggled to place us on a footing of social and political equality with the white population of the country, yet we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that no advancement has been made towards the result to us so desirable; but that on the contrary, our condition as a class is less desirable now than it was twenty years ago.

Resolved, That in the face of an immigration from Europe, which is greater each year than it was the year preceding, and during the prevalence of a feeling in regard to us, which the very agitation intended for good has only served apparently to embitter, we cannot promise ourselves that the future will do that which the past has failed to accomplish.

Resolved, That we recognize in ourselves the capacity of conducting our own public affairs in a manner at once creditable and well calculated to further among us the cause of religion, virtue, morality, truth and enlightenment—and to acquire for ourselves the possession and enjoyment of that elevated refinement which so much adorns and beautifies social intercourse among mankind, and leads them to a proper appreciation of the relations existing between man and Deity—man and his fellow men, and man and that companion whom God has bestowed upon him, to console him in the hour of trouble and darkness, or enjoy with him the blessings that heaven vouchsafed occasionally to shower upon our pathway through life.

Resolved, That in a retrospective survey of the past, we see between the white and colored races a disparity of thought, feeling and intellectual advancement, which convinces us that it cannot be that the two races will ever overcome their natural prejudices towards each other sufficiently to dwell together in harmony and in the enjoyment of like social and political privileges, and we therefore hold that a separation of ourselves from our white neighbors, many of whom we cannot but love and admire for the generosity they have displayed towards us from time to time, is an object devoutly to be desired and the consummation of which would tend to the natural advantage of both races.

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

VIII. Commissions and Reports

D. Reports of the Board of Managers 1852-53