

# A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

— OF THE —

## Proposed Afro-American Industrial Petition to the Congress of the U. S. of America.

[Proposed and Advocated by J. S. STEMONS, Nicodemus, Kansas.]

**Whereas,** WE, the Colored People of the United States of America, have sustained, and do sustain, grievances that are intolerable, industrially, as well as socially; and

**WHEREAS,** These (industrial) grievances have been made known to the public through the press, and through certain circulars—"How Does it Feel to be a Negro?"—which have been circulated through the various States of the Union, causing said grievances to be personally acknowledged by ——— thousand white, and by ——— thousand colored persons; and

**WHEREAS,** We have never rebelled against our Government, either individually or collectively, on account of said grievances. Neither have we resorted to the use of the torch or dynamite bomb upon the private or public property of individuals, or corporations, in retaliation of our grievances; and

**WHEREAS,** The foreign population of the United States of America *threaten* our Government by these, and by many other means, by inciting the PEOPLE to, and plunging the COUNTRY into riots and rebellions, through a restlessness and dissatisfaction with work and rights, that are granted to them, and denied one-eighth of the TRUE and LOYAL CITIZENS of the United States:

WE, Therefore, the Colored People of the United States of America, do pray and petition the Congress of the United States of America—not through mobs and riots; not through any anarchistic demonstrations, or secret organizations; not through marching to Washington *en masse* to force our measures—but through the great representatives of the colored, as well as the *white*, citizens of the United States, (the Congressmen of the United States), to immediately, by appropriate legislation, enact such a law, or laws, as will insure to all citizens of the United States of America, regardless of race, color, or nationality, undisputed and equal rights to the resources of the United States of America, that are to be reached through labor, common or skilled; or in case of the inability of Congress to enact such a law, or laws to—in view of the labor riots and mobs that have been so prevalent—forthwith make a proviso in the Constitution of the United States of America, that will exempt such oppressed persons from being COMPELLED to go upon the battlefield to sacrifice THEIR lives for trouble and wars, that foreigners (and such Americans as may be implicated) have caused, by a discontentment in the possession of rights and privileges that are not accorded to such oppressed persons. *mobs etc.*

### NOTE—TO THE COLORED PEOPLE:

We all know that we have never had any kind of a chance, industrially, as compared with the white people, or with any foreigners who come to the United States, especially in the States, excluding the South.

But we have no reason to censure the WHITE people for this state of affairs.

The fact that we have *never* enjoyed these rights, after a residence of 275 years in the United States, is *self-evidence* that we never *will* enjoy them unless we call for them OURSELVES. Less than one year of industrial depression started Mr. J. S. Coxe, with thousands of followers and sympathizers, to Washington, to demand *their* "rights." The colored race suffers more industrial wrongs in one year than a million Coxes would suffer in a life time; but how many times have WE started to Washington, or any other place, to get a redress of OUR grievances? In OUR great labor straits WE represent the ACTIVE; the WHITE PEOPLE represent the PASSIVE; and, unless WE act, we will be in this, and a worse, state of industrial subjugation until time shall cease.

We are CITIZENS of the United States, and if we are not TREATED and REGARDED as citizens, it is our DUTY AS MEN to apply to the proper authorities for the RIGHTS of citizens, and if the authorities refuse to CONSIDER our request it will be to THEIR EVERLASTING SHAME and DISGRACE.

We have been, as I have said, "slaves" in one way or another for 275 years. We can easily MAKE ourselves slaves for 275 years longer, by saying that we cannot get justice. Say that "We need not petition Congress, for they will not consider the petition," and you have added another STRONG link to the chain that binds us. To *whom* and to what will we petition, if not to the Congress of the United States?

We are, as a race, certainly "in a hole," and it is with us whether we will come out of that "hole," or REMAIN therein, and die like brutes!

I believe that there are more than enough *Christian* white people in the United States, to assist us from our awful condition, when once WE make a decided effort, and who will rejoice with us when we shall have secured the enjoyment of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Mere talking and writing of our condition will do no good. We must take DECIDED action! Let us act now, by asking all persons who believe in "justice to all mankind," let such persons be white or colored, women or men, old or young, professional or non-professional, Republicans or Democrats—to acquaint themselves with our industrial straits, by procuring one of the circulars above referred to, which sets forth in a clear and truthful way our industrial grievances, and they will substantiate their SYMPATHY by giving their *names*, to be used in our behalf. If we can get enough sympathizers to warrant such action—which we doubtless can—we will submit these names to the Republican Congressional nominees, or to those whom we may deem the most likely to favor our measure, this fall (1894), asking them (the Congressional nominees) to support a petition that we will present (through some one of them) to Congress, of which petition the foregoing is a brief text; and in consideration of their (the Congressmen's) support of said petition, we will CERTAINLY support THEM with our votes.

In conclusion: If we wish to sustain any "race pride"—if we wish to prove to the world that we ARE MEN in our hearts as well as in our figures; that we DO "know our rights and DARE maintain them;" let us, for ONE time, act with promptness and decision in this matter, and the white people will meet us "half way."

We HURT ourselves every TIME we make an effort and FAIL, and we DISGRACE ourselves when we make no effort at all. Yours, for the industrial justice of all mankind,

JAMES S. STEMONS,

No. 1303 Jefferson St., Baltimore, Md., [Nicodemus, Kans.]

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