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Albion W. Tourgee, Esq.,

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Mayville, Chautauqua Co., N.Y.

My Dear Sir:-- Anything which has your name connected with it always attracts my attention. A very intelligent young colored man handed me an envelope containing certificate No. 5372 of the National Citizens Rights Association, to which your name is attached as Provisional President; also a circular unfolding the object and purposes of the association; containing also an appeal to organize under it, which is full of exactly right and infinitely true doctrine, and showing how the organization is to be carried on; also a subscription list.

This is a new movement to me, but I am inclined to think that it can be made to go, and be made a positive success.

No man in the United States understands better than you the condition in which the lovers of liberty and justice in the southern states, are placed. Those who have placed themselves squarely upon the platform of the republican party, and who are outspoken, fearless and unyielding in defense of this party, have been for a long time and are yet, between the devil and the deep blue sea. The devil on the one side to persecute, torment and devour him if he will not give up, and the raging ~~of this~~ on the other if he goes in the only organization which has ever existed here, called the republican party.

You may not right here be thoroughly posted. Practically the trouble is just this --- When we set out to get up a convention of any kind if it is to be made truly representative, there must be primary elections. In every precinct there is either some aspiring and overbearing black man or some selfish and corrupt white man who has control of the machine. They nominate delegates that are to be elected, and if there is any danger of their being defeated they elect them secretly and certify them to the convention. No other certificate but that of the machine counts. Therefore the conventions of the republican party, whether municipal, county or state, are made up of a lot of howling dervishes who are played upon by designing and ambitious men, nearly always without ability or merit, and the conscientious, intelligent and really valuable members of the party will have nothing to do either with the conventions or their nominees. It is therefore now the fashion for a man to say -- "I vote the national republican ticket but the democratic ticket for everything else".

In this state the ~~skunk~~ leaders of the party have absolutely determined to permit no nominees for county, state or national offices. This chiefly and almost solely because it is impossible to elect any of them anyhow, or if they are elected to have them counted in, or if they are counted in to have

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them commissioned, but behind and beneath all this is a feeling of disgust and dismay at the way the party is run when there is any running done.

Did you ever see a republican convention in the south, made up as they nearly always are, of three fourths black? If you have seen such you can appreciate the danger we are in of being managed and controlled by such a howling mob. I admit that it is astounding to note how many really good men they will nominate.

Can you suggest any plan or devise any method by which a sufficient number of intelligent, upright and sensible men can be induced to take the leadership of the republican party in each county in the south? The only real difficulty is that the black voters who outnumber the whites, insist upon sending their own representatives, and there is no earthly way of getting ahead of them or around them.

The National Citizens Rights Association is all right and ought to be promoted. I enclose some stamps for circulars and literature and for a certificate of membership.

In the spring of 1888 I personally and almost alone took up the organization of the republicans in this state into republican league clubs, these into state league of republican clubs, and we have been admitted into the National League of Republican Clubs. The Harrison and Morton Club of this city (white) of which I was President for three years, declining re-election, is composed of over two hundred members. We meet once a month, sometimes oftener. This is the only live club in the state that I know of. Now that the presidential campaign is on I suppose these league clubs will reorganize. We printed 5000 constitutions and sent them to the leading members of the party at every P.O. and in every precinct in the state. But now suppose we have a state convention of these clubs -- the black brother as you know, is very fond of being called "Mr. President" or "Mr. Chairman", and it will be difficult to prevent the body from being presided over by one of them. Unfortunately those who are most popular and really efficient, have not the unbounded confidence in the leading white members of the party. I cannot and will not give up, and yet I do not know exactly how to go on.

The White republican clubs and white republican conventions are inconsistent with the principles which we avow and promote, but the mixed clubs and mixed conventions are always or nearly so, a miserable nuisance.

I have unhesitated myself thus to you, consenting that you may make known the contents of this letter to your trusted colleagues, if you chose, but knowing that it would do more harm than good to publish it, I forbid the publication.

The difficulty in our way seems to be insuperable, and the only way of overcoming it at all is to labor and to wait, to educate, advise, instruct, persuade. If you have anything to suggest I would be pleased to hear from you. Please do not be deceived.

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The difficulty is real, and at present insurmountable.

It is the privilege of the black man to assert and maintain his rights just as fully and completely as the white man asserts and maintains his, but in doing this ignorance, selfishness and folly reign supreme because of this assertion, over wisdom, patriotism and ability.

I have appropriated valuable time which could have been more presently profitably used, to formulate and indict this episode, and as the subject is of great importance I should be greatly pleased to hear from you, and it will please me much more to find the way out of the dilemma in which we are placed here.

Yours most Resp'y,

James R. Challen