Mayville N.Y.
June 24th 1892

Rev. Geo. W. Gaines —

Dear Sir: I have yours of yesterday with enclosed interview.

I cannot imagine anything more perilous to the future of the colored citizen than such a movement as you propose, for the following reasons:

1— Any distinctively colored political movement will alienate every white friend of equal rights and protected citizenship in the country.

2— It will generally be regarded as a blackmailing, selling out movement and will strengthen the prevailing belief that the colored man of the South is in politics "for revenue only," and not for the good of his people.

3— Until the meeting of the Democratic Convention and the adoption of its platform, such a movement might have had some apparent excuse. Now, it has none. The

colored man who can read the second article of that platform and then vote to put the Democratic party in power directly or, indirectly, deserves to suffer that entire loss of right which it clearly threatens. Never before has even that party so openly proclaimed the ~~right~~ prerogative of the State to nullify the Constitution of the United States in order to oppress your people.

4— If the Republican party is neglectful of its full duty, that does not justify any lover of liberty in giving aid and comfort to the professed and open enemies of equal rights and universal citizenship.

5— There are but two grounds on which a separate party organization of those desiring the assertion and enforcement of the power conveyed in the Constitution can be justified. The one is the hope of

securing control of the National government. This you admit is not to be expected. My own opinion is that such a movement would not carry more than one-fourth of the colored vote, not any of the white vote, and would hopelessly degrade the colored citizen as a political factor. (2) The only other ground on which it could be justified would be the hope that it might compel the Republican party to take more pronounced ground in favor of equal rights and protection to the citizen. I suppose it should have a contrary effect and incline the Republican party to assent to the repeal of the 14th and 15th Amendments and the disfranchisement of the colored man in the States of the North as well as of the South. You do not seem

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to have thought of this as a possibility. I have trembled for years lest it should occur.

6— I have no doubt that with a Democratic House, Senate and President, an Amendment to repeal those Amendments would be passed. There is no doubt that several Republican Senators would support such a measure and it is my candid conviction that at least ten of the States of the North would favor such an amendment.

7— You must remember that the power to repeal a party does not imply the power to control its subsequent action. One tenth of the white Republican vote going to the Democracy would be sufficient to secure such repeal. How long would it then take the colored race to secure even as good a standing under the Constitution and laws

of the United States,
as they now have? The man
who throws away his bread
because he is not given cake,
is a fool; but the man who
imperils a people's only hope
from mere petulance is some-
thing much worse.

10— A man has a right to protest
and it is his duty to use his
ballot to secure all he can
of justice and liberty for him-
self and his people; but he
has no right to imperil all that
they have because he does not
at once gain all that he de-
sires. His first plain duty is
to secure what show of right
and liberty has already been se-
cured and work for more
without endangering that. The
only hope of the colored citizen's
right depends on the Fourteenth
Amendment: if the Republican par-
ty once drops his cause openly

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and avowedly, that will be re=
peaked.

11— A party movement which has no purpose but mere resent=ment neither benefits the cause it claims to represent nor does honor to its originators and supporters. On the contrary it induces the almost universal be=lief that its leaders promote it for their personal interests only. In this case, I think this would be the almost universal belief.

12— The thing of supreme importance is to secure favorable legislation. We know that Mr Harrison would not sign such a measure as the repeal of these amendments; it is morally certain that Mr Cleveland would. In my opinion, therefore, those who really desire the rights of the citizen to be protected and secured will seek to pledge the Republican ~~Representatives and~~

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Republican candidates for the House, for the ~~[illegible]~~ by State Legislatures and for all other offices, to the support of the legislation we desire. If they will not pledge themselves to it we have a right and it is our duty not to vote for them; but no man has a right to vote for a party which antagonizes his political principles, merely because another does not go far enough and fast enough to wholly please him. That is a puerile throwing away of what has been secured because some one has not given us all we ask. Remember there has been no organized effort for [illegible] to secure justice and equal rights except during the last eight months; and it is a work we should be glad enough if we were able to achieve

in a life time.

13— I cannot too strongly dwell on the danger of a <u>colored political movement</u>.

The chief argument against the colored citizen, as such, at the South, is that he makes his race the line of political preference and action. The known he was driven to it there but if he chooses it here, he arms his enemy with a club to kill his hope and chance.

Even the protest should not be distinctively colored but should be that of <u>citizens</u> without regard to color and I think the interrogation and pledging of candidates should be made without clamor and in as quiet a way as possible. If a man will agree in writing to support the proper legislation we can and ought I think, to relieve him from fear of de-

feat by ~~too~~ too much publicity pending the election. It looks now as if the Democrats would press this issue especially. If they do it will force the Republicans up to firmer and better ground.

14— I must again call your attention to the fact that it is to the conscience, ~~of the~~ the humanity and the patriotism of the Northern white voter alone, that the colored man citizen can look for justice and protection just as ~~it was~~ to him ~~that~~ he is indebted for release from bondage. Without this he is powerless and hopeless. Without this he is as sure to slip back to the position of a mere "inhabitant" of the several states as defined in the Dred Scott decision, as the sun is to shine. Now, consider what hold he has on this Northern voter and whether he can afford to play any desperate odds with it.

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I and the 200,000 other colored voters of the U.C.R.A. believe in his equal right and are ready to work and fight for it. We have no special interest in party results, aside from that, however. We have, with difficulty, held the party from slipping backward in its apparent policy. We have stirred an interest in the matter such as excelled in a dozen years. What would be the effect of such a movement as you propose on the Association? I do not know; but I think it would be the same as a red blanket just front on a field of wheat in the milk. If you have any other hold upon the colored sentiment or colored vote of the North, I do not know it.

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We believe that in the next four years we can develope and increase this to an irresistible and enthralling force in the Republican party, but with the action you propose to take, it will be useless to attempt to move another step in that direction. Whether your people will gain anything by destroying this movement is for you to say. We would certainly, relieve me of no small trouble, though it is doubtful if your people would again be in a position as favorable as the present in a century to come.

We seems to me a time for caution not rashness; for patience

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prudence and deliberation rather than precipitancy and extravagance of claim on demand. In my opinion, the friends of liberty and equal right should hold a quiet council of one prudent delegate from each state, to meet somewhere without speeches on parade, to formulate quietly and accurately our protest and our demand after the present excitement is over, when the candidates have accepted and the campaign ~~is full~~ has fully disclosed the animus and position of each party.

It seems to me, therefore, that the wisest thing your body of self-chosen delegates can do is to adjourn; but if you shall elect to go on, I shall be your debtor for release from

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there is no hesitation. In such a difficult position as the present, it is always wise to take counsel with time. The colored man has more at stake than any class of American citizens ever had before and has unfortunately, as much to lose as to gain. Let the XIVth Amendment be repealed and he goes back at least a century. I am sorry to say these things, but there seems to be no one else standing outside the sweep of personal interest or party expediency who cares to analyze the situation carefully and speak of it truly.

I have never hesitated to ~~[illegible]~~ lash the Republican party when remiss in duty or to criticise the President. I thought the latter should have sent message after message to Congress on the subject of the extension of personal and political rights. This he could

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have done. He could not have done anything more in that direction. He did not manifest a just consideration for the colored laborer in connection with the World's Fair. For this he deserves the severest censure. It was an act of gross and inexcusable injustice. But you must reflect that the party whose candidate he is is the only one which has ever attempted an indictment with a desire to secure the colored citizen in the free exercise of any of his rights. You cannot well strike him without striking them. To do that will be to deprive yourselves of all moral backing in the country and leave it simply ~~the colored man~~ against a race issue. This is of all things to be most deplored.

You must remember, too, that we

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one has been more remiss on this matter than the colored people of the North. Of the 200,000, ~~the~~ members of the Nat. Cit. Rights Association not more than 5,000, if so many are colored. Yet it is especially the battle of the colored man this noble army of liberty-lovers undertook to fight. If the colored people of the North had given the Association their hearty support and swelled its numbers as they might, we should have been able to command all we could reasonably ask at the convention. They did not do it: I have no reproaches: the loss is theirs but they have such a narrow margin, that they cannot afford to miss opportunities or alienate friends. The Allied party offers no hope for many reasons; but one is sufficient: if it should carry a

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few states the only consequence ~~result~~ would be to throw the election into the House where the only possible result would be the election of a Democrat.

If there were enough white and colored voters pledged to the maintenance of the ~~Citizens~~ rights of the National Citizen to prevent any danger of the repeal of the amendment of the Constitution on which national citizenship rests, the course you propose might be taken. But it is not a safe thing to do until we have a million voters — who believe in liberty and justice and have so declared. Even then, it would have to be a Citizens' movement and not a colored citizens movement. My candid conviction is that such a course as you propose would prevent the Republican party from ever again attempting

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to assert or secure the rights of the colored citizen. What would they do? Simply accede to the Democratic demand to re-establish "State Sovereignty" and leave the colored man to get up to citizenship again as he could. It seems to me an incredible risk for our people to run with no possible hope of gain.

As to Douglas, Brown, and Lynch, &c, it is not wise to be misled by resentment against them any more than by sympathy for Langston's resentment. Liberty is a thing to be played for with a cool head and work with a level brain. The colored race in the United States should first of all aim to hold what it has and then gain all it can. It has no strength to waste in chasing rabbits or indulging resentments. The colored delegates at Minneapolis were placed in the difficult position of supporting Mr. Harrison or seeming to prefer Mr. Blaine. This forced them

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to elect between two men. The one had not done what he ought for their people; the other had not only failed to do what he ought but is the specific representative of that sentiment of the Republican party which favors the abandonment of all effort to approve the condition of the colored citizen at the South. Whose supporters claimed for him a purpose to "settle the race problem" by allowing the states of the South full power to do as they may elect with the colored man. Under these circumstances I cannot blame any man for ~~it~~ supporting Mr. Harrison. I thought there was a good fighting chance for Reed ~~but cannot blame~~ simply because I knew that Blaine was largely ~~only~~ a pretence on the part of his apparent supporters. ~~I cannot~~ I cannot blame any one for distrusting such a man, however.

People who have nothing to lose like the Prohibitionists or Alliance may indulge in mere resentment but people who have everything to lose ~~at~~ like the colored citizens

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of the United States, should ask them=
selves, not "Whom can we injure?"
but "What can our people gain
~~by any~~ at any particular juncture?"

I think it may be wise for the Citizens' Rights Association ~~to pr~~ to do three things, by and bye;

1 — Protest against Republican remissness and denounce Democratic animosity to nat. citizenship.

2 — To recommend the support of Republican nominees for Congress who pledge themselves to support just legislation.

3 — To ~~demand a~~ call public attention still more clearly to the legal rights of the citizen even yet but half=comprehended by the people.

~~It seems to me, therefore, that your~~ It seems to me, therefore, that the meeting you have called would do most good by appealing to the National Citizen's Rights

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Association, to hold a council to express the general sentiments of those who favor justice and equal rights to all citizens of the United States in whatever state they may reside. This will take away from it the heedless quality of a mere movement; will leave you in an attitude of watchfulness over your own rights, and will indicate prudence rather than rashness. Remove the suspicion of cruelty and coercion must hold with you all the white sentiment which nearly means justice. You can lose nothing by this course: you stand to win much.

This is the way the matter appears me. I only give my opinion because you ask it. Personally, it would no doubt be to my advantage that you should not act upon it. I have nothing to gain by the desperate struggle I have long waged almost single

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branded for your people's rights and the cause you fought would give me an honorable discharge from a comfort it would shame under wholly vain. I should then have the satisfaction of having done what I could without having any responsibility for the failure of my efforts.

Sincerely Yours

Wm W. Tangée