ADDRESS

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Ohio:

Gentlemen:—We, the disfranchised Colored Citizens of Ohio, assembled in General Convention, feeling deeply the grievous wrongs unjustly imposed upon us by the prohibitions implied in the first Section of the fifth Article of the Constitution of the State, and knowing the people have the right to assemble together, in a peaceful manner, to counsel for their common good, and petition the General Assembly for a redress of grievances; and, believing it to be a solemn duty we owe to ourselves, our posterity, and the honor and dignity of the free State of Ohio, to use every constitutional means which the law-makers of Ohio have left [in] our power, to remove from our necks the burdens too grievous to be borne; we do, therefore, most earnestly, in the name of our common humanity, in the name of the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights of the State of Ohio, ask your Honorable Body to take the necessary constitutional steps to strike the word "white" from the section before referred to, and to all other places in which it occurs in the Constitution, and thereby abrogate the unwise and unjust distinction therein made between the citizens of the State on account of the accident of color. The section referred to is couched in the following language: "Art. V. Sec. 1. Every white male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been a resident of the State one year next preceding the election, and of the county, township, or ward in which he resides, such times as may be provided by law, shall have the qualifications of an elector, and be entitled to vote at all elections."

The first reason we will assign for the removal of this odious word from the Constitution of a professedly free State, is, that we are MEN. This, to our minds, seems an all sufficient plea. Human rights are not to be graduated by the shades of color that tinge the cheeks of men. Any being, however low in the scale of civilization, that yet preserves the traits that serve to distinguish humanity from the brutes, is endowed with all rights that can be claimed by the most cultivated races of men.

That we are men, we will not insult your intelligence by attempting to prove. The most bitter revilers and oppressors of the race admit this, even in the enactments by which they wrong us. Statutes and ordinances are not necessary for the regulation and control of animals, but men, reasoning men, who can understand and obey, or plot to overthrow. The section of which we complain, by defining that white men may exercise the right of franchise, virtually admits that there are black men who are by the rule prohibited from voting. We ask any who doubt our manhood, Hath not the negro eyes? Hath not the negro hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?--fed with the same food--hurt with the same weapons--subject to the same diseases --healed by the same means--warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter, as the white man is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?

We ask you to ponder the danger of circumscribing the great doctrines of human equality, which our fathers promulgated and defended at the cost of so much blood and treasure, to the narrow bounds of races or nations. All men are by nature equal, and have inalienable rights, or none have. We beg you to reflect how insecure your own and the liberties of your posterity would be by the admission of such a rule of construing the rights of men. Another nation or race may displace you, as you have displaced nations and races; and the injustice you teach, they may execute; perchance they may better the instruction. Remember, in your pride and power, 'That we are all children of one Father, and all ye are brethren.'

But the principles upon which our Government is founded, condemn the practice of excluding colored men from the advantages of the ballot box. To uphold the principle that taxation and representation should go together, the union between Great Britain and the American Colonies was broken, and a desolating war of seven years' duration was waged. As proof of the correctness