

# Memorial Presented to Governor Frank O. Lowden by Chicago Select Citizens' Committee

To His Excellency Frank O. Lowden, Governor of Illinois:

This memorial is presented to your Excellency in behalf of two hundred thousand citizens of your state who belong to the Colored race—or citizen of African descent.

The recent mob violence directed against our people in East St. Louis proves conclusively that something is radically wrong, either in our system of government or in the conceptions of justice and Christianity of the American people, at the foundation of the trouble.

The government of the United States was founded for liberty and justice to all people. Its soldiers are now on the battle-front in Europe ready to fight for universal democracy; the Colored citizens are called upon to tender their quota both by volunteers and by conscription, for the maintenance of the high ideal of our country and the protection of its institutions, and in no emergency have we failed to respond to our country's call.

If the Constitution of our native land affords protection to all citizens, naturalized and native born, except the citizen of African descent, we should know it.

If the fight for a world democracy means that all people should share in its benefits, except the American Negro, the world should be made to understand the limitations of its fight for freedom and opportunity.

We are in no position to exercise force. We would be reckless and foolhardy indeed to do other than appeal to the best conscience of the American people and ask that the Constitution be respected as to all citizens alike.

In the struggle for advancement and the betterment of the conditions of the masses the Negro is animated by the same impulses that influence all other human beings. We shall not willingly submit to be serfs in a land of freemen.

We shall demand, with all the energy at our command, that the rights of citizens be accorded us, and that our government protect us against all lawbreakers when those rights are invaded.

The member of the mob who bands with others to trample upon the Constitution and the laws is just as much a traitor to his country as the slacker and the spy in time of war.

Such men should be dealt with as traitors and the heavy hand of the law should come down upon them; and every loyal American should rally to the maintenance of the law and insist upon the swift and sure punishment of the lawless.

We wish to voice our vigorous protest against all influence which tends to justify the deprivation or curtailment of the rights of the citizens.

We protest against the conclusions of the State Council of Defense to the effect that citizens should not freely travel from one section of our country to another in their effort to better their condition and prepare for the future of their children. If foreigners may freely come and find a peaceful domicile in any part of the United States, we insist that no provision of our Constitution justifies the limiting the rights of the native born Colored citizen in the enjoyment of such privileges.

We protest against those organizations which, under the pretext of bettering the condition of the laboring man, would violate the sacred principles of the Constitution of the land by depriving other citizens, through threats, intimidation and violence, of the rights that they themselves enjoy.

The time has come when all the world should know whether our country stands for freedom and justice and equality for all citizens, under the law, or whether any part or class of its citizenship is to be deprived of those privileges with the sanction of the Government—local or national.

Twelve million Negroes await anxiously the settlement of this momentous question.

We are but a "drop in the ocean" as compared to one hundred million citizens of America. We can do naught but appeal to the best conscience and Christian spirit of that vast body of American citizens who believe in law—who believe in God—who believe in the destiny of America—to point the way to a great freedom and a wider liberty to all the peoples of the earth.

If the answer should be, that to us alone these blessings shall be denied, and for us must be slavery and serfdom or annihilation, we are ready for the sacrifice—for never will we, of choice, accept anything but justice.

But should that day come (and God grant it may not!), freedom will have perished from the face of the earth and Christianity will be but a mockery.

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