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Target Audience: Elementary-3rd-5th (can be modified for older students)

Description: The Proceedings of The Colored National Convention

Submitted by: Charlie Sanders

The Delegates of the National Convention of Colored Freemen, met in the Court House in Cleveland, Ohio on Wednesday, September 6th, 1848, at 10 o'clock a.m. to discuss issues of importance to people of color as black people referred to themselves at this time in history. This convention, known as **The Colored National Convention**, took place just thirteen years before the Civil War. The people that met considered themselves abolitionists because of their stand on slavery. Frederick Douglas was one of the key persons at this convention and a member of the committee. He was elected President of the National Colored Convention and presided over this meeting along with H. Bibb, D.H. Jenkins, A.H. Francis, and W.L. Day. Issues of importance that were brought up at the convention included:

- the ongoing issue of slavery
- provisions of free land for free men of color (not just white men)
- equal access to jobs of all professions since many men of color were as well or better educated than many of their white peers
- fair and equal representation in government since men of color were taxed along with white men yet not given fair and equal treatment under the laws of that time period
- Schools to educate all children of color

The issues listed were discussed and resolutions were made in which those present took a stand on the issues they wanted to take action on and work on until the next convention was held.

Also discussed was the fact that the majority of Christian American Churches did not take a stand against slavery and by their failure to voice an opinion for or against slavery, they did not stand for the freedom and equality of all men of God.

The following are selected resolutions taken from the original document discussed at The Colored National Convention. Questions follow each set of selected materials.

14. Resolved, That as Liberty is a right inherent in man, and cannot be arrested without the most flagrant outrage, we recommend to our brethren in bonds, to embrace every favorable opportunity of affecting their escape.

15. Resolved that we pledge ourselves individually, to use all justifiable means in aiding our enslaved brethren in escaping from the Southern Prison House of Bondage.

16. Resolved, that we recommend to the colored people everywhere, to use every just effort in getting their children into schools, in common with others in their several locations.

17. Resolved, that American Slavery is politically and morally an evil of which this country stands guilty, and cannot be abolished alone through the instrumentality of moral persuasion and whereas the two great political parties of the Union have by their acts and nominations betrayed the sacred cause of human freedom, and whereas, a Convention recently assembled in the city of Buffalo having for its object the establishment of a party in support of free soil for a free people, and Whereas said Convention adopted for its platform the following noble expression, " Free

Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor and Free Men," and believing these expressions well calculated to increase the interest now felt in behalf of the down-trodden and oppressed of this land...

Discussion Questions on the above selected resolutions:

1. The above listed resolutions are from the "Proceedings of The Colored National Convention. Explain the expression "Free soil, free speech, free labor and Free Men".
2. Write a brief summary of the resolutions given above. Consider the following questions in your summary: Are the writers of these resolutions advocating for laws to be broken? Do you agree or disagree with the sentiments expressed in the above resolutions?
3. Do moral rights take precedence over man made laws? Consider the issue of slavery discussed above. Write an argument for or against unjust laws.

Whereas, we firmly believe with the Fathers of 76 that taxation and representation ought to go together; therefore, Resolved, That we are very much in doubt as to the propriety of paying any tax upon which representation is based, until we are permitted to be represented.

Discussion Questions on the above paragraph:

1. During this period in history, free people of color were taxed on goods just as were white men, yet they were not allowed to vote. Is this fair and why or why not?
2. What is being referenced in the statement: "Fathers of 76" and why is this of importance to free men of color?

Resolved, that, as a body, the professed Christian American Churches generally, by their support, defense, and participation in the damning sin of American Slavery, as well as cruel prejudice and proscription of free colored people, have forfeited every claim of confidence on our part, and therefore merit our severest reprobation.

Discussion Questions on the above paragraph:

1. Why do the free people of color make a resolution during the convention that states the Christian American Churches merit their severest reprobation and what is meant by this?
2. What issue has the attendees of the convention upset with the churches?