

The Founding of the NAACP

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People



OVERVIEW

"Call for the Lincoln Emancipation Conference in 1909," written by Oswald Garrison Villard, brought together the founders of what became the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Sixty prominent African American and white leaders signed the manifesto, which is reproduced here.

GUIDED READING As you read, consider the following questions:

- Why is Abraham Lincoln mentioned in this manifesto?
- Why is the North, as well as the South, at fault for the mistreatment and enslavement of African Americans?

To Discuss Means for Securing Political and Civil Equality for the Negro
The celebration of the centennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln widespread and grateful as it may be, will fail to justify itself if it takes no note and makes no recognition of the colored men and women to whom the great emancipator labored to assure freedom. Besides a day of rejoicing, Lincoln's birthday in 1909 should be one of taking stock of the nation's progress since 1865. How far has it lived up to the obligations imposed upon it by the Emancipation Proclamation? How far has it gone in assuring to each and every citizen, irrespective of color, the equality of opportunity and equality before the law, which underlie our American institutions and are guaranteed by the Constitution?

If Mr. Lincoln could revisit this country he would be disheartened by the nation's failure in this respect. He would learn that on January 1st, 1909, Georgia had rounded out a new oligarchy by disfranchising the negro after the manner of all the other Southern states. He would learn that the Supreme Court of the United States, designed to be a bulwark of American liberties, had failed to meet several opportunities to pass squarely upon this disfranchisement of millions by laws avowedly discriminatory and openly enforced in such manner that white men may vote and black men be without a vote in their government; he would discover, there, that taxation without representation is the lot of millions of wealth-producing American citizens, in whose hands rests the economic progress and welfare of an entire section of the country. He would learn that the Supreme Court, according to the official statement of one of its own judges in the Berea College case, has laid down the principle that if an individual State chooses it may "make it a crime for white and colored persons to frequent the same market place at the same time, or

appear in an assemblage of citizens convened to consider questions of a public or political nature in which all citizens, without regard to race, are equally interested." In many States Lincoln would find justice enforced, if at all, by judges elected by one element in a community to pass upon the liberties and lives of another. He would see the black men and women, for whose freedom a hundred thousand of soldiers gave their lives, sit apart in trains, in which they pay first-class fares for third-class service, in railway stations and in places of entertainment, while State after State declines to do its elementary duty in preparing the negro through education for the best exercise of citizenship.

Added to this, the spread of lawless attacks upon the negro, North, South and West—even in the Springfield made famous by Lincoln—often accompanied by revolting brutalities, sparing neither sex, nor age nor youth, could not but shock the author of the sentiment that "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

Silence under these conditions means tacit approval. The indifference of the North is already responsible for more than one assault upon democracy, and every such attack reacts as unfavorably upon whites as upon blacks. Discrimination once permitted cannot be bridled; recent history in the South shows that in forging chains for the negroes, the white voters are forging chains for themselves. "A house divided against itself cannot stand"; this government cannot exist half slave and half free any better to-day than it could in 1861. Hence we call upon all the believers in democracy to join in a national conference for the discussion of present evils, the voicing of protests, and the renewal of the struggle for civil and political liberty.

Miss Jane Addams, Chicago
Ray Stannard Baker, New York
Mrs. Ida Wells-Barnett, Chicago
Mrs. Harriet Stanton Blatch, New York
Mr. Samuel Bowles, (*Springfield Republican*)
Prof. W. L. Bulkley, New York
Miss Kate Claghorn, New York
E. H. Clement, Boston
Prof. John Dewey, New York
Miss Mary E. Dreier, Brooklyn
Prof. W. E. B. Du Bois, Atlanta
Dr. John L. Elliott, New York
Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, Boston
Rev. Francis J. Grimke, Washington, D.C.
Prof. Thomas C. Hall, New York
Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, Chicago
Rev. John Haynes Holmes, New York
Hamilton Holt, New York
William Dean Howells, New York
Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Chicago

Mrs. Florence Kelley, New York
Rev. Walter Laidlaw, New York
Rev. Frederick Lynch, New York
Miss Helen Marot, New York
Miss Mary E. McDowell, Chicago
Prof. J. G. Merrill, Connecticut
Mr. John E. Milholland, New York
Dr. Henry Moskowitz, New York
Miss Leonora O'Reilly, New York
Miss Mary W. Ovington, New York
Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, New York
Rev. John P. Peters, New York
J. G. Phelps-Stokes, New York
Louis F. Post, Chicago
Dr. Jane Robbins, New York
Charles Edward Russell, New York
William M. Salter, Chicago
Joseph Smith, Boston
Mrs. Anna Garlin Spencer, New York
Judge Wendell S. Stafford, Washington, D.C.
Lincoln Steffens, Boston
Miss Helen Stokes, New York
Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, Washington, D.C.
Prof. W. I. Thomas, Chicago
President Charles F. Thwing, Western Reserve University
Oswald Garrison Villard, New York
Mrs. Henry Villard, New York
Miss Lillian D. Wald, New York
Dr. J. Milton Waldron, Washington, D.C.
William English Walling, New York
Bishop Alexander Walters, New York
Dr. William H. Ward, New York
Mrs. Rodman Wharton, Philadelphia
Miss Susan P. Wharton, Philadelphia
Horace White, New York
Mayor Brand Whitlock, Toledo
Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, New York
President Mary E. Wooley, Mt. Holyoke College
Rev. M. St. Croix Wright, New York
Prof. Charles Zueblin, Boston