

The President on the Exodus

According to this unsigned article, Rev. John Turner and General Conway spoke with President Rutherford B. Hayes about the black exodus from the South. Hayes listened intently to their report of conditions in the South and agreed that blacks had the right to emigrate and would thrive once spread throughout the states. He also expressed his conviction that any of the emigrants' material needs would be readily supplied through aid organizations.

Creator: Topeka Colored Citizen

Date: June 7, 1879

Callnumber: Microfilm: T1031

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 210623

Item Identifier: 210623

www.kansasmemory.org/item/210623



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Rev. John Turner, and Gen. Conway while at Washington the other day called on President Hayes and had a long talk with him on the subject of the colored exodus question, and after telling him all they knew regarding the condition of the people and showing him documents and telegrams to prove that hundreds of migrationists were refused transportation on the regular line of boats, informed him that there was a movement on foot that looked to the chartering of boats and bringing the people away that desired to leave. The gentlemen informed the President that it was a part of their mission to find out what his views on the question were; from a letter in last week's *Christian Recorder*, we take the following excerpt, showing what the President had to say:

The President listened to the gentlemen with the deepest attention and said he recognized their errand to the Capitol as a most important one. He was very particular in ascertaining what proofs there were of the truth of the statements made to him, and seemed inclined to believe them to be true, because of the letters, telegrams and reports referred to. He expresses his views on the whole subject with great candor and is further reported to have said that, judging from the reports of Government officers and agents, as well as from other good sources of information, he thought the exodus was destined to become general, especially from those portions of the South where the greatest amount of persecution was inflicted upon the negroes, that there would be no need of funds to help the emigrants if the need of them were but properly made known to the good people of the country; that there could be no question of the right of the negro to emigrate when ever he saw fit to do so, and that this right would and should be maintained; that the interest of the negroes themselves, would, he thought be best secured by their scattering through the Western States, instead of crowding into any one of them, and that he had no doubt, from very extensive information on the subject, but that all who came from the South would get good employment, west of the Ohio. He said also that the exodus would do good and in fact had done good already.

General Conway desired to know definitely whether the President approved the proposition to go with chartered boats and deliver the thousands on the banks of the river. The President said he thought the step ought to be taken as one of justice and humanity. General Conway said "suppose the planters of their agents use violent means to prevent such boats from accomplishing their object, could the Government be relied upon to give its protection". With considerable spirit and earnestness the President replied; Such resistance to lawful business, carried on a national highway, such as the Mississippi is, would be rebellion, and there would be no doubt but that the Government would afford its protection". Then said Gen. Conway with that most satisfactory assurance we will undertake the work of delivering our poor fellow-citizens who are in bondage on the river banks