

grow greater, more glorious and free, I shall vote as I wish you all to vote—for the whole Republican ticket. Vote for every man named. Vote for the long term and vote for the short term. Especially vote for the long term. (Applause.)

WE NEED A TRUE, STRONG, AND PRINCIPLED PARTY:
ADDRESSES DELIVERED IN WASHINGTON, D.C.,
ON 29 MARCH 1871

Washington Evening Star, 29, 30 March 1871. Other texts in the *Washington Daily National Republican*, 30 March 1871; *Washington Daily Morning Chronicle*, 30 March 1871; *New National Era*, 6 April 1871.

At noon on 29 March 1871, Republican delegates convened in Washington's Urban League Hall to select the party's candidate for delegate to Congress from the District of Columbia. Before conducting any business, however, the meeting adjourned long enough to move to the larger Lincoln Hall. Upon reassembling at 12:40 P.M., the delegates elected Douglass president of the convention, the occasion for the first of his two speeches of the day. Although somewhat fatigued by his recent return from Santo Domingo, Douglass accepted the post. The long afternoon session centered on the adoption of a platform and in the election of a nominee for delegate. *NNE*, 30 March 1871.

Gentlemen of the Convention: The honor you have conferred upon me by calling me to preside over your deliberations is one for which I am largely unprepared, unqualified, and one which I certainly did not expect on coming to this convention. Taken entirely by surprise, I have to say, at the beginning, that I have no formal speech to make. The truth is, I have not yet quite got on my land legs (laughter), and am not altogether able to steady the helm of such a convention as this on dry land, after being quite so long at sea.¹ It requires something that I have not got. I shall have to throw myself entirely upon the indulgence of the members of this convention in

1. One of the most controversial diplomatic initiatives of the Grant administration was its attempt to annex the Dominican Republic. In 1869 Grant's personal representative, General Orville Babcock, had negotiated a treaty of annexation with Dominican president Buenaventura Baez. The Senate twice defeated Grant's attempt to get this treaty approved, largely because of the vociferous opposition by a faction of the president's own Republican party led by Charles Sumner. To rally public support behind his policy, Grant persuaded Congress to authorize him to send a commission to the Dominican Republic to investigate political and economic conditions there and to ascertain popular sentiment toward

the management of its business, and to ask their most lenient judgment upon the part I shall take in presiding over the convention.

I realize, gentlemen, that this is a moment of great solemnity to the country, and especially is it a moment of solemnity to the class of your fellow countrymen with which I am especially identified. We have gone through dark days and stormy nights in our history, and had seemed to have reached almost the land of the haven of safety. But again clouds are in the horizon; the storm again is here; there is darkness, and there are tempests ahead in the political sky, but I think that the action of this convention today, will do much to brighten, or darken the pathway of our political future. (Applause.) If our conduct shall be wise, as I hope it will be; if we shall be firm in the adhesion to the great principles upon which our republic has now started I think it will be well with us, and we shall contribute largely to the success of those principles.

What are those principles? Where are they? We have undertaken an experiment—a new experiment. The government of this country originally rested entirely upon the shoulders of the white citizens of the republic. The black man had no voice in our proceedings. He was unknown a few years ago; utterly unknown in any of our political, religious, moral, or intellectual activities. He was not represented in the general assembly, in the general conference, in the association or consociation; in the [D]emocratic convention, or the [W]hig convention, or the [R]epublican convention. But a great change has taken place. It was thought originally that he was morally and intellectually incapacitated to represent or to be represented in

American annexation. The three commissioners selected by Grant were Andrew White, president of Cornell University; Samuel G. Howe, a wealthy Boston reformer; and Benjamin Wade, former U.S. senator from Ohio. Although he regarded the position as "inconsiderable and unimportant," Douglass accepted appointment as assistant secretary to the commission. The commissioners, their staff, and numerous reporters left New York City on 17 January 1871 and arrived at Sanama Bay seven days later. Douglass participated in the commission's interviews with Dominican government officials and civic leaders and also had the responsibility for contacting English-speaking blacks who had migrated from the United States to the Sanama area during the Civil War. The commission arrived back in Washington, D.C., on 26 March 1871 and soon thereafter published a report strongly favorable to annexation. Despite regrets at disagreeing with his friend Sumner, Douglass endorsed the annexation policy as being in the mutual interests of both nations in speeches and in editorials in the *New National Era*. Opponents of annexation remained obdurate, however, and the treaty was never approved. *NNE*, 19 January, 23 February, 6 April 1871; *Washington National Republican*, 24 February 1871; *Washington Evening Star*, 28 March 1871; Douglass, *Life and Times*, 452–54; Douglass to Hamilton Fish, 3 April 1871, General Correspondence File, reel 2, frame 589, FD Papers, DLC; Charles Callan Tansell, *The United States and Santo Domingo, 1798–1873: A Chapter in Caribbean Diplomacy* (1938; Gloucester, Mass., 1967), 428–40; Merline Pitre, "Frederick Douglass and the Annexation of Santo Domingo," *JNH*, 62 : 390–400 (October 1977).

such conventions. But by a heroic effort, and by the favorings of Providence, a vast and wonderful change has taken place, and this race, long ago scourged beyond the beneficent range, even of our free institutions has been gathered in, and is now a member of this government, and the experiment in which we are engaged now is to establish the truth, or the falsehood, the possibility or impossibility of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples, living harmoniously, happily, prosperously and successfully under one government. We hereby naming and adhering to the same principles, shall all stand clansmen and brothers beloved in our common country. It is a great experiment. It seems to be an attempt to realize the Christian idea that of one blood God has made all nations to dwell on all the Christian earth. (Applause.) I have, during the last thirty years, appeared often before the American people—sometimes in the character of a slave; sometimes in the character of an advocate for the slave; but to-day I appear before the American people in the enlarged and dignified attitude of character of an American citizen. (Cries of “good,” and great applause.) I have sometimes been called a “nigger” (laughter), a black man, or a mulatto man, but to-day I stand before you a man among men, and a citizen, but by your generosity, your partiality, I may say, by your determination to work, your sense of your utter abhorrence of the miserable proscription, the outrageous indignity heaped upon men because God has clothed them with a skin not colored like their own. I say by this grace, this generosity, this disposition of yours, I am here as the president of your convention. (Applause.)

Now, what is the pleasure of the convention?

[Committee reports, adoption of platform, and nomination of Norton Parker Chipman.]

Gentlemen of the Convention: It seems proper under the circumstances that the man you have honored by your votes to preside over you on this occasion should say a word or two at parting to this convention.

And, first, let me express my surprise—my profound surprise—that any considerable number of the electors of the District of Columbia should regard me as a suitable candidate to represent this District, this capital, in the Congress of the nation.² I say I felt surprised, bordering on to a shock,

2. In an informal ballot at the nominating convention for the office of territorial delegate to the U.S. Congress, Douglass received 27 of the 112 votes cast, finishing second behind Norton P. Chipman. A series of speeches followed in which Mayor W. S. Morse, Allen Coffin, Thomas C. Connolly, Charles H. Peters, and others supported Douglass's candidacy. In the official convention

that any considerable number of the citizens here should have regarded me as a suitable candidate. When the matter was suggested to me that I should be a candidate I at first revolted, and thought that it was hardly proper to allow my friends to use my name. I, however, at last consented, and I must express to you and to them, my profound gratitude for the mark of respect for the tender sentiments which have been expressed on both sides towards me, and towards my history.

While I am for making no distinction, I am one of those who believe that whenever, and wherever, there is an office to be had, and a white applicant equally eligible, and equally available to obtain it; that while I am in favor of no distinctions on account of color, remembering the stripes, remembering the 250 years of bondage in this land, through which the colored man has been dragged, remembering that 250 years he has not had the right to learn to read the name of the God that made him, and that every man in the land has been at liberty to kick him, and to disregard his rights, he having no rights which a white man was bound to respect—I say, in view of that history, and the history of stripes, of tears, and of blood for the black man's track through this country for two hundred years, may be traced, as O'Connell³ said of "Old Ireland" long ago, "like a wounded man through the crowd, by the blood itself"—I say, whenever the black man and the white man, equally eligible, equally available, equally qualified for an office, present themselves for that office, the black man, at this juncture of our affairs, should be preferred. That is my conviction.

While I say this, I know the only way to make the principle victorious in legislation in this country; the only way to have right views crystalized into law, organized into statute, and to be made the rule of life of the republic; the only way in which that can be done is through a party, and through a party that is able to elect its candidate. (Applause.) That is the way every measure has to be carried. Any man can have a little party. I can have a little party; you can have a little party; but it will be inefficient and impracticable. But what we want is a true party, (cries of "That's it!") and not only a true party, but a strong party ("That's so!" and applause); a large party; a party able to elect its candidates (applause), and when they are elected these candidates carrying out the great principles they were elected on. (Applause.)

ballot, Douglass again trailed Chipman, the winner, by a vote of 67 to 37. *Washington Daily Morning Chronicle*, 30 March 1871; *Washington Evening Star*, 30 March 1871.

3. Daniel O'Connell.

Believing this, and believing that at this hour—the dark hour of kukluxism, of war to the knife against the black man—believing at this hour that a defeat of the Republican party in the District of Columbia would be the greatest calamity that could befall our people throughout the States (applause), I stand here and now, and I believe I express the feeling of every man who stood up here and voted for me, I say I stand here and affirm that whatever any other man will do to make the candidate which you have now honored with this nomination⁴ victorious at the polls, I am ready to do. (Applause.)

Of course I would have felt a little better if it had been me (laughter), for I am human; and if the gentlemen here could have thought that they could have carried me into the White House I believe it would have been a good answer to those men who, the other night, when I was returning from a mission for this government from St. Domingo, hungry, travel-stained, tired, and wanting food very much, and presented at the door of the cabin for dinner, was told I could not come in.⁵ (A voice—“We will mark them.”) I had two lips with good appetite, ready to take a dinner, and behaved myself like a gentleman as well as I know how, and yet I could not come in. Therefore I believe if you had sent me up to that White House it would have been a good rebuke to them. But the next best thing is to elect Chipman, and see that he teaches these fellows good manners. (Applause.)

Now, whatever you want me to do, tell me, and I am going right at it and elect Chipman. (Loud applause.)

4. Norton Parker Chipman (1838–1924) was born in Milford Center, Ohio, and moved to Iowa with his family during early childhood. In 1859 he began the practice of law in Washington, Iowa, after graduating from Washington College in the same city and from Cincinnati Law School. He served in the Union army's Bureau of Military Justice during the Civil War and rose to the rank of brigadier general. Chipman settled in the District of Columbia following the war, and President Grant appointed him secretary of its territorial government. After defeating Douglass for the Republican nomination, he served two terms as delegate from the District to the U.S. Congress. In 1876 Chipman moved to California, where in subsequent years he engaged in a law practice, held posts on the state board of trade, and was elected presiding justice of the state's Third District Court of Appeals. *NNE*, 6 April 1871; J. C. Bates, ed., *History of the Bench and Bar of California* (San Francisco, 1912), 259–60; *BDAC*, 689–90.

5. During their return from Santo Domingo, the commission party, including Douglass, transferred from the U.S.S. *Tennessee* to the Potomac River mail steamer *Georgiana*. While on this final leg of the trip, Douglass was subjected to racial discrimination when the *Georgiana*'s captain denied him access to the ship's dining room. Commissioners Samuel Gridley Howe and Andrew D. White seconded Douglass's protest. When the captain remained adamant, Howe and White refused to eat in the dining room and joined Douglass in declining the offer of a meal served in a separate room. *Washington Evening Star*, 28 March 1871; *Washington National Republican*, 29 March 1871; *NNE*, 30 March 1871; *NASS*, 1 April 1871.