

# *The White Declaration of Independence*

[Printed in the Raleigh *News and Observer*, November 10, 1898]

Believing that the Constitution of the United States contemplated a government to be carried on by an enlightened people; believing that its framers did not anticipate the enfranchisement of an ignorant population of African origin; and believing that the men of the State of North Carolina who joined in forming the Union did not contemplate for their descendants a subjection to an inferior race;

We, the undersigned citizens of the city of Wilmington and county of New Hanover, do hereby declare that we will no longer be ruled, and will never again be ruled, by men of African origin. This condition we have in part endured because we felt that the consequences of the war of secession were such to deprive us of the fair consideration of many of our countrymen.

We believe that, after more than thirty years, this is no longer the case.

The stand we now pledge ourselves to is forced upon us suddenly by a crisis, and our eyes are open to the fact that we must act now or leave our descendants to a fate too gloomy to be borne.

While we recognize the authority of the United States and will yield to it if exerted, we would not for a moment believe that it is the purpose of more than 60,000,000 of our own race to subject us permanently to a fate to which no Anglo-Saxon has ever been forced to submit.

We, therefore, believing that we represent unequivocally the sentiment of the white people of this county and city, hereby for ourselves, and representing them, proclaim:

1. That the time has passed for the intelligent citizens of this community, owning 95 per cent of the property and paying taxes in like proportion, to be ruled by negroes.
2. That we will not tolerate the action of unscrupulous white men in affiliating with the negroes so that by means of their votes they can dominate the intelligent and thrifty element in the community, thus causing business to stagnate and progress to be out of the question.
3. That the negro has demonstrated, by antagonizing our interest in every way, and especially by his ballot, that he is incapable of realizing that his interests are and should be identical with those of the community.

4. That the progressive element in any community is the white population, and that the giving of nearly all of the employment to negro laborers has been against the best interests of this county and city, and is sufficient reason why the city of Wilmington with its natural advantages has not become a city of at least 50,000 inhabitants.

5. That we propose in the future to give the white men a large part of the employment heretofore given to negroes, because we realize that white families cannot thrive here unless there are more opportunities for the different members of said family.

6. That the white men expect to live in this community peaceably, to have and provide absolute protection for their families, who shall be safe from insult for all persons whomsoever. We are prepared to treat the negroes with justice and consideration in all matters which do not involve sacrifices of the interest of the intelligent and progressive portion of the community. But we are equally prepared now and immediately to enforce what we know to be our rights.

7. That we have been, in our desire for harmony and peace, blinded to our best interests and our rights. A climax was reached when the negro paper of this city published an article so vile and slanderous that it would in most communities have resulted in the lynching of the editor. We deprecate lynching, and yet there is no punishment provided by the laws adequate for this offense. We therefore owe it to the people of this community and of this city, as a protection against such license in the future, that the paper known as the Record cease to be published, and that its editor be banished from this community.

We demand that he leave this city within twenty-four hours after the issuance of this proclamation; second, that the printing press from which the Record has been issued be packed and shipped from the city without delay; that we be notified within twelve hours of the acceptance or rejection of this demand. If it is agreed to within twelve hours, we counsel forbearance on the part of all white men. If the demand is refused, or if no answer is given within the time mentioned, then the editor, Manly, will be expelled by force.

8. It is the sense of this meeting that Mayor S.P. Wright and Chief of Police J.R. Melton, having demonstrated their utter incapacity to give the city a decent government and keep order therein, their continuance in office being a constant menace to the peace of this community, ought forthwith to resign.

## REPLY OF THE COLORED COMMITTEE TO "*THE WHITE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE*"

[The Committee of Colored Citizens to Hon. A.M. Waddell, undated typewritten copy in Alfred M. Waddell Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library.]

Dear Sir,

We the colored citizens to whom was referred the matter of expulsion from this community, of the persons and press of A.M. Manly, beg most respectfully to say that we are in no wise responsible for nor in any way endorse the obnoxious article that called forth your activities. neither are we authorized to act for him in this matter, but in the interest of peace we will most willingly use our influence to have your wishes carried out.

Very respectfully,

The Committee of Colored Citizens

BACK TO [CHAPTER 3.5](#)

BACK TO [RESOURCES](#)