

MARCH • 1901

the negro does not give up any part of the struggle for retaining his citizenship. They are against the repeal of the fifteenth amendment, and they believe that election laws throughout the country should be made to apply with equal justice to black and white alike. They believe that if the franchise is restricted in any state it should not be done in such a way that an ignorant white man can vote while an ignorant black man cannot. At the same time they recognize the fact that to retain citizenship and the respect of the nation there must go with the negro's demands for justice, tangible, indisputable proofs of the progress of the race, or, briefly, that deeds and words must go together. They believe that helping the negro along commercial lines will help his political status. This is not a political meeting. It is a business gathering. Politics and other general matters pertaining to the race are dealt with at the sessions of the national Afro-American Council."

I think that a paragraph in an editorial in one of the Boston papers, printed just after the conference adjourned, described the tone of the gathering admirably. It said: "There was no politics in this gathering. There was no clamoring for rights. There was as little sentimentality as in a meeting of stock jobbers or railroad directors. . . . Wanton, insane cruelty of white men was something which colored men, minding their own business, could not reasonably cause, nor effectually rebuke. With a perfect dignity they left the matter to those whom it concerned. . . . Their conduct was a sign of power, equal to any other that the conference gave witness of, the supreme power of manliness that is recognized in self-restraint."

It had seemed to me for some time that an organization was needed which would bring together the colored business men and women of the country for consultation and to obtain information and inspiration from each other. As I had traveled through the country, especially in the South, I had often been impressed and repeatedly surprised to see how many colored men were succeeding in business enterprises, often in small, out-of-the-way places where they are never heard of, but where they are doing good work not only for themselves but for the race. I do not mean that the men and women who are in business in the cities are not doing equally well, but their work is better known because it is more obvious. How much I wish that our race might be judged by these people