



ADDRESS.

The Members of the Equal Rights League of Wilmington, N. C., to the Citizens of Wilmington and Vicinity:

As the objects of this League have been misrepresented as well as misunderstood, and as the League has been the occasion of much unjust suspicion and anxious fear, we desire to make known its *real* object and purpose. We do this with pleasure. Our object is a public one. We invite, therefore, public scrutiny.

In the first place, we desire it to be perfectly understood that this is *not* a secret organization. The meetings are not held within closed doors. There are no secret formulas of initiation, no pass words, or signs, or oaths. The constitution makes no distinction on account of color; *any person* may become a member by subscribing to its principles. If any person *may* become a member, then any person who observes the rules of decency and order may witness its proceedings.

We do nothing in secret; our object is in interest too general, in principle too noble, for a dark lantern organization. Our object is to win confidence, not to awaken suspicion.

This is the object of the League: To secure, by political and moral means, as far as may be, the repeal of all laws and parts of laws, state and national, that make distinctions on account of color." (*See Con. Art. 2.*)

This is our object in all its length and breadth! We are freemen. We therefore aspire to the condition and privileges of freemen. Is not this a natural aspiration? Is it not the dictate of self-respect? We ask for an opportunity to show that we are worthy to be free. We propose to attain the condition and privileges of freemen by becoming intelligent, by industry, by virtue and by piety. If our object is a noble one, worthy of freemen, the means proposed for attaining it are moral and peaceful.

We disclaim the remotest intention of enforcing our claims by violence. *Does any one suggest insurrection!* We frown upon him; we denounce him. Arms can do nothing for us. We believe that the humanity and justice of the nation will vindicate us. Therefore our labor is with; and our appeal is to, the minds and hearts of free American citizens.

If we wish property, we mean to save it by honest labor. If we aspire to positions of trust and honor, we mean to merit them by our intelligence and virtue. If we ask for citizenship, we mean to show, by our respect for the rights of persons and property, and by our reverence for law and order, that we are worthy to be taken into the great company of American citizens.

During years (to us) of horror and great darkness, we have been a patient, hopeful people, and now when our chains are severed, when freedom has *come*—now when we are accounted men—now when we are to have the opportunities of men—shall we belie our reputation by becoming lawless, revengeful and murderous? No! No! By so doing we should forfeit our hopes of happiness.

Believe us, we mean to live in peace with our fellow-countrymen; to maintain justice and practice charity toward all. Our rights we mean to define clearly: *then* we mean to achieve them in a spirit and by means that will secure the approbation of all good men.

For our methods of action and for our meetings we invite the candid criticisms of our neighbors. They are open to the inspection of all.

We do pledge ourselves to maintain good order. Our arms and our lives, if necessary, are at the service of government, to quell and to crush insurrection.

Having done this, we shall demand of lawful authority protection for our persons, protection for our property, protection for our schools, presses and churches.

We desire to help make North Carolina a great, prosperous and happy commonwealth.

WM. CUTLER, *President.*

EDWARD J. DEBERNIERE, *Secretary.*