

Transcribed Excerpts from Alexander Clark's Speech at the "Colored Convention" in Des Moines, Iowa, 1868

Excerpt 1

Being men, we claim to be of that number comprehended in the Declaration of Independence, and who are entitled not only to life, but to equal rights in the pursuit and securing of happiness and in the choice of those who are to rule over us. Deprived of this, we are forced to pay taxes without representation; to submit, without appeal, to laws however offensive, without a single voice in framing them; to bear arms without the right to say whether against friend or foe — against loyalty or disloyalty.

Excerpt 2

Our demands are not excessive; we ask not for social equality with the white man, as is often claimed by the shallow demagogue; for a law higher than human must forever govern social relations. We ask only that privilege which is not given to every white, native-born or adopted, male citizen of our State — the privilege of the ballot-box.

Excerpt 3

"... that he who can be trusted with an army musket, which makes victory and protects the nation, shall also be intrusted (sic) with that boon of American liberty, the ballot, to express a preference for his rulers and his laws."