

# *The Founding of the NAACP*

## National Association for the Advancement of Colored People



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### **OVERVIEW**

"Call for the Lincoln Emancipation Conference in 1909," written by Oswald Garrison Villard, brought together the founders of what became the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Sixty prominent African American and white leaders signed the manifesto, which is reproduced here.

**GUIDED READING** As you read, consider the following questions:

- Why is Abraham Lincoln mentioned in this manifesto?
- Why is the North, as well as the South, at fault for the mistreatment and enslavement of African Americans?

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**T**o Discuss Means for Securing Political and Civil Equality for the Negro  
The celebration of the centennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln widespread and grateful as it may be, will fail to justify itself if it takes no note and makes no recognition of the colored men and women to whom the great emancipator labored to assure freedom. Besides a day of rejoicing, Lincoln's birthday in 1909 should be one of taking stock of the nation's progress since 1865. How far has it lived up to the obligations imposed upon it by the Emancipation Proclamation? How far has it gone in assuring to each and every citizen, irrespective of color, the equality of opportunity and equality before the law, which underlie our American institutions and are guaranteed by the Constitution?

If Mr. Lincoln could revisit this country he would be disheartened by the nation's failure in this respect. He would learn that on January 1st, 1909, Georgia had rounded out a new oligarchy by disfranchising the negro after the manner of all the other Southern states. He would learn that the Supreme Court of the United States, designed to be a bulwark of American liberties, had failed to meet several opportunities to pass squarely upon this disfranchisement of millions by laws avowedly discriminatory and openly enforced in such manner that white men may vote and black men be without a vote in their government; he would discover, there, that taxation without representation is the lot of millions of wealth-producing American citizens, in whose hands rests the economic progress and welfare of an entire section of the country. He would learn that the Supreme Court, according to the official statement of one of its own judges in the Berea College case, has laid down the principle that if an individual State chooses it may "make it a crime for white and colored persons to frequent the same market place at the same time, or

appear in an assemblage of citizens convened to consider questions of a public or political nature in which all citizens, without regard to race, are equally interested." In many States Lincoln would find justice enforced, if at all, by judges elected by one element in a community to pass upon the liberties and lives of another. He would see the black men and women, for whose freedom a hundred thousand of soldiers gave their lives, sit apart in trains, in which they pay first-class fares for third-class service, in railway stations and in places of entertainment, while State after State declines to do its elementary duty in preparing the negro through education for the best exercise of citizenship.

Added to this, the spread of lawless attacks upon the negro, North, South and West—even in the Springfield made famous by Lincoln—often accompanied by revolting brutalities, sparing neither sex, nor age nor youth, could not but shock the author of the sentiment that "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

Silence under these conditions means tacit approval. The indifference of the North is already responsible for more than one assault upon democracy, and every such attack reacts as unfavorably upon whites as upon blacks. Discrimination once permitted cannot be bridled; recent history in the South shows that in forging chains for the negroes, the white voters are forging chains for themselves. "A house divided against itself cannot stand"; this government cannot exist half slave and half free any better to-day than it could in 1861. Hence we call upon all the believers in democracy to join in a national conference for the discussion of present evils, the voicing of protests, and the renewal of the struggle for civil and political liberty.

Miss Jane Addams, Chicago  
Ray Stannard Baker, New York  
Mrs. Ida Wells-Barnett, Chicago  
Mrs. Harriet Stanton Blatch, New York  
Mr. Samuel Bowles, (*Springfield Republican*)  
Prof. W. L. Bulkley, New York  
Miss Kate Claghorn, New York  
E. H. Clement, Boston  
Prof. John Dewey, New York  
Miss Mary E. Dreier, Brooklyn  
Prof. W. E. B. Du Bois, Atlanta  
Dr. John L. Elliott, New York  
Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, Boston  
Rev. Francis J. Grimke, Washington, D.C.  
Prof. Thomas C. Hall, New York  
Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, Chicago  
Rev. John Haynes Holmes, New York  
Hamilton Holt, New York  
William Dean Howells, New York  
Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Chicago

Mrs. Florence Kelley, New York  
Rev. Walter Laidlaw, New York  
Rev. Frederick Lynch, New York  
Miss Helen Marot, New York  
Miss Mary E. McDowell, Chicago  
Prof. J. G. Merrill, Connecticut  
Mr. John E. Milholland, New York  
Dr. Henry Moskowitz, New York  
Miss Leonora O'Reilly, New York  
Miss Mary W. Ovington, New York  
Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, New York  
Rev. John P. Peters, New York  
J. G. Phelps-Stokes, New York  
Louis F. Post, Chicago  
Dr. Jane Robbins, New York  
Charles Edward Russell, New York  
William M. Salter, Chicago  
Joseph Smith, Boston  
Mrs. Anna Garlin Spencer, New York  
Judge Wendell S. Stafford, Washington, D.C.  
Lincoln Steffens, Boston  
Miss Helen Stokes, New York  
Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, Washington, D.C.  
Prof. W. I. Thomas, Chicago  
President Charles F. Thwing, Western Reserve University  
Oswald Garrison Villard, New York  
Mrs. Henry Villard, New York  
Miss Lillian D. Wald, New York  
Dr. J. Milton Waldron, Washington, D.C.  
William English Walling, New York  
Bishop Alexander Walters, New York  
Dr. William H. Ward, New York  
Mrs. Rodman Wharton, Philadelphia  
Miss Susan P. Wharton, Philadelphia  
Horace White, New York  
Mayor Brand Whitlock, Toledo  
Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, New York  
President Mary E. Wooley, Mt. Holyoke College  
Rev. M. St. Croix Wright, New York  
Prof. Charles Zueblin, Boston