

1837. Political and Civil Rights

Typical of the persistent, organized efforts of African American people to obtain full political and civil rights was a meeting held in New York City on February 20, 1837. The report of the meeting is taken from the New York *Weekly Advocate*. Source: H. Aptheker (1973). *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, v. 1, 164-165.

On Monday evening last a very large meeting of our people was held at Phenix Hall, in Chapel Street. Henry Davis was called to the chair, and Philip A. Bell and Edward V. Clark appointed Secretaries. The object of the meeting, in accordance with the notice previously given, was stated to be to get up petitions for the Legislature of this State now in session in Albany.

1st. For the repeal of the laws authorizing the holding of a person to service as a Slave in this State.

2nd. To grant a *trial by jury* for their liberty to persons of color within this State arrested and claimed as fugitive slaves.

3d. For an alteration of the [New York] Constitution, so as to give the right of voting to all the male citizens of the State on the same terms without distinction of color.

Three petitions, one for each of the objects specified, were then presented, considered and adopted. A large number of signatures was obtained on the spot. Indeed the crowd was so great, that *all* present could not get an opportunity to give in their names.

The subject therefore of giving a further opportunity to all who may wish to sign these petitions was referred to a committee; and it is understood that to this end one or more of their number will be in waiting at Phenix Hall every day for a few days, from 3 o'clock till 9 in the evening to receive the names of such as desire to add them to the petitions.