

## EQUALITY OF RIGHTS

My dear Sir:

Your letter is received, accompanied by a newspaper clipping which discusses the possibility that a colored man may be the Republican nominee for Congress from one of the New York districts. Referring to this newspaper statement, you say:

“It is of some concern whether a Negro is allowed to run for Congress anywhere, at any time, in any party, in this, a white man’s country. Repeated ignoring of the growing race problem does not excuse us for allowing encroachments. Temporizing with the Negro whether he will or will not vote either a Democratic or a Republican ticket, as evidenced by the recent turnover in Oklahoma, is contemptible.”

Leaving out of consideration the manifest impropriety of the President intruding himself in a local contest for nomination, I was amazed to receive such a letter. During the war 500,000 colored men and boys were called up under the draft, not one of whom sought to evade it. They took their places wherever assigned in defense of the nation of which they are just as truly citizens as are any others. The suggestion of denying any measure of their full political rights to such a great group of our population as the colored people is one which, however it might be received in some other quarters, could not possibly be permitted by one who feels a responsibility for living up to the traditions and

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maintaining the principles of the Republican Party. Our Constitution guarantees equal rights to all our citizens, without discrimination on account of race or color. I have taken my oath to support that Constitution. It is the source of your rights and my rights. I propose to regard it, and administer it, as the source of the rights of all the people, whatever their belief or race. A colored man is precisely as much entitled to submit his candidacy in a party primary, as is any other citizen. The decision must be made by the constituents to whom he offers himself, and by nobody else. You have suggested that in some fashion I should bring influence to bear to prevent the possibility of a colored man being nominated for Congress. In reply, I quote my great predecessor, Theodore Roosevelt:

“ \* \* \* I cannot consent to take the position that the door of hope—the door of opportunity—is to be shut upon any man, no matter how worthy, purely upon the grounds of race or color.”

Yours very truly, etc.