

To the School Committee of the City of Salem

the undersigned, colored citizens of Salem, very respectfully represent:

that the establishment of separate schools for the colored children of the City appears to us inexpedient for the following reasons:

1. We are satisfied that we never shall have a really good or flourishing school, under this system, for as the colored school can have but a limited number of pupils few teachers of superior ability will be found to take charge of it, & from this cause, the children must & always will suffer:

2. The inefficiency of the teacher will moreover be a cause for keeping the children from school, & thus the school will move & more grow thin & languish.

3. Either one colored school must combine instruction in all studies from the most elementary to the highest, which your adoption of a contrary system in the white school shows cannot be efficiently & advantageously done, or else the instruction must be kept down to the average necessities of the scholars, a plan which robs the more intelligent of the benefits of a higher education; or lastly there must be a series of colored schools, which from its expense would be impracticable. How is an intelligent colored youth in Salem to make the same proficiency in his studies as a white boy who is admitted to the Grammar School? If it be said that the colored boy can be admitted to the Grammar School, why exclude him from the other schools?

4. The present conclusion of our children from the best schools & competition in learning, with white children, is felt as a slight upon us & them, & is calculated to repress an honorable ambition. People are apt to become what they see is expected of them. It is very hard to retain self-respect, if we see ourselves set apart and avoided as a degraded race, by others. Do not say to our children that however well-behaved, their very presence in a public school, is contamination to your children.

5. Under the system of allowing the white & colored children to attend the same schools as it formerly prevailed in Salem, we believe no practical inconvenience was experienced. Some fo the colored youths were among the best scholars. Our children were well-treated & well-taught.

6. You have a precedent for the change we desire. We are informed that on the Island of Nantucket where great attention is paid to the schools, the inhabitants have with great unanimity abolished the Coloured schools which were kept up for some years & that all the children now attend the same schools: the recent change having been made partly in view of considerations like those we have presented, & partly in conformity with elaborate written opinions from several legal gentlemen in Boston, advising that the establishment of separate schools for colored children at the public charge is contrary to the laws of the Commonwealth,

Wherefore your petitioners would respectfully But earnestly ask the immediate & entire abolition of the colored schools in Salem.

William Reed
George Dickerson
Sally Colman
M? Morris
? Williams
Thomas ?
Rache Fletcher
? ?
Eugene Baker
Mary A Williams
Robert Dailey
William ?
? ? Morris
Edward Redman
Joseph Bass?
Hannah Dailey
James Mars?
John ?

George W. Henry
Harriet Lee
Mercy A. Morris
Aaron Phillips
Mrs. Barnes
William Williams
Betsey Blanchard
Abraham Williams
John R. Benson
? Benson
Eliner Jones
R.R.S. Wilson
Esther Freeman
Samuel ?
Catherine
Mercy J. Morris
Nancy Randolph
Nancy Buts

William Jones
Eliza Jones
Elizabeth ?

Thomas Math?
Samuel ?
Leah
Laura

In School Com. Jany 15, 1844, Referred to the Com on the col School
Cloutman, Clerk

[very faint pencil with these questions scrawled on the back of the petition]

1. What are the objections to existing coloured school?
2. Does the school accomplish the object designed?
3. Can the committee recommend any change in the organization or administration of the school?

Is it expedient to continue it?

May not the whole subject be referred to the common council?