Defense of Voting Requirements – 1898.

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STATE DISFRANCHEISEMENT. The negro has for some years been boiling with anger and spitting flames of vituperation because of the legislative action of Mississippi, Georgia and some other states that have amended their state constitutions so as to actually disfranchise a large percentage of negroes and a respectable percentage of whites. The constitutional amendment referred to is based upon a property or intellectual qualification, very similar to that which has existed in some of the New England states for nearly a century.

It is unfortunate for the Negro that he is incompetent to pass the required examination requisite to claim the rights of franchise in those states, but he may as well make the best of the situation and proceed to qualify himself, for such is the ultimate standard of American citizenship that sooner or later will be adopted by every state in the Union.

As a principle or proper measure we most emphatically endorse it, but as a direct means of overcoming the political influence of the negro, or any particular class or race, we object. Ignorance is the father of crime, in fact, ignorance itself is crime. Unfortunately the largest percentage of illiteracy in the United States is found in the southern states and in those very states that have adopted the "property and intelligence" qualification.

The great lesson taught by the acts of those state legislatures that have disfranchised so many by the exactions referred to is "get property," or "become frugal and industrious; learn to
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read and write," or are you too old to learn, encourage, and assist others of the race who are not too old.

After all, ire can see in the distant future, a profit to the negro, in the very acts of those southern states which directly strikes at the apparent vitals of negro citizenship. If yon desire consolation look to the east for a parallel law, in states too that stood foremost in the crusade against human slavery. The facts are that a "property and intelligence qualification" for voters is by no means a democratic or southern idea.

Every- citizen of the United States ought to be a contributor toward the support of the government as well as competent to at least understand the principles of true American government.—*The Negro Solicitor, Oskaloosa, Iowa.*