Pike’s Address at the celebration of Emancipation Day (Excerpt)

You are independent citizens, and are qualified to decide for yourselves what things you like best, and should, therefore, never allow yourselves to be driven or led by any man, white or black, into measures you do not like. Think for yourselves, act for yourselves, and let the will of the majority rule. Never trust too much to any one man, be he white or black, for men so trusted are apt to think that they rule and command the people who trust them, and men who so think are always neglectful of the interests of their friends and supporters.

Trust a man just so long as you believe that he is true to you and your interests, and not a minute longer. Once you have reason to suspect that a man you have trusted has proved unfaithful to you, throw him aside, for you have reason to fear that he will injure you and your cause. The acts of men, not their words, are the true tests of their good faith. If you trust a man and he does nothing for you in return, and shows no interest in your welfare, then you have trusted a bad, a selfish, an ungrateful man, and should trust him no more. If you trust a man and he does as much or more for you than he does for himself, he is just the man you want, and one that you should be proud of possessing. In these troubled times these things are most important to you, and therefore I speak of them.

And now, my friends and fellow-citizens, I have said all that I think I should say, for I do not wish to longer engage your attention, when there are so many distinguished gentlemen waiting to address you. The honor you have done me in selecting me to address you, I fully appreciate, and I thank you for it. Whatever will tend to the good of the colored people of North Carolina, will ever command my warmest sympathies and my best services, and I hope to live to see that day when throughout the length and breadth of this great land there will be a great, a prosperous and a united people, and when there shall be no American citizen slighted because of race or color.