

In 1884, Matthew M. Lewey organized the Independent Party of Florida in Gainesville after realizing that the Republican Party offered mostly empty promises to assist Blacks, and to challenge the oppressive Democratic Party (which was the party of white supremacy in the South at that time).

The goals of the Independent Party of Florida are following:

- 1.) We want increased facilities for common school education and the highest branches, so as to be able to reduce the high rate of illiteracy which the last census shows to exist among our people in this State.
- 2.) We want a fair representation on juries, and a fair show in the Courts and Justices of the Peace.
- 3.) We want to cast our votes freely and have them fairly counted; and also a better system of registration; one which shall give county Commissioners less power to do injustice to colored voters.
- 4.) We want a fair recognition and representation in the offices of State and county, and also under city governments.
- 5.) We want to enjoy the same rights and privileges accorded to others in all public places, on railroads and steamers, when we pay the same fare.
- 6.) We want a law enacted restoring to the right of suffrage all men (most of whom are colored), disfranchised for alleged petty offenses tried before Justices of the Peace.