

**Black Citizenship, Black Sovereignty:  
The Haitian Emigration Movement  
and Black American Politics, 1804-1865**

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## Timeline

<p>1791 Slave rebellion begins Haitian Revolution</p> <p>1804 Independent Republic of Haiti declared, with Jean-Jacques Dessalines as President</p> <p>1805 First Constitution of Haiti Written</p> <p>1806 Dessalines Assassinated; Haiti divided into Kingdom of Haiti in the North, Republic of Haiti in the South.</p> <p>1808 United States Congress abolishes U.S. Atlantic slave trade</p> <p>1811 Paul Cuffe makes first voyage to Africa</p> <p>1816 American Colonization Society founded</p> <p>1817 Paul Cuffe dies</p> <p>1818 Prince Saunders tours U.S. with his published book about Haiti Jean-Pierre Boyer becomes President of Republic of Haiti Mutiny of the <i>Holkar</i></p> <p>1820 President Boyer reunites divided Haiti</p> <p>1822 Denmark Vesey rebellion, South Carolina</p> <p>1824 Boyer begins recruiting black American to emigrate to Haiti, emigration begins</p> <p>1825 Haiti bargains for diplomatic recognition from France, England follows Emigrants begin to return to the United States from Haiti</p> <p>1827 <i>Freedom's Journal</i>, first black newspaper in the U.S., begins publication</p> <p>1829 Editor John Russwurm departs for Liberia</p> <p>1830 David Walker publishes <i>Appeal in Four Articles</i></p>	<p>1831 Nat Turner rebellion, Virginia Radical abolitionist paper <i>The Liberator</i> begins publication</p> <p>1836 U.S. Congress passes "gag rule," blocking petitions against slavery</p> <p>1838 Haitian recognition brought to U.S. House of Representatives, fails</p> <p>1843 Jean-Pierre Boyer deposed in coup, political chaos follows in Haiti</p> <p>1846 Liberia, colony of American Colonization Society, granted independence</p> <p>1847 General Faustin Soulouque gains power in Haiti, provides stability</p> <p>1850 Fugitive Slave Act passes U.S. Congress</p> <p>1854 Martin Delany holds National Emigration Convention</p> <p>1855 James T. Holly tours Haiti as a potential site for emigration</p> <p>1859 Fabre Geffrard becomes President of Haiti Geffrard establishes Haitian Emigration Bureau, led by James Redpath</p> <p>1860 Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States</p> <p>1861 U.S. Civil War begins</p> <p>1862 Haitian Bureau of Emigration ceases operations U.S. Government grants diplomatic recognition to Haiti</p> <p>1865 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution legally abolishes slavery in the United States</p>
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## Introduction

In 1818, the crew of the American brig *Holkar* mutinied off the coast of Curaçao, slaying their captain and mate. Like many ships sailing the early nineteenth century, the captain and mate were white, while the entire crew consisted of free black men. Upon gaining control of the ship, the crew set course to Haiti, scuttling their ship upon landing at the southern port city of Jacmel. We know from murder proceedings against one of the mutineers that at least two crewmen returned to the United States, but the decision to land in Haiti was deliberate. In 1818, the other islands of the Caribbean were possessed by European powers, and nearly all of them were plantation colonies held for the production of coffee and sugar by enslaved laborers. The self-appointed pilots of the ship bypassed other islands held by France, Spain, England, and the Netherlands to land in Haiti, the first independent nation in the Caribbean and the first black republic in the world. The contrast between the promise that Haiti represented and the situation they faced in the United States is striking. By 1818, the United States had abolished the legal slave trade with Africa ten years past, but slavery as an institution grew more entrenched, and the heated discussion about abolition that would characterize national politics for the better part of the next four decades had not yet begun to take center stage. The sailors of the *Holkar* were not the only people, black or white, to question whether black people would ever have a place in the United States. Barred from any political power or autonomy in the United States, the crew of the *Holkar* seized control over their lives by force. These sailors, taking advantage of the mobility offered by the seafaring life, decided to set course for Haiti. Passing by other Caribbean islands,

the new captains had a clear idea of where they needed to go to find what they never could in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Though very few black Americans ever emigrated, discussion about emigration and the movements it inspired have played an important role in American history, shaping issues of blackness and nationhood in the context of American slavery and freedom. The U.S. Civil War and the abolition of slavery left the urgency and persuasive power of emigrationist movements greatly diminished, but they did not disappear entirely: Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was perhaps the most powerful example of the enduring power of emigration to American blacks after the U.S. Civil War. So what is it that explains the persistent importance of emigrationist thought, or more importantly, what factors contribute to its periodic resurfacings? The obstacles faced by blacks in the United States were numerous, and, while not immutable, remain substantial. Emigration, however, only surfaces as a viable option at particular historical junctures. One object of this thesis is to examine some of these particular moments more closely, at a time when ideas about blackness and black life in the United States were rapidly changing and building toward a national crisis.

My subject, narrowly speaking, is the Haitian emigration movement of the early nineteenth century, starting from the culmination of the Haitian Revolution and the establishment of the Republic of Haiti in 1804 and persisting until the 1860's. However, rather than simply continuing as a steady exodus throughout that period, two distinct movements for Haitian emigration emerged out of the early republic and antebellum years of the United States: the first in the 1820's and the second in the 1850's. Though both movements shared fundamental aims,

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob D. Wheeler *Reports of Criminal Law Cases Decided at the City-hall of the City of New-York: With Notes and References, Volume 2* (New York: Gould & Banks, 1851), 452-463. For a more detailed study of the black seamen of the Atlantic World, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).



their distinctions shed light on a larger history. The intervening years were instrumental in the national development of the United States as well as Haiti: it was during that period that the fervor of their revolutions died with their revolutionary generations, and state structures and processes calcified into recurring trends. In Haiti, international and internal pressures made stability and growth almost impossible; in the United States, free black Americans were denied access to meaningful citizenship and the nation defined itself increasingly by its whiteness. Both nations had strong national identities, in which race was significantly constitutive.

On certain political issues, the influential and vocal black leaders in the antebellum United States stood united. All demanded an end to slavery, and all believed that black men were equal to the white man, capable of exercising the political rights of a democratic society. However, in the decades preceding the U.S. Civil War, important divergences developed. Beginning in the 1830's, two political strategies emerged between the two movements for Haitian emigration: abolitionism and Black Nationalism. The former pledged alliance to white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, and believed in remaining in the United States to fight for equality. Black Nationalists, on the contrary, believed that equal rights in the United States were either impossible to attain or at least not worth the necessary struggle. For them, the crucial task was to build a strong and autonomous society outside of the racist institutions of the United States.

To define these perspectives adequately would be a long project in itself, but by viewing their development historically in the context of Haitian emigration, I hope to create working definitions that avoid essentialization and teleology. The common narrative of black history in the United States presents a series of oppositions: Martin Delany vs. Frederick Douglass; W.E.B. Du Bois vs. Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey; and finally Malcolm X vs. Martin

Luther King, Jr. This series of dichotomies aids only in the most basic understanding of history, but to move beyond this paradigm it is necessary to analyze these oppositions historically and in detail. In place of this series of oppositions, this project presents abolitionism and Black Nationalism as distinct but not necessarily oppositional trends in the nineteenth century. The ways in which people and organizations articulated themselves around Haiti and the Haitian emigration projects break down the polarizations that emerged around other colonization schemes and demonstrate the complexity of the black American relationship to the United States.

Two distinct but interrelated political concepts shape much of the debate contained in this thesis: citizenship and sovereignty. Both terms imply political rights and power, but with very different degrees of autonomy. For black thinkers in nineteenth century America, this distinction was extremely important. Citizenship eluded black Americans in the United States, where the vast majority were held as slaves and localities barred free people from meaningful participation in the political process by statute, practice, or outnumbering. For some black thinkers and activists, most notably Frederick Douglass, citizenship for black people in the United States should be the primary political concern of American blacks. The power to stand as candidates and vote in elections with the rest of the enfranchised American public constituted their political project. Haiti, of course, represented something different. Black people in Haiti were citizens of that nation, but Haiti also possessed black sovereignty, which would elude American blacks as long as they remained in the United States. Whereas the white majority in the United States could always render black citizenship meaningless, black people in Haiti, by the terms of its original constitution, constituted the entire citizenry. The black population, such as one existed in Haiti, therefore possessed a degree of autonomy that was impossible in the United States. Black

sovereignty, as opposed to simple citizenship, was the project of the black nationalists such as Martin Delany, a project deeply informed by the national example of Haiti.

The language used to tell stories and make distinctions often reinforces the narrow lens through which black history is generally told. Many of the words used in this thesis carry political connotations from the twentieth century that are not applicable to the political situation of the antebellum United States. Black nationalism is a strongly charged word, and though the political programs of Martin Delany, Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X were not interchangeable, this project attempts to understand these roots more fully. “Abolitionism,” as a political position advocating for the abolition of slavery, does not sufficiently describe black politics of the nineteenth century. No black American publicly supported slavery, so the word “abolitionism” in reference to black politics in the nineteenth century merely indicated a close relationship to white abolitionists. “Integrationism,” however, is a dangerous word to apply to figures like Frederick Douglass because of its extremely strong connotations with the black freedom struggles of the mid- twentieth century. Douglass and his allies did fight for black citizenship in the United States and equality within its institutions, but it would be careless to equate his integrationist politics with those after *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), or even *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). In the absence of more precise language, the best approach to dealing with these specificities is through working definitions rooted in historical analysis.

The first chapter surveys the ideological and institutional framework from which the U.S.- Haitian emigration movement emerged in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In the late eighteenth century, black people in the United States began forming their own civic, religious, and political institutions as they grew frustrated with the failure of white organizations to meet their needs. Though these organizations fought for greater rights and power within the

United States, they also looked abroad. There was no consensus that remaining in the United States was the best option for free black Americans; in fact, the idea that any meaningful freedom for black people may eventually entail departure from the United States was uncontroversial. That attitude changed in 1816, however, when powerful whites, many of them slaveowners, established the American Colonization Society with the stated purpose of relocating blacks in America to the African colony of Liberia. Black community organizations opposed the ACS almost unanimously, viewing it as nothing more than a scheme to rid the country of free blacks, whose presence constituted an existential threat to slavery in the United States. After the founding of the ACS, emigration became a more contentious issue. To leave the United States, particularly under the auspices of a white organization with slaveholding interests, became conflated with a betrayal of the enslaved population shackled to the country.

Black Americans understood emigration to Haiti to be a different matter. Residence in Haiti, an independent black nation standing uncompromisingly opposed to slavery, did not constitute a betrayal of the cause of those still enslaved, because to strengthen Haiti fought the system of slavery itself. White institutional support for emigration to Haiti was almost nonexistent, and slaveowners consistently tried to isolate Haiti to the greatest extent possible. Chapter 2 concerns the movement that emerged in the 1820's to send black Americans to Haiti. With financial support from the Haitian government, many black Americans actually did make the journey to the island, only to be disappointed by the conditions they met upon their arrival. Their negative reports back to America, and political changes in Haiti itself, diminished the popularity of emigration over the next three decades.

The political position of black Americans changed in the years after the first Haitian emigration movement, and the third chapter of this thesis tracks the important political changes

taking place. By the early 1830's, for the first time in history, a large number of influential whites began advocating for the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery. This group of abolitionists, led by William Lloyd Garrison, represented a new kind of ally, a group avowedly committed to black equality in America in a way that no group of white people had been previously. Yet for all their sincerity, alliances between black advocates and white abolitionists were not without friction. The white abolitionists were extremely committed to religious arguments, and supported moral suasion as the best tactic to end slavery, while black abolitionists were more open to a wide variety of tactics, as demonstrated by their support for the Haitian Revolution. During the 1830's and 40's, an explicitly Black Nationalist ideology began to develop in the United States, which strove for black autonomy and independence rather than simple formal equality under white rule. Though not explicitly advocating a black exodus to Haiti until the 1850's, Black Nationalists did look to Haiti as a powerful display of black sovereignty in the face of international isolation. White abolitionists did advocate for U.S. diplomatic recognition of Haiti, but primarily used the nation as an indirect way of raising the issue of slavery in a hostile Congress. The existence of Haiti as a black nation in itself was never especially important to them, but for blacks in America, unable to exercise any meaningful political sovereignty in their own lives, Haiti always represented more than political leverage. This divergence was representative of larger conceptual differences between white abolitionists and their allies and the growing Black Nationalist movement about how to best fight black oppression. By the 1850's, the differences between the two camps proved nearly irreconcilable.

Chapter 4 begins in 1850, the United States Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act as part of the legislative program known as the Compromise of 1850. The Fugitive Slave Act made any black person in the United States, slave or free, liable to enslavement with no way to defend

themselves. This dramatic new shift in policy radicalized black communities across the North, and as a result many free blacks immediately fled to Canada. This exodus was uncoordinated, the product of urgency rather than fully formulated ideology, but in the early 1850's emigration returned to the forefront of black political debate in America. Despite the opposition of influential men such as Frederick Douglass, the Black Nationalist argument that black people could never achieve the political power they desired gained more and more credence in the black community. The stakes of having political power were higher than ever before: after 1850, black Americans' lack of political power and autonomy represented an immediate threat to their freedom, and the idea of massive black emigration to Haiti became a reality once again. In a reprise of the emigration fiasco of the 1820's, thousands of black Americans sailed to the Caribbean nation in search of freedom, only to die or return in disappointment.

The U.S. Civil War began in 1861, forever altering the political terrain on which the struggles against slavery, discrimination, and disenfranchisement were fought. Both Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany, archetypes of abolitionism and Nationalism, supported the Union army as the end of slavery became a possibility for the first time. Following the Union victory, the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution of the United States (ratified in 1865, 1868, and 1870, respectively) abolished slavery and guaranteed citizenship and voting rights to former slaves and their descendants. Enforcement of the new amendments proved to be a major source of controversy for the next century, but the codification of a meaningful black citizenship into law constituted a fundamental change in the position of black people in America. After the Civil War, emigration never held the same luster for black Americans, and in particular not for the growing class involved in politics.

This story is presented primarily as an intellectual history. It is, in actuality, a political history of a people barred from formal political participation. Independently, American blacks organized their own political forums, creating organizations and conventions with democratic procedures and press organs. Black communities made their needs known through petitions and by building relationships with certain white politicians. Some individuals, whether consciously or not, took up the example of the Haitian Revolution and asserted themselves politically by force. Gabriel, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner placed slavery and the oppression of black people at the forefront of national politics through slave rebellion while traditional politics ignored the issue. Emigration to Haiti, and the discourse surrounding the actual trips, constituted an attempt by black Americans to find a political voice they lacked in the United States. The crew of the *Holkar* and Denmark Vesey's conspirators intended to seize directly the power they were consistently denied and use that power to go to Haiti. For Frederick Douglass, Haiti was an example of black political participation and an inspiration of what could be achieved in the United States. This thesis is broadly about Haiti in the black imagination, and the fundamental role it played in shaping the emergent discourses of black freedom in the early nineteenth century.





## I. Race, Nation, and Emigration in the Atlantic World

By the early years of the nineteenth century, the era of the “Atlantic World” was coming to an end as the territories once held as European colonies began to establish themselves as nation states. The first two independent nations established in the Western Atlantic were the United States and Haiti, but the imposition and solidification of state boundaries did not always respect internal divisions that complicated the very idea of nationhood.<sup>2</sup> The African slave trade and the system of slave labor it fed was the engine that made the Atlantic World possible, but as newly independent states began to construct themselves as nations, slavery and its demographic effects become internal political problems. The United States, characterized both by a growing free black population and an economy increasingly dependent upon slavery, implicitly defined itself as a white nation in its founding documents, with no blacks holding public office and a national narrative consciously drawn from European sources. Alternatively Haiti, in its founding constitution, defined itself explicitly as a black nation founded in the violent extirpation of a regime of colonial slavery. For blacks in the United States, the overriding question was whether or not they could ever be properly integrated as equals into the United States and, if not, whether Haiti was a more promising alternative than Africa, Central America, or Canada.

The first debates around black emigration to Haiti occurred in the 1820’s, as the United States was transitioning between the eras later demarcated as “early republic” and “antebellum,” but emigration was not a new issue. From its very inception, powerful elements in the United States were concerned about controlling the nation’s black population, in particular its free black population, and schemes for their removal to other shores resonated with the long standing

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) and Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso Press, 1993) construct this elusive Atlantic world provocatively.

intentions of powerful sectors of the American population. For the black population both enslaved and free, emancipation and emigration offered a potential escape from the brutality of life in the United States, but for free blacks in particular emigration also raised important questions about their place in America, in particular their relationship to whites and enslaved blacks.

The French Revolution of 1789 echoed dramatically throughout the overseas territories of France, and Parisian demands for “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” for all men attained a new significance upon confronting the social realities of the ancient regime’s disparate colonial holdings.<sup>3</sup> The most significant of these colonies was St. Domingue, in the western third of the island now known in the United States as Hispaniola. For France, St. Domingue was the “Pearl of the Antilles” in the eighteenth century, and the most valuable colonial possession in the Caribbean. St. Domingue produced sugar and coffee, with an entrenched system of racialized slave labor: as much as 95% of the population consisted of African slaves, while the remaining 5% was split evenly between free *gens de couleur* or *affranchis*, mostly of mixed African and European descent, and European whites. The radical developments in Paris concerned the white and French-identified planter elite in the colonies, who perceived their own vulnerability and vigorously protested the extension of political rights to the free but disenfranchised *gens de couleur*. The extension of political rights for the slaves, of course, was unthinkable. The planter elite sent envoys to France and openly threatened to separate from France if political changes

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<sup>3</sup> There are numerous histories of the Haitian Revolution published in English, most following the example of C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. (New York: Vintage, 1989), originally published in 1938. Modern accounts include Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), a narrative account; and Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution From Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press 1990). Most summaries of the Revolution draw on these sources, and this one is no exception.

threatened their supremacy. The *gens de couleur* class used this opening to advocate for greater social and political rights, but consistently met the intransigence of the planter elite. Until 1791, the planters and the free people of color continued to fight over political rights in a stalemate perpetuated by the rapid and unpredictable nature of political change in France and exacerbated by the slow pace of Atlantic communication, until the intervention of an unforeseen third actor.

In August of 1791, enslaved workers in the sugar cane fields outside the northern city of Cap Haitien rose up against their oppressors at the instigation of Voudoun priest Dutty Boukman who inspired and organized the uprising quickly in a series of nocturnal meetings. In stark contrast to the failed slave rebellions that dot the history of the black Atlantic, no word of the insurrection reached the whites on the island, who were taken by surprise as their rebellious slaves destroyed the cane fields and plantation houses. One literate former slave, Toussaint L'Ouverture, rose to become supreme commander of the army of self-liberated slaves, tactically allying his army with Spain to gain leverage against France.<sup>4</sup> In 1793 the French government, under the control of the radical Jacobins, finally authorized the abolition of slavery in the French colonies in an effort to maintain their holdings.<sup>5</sup> The powerful rebellious Army of Toussaint L'Ouverture finally aligned itself with France, and an uneasy truce emerged under which Toussaint L'Ouverture and a series of French colonial administrators governed St. Domingue as a French plantation colony worked by free labor.

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<sup>4</sup> The political machinations of the European empires make this war particularly difficult to follow. In 1795, Spain ceded all their territory on the island, or what is now the Dominican Republic, to France in the Treaty of Basel. This territory was not actually controlled by France until the early nineteenth century, but Spain clearly stood to gain from a successful uprising against France.

<sup>5</sup> Of the French revolutionary factions, the Jacobins were the most dependent upon the mobilized common people of Paris, though they by no means constituted a working class movement. Their constitution of 1793, which was never enacted, was the most radically democratic written constitution Western Europe had ever seen. Rather than enact it, the Jacobin government suspended the constitution already in place to carry out what is commonly known as the Reign of Terror. The historiography of the French Revolution in both French and English is so extensive that it reflects the ideological and methodological conflicts of an entire discipline. A foundational text, over half a century old, is Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From Its Origins to 1793* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2001).

In 1802 Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul of France, sent his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc, to St. Domingue, hoping to strengthen French control over its colony and rein in or eliminate the power of Toussaint L'Ouverture, deemed too independent and too powerful.<sup>6</sup> The people received the army skeptically, but when news arrived that France had reenslaved the population of the nearby colony of Guadeloupe, the second phase of the Haitian Revolution began: the fight for complete separation from France. Feigning negotiations, the French government kidnapped Toussaint L'Ouverture and imprisoned him in a French fortress where he died in 1803. In his place, Jean-Jacques Dessalines initiated a war of extermination against the French, culminating in a ceasefire, the withdrawal of French forces, and the establishment of the Republic of Haiti with Dessalines at its head. The name itself, Haiti, reclaimed the Taíno name of the island before the arrival of Europeans. The resulting peace was fragile: France refused to negotiate a treaty as they left, leaving the possibility of a new invasion looming over the island. Lack of international support exacerbated the French threat, as no other nation would offer diplomatic recognition to the world's first black republic.

The political situation within the new nation was fragile as well: the national motto "*L'Union Fait La Force*," or "Unity makes strength," represented the unification of the *gens de couleur* with the black ex-slave armies in their mutual fight against France, but this solidarity was ephemeral at best, as the distinct population groups in Haiti had in fact fought each other for much of the 1790's. With the advent of Napoleon's forces, the *gens de couleur* and blacks found the unity that had previously eluded them, allowing them to defeat the French forces and rally around Dessalines as the first head of state. The transient nature of this alliance plagued Haiti

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<sup>6</sup> By 1802, French power had shifted back into the hands of the right; Bonaparte himself seized power in a 1799 coup. Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From 1793 to 1799* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

long after the Revolution, and constantly emerged as a factor complicating the conceptualization of Haiti as a black nation, putting the nation's very existence into question.

Under these fragile circumstances, the Republic of Haiti began the work of establishing an independent government, charged with implementing the radical changes that thousands had fought and died for in the Revolution. The nation's first Constitution, written in 1805, highlighted the contradictions and innovations of the Haitian state. This particular constitution was short lived: as detailed below, a band of conspirators assassinated Dessalines in 1806 and subsequently divided Haiti into two separate polities. Dessalines' Constitution, however, provided a framework for Haitian nationhood that remained intact for well over a century. Written in French, and thereby inaccessible to a significant portion of the Haitian populace, the Constitution explicitly affirmed the black identity of the new nation while precluding political domination by hostile white landowners.<sup>7</sup>

12. No white, whatever his nationality, shall put his foot on this territory with the title of master or proprietor, neither shall he in the future acquire any property therein.

13. The preceding article cannot in the smallest degree affect white women who have been naturalized Haitians by the government, nor does it extend to children already born, or to be born of these women. The Germans and Polanders naturalized by government are also included in the provisions of the present article.

14. All preferences based on color among the children of one and the same family, within which the head of state is the father, having necessarily to cease, the Haitians shall henceforth be known only under the generic appellation of blacks.<sup>8</sup>

Slavery was unequivocally outlawed within the Constitution's jurisdiction, but more was at stake in this constitution: it directly engaged with the definition of blackness. By defining all Haitians

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that at the time of the revolution, many Haitians had been born in Africa, and spoke primarily West African languages. Haitian Creole developed among those who had been on the island for some time or were born there, but the percentage of people who spoke French was very low, and the literate population extremely small. Haitian Creole was not an official language of Haiti until the Constitution of 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Anne W. Gulick, "We Are Not the People: The 1805 Haitian Constitution's Challenge to Political Legibility in the Age of Revolution," *American Literature* 78 (2006): 807-808.

as black, and by defining Polish and German whites as Haitians under the power of the Constitution, this document defined blackness in political rather than biological terms.<sup>9</sup> The French planters who subjugated the enslaved peoples of Haiti for over a century were viewed as enemies of the new state, and completely excluded from it. In light of the persistent threat of French invasion, this was not an especially radical decision. However, against the concept of race as a biological determining factor, which would determine a significant amount of European discourse around the nation in the nineteenth century, Haiti formulated a working definition of blackness, articulated in the political and military struggle against slavery. It was in this larger struggle for black people, shaped by the conditions of Atlantic plantation slavery, that some American blacks found a place in Haiti while their own country increasingly defined itself by a white freedom predicated on black slavery.

In the United States, Haiti had become an extremely controversial political subject. For supporters of slavery in particular, Haiti represented a threat to slavery and to the national cohesion and security of the United States. For black people, Haiti offered first an example of bold and successful defiance of a slave labor regime, and ultimately the example of a black nation in the western world founded upon the same contemporary definitions of constitutional nationhood as France and the United States. Recognizing the explosive potential of the Haitian Revolution, whites in America made attempts to prevent the spread of information about the uprising among black people, but in vain. Black seamen brought news from the ports of St. Domingue to the often black, sometimes enslaved, dockworkers of American's commercial centers, and whites aided the circulation of information by extending an open invitation to white

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<sup>9</sup> Barrymore Bogues, "The Haitian Revolution and the Colonized World" Lecture. (Providence, RI: Brown University, November 4 2009).

planters fleeing Haiti with their slaves.<sup>10</sup> But no matter how sparse or filtered the information, Haiti stood in the American mind as a unique and forceful product of the Atlantic world: enslaved people, captured from Africa and brought to the Americas, held as chattel under the European conception of a nation state, dismantled the entire system and placed themselves at the head of their own polity. The unique importance of Haiti lay precisely in this seizure of European republican forms: there were many self-governing African polities, but the fact of black self-governance alone did not suffice to make Haiti what it was. Black self-governance as a nation state, on the other hand, directly challenged the global hegemony of Europe and dominant believes of white supremacy. While the revolution in the American colonies threatened British colonialism, it did not pose an existential threat to European domination in the way that Haiti did.

While the 1776 Declaration of Independence of the United States was rooted in universal terms of liberty and equality, the realities of American society stood fundamentally and brutally opposed to the rights and needs of black people in America. The position of even free blacks in the United States was precarious, and the British understood this fact well enough to exploit it during the Revolution. In 1775, the colonial governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, proclaimed that any slave who joined the British forces in fighting against the United States would earn their liberty at the conclusion of the war. When the British forces lost, they betrayed many of these soldiers and sent them back into slavery. Some British commanders disregarded the treaty that ended the war, however, evacuating American ports with thousands of freed blacks aboard their

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<sup>10</sup> Julius S. Scott, III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (PhD Diss., Duke University, 1986) provides an influential account of how news of the Revolution made it back to free and enslaved blacks, in particular through the reports of sailors. For an account of white refugees, see Ashli White, "A Flood of Impure Lava: Saint Dominguan Refugees in the United States, 1791-1820" (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 2003).

ships. Therefore this formative moment for the United States, when their former colonizers left their shores as an occupying power for the last time, also constituted the first large scale exodus of blacks from the country. Those who left in that first instance spread across the Atlantic world on their own or under obligation for decades, establishing their first settlements in Nova Scotia but ultimately populating sites throughout the English Atlantic, including Britain's African resettlement colony, Sierra Leone.<sup>11</sup>

Though lamenting their loss of property in human bodies, the continued presence of black people in the new nation, especially free black people, concerned many prominent whites. In his 1781 publication, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson lamented the cruelty of slavery, but nevertheless remained unequivocally opposed to emancipation except if contingent upon the removal of freed blacks from America:

It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the State...? Deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections by the blacks of the injuries they have sustained... and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.<sup>12</sup>

Jefferson's book was intended to respond to "queries proposed to the Author, by a Foreigner of Distinction."<sup>13</sup> Among issues of agriculture and commerce, population and laws, Jefferson admitted that the demographics problem inherent in the presence of an emancipated black population in the United States represented an insurmountable barrier to emancipation. For him and many who agreed, the removal of any emancipated population outside the boundaries of the new republic was absolutely necessary for the nation's survival.

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<sup>11</sup> Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Jefferson, Thomas, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Richmond, VA: J.W. Randolph, 1853) 149.

<sup>13</sup> "Advertisement." *Notes on the State of Virginia*.



Free blacks also questioned the wisdom of their continued presence in Early Republic America, and as they made their way in the social world of the nation trying to find its identity, the community organizations they established frequently hedged their bets by cultivating relationships outside the United States or seeking assistance for emigration if necessary. While maintaining a focus on their own communities and political action at home, these groups fostered international relationships with organizations across the Atlantic world. Prince Hall's African Masonic Lodge in Boston and Richard Allen's African Methodist Episcopal church in Philadelphia are two examples of specifically black organizations with domestic political interests and, to some degree, political influence that engaged extensively with issues of emigration and colonization, albeit in complex ways.

In 1775 Prince Hall became the first black American elevated to the rank of Master Mason. In revolutionary era Boston, the American lodge refused to grant Hall his petition to join the order and he thus turned to the travelling British Lodge No. 58. Upon acquiring the status of Mason, Hall turned to London in search of authorization to found his own lodge for black Masons, which became African Masonic Lodge No. 459 in Boston.<sup>14</sup> With their membership in the elite group of Masons granted by an English institution, Prince Hall and his fellow Masons inserted themselves into the politics of the city of Boston. They quickly gained a degree of respect from white citizens for their conservative politics. Hall's lodge, for example, volunteered to assist in the putting down of Shay's Rebellion in the western end of the state. The lodge diverged from white Masons, however, in its unwillingness to compromise on the issue of slavery. In 1787 they drew up a petition to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for aid in a

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<sup>14</sup> Upon the death of Prince Hall, most African American Freemasons call began to call their branch of the tradition "Prince Hall Masonry." Prince Hall lodges still exist throughout the United States, and Canada, and are recognized as legitimate in all states outside the southeastern United States, where they are still not officially recognized by state level Masonic bodies. Bessel, Paul M. "Prince Hall Masonry Recognition Details: Map of U.S. Recognition Status." *Masonic Recognition Issues*. <<http://bessel.org/masrec/phamap.htm>> Accessed 11.15.2009.

scheme of African emigration, as a response to the “disagreeable and disadvantageous” lives that blacks were forced to lead in America. Members of the African Lodge, despite being some of the most prominent black men in the city, demanded that an alternative to life in America be opened up to slaves and freedmen throughout the nation.<sup>15</sup>

In the context of the eighteenth and nineteenth century social and political exclusion of blacks, the very act of black participation in the elite European cultural phenomenon of Masonry challenged European dominance. On one level, men like Prince Hall simply joined the same fraternal organization that welcomed American heroes such as Washington and Jefferson, and in this sense propped up the system of dominance. However, owing to their categorical exclusion from American civic life, black participation in the conservative Masonic tradition constituted a dangerous performance of equality and a demand for recognition on the part of the most marginalized population of the young United States. Black American Masons were embedded within the society of the United States, but by necessity consciously looking beyond its borders. In that sense we can see the same tendencies operative in the Haitian Revolution itself, in adapting imposed Europeans cultural forms to the particular struggles of black people in the Atlantic.<sup>16</sup>

In an oration delivered in June of 1797, Prince Hall drew on the Haitian Revolution to inspire his membership and convince them that the oppression under which the African diaspora had lived for centuries need not be permanent:

My brethren, let us remember what a dark day it was with our African brethren six years ago in the West Indies. Nothing but the snap of the Whip was heard from morning to evening. Hanging, breaking on the heel, burning and all manner

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<sup>15</sup> James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 68-80; Corey D.B. Walker, *A Noble Fight: African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008) 48-68.

<sup>16</sup> Walker, *A Noble Fight* 45-85.

of tortures were inflicted on those unhappy people. But, blessed be God, the scene is changed.<sup>17</sup>

The slave revolt in St. Domingue had by 1797 ended slavery there but had not established Haiti as a nation independent of France. Hall's reference to Haiti was not a call to rise up against the government of the United States nor was it a plea for blacks to leave, but even a call for reform based on an appeal to Haiti was controversial as whites grew increasingly paranoid about the activities of free blacks perceived to be revolutionary. The engagement of the African Masonic Lodges in the United States with Haiti did not end with rhetoric, and prominent members were intimately involved in the Haitian emigration efforts, and on occasion emigrants themselves. Though the African Masonic organizations were otherwise politically conservative, their affiliation with Haiti's political definition of blackness, and the affirmation of black humanity that the nation represented, resonated with their experience of exclusion within the United States.

Across the nation, black Americans began creating their own institutions. Black leaders established these organizations with the understanding that even the few racially inclusive white American institutions were incapable of confronting the forms of oppression that black people faced. Many of these organizations recognized that black freedom may require not only independence from American institutions, but from America itself. In Philadelphia, Richard Allen struggled against the orthodox white Methodist Church to create a religious institution that would meet the needs of his black parishioners. After years of legal and religious disputes, his efforts culminated in the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a national religious body, by 1816. In 1786, however, Allen established himself in Philadelphia at St. George's Methodist Church, a white church that contracted Allen to preach to a black audience before the regular morning services. Feeling the constraints of the orthodox Methodist Church,

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<sup>17</sup> Grimshaw, *Official History of Freemasonry*. Cited in Walker, *A Noble Fight* 69.

Allen lamented the lack of any independent black organization in the city and in 1787 created the Free African Society of Philadelphia, a mutual aid society. This organization helped mobilize the growing free black community of Philadelphia, free from the dictates of any established church or political body, and inspired sister organizations in New York, Boston, and Newport. In 1792 Allen's organizing bore fruit when the white leadership at St. George's ordered black parishioners to sit in the back of the church and the black community walked out in protest, exhibiting publicly their intention to form a separate church. In 1794, Allen and his black parishioners established Philadelphia's first African Methodist Church.<sup>18</sup>

After a protracted legal battle with the established Methodist church, Allen and his group earned the right to establish themselves as an independent church, responsive to the spiritual and political needs of Philadelphia's black Methodist community. Inspired by Allen's victory, the Baltimore religious leader, Daniel Coker, corresponded with Allen about the possibility of a larger organization for black Methodists. In 1816, Allen and the Philadelphia Bethel African Methodist Church joined with similarly disaffected religious groups in Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York to found the African Methodist Episcopal Church, appointing Allen himself as Bishop. From his post in the AME church and as a member of numerous philanthropic and social organizations, including the African Masonic Lodge of Philadelphia, Allen exerted considerable influence in Philadelphia and across the eastern seaboard. Born into slavery, Allen remained in the United States his entire life to fight against slavery and discrimination. When his religious partner Daniel Coker moved to Africa to work as a missionary in 1819, Allen condemned his decision as a betrayal of the black people in the United States. However, in the 1820's Allen threw his considerable influence behind a voluntary organization for emigration to

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<sup>18</sup> James Campbell. *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 5-10.

Haiti, so that though he himself never left the struggle for rights in the United States, his son James Allen joined the first wave of emigrants to Haiti in 1824.<sup>19</sup>

These two organizations serve as examples of the demonstrated need of black people in early nineteenth century America to create strong, independent institutions to consider the problems they faced. Both the African Masonic Lodges and the African Methodist Episcopal Church were cornerstones of free black culture in nineteenth century America, but their efforts to create a sustainable expression of black freedom in the United States were inseparable from their explorations abroad, in both cases with strong considerations of Haiti and Africa. Until the founding of the white American Colonization Society in 1816, black Americans were not polarized around emigration; rather, emigration constituted one part of broader efforts by the black community to negotiate the social reality of the United States. Once pro-slavery whites began to mobilize more forcefully behind the removal of blacks from the United States, the political implications of staying or leaving, and the distinctions between different destinations, crystallized into more recognizable nineteenth century positions.

In the marked variety of his life, the black ship captain Paul Cuffe exemplified this early American perspective: though an advocate of prosperity and civil rights in the United States, Cuffe devoted his life to the cause of black emigration and the establishment of a transatlantic black commerce. By the end of his life, Cuffe's proximity to white colonization plans separated him from black Americans. His life and career are particularly indicative of the changes being wrought in American black consciousness between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Though his work laid the foundations for future emigrationist movements, he died feeling alienated from a movement he helped create.

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<sup>19</sup> Campbell, *Songs of Zion* 12-14.

Paul Cuffe was born free in New England to an emancipated African father and a Wampanoag mother. After serving in the army of the United States during the American Revolution, Cuffe gained some notoriety as a ship captain and eventually owned his own ships, prospering as a merchant in New England and up and down the eastern seaboard. Cuffe was a fervent Quaker, and his connections to the Society of Friends linked him to a network of anti-slavery whites across the Atlantic, and especially in Britain. The British colony of Sierra Leone particularly impressed Cuffe: established in 1787 as a destination for the resettlement of black people from England, the colony quickly became home to many black American loyalists deposited in Nova Scotia after the American Revolution. In January of 1811, Cuffe travelled across the Atlantic with the hope of gathering information about Africa. His intention was to establish a merchant line between the United States and West Africa that would, in its initial stages, bring emigrants from the United States to Africa and then finance the trips by selling African goods in the United States. Ultimately, Cuffe hoped to foster industry in Africa and develop a thriving black Atlantic commerce. Through leaving the United States and creating their own nation on the coast of Africa, Cuffe reasoned, black people of the Americas could reach their potential, stymied in America by white oppression.<sup>20</sup>

While in Sierra Leone, Cuffe fostered ties with a number of settlers there, and in particular a minister, translator, and merchant named John Kizell. Kizell had been captured in West Africa in his youth and sold into slavery on a South Carolina plantation. When the American Revolution broke out, Kizell joined the British army, evacuated to Nova Scotia, and moved to Sierra Leone. The shared experiences of the two men no doubt drew them together; they were both, in many ways, indicative of the Atlantic world of the eighteenth century. Though

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<sup>20</sup> James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005* (New York: Penguin, 2006) 30-33.

Cuffe and Kizell's friendship remained strong for the latter's career, Cuffe's relationship with the native Africans he met proved more strained. Linguistic and cultural differences made negotiations difficult: in lieu of the customary rum, Cuffe presented a local leader with what he considered to be helpful texts, including a bible, a tract on Quakerism, and "a letter of advice from myself... for the use and encouragement of the nations of Africa."<sup>21</sup> They did not discuss at length Cuffe's request that the kingdoms of West Africa end their participation in the slave trade.

In April of 1811, Cuffe left Sierra Leone for London, where he presented his commercial and emigrationist plans to English abolitionists and in particular his Quaker allies. In September, Cuffe sailed back to Sierra Leone briefly and then returned to the United States. During his travels, relations between the United States and Britain had soured, and British ships stopped Cuffe twice on his return trip. When he finally arrived in the United States, Cuffe found America too was preparing for the Anglo-American War of 1812, and he traveled to Washington, D.C. to promote his plan and try to obtain some sort of waiver for trading with Britain. Cuffe met with President James Madison as the first black man to be received at the White House, but was unsuccessful in gaining permission to trade. Instead, Cuffe spent the war biding his time and consolidating support, until his return to Sierra Leone, bringing a number of emigrants with him. The political and economic situation in Sierra Leone had evidently changed as well, however, and Cuffe and his settlers were not greeted as warmly as they had expected. Cuffe returned to America with very few products to sell- his last voyage was in fact a financial disaster. As slavery became more entrenched in the South and the U.S. policies designed to control black people increasingly draconian, Cuffe wrote that Americans were "preparing instruments for their own execution."<sup>22</sup> Before Cuffe's death in September 1817, a group of whites who had arrived at

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<sup>21</sup> *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs*, Cited in Campbell, *Middle Passages* 35.

<sup>22</sup> Sheldon Harris, ed. *Paul Cuffe: Black America and the Africa Return* cited in Campbell, *Middle Passages* 39.

the same conclusion began to put elements of Cuffe's emigration plan into effect, shifting the implications of emigration and colonization in the United States.

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of white Americans came to Thomas Jefferson's earlier conclusion that whatever became of the institution of slavery, the United States could never be a suitable home for free blacks. An uneasy alliance emerged between opponents of slavery, who believed that the removal of blacks would hasten the end of the institution, and slaveowners (and their apologists) who simply wanted to rid the nation of free blacks, whom they viewed as a menace. After the St. Domingue uprising slaveowners grew increasingly paranoid about slave revolts, and after Gabriel's Conspiracy, a failed rebellion plot in Richmond, VA in 1800, whites became especially concerned that America's free black population represented a threat to American economic and security interests.<sup>23</sup> The American Colonization Society emerged in 1816 as a group of prominent whites with various relationships to the slave system in the United States: its loose coalition included abolitionists and slaveholders, all advocates of removing portions of the American black population to Africa. One of the central organizers of the ACS, a minister from New Jersey named Robert Finley, relied heavily upon correspondence with Paul Cuffe for accurate information about the western coast of Africa and the feasibility of constructing a colony for blacks there. Perhaps overestimating the importance of their relationship with Cuffe, members of the ACS thought they could count on black support for their project.<sup>24</sup>

Their assumption proved to be incorrect: at the first meeting of the ACS in December, 1816. Kentuckian Henry Clay's opening speech determined the opposition of free black

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<sup>23</sup> James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Floyd J. Miller. *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization 1787-1863* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975) 45.



communities across the United States, asking “Can there be a nobler cause than that which, whilst it proposed to rid our country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population, contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized life, and the possible redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted quarter of the globe!”<sup>25</sup> Published nationally, Clay’s address, and the presence of numerous slaveowners and defenders of slavery at the highest levels of the organization, all but precluded black support for an organization seen increasingly as merely a tool to consolidate the institution of slavery in America by removing its most dedicated opponents.

Richard Allen’s AME Church in Philadelphia served as the locus for opposition to the ACS. A meeting of Church members and allies in the community adopted a resolution condemning the American Colonization Society, reaffirming that “We will never separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population of this country.” In the summer of 1817, a meeting in protest of the ACS drew an audience of 3000 free blacks in Philadelphia, issuing further resolutions in opposition to ACS plans for colonization.<sup>26</sup> The belief that the ACS would ultimately lead to the forced removal of free blacks from the United States while slavery in the South persisted gained credence, and opposition to colonization swelled. In a resolution published in the national newspaper *Niles’ Weekly Register*, a Philadelphia committee chaired by black sailmaker James Forten, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, and based in the AME church linked the colonization schemes of the ACS to contemporary political maneuverings to increase the number of slave states:

... The reiterated expressions of some of the advocates of the measure, that it was foreign to their intentions to interfere with a species of property which they hold sacred, and by the recent attempt to introduce slavery, in all its objectionable

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<sup>25</sup> *National Intelligencer*, December 24, 1816 as quoted in P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 28.

<sup>26</sup> P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement* 25-35.

features, into the new states, and which has only been prevented by a small majority in the national legislature, confirms us in the belief, that any plan of colonization without the American continent or islands, will completely and permanently fix slavery in our common country.<sup>27</sup>

Henceforth, the American Colonization Society tainted all African colonization projects by association, and that stigma would last for decades. However, the changing political and ideological terrain of blacks in the United States ensured the continued relevance of emigration in antebellum black thought.

Paul Cuffe died in September of 1817 believing himself disconnected from his black countrymen, and lamenting what appeared to be an abrupt shift in black thinking away from emigration. Rhetoric against the American Colonization Society invoked not only the right, but also the intention of free blacks in America to remain in the United States, and to fight to improve their position in society while opposing the system of slavery from within. Cuffe was partially correct: as the United States changed, the ways in which American blacks articulated their opposition to slavery and oppression changed. However, both the issue of emigration from the United States and the prospect of a black nation from which to build a social and commercial network for the advancement of black people reemerged, as the favored destination for black refugees shifted from Africa to Haiti.

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<sup>27</sup> James Forten, "The Colonization Scheme." *Niles' Weekly Register*, Baltimore, November 27, 1819.

## II. The Beginnings of Black Emigration to Haiti

By the 1820's, American blacks both free and enslaved had considered emigration to another place a means by which they could achieve the freedom they could not find in the United States. Since its independence in 1804, Haiti provided inspiration and ideological support to black Americans' strivings for freedom, but it was not until the 1820's that the political will and material support was available to make black American emigration to Haiti a reality. This chapter details the changes in both the United States and Haiti that made emigration from the former to the latter country both desirable and feasible.

Since its inception in 1804, the government of Haiti had an interest in the black population of the United States. In the 1790's, the United States constituted a major trading partner with Haiti, and given its size and proximity the island nation sought positive relations with the United States, the sole other independent nation in the Americas. Relations between the two nations were volatile however; the distinctions that kept the two states apart were great, and powerful political forces closely tied to slavery in America believed that the existence of Haiti threatened the economic physical security of the United States. Haiti's relationship with the United States was therefore doubly complicated, as it desired a cordial relationship for its own security interests, but by its very constitution opposed the institution of slavery.<sup>28</sup>

Surrounded by the hostile colonial military powers, caution precluded Haiti from intervening in the internal politics of its neighbors. Jean-Jacques Dessalines' founding 1805 Constitution, while radically affirming the blackness of the new nation as well as its opposition to slavery, assured the world that "The Emperor shall never form any enterprize with the views

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<sup>2828</sup> Simon P. Newman, "American Political Culture and the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution on the Atlantic World*, ed. David Geggus (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2001) 72-89.

of making conquests, nor to disturb the peace and interior administration of foreign colonies.”<sup>29</sup>

With these concerns in mind, Dessalines formulated a policy in keeping with Haiti’s fundamentally anti-slavery character which would still appeal to the political concerns of nations invested in slavery. He made a public offer of \$40 to any ship captain who brought a black American to Haiti as an emigrant, and offered to purchase and emancipate blacks on board British slaving ships en route to the West Indies.<sup>30</sup> The Haitian government formulated these policies carefully: they cemented Haiti’s character as a nation for black people, but also allayed white politicians’ concerns about the black populations of the United States and English colonies. In the United States, Haitian emigration provided an outlet for the population of free blacks whose very existence slave owners perceived to be a threat to their slave society. In England, Dessalines’ proposals spoke to the demands of the abolitionist movement coalescing around opposition to slavery and the Atlantic slave trade.

Dessalines’ immigration policies also addressed the internal political needs of Haiti. After 13 years of war that ended slavery and won independence from France, Haiti was severely depopulated. Since from the perspective of the elites, the nation’s economic survival depended entirely upon reviving agricultural production, Haiti needed bodies working in the fields as quickly as possible. This necessity drove the proliferation of Haiti’s extremely unpopular labor codes, dating back to Toussaint’s rule, which periodically created conditions similar to slavery on large plantations owned by the government. Obviously cut off from the methods of labor procurement favored by its neighbors, Haiti struggled to promote itself to potential emigrants.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “The 1805 Constitution of Hayti.” *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1805. Transcribed onto *Bob Corbett’s Web Page*. <<http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/earlyhaiti/1805-const.htm>> .

<sup>30</sup> Sara Fanning, “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans’ Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Slavery and Abolition*. 28 (April 2007): 68.

<sup>31</sup> The following history of post-revolutionary Haiti is drawn from a few different sources, in particular David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier : Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ:

Security concerns dominated the politics of the new republic, and ultimately took primacy over attempts to lure emigrants. Of particular concern was France: the revolutionary war had ended with a ceasefire rather than a treaty, and the possibility loomed of France returning to reclaim the island. Spain, though less powerful, threatened to attack the new nation in an effort to recover the eastern portion of Haiti, now the Dominican Republic, ceded to France in the 1795 Treaty of Basel. In 1805, Dessalines made it clear that any European presence on the Island of Haiti would constitute an existential threat to the new republic and would not be tolerated:

Having decided to recognise as borders only those traced by nature and the seas, convinced that as long as a single enemy still breathes on this territory there remains something for me to do in order to hold with dignity the post to which you have appointed me... I have resolved to regain possession of the integral part of my dominions and to destroy even to the last vestiges the European idol.<sup>32</sup>

England and the United States were more cautious in their relationship with Haiti, and though they refused to grant the new nation diplomatic recognition, neither threatened military action. Both England and the United States profited immensely from Haitian trade, though a brief embargo placed upon the island nation by President Thomas Jefferson interrupted American commerce.<sup>33</sup> Despite Haiti's vibrant commercial relationships with some European powers, not a single country granted the new nation the official diplomatic recognition it needed to ensure its security and inclusion in the nineteenth century diplomatic world. Protection from external

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Rutgers University Press, 1996); and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> *Gazette Politique et Commerciale d'Haiti*, 30 mai 1805. Cited in Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier* 35.

<sup>33</sup> The diplomatic history between the United States and Saint Domingue is extremely convoluted until at least a decade into the nineteenth century. Northerners tended to be more supportive of trade with Haiti, and southerners less so. On the issues of Haitian trade and even Haitian independence, Thomas Jefferson stood with his fellow slaveowners. See Donald R. Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," *Journal of the Early Republic* 2 (Winter 1982): 361-379.

violence was therefore a central priority for the new nation, and maintenance of the standing army drained a significant percentage of the annual budget.<sup>34</sup>

Beset by external threats, internal stability also eluded the Haitian government after the victories of 1804. The armies of Toussaint and Dessalines drew their strength from the rebellious slave laborers of the large northern plantations, but the more mountainous South of Haiti possessed a larger proportion of powerful *gens de couleur*, or *affranchis*, often property owners themselves.<sup>35</sup> Given stronger cultural ties to France and no vivid memory of slavery, the *affranchis* were less willing to submit to the authority of the Revolutionary army. In 1799 the southern general André Rigaud, the son of a French planter and an enslaved woman, rebelled against Toussaint L'Ouverture, supported by elements in the French government. He was defeated and fled to France, returning with General Leclerc's 1802 expedition to regain French control and reestablish slavery.

The coalition that Toussaint and Dessalines forged was fragile, and in 1806 a conspiracy to take control of the government, hatched largely by the *affranchis*, assassinated Dessalines. After Dessalines' death, a power struggle ensued between Henry Christophe, a protégé of Dessalines who drew support from the northern plains, and Alexandre Pétion, who had served under the rebellious general Rigaud in the southern Haiti. In 1810, the leaders reached an

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<sup>34</sup> Different nations refused to grant Haiti recognition for different reasons, as demonstrated in the conditions under which they all finally recognized Haitian sovereignty. As will be made clear in the course of the thesis, France primarily objected to its loss of territorial and human property while England wanted to maintain colonial order and avoid undue conflict with France. In the United States, recognition of Haiti was clearly linked to the issue of slavery itself, and foreign policy was shaped by southern intransigence. For a closer reading of underlying economic benefits of nonrecognition to the world powers, see Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation* 50-55.

<sup>35</sup> This division was essentially a product of economic geography. The Northern plains were better suited for large scale sugar production, which was dominated by the most powerful French planters. Southern Haiti is more mountainous, so the land there was easier to procure. Secondary agricultural products such as Coffee were grown in Southern Haiti by the less prosperous. Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation* 37.

agreement to divide the nation, the South becoming the Republic of Haiti ruled by President Alexandre Pétion and the North the Kingdom of Haiti, governed by King Henry Christophe.<sup>36</sup>

The two Haitis experienced only sporadic conflict during the period between 1810 and the reunification of Haiti under President Jean-Pierre Boyer in 1820, but the central problems that had faced the government of Dessalines, specifically the lack of security and a labor force sufficient to revitalize production, remained urgent for the new governments. Like Dessalines before them, both rulers pursued policies to stabilize their domains internally and remain viable and independent.

Christophe aligned his northern kingdom very closely with England, distancing himself from the French and positioning his country to gain English diplomatic recognition. His rival to the south, Alexandre Pétion, had close ties with France and had in fact lived there in exile during a significant portion of the Haitian Revolution. Christophe was not alone in his admiration for England; a degree of Anglophilia persisted among anti-slavery advocates internationally until well into the nineteenth century. In 1772, an English judge ruled in the *Somerset Case* that slavery was not legal within the boundaries of England, but remained legal in the colonies. In 1807, Parliament passed a bill, at the insistence of British abolitionists such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, outlawing the Atlantic slave trade, previously the enterprise of mostly British merchants. As a result of these legal breakthroughs, England had gained some respect in the eyes of slavery's opponents.<sup>37</sup> Christophe's close relationship with England, however, was a policy determined at least as much by necessity as ideology: faced with the hostility of both France and the United States, Christophe set his efforts upon achieving English

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<sup>36</sup> This history is derived from previously cited sources, in particular Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation* and David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*.

<sup>37</sup> David Brion Davis, "Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony," *The American Historical Review* 92 (Oct. 1987): 797-812 provides an account of British abolitionism, written in conversation with the works of Thomas Haskell and Eric Williams on the subject.

recognition. His main agent working to achieve this goal was a black American named Prince Saunders.

Saunders was born in northern New England, and at a young age the president of Dartmouth College, John Wheelock, identified him as “promising” and introduced him to the Unitarian community of Vermont. From there, the Unitarians sent him to Boston to teach at an African School in 1808. While in Boston, Saunders solidified his connections with influential quakers and abolitionists, joining the African Masonic Lodge, befriending Thomas Paul, founder of the Boston African Baptist Church, and marrying the daughter of ship captain Paul Cuffe. These ties brought Saunders into the transnational network of antislavery activists, and he eventually travelled to England where he met abolitionist William Wilberforce, who in turn introduced him to Henry Christophe.<sup>38</sup>

Christophe hired Saunders, at Wilberforce’s suggestion, as a personal courier for King Henry of Haiti in London. He was charged with delivering mail to members of the British government as they pondered the question of diplomatic recognition for Haiti. His efforts were ultimately fruitless: England did not grant recognition to Haiti until France did in 1825. However, in his capacity as an agent of the Haitian government to the English speaking world, Saunders published the *Haytian Papers* in 1816, distributed widely through the English speaking world as a sort of advertisement for the Haitian nation.<sup>39</sup>

The *Haytian Papers* consisted of a number of Haitian government documents translated into English, published with the clear intention of gaining English diplomatic recognition for the Kingdom of Haiti. In his introduction, Saunders placed his own text against alleged fabrications at the hands of whites pretending to be in the service of King Henry Christophe:

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<sup>38</sup> Arthur O. White, “Prince Saunders: An Instance of Social Mobility Among Antebellum New England Blacks,” *The Journal of Negro History* 60 (October, 1975): 526-535.

<sup>39</sup> White, “Prince Saunders” 528.



Having understood that it has often been insinuated by those few individuals, whose habitual labour is the perversion, (and as far as they are able,) the absolute destruction of every object which has a tendency to show that the Blacks possess, to any considerable extent, that portion of natural intelligence which the beneficent Father of all ordinarily imparts to His Children... I upon my honour declare, that there is not a single white European at present employed in writing at any of the public offices; and that all the public documents are written by those of the King's secretaries whose names they bear, and that they are all black men, or men of colour.<sup>40</sup>

What follows is a copy of Christophe's rural code, developed to maximize agricultural production at any cost, as well as historical documents pertaining to the founding of the Haitian state and the Kingdom of Haiti. The collection ended with "Reflections on the Abolition of the Slave Trade," exalting the British for their services to mankind in the abolition of slavery:

Noble and generous England, by the wisdom of its government is become the mediatrix of the world, and the common tie which is to unite all nations! Moreover, this great country enjoys eternal glory, as the reward of the services she has rendered to the human race, whilst other nations who have persisted in closing their hearts to every claim of justice and humanity, are stamped with signs of degeneracy, and calamities of every kind are afflicting their territories.<sup>41</sup>

Yet while the pamphlet touched upon the greatness of England and the wickedness of France, the United States was not mentioned once in "Reflections on the Abolition of the Slave Trade." Though the United States had abolished the slave trade in its ports by an Act of Congress in 1808, Saunders knew well that slavery was only consolidating throughout the South. Given the urgency with which the Haitian government pursued recognition in England, there was no space for reservations about England's anti-slavery program.

Saunders was relieved from his post due to a personal dispute with King Henry Christophe shortly after the publication of the *Haytian Papers*, and he returned to the United

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<sup>40</sup> *Haytian Papers: A Collection of the Very Interesting Proclamations, and Other Official Documents; Together with Some Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Kingdom of Hayti*, Ed. Prince Saunders, Esq (London: T. Bensley & Son, 1816) iii.

<sup>41</sup> *Haytian Papers* 216-217.

States. In 1818, he published a second edition of the *Papers* in Boston, changing nothing but writing a brief prefatory note declaring that American blacks might be interested in what the papers had to say. He then embarked upon a lecture tour of northern cities, building ties with prominent free black people and organizations and serving as an authority on and advocate of Haiti for an immensely interested population.<sup>42</sup>

In the last few months of 1818, Saunders spoke before two Philadelphia organizations: the Pennsylvania Augustine Society for the Education of People of Colour, and the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race. The Augustine Society met at Richard Allen's Bethel Church and Saunders spoke in his capacity as an educator and advisor on educational matters for Christophe. Among the board members of the Pennsylvania Augustine Society, and the presumed audience of his talk, were prominent free blacks in the city such as Samuel Cornish and Robert Douglass, as well as James Forten, who had so strenuously opposed the efforts of the American Colonization Society to colonize free blacks the year before.<sup>43</sup> Before the Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, Saunders opened his lecture by alluding to the urgency of the black situation in United States:

At a period so momentous as the present, when the friends of abolition and emancipation, as well as those whom observation and experience might teach us to beware to whom we should apply the endearing appellations, are professedly concerned for the establishment of an Asylum for those Free Persons of Colour, who may be disposed to remove to it, and for such persons as shall hereafter be emancipated from slavery, a careful examination of this subject is imposed upon us.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> White, "Prince Saunders" 530.

<sup>43</sup> Prince Saunders, *An Address Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia, on the 30th of September, 1818, Before the Pennsylvania Augustine Society for the Education of People of Colour* (Philadelphia: Joseph Rakestraw, 1818). Chapter 1 of this thesis discussed James Forten and Philadelphia's mobilizations against the American Colonization Society, based largely around Richard Allen's African Methodist Episcopal Church.

<sup>44</sup> Prince Saunders, *A Memoir Presented to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race, December 11th, 1818* (Philadelphia: Dennis Heartt, 1818).

Saunders was clear in his speech that he encouraged emigration to Haiti as a solution to the problems blacks faced in America, but perhaps due to his personal conflicts with Christophe he placed an added emphasis on the problems within Haiti that, to his thinking, could be alleviated by an influx of more enlightened and civilized American blacks.

And believing that the period has arrived, when many zealous friends to abolition and emancipation are of opinion, that it is time for them to act in relation to an asylum for such persons as shall be emancipated from slavery, or for such portion of the free coloured population at present existing in the United States, as shall feel disposed to emigrate. And being aware that the authorities of Hayti are themselves desirous of receiving emigrants from this country; are among the considerations which have induced me to lay the subject before the Convention.

The present spirit of rivalry which exists between the two chiefs in the French part of the island, and the consequent belligerent aspect and character of the country, may at first sight appear somewhat discouraging to the beneficent views and labours of the friends of peace; but these I am inclined to think are by no means to be considered as insurmountable barriers against the benevolent exertions of those Christian philanthropists whose sincere and hearty desire it is to reunite and pacify them.<sup>45</sup>

There was no mass emigration movement to Haiti during this period of the two divided polities, but support swelled around Saunders until his plan was aborted by the death of King Henry Christophe who, faced with both pressure from the southern Republic of Haiti and internal opposition to his Rural Code, took his own life in 1820.

Christophe's rival in the neighboring Republic of Haiti, Alexandre Pétion, also wished to lure black American emigrants, but during his tenure as President faced economic difficulties much more substantial than those faced by Christophe in the North.<sup>46</sup> Culturally, Pétion looked more to France than England, and was therefore not as enthusiastic about either the English language or the Protestant faith as King Christophe. His use of republican forms, however,

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<sup>45</sup> Saunders, *A Memoir Presented* 13.

<sup>46</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued that due to Pétion's light skin and strong ties with France, his legitimacy as a ruler was constantly questioned in a way that Christophe's was not, and he was therefore forced to enact popular land reforms that maintained his population's loyalty at the expense of economic productivity. Christophe, on the contrary, enforced economic productivity through his draconian rural code and centralized land control. Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation* 47-49.

though inconsistent and vulnerable to crises, did speak more to the interests of black Americans than Christophe's monarchical stylings.

Pétion's Constitution of 1816 consolidated his own power at the expense of Republican forms, but it offered much to black Americans, and Pétion took pains to publish it in major newspapers. His spokesperson, Joseph B. Inginac, wrote a letter published in the Quaker paper *Niles' Weekly Register* in which he included specific sections of the new constitution making plain the constitution's intention of attracting disaffected black people from around the world to the nation:

I shall be flattered, sir, if this statement of facts, this genuine picture, which you can present to [your] unhappy fellow countrymen, shall determine a great number of them to come and console themselves beneath the protection of our laws, from the cruel idea of being transported, it is true, whence we all derive our origin but which our civilization has now rendered altogether a foreign country.<sup>47</sup>

The relevant clauses that Inginac included for publication in the *Weekly Register* included some laws that remained in effect since Dessalines' constitution of 1805 concerning the abolition of slavery and the prohibition against whites becoming masters or planters. A new article that was particularly relevant to black people in the United States stipulated that "All Indians, Africans, and their descendents, born in the colonies or elsewhere, who shall hereafter reside in this republic, shall be acknowledged as Haytians." Though the political will and legal framework for black Americans to emigrate to Haiti was in place, internal political change prevented the Haitian government from establishing a viable system for black American emigration until 1824.

Alexandre Pétion died peacefully in 1818, and the presidency of the southern Republic of Haiti passed to Jean-Pierre Boyer. Like Pétion, Boyer had fought with Toussaint until joining Rigaud's rebellion, after which he was exiled to France. His name evidently reached the United

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<sup>47</sup> *Niles' Weekly Register*, October 17, 1818.

States before he had become president, because in 1812, the New York African Masonic Lodge chose the name Boyer Lodge in honor of Boyer's role as a fighter in the Haitian Revolution.<sup>48</sup> As discussed previously, King Henry Christophe of the northern Kingdom of Haiti committed suicide in 1820 in the face of a rebellion, and Boyer then seized the opportunity to unify the nation once again. By 1822, Boyer had secured the eastern half of the island, or what is now the Dominican Republic, for the first time since Dessalines invaded Spanish Santo Domingo in 1805. Having thus unified the island under his rule, thereby diminishing threats to the nation's security, President Boyer's long tenure as President began auspiciously.

Unification of the island diminished the threats from France and Spain, but the United States loomed large to the North, and President Boyer immediately threw himself into advocating for diplomatic recognition. In August of 1822, *Niles' Weekly Register* published a letter from Boyer to a supporter in North Salem, Massachusetts. The American, one Mr. Dodge, was part of a larger contingent of Americans, almost entirely residing in the North, who for commercial or humanitarian reasons supported the extension of diplomatic recognition to Haiti. The editorial comments of the *Weekly Register* demonstrate that paper's position as a pro-recognition organ, and the high regard with which it held President Boyer:

The perusal of this letter will show, that those islanders who have so long struggled for liberty and independence, who know and will justly appreciate their rights; and that, for clearness of conception, correctness of political morality, and just views of national interest, this letter is equal to any white's production...Genius, bravery, and high moral attainment, are confined to no zone, nor color, but where freedom is, there will they flourish.<sup>49</sup>

Debates around recognition of Haiti in the United States fell along the same sectional lines as debates about slavery in general. Boyer initially appealed to American politicians, thinking that

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<sup>48</sup> Sara Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century," 72-73.

<sup>49</sup> *Niles' Weekly Register*, August 17, 1822.

appeals to moral and commercial interests would sway the American government in spite of intense racism. Boyer's letter to the man in Massachusetts reflects, or at the very least projects, a degree of confidence in capacity of America to overcome prejudice and recognize Haiti for economic reasons:

It is then to be hoped that time and experience, enlightening governments upon their true interests, and destroying all prejudices founded upon trifling and absurd considerations, will produce the reign of a wise and reasonable policy, and will cause those governments to feel the necessity of acknowledging the independence of the *Queen of the Antilles*.<sup>50</sup>

Boyer, like many Americans, had not yet grasped the increasing sectional polarization around issues of slavery and race that widened already visible cracks in the United States. By the 1820's factions had hardened around these questions as the nation entered the antebellum period, characterized by the exacerbation of economic, political, and ideological differences in the nation to the point of rupture, culminating in the U.S. Civil War.

In June of 1822, Denmark Vesey's rebellion in Charleston, South Carolina frightened Southerners, and as in the aftermath of Gabriel's Rebellion in 1800, white retaliation was severe. After years of servitude in Saint Domingue and Charleston, South Carolina, Denmark Vesey bought a winning lottery ticket and purchased his own freedom in 1799. In 1822, with the help of the African-born "Gullah" Jack Pritchard, Denmark Vesey allegedly crafted a plot for the slaves of South Carolina to gain their freedom by burning Charleston to the ground, slaying the white people, and setting sail for Haiti. Subsequent reports discussed the possibility of aid from Haitian soldiers. But like Gabriel's conspiracy two decades before, Vesey's rebellion was uncovered before it began and the alleged conspirators were put to death.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Niles' Weekly Register*, August 17, 1822.

<sup>51</sup> Walter C. Rucker, "I Will Gather All Nations": Resistance, Culture, and Pan-African Collaboration in Denmark Vesey's South Carolina," *The Journal of Negro History* 86 (Spring, 2001): 132-147.

Notwithstanding the unsubstantiated testimony of the accused and the allegations of frantic slaveowners, there is no evidence that the government of Haiti played any role in the planning of the Denmark Vesey uprising. Such involvement would have of course condemned the new nation to further isolation, and President Boyer stood with his predecessors in refusing to interfere in the internal affairs of his neighbors, even at the expense of allowing chattel slavery to continue throughout the hemisphere. The forced testimony does, however, attest to the significant imaginative pull of Haiti, both as a force for black liberation and a destination where black people could be free and proud, standing in a world dominated by slaveholding European nations as a sovereign nation, free and independent.

In August of 1822, the City Council of Charleston published “an account of the late intended Insurrection in this City, with a Statement of the Trials and such other facts in connexion with the same as may be deemed of public interest.”<sup>52</sup> The “Intendant’s Report” references Saint Domingue at numerous points, mostly in what is printed as the testimony of black informants. According to the report of at least one witness, Haiti was to serve not only as an inspiration but as an active force assisting in the liberation of the Charleston blacks, who would “not be without help, as the people from San Domingo and Africa would assist them in obtaining their liberty, if they only made the motion first themselves.”<sup>53</sup> Though not all accounts implicated the armies of Haiti into the insurrection, most did note the intention of escaping to Haiti, even though Haiti’s acceptance of the rebels would have dashed their chances at positive relations with the United States. Some accounts indicated that England would come to the aid of the slaves, assisting them in their removal to Haiti, while many whites predicted that Vesey

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<sup>52</sup> “An Account of the Late Intended Insurrection Among a Portion of the Blacks of this City” (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1822) included in the collection by Lois A. Walker and Susan R. Silverman, *A Documented History of Gullah Jack Pritchard and the Denmark Vesey Slave Insurrection of 1822* (New York: The Edward Mellon Press, 2000) 295-337.

<sup>53</sup> “An Account” 300 .

would merely use the insurrection as an excuse to rob the banks of the city and escape to Haiti himself, leaving his followers stranded to the justice of the slaveholders.<sup>54</sup>

The surviving evidence from the Denmark Vesey conspiracy is problematic.<sup>55</sup> Vesey was executed without a confession, and the only black voices emerge tempered by the reporting of whites and their coercive confessional techniques. What the accounts do reveal is the importance of Haiti in the American imagination and its position as a bulwark against slavery and black oppression. The Denmark Vesey conspiracy, as alleged through the courts, was in fact an emigration scheme of enslaved southern blacks, a population never explicitly courted by the Haitian government. To escape to Haiti was a particular act of defiance in itself, and though some northern free blacks were concerned that emigration constituted abandonment of the enslaved in the United States, for the Vesey conspirators Haiti represented a tremendous pull for freedom. For southern whites, it represented a tangible and nearby threat to their society.

Denmark Vesey's conspiracy had a substantial impact on American politics. Slavery had of course only become more entrenched in the South since Gabriel's rebellion, and planters implemented increasingly draconian policies to assuage their fears of slave uprisings. As a result of Vesey's the rebellion's real and imagined connections to Haiti, the Caribbean nation took up its position once again at the center of southern fears about slavery. It was clear that despite 18

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<sup>54</sup> "An Account" 314-322. This last accusation is indicative of southern views on slavery. Per the published report, Vesey's motives can be ascribed to a "malignant hatred of the whites, and inordinate lust of power and booty." The motives of his followers of course can hardly be ascertained, as "they had no individual hardship to complain of, and were among the most humanely treated negroes in our city."

<sup>55</sup> A series of recent articles calls into question the very existence of a conspiracy on the grounds of the prejudice and unreliability of the South Carolina legal system and the coerced nature of witness testimony. Although the same debate took place decades earlier, this discussion began most recently with Michael Johnson's article "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (Oct. 2001): 915-976. One of the historians taken to task by Johnson, Douglas Egerton, responded with his own article "Forgetting Denmark Vesey; Or, Oliver Stone Meets Richard Wade," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (Jan., 2002): 143-152. Egerton notes that Johnson, eager to debunk what he perceives as exaggerated accounts of Vesey and his conspiracy, overlooks essential documents which lend credence to the conspiracy. Johnson emphasizes the unreliability of the courts to mask the larger implication of his article, which denies agency to the enslaved and characterizes discussion of those who rebelled against slavery as at best misguided and uninformed.



years of calm since Haiti's 1804 independence, the slaveholding South would never consider it an equal with other nations of the world, both on account of its black government and the perception that it presented a threat to their very existence as a slave society. In an environment where violence and statutes prevented southern blacks from learning about even the activities of free blacks in the Northern United States, discussion about Haiti was unacceptable.

Consideration of Haiti as a nation became inseparable from the issue of slavery in United States politics, and would remain so until the U.S. Civil War, when the South's attempted exit from the Union allowed for the diplomatic recognition of Haiti in 1862 and the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, officially outlawing slavery, in 1865.

By 1822, Boyer ruled the entirety of the island known to contemporary Americans as Hispaniola, and though his conquest solved some long standing problems, it also created new ones. Haitian control over the eastern portion of the island eliminated a substantial security liability, since hostile European powers could no longer stage an attack from the weakly defended Spanish half of the island. However, after decades of intense conflict and economic stagnation the island remained underpopulated, and required more rural workers to succeed economically. Given that environment, Boyer aggressively sought new citizens. As political debates in the United States made it increasingly clear that Haiti would not achieve U.S. diplomatic recognition with moral and commercial incentives alone, Boyer focused his efforts on the black population in the United States, which constituted a large and reliable ally. For the first time, he directed the efforts of the Haitian state toward engaging with black Americans directly, seeking not only their political support but their physical removal to Haiti. He took an early interest in the emigration of African Americans to his country not only because he presided over

the only nation in the Americas that would treat them as equals, but also because Americans could replenish his population and introduce innovative agricultural techniques.

Boyer's efforts to recruit black Americans to Haiti began in early 1824, in his correspondence with Loring Dewey. Dewey was a New York City minister and an agent of the American Colonization Society, disillusioned by the overwhelming black opposition to the organization. Believing that American blacks were more supportive of emigration to Haiti than to Africa, Dewey initiated a correspondence with President Boyer. On his part, Boyer believed that Dewey's writings carried the endorsement of the powerful American Colonization Society and was glad to initiate a plan for black emigration.<sup>56</sup>

In his correspondence with Dewey, Boyer advertised his government's offer to defray a portion of the cost of the voyage as well as furnish emigrants with fertile lands and the necessary tools to begin agricultural production. The Haitian government expected these emigrants to integrate into Haitian society, and Boyer balked at Dewey's suggestion that the Colonization Society create a colony "in *all* respects like one of the states of the United States, and *connected with* and *subject to* the government of Hayti, only as each state is with our general government..."<sup>57</sup> The president's response to Dewey's query was unequivocal:

That cannot be. The laws of the Republic are general- and no particular laws can exist. Those who come, being children of Africa, shall be Haytiens as soon as they put their feet upon the soil of Hayti: they will enjoy happiness, security, tranquility, as such as we ourselves possess, however our defamers declare the contrary.<sup>58</sup>

Still an agent of the American Colonization Society, Dewey's request referred to the structure of the ACS colony of Liberia, which had been established "in all respects like one of the states of

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<sup>56</sup>Sara Fanning, "Haiti and the U.S.: African American Emigration and the Recognition Debate." PhD Diss., University of Texas, 2008.

<sup>57</sup> *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Hayti: of the Free People of Colour in the United States. Together With the Instructions to the Agent Sent Out by President Boyer* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1824) 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Correspondence* 10.

the United States,” and not part of a larger sovereign government. Of course, this proposal was unacceptable to President Boyer for the same reason that Liberia was unacceptable to the majority of American blacks: it was incommensurate with a strong and independent black nation capable of defending the interests of black Americans.

With his correspondence, Boyer sent an emissary named Jonathan Granville with the particular charge of promoting colonization to the United States. Granville arrived in Philadelphia on June 9, 1824 with instructions to proceed immediately to New York City, where he contacted prominent advocates of emigration. Making of a tour of religious and philanthropic societies, Granville advertised the generosity of the Haitian government in providing land and furnishing loans for travel expenses.<sup>59</sup>

In July of 1824, Jonathan Granville delivered a speech to a “meeting of colored people,” in New York, hoping to soothe any fears that American blacks had of migration to Haiti and convince them that the trip was worth making. His speech was printed in the *New York Mercantile Observer* and then reprinted in *Niles’ Weekly Register*:

I do not come here to obtain recruits. For more than thirty years the world has beheld us struggling alone against the tempests of despotism. Though we have not withheld from others, we have received nothing from any; alone we have resisted the storm; the winds are now calm, and our vessel glides smoothly upon an ocean of tranquility and happiness. An efficient government offers you protection; offers to share with you blessings and advantages which you cannot experience here.<sup>60</sup>

Granville’s appeal to both the degraded conditions of blacks in the United States and the persistence of black independence in Haiti against substantial odds resonated with the black communities in the east coast cities he visited, and a growing contingent of blacks who had opposed emigration under the aegis of the American Colonization Society embraced Boyer’s plans and formed their own societies to bring them to fruition.

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<sup>59</sup> *Correspondence* 21-28.

<sup>60</sup> *Niles’ Weekly Register*, August 7, 1824.

Though Boyer had corresponded with Loring Dewey, an affiliate of the American Colonization Society, the Society had always distanced itself from Haitian Emigration. By 1824 the ACS had in fact transported a significant number of American blacks to Africa, almost all of whom were former slaves emancipated on the condition of their removal from the country. The following letter from an agent of the American Colonization Society in Liberia, printed in the *New York Observer*, is telling of the degree of autonomy granted the free blacks who were settled in the Society's West African colony:

My Dear Sir: The American colonization society has formed a constitution and laws for the government of the colony, and every emigrant is compelled to subscribe his name to them, and to take an oath that he will support and abide by them. The constitution provides, that the government of the colony shall be vested in an agent appointed by the society, and such other officers as they may from time to time see proper to appoint, until such time as they may choose to withdraw and leave the colonists to govern themselves.<sup>61</sup>

The stark contrast between the independent black nation of Haiti and the persistent authority of a white pseudo-benevolent society was lost on no one. In its steadfast opposition to any project of removal to Haiti, the American Colonization Society revealed its hostility to black self-government, which black leaders such as Richard Allen and James Forten had seen from the start. As a result of the ACS's intransigence, they were simply circumvented.

Despite ACS opposition, societies of both blacks and whites supporting emigration to Haiti sprang up along the east coast. Black community leaders such as Peter Williams in New York and Richard Allen in Philadelphia opened city chapters of the "Society for promoting the Emigration of Free Persons of Colour to Hayti." Whereas the American Colonization Society was essentially a front for slaveowning interests, new societies sprang up throughout the northeast, rooted in black communities and centered around free churches, to promote emigration to Haiti. Antislavery whites formed complementary groups, creating a network of mostly Quaker

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<sup>61</sup>*Niles' Weekly Register*, September 11, 1824.

advocates of Haitian emigration that foreshadowed the multiracial abolitionist movement which emerged a decade later. Prominent white supporters included the newspapermen Hezekiah Niles and Benjamin Lundy, publishers of *Niles' Weekly Register* and *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, respectively. Using those national newspapers for publicity, the societies for Haitian emigration grew.

In 1825 the Haytien Emigration Society of Philadelphia printed a pamphlet for general distribution entitled "Information for the Free People of Colour Who are Inclined to Emigrate To Hayti," included practical information about how to register for emigration as well as data concerning the types of labor Haiti required. The second to last paragraph contained a call for the defense of the only black nation in the hemisphere:

While we have no fear that Hayti will be invaded by the French, we yet would say, that were it so, it should not deter our going, but be a motive to urge our departure. Do we not see what La Fayette receives for flying to the aid of an oppressed people? And is not Hayti the only spot where the coloured man has gained his rights? And could it be overthrown, would it not be putting out the very sun of our hopes?<sup>62</sup>

While the legacy of the Haitian Revolution would later be used to rally black troops in the United States Army during the Civil War, here it was Haiti itself that black Americans were called upon to defend. As a defense of black rights, emigration to Haiti stood as a polar opposite to the plans of the ACS and proslavery factions despite apparent similarities. The pamphlet's rousing call to action is followed by a paragraph extolling the freedom of religion in Haiti:

All religious professions are tolerated, and men are left at full liberty to worship their Creator according to the dictates of their own conscience, and through the medium of their own forms and ceremonies- provided they do not disturb the public tranquility.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "Information for the Free People of Colour who are Inclined to Emigrate to Hayti" (Philadelphia: J.H. Cunningham, 1825) 6.

<sup>63</sup> "Information for the Free People of Colour" 6.

These final lines give the impression that they were tacked on as an afterthought, merely as something the author had failed to address as the pamphlet went to press. Yet the importance of these lines to any potential emigrant should not be lost: religion was an extremely important subject for African Americans who were considering a trip to Haiti. Religious difference, however, was only a minor factor in the failure of the Haitian emigration project. As many as 13,000 black Americans sailed for Haiti, beginning in September of 1824, but within three years many had returned or died. Not only cultural differences but disease, poverty, and changes in the Haitian political system forced thousands to quit Haiti. The emigration movement was set back decades, but was not eliminated, and the significance of Haiti as a symbol and bastion of black power remained potent in black America.

### **III. Black Nationalism and Black Abolitionism in Antebellum America**

Black politics in the United States changed considerably after the first Haitian emigration movement of the 1820's. The project was a fiasco, and in its aftermath there were no significant attempts among black Americans to emigrate from the United States until after 1850. In the intervening years, however, the political situation of black people in the United States had worsened dramatically. Newspapers and organizations proliferated, and as more black voices began to participate in the debates around black freedom, divergences emerged and solidified around certain fundamental questions. Was violent action necessary for the liberation of blacks, or was it counterproductive? To what extent could black Americans rely on white support in their struggle? As conditions for blacks in the United States deteriorated, and emigration receded, if only temporarily, as a viable option, two distinct parties emerged that would characterize black political discussion until the U.S. Civil War: those desiring equal rights in the United States, who maintained strong relations with white abolitionists, and those who believed that equality in the United States was impossible, and sought to establish a black nation elsewhere.

Upon arriving in Haiti, some blacks who came to regret their decision to emigrate, and though some remained and found what they had wanted there, many intended to return to the United States. Some died before they could do so. The first boat back to the United States left from Port-au-Prince in March of 1825, six months after the first boat had left the United States for Haiti. A myriad of cultural differences between the Haitians and the emigrants from America contributed to the discomfort and alienation felt by many people on both sides, but the most pressing concerns for the recently arrived immigrants were very material. The standard of living in Haiti was generally lower than that of free black Americans in the United States. By the

1820's meat was readily available to most Americans, whereas regular consumption of meat remained beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest in Haiti. Weather conditions hit Haiti hard, contributing to the discomfort. A massive draught hit Haiti in 1825, greater than the nation had seen in some time. The draught was devastating for Haitians, but proved particularly hard for the immigrants from the United States who had not yet built up lives for themselves and were mostly thrust on the charity of strangers. What ultimately drove a wedge between Americans and their Haitian hosts was the outbreak of smallpox that hit Port-au-Prince in the winter of 1825 and quickly spread through the nation. Haitians tended to blame the new immigrants for the outbreak, and they may have been right: both Philadelphia and New York suffered from smallpox outbreaks shortly before the new immigrants arrived, killing dozens of people in the cities' black neighborhoods. The Haitian outbreak was rather worse, killing nearly 40,000 people in Port-au-Prince and nearly 10% of the northern city of Cap Haitien. From that point forward, American blacks found themselves more feared than welcomed in their new home.<sup>64</sup>

Shortly after the arrival of the American emigrants, the political fortunes of Haiti began to deteriorate as well. Since independence, successive Haitian rulers had lobbied for diplomatic recognition, primarily from England and the United States, appealing to moral as well as commercial sensibilities. By 1825, Boyer decided that he would have to negotiate with France on their terms, but their demands were steep. Legal abolition of slavery within a territory was rare, but uncompensated emancipation was unheard of at the time, and emancipation at the hands of the slaves themselves particularly unconscionable. In return for their freedom, France demanded an indemnity of 150 million francs from the Haitian people.<sup>65</sup> To meet this enormous monetary

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<sup>64</sup>Fanning, "Haiti and the U.S.: African-American Emigration and the Recognition Debate."

<sup>65</sup> In April of 2003 Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, celebrating the bicentennial of the Haitian Revolution, issued a demand that France repay the indemnity that wrecked Haiti's economy in the nineteenth century. The Haitian government calculated the 2003 value of 150 million 1825 francs to be \$21,685,135,571.48 USD, or nearly



demand, Boyer took out loans from France, printed money, and tried to increase agricultural production. France's demands, and the policies that Boyer enacted to meet them, proved disastrous for the nation as a whole, as the burden of state spending was placed on the peasants. Boyer never again enjoyed the popularity he had while he unified the nation, and though he ruled until 1843 his authority rested increasingly on despotic military control. Finally achieving the diplomatic recognition of France, and of Great Britain shortly thereafter, Boyer's principal security threat came from the Haitian people themselves in the face of his own lack of legitimacy.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the bad news from Haiti and the tales of the returned emigrants, Haiti retained great symbolic importance for black Americans. On March 16, 1827, in New York City, John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish began publication of *Freedom's Journal*, the first black-published newspaper in the United States, and they specifically promised accurate and timely news about the island nation. Some prominent white newspapermen, such as Hezekiah Niles of *Niles' Weekly Register*, considered themselves allies of black Americans, and white abolitionist newspapers devoted specifically to the abolition of slavery, such as Benjamin Lundy's *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, emerged in the 1820's, but it was not until 1827 that black Americans had their own newspaper. On the first page of the first issue of *Freedom's Journal*, the editors stated their purpose in founding a paper: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us." Their paper intended to both represent and uplift the race, and in this endeavor the editors looked to international examples:

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22 billion dollars. The French government flatly denied Aristide's request. "Recognizing the Right of Haitians to Reparations," *Center for Economic and Policy Research*, February 12, 2010. <<http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/relief-and-reconstruction-watch/qrecognizing-the-right-of-haitians-to-reparationsq/>> Accessed March 31, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation* 60-61.

If ignorance, poverty and degeneration have hitherto been our unhappy lot; has the Eternal decree gone forth, that our race alone, are to remain in this state, while knowledge and civilization are shedding their enlivening rays over the rest of the human family? ... the establishment of the republic of Hayti after years of sanguinary warfare: its subsequent progress in all the arts of civilization; and the advancement of liberal ideas in South America, where despotism has given place to free governments, and where many of our brethren now in important civil and military stations, prove the contrary.<sup>67</sup>

Along with letters, poetry, news items, and substantial amounts of information about the educational of young blacks in New York, the first issue of *Freedom's Journal* inaugurated a serial publication of the "Memoirs of Capt. Paul Cuffe." The editors consciously positioned the paper as part of a tradition of black independence.

The first issue of *Freedom's Journal* demonstrated the continued importance of Haiti for black Americans, and affirmed that the information about Haiti printed in the United States was always politically charged. Part of "pleading their own cause," for a black publisher in the United States, was providing factual information about Haiti so that the legacy of the Haitian Revolution would not be tarnished by misreporting:

The Haytiens, in declaring their independence, and their determination to maintain it, have done so in the face of the universe. They have erected the standard of liberty... Though desirous of conciliating all nations, yet they fear none: and so far from being on the eve of a revolution, never were all parties more united and determined to support their hard-earned liberty.

As the relations between Hayti and this country are becoming daily more interesting, it is highly important that we have correct information concerning the state of affairs there. Our readers may depend on our columns, as we shall never insert any news whatever, of a doubtful nature, concerning the island.

We caution the dissatisfied and envious in this country, who are constantly forging "news from Hayti," to desist from their unmanly attacks upon a brave and hospitable people. Were our readers as well acquainted with their motives for venting their spleen as we are, they would give as little credit to their instructions.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> "To Our Patrons," *Freedom's Journal* March 16, 1827.

<sup>68</sup> *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

White political opinion remained opposed to Haiti as a nation, and though the returned emigrants discouraged any other attempt at emigration for decades, Haiti did not cease to inspire and empower black communities in the United States. On the contrary, the editors of *Freedom's Journal*, as black Americans, understood the extent to which the cause of Haiti was tied to their own. Beginning with the sixth issue, on April 29, 1827, *Freedom's Journal* began publishing a serialized history of the nation, from the arrival of Europeans through to the Revolution, and on May 4 the newspaper began a serialized account of the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Interest in Haiti among black northerners had evidently not flagged as a result of the unsuccessful colonization scheme.

For editor John Russwurm, Haiti was a lifelong interest. Born in Jamaica in 1799 to a white American man and an enslaved black woman, Russwurm was only four years old when Haiti proclaimed its independence in 1804. In 1824, he entered Bowdoin College in Maine, becoming the college's first black graduate in 1826, and only the third in the United States. At his graduation ceremony he gave a speech called "The Condition and Prospects of Hayti." Considering the heroic past of the first black nation, and the great struggles which had accompanied its independence, the young Russwurm could not imagine that the country's future would lead to anything but prosperity and reward.<sup>69</sup>

Despite its international content, *Freedom's Journal* established itself from the outset as resolutely opposed to emigration, in particular African emigration. In the May 18, 1827 issue, a writer signing as "A Man of Colour," speculated to be prominent Philadelphian James Forten,<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Winston James, "The Wings of Ethiopia: The Caribbean Diaspora and Pan-African Projects from John Brown Russwurm to George Padmore," *African Diasporas in the New and Old Worlds: Consciousness and Imagination* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004) 128.

<sup>70</sup> Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality* 83.

railed against the Colonization Society itself and also took aim at its many philanthropic owners, who purported to do good but in fact worked against black freedom:

I am aware that many philanthropists have become converts to the colonization scheme; many, I doubt not, who have at all times espoused the cause of the oppressed, and imagine that it will ultimately prove beneficial to them; others, think that it is the only means by which Africa can become civilized, and “Ethiopia stretch forth her hands to God,” but they do not penetrate the real views of the Colonization Society, who have carefully disguised their intentions; which have since the formation of this society been aimed at the liberty of the free people...<sup>71</sup>

*Freedom's Journal* opposed African colonization, but remained deeply interested in the news and history of both Africa and Haiti. Turning their editorial attention inward to the United States, Russwurm and Cornish made a strong statement with their paper: black people in America were ready to speak rather than be spoken for, and assert their own ideas about how best to obtain the freedom they deserved. Whether that was possible in the United States or if it could only be achieved elsewhere was an open question.

Over the next two years, the editorial opinion of *Freedom's Journal* regarding Haiti shifted dramatically as Samuel Cornish abandoned the paper and John Russwurm grew increasingly supportive of colonization efforts. He devoted the first two pages of the February 14, 1829 issue mostly to excerpts from Haitian Baron de Vastey's writings on his African tours. Later in the paper, “the editors,” still solely Russwurm, announced their change of opinion regarding emigration to Africa. Remaining in the United States, he argued, was not an option: “We consider it mere waste of words to talk of ever enjoying citizenship in this country; it is utterly impossible in the nature of things.” Though Russwurm advocated for Liberia as the ideal destination for blacks seeking a better life, he remained circumspect about Haiti as another potential destination:

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<sup>71</sup> *Freedom's Journal*, May 18, 1827.

In preferring Liberia, we wish not to deprive any of the right of choice between it and Hayti; as is not our object to say ought against Hayti or the able ruler at its head; but it is a fact well known to all, that our people have strong objections against emigrating to that country, arising in many cases, from the unfavourable reports of those who have returned.<sup>72</sup>

Russwurm began printing pieces from the print organ of the American Colonization Society, *The African Repository*, in late February, and in March ceased printing *Freedom's Journal* forever.

Facing strong criticism from the black intelligentsia of the northern cities, Russwurm left for Liberia in May of 1829. He was appointed director of education for the colony and died a supporter of African emigration in the Maryland province of Liberia in 1851.

The returning emigrants had diminished the appeal of Haiti as a destination for black Americans, but conditions in the United States continued to deteriorate. The immediate response was an increase in the intensity and militancy of the organizing being done in the United States. White activists as well as black emboldened their antislavery rhetoric, and divergences ultimately formed among black people fighting for political rights and against slavery. Differences emerged over the use of violence, alliances with whites, and whether black presence in the United States was tenable, regardless of how bad the alternatives seemed. The factions that emerged in this period can be labeled black nationalists, and black abolitionists.

David Walker's *Appeal in Four Articles*<sup>73</sup> contained the genesis of black nationalist ideology. Published in Boston in 1830, Walker's *Appeal* captured the precarious and deteriorating position of American blacks and advocated for radical change. Walker's four articles included the following: "Our Wretchedness in Consequence of Slavery," "Our

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<sup>72</sup> *Freedom's Journal*, February 14, 1829.

<sup>73</sup> The connection between Walker's *Appeal in Four Articles* and the more fully developed Black Nationalism of the 1840's and 1850's was made as early as 1848 when Henry Highland Garnet, who would play a role in the Haitian Emigration Movement of the 1850's, published Walker's text, writing in his preface that "The work is valuable, because it was among the first, and was actually the boldest and most direct appeal in behalf of freedom, which was made in the early part of the Anti-Slavery Reformation." *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles/ David Walker; An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America* (New York: Arno Press, 1984).

Wretchedness in Consequence of Ignorance,” “Our Wretchedness in Consequence of the Preachers of the Religion of Jesus Christ,” and finally “Our Wretchedness in Consequence of the Colonizing Plan.” Affirming that blacks in America were “in the most abject ignorance and degradation, that ever a people were afflicted with since the world began,”<sup>74</sup> Walker was not, however, willing to accept such a condition and did not believe that God was either. Walker’s radicalism lay in his determined sense that the wrongs of America would be avenged and that the blacks would be delivered from slavery, if not by their own hands then by that of God:

I speak Americans for your good. We must and shall be free I say, in spite of you. You may do your best to keep us in wretchedness and misery, to enrich you and your children, but God will deliver us from under you. And wo, wo, will be to you if we have to obtain our freedom by fighting.<sup>75</sup>

The radicalism of Walker’s pamphlet indicated the increasing national urgency of the slavery problem, and the impatience of blacks in America faced with white intransigence. Walker urged against emigration, particularly under the aegis of white colonization programs, but steadfastly insisted on black independence and militancy.

The Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831 amply demonstrated the growing impatience of American blacks as well as the increasing urgency of the slavery question in the United States. The rebellion, which occurred in Southampton County, Virginia on August 22, 1831, became the bloodiest slave revolt in American history: the rebels succeeded in killing 60 whites, but the following weeks brought the retaliatory massacre of hundreds of blacks. Like Gabriel’s Rebellion of 1800 and the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy of 1822, the political repercussions of the Nat Turner revolution were significant. The Virginia State Legislature began debating slavery in January of 1832, and lawmakers seriously considered the gradual emancipation of slavery in

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<sup>74</sup> David Walker, “Appeal in Four Articles” in *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey*, ed. Wilson Jeremiah Moses (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 72.

<sup>75</sup> Walker, “Appeal in Four Articles,” *Classical Black Nationalism* 88.

Virginia for the first time. Poor whites in the western section of the state, where relatively few whites owned slaves, resented the political dominance of the eastern slaveholders and the danger to their lives and property that the institution of slavery posed. All proposals for abolition contained corresponding measures for the colonization of freed blacks, including a measure proposed by Thomas Jefferson Randolph, grandson of the late president.<sup>76</sup>

Ultimately, the powerful supporters of slavery won in the Virginia Legislature. Echoing previous rebellions, the lives of free and enslaved blacks were more strictly patrolled, and the chance of voluntary emancipation reached a low point. The legislature stopped short of deporting free blacks, but cracked down on their schools and religious institutions. Particularly as a result of David Walker's pamphlet, the Virginia legislature redoubled their efforts to prevent black literacy, and state throughout the South adopted similar measures to enforce oppressive laws already on the books.<sup>77</sup>

This time, however, southerners did not cast all the blame onto their own enslaved population or even free blacks. Growing tension between the North and South resulted in a campaign to rest the blame for slave rebelliousness upon a few northern agitators. William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper *The Liberator*, the principal organ of the abolitionist movement through the 1830's, began publication in Boston in January of 1831 and, along with Walker's pamphlet, the paper met criticism. The *Charleston Mercury* printed a clear warning against outside influences, advertising that the "Vigilante Association of Columbia" was willing to offer a reward for the capture and conviction of white people distributing either *The Liberator* or "Walker's Pamphlet."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Eric Foner, ed, *Nat Turner*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971) 8. It was the Western portion of Virginia that left the Confederacy to become West Virginia in 1863.

<sup>77</sup> *Nat Turner*, 9.

<sup>78</sup> *Charleston Mercury*, cited in Washington D.C. *Globe*, October 11, 1831.

Garrison's movement was not completely new or more radical than anything that had been seen before- southern fear of him and his paper came from a different source. The particular threat of Garrison lay in the fact that his rhetoric was more radical than that of previous white abolitionists, and that he attracted powerful supporters. Garrison's innovation, and what set the movement he represented apart from its predecessors, was the call for the full and immediate abolition of slavery.

Despite his political shift to advocacy for the immediate and uncompensated emancipation of slavery, Garrison's abolitionist movement drew upon the work of previous abolitionists. William Lloyd Garrison began his career in the office of *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, an abolitionist newspaper run by the Baltimore Quaker Benjamin Lundy. Lundy had been one of the most important white supporters of the Haitian emigration scheme in the 1820's, and in 1825 he travelled to the island himself and published positive reports of Haiti as a potential destination for freed American blacks. However, like many white supporters of emigration, Lundy stopped short of supporting immediate emancipation. It was on this point that Garrison diverged from his mentor, and where the white abolitionist movement of the 1830's diverged from its predecessors.<sup>79</sup>

In a statement to the public on the cover of his first January 1, 1831 issue of *The Liberator*, Garrison made explicit his progression toward immediate and universal emancipation:

I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. In Park-street Church, on the Fourth of July, 1829, in an address on slavery, I unreflectingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of *gradual* abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation...<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Merton L. Dillon, *Benjamin Lundy and the Struggle for Negro Freedom* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966).

<sup>80</sup> *The Liberator*, January 1, 1831.



Garrison's personal political shift from gradual to immediate emancipation mirrored other activists who saw the urgency of the slavery question and grew tired of endless compromise and stagnation. In 1833 Garrison, with the support of evangelical ministers, wealthy philanthropists, and free black activists, formed the American Anti-Slavery Society. Garrison and the abolitionist movement he led were simultaneously more radical and more influential than any previous group. Their radicalism, however, had limits. The Garrisonians abhorred violence, and advocated for the abolition of slavery through moral suasion alone. One aim of abolishing slavery was in fact to prevent "a general convulsion" of the sort that might erupt if slavery continued.<sup>81</sup>

The advent of Garrisonian abolitionism signaled a slight change in the relationship between white abolitionists and American blacks. There were, of course, no prominent black figures that supported the continued existence of slavery. To the extent to which abolitionists also constituted themselves around that principle, American blacks found an ally in the abolitionist movement. As demonstrated by the careers of Paul Cuffe and Prince Saunders, alliances between free blacks and white abolitionists dated back to the English roots of the movement. Unlike previous white abolitionists, however, the Garrisonian radical abolitionists understood the urgency of the problem of slavery, and the need for immediate eradication. This new radicalism attracted men like Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet, creating an unprecedented multiracial movement in the United States.<sup>82</sup>

Yet there was some divergence among opponents of slavery on the issue of violence. The Garrisonian abolitionists, though advocates of immediate emancipation, remained steadfastly

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<sup>81</sup> "Constitution of the American Anti-Slavery Society," *Platform of the American Anti-Slavery Society and its Auxiliaries* (New York, 1855).

<sup>82</sup> The abolitionist movement in America at this time is extensively documented. However, central figures in the abolition movement and certain aspects of their platform deserve inclusion in my study, touching as they do upon issues of Haitian immigration. A useful source for understanding abolitionism in its larger context is David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 250-267.

opposed to violence as a means of ending slavery, preferring moral arguments in every case. They stopped short, however, of denouncing outright figures like Nat Turner. Though declaring himself “horror-struck” at the events of the Nat Turner rebellion, the editor of *The Liberator* did not wonder at its cause:

Ye accuse the pacific friends of emancipation of instigating the slaves to revolt... The slaves need no incentive at our hands... smarting under the newly made wounds, is it wonderful that they should rise to contend- as other “heroes” have contended- for their lost rights? It is *not wonderful*.<sup>83</sup>

Garrison certainly claimed to understand how one in Turner’s position could be mistakenly brought to violence due to the brutality of slavery, but he himself condemned violence as a counterproductive tactic, especially in a nation where the majority of the population was white. Garrison could not go as far as David Walker in supporting an end to slavery by any means necessary, and therefore lagged behind the program of a growing number of northern blacks.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the widespread recognition among black leadership that conditions for black people in the United States were deteriorating instead of improving, sentiment against emigration persisted throughout the 1830’s. The Second Annual Convention for the Improvement of the Free People of Color in These United States, held in Philadelphia in June of 1832, noting that the situation of blacks in the United States was at that moment “more precarious than it has been at any other period since the Declaration of Independence,” nevertheless painted the Liberia and Haiti projects with the same brush, resolving that they “recommend to the members of this Convention, to discountenance, by all just means of their power, an emigration to Liberia or

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<sup>83</sup> *The Liberator*, September 3, 1831.

<sup>84</sup> Garrison’s nonviolence was fundamentally different from the nonviolence espoused by black leaders in the twentieth century, in that his advice for those enslaved was not an active nonviolence but simply patience.

Hayti, believing them only calculated to distract and divide the whole colored family.”<sup>85</sup> The *Colored American*, a black abolitionist paper edited by members of the American Anti-Slavery Society including Samuel Cornish, former editor of *Freedom’s Journal*, took a similar approach to emigration in the 1830’s, explicitly siding with the abolitionist movement against emigrationists:

It is often triumphantly, and with a sneer of self gratification, and affected disdain, by colonization agents, such as the Rev. Governor Pinney, and Robert Finley, Esq., asked what have Abolitionists ever done for the colored people?

We will here answer the question, and in very few words. They have created A CONSCIENCE on the subject of slavery, and prejudice against color, throughout the length and breadth of our land.<sup>86</sup>

This editorial, written in 1837, provides insight into one particular strand of black thought. One decade earlier, in 1827, *Freedom’s Journal* had advocated at least as passionately against the Colonization Society, but the very existence of the paper spoke to the inadequacy of well-intentioned white philanthropists for solving the problems of blacks. By 1837, the political situation had changed and while *The Colored American* steadfastly opposed slavery and discrimination, it placed more emphasis on multiracial cooperation while not abandoning the importance of independence. Though a degree of nationalism had been sacrificed to the alliance with white abolitionists, their support of Haiti, which remained the world’s only black nation, had not.

White abolitionists did not discuss Haiti as often as their black counterparts, especially after the dismayed return of the original emigrants to the island. Though abolitionists lauded Haiti’s early abolition of slavery, they were ambivalent about its example of violent revolution.

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<sup>85</sup> “Minutes and Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention for the Improvement of the Free People of Color in These United States,” *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions 1830-1864*, Ed. Howard Bell (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

<sup>86</sup> “A Colonization Subterfuge. Answered,” *The Colored American*, May 6, 1837.

More inspiring for them were the legislative accomplishments of the English abolitionists, which reached their culmination in 1833 with the emancipation of 800,000 slaves in the West Indies, accompanied by the payment of twenty million pounds sterling to their former owners for compensation.<sup>87</sup> White abolitionists, however, remained uninterested in the news of the world's only black nation, just off the southern coast of the United States. For them, the issues of freedom and equality were separate from questions of nationhood and sovereignty, but for many black activists in the United States, both nationalists and abolitionists, these issues were inseparable.

The black press in the United States also followed the situation in the British colonies closely, and praised the English abolitionists for their high morals and progressive ideals. "Yes," opined the editorial staff of *Colored American*, "this British act is big with IMMORTAL GLORY, and our repenting nation shall shortly make her acknowledgments, and bring HER OFFERINGS to the same consecrated altar."<sup>88</sup> Yet while the accomplishments of British abolitionists were noted and praised, the daily activities of Haiti remained significant to American black newspapermen even as the appeal of emigration waned. *Freedom's Journal* had of course devoted a significant amount of space on their pages to columns and articles about Haiti, and that practice continued throughout the 1830's. On March 3, 1838, the *Colored American* printed a letter by the black abolitionist Robert Douglass dated January 1 of that year, describing in glowing terms the pomp surrounding Haiti's 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. Douglass' reserve appears only in the final paragraph, tempering slightly his appraisal of the whole scene:

What I have seen to-day I shall not forget- for although too much of a peace man to approve of a military government- yet the sight of what these people have

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<sup>87</sup> Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, xiv.

<sup>88</sup> *Colored American*, August 5, 1837.

arisen to, from the most abject servitude, caused in my bosom a feeling of exultation which I could not suppress.<sup>89</sup>

Newspapers like the *Colored American* continued to publish messages and news from Haiti, despite the declining political fortunes of the Boyer regime. It is clear that for many blacks residing in the United States, including those most closely aligned with the white abolitionist movement, the existence of the black nation of Haiti continued to resonate strongly. As a self-governing black republic, Haiti stood as proof that black people could govern themselves and be responsible citizens, and even the black activists who sought full equality and integration in the United States were invested in its success.

Despite Haiti's longstanding independence, the United States had still failed to grant Haiti diplomatic recognition by the time Robert Douglass penned his 1838 letter. France and England granted recognition after 1825, but the United States continued to hold out, precluding recognition from the independent states of Latin America who could not afford to jeopardize their commerce with the United States by recognizing the hemisphere's black republic. The South stood irreconcilably opposed to Haitian recognition, seeing in the black Republic both a threat to chattel slavery and the realization of black self government. However, as the issue of slavery became more central to American politics, anti-slavery activists and abolitionist politicians increasingly used recognition of Haiti as a political tool. From the organization's inception in 1833, Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society submitted numerous petitions to Congress to force the issue of abolition. In 1836, the House of Representatives, followed by the Senate, passed a "gag rule," by which Congress would simply table all petitions concerning slavery and abolition upon their receipt, rather than acknowledging them and then voting to table

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<sup>89</sup> "Hayti," Letter from Robert Douglass, January 1, 1838. In *Colored American*, March 3, 1838.

them.<sup>90</sup> For the abolitionists, therefore, Haiti became a convenient tool for raising the question of slavery in a hostile Congress.

In December of 1838, John Quincy Adams brought the issue of Haitian recognition before the House of Representatives, citing that beyond all the tangible trade benefits the United States stood to gain, they must recognize Haiti because “among the states of the civilized world, we... stand alone in refusing to do so.”<sup>91</sup> Southern legislators were unified in their unequivocal opposition to recognition of Haiti, but they made no pretense about the fact that at the root of their opposition was the question of slavery. Representative Henry Wise, of Virginia, not only objected to Adams’ petition to “recognise an insurrectionary republic on our southern coast,” but contended that “these petitions for establishing relations with Hayti are part and parcel of abolition; nay, they form parts of the abolition petitions themselves.”<sup>92</sup> Adams’ petition failed to make it through Congress- recognition of Haiti would prove impossible as long as the supporters of slavery held their seniority in the United States government. While white abolitionists, with little investment in the project of a black nation, lost interest in Haiti, black activists never did.

In 1843, a coup overthrew Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer after 25 years of rule. Boyer, as the first Haitian President to make direct overtures to black Americans, had remained a constant in their political discourse for nearly three decades. His deposition constituted a significant shift for black Americans’ relationship with Haiti, but for many Haitians the coup that overthrew Boyer did not come as a surprise. The Americans who returned to the United States from Haiti had complained of Boyer’s increasingly dictatorial ruling style, especially in the aftermath of his agreement with France and the draining of the island’s economy. In his 1838

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<sup>90</sup> Daniel Wirls, “The Only Mode of Avoiding Everlasting Debate:” The Overlooked Senate Gag Rule for Antislavery Petitions,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27(Spring, 2007): 115-138.

<sup>91</sup> *The Liberator*, December 28, 1838.

<sup>92</sup> *The Liberator*, January 4, 1839.

letter, Robert Douglass hinted that the situation had not improved in the intervening years, and by 1843 opposition to Boyer's rule had organized even in southern Haiti, where he had previously maintained loyalty. In 1842, a group of men formed an anti-Boyer group called the Society for the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, alluding to the French Revolution. Though composed largely of frustrated members of the light-skinned *affranchi* class, the Society was careful to include black military officers in their plan to secure the loyalty of northern and central Haiti. The government of the conspirators that replaced Boyer lasted only a year under President Charles Hérard, and then 87 year old general Philippe Guerrier became the next ruler of Haiti. In the absence of any peaceful secession policy, Haitian politics became a complex and violent farce, with four presidents seated between the overthrow of Boyer in 1843 and 1847, when Faustin Soulouque began his ten year reign.<sup>93</sup>

As a result of the political turmoil, military rebellion on the eastern part of the island, in what is now the Dominican Republic, further threatened the nation's stability. The people in that part of the island, frustrated by Spanish rule and attracted by Boyer's promises of progressive government, had voluntarily joined Haiti in 1822, but as Haiti's economy declined and Boyer's government became more authoritarian, resentment to Haitian rule spread, and on February 27, 1844, a faction of separatists calling themselves La Trinitaria declared independence from Haiti in a military coup. Amidst the disorder in Haiti, the Haitian army was unable to put down the eastern rebels and thus the Dominican Republic was formed. Foreign powers were immediately receptive to the new nation, seeing this division as a potential for greater influence in the affairs of the notoriously rebellious island. Contrary to the desires of some of the more liberal supporters of independence, the new Dominican government immediately took a conservative

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<sup>93</sup> Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier* 76-79.

turn, courting financial and military support from great colonial powers and thereby actualizing the longstanding fears of the Haitian government.<sup>94</sup>

The new Dominican administration immediately sent an envoy to Washington D.C. seeking diplomatic recognition. Most likely aware of earlier debates concerning Haitian recognition, the new government distanced itself ideologically and racially from Haiti as much as it could. In a letter to Secretary of State John C. Calhoun, the Dominican envoy to Washington, Dr. José Caminero penned the following account of the Eastern rebellion:

After enduring for twenty years the heavy yoke of Haytian despotism, the white Dominicans, in order to put an end to their sufferings by another act of a contrary nature, availed themselves of the opportunity offered by the revolution which led to the fall of Boyer, and on the night of the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1844, they raised the cry of independence...<sup>95</sup>

However, despite Caminero's colorful recounting of the Dominican's struggle against black despotism, the United States did not recognize the Dominican government until 1866, thinking it best to isolate the entire island to the greatest extent possible.<sup>96</sup>

On July 26, 1847, the original colony of the American Colonization Society issued their Declaration of Independence, becoming the Republic of Liberia and the world's second black republic. Their Declaration of Independence drew upon their experiences in the United States and positioned their new nation as an alternative to the oppression found there:

We, the people of the Republic of Liberia, were originally the inhabitants of the United States of North America.

In some parts of that country, we were debarred by law from all the rights and privileges of men- in other parts, public sentiments, more powerful than law, forced us down...

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<sup>94</sup> Frank Moya Pons. *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998) 143-165.

<sup>95</sup> Dr. José Caminero to John C. Calhoun. Washington, January 8, 1845. "Message from the President of the United States, in answer to a resolution of the House of 5<sup>th</sup> incident, transmitting a report of the Secretary of State relative to the Dominican Republic."

<sup>96</sup> By the time the United States granted diplomatic recognition to Haiti in 1862, the Dominican Republic had been re-annexed by Spain. It was not until 1865 that the country was free from direct colonial rule for the last time.



We uttered complaints, but they were unattended to, or met only by alleging the peculiar institution of the country.

All hope of a favorable change in our country was thus wholly extinguished in our bosom, and we looked with anxiety abroad for some asylum from the deep degradation.<sup>97</sup>

Unlike Haiti, Liberia was not borne of revolution; white Americans initiated the colonization scheme, and Liberia never strayed far from their program. However, despite their extensive cooperation with the scorned American Colonization Society, the Liberian settlers, most of them former slaves themselves or one generation removed, used a very similar political language to those who had fled to Haiti two decades previously, and those fighting for justice in the 1840's. The Liberian Declaration of Independence, as the first political document of the refugees from oppression in America, demonstrated a degree of openness to American emigrants, and of course an understanding of their situation, that no other nation, including Haiti, could offer.

As they had done for Haiti, blacks in the United States advocated for U.S. recognition of Liberia. Liberia became a test, like Haiti before it, of black self-government, and a lack of American recognition was an unnecessary obstacle. France and Great Britain immediately established diplomatic relations, but despite the former colony's continued ties to the American Colonization Society, U.S. Congress refused to grant recognition. Frederick Douglass lamented the United States' refusal to recognize both Haiti and Liberia in the pages of his newspaper *The North Star*.

Our government, under the influence of the violent slaveholders, has stubbornly refused to recognize Haiti... Under the same influence, it seems, it refuses to recognize the Republic of Liberia. This is really too contemptible for a Government that has any pretensions to common intelligence. It is paying rather too much to gratify the *colorphobia* of a few fanatics.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> "Declaration of Independence." cited in Charles Johnson, *Bitter Canaan: The Story of the Negro Republic*. (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1987) 75-76.

<sup>98</sup> *The North Star*, January 5, 1849.

Black Americans like Frederick Douglass did take up the issue of diplomatic recognition for Liberia, seeing the stakes of the issue for their own political rights. Douglass was primarily concerned with full citizenship for black people in the United States, but he understood that proving the capabilities of black Americans for citizenship was tied to, if not dependent upon, successful black self-government abroad. However, though black Americans across the political spectrum supported U.S. recognition of Liberia, no significant movement for Liberian emigration emerged. In the 1850's, as the appeal of emigration reached a height not seen since the 1820's, Liberia was barely part of the conversation, despite its overtures to black Americans.

In the aftermath of the first Haitian emigration project of the 1820's, emigration lost its luster for American blacks, even as their conditions in the United States steadily deteriorated and slavery became more entrenched. As black Americans grew more radical tactically in their opposition to slavery, whites grew more radical ideologically, and a significant multiracial movement pushed forward in the United States, demanding an immediate and unconditional end to the institution of slavery. Out of this cooperation, however, fundamental fissures emerged around questions of black autonomy in the struggle against slavery, and the desirability or importance of black nationality and sovereignty. By the 1850's, as sectional conflict reached a boiling point, and conditions for blacks in the United States deteriorated more than ever before, many black Americans began calling into question the efficacy of their ties with white abolitionists and politicians. Ideological developments in the United States, and political developments in Haiti, brought the island nation back into focus as a sovereign black nation state and, potentially, the best hope for black freedom.

#### IV. The Return to Emigration and the Prospect of Citizenship

As the relations between the northern and southern United States deteriorated, life for American blacks, enslaved and free, deteriorated as well. A bundle of legislation passed through Congress in 1850, collectively known as the “Compromise of 1850,” simply sacrificed black welfare and freedom to Southern greed. Though unable to heal the emerging rift between the two sections of the nation, the new legislation, proposed by American Colonization Society supporter Henry Clay of Kentucky, did have a decisive impact on what it meant to be a black person in the United States at that time. The most threatening element of the legislation for black people in America was the Fugitive Slave Act. An update to the original Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 created mechanisms to ensure that alleged runaway slaves would be returned to captivity, including a fine for government officials who did not arrest an alleged runaway, and a fine plus six months imprisonment for anyone found to be harboring an alleged runaway slave. The suspected slave could not receive a trial by jury nor provide testimony in their defense, and officials who did succeed in capturing a runaway slave received a bonus for their work. The trials set up were clearly designed to legitimize enslavement: in the absence of any right of the accused to present evidence in their own favor, the result of the law was to make all American blacks, north and south, potentially slaves. The question of whether blacks were truly American citizens had never been fully resolved, but never before had the possibility of full black citizenship rights been so fundamentally denied at the state level.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *Statutes at Large*. 31<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 462. The 1793 Act, passed by Congress as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, provided a means by which “a person held to labor” could be apprehended as a fugitive. However, under the 1793 law, such persons were brought before traditional courts. *Annals of Congress*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1414-1415.

Black American reaction was immediate. Frederick Douglass' abolitionist paper *The North Star* published extensive commentary on the bill, and carried news of local reactions. A small piece from Pittsburgh reported an exodus to Canada:

Excitement prevails here among our colored population, on account of the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill. A party of seventeen negroes, who had previously been slaves, started on Saturday, armed to the teeth with pistols and bowie knives, en route to Canada. Small parties are leaving daily.<sup>100</sup>

The mood of the preceding two decades had turned away from emigration, as American blacks in search of full human rights found an ally in the increasingly radical white abolitionist movement. After 1850, however, *any* inclusion of black people in American political society seemed more remote than ever. As meaningful citizenship in the United States grew more elusive, the idea that a powerful black polity beyond its borders was necessary gained currency among black leaders.

The intellectual preparation for the resurgence of emigrationism in the 1850's began a decade earlier, and as conditions grew direr in the United States, black autonomy and strength gained importance in the discourse around black liberation. By 1843, Pastor Henry Highland Garnet's militant ideas had already placed him at odds with such influential abolitionists as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass. At that year's National Negro Convention in Buffalo, New York, Garnet rose to deliver a speech known as the "Call to Rebellion." Recounting the heroism of Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner and alluding to the achievements of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Garnet's oration echoed with the refrain "Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are FOUR MILLIONS!"<sup>101</sup> Garnet, who like Douglass was born into slavery and escaped to freedom, placed less faith in their white allies and the American political process. Under Douglass' influence, the convention did not adopt Garnet's statement,

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<sup>100</sup> *The North Star*, October 3, 1850.

<sup>101</sup> Henry Highland Garnet, "An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America (Rejected by the National Convention, 1843)" in *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles/ David Walker; An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America* (New York: Arno Press, 1984).

but his address continued to resonate independently. In 1848 Garnet published it, bound with David Walker's 1830 appeal. The continuity between the two messages was clear, and in resurrecting Walker, Garnet spoke to a current in black thought obscured in the preceding decades. After 1850, Garnet's insistence on strength and autonomy gained a wider audience in an environment where political and evolutionary change appeared precluded by white intransigence.

In 1852 Martin Delany, who had collaborated with Frederick Douglass on the *North Star*, published *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, primarily as a response to the events of 1850. While in 1863 Delany would, like Douglass, recruit soldiers to the Union Army to fight for emancipation in the United States, merely a decade earlier Delany was one of the most significant figures in the resurgence of Black nationalism and emigrationism. *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* responded directly to the Fugitive Slave law; Delany reprinted the text of the law in full, and speculated broadly about its import for black Americans. Freedom, as previously understood by black Americans in the North, had become meaningless and for Delany emigration was the only solution. He cautioned people against moving to Liberia, which was in his view “*not* an independent nation at all; but a poor *miserable mockery*- a *burlesque* on a government.”<sup>102</sup> This was in opposition to Haiti, which Delany had not forgotten: “We do not expect Liberia to be all that Hayti is; but we ask and expect of her, to have a decent respect for herself.”<sup>103</sup>

Delany's recommendation in 1852 was not for black Americans to emigrate to Haiti, however, but rather to Canada. As demonstrated by the news published in the *North Star*, a movement of sorts for Canadian emigration had already begun by the publication of Delany's

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<sup>102</sup> Martin Delany, “The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States,” *Classical Black Nationalism* 114.

<sup>103</sup> Martin Delany, “The Condition...” 115.

book. Unlike movements to Haiti or Africa, the Canada movement emerged out of purely practical considerations, determined by urgency and geographical proximity. Canada, unlike Africa or Haiti, had no particular historical importance to American blacks, and had in fact been the site of the relatively unsuccessful post-American Revolution exodus upon the British warships. Despite having a degree of local parliamentary autonomy, The British Crown maintained control over Canada.<sup>104</sup> After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, however, refuge was more urgent than ever before, even if only temporarily. Delany himself moved with his family to the town of Chatham, Canada West in 1856, four years after *The Condition* was published.

In August of 1853, before moving to Canada himself, Martin Delany issued a call for a National Emigration Convention in the pages of the recently rechristened *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, previously known as *North Star*. Delany hoped to discuss the various options available to black Americans hoping to emigrate to a place with more secure rights for black residents. For Delany, black freedom and equality necessitated black sovereignty.

...we must occupy a position of entire *equality of unrestricted* rights, composed in fact, an acknowledged *necessary* part of the *ruling* element of society in which we live. The policy *necessary* to the *preservation* of this *element* must be in *our favor*, if ever we expect the enjoyment, freedom, sovereignty, and equality of rights anywhere.<sup>105</sup>

For black abolitionists, Delany's call for an emigration convention was unwelcome. The editors of *Frederick Douglass' Paper* denounced the convention unequivocally, opening their column by stating that "We have no sympathy with the call for this convention which we publish in

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<sup>104</sup>From 1841 to 1867, the Province of Canada, constituting the entirety of Great Britain's North American holdings, consisted of roughly the eastern half of contemporary Québec and the southern half of contemporary Ontario. These sections were designated Canada East and Canada West, respectively.

<sup>105</sup> Martin Delany, "Call for a National Emigration Convention of Colored Men" in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Rochester, NY: August 26, 1853.

another column.”<sup>106</sup> For them, the path forward had not changed: they intended to remain in the United States and fight for black rights at home.

The contention surrounding the conventions is indicative of the new climate of black politics in the 1850’s. Decades of organizing coupled with the increased reach and number of black newspapers increased the size of the movement, so the conventions and conferences of black American leaders had grown larger and more elaborate. The composition of the leaders themselves had evolved, as the number of free blacks in the United States grew and became less concentrated in the east coast. Cities like Cleveland, Rochester, and Buffalo joined Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore as centers of activity in the black struggle for political rights and an end of slavery. With the enlarged field of political advocates came more and different disagreements: in the 1820’s the fight against white oppression was more improvisational, but by the 1850’s the line between those wishing to emigrate and those wishing to remain in the United States only hardened as black life in the United States deteriorated.

Debate over the merits of Delany’s emigration convention reverberated through the black press for some time. The exchanges were of such great significance that a Detroit publisher issued a collection of the major arguments for and against the convention, titled *Arguments, Pro and Con, on the Call for a National Convention, to be Held in Cleveland, Ohio, August 24, 1854*.<sup>107</sup> Both Delany and Douglass had allies who spread their views in print, most notably James Whitfield of Buffalo and William Watkins, associate editor of *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, respectively. The debate was not restricted to those living in the United States: many blacks who

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<sup>106</sup> “The Emigration Convention,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, August 26, 1853.

<sup>107</sup> *Arguments, Pro and Con, on the Call for a National Convention, to be Held in Cleveland, Ohio, August 24, 1854* (Detroit: George E. Pomeroy & Co., 1854) Understandably, this pamphlet has not been regularly reprinted. However, Cornell University recently published an edition drawn from their digital archives, crediting Frederick Douglass as the author. If this focus on men like Douglass is indicative of historical study in general, it is only sharpened in the field of black history.

had already moved to Canada West had their own separate newspapers for the first time, and they played a significant role in the emigration movement of the 1850's. One of these men was Henry Bibb.

Born into slavery in Kentucky, Bibb escaped to the northern United States in 1842, and then fled further to Chatham, Canada West, in the wake of the Fugitive Slave Act. In 1851 Bibb founded *The Voice of the Fugitive*, the first black newspaper in Canada. Bibb made it clear by his actions that he did not believe that blacks would be best served by remaining in the United States and fighting racism from within. However, Canada was not a black nation. To be sure, in the 1850's Britain was much more engaged with their possessions in Asia and Africa than the distant and rebellious Canadian territories, granting Canadian communities a degree of autonomy unavailable to blacks who remained in the United States. Canada was not a promised land, however, as demonstrated by blacks' use of the terms "fugitive" and "refugee" to describe their relation to their adopted country. Having left the United States out of urgency, many Canadian refugees participated intensely in discussions about emigration, and the new Canadian newspapers became important forums for discussion about issues beyond the scope of *Frederick Douglass' Paper* and allied American publications.

American James Theodore Holly, later one of the leaders of the Haitian emigration movement of the 1850's, was one of the most frequent early contributors to *The Voice of the Fugitive*. Born to free parents in Washington, D.C. in 1829, by 1851 Holly lived as a boot maker in Burlington, Vermont. While in Vermont, Holly became increasingly involved in emigrationist circles, going so far as to contact the American Colonization Society in June 1850 in hopes of traveling to Liberia to teach. For unknown reasons, the Society rebuffed his offer after a brief correspondence, but Holly remained interested in the possibility of a life outside the United



States. By the summer of 1851, James T. Holly made a clear distinction in his writings between the sort of emigration that assisted the struggle for black equality and the type that crippled it.<sup>108</sup>

Writing to *The Voice of the Fugitive* in July of 1851, already a Vermont agent for that newspaper, Holly recalled that

We have had also too good a reason to suspect a deep laid scheme on the part of the projectors of these plans of colonization, to perpetuate slavery forever, by removing the free blacks, the only incentives to cheer the drooping slaves with hope, and make him strive for liberty.<sup>109</sup>

On these grounds he praised the memory of James Forten and the earlier opponents of colonization, but stressed that a change had come. Holly spoke of emigrationists who, perhaps like himself only a year earlier, despised the project of colonization but were “cherished with the hope to contribute to the development of an empire, which shall at some distant day, perhaps three centuries hence, revenge the wrongs we have suffered, and turn the weapons of American hate and oppression to her own destruction.” James Holly, however, was not yet interested in Haiti. Through the 1850’s, as he moved from the margins of the emigrationist movement to the center, Holly grew increasingly convinced that Haiti was the only suitable destination for black Americans, and beginning with Delany’s 1854 conference became the central instigator of the second Haitian emigration movement.

The American-born blacks in Canada did not speak with one voice on emigration issues, and competition with Henry Bibb’s *The Voice of the Fugitive* soon emerged from the presses of Windsor, Canada West. The first issue of the *Provincial Freeman* appeared in March of 1853, printed by two prominent Canadian emigrants, Samuel Ward and Mary Ann Shadd Cary. *The Voice of the Fugitive*, as befits its name, advocated removal from America and settled upon Canada as a temporary measure for an oppressed people. *Provincial Freeman*, alternatively,

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<sup>108</sup> Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality* 108-110.

<sup>109</sup> *The Voice of the Fugitive*, July 2, 1851.

believed that the blacks in Canada West should think of themselves fully as British subjects, eschewing nationalist sentiments which in their view amounted to pure folly. Their position was a sort of third way, believing for practical reasons that true freedom for black people was impossible in the United States, but seeing a black nationality as unnecessary at best and at worst a disastrous notion. Trying to reconcile these positions, the editors of the *Provincial Freeman* characterized those who held their beliefs as

the men who love liberty too well to remain in the States, but would not agree to an exclusive nationality... Animated by a similar spirit with Hungarians, Poles, German and other people who settle in America from a love of liberty... have surveyed the entire fields, and now, after the years of opinion they settle down practically upon their first thought, "Canada."<sup>110</sup>

The above comparison between the American blacks moving to Canada and the Eastern Europeans seeking liberty in America is striking in light of the considerable differences in the ways these groups crossed the Atlantic. Eastern Europeans voluntarily crossed to the Americas to escape oppression and privation. American blacks, as the editors of the *Provincial Freeman* were well aware, were carried involuntarily across the Atlantic in chains to face a life of oppression and privation in the New World. Correspondingly, the *Provincial Freeman* dedicated less space to covering events in the black world than many other papers. While most black papers concerned themselves primarily with the well being of both enslaved and free blacks, sprinkling news of blacks in the Americas with reports from Africa and the West Indies, the editors of the *Provincial Freeman* demonstrated their British identities by closely following events in Europe and the political relationships of England.

The *Provincial Freeman* represented a fairly new strain in North American black discourse, which linked emigrationism to an explicit opposition to black nationalism. Papers like the *Provincial Freeman* offered a distinct place for the Anglophilic tradition of black thought,

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<sup>110</sup> *Provincial Freeman*, May 20, 1854.

dating at least past King Henry Christophe of Haiti in the 1810's. In this paper, that conservative impulse was distinct from the discourse of a nationalist emigrationism making advances in the 1850's. The faction of Canadian blacks standing behind the *Provincial Freeman* therefore stood with Frederick Douglass in opposition to the National Emigration Convention, albeit for different reasons.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the differences of opinion among important black leaders, Martin Delany's National Emigration Convention did finally convene on August 24, 1854 in Cleveland. Over 100 delegates attended, representing eleven states and Canada, including a large proportion of women.<sup>112</sup> This fact is significant in light of the absence of female voices, with the exception of Mary Ann Shadd Carey, in the emigration debate up to this point. In organizations focused on the formal politics of the United States women had no place, as they were categorically excluded from the political process. Men represented the black abolitionist movement to the world in newspapers, and cultivated close relationships with abolitionist lawmakers, but black women were consistently present in the movements of the nineteenth century even if they were not consistently heard.<sup>113</sup> The extrapolitical nature of the emigration movement, whose aspirations were not shaped by the politics of the United States government, allowed for greater flexibility in this respect.

If the diversity of the delegates to the Convention, as women, as westerners, and as Canadians, set it apart from its predecessors, then the conclusions reached and the final report published truly broke new ground. In the final report of the Convention, entitled "Political

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<sup>111</sup> *Provincial Freeman*, March 25, 1854. Contained in the same issue was a brief piece about England's power in India, defending the colonial power. This position is much more significant in hindsight than it could have been then, but is notable considering the general orientation of the paper.

<sup>112</sup> *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention of Colored People* (Pittsburgh: A.A. Anderson, 1854) 16-18.

<sup>113</sup> Most literature on the abolitionist movement is of course concerned with men, but the literature on women in the movement is overwhelmingly concerned with white women rather than black women. A notable exception to this trend is Shirley Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

Destiny of the Colored Race, On the American Continent,” the conveners made their case for the need for political rights, the certainty that attainment of such rights was impossible in the United States, and the subsequent necessity to leave for a more hospitable nation. Probably written in large part by Delany himself, the report reiterated the point made in Delany’s original call for the Convention: “...No people can be free who themselves do not constitute an essential part of the *ruling element* of the country in which they live... A people, to be free, must necessarily be *their own rulers*...”<sup>114</sup> The report did not stop there, however, for the author’s nationalist project was larger than a simple desire for political rights:

It would be duplicity longer to disguise the fact, that the great issue, sooner or later, upon which must be disputed the world’s destiny, will be a question of black and white; and every individual will be called upon for his identity with one or the other. The blacks and colored races are four-sixths of all the population of the world; and these people are fast tending to a common cause with each other. The white races are but one-third of the population of the globe- or one of them to two of us- and it cannot much longer continue, that two-thirds will passively submit to the universal domination of this one-third.<sup>115</sup>

The example to follow in the matter of overthrowing this domination was, of course, that of Haiti. Inaction could only lead to greater loss of land for the world’s oppressed people, but holdouts from European domination still existed: “the Island of Haiti, in the West Indies, peopled by as brave and noble descendents of Africa, as they who laid the foundation of Thebias, or constructed the everlasting pyramids and catecombs [sic] of Egypt.”<sup>116</sup>

The Convention stopped short of advocating emigration to Haiti specifically, leaving the question of a destination open to South America, Central America, or the West Indies. James T. Holly, however, evincing great changes since his 1851 support for the American Colonization Society, came out strongly in favor of emigration to Haiti. Short of supporting emigration

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<sup>114</sup> *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention* 35.

<sup>115</sup> *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention* 40-41.

<sup>116</sup> *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention* 42.

without reservations, the Convention voted to approve Holly's resolution that "hereafter the First Day of January of each year be observed as a day of Celebration, being the anniversary of Haitien Independence."<sup>117</sup> For his interest, the Convention appointed Holly their "official commissioner" to visit Haiti. Direct contact between the American blacks and Haiti had slowed dramatically in the decades since the emigration fiasco of the 1820's and Holly's experience in the country would shape that relationship into the 1860's.<sup>118</sup>

The uncertainty that dominated Haitian politics in the 1840's ended in 1847 with the appointment of General Faustin Soulouque as President of the Republic. Soulouque was already 65 years old when he ascended to the presidency, and Haiti's *affranchi* elites fully expected him to be merely another pawn until his likely death a few years later. Ultimately, President Soulouque was not so acquiescent, and in 1849 declared himself Emperor Faustin I of Haiti, claiming extensive powers for himself.<sup>119</sup> The antidemocratic nature of Faustin's rule attracted substantial criticism from black Americans. Frederick Douglass' newspaper criticized the Soulouque regime, though *North Star* placed some of the blame on the United States for isolating Haiti diplomatically and not supporting its development as a nation.<sup>120</sup> Yet though the regime of Emperor Faustin I failed to inspire confidence in many observers, it ultimately provided a degree of stability that had eluded Haitian politics for much of the preceding decade. That stability made travelling to the island easier and made news more readily available. In the aftermath of the Fugitive Slave Act in the United States, some black Americans were once again ready to take up the issue of permanent emigration to Haiti.

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<sup>117</sup> *Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention* 20.

<sup>118</sup> Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 2000) 96.

<sup>119</sup> Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier* 82-83. Though Marxists since C.L.R. James have been interested in the history of Haiti, one of Karl Marx's few references to Haiti was in his correspondence with Engels, in which he denounced Simon Bolívar as a "veritable Soulouque." Ronaldo Munck. "Review: Marx and Latin America," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. 3(Jan., 1984): 142.

<sup>120</sup> *North Star*, June 13, 1850.

In July of 1855, James T. Holly embarked for Haiti in his twofold capacity as an Episcopal priest and official commissioner on Haiti of the National Emigration Convention. Holly met with officials in the Haitian government concerning both issues, but received no firm commitments. The nominally Catholic government of Haiti was hesitant to provide substantial support for an Episcopal mission, and Emperor Faustin I was not willing to provide the same sort of support for American emigrants as President Boyer had three decades previously, despite Holly's guarantee of a steady flow of migrants. The Haitian government merely reiterated their longstanding support for black Americans, but made no concrete offer to help them.<sup>121</sup>

Though lacking strong support from either the Haitian government or black organizations in the United States, Holly redoubled his efforts to gain support for Haitian emigration. Upon returning to the United States from Haiti, he gave a lengthy address in New Haven, Connecticut that he later delivered at the National Emigration Convention in 1856. The new publishing arm of the Emigration Conventions, Afric-American Printing Company, published his speech in 1857 under the title *A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self-Government and Civilized Progress*. Echoing John Russwurm's address 30 years earlier on "The Conditions and Prospects of Haiti," Holly's tract began with an extensive history of the Haitian Revolution, which he refers to as the "grandest political event of this or any age," and the politics of the Haitian state.<sup>122</sup> Holly defended the Haitian state against charges of instability, arguing that while the United States had had numerous heads of state since independence, Haiti had only eight since 1804. At the root of Holly's support for the Haitian state was an interrogation of the inherent value of a republican state over a monarchical one. For Holly, this value was not self evident:

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<sup>121</sup> Dixon, *African America and Haiti* 104.

<sup>122</sup> James T. Holly, "A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self-Government and Civilized Progress as Demonstrated by Historical Events of the Haytien Revolution; and the Subsequent Acts of that People since Their National Independence," *African- American Social and Political Thought, 1850-1920*, Ed. Howard Brotz (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004) 143.

If there was one-half of the real love of liberty among even the people of the professedly free northern states, as there is among the negroes of Hayti, every one of their national representatives who voted for [the Fugitive Slave Bill], or who would not vote instantaneously for its repeal, would be tried for his life, condemned and publicly executed as accessory to man stealing.<sup>123</sup>

For Holly, the lesson of the Haitian example was clear, and black people in the western hemisphere had no choice but to establish and fortify their own nation. For Holly, Haiti was the obvious choice:

If one powerful and civilized Negro sovereignty can be developed to the summit of national grandeur in the West Indies, where the keys to the commerce of both hemispheres can be held; this fact will solve all questions respecting the Negro, whether they be those of slavery, prejudice, or proscription, and wheresoever on the face of the globe such questions shall present themselves for a satisfactory solution.<sup>124</sup>

For Holly, Haiti had the capacity to become the great black nation that, as he had hoped in his 1851 letter to *Voice of the Fugitive*, would “turn the weapons of American hate and oppression to her own destruction.”

Largely as a result of his speeches and publications, this second project for emigration grew during the 1850's, but the competitors to the Haitian program were more numerous. Frederick Douglass, with significant political connections and a large publishing industry behind him, wielded an enormous influence and stood steadfastly against any sort of emigration plan, though he looked favorably upon the Haitian legacy. Martin Delany, though still operating out of Chatham, Canada West, grew increasingly interested in African emigration as the 1850's progressed. Henry Highland Garnet, who had delivered such a divisive speech at the 1843 National Negro Convention, had also turned to Africa. Garnet had been out of the country for the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, working as a missionary and teacher in Jamaica until his return to the United States in 1856. Soon after his return, Garnet became active in the movement

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<sup>123</sup> Holly, “A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self- Government and Civilized Progress,” 167.

<sup>124</sup> Holly, “A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self- Government and Civilized Progress,” 169-170.

for black emigration, helping to establish the African Civilization Society in 1858. The African Civilization Society endorsed the emigration of American blacks to Africa, and promoted the production of products such as cotton in Africa to compete with the products created in systems of slavery. Civilization Society met substantial criticism from its contemporaries, including Martin Delany, for being too similar to the American Colonization Society, in particular because its financial stability relied largely on white contributors. Ultimately, emigration to Africa still suffered from the stigma of the American Colonization Society, which remained the only organization sending emigrants to Liberia despite the latter's formally independent status. Emigration to Africa, and the African continent itself, had been successfully maligned that even by the 1850's the programs were at a disadvantage from the start.<sup>125</sup>

As the 1850's drew to a close, the movement for Haitian emigration finally became a reality. This was in large part due to another shift in Haitian government. In 1859, a coup toppled Emperor Faustin I, replacing him with President Fabre Geffrard. Geffrard was a member of the Haitian elite, and upon coming to power immediately dismantled Emperor Faustin's state and returned to the republican government in place in 1846. For American newspapers, this was a welcome change. Even white newspapers such as the *New York Times* endorsed Geffrard's presidency as a positive change for Haiti.<sup>126</sup> Most importantly for black Americans, Geffrard was enthusiastic about the prospect of black American emigration to Haiti, and like Boyer before him, he willingly provided substantial resources for the program. However, in a move that angered many American blacks, he appointed the white Scotsman James Redpath as director of the Haitian Bureau of Emigration, the organization that would ultimately oversee the emigration of

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<sup>125</sup> Dixon, *African America and Haiti* 117-121.

<sup>126</sup> *New York Times*, May 6, 1859.



numerous black Americans to Haiti.<sup>127</sup> Geffrard's decision was indicative of divisions that would become more apparent as black Americans' conceptions of Haiti met its realities.

In 1858, Emperor Faustin I, perhaps taking to heart Holly's earlier advice, commissioned a representative of the Haitian government to go to the southern United States and commit black Americans to going to Haiti. His representative, Emile Desdunes, was a native of New Orleans, educated in Haiti, and he travelled through Louisiana and Missouri in search of emigrants. Desdunes continued working in this capacity under Geffrard, and from May 1859 until early 1860, nearly 300 blacks from the Louisiana bayou region emigrated to Haiti, though like the ACS transportations failed to excite much attention among Northern blacks, who had not been involved in the process. The majority of newspaper coverage came from the *New Orleans Times Picayune* and the *New York Times*, pointing to the fact that this limited transaction had been primarily an exchange between governments rather than between Haiti and the black population of the United States.<sup>128</sup> Regardless, no social movement or lasting structure emerged out of the short-lived Louisiana emigration scheme.

By the middle of 1859, most American news focused on other matters. On July 3, 1859, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry broke as the first major incidence of anti-slavery violence since the heightened tensions of the Fugitive Slave Act, and observers in the United States and Haiti immediately recognized its historical significance. Southerners, of course, condemned John Brown's raid and what they considered to be a northern conspiracy of his supporters, but black Americans supported Brown, and Haiti greeted the news of his raid with great ceremony. President Geffrard held a state funeral in his honor, and the editors of the *Weekly Anglo-African* reported that "The Hayti Papers are so full of John Brown that they have little room for anything

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<sup>127</sup> Leslie Alexander, "The Black Republic: The Influence of the Haitian Revolution on Northern Black Political Consciousness, 1816-1862," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution*. (New York: Routledge, 2010) 71-72.

<sup>128</sup> Dixon, *African America and Haiti* 138.

else.”<sup>129</sup> The political circumstances surrounding John Brown’s insurrection were more favorable, conferring more strategic importance upon his raid than the rebellions of Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, or Gabriel. Brown’s whiteness made the raid all the more remarkable. Despite Haiti’s own past, rooted in the insurrection of enslaved laborers, the Haitian response to John Brown’s raid mirrored this imbalance.

James Redpath himself, the director of the newly formed Haitian Bureau of Emigration, had been an ally and apprentice of John Brown in Kansas. Redpath, born in Scotland in 1833, moved to Michigan with his family at a young age. After a brief period in the United States, Redpath became involved in the Abolition movement, corresponding with William Lloyd Garrison in 1854, and by 1856 moving to Kansas, where he worked with John Brown. In 1859, Redpath was in Haiti when the government of Faustin I collapsed. Redpath quickly sought out Geffrard, and obtained money to found the Haitian Bureau of Emigration in the United States.<sup>130</sup>

By the time of Geffrard’s presidency and the establishment of the Haitian Bureau of Emigration, James T. Holly still actively promoted emigration from his base in New Haven, CT. In the summer of 1959, he began publishing a series in *The Anglo-African Magazine* titled “Thoughts on Hayti.” In his column, Holly extolled the virtues of the Haitian government and the Haitian Revolution, revisited the horrors of black life in the United States, and concluded that the most profitable thing for both the blacks of the United States and the Republic of Haiti would be an emigration program. Holly’s work emphasized the civilizing aspect that black Americans could have on Haiti more than most authors, but he concluded that both parties had much to gain from American emigration. However, the emigrants had to be of the appropriate sort, and had to

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<sup>129</sup> *Weekly Anglo-African*, February 18, 1860. Still today, one of central roads in Port-au-Prince is known as Rue John Brown.

<sup>130</sup> Dixon, *African America and Haiti* 130-134.

arrive with the right mindset. In his opinion, a lack of these elements in the emigrants of 1824 led to that project's failure:

It may be set down as a truism, that slavery, proscription, and oppression are poor schools in which to train independent, self-respecting freemen... the bent of the slavery-disciplined mind is either too low or too high... These things, being true of the victims of abject servitude, we have herein the key to the failure of the emigration to Hayti in 1824.<sup>131</sup>

For Holly, it was essential that the vanguard of black America be sent to Haiti, so as not to repeat the mistakes of 1824. In fact, these admonitions against emigration of the wrong sort were necessary not only to attract the best sort to Haiti, but to attract anyone at all.

As the director of the newly formed Bureau of Haitian Emigration, James Redpath published his *Guide To Hayti* in 1860. In his book, Redpath collected information about every aspect of Haitian life that could help the emigrant make a decision, presenting it in the most positive possible light. "Has the black accomplished his destiny in America?" Redpath poses in his afterward, and he answers in the affirmative. "I think that in North America he has; for he is threatened with extinction there. His future is- *annihilation*."<sup>132</sup> Though essentially propaganda, Redpath's *Guide to Hayti* carried the sanction of the Haitian government, containing in the introductory material an "Invitation," written by President Geffrard, exhorting American blacks to consider Haiti their proper home:

Hayti is the common country of the black race. Our ancestors, in taking possession of it, were careful to announce in the Constitution that they published, that all the descendents of Africans, and of the inhabitants of the West Indies, belong by right to the Haytian family. The idea was grand and generous...

Hayti, regaining her former position, retaking her ancient scepter as Queen of the Antilles, will be a formal denial, most eloquent and peremptory, against those detractors of our race who contest our desire and ability to attain a high degree of civilization.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> James T. Holly, "Thoughts on Hayti," *The Anglo-African Magazine*, October, 1859.

<sup>132</sup> James Redpath, *A Guide to Hayti* (New York: G. Woolworth Colton, 1861) 172.

<sup>133</sup> Redpath, *A Guide to Hayti* 5.

For the first time since the 1820's, free American blacks took part in a significant emigration movement that sent large numbers of people to a black nation. Many figures, previously instrumental in the ideological battle against slavery and black marginalization, took roles in the Bureau of Emigration. In his report to the Haitian Secretary of State of Exterior Relations, Victorien Plésance, Redpath indicated that he had secured the services, as agents of the Bureau, of James T. Holly, John Brown Jr., and Henry Highland Garnet. Among newspapers, Redpath secured the support of the *New York Tribune*, newspaper of the Republican Party, and the *Anglo-African*. Regarding Frederick Douglass, Redpath wrote that he was “negotiating for the support of the other of the two papers, published by colored men in the United States, and although its editor has always hitherto opposed emigration I am likely to obtain his aid.”<sup>134</sup>

Redpath had numerous detractors, among both abolitionists, who wished to stay in the United States, and emigrationists. To be sure, Redpath could not be conflated with the white men of the American Colonization Society in ideology or racial politics. As a follower of John Brown, Redpath went further than men like Garrison in advocating the use of violence, when necessary, in the struggle against slavery, and enumerated the viewpoints of black nationalism in the official newspaper of the Haitian Bureau of Emigration, *The Pine and Palm*:

The *Pine and Palm* will advocate the building up of Hayti, by an enlightened and organized emigration, into the rank of a great American Power. We hold this measure to be now essential for the dignity of the African race and its descendents wherever they exist. The foundation of respect is *power*.<sup>135</sup>

Yet the very fact that the Government of Haiti, as the only black nation in the western hemisphere, had appointed a Scotsman to head their bureau in the place of black men such as

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<sup>134</sup> James Redpath to M. Plésance, “Weekly Report of James Redpath, General Agent of Emigration to Hayiti, in Boston, to the Honorable M. Plésance, Secretary of State of Exterior Relations of the Republic of Hayti. Report No. 1 (From September 27, 1860 to November 3, 1860).”

<sup>135</sup> *The Pine and Palm*, May 18, 1861.

James Holly, Martin Delany, or Henry Highland Garnet, all of whom had built reputations as organizers in their own communities, was a source of frustration. Martin Delany was particularly strong in his condemnation, maintaining that no white man was “competent to judge and decide upon the destiny of the colored race or the fitness of any place for the bettering of their condition.”<sup>136</sup> For Delany, a black nationalist program under the direction of a white man was incomprehensible, and his appointment by a black nation was indefensible.

Of course, by 1861 politics in the United States had changed dramatically. Abraham Lincoln was elected President in November of 1860, and though the platform of the Republican Party merely opposed the *extension* of slavery rather than the institution itself, southern states felt sufficiently threatened that they seceded from the Union.<sup>137</sup> Black Americans supported Lincoln nearly unanimously, in particular those close to Garrison, but as the institution of slavery was not legally threatened until the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, emigrationist programs continued. Though advocating emigration, *The Pine and Palm* also functioned as an organ of the Republican Party and the Union Army, publishing news and jokes concerning both the battlefield and U.S. Congress.<sup>138</sup> Martin Delany devoted himself more fully to the Union cause, ceasing his emigrationist work and returning to the United States, where like Henry Highland Garnet and Frederick Douglass he worked to recruit black soldiers for the Union Army.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *Chatham Tri-Weekly Planet*, January 21, 1861. Cited in Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti* 192.

<sup>137</sup> The history of the U.S. Civil War is exhaustively studied; I merely point to James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) as a seminal secondary text. The Freedmen and Southern Society Project, based at the University of Maryland, has published a five volume documentary history chronicling the experience of black Americans in the U.S. Civil War and Emancipation, *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867*, ed. Ira Berlin, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 1985, 1990, 1993).

<sup>138</sup> *The Pine and Palm*, May 18, 1861. The pervasive influence of northern capitalism and advertising did not ignore the Haitian Emigration movement, for this May 18 issue carried the following directed advertisement: “Emigrants should not go to Hayti without providing themselves with a bottle of Dr. Clarke’s Sherry Wine Bitters, which will be found exceedingly efficacious in the acclimating process. It can be had at 25 cents a bottle, of THOS. HAMILTON, 48 Beekman St., New York.”

<sup>139</sup> Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality* 262.

As the U.S. Civil War progressed, conditions in Haiti deteriorated for those who had emigrated. Between December of 1860 and August of 1862, the Haitian Bureau of Emigration settled more than two thousand black Americans in Haiti, including a group that left from New Haven with James Holly himself, but the news that reached the United States merely echoed the disappointment of the 1820's. Once again, disease proved to be a central problem for the emigrants: by the summer of 1862, 125 of the approximately 1,200 Americans who settled in the St. Mark's region of Haiti had succumbed to tropical diseases.<sup>140</sup> The unpreparedness of many emigrants was perhaps partially due to inaccurate information published in Redpath's *Guide to Hayti*, which claimed, in a chapter titled "Diseases of Hayti and Their Remedies," that Americans could expect no diseases beyond what they were used to in the United States:

The catalogue of diseases in Hayti does not present anything nearly so complex in character, nor so many varieties of types, as are known to exist in colder latitudes... Individuals of sober, regular habits, who are cleanly in their persons, and whose constitutions are not injured by the use of spirituous liquors and other excesses, may live in Hayti to an advanced age...<sup>141</sup>

Disease aside, some emigrants took issue with the Haitian government itself. In April of 1862, *The Weekly Anglo-African* published a letter from Isaiah Jones, an emigrant from Windsor, Canada West, who denounced the Haitian government as "a military despotism in the strictest sense of the term."<sup>142</sup> Jones went on to denounce what he saw as the duplicity of *The Pine and Palm* in promoting emigration:

Much complaint is made by the emigrants in relation to the publication of letters in the "Pine and Palm," purporting to come from them, but were probably written in the office of said paper... I do not believe that there are a dozen persons there but that would return could they get away.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *The Pine and Palm*, June 12, 1862. Considering the source, the number may have been higher.

<sup>141</sup> Redpath, *Guide to Hayti* 159.

<sup>142</sup> *Weekly Anglo-African*, April 5, 1862.

<sup>143</sup> *Weekly Anglo-African*, April 5, 1862.

As the second Haitian emigration movement devolved into a fiasco reminiscent of the first, people still involved began to distance themselves from the entire program. By September of 1862, the Haitian Government ceased their support of the Bureau of Emigration and James Repath stepped down, ceasing publication of *The Pine and Palm*. In 1862, as in 1826, the movement for Haitian emigration simply dried up as it grew unsustainable for both American and Haitian backers.<sup>144</sup>

Though slavery would not be abolished entirely until 1865, with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, the issue of American recognition of Haiti and Liberia was finally resolved in 1862. Senator and abolitionist Charles Sumner proposed full diplomatic recognition for both Haiti and Liberia, and in the absence of southern legislators in Congress the resolution passed. Lincoln approved the recognition, and proceeded to send America's first diplomatic delegation to a black nation.<sup>145</sup>

For white abolitionists, not only was their engagement with Haiti finalized by the extension of U.S. diplomatic recognition, but their entire political project was accomplished in the abolition of slavery. *The Liberator* published its final issue on December 29, 1865, filled with poems and victorious speeches. To be sure, Garrison assured readers that he would neither “counsel others to turn away from the field of conflict, under the delusion that no more remains to be done, nor contemplate such a course in [his] own case.”<sup>146</sup> Though many abolitionists played a role in the reconstruction of the South, most notably in the establishment of an education system immortalized by W.E.B. Dubois as the “crusade of the New England schoolma'am,”<sup>147</sup> the principle task of the white abolitionists was completed in 1865. Black

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<sup>144</sup> *The Pine and Palm*, September 4, 1862.

<sup>145</sup> *The Liberator*, July 4, 1862.

<sup>146</sup> *The Liberator*, December 29, 1865.

<sup>147</sup> W.E.B. Dubois, “The Souls of Black Folk,” *Three Negro Classics* (New York: Avon Books, 1999) 229.

Americans knew that their problems were not solved by the favorable conclusion to the U.S. Civil War. Though the Reconstruction amendments granted full citizenship under the law, its enforcement depended on the will of the federal government, and constituted a central point in the black freedom struggle over the next century.

Many of the most prominent leaders of the Haitian Emigration movement went onto modest careers in the black freedom struggle following the U.S. Civil War. James T. Holly remained in Haiti until his death in 1911, though Henry Highland Garnet and Martin Delany both continued their public advocacy on behalf of blacks in America.<sup>148</sup> Ironically, perhaps the greatest foe of the Haitian emigration project, Frederick Douglass was appointed minister resident and consul general to Haiti by the U.S. government in 1889. In 1893, Douglass was appointed by the Haitian president to deliver two lectures on Haiti at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, placing the world's first black republic in the pantheon of liberators of blacks worldwide:

Speaking for the Negro, I can say, we owe much to Walker for his appeal; to John Brown for the blow struck at Harper's Ferry, to Lundy and Garrison for their advocacy, and to the abolitionists in all the countries of the world. We owe much especially to Thomas Clarkson, to William Wilberforce, to Thomas Fowell Buxton, and to the anti-slavery societies at home and abroad; but we owe incomparably more to Haiti than to them all. I regard her as the original pioneer emancipator of the nineteenth century.<sup>149</sup>

The individuals that Douglass chose to highlight are indicative of his own political commitments, but his presentation at the World's fair is indicative of the extent to which black Americans, after two failed attempts at emigration, viewed the Haitian Revolution as part of a glorious past and an inspiration for a better future, but no longer saw Haiti as part of their political present.

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<sup>148</sup> Dixon, *African America and Haiti* 208.

<sup>149</sup> Frederick Douglass, "Lecture on Haiti. The Human Pavilion Dedication Ceremonies Delivered at the World's Fair, in Jackson Park, Chicago, Jan. 2d, 1893," *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution* 209.



## Epilogue

On November 2, 1979, Joanne Chesimard, commonly known as Assata Shakur, escaped from the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in central New Jersey. An all white jury sentenced her to life in prison for the murder of a state trooper, a charge she denied. In 1984, she resurfaced in Cuba, where she continues to reside in exile. The Cuban government has consistently denied American demands for extradition, and Shakur remains free.<sup>150</sup> Of course, Assata Shakur was not the first black nationalist to flee political and legal pressure in the United States and seek refuge in Cuba: Black Panthers William Lee Brent and Tony Brant both hijacked planes to get to Cuba in the 1960's, fleeing political persecution in the United States.<sup>151</sup> The creation of Cuba as a refuge from imperial reach, however, was itself a creation of U.S. foreign policy. Cuba's very establishment on January 1, 1959 challenged American ideas about the relations between the United States and the Caribbean, and the two countries have no formal diplomatic relations today as a consequence.

It would be bold to impute a particular political ideology to the mutineers of the *Holkar* in 1818, but the parallels between their mutiny and Shakur's prison escape and current refugee status, nearly a century and a half apart, are striking. Indeed, the ties between the Haitian Revolution and the Cuban Revolution have been noted before. Penned in 1962, C.L.R. James' appendix to the second edition of *The Black Jacobins*, titled "From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro," made the connection explicit:

Castro's revolution is of the twentieth century as much as Toussaint's was of the eighteenth. But despite the distance of over a century and a half, both are West

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<sup>150</sup> Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago, Lawrence Hill Books, 1987).

<sup>151</sup> "People on Run Finding Themselves at Home Abroad with Castro," *The Miami Herald*, March 10, 2001. <<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/us-cuba/fugitives.htm>> Accessed April 6, 2010. The editorializing in this article is a good example of official U.S. opinion toward Cuba, and for that matter toward black nationalists.

Indian... Wherever the sugar plantation and slavery existed, they imposed a pattern. It is an original pattern, not European, not African, not a part of the American main, not native in any conceivable sense of that word, but West Indian, *sui generis*, with no parallel anywhere else.<sup>152</sup>

Yet it is clear that both revolutions responded, however imperfectly, to the needs of marginalized and oppressed people from the United States. If the U.S. Civil War marked the end of large-scale emigration plans among American blacks, it did not mean that no more black people were compelled to leave.

As this thesis shows, emigrationism has been, since the establishment of the United States, a significant theme in black American politics. Early proposals to emigrate were scattered, and focused mostly on a return to Africa, but the Haitian Revolution fundamentally changed the nature of black politics in the modern world. The existence of a black nation made a particular type of black nationalism possible: not only did it provide black Americans with a powerful example of black sovereignty to themselves and doubtful whites, but it provided black people with a nation that served not only as a refuge from slavery, but also a bulwark against it.

It is my contention throughout this thesis that black imaginations of Haiti as well as discourses around emigration to Haiti were central to the development of black political ideology in the nineteenth century. As the hardships of life as a free black person in the United States increased, and slavery grew more entrenched in the South, emigration became increasingly important, but despite the persistent talk of Africa, Haiti was the only country that attracted a large number of free black emigrants. The similarities and differences between the two periods of Haitian emigration, both of which were themselves made possible by political events in Haiti, are very instructive about the significant changes wrought in black political discourse through

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<sup>152</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins* 391-392.

the intervening decades. Even in periods with little emigrationist activity, Haiti remained present as both an inspiration for and manifestation of black capacity for citizenship and sovereignty.

The appeal of a black nation, and the corresponding ideas about black independence and autonomy, persisted through the twentieth century. Describing the incredible oppression that black Americans lived under in the era of Jim Crow, a former slave lamented her own situation, and consciously linked it to the lack of black power on the world stage: “See, de ‘nigger’ ain’t got no law, no flag, no nothin. He lives under de white man’s law, dat’s whut keeps him dis’adisfied, an’ nuverous all de time.”<sup>153</sup> Despite their unqualified right to citizenship, guaranteed since Reconstruction, black people across the United States, and particularly in the South found that they were unable to exercise any sort of meaningful sovereignty as the violent opposition of whites precluded their participation in the political and economic life of the country.

Black nationalist discourses, rooted in the persistent disempowerment of black people in the United States and echoing the calls of David Walker and Martin Delany, reemerged at particular junctures in American history. Most significantly, Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association attracted millions of followers from across the United States between 1915 and 1926. His movement stressed black independence within the United States, but also consisted of a specific plan for emigration to Africa. Although his plan to physically relocate American blacks never came to fruition, his success in consolidating black Americans as a nation

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<sup>153</sup> *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*, ed. John Blassingame (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1977) 653. Phonetic transcription and punctuation present in original.

within the United States was unprecedented, laying the foundation for twentieth century organizing around the same principles.<sup>154</sup>

Modern conceptions of black nationalism mostly stem from the black freedom struggles of the 1960's. In the first half of the decade, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam stressed the importance of black nationalism and the political separation of the races, but never developed concrete plans for emigration or specified a location. The Black Power movement of the late 1960's, of which Assata Shakur and the Black Panther Party were integral parts, responded to the continued subjugation of black people with militant resistance, but were mostly dedicated to fighting for change within the United States. The fugitive status of Assata Shakur and many of her partners in struggle indicate an international perspective, but no emigrationist or separatist program.

In stark contrast to the political discourse of the early nineteenth century, the black revolutionaries of twentieth century America rarely mentioned Haiti. As Frederick Douglass noted in his 1893 address, black freedom was all but unthinkable without the Haitian Revolution, and for generations of nineteenth century black thinkers Haiti stood as an unparalleled example of black sovereignty. Yet neither Malcolm X nor Huey Newton looked to Haiti for inspiration in fighting their own struggles in the United States, and Haiti barely figured in their speeches. Marcus Garvey, active decades earlier, did allude to Haiti as a source of inspiration but despite his emigrationist outlook and Jamaican provenance believed that West Africa and not Haiti was the ideal refuge of the oppressed black people of the United States. What changed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such that Haiti ceased to be an inspiration for American blacks?

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<sup>154</sup> Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (London: Verso, 1998).

In July of 1915, the United States Marines invaded Haiti, ostensibly to maintain political order, beginning an occupation that lasted until 1934. Haiti's borders had been invaded before, but mostly by European nations seizing the customs house for payment of outstanding debts. America's occupation was fundamentally different: beyond the simple duration of the occupation, which was long enough to leave a lasting impression on the nation, the political changes brought about by the new government of Haiti, propped up by American military power despite overwhelming opposition to occupation, fundamentally altered the political character of the nation. In a symbolic move, the Constitution of 1918 granted the right of foreigners to own land for the first time in the nation's history, paving the way for the twentieth century equivalent of colonial absentee planters. The political product of U.S. occupation was the brutal father-son regime of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier, who ruled the nation from 1957 to 1986.<sup>155</sup> By the 1960's, the new generation of black radical thinkers in the United States had to look elsewhere for inspiration.

In the heart of the colonial Atlantic, Haitians accomplished the unthinkable by violently overturning the institution of slavery, an institution absolutely fundamental to the construction of the Atlantic World itself, and establishing in its stead a black republic on the island of Saint-Domingue. Following the Revolution, Haiti's leaders followed a path familiar to any student of the twentieth century: production was placed under control of the state, and the only available capital, the labor of its citizens, was pushed to extremes to prevent the immediate extinction of the revolutionary project, in this case nothing more or less than human freedom. Economically dependent and politically ostracized, Haiti was never structurally positioned to thrive. Free of

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<sup>155</sup> A nuanced historical analysis of the American occupation and the Duvalier dictatorship can be found in Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation*.

both foreign rule and domestic capital since the early nineteenth century, Haiti was a neocolonial state before most decolonization movements began.

C.L.R. James called upon the story of the Haitian Revolution for inspiration in the anti-colonial struggles of the twentieth century, but despite national independence those struggles are not complete. The structural inequalities characteristic of the capitalist world system remain and grow, both between nations and within them, and remain marked by race more than two centuries after the Haitian Revolution. U.S. handling of the military coup of 2009 in Honduras showed that political independence can be undermined by structural subordination, and the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti brutally emphasized the fact that to live at the bottom of such a system is not only undesirable but dangerous. James' call for independence, therefore, still stands. As long as people remain unfree, Haiti will provide a space, if only a historical one, from which to mount a challenge.

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The sources that tell the story of Haitian emigration change substantially over the course of the early nineteenth century, evolving along with the communicative forms of the time. The establishment of *Freedom's Journal*, the first black newspaper in the United States, in 1827 fundamentally altered the ways in which information reached interested parties. Prior to that date, black communities relied upon white newspapers for news, and people with particular things to say published pamphlets and books. The first wave of Haitian emigration, lasting through the 1820's, relied on individual contact and small printing runs to grow into a larger movement. Beginning in the 1830's, black newspapers proliferated, and though black thinkers and activists still published pamphlets and books the new medium became the favored venue for debate and discussion. Papers such as *The Colored American* and Frederick Douglass' *North Star* reached a larger audience than previous black publications, expanding the size and scope of black political discussion accordingly.

Three secondary sources served as my central guides to the Haitian emigration movements. Floyd J. Miller's 1975 text *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863* provides a broad overview of emigrationism and nationalism during roughly the same period that this thesis covers, but with a wider lens and a decreased emphasis on Haiti. Sarah Fanning's 2008 PhD dissertation at the University of Texas under James Sidbury, *Haiti and the U.S.: African American Emigration and the Recognition Debate*, provides a detailed analysis of the emigration project of the 1820's, including an analysis of the political situation in Haiti. Chris Dixon's 2000 publication *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* centers on the movement of the 1850's, focusing more closely on American politics.

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