2018

“Gratuitous Distribution”: Distributing African American Antislavery Texts, 1773–1850

Nathan Jeremie-Brink

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

“GRATUITOUS DISTRIBUTION”:

DISTRIBUTING AFRICAN AMERICAN ANTISLAVERY TEXTS, 1773–1850

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY

NATHAN JÉRÉMIE-BRINK

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The instruction, mentoring, generosity, and love of many people made this project possible. I wish to honor the great cloud of witnesses whose legacies inform my own understanding of history, faith, and social justice.

My graduate training and professional mentoring at Loyola University Chicago was essential for my development as a historian. Kyle Roberts was a thoughtful, reliable, engaged, and gracious advisor. His insights were critical in shaping this project. Our conversations were generative throughout my research and writing, and Kyle was compassionate in times of stress and strain. In John Donoghue, I found a passionate teacher and a kindred spirit committed to both historical inquiry and advocacy for social justice in the present day. Jeffrey Glover provided thoughtful feedback on my work, and helpful encouragement as the project's future directions. I am indebted to Tim Gilfoyle for many lessons on effective teaching and careful writing. Tim must also be thanked for his stalwart willingness to read drafts of seminar papers, chapters, and job application materials, and for his sound professional advice.

At Loyola, in addition to my committee, Robert Bucholz, Theresa Gross-Diaz, and Marek Suszko helped me learn the art of teaching. I enjoyed many kindnesses and good counsel from Kim Searcy, Ted Karamanski, Eliot Gorn, Suzanne Kaufman, Jessica Horowitz, Benjamin Johnson, and Stephen Schloesser. I am grateful for writing feedback and friendship from my colleagues in the History PhD program, including Eliot Pope, Anthony Di Lorenzo, Devin

Hunter, Peter Kotowski, Erin Feichtinger, Dan Ott, Amelia Sarafine, Will Ippen, and Katie Macica.

Several institutions provided critical support for this project. At the American Antiquarian Society History of the Book Summer Seminar on Early African American Cultures of Print, Paul Erickson, Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Stein, along with many seminar colleagues and the amazing staff of the AAS, proved vital to some early research. I was grateful for the support of a McFarland fellowship in African American History from the Historical Society of the Pennsylvania and the Library Company the Massachusetts Historical Society, and am so grateful for the generous assistance and encouragements of Rich Newman, Jim Green, Krystal Appiah, and Connie King during the course of my fellowship in Philadelphia and in subsequent research visits to the Library Company. My research also benefitted from an Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship from the Massachusetts Historical Society, and a Lapidus-Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (OIEAHC) Slavery and Print Culture Fellowship. I also enjoyed a year as a Graduate Scholar-in-Residence at the Newberry Library, and appreciated the interest of the Newberry Staff, and other fellows and colloquium participants. These institutions not only offered me the invaluable support of knowledgeable library and curatorial staff, but opportunities to share aspects of this project and receive helpful feedback and collegial relationships.

I am thankful for the support of an Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation Dissertation Fellowship in Leadership and Service. I am also grateful for a Dissertation Fellowship from the Louisville Institute and for feedback from Cheryl Tonwnsend Gilkes, Randall Balmer, A.G. Miller and other LI Winter Seminar participants who read and commented on my project.

Numerous other scholars whose work I deeply admire encouraged and enhanced aspects of my own scholarship. John Saillant proved ever ready to offer his insights and I appreciate his generosity and collegial spirit. George Price's knowledge as a historian and a descendant of the Easton and Roberts families of New England greatly enhanced my research on Hosea Easton and his connections to David Walker and black New England abolitionists. Leon Jackson has encouraged and challenged my ideas, generously shared his own archival findings, and given me ideas regarding future directions for my scholarship. I am grateful to Rich Newman for his enthusiastic encouragement of my work and support of my professional development. Jim Stewart has also offered me much kindness, inspiration with respect to the ongoing work of Historians Against Slavery, and encouragement of my vocational goals.

Randal Jelks deserves many thanks for guidance ranging from his Calvin College class in Grand Rapids and study abroad in Ghana, to marriage and grad school plans, and most recently, advice on career placement decisions. Before I began doctoral study, Curtis J. Evans' course on Slavery and Christianity at the University of Chicago Divinity School clarified my initial research agenda, and I am grateful for our continued relationship. I wish to thank Jim Casey and Joel Brown for being both professional colleagues and personal friends.

McCormick Theological Seminary provided me with early financial support of my doctoral work, through the Arthur A. Hayes Fellowship, and I thank God for many mentors and colleagues among the faculty of McCormick. My favorite bishop and dear mentor, David Daniels often reminded me to breathe at times of confusion and uncertainty, to inhale the creative power and enduring peace of the Holy Spirit. My teaching and use of office space at McCormick came with the advantage of frequent kind and humorous interactions with Ken Sawyer and the interest and support of other faculty including Stephanie Crumpton, Ted Hiebert,

Sarah Tanzer, and Steed Davidson. I must also honor the memory of my late mentor at McCormick, Ogbu Kalu, who stirred my conviction about the liberative power of doing history.

Pullman Presbyterian Church and my pastor Eddie L. Knox affirmed my sense of vocational calling and nourished my spirit. Urban Village Church, Hyde Park-Woodlawn also provided me with community and deep engagement of issues pertaining to inclusion and justice in the church and in society. The Covenantal Community Housing Cooperative has for the past six years provided my family with the blessing of intentional community and participation in an experiment to model just and sustainable housing in the Woodlawn Neighborhood.

My deepest thanks go to my family, for their constant love. My parents, Daniel and Cheri Brink, nurtured my body and mind and began the development of my faith and commitment to serve the world with passion and joy. I enjoy the continued support and prayers of many from my childhood family of faith, Rosewood Christian Reformed Church in Bellflower, California. My second mommy and daddy, Yves Emeline and Dutroy Jérémie, loved me as their own and eagerly grafted me into a deeply-rooted Haitian family tree. I am grateful also to my siblings, Aaron and Theresa Brink, Stephanie and Kyle Brooks, David and Ryann Brink, Farah and Edwin Felix, Cassie and Rob Ramos, Anica, and Louis Jérémie. My dear cousins Derek and Deqa Elmi-Buursma gave our family great joy through their presence with us in this season of life in Chicago. I thank my siblings born of different mothers, Oludare Odumosu, Damien Davis, Emily McGinley, Rich Pak, Anissa and Jermale Eddie, Dorian and Jermaine Lamotte, Leah Gipson, and Rabiatu Barrie, for timely humor, inspiring social consciousness, and Christian faithfulness.

My children have provided me with my greatest sources of joy and creativity during this project. My beautiful Mateo and Naya inspire me to greater moral courage and a fierce sense of urgency about the work of justice I am called to in my own day.

This dissertation would not have been possible without my beloved spouse, Gihane Jérémie-Brink. Beyond all the ways that our partnership shaped the decisions pertaining to our family life and vocational pursuits, Gihane profoundly shaped my intellect and sharpened my critical consciousness about issues of race and gender. She informed my thought and service, and continues to do so. I am humbled to have such a brilliant, sincere, beautiful, powerful, and faithful partner. I thank God for Gihane's unwavering love and support. It is a joy to sojourn and serve together, seeking the rare intersections of mercy and truth where peace and justice meet.

To God be all praise and honor and glory and power.

In memory of Yves Emeline Jérémie.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"GIVE THEM BOOKS FOR NOTHING"

In December of 1829 David Walker sent at least thirty copies of his *Appeal in Four Articles, with a Preamble, to the Colored Citizens of the World* to Richmond, Virginia. He suggested his black abolitionist text be sold "among the Coloured people" for the sale price of only "twelve cents." But he explicitly instructed his black agent to give copies away for free "to those who cannot pay for them." In a handwritten letter to a prospective distributor, Walker instructed: "If there are any who, Cannot pay for a Book Give them Books for nothing."[1] Publishing three editions of his work in less than a year, Walker sank deeper into personal debt because these movements of copies could not sustain the printing costs. But the self-published black abolitionist's willingness to give "Books for nothing" said much about the immaterial importance Walker attributed to his work's distribution. Walker placed far greater value in the social and ethical transformation he hoped to achieve by the widespread, unprofitable, and controversial dissemination of his text.

Walker's strategy for the cheap or gratuitous dissemination of his *Appeal* made use of Walker's associates and select black agents, moved in the possession of witting and unwitting seamen, crossed state boundaries cultural regions, made use of the United States' rapidly

[1] David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829* (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1829). Walker offered a second, revised edition in 1830, and a "Third and Last Edition, with Additional Notes, Corrections, &c." in 1830. (Hereafter cited as Walker, *Appeal*.) David Walker to Thomas Lewis, December 8, 1829, Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0430, Virginia State Library, Richmond. Citations follow Walker's own spellings and capitalization.

expanding postal service, and met with varied responses that ranged from praise to ambivalence to condemnation. Copies were sold by black agents, shared among sympathetic friends and outraged officials, passed out for free by black and white intermediaries in seaports and urban centers, and aggressively confiscated by white Southern authorities. As the text was disseminated, the *Appeal* provoked widespread public debate both for what it said and how it moved. Walker was neither the first nor the last black author or editor to give out antislavery print for free. These movements of his printed antislavery text involved the formal and informal exchanges of a range of participants.

In 1837, African American pastor William Watkins marveled that "books are now teeming from the press with astonishing rapidity and in boundless profusion." He proclaimed that print would "shake down" and "revolutionize" society as "the wings of the press are wafting to all lands …the heaven-born truths" of racial equality.[2] Watkins' abolitionist zeal shared a vision of racial justice common among black Christians in the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, antislavery materials did not merely waft around the world. After the ink dried and sheets were stitched, people moved texts.

Individuals and communities participated in the various strategies for distributing texts. Watkins' own speech was published and distributed by the American Moral Reform Society in Philadelphia. A New York convention for free black people funded the "gratuitous distribution" of 2,000 copies of a similar speech in 1834.[3] Without institutional funding, Watkins or a patron

---

[2] William Watkins, *Address Delivered before the Moral Reform Society, in Philadelphia, August 8, 1836,* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1837).

[3] The motion to publish William Hamilton's address was made by James G. Barbadoes, *Minutes of the Fourth Annual Convention for the Improvement of the Free People of Colour, In the United States, Held by the Adjournments in the Asbury Church, New-York* (New York: Published by order of the Convention, 1834).

could have paid a job printer to publish his manuscript sermon. A publisher might have been convinced to take a risk on it. A newspaper might have printed a summary or selection of the oration. His printed text may have been reprinted in a religious periodical, copied into a handwritten letter, shared in a family journal, or read aloud at a school or reading society. Someone might have given Watkins' pamphlet as a gift, loaned it to a friend, or mailed it to a relative. A servant tasked with personal delivery of printed material may have read the text for themselves en route to the intended recipient. An offended master may have discarded a text, only to have it later recovered by one of his enslaved. At times antislavery texts were smuggled, carried in bulk to port cities by sailors, mailed in violation of censorship laws, or read aloud to people lacking or prohibited from literacy. Sometimes texts appeared despite efforts to prohibit their survival. People moved antislavery texts in many ways.

'Gratuitous Distribution': Distributing African American Antislavery Texts, 1773–1850 argues that African American networks and practices for moving print were foundational to the ideas and the strategies of the abolitionist movement in the early nineteenth century. African American agents in places as diverse as Princeton, New Jersey and Port-au-Prince, Haiti built networks linking black advocacy and facilitated the flow of print and people between sites as geographically and culturally far afield as New York City and New Bern, North Carolina. Exchanges made use of subscription agents, business affiliates, churches, civic institutions and informal family and personal connections. African American communities resisted racial oppression and engaged in various strategies to affirm black humanity and dignity, and disseminated texts that supported these collective labors.

The distribution of printed materials as diverse as sermons, newspapers, pamphlets, hymn-sheets, and textbooks was essential in supporting African American resistance and foundational to the growth of abolitionism in the early republic. At times, these exchanges violated repressive laws but in so doing created channels for the movement of formerly-enslaved and free black people, and emboldened the efforts of enslaved and free communities. These collaborative strategies laid the groundwork for national movements against racial inequality and for African American empowerment. Black print networks made possible, informed, and distributed the work of white abolitionists who joined in the shared political labor against slavery, as the United States hurtled towards a bloody civil war. Recovering long hidden or obscured African Americans' print distribution practices and networks offers a new vantage point for reconsidering the agency of these black individuals and communities and reinterpreting their foundational roles in the struggles for abolition and racial equality.

Technological innovations – the manufacture of wood-pulp paper, improved printing press mechanization, specialization and automation of printing labor, inexpensive methods of book binding, and the use of rail and steam to distribute printed works – drove changes in communication processes of the era, but failed to create an inclusive national print marketplace.[4] Instead of these revolutionary possibilities, changes in the material processes and cultural modes of communication only reified social inequities and racial oppression. Anti-black racism pervaded mainstream white American sentiments even in regions of the country that lacked proslavery consensus. Despite the expanding scope of religious and social interests set in type,

[4] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5. Walker argues that communications "revolution, with its attendant political and economic consequences, would be a driving force in the history of the era."

the print culture of mainstream antebellum reform movements was largely white and rarely challenged slavery or racial oppression.[5]

The study of print distribution highlights both the agency of people and the dynamism of texts. Scholarship on the history of the book informs my examination. Robert Darnton's influential schematic of the communication circuit identifies the agency of numerous people involved in the processes of print.[6] In contrast to Darnton's focus on individual roles, Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker suggest an alternate conceptualization focused on five phases in the life of a bibliographic document: publication, manufacture, distribution, reception, and survival.[7] Each phase bears relationship to diverse socio-economic influences that can set off new textual cycles. Distribution, according to Adams and Barker, is where the book's social life is most dynamic and makes possible the essential goal of communication. The distribution phase involves the texts' impetus, movement, destination, and long-term momentum.[8] My research seeks to draw from both Darnton's emphasis on human agency and Adams' and Barker's insights into the dynamic lives of texts. Study of distribution allows the blending of these analyses to explore the complex actions of individuals and institutions, material considerations, and cultural factors that moved African American antislavery texts. This dissertation entertains questions generated by scholars of the history of the book and print culture to track how texts

---

[5] Corey Capers, "Black Voices, White Print: Racial Practice, Print Publicity, and Order in the Early American Republic," *Early African American Print Culture* eds. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), provides evidence of the anti-black prejudice common to the print culture of the early American republic.

[6] Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus*, III, (1982): 65-83.

[7] Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, "A New Model for the Study of the Book," *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society: the Clark Lectures 1986-1987*, ed. Nicolas Barker (London: British Library, 1993)12-15, diagram 14.

[8] Adams and Barker, "A New Model," 22.

were distributed, and endeavors to use the tools of social history to recover the agency of people of the early American republic whose efforts to build black communities and move printed texts changed the abolitionist movement.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTEXTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PRINT CULTURE IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

Situating the distribution of antislavery print by African Americans in the context of the early American republic requires engagement with scholarship that offer various insights into the history of this era with respect to changes in Atlantic and North American print practices and literary culture, slavery and abolition, and the social movements and religious and cultural experiences of African Americans. Because scholars from different fields utilize a broad range of sources, tools, and methods and as a result think quite differently about this period in American history arguments sometimes struggle to cross the boundaries of discipline or field. The present chapter will establish the setting for these developments holding in view a broad range of scholarly perspectives that informs the interrogation of African American antislavery print distribution.

Communications and Print in the Early American Republic

This study examines an era in American history for which scholars argue for revolutionary change in democratic politics, capitalist economics, and technological advances in an expanding young republic.[1] Daniel Walker Howe's *What Hath God Wrought* modifies the

[1] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005) champions the expansion of democracy in the tradition of scholars who highlight movement toward universal white male suffrage in depictions of the period as "Jacksonian" America. Wilentz's argument updates the classic work, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1945), that argued the period was marked by democratic revolution led by white labor. Beyond Schlesinger, another influential work on the period is Charles Grier Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford

classic argument of George Rogers Taylor's *The Transportation Revolution* to present his own emphasis on simultaneous revolutions in transportation and communication in the early American republic.[2] Howe's analysis of these concurrent "twin revolutions" narrates the rapid pace of communication innovations – the invention of electric telegraphy, new print technologies, increasingly diverse print media, and expansion of the postal system – coupled with transportation advances that reduced travel times and shipping costs. Howe suggests that changes in communication moved new ideas by more public and political means than ever before, with these developments united in the struggle "to define America's national mission."[3]

Howe's argument builds on the work of scholars of newspapers, politics, and information communications. He benefits from Richard John's exploration of newspaper printing and distribution in his discussion of technologies and economics, the impact of the postal system and transportation on print dissemination.[4] Many other scholars have also examined aspects of rapidly changing communications practices, networks, and consequences in the early nineteenth

---

University Press, 1991) that articulates revolutionary changes in capitalist markets. Rather than highlight the triumphs of popular inclusion, however, Sellers suggests that capitalism overtook a reluctant American public. Communications revolution is argued for by Howe, *What Hath God Wrought.*

[2] George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution* (New York: Rinehart, 1951).

[3] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 2, 7, 849-53. Howe argues that changes in communications and transportation facilitated economic growth toward positive material and social consequences. In contrast to the bleak characterizations of Charles Sellers's *The Market Revolution*, Howe suggests that market developments "broadened and enhanced" democracy as it "widened people's horizons, encouraged a greater equality within family relationships, and fostered… commitments to education and the rule of law." In Howe's interpretation, this hopeful depiction of market expansion and communications innovation had the potential to enact suffrage for women and limit the prevalence of slavery. Though popular opinion and politics failed to support these causes in reality, Howe suggests that some religious communities supported activists and a communications revolution made their democratic visions consequential. Howe argues that transportation and communication innovations informed white-supremacist violence and proslavery imperialism chosen by common people and their leaders.

[4] Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). For other studies of newspaper and postal communications, see Richard Burket Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700-1860s* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989); Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

century. Richard Brown's work studies the role of access to print information in theoretical and pragmatic expansions of democratic participation.[5] Ronald Zboray argues that technological innovations in rail and print circulation undermined localism but encouraged people to find in print a new, fictive collective identification and to redefine their reading practices by the new possibilities of letter writing across an expanded U.S. geography. Zboray's analysis of distribution shows how regional interests contributed to the uneven development of print markets.[6]

Other scholarship challenges assumptions about the efficiency or extent of the era's rapidly expanding communications networks. Jeffrey Pasley's work argues that print communication amplified social and political discourse on a national level in the period from the presidency of George Washington through the War of 1812, a generation before the rapid pace of innovation and expansion of these enterprises that Howe locates.[7] Trish Loughran's close material investigations of print culture in *The Republic in Print* troubles Howe's suggestion of a nation brought together in relation to a communications revolution and shared nationalist visions. Loughran work debunks myths about the ubiquity of print, shows the limitations of innovation, and argues that transformations of communication fostered "the disintegration and national

[5] Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[6] Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[7] Jeffrey L. Pasley, "*The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

fragmentation that mark these same years, in all their technological wonder."[8] Her work provides a useful model for my own study as she explores material measures of print culture but also presents the limits and contingencies of the communication transformations.

Interest in the diverse and geographically expanding print culture of the early American republic has increased in recent decades, challenging facile interpretations of a rapidly evolving nationalist print culture. Growing scholarship in the 'history of the book' explores the "social and cultural history of communication by print ...to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behavior" of individuals and communities.[9]

William Charvat argues that print and market changes coupled with a consensus of popular interests in the early republic completely commercialized and nationalized print communications, ultimately positioning authors as servants of the economic will of publishers and presents publishers as blindly submissive to commercial booksellers. He emphasizes the primacy of Eastern urban hubs and the commercial book trades, convinced that market forces drove cultural creation.[10] Scholars have more recently challenged the nationalist teleology and market determinism of Charvat, including Leon Jackson and Robert Gross.[11]

In *An Extensive Republic*, the second volume in the seminal *History of the Book in America* series, editors Robert Gross and Mary Kelley provide a valuable snapshot of areas of

---

[8] Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3.

[9] Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" 65.

[10] William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959).

[11] Leon Jackson, *The Business of Letters: Authorial Economies in Antebellum America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), offers a thorough and compelling challenge to Charvat.

interest to contemporary scholars.[12] Gross's introduction argues that an expansive and decentered print culture emerged in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, one that was "at once local and cosmopolitan but hardly national."[13] Gross admits the expansion of the press and tangible changes that technological developments brought to all areas of American life, but suggests that American cultures of print were "multifarious," embracing a great variety of enterprises and agents on local, state, and national levels, serving diverse purposes by many means, and running on separate tracks of development that only occasionally overlapped" and resulted in increased conflict rather than national unity.[14]

Several essays in *An Extensive Republic* speak to the diverse set of interests that promoted the dissemination of texts in the early American republic. John L. Brooke complements the scholarship of Loughran and shows dramatic sectional and rhetorical limits of political party newspapers and print culture.[15] Looking at the economic motivations of an editor of a political newspaper, Jeffrey Pasley illustrates that his drive for profit was a matter of personal subsistence rather than accumulation of wealth.[16] David Shields shows how elite Americans sought to circulate books that promoted the nation's intellectual ascendency while

---

[12] Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley, eds., *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840, A History of the Book in America,* Vol. II (Chapel Hill: American Antiquarian Society, The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[13] Robert A. Gross, "Introduction: An Extensive Republic," in *An Extensive Republic*, 6.

[14] Gross, "Introduction," *An Extensive Republic*, 4.

[15] John Brooke, "Print and Politics," *An Extensive Republic*, 179-189.

[16] Pasley "Have Pen, Will Travel: The Times and Life of John Norvell, Political Journalist," *An Extensive Republic*, 190-197.

retaining an orientation toward Europe.[17] These works reveal a range of motivations but fall short in their discussion of the actual means and strategies of distribution.

An important exception to the ways economic factors shaped the print practices of the early American republic is the growing body of scholarship on antebellum reformers' use and distribution of print. David Paul Nord examines how religious societies and their local auxiliaries aspired to make printed texts free and widely available, motivated by their desire for religious and social transformation.[18] Local bodies often funded these projects and participated in attempts to remove commercial considerations from their print production. Their intent was to flood the market with morally and socially uplifting print to the demise of the popular novel.[19] These reformers wielded "the tools of modernity to resist modernity," as publishing houses did not seek profit yet used innovations in print and business practices to competitively access capital and engage the marketplace.[20]

These works also speak to the power of printed texts and images in religion and reform movements. In his monograph *Protestants and Pictures,* David Morgan examines the diverse ways that Protestant Christians used images to argue for the important role of communication strategies in religious culture.[21] In his treatment of the early nineteenth century, Morgan shows Protestants printed and distributed images mostly for conversion and catechesis. Though he

---

[17] David S. Shields, "The Learned World," *An Extensive Republic*, 247-267.

[18] Nord, "Benevolent Books," *An Extensive Republic*, 221-247.

[19] David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[20] Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 149.

[21] David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

notes the intended role some leaders envisioned for printed images to inform the morality and submission of the enslaved, the ways African American Protestant communities created and utilized images and diverse printed media are notably absent from his study. However, Morgan's work makes an important contribution in its treatment of religious publication by looking beyond the business models of these institutions and exploring the ways in which mass printed images and texts were received and used in early nineteenth-century America.

Related to the rise of religious and reform publications, an understanding of social authorship conventions in early America has been advanced by the scholarship of Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray. Their study examines "amateur" authors whose work evaded the trends toward professionalism that have been argued in histories of literary publishing. They consider practices of "social authorship" that began with scribal cultures and the circulation of manuscript materials yet persisted even amidst the proliferation of printed materials and came to inform the distribution strategies of "published amateurism" in the nineteenth-century United States.[22] The Zborays argue that "the small presses accounting for the bulk of production" brought texts to "a limited and predictable audience" but that publication offered authors a chance to enlarge their audience share their ideas or causes more broadly. Even so, antebellum manuscript and print distribution often avoided the relatively small number of commercial outlets of agents, stores, and booksellers prior to the Civil War. While the means of social authorship often failed to secure commercial or financial measures of success, these practices were useful when the authors or communities design for print dissemination was motivated "to spread information to a wider audience than could be reached with manuscripts." The Zborays

[22] Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Literary Dollars and Social Sense: A People's History of the Mass Market Book* (New York: Routledge, 2005), xv.

point out that even as print became more accessible in the nineteenth century, "vestiges of social authorship remained insofar as writers often targeted a limited, specialized, and identifiable readership, to which they themselves might distribute their work in person. Similarly, too, social authorship practices can be discerned in instances of collaborative production for social ends."[23]

The Zborays' theorization of social authorship and social dissemination of manuscript and printed materials in service of social causes provides a valuable frame for considering the print practices of African American authors, readers, and communities. For example, their study of Charlotte Forten (later, Grimke) recovers important details concerning the literary activities of a black woman author whose published work did not earn financial compensation still provided her the gratification of lending her pen to the abolitionist cause. Forten offers a rich example for understanding how she and others used practices of social authorship to disseminate ideas. Social authorship and dissemination practices provides a framework for understanding the complex functions of black literacy taught and utilized in Christian faith communities, the efforts of early black authors who made use of evangelical Christian networks, and the relationships of early black pastors and religious organizations. Reading and practices of print tracked across efforts to build, sustain, and expand collaborative networks that developed and shared of ideas of black empowerment.

With respect to these patterns of communication and the history of print culture, closer scholarly attention is needed to examine the communications circuits of marginalized communities in the period. Further, attention on this subject must engage how the printed word was accessed, distributed, and used by those whose lived experience or political labors countered ideologies and myths of white American destiny. African American antislavery texts did not

[23] Zboray and Zboray, *Literary Dollars*, 7.

uniformly present a view of American progress, and the period's market expansion, political inclusion, and communications innovation tended toward the exclusion of their ideas, texts, and access.

The Antislavery Movement in Early 19th Century America

Antislavery movements were among the countless social reform campaigns that sought to utilize communications technology. Historical writing on American antislavery evolved with social changes in the twentieth-century United States to develop increasingly complex appraisals of the contributions, contradictions, and limits of activists and movements. In the first half of the twentieth century, historical treatments of antislavery activism considered only white males and presented abolitionists as an extremist fringe. These historians generally believed gradualism to be a core American virtue and condemned or at least critiqued the way antislavery crusaders used radical rhetoric and sought immediate social change. With the rise of mid-twentieth-century civil rights movements, new progressive historians invoked an active link between their contemporary struggles and the antislavery movements of early America with little respect for the complex dynamics of race and economics in the earlier tradition of protest. Martin B. Duberman's 1965 edited collection, *The Antislavery Vanguard,* reflected a revisionist consensus of the time that offered a more sympathetic assessment of the abolitionists.[24]

By the 1970s scholars witnessed the limits of twentieth-century civil rights advocacy and their scholarship likewise reexamined limitations and contradictions in the antislavery movements of the nineteenth-century. Still emphasizing the important contributions of the antislavery movements, more nuanced and contested narratives of abolition were explored in the

[24] Martin B. Duberman, ed., *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

scholarship of that decade. This increasingly complex paradigm was the larger interpretive thrust of Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman's *Antislavery Reconsidered* in 1979.[25] Scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s sought to understand the ideological, political and strategic diversity that characterized American antislavery movements. Syntheses of abolitionism by James Brewer Stewart and Ronald G. Walters separated distinct ideological and political perspectives within American antislavery movements.[26] They presented "radical" abolitionists that rejected the US Constitution, political parties, and religious institutions in their immediatist demands as distinct from more moderate antislavery advocates that embraced the gradualist strategies of African colonization or Liberty, Free-Soil, and Republican parties.[27] Since these synthetic treatments, more recent scholarship has blurred and challenged the fixity of these distinctions. These trends have resulted in the field's greater awareness of plurality and overlap in these movements.[28]

Beyond increased awareness of the ways race contributed to these complexities, historians since the late-1970s have more broadly accepted African American contributions to antislavery movements. The anthology of Perry and Fellman evidenced a complex understanding of racial limits on American antislavery, but included fewer essays on the

---

[25] Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

[26] James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976); Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978).

[27] Credit in exploring the relationship between capitalism, race, and class in these more politically-linked moderate approaches to antislavery must also be given to Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[28] Though he still utilizes these distinctions to a degree, a more complex understanding of fluidity and overlap between these antislavery camps is offered in John Stauffer's *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformations of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). The suggestion that political antislavery activists presented their own brand of radicalism is argued by Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

contributions of African Americans than did the Duberman collection of fifteen-years prior. The earlier collection included the work of Benjamin Quarles and other essays that championed black protest to slavery.[29] The centrality of African American involvement in antislavery movements was argued by Quarles in the late-1960s and as early as 1941 by Herbert Aptheker, but this perspective lacked widespread acceptance in the field until the last few decades.[30] The 2006 collection *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* edited by Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer provides sustained engagement with the contributions of African Americans to abolitionism and represents a mainstreaming of these interests within the discipline.[31]

With the inclusion of African Americans into the scholarship of antislavery movements, there has been renewed interest in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century African American activism. Approaches to this subject have presented the activities of African American "founders" in the early American republic, examined diverse strategies for African American community identity and activism, and maintained interest in the Atlantic experiences and horizons of African Americans.[32] These investigations are significant for my study as they

---

[29] Benjamin Quarles, "Abolition's Different Drummer: Frederick Douglass," *The Antislavery Vanguard*; Quarles' work of that decade also included *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[30] Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro in the Abolitionist Movement* (New York: International Publishers, 1941).

[31] Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

[32] The argument for African American founders is most forcefully made by Richard Newman in his essay "'A Chosen Generation': Black Founders and Early America" in *Prophets of Protest*, eds. McCarthy and Stauffer. Newman applies this understanding to the most prominent of these black founders, Richard Allen, in the biography *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008). African American strategies for collective identity and activism included celebrations as examined in Julie Roy Jeffrey, "'No Occurrence in Human History is More Deserving of Commemoration Than This': Abolitionist Celebrations of Freedom," *Prophets of Protest*, eds. McCarthy and Stauffer, public events and convention movements as shown by Eddie S. Glaude, *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and*

suggest that a diverse range of African American antislavery strategies occurred well before or independently of William Lloyd Garrison's publication of *The Liberator* in 1831 and Douglass's printed *Narrative* in 1845.

Further, these trends to understand antislavery activism in varied local and Atlantic relationships feature various degrees of cooperation and contestation concerning antislavery and racial equality. My own study seeks to complicate the ways that historians consider shifts toward racial cooperation in the abolitionist movement by 1831. Richard Newman's *The Transformation of American Abolitionism* depicts separate antislavery traditions of African American immediatism and a white colonizationist gradualism coming together in a moment of interracial coalescence through the publication of *The Liberator* in 1831.[33] Newman highlights the foundational work of African American activism in the abolitionist movement, however the persistent limits and suppression of African American literacy and print culture and the ongoing efforts of black abolitionists to build autonomous black institutions questions the interracial coalescence of the movement and reveals ongoing racial divisions even after the rise of Garrisonian abolitionism.

When antislavery and other reform movements used images and print materials they participated in the era's commercial and technological shifts and rarely challenged prevailing

---

Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), and critical engagement with racial science as studied by Patrick Rael, "A Common Nature, A United Destiny: African American Responses to Racial Science from the Revolution to the Civil War," *Prophets of Protest,* eds. McCarthy and Stauffer. Indelible Atlantic dimensions of the African American experience in terms of slavery and abolition has been studied by countless scholars. Examples of scholarship that highlights migration patterns and cultural developments include Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), and Michael Angelo Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[33] Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

social constructs. Bruce Dorsey's *Reforming Men and Women* argues that gender constructs impacted social reform movements' approaches to race, class, and nation.[34] Despite Dorsey's valuable insights, he consistently suggests that the most significant contributions of African Americans were to teach whites of slavery's horrors and tutor nascent activists on the subject of pervasive racial prejudice. This argument suggests that African American efforts provided a necessary witness to the horrors of slavery, but does not locate the ways that black communities used the print culture of reform in efforts to substantively challenge the institution. His analysis of the ways antislavery reform movements were significantly shaped by gender is valuable, but in the end remains a discussion of the limits of white reform discourse and does not sufficiently locate and present the diverse and powerful contributions of African Americans.

Black Atlantic Authors and African American Cultures of Print

Fresh interest in how practices of print and literacy elucidate previously hidden aspects of African American activism and culture has also complicated the historical narratives of that omit or narrate only the privations of black agency due to the ubiquity of slavery in the late-eighteenth century Atlantic. Edited collections and a number of conferences, seminars, and symposia have brought together key contributors and offer important considerations of this growing area of study.[35]

A number of scholars have joined in Leon Jackson's desire to see new scholarship that brings together the often disparate agendas that tend to divide the labors of "scholars of slave

[34] Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[35] Cohen and Stein, eds. *Early African American Print Culture* offers a collection of essays on African American print culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Todd Vogel, *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001) features three essays that deal with antebellum black authorship or publication.

culture and print culture" and between "African American social, cultural, and literary historians and those within the community of book historians."[36] His 2010 state of the field essay in *Book History* highlights exciting new recoveries and arguments being made by scholars who pay attention to early practices of literacy and print culture among African Americans, and to the form, materiality, and social lives of African American-authored texts. Many of these efforts have shifted scholars' understandings and theorizations of early American print culture of the late eighteenth-century Atlantic World.

Scholarly investigations of late-eighteenth-century have recovered many details about the ways early black writers faced barriers to publication and persisted in their efforts to see their manuscripts printed and their texts disseminated. The texts of Phillis Wheatley, an African-born, enslaved teenage poet in Boston, have attracted more scholarly consideration than the black male authors of the late eighteenth century Atlantic world. Research on Wheatley interrogates but offers no consensus concerning the ways she exerted her own agency, or, rather, was profoundly and inexorably constrained by the involvements of her white masters, patrons, and printers.[37] Vincent Carretta offers the most magisterial and sustained examination of Wheatley's life and how her texts were published and disseminated. Carretta explores her circulated manuscript poems, elegies that were set to type by colonial printers, and her London published book within the religious and political context and examines the transatlantic networks that facilitated her

[36] Leon Jackson, "The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian: African American Cultures of Print—The State of the Discipline," *Book History* 13 (2010), 252.

[37] Christopher D. Felker, "'The Tongues of the Learned are Insufficient: Phillis Wheatley, Publishing Objectives and Personal Liberty," *Resources for American Literary Study* 20 (1994), 149-79; Kristin Wilcox, "The Body into Print: Marketing Phillis Wheatley," *American Literature* 71, (1999), 1-29. Antonio T. Bly, "From Manuscript to Print: Authorship and Design in the Poems of Phillis Wheatley," *Old Dominion University Historical Review* 7 (2000), 97-119; Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003).

publishing and dissemination within the era's print and manuscript practices to interrogate her complex negotiations of enslavement, patronage, and publicity. [38]

The work of Henry Louis Gates Jr. in 1980s brought popular attention and renewed scholarly focus to the literary works of black Atlantic writers of the late-eighteenth century. Gates' work was instrumental in renewed efforts to read and consider the autobiographical writing of black authors in the Atlantic such as James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Phillis Wheatley, John Marrant, Quobna Ottoba Cugoano, Olaudah Equiano of the 1770s and 1780s. Not only was Gates's work important in calling attention to these texts, but his theory about "signification" in African American authorship has enjoyed considerable influence within African American literary criticism.[39]

A number of recent studies in African American literary history have recovered details about early black authors in the late-eighteenth century English-speaking Atlantic and the publication history of their works. The work of Joseph Rezek argues "the cultural significance of the book" among black authors and the print culture of the Atlantic world.[40] A fresh look at the local colonial contexts and practices that factored into the widespread dissemination of Wheatley's elegies in broadsides or periodicals is offered by recent scholarship by Karen A. Weyler. Departing from the literary theorizations of Gates and more in line with Carretta's attention to the publication histories and social situations of these author's efforts to print their work, Weyler, too, shows how "remarkably persistent and successful [Wheatley] was in pursing

[38] Vincent Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2011).

[39] Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[40] Joseph Rezek, "The Print Atlantic: Phillis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho, and the Cultural Significance of the Book," *Early African American Print*, eds. Cohen and Stein.

printedness." Weyler's argument speaks not merely to the entrepreneurial spirit of Wheatley but also shows how her work "reveals the fluid, tumultuous, and contingent nature of pritntedness in early America as the poor and the unfree sought to use print for their own purposes, rather than be the objects of discussion by others."[41] These explorations are foundational for understanding subsequent generations of African American authors and marginalized communities of early America who struggled and achieved only limited success at setting their interests to type.

The scholarship of Carretta and James Green have also examined carefully the publication history of Olaudah Equiano, to reveal his entrepreneurial acumen with respect to his work's copyright and distribution strategies that offered him a remarkable degree of financial success and authorial control. Even as Equiano relied upon some of the same white transatlantic networks of evangelical Christian reformers and philanthropists to support his work, he achieved a far greater degree of autonomous agency in the process of marketing and selling his spiritual biography that through its dissemination achieved the widespread circulation of Equiano's abolitionist argument.[42]

Scholars extending their investigations into the early national period and the nineteenth century raise significant theoretical questions about the relationship of African American literary and cultural productions to an early American public sphere. These investigations take into account that the public sphere in the early American republic was profoundly shaped by anti-black racism and racially-justified economic exploitation. At least three paradigms have emerged

---

[41] Karen A. Weyler, *Empowering Words: Outsiders and Authorship in Early America* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2013), 25.

[42]Vincent Carretta, "Property of Author": Olaudah Equiano's Place in the History of the Book," *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic*, eds. Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001); Carretta, *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-made Man* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2005); James Green, "The Publishing History of Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*," *Slavery and Abolition* 16 (1995), 362-75.

for considering African American print practices and their social consequences between the American Revolution and the Civil War. The most common perspective argues that print provided African Americans with a way to participate in the public sphere. Works in this vein invoke Jürgen Habermas's critical theory and Michael Warner's application of the concepts of publics and counterpublics.[43] Richard Newman, for example, argues that African Americans gained access to the public sphere via print. He suggests that the protest pamphlets written and published by "black founders," such as Bishop Richard Allen, forced an expansion of the public sphere to include their protests of racial injustice. The print production of these founders, according to Newman not only "participated in the making of black modernity," but showed the limits of democracy and challenged slavery and racism.[44] Newman stresses black leaders' eagerness to display civic virtue and nationalism, so that African American print could function both as "a metaphor for black autonomy in the early republic" and as the only means by which black leaders could speak to the American public.[45]

Joanne Pope Melish's *Disowning Slavery* questions the extent to which free black Northerners participated in the public sphere to argue instead for the limited agency of African American print in the face of hegemonic racism.[46] In her study of New England's history of slavery and race after emancipation, Melish argues that abolitionism and republicanism served as "ideologies of exclusion" and that the efforts of African Americans did little to counter racist

---

[43] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989); Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

[44] Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 96.

[45] Newman, "'A Chosen Generation': Black Founders and Early America," *Prophets of Protest*.

[46] Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

hegemony.[47] In this way, Melish presents minimal economic, political, and cultural consequence of African American print protest. She looks specifically at African American protest and argues that as free black leaders adopted abolitionism, republicanism, or even Black Nationalism they endorsed and mimicked the same hegemonic framework for racial essentialism and exclusionary social oppression.

A third perspective presents a middle way between interpreting the achievements of African Americans who contributed in print to the public sphere and the persistent limitations of their efforts against the hegemony of anti-black racism in the United States. Joanna Brooks argues the emergence of a black print counterpublic reveals both the agency and limits of African American print culture in the early American republic.[48] Brooks points out Warner's dismissal of African American print in *Letters of the Republic*.[49] She draws from and reworks feminist critiques of Habermas and utilizes Warner's own work on publics and counterpublics to argue for a "black print counterpublic."[50] Within this paradigm, Brooks admits that African Americans were generally denied agency as free, political, and intellectual human beings during this period, limiting their participation in the public sphere. However, she rejects the suggestion that African American print culture contributions merely reacted to and ultimately reified racist hegemony. Brooks' interpretation moves from the dominant public sphere's negative messages to the black print counterpublic's affirmative: "If the message for individual blacks encoded in

---

[47] Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 50.

[48] Joanna Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Jan, 2005), 67-92.

[49] Warner, *The Letters of the Republic*.

[50] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, 25-26 (1990), 56-80; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, Zone Books, 2002).

the bourgeois public sphere was, 'You are public property,' the message of the black counterpublic to whites was, 'Only we can own who we are.'"[51] Thus the paradigm of a black print counterpublic holds in tension and seeks to negotiate Newman's emphasis on African American print's agency within the national public sphere and Melish's insistence on denials of agency through a pervasive hegemonic racism in the early republic.

Hearing and Doing the Word: The Practices and Common Texts of Black Christianity

Understanding the practices of Christianity, religious interpretation, and literacy among free and enslaved black people of the eighteenth-century provide a necessary backdrop to the collaborative development of print practices and networks critical to the African American distribution of antislavery print in the early nineteenth century. Protestant Christianity and the growing influence of evangelical movements in the mid- to late-eighteenth century provided key points of access whereby black people of the Atlantic world and the early United States came into contact with printed materials, engaged various literacy practices, and used print for a variety of purposes.

Faith formation and a broad range of spiritual practices within the Christian tradition relied upon and made use of printed texts. The Bible was read by individuals and among groups. Commentaries and confessional documents provided expositions or explanations that helped believers interpret the sacred scriptures or understand theology. These printed resources served as tools for teaching Christians of all ages and at various stages of faith development. Personal narratives and spiritual autobiographies offered lively and sometimes harrowing tales that reinforced specific virtues or promoted transformation. Printed tracts convicted readers of personal or social sins and promoted conversion, or, in an alternate understanding of the process

[51] Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," 73.

of salvation, regeneration. Christian groups, including the churches and para-church organizations of African Americans, supported the proliferation of evangelical print and institutions dedicated to this cause sought new avenues for mass print communications. Systematic evangelical efforts to publish and distribute texts to achieve the widest possible readership developed both the religious and professional character of print culture in early America and "stood at the vanguard as the American print market blossomed in the early nineteenth century."[52]

The thrust of evangelical revival did not drive all its adherents to endorse a social witness against slavery. David Brion Davis' treatment of the limits of evangelical Christianity's "reformist impulse" concerning slavery admits the movements "sometimes countervailing need for social conformity."[53] The same biblical and theological texts from which some interpreters argued for liberation and a common humanity were used by others to justify the dehumanization of Africans through the institution of slavery and hegemonic anti-black racism. Black Christianity in North America before 1750, according to historian Henry H. Mitchell was "not due in any appreciable measure to missions" by white Protestants, but rather was a product of the "eclectic character of African traditional religion," the efforts of the enslaved who read, possessed, and "interpreted the bible for themselves," and a "commonality between the

[52] Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 47.

[53] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation, 1770-1823,* Rev. Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999; First Ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 203. Davis credits Leland J. Bellot "Evangelicals and the Defense of Slavery in Britain's Old Colonial Empire," *Journal of Southern History,* XXXVII (1970), 19-40, summarizing Bellot's argument that "there was no necessary connection between religious evangelicalism and hostility to colonial slavery."

expressive culture of Africa and the …free expressiveness and emotion" that increasingly came to characterize evangelical and revival movements in Atlantic Protestantism.[54]

In their scholarship on black Christianity in North America and the Caribbean, Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood discuss the importance of orality in evangelical revivalism and African oral and graphic "magico-religious" traditions to explain the spread of evangelical Christianity among the enslaved black people of the British Atlantic. They suggest that "'literate' religions, such as the Anglican and Presbyterian faiths, were in important ways less accessible to the preliterate slave populations" and that oral faith traditions facilitated greater reception, reinterpretation, and transmission by African peoples.[55] Cultural theorists and rhetorical studies argue the limits of the written word, practices of literacy, and printed texts in understanding black experience and history. This trend in scholarship warrants ongoing recovery of other modes of Black Atlantic cultural practice and expression, and the primacy of the spoken word in many contexts.[56]

---

[54] Henry N. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 32.

[55] Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 83.

[56] Experts from a variety of academic fields have rightly reconsidered the complex relationship between literacy and orality in these histories. See discussions of music and other modes of communication due to denials of literacy among the enslaved and non-elites in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993; Verso, 1993), 36-43, 74-77. The most dramatic scholarly theorization between oral and literacy practices is Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 2002; First ed. Methuen & Co., 1982), although Ong is not specifically speaking to the relationship of literacy and orality in African and African American history. In rhetorical studies, Thurmon Garner and Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, "African American Orality: Expanding Rhetoric" *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations,* eds. Ronald L. Jackson and Elaine B. Richardson (New York: Routledge, 2003), 47, argue the primacy of orality in the African American experience: "African American rhetorical presence based on written texts without critical and extended investigation of the orality out of which they came limits our knowledge of the African American rhetorical process."

But early black Atlantic Christianity was not merely pre-literate or confined to practices of orality. Recovering early black Atlantic religious textual practices may in fact strengthen the links between oral and literary. The long history of opposition to these black Christian's reading practices provides insight into the complicated relationship between proslavery religious authority and how black Christians interpreted and practiced their faith. Most early black authors became Christians before they read, wrote, and published. Scholarship by E. Jennifer Monaghan and Janet Cornelius looks beyond the more exceptional examples of black authors to examine more widespread questions of black access to reading and writing and practices of literacy in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic and early nineteenth century U.S. South. Monaghan's work reveals that black Christians who embraced conversion, catechesis, and literacy practices in the mid- and late-eighteenth century increasingly did so in connection to growing mission efforts and evangelical movements within British Atlantic Protestantism.

Reports of early black literacy and textual practices recorded by white missionaries, philanthropists, or commentators suffer from the problematic vantage point of those chroniclers. White Christians of the period often believed that those same texts for Christian faith formation should be used to reinforce their own religious authority and social control over the enslaved and marginally free. Some evangelical Christians in the eighteenth century encouraged black Christians' practices of literacy even as they defended and profited from their chattel enslavement. Many black Christians rejected the designs of authorities who deemed Christian conversion, literacy, and religious catechesis expedient for maintaining social control in a slave society. Some found that Christian faith and reading practices promoted both their survival within that oppressive system and a means to advocate for liberation. The ideas and practices of

print and the black Atlantic Christian experience gathered individual and communal bodies together in ways that promoted efforts for black survival, elevation, and liberation.[57]

Throughout the Atlantic World, black Christians read, wrote, and moved texts before their communities and textual practices recorded formalized participation in English Atlantic cultures of print in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Despite obstacles, many sought literacy and many promoted a variety of social reading practices. They read aloud and memorized texts. They took actions to promote the literacy of others. The illiterate listened and repeated the words they heard proclaimed. Those who accessed texts shared them with other readers. They carried manuscript or printed texts on behalf of their owners or others. Black literacy, and the diversity of creative reading practices required deliberate, careful exchanges, negotiated shifting religious and political landscapes, and (in some cases) even illegal activity. Countless examples of these subversive uses of Christian conversion, theology, biblical interpretation, and religious texts can be found in the work of scholars of Albert Raboteau, Frey and Wood, and others, who have recovered various religious sources and interpreted the faith practices of the free and enslaved black Christians of the Atlantic world and nineteenth-century North America.[58]

Readers formed their own opinions as they read and discussed these texts, including the Bible and Christian catechetical texts, commercial documents, and political treatises. In some cases they used these texts to inform their own speeches, petitions, literary productions, and

---

[57] Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Black Religion : Strategies of Survival, Elevation, and Liberation," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 21, no. 1–2 (1993), 145–64.

[58] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood. *Come Shouting to Zion: Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

intellectual engagements with issues of race, religion, and the institution of slavery in the early modern Atlantic World. By the end of the eighteenth century, black authors disseminated their work through informal social means of dissemination, fostered subscription networks, and worked with white patrons of evangelical print culture to achieve publication of their own texts and to build and gain access to distribution networks across which they disseminated their texts.

On the eve of American independence, few North American Christian communities esteemed black people under a theological framework for shared humanity, common faith, or equal intellectual capacities. But in the 1780s and 1790s, new evangelical fervor promoted efforts to make religious materials freely and widely accessible to the broadest possible audience, and at times those efforts included black audiences. Methodist conferences in North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland in 1787 posed questions about their role in "the spiritual welfare of the colored people" and their ministers were in response charged "to leave nothing undone for the spiritual benefit and salvation of them." The answer continued that the preachers of the gospel were to "unite in society those who appear to have a real desire of fleeing from the wrath to come; to meet such in class, and to exercise the whole Methodist discipline among them."[59] In these admonitions, African Americans were to be made people of the book in more ways than one. They were to be included in the evangelical insistence on the centrality and literal place of the Bible, but also instructed and conformed to the essential supplemental text for examining Methodist faith and practice.

Though evangelical movements in the British Atlantic fostered new points of access for black Christians to engage in the practices of an emergent evangelical print culture, white

[59] *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Church, 1773-1828*, 2 vols. (New York: T. Mazon and G. Lane, 1840), I, 26. Quoted in Sernett, *Black Religion and American Evangelicalism*, 34.

religious structures provided few opportunities for black people to serve as pastoral leaders or creators of religious print. For the most part, the growing movement initiated black Christians into an emergent print culture that seldom outwardly challenged hegemonic anti-black racial discrimination and the expansion of the institution of slavery. Nonetheless, this movement featured black Christians who not only affirmed Christianity but found therein space to pursue black religious leadership and their own physical spaces and interpretive authority.

Enslaved and free black people in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic exerted themselves to gain access to literacy, education, and printed texts. They aligned their cause with a growing evangelical Protestant movement that served as an engine for the proliferation of religious print, supported by an ecumenically diverse and geographically diffuse network of patrons, subscribers, institutions, and readers. Though a few white reformers aligned with this growing swell of religious enthusiasm advocated African education and decried slavery, their convictions failed to effect social and political change. By the late-eighteenth century, African Americans endeavored to have their literary, religious, and civic labors set to print. While patrons and philanthropists fostered public acknowledgment of black literary productions as exceptional, the aims of black creators and distributors of print sought structural change to the pervasive anti-black racism that perpetuated dehumanization and denied opportunities.

Not only did African Americans actively shape evangelical movements in American Christianity, but they fostered theologies and faith practices that supported their own personal and collective, cultural and social needs. Historian of black Christianity, Milton C. Sernett argues that "[b]lack folk religion was first hammered out on the anvil of the slaves' experience under the dehumanizing forces of chattel servitude and then brought by them into their own

churches in the North." He suggests African Americans "took the Gospel as preached by the plantation missionaries and shaped it to fit their own needs, making a creative synthesis out of what whites taught them, of what they discovered for themselves, and of what they remembered from the African past."[60] Beyond the ways these factors influenced African American practices of religious culture, they can be seen in the ways African Americans engaged in practices of the Atlantic and early American cultures of print driven in large part by the rapidly expanding use of print by evangelical Christian movements. In the same way that Sernett explores "the great lesson… that black Christianity cannot be judged, even among the slaves, as if the African was simply a passive receptacle for Caucasian mysteries," similar lessons must be learned of early black Atlantic encounters with and practices of print culture.[61]

African American interpretation of scripture served as a foundation for "a series of biblical assurances of human unity and of religious hope" that literary historian Dickson Bruce argues provided the core of African American religious discourse in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century.[62] African American theology and scriptural reasoning posited the shared humanity and dignity of all people. Even as the history of the Atlantic world saw dramatic assertions of revolution and nationhood, African Americans insisted on the relevance of texts such as Acts 17:26 that all nations of the earth originated from a single common ancestor, or "of one blood" as it was phrased in the King James translations. The passage was not the only scriptural basis for belief in a singular origin of all humanity. Similar reasoning was drawn from

---

[60] Milton C. Sernett, *Black Religion and American Evangelicalism: White Protestants, Plantation Missions, and the Flowering of Negro Christianity, 1787-1865* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1975), 18.

[61] Sernett, Black Religion and American Evangelicalism, 18.

[62] Dickson D. Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 77.

the Genesis creation narratives and genealogies. Notions of spiritual and human equality beyond the discussion of origins often invoked Acts 10:34 and similar passages suggested that "God is no respecter of persons."

Scriptural authority was central to the early interpretations in this tradition that began as early as the 1770s. Rev. Lemuel Haynes, a minister of African descent, championed the authority of scripture and on at least one occasion discussed the biblical argument for the monogenesis of the human family. Haynes 1776 manuscript, from early in his ministerial training, evidenced a cogent argument on the point of divinely granted universal human dignity.[63] His scriptural reasoning argued forcefully for equal humanity among all persons, given the Bible's insistence on "one blood" common to the entire human family.[64] Because this text derived from scripture a view of the common origins and nature of humanity, it was invoked by the African American community with great frequency in the early nineteenth century.

The biblical affirmation of a common humanity appeared in printed texts ranging from sermons to pamphlets to songs that were published by the collaborative efforts of black faith communities. One such published text is that of another minister of African descent, Rev. Absalom Jones. Jones reflected on the text in his "Thanksgiving Sermon …on Account of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade" preached to his Philadelphia congregation of the St.

---

[63] Ruth Bogin, ""Liberty Further Extended": A 1776 Antislavery Manuscript by Lemuel Haynes," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1983), 85-105.

[64] Haynes, "Liberty Further Extended," in Bogin, ""Liberty Further Extended": A 1776 Antislavery Manuscript," 95. Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature*, points out that Haynes more consistently emphasized a Calvinist "theological rigidity – and staunch Federalism" than an African identity. Though Bruce notes that he used his theological platform and learned sophistication to present "the falsity of those ideas connecting color and inferiority that underlay alternative views of a degraded African race," these principles need not be seen at odds. Calvinist Christians of Haynes day would almost universally acknowledge inferiority claims as sinful, and certainly affirm the authority of scripture in regard to the monogenesis of humanity.

Thomas Episcopal Church in 1808.[65] On the same Sunday, the congregation sang an antislavery hymn written by Michael Fortune that dedicates a stanza to this principle. Upon the request of the secretary of the congregation, both the pastor and the hymn writer provided manuscripts of their offerings, which were subsequently "printed for the use of the congregation."[66]

Churches were not the only black institutions of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century that played a role in the publication and dissemination of antislavery print. Networks of Freemasons among the free black communities of the North built mechanisms for correspondence across their connected lodges and arranged for the printing and distribution of Masonic sermons. In an example of the ways these institutional networks used print to link geographically distant black communities, a sermon that Prince Hall delivered to masons in Charleston in 1792 was subsequently printed in Boston, and likely disseminated through both the city where the sermon was preached and the city where it was published.[67]

Scriptural arguments for a common humanity were repeated in printed materials created by African American civic institutions. The "one blood" text provided the opening lines of the African Benevolent Society of the Newport, Rhode Island's founding document in 1808.[68] This

---

[65] Absalom Jones, *A Thanksgiving Sermon, Preached January 1, 1808, in St. Thomas's, or the African Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, On Account of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, On that Day by the Congress of the United States* (Philadelphia: Fry and Kammerer, 1808), reprinted in *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837*, ed. Dorothy Porter Wesley (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 341.

[66] Michael Fortune, "New Year's Anthem, Sung in the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Jan 1, 1808," in *Early Negro Writing*, 563. Although this was reprinted in Porter Wesley as a separate entry, both Jones' sermon and Fortune's hymn were printed together in 1808.

[67] Prince Hall, *To the Brethren of the African Lodge on the 25th of June, 1792, At the Hall of Brother William Smith, In Charlestown* (Boston: The Bible and Heart, 1792).

[68] "The Constitution of the African Benevolent Society of Newport, Rhode Island, 1808," in William Patten, *A Sermon Delivered at the Request of the African Benevolent Society*: *In the Second Congregational Church* Newport, *12th April, 1808* (Newport: Printed at the Office of the Newport Mercury, 1808). Reprinted in *Early Negro Writing*, 85.

society's charter accepted black people's "circumstances of trial and depression" and God's "frown upon the African Nation" within a scriptural framework for understanding and a theological ethics for activism. Scriptural reasoning about theological anthropology affirmed a common humanity even while admitting moral failures of some nations. The present degraded state of an imagined "African Nation," according to the constitution, entailed no biological or spiritual fixity. As the "object" of the society was a "free school, for any person of colour," any perceived deficiencies would be remedied in the universal application of a human right to education.[69] The society understood within that framework a divine, universal vision for human flourishing.

Printed texts written by, and disseminated among black communities of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century frequently used the Bible to address the salvation of Africa and the African diaspora. Texts often cited Psalm 68:31, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God," as an indication of God's redemptive plan for Africa and her descendants.[70] In her 1770 elegy of Reverend George Whitefield, Phillis Wheatley evoked the allusion, suggesting that an "Impartial Saviour" desires Africans so that redeemed they "shall be sons, and kings, and priests to God."[71] In the case of this poem by Wheatley, her invocation of this scripture circulated in New England as early as 1770 before the 1773 London collection of her work. This scripture also featured in the works of African masons of the late-eighteenth

---

[69] "The Constitution of the African Benevolent Society," in Patten, *A Sermon*.

[70] For more detailed discussion, see Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[71] Phillis Wheatley, "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, 1770," in *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral By Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England* (London: Printed for A. Bell; and sold by Messrs. Cox and Berry, Boston, 1773). For discussion of the publication process for Wheatley, again consult Gates, *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley*.

century, including in the previously discussed texts of Marrant and by Prince Hall.[72] In the early-nineteenth century, this interpretation of divine promise for African redemption was increasingly affirmed by African American communities. By the 1808 abolition of the African slave trade, a number of orations by African Americas not only insisted on the unity of the human family but also presented partial fulfillment of a particular design for the flourishing of Africa and African peoples.[73]

African American-led societies and movements for social reform increasingly understood their biblical mandate as a call to challenge slavery, promote black education, and develop other platforms and institutions for moral formation and community empowerment. These efforts were evident in the formation of aid societies, churches, schools, and other civic organizations. Antislavery print was at times used to raise funds for these organizations, and the black founders of these organizations sought to use print to publicize their efforts.[74]

African Americans created and shared a variety of printed and manuscript texts. African American uses and practices of print certainly participated in the rapid changes of the media in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As they were able, black individuals, organizations, and communities certainly utilized texts that were available to them and participated in exchanges driven by the era's print marketplace. Individuals, families, churches,

---

[72] John Marrant, *A Sermon Preached on the 24th Day of June 1789, Being the Festival of St. John the Baptist, At the Request of the Right Worshipful the Grand Master Prince Hall, and the Rest of the Brethren of the African Lodge of the Honourable Society of Free & Accepted Masons in Boston* (Boston: The Bible & Heart, 1789); Prince Hall, *A Charge*.

[73] Jones, A *Thanksgiving Sermon*.

[74] For examples, see "The Constitution of the African Benevolent Society of the Newport, Rhode Island, 1808," in Patten, *A Sermon;* Prince Saunders, *An Address, Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; on the 30th of September 1818* (Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1818).

schools and civic organizations that managed to print their words or set their interests to type did not reshape the market nor upended the conventions of publication and print distribution.

However, African American texts that challenged the early American republic's pervasive systems of anti-black racism and the institution of slavery required risk taking. Authors, publishers, and distributors took risks to move print that participated in a shared ideological cause. In fits and starts, subject to barriers and prone to failed attempts, these exchanges fostered dynamic material networks. As these texts moved across expanding geographies and an increasingly diverse and divided human landscape they encountered appreciation, indifference, and sometimes intense hostility.

African American print culture opposed to racism and slavery appeared in various media, and those forms moved in diverse ways in pursuit of diverse projects. Just as African Americans employed various strategies for personal and cultural survival, individual and community uplift, and social transformation, they wrote, printed, and distributed a diversity of texts. Some ideas were contradictory and at times contentious, evidencing the diversity of projects and aims advanced in African American publications and sought by various people and communities. Direct strategies for liberation were not always central to African American print. The dissemination of texts at times pursued projects to liberate enslaved African Americans, and offered alternate designs to emigrate from the United States in hopes of greater black political and social freedoms in international locales. Dissemination strategies made use of, reinforced, and helped to build autonomous black institutions, yet most often required personal exchanges that tended to be private or informal. Distribution of printed texts by African American communities often involved obstacles and risks.

The movement of these texts galvanized African American collective consciousness and promoted an expansive vision of freedom at the core of the antislavery cause. Antislavery activists were made, emboldened, and linked in a project that was at once material and in pursuit of an ethical aim. The complex and contested distribution of African American antislavery texts demonstrated the substance and spirit that animated the evolving abolitionist movement in the early-nineteenth century and the emergent African American community that struggled for inclusion in it.

CHAPTER TWO

DISTRIBUTING *HAYTIAN PAPERS* AND PROMOTING BLACK ATLANTIC AUTONOMY

In 1816 an African American schoolteacher from New England was commissioned to undertake multiple voyages across the Atlantic, carrying documents in service of a British abolitionist and a Haitian king. American newspapers published their astonishment that he was the toast of London's elite philanthropists, that he dined with members of parliament, and that he secured letters of recommendation to meet with English nobility. Of his visits to Haiti, reports circulated that he was received by the king's state coach and had a personal audience with the Haitian monarch. American newspaper editors and readers marveled at the transatlantic receptions and remarkable social mobility of Prince Saunders, this "black schoolmaster from Boston."[1]

Saunders' achievement was not merely in getting his name in print, but in what he printed. More deeply interested in a project of publication and distribution that might harness the power of print for himself and his community, Saunders strategically gathered, translated, edited, and distributed a series of texts that linked Haitian and African American interests. His larger project promoted the political genius and virtue of an autonomous black state. Saunders' activism and travel reveal a remarkable degree of mobility across Atlantic networks of abolition and reform. While much of his work was made possible by the commission of others, Saunders engaged in his own project through the movement of print.

[1] "Extract of a Letter from an American Gentleman in England. Liverpool, May 15" *Rhode Island American and General Advertiser* (Providence), July 28, 1815.

Saunders' more significant work 'of letters' featured his command of a diverse body of texts that he used to represent much larger constituent communities and political bodies. He exploited those connections and garnered his own publicity to facilitate larger international campaigns for freedom, political autonomy, and liberal education in the black Atlantic. For Saunders, Haiti served as the quintessential proof of black intelligence and dignity, and a viable model for extending black political autonomy. Independently of his commissioners, Saunders assembled, translated, and edited a collection of papers related to the Haitian state, which he published and distributed. Saunders' agency in these actions offers an early example of black autonomy in practices of print, even as his published text represented an example of black political autonomy. In contrast to the more common African American path to publication in this period, generally subject to the validation and control of white elites, Saunders asserted his own authority and autonomy as a black intellectual. His text not only avoided the 'need' for whites to direct his activities in print, but his distribution practices sought to redirect the consideration of white elites toward an affirmation of black intellect and political liberties.

Saunders' travels and activism informed and made possible his work with texts, as a collector of both personal letters and government pamphlets from Haiti, a translator and editor of these political documents, and a distributor of documents he published under the title, *Haytian Papers*.[2] Saunders used letters of introduction and his social graces to elevate himself within Atlantic networks of abolition and reform and enable his service in a variety of roles. But Saunders' labors with printed texts also sought to speak to and represent the interests of numerous others. He spoke to the interests of various African American communities; circulated

[2] Prince Saunders, *Haytian Papers*: *A Collection of the Very Interesting Proclamations and other Official documents; Together with some account the rise, progress, and present state of The Kingdom of Haiti* (London, England: W. Reed, 1816).

the messages of influential English abolitionists; voiced the proclamations of Haiti's King; displayed Haiti's virtues to British and American audiences, white and black; and sought to curate and preserve a favorable narrative of Haiti's revolutionary history to his contemporaries and their posterity. Above and beyond Saunders' social and political self-fashioning, his imprints sought to shape racial discourses, public perceptions, political bodies, and social movements.

More than just an example of black literary accomplishment, Saunders' assembly, editing, publication and distribution of Haitian texts, and subsequent imprints on this subject, worked toward a larger social and political project of black empowerment. Though the freedoms, literary access, social standing, and geographic mobility enjoyed by Saunders was not characteristic of most African Americans' experience in this period, his work offers a prime example of early African American editorial practices, distribution strategies, and intertextual book culture. Saunders' work as an editor and distributor of texts reveals how those practices contributed to his larger social and political project. Saunders gained social and political agency through print, and distributed texts with the hopes of similarly promoting the black sovereign state of Haiti and African American communities of the early American republic. Saunders' work presents an important chapter in the development of early African American cultures of print. His advocacy, travel, and textual labors connect various figures and groups at a pivotal point in the history of abolitionism.

Saunders' Activism and Atlantic Travel

An examination of Saunders' own education, activism, and Atlantic travel is necessary to understand how an under-funded black school teacher baptized in Thetford, Vermont, become

the sought-after guest of London elites, emissary of leading abolitionists, courier to Haitian rulers, and editor and publisher of his own books on the historical and political situation of Haiti. Saunders remains a rather obscure figure in American history and literature. A few scholars have included discussions of Saunders' work among elite African American communities and his advocacy of Black emigration.[3] Further investigating Saunders' work with *Haytian Papers* reveals the practices of print culture amidst the communities Saunders served and whose political and social autonomy he sought to promote by moving print and people.

Saunders, the son of a black revolutionary war veteran and an African-born mother, was tutored in the home of a prominent white lawyer. By the late 1790s he taught in the African School in Colchester, Connecticut. He went on to study at Dartmouth's Moor's Charity School from 1807 to 1808, and subsequently served four years as the instructor at the African School in Boston. Saunders' work extended beyond the classroom and was not entirely limited along racial lines; by 1811 Saunders was the secretary to Boston's African Lodge of Freemasons, and founded a reading society in which young white intellectuals provided the majority of the

[3] The most frequently cited is Arthur O. White, "Prince Saunders: An Instance of Social Mobility Among Antebellum New England Blacks," *The Journal of Negro History,* Vol. 60, No. 4 (1975), 526-535. White, however, merely presents Saunders as an interesting example of black social attainment. Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), offers a useful discusses Saunders work, and particularly his time among black Philadelphians. Ousmane K. Power-Green, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle Against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), offers a useful treatment of Saunders within his considerations of African Americans supportive of emigration movements while simultaneously rejecting the American Colonization society and designs to colonize West Africa. A paragraph of Saunders' life and work is offered in the brilliantly-researched monograph of Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 168. Articles offering interpretive frames for African American interests in Haiti also discuss Saunders. See, Sara C. Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 28, (April 2007), 61-85; Chris Dixon, "An Ambivalent Black Nationalism: Haiti, Africa, and Antebellum African American Emigrationsm," *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol.10, (December 1991), 10-25. Other scholars have contributed solid biographical pieces on Saunders to leading reference sources. For biographical details on Saunders, see Graham Russell Hodges, "Saunders, Prince," in John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography* Vol. 19, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 308; John Saillant, "Prince Saunders" in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass,* ed. Paul Finkelman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

members. Saunders advertised his own intellectual service to the public and sought patrons among Boston's elite, securing at least one significant bequest from a Boston merchant for the cause of black education.[4]

Saunders first came to London in 1815, representing Boston's African Masonic Lodge alongside his friend and fellow teacher, Baptist minister Thomas Paul. But the public intellectual's contact with the famed British abolitionists William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson soon expanded his project for black education and institutional autonomy.[5] The British abolitionists made international designs to bolster Haiti for the further extension of Atlantic antislavery reforms, and to seek a new British political and economic ally in the Caribbean.[6] At the close of 1815 Saunders was not only the toast of London's elite philanthropists, but was commissioned to represent Clarkson's negotiations with Haiti's most imposing and powerful figure, King Henry Christophe.

Clarkson commissioned Saunders to carry documents essential to ongoing negotiations with Haiti's King Christophe, who rose to power after the 1806 death of Jean-Jacques Dessalines

---

[4] Biographical details on Saunders suggest he was baptized in Thetford, VT and spent years living in the home of George Oramel Hinckley. Hinckley sponsored Saunders' education at Dartmouth's Moor's Charity School where his transition to teaching in Boston was facilitated by a recommendation from the college's founder, John Wheelock, to Boston Unitarian Minister William Ellery Channing. "Communication" *The Repertory* (Boston) April 16, 1811; *Columbian Centinel (*Boston) April 17, 1811. Saunders' work advertised the African Free School through Annual Visitations, in which he gave scholarly addresses and collected funds both for the school and for himself. See White and Hodge for details on the endowment of the earnings of $4,000 in stocks by Abiel Smith for black education in Boston, which the school teacher secured in 1815, shortly before Smith's death.

[5] See White, "Prince Saunders," 526-527.

[6] Clarkson in particular, found in Paul Cuffe an influential African American asset in early attempts at West African colonization. Letters of introduction from leading New Englanders meant that Saunders' quickly merited the interests and audiences with the elite philanthropic networks of Old England independently of Clarkson. For descriptions of Wilberforce and Clarkson's colonization interests, see Power-Green, *Against Wind and Tide;* "Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle Against the Colonization Movement," 70-77. Hodges, "Prince Saunders," 308 notes Saunders was engaged to be married to a daughter of Paul Cuffe. Winch notes that this fiancée may have been Alice or Rhoda Cuffe in Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of* Color, 416 n. 10.

and the dissolution of a unified Haitian republic. Christophe's northern Kingdom of Hayti established a highly militarized, monarchical state in an effort to ensure his control and to promote black political sovereignty against factions open to negotiations with France. His southern and western opposition led by Alexandre Pétion wished to preserve relations with Haiti's former colonial oppressors, and promoted loosely republican representative governance that privileged the island's lighter-skinned elite people of color. In his attempts to consolidate power, Christophe sought British support and appealed to his own natal connection to the British Caribbean colonial presence. As he corresponded with English abolitionists, he made sure to mention designs to institute English education and Anglican religion in his Haitian kingdom.

Saunders arrived in Christophe's Haiti on a mission—or, perhaps, on multiple missions. He was charged to deliver documents, evaluate the prospects of Anglican missions, establish schools, and more. But as soon as Saunders delivered the documents assuring French retreat from claims to the island with Clarkson's correspondence *to Christophe,* Saunders was tasked with bringing documents *from Christophe* back to England, as Christophe's political emissary with "various letters" and Haiti's "public papers" for British review.[7] Initially commissioned by English abolitionists to assess bookish things in Haiti, Saunders subsequently carried bookish items from the Haitian monarch back to the same British reformers who sent him there.[8]

[7] "Prince Sanders…" *Boston Weekly Messenger*, Dec 7, 1815.

[8] "Henry to Clarkson, Feb 5, 1816" in Henri Christophe (King of Haiti) and Thomas Clarkson, *Henry Christophe & Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence,* eds. Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 91-93. Saunders' commission from Christophe was to carry "various letters" to abolitionist friends along with Haiti's "public papers," so that these sensitive documents would not go the way of prior correspondences "intercepted by French ex-colonists."

American newspapers reported Saunders' "cordial reception" in Haiti and "the protection of his sable Majesty."[9] Some commented that "distinguished honors" bestowed on him in Haiti were much deserved.[10] Others commented that the Dartmouth graduate and "man of education" was "well calculated to assist Christophe in his plans of ameliorating the condition of the blacks by instructing them in the various branches of science."[11] Saunders' own reports upon his return to England in May of 1816 were overwhelmingly positive. A white American gentleman abroad reported Saunders' assessment to an editor in Boston. Either the American gentleman or the American newspaper editor followed Saunders' praise of Haiti with a Latin citation from Juvenal, "Nigroque simillima cygno," – *like a black Swan* -- dismissing Saunders' report with an allusion to the classical metaphor for impossibility. The reports presented dignified images of Haiti, Christophe, and Saunders. But the printed commentary and popular perceptions of white readers deemed all of these as unthinkable. These reports and black political empowerment presented the persistent ontological crisis of the Haitian Revolution itself, an "unthinkable" event that "challenged the very framework within which proponents and opponents had examined race, colonialism, and slavery in the Americas."[12] This story and its

[9] *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), March 28, 1816. Article notes that it was reprinted from the *Boston Centinel*.

[10] *American Advocate and Kennebec Advertiser* (Hallowell, Maine), March 9, 1816. Notes that article was reprinted from the *Boston Gazette*.

[11] *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), March 28, 1816.

[12] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 82-83.

Black Swan allusion were widely reprinted in New England and down the eastern seaboard, reaching the pages of newspapers in Virginia within the span of a couple weeks.[13]

Clarkson may have doubted the reliability of Saunders' reports of the virtue of Christophe's kingdom, as his response to Christophe's letters and the Haitian documents that arrived with Saunders suggested that the British abolitionist would likely discontinue using the African American as his courier. He stated to Christophe, that his "intention to return an answer… by the same person" had changed, in favor of including a Quaker minister from New York in the circuit of correspondence. Perhaps, Saunders' assessment was too favorable. It seems Clarkson desired a second opinion of Haiti's religious and political situation – this time, from a white American reformer and intellectual. Contrary to the Englishman's written desire to send future materials through the white Quaker of New York, Stephen Grellet, Saunders remained in Clarkson's service and carried out this errand for the British abolitionist.[14]

But beyond his English and Haitian commissions in 1816, Saunders exerted his own editorial hand to prepare a text that lacked clear mandate or approval from the Atlantic power brokers whom he served. He assembled and edited Haitian imprints—letters and political documents printed as pamphlets, books, and broadsides—that in his consideration presented Haiti as a rational, lawful, and sovereign nation. While his personal credentials as a black intellectual and his ease within influential reform networks met with mixed reception by

---

[13] Saunders "describe[d] the morals of the court and country as pure, the troops in a high state of perfection, and the kingdom growing fast into a well-organized government." *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 22, 1816. The article was reprinted in a number of American cities, including other newspapers in Boston and elsewhere in New England, New York. The story's southern-most reprintings were featured by newspapers in Alexandria (5/31/1816) and Norfolk, VA (6/1/1816).

[14] "Thomas Clarkson to King Henry, Suffolk, England, May 4, 1816," *Christophe and Clarkson*, 94-96. The reply of Clarkson to Henry offers a biographical introduction to his new white correspondent, Stephen Grellet, and a promise to send Christophe a copy of Clarkson's own 1806 authored history of Quakerism.

American newspaper editors and in the public sphere of the early American republic, he was more concerned with extolling Haiti than vindicating himself. He prepared a text that might justify "the success of his embassy" and prove the virtues of Haiti's king and black sovereign state.[15]

In the era of American, French, and Haitian revolutions, celebrations of political freedoms provided public spectacle and consumed countless pages of print.[16] While Haiti was the subject of selective public invocation, other events and sites related to the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade marked more public occasions for African American commemoration.[17] But accounts of the Haitian revolution reverberated in the early American republic as fleeing planters arrived in American cities, and reports of planters killed or expelled by their former slaves occupied the pages of American newspapers and the imaginations of Americans of all races. African American invocations of Haiti no doubt stoked the smoldering racist fears and indignation that characterized most white interpretations of these events. But the divisive social and political implications of Haitian revolution, the end of slavery on the island, and Haiti's

[15] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 22, 1816.

[16] David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism,1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1997).

[17] For scholarship discussing African American freedom celebrations and public commemoration, see Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808–1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003). Other articles, essays, and chapters on this subject include Leonard I. Sweet, ''The Fourth of July and Black Americans in the Nineteenth Century: Northern Leadership Opinion within the Context of the Black Experience,'' *Journal of Negro History*, 61 (July 1976), 256–75; William B. Gravely, ''The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808–1863,'' *Journal of Negro History*, 67 (Winter 1982), 302–17; Genevieve Fabre, ''African-American Commemorative Celebrations in the Nineteenth Century,'' in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, ed. Fabre and Robert O'Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72–91; Shane White, '' 'It was a proud day': African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741–1834,'' *Journal of American History*, 81 (June 1994), 13–50; Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *Exodus: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

expression of black self-determination inspired Saunders and countless other African Americans with a model of black citizenship and political autonomy.

Another Black New Englander of the same first name, Prince Hall, the founder of the African Lodge in Boston to which Saunders belonged, offered early assessments of the political power of Haiti's revolutionary example. Hall offered oratory and a pamphlet by 1797 that evaluated the Haitian revolution in contrast to the racial inequality and deprivation of liberty he witnessed in the United States.[18] African Americans publicly championed the Haitian Revolution to challenge the limits of citizenship in the United States. Their arguments shared features of the intellectual and social efforts of women in Philadelphia who interpreted aspects of the French Revolution as a call to women's intellectual and political engagement and a mandate to counter the refusals of women's civic participation.[19] African Americans' cultural celebrations of events that undercut slavery in the Atlantic world included a variety of local "demonstrations, speeches, parades," and "the naming of institutions." But in contrast to these larger political events, Saunders' textual labor envisioned a more stable and potent source – an authoritative textual witness to Haiti's rise from the depths of colonial slavery to political sovereignty. Saunders promoted and disseminated what historian Sara C. Fanning terms "the final chapter of the revolution, Haitian nationhood."[20]

Most important in Saunders' advertisement of his London-printed first edition was the performance of his own political authority. The ad presented the text as expertly printed, sold by

---

[18] Prince Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren of the African Lodge, delivered on June 24, 1797 to the African Lodge in Menotomy, Massachusetts* (Boston: Bible and Heart, 1797).

[19] Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames:Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

[20] Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism," 62.

a law bookseller, and edited by Saunders in official service as an authorized agent of the Haitian government. But the detail of Saunders' race was not left out of American papers, and at least one reprinting editor in the United States supplied further information and his own commentary. "This Mr. Saunders, is a man of colour, and a native of New-Hampshire. Convinced that 'A prophet receives no honor in his own countr[y]' he ventured abroad a year since, and has been made, in England, not only an Esquire but a Great Man."[21]

A few Americans who witnessed the accomplishments of Saunders questioned his merits and ventured alternate explanation's for his acclaim. One American editor attributed Saunders' achievements in diplomacy, philanthropy, and publishing labors to the honors conferred on him in foreign locales. Other American reports in the second half of 1816, however, threw doubts upon Saunders' personal and professional qualifications. Many attributed his social standing in London and warm reception in Haiti to supposed assumptions that his first name was a royal title.[22] Despite Saunders' inability to control the ink spilled over racist presumptions about his personal fame, his own editorial project made it to the press, and was printed in a handsome octavo. And when Saunders published his own distinguished likeness as the book's frontispiece, the black intellectual portrayed himself resting an elbow on a stack of books offering a direct, satisfied gaze.

Seeing Haiti in Print: Saunders' Vision of Haitian Sovereignty

Saunders encountered pervasive doubts about his reports and vision of a virtuous and autonomous black political state in Haiti. In his work and throughout his Atlantic travels,

---

[21] *Washington City Weekly Gazette*, October 19, 1816.

[22] An example of reports that English elites assumed Saunders an African prince included "Extract of a Letter, London, July 7," *Dedham Gazette*, August 30, 1816.

Saunders received glowing personal appraisals: as a pupil in Thetford and at Dartmouth, as a teacher at Colchester and Boston, as an intellectual among white and black New Englanders, as a socialite and reformer among British nobles and philanthropists, as a confidant and courier to a paranoid, militaristic Haitian king. Yet, even as Saunders suggested a Haitian project of black empowerment requiring the collaboration of the various groups he represented, American reports questioned his legitimacy. To vindicate himself and legitimize his project, Saunders had to command print for himself.

In *Haytian Papers*, Saunders assembled, translated and edited a diverse body of texts that presented the virtues by which he hoped to represent Haiti. Saunders included writings that display Haitian attempts at fair labor standards, concern for political order, and consistent commitment to the political autonomy of black people and states. Resonant with the career focus of Saunders and the wishes of his elite backers, the editor publicized Christophe's concern for moral reform and universal education in Haiti. The king specifically sought English instruction in the Lancasterian model and professed a desire to adopt Anglican religion throughout his reign.

Saunders' introduction to the London edition describes his feeling "induced to lay the following translations of Haytian state papers, in conjunction with some extracts from their ordinary publications, before the British people generally." [23] Saunders' understood the text as a public corrective proving "the enlightened systems of policy, the pacific spirit, the altogether domestic views, and the liberal principles of the Government" in Christophe's "truly interesting Empire." Saunders noted his "honour to be connected" to the administration, and suggested that it was "only necessary that the actual character and feelings of the Haytians should be made apparent." He believed that a presentation of Haitian virtues would effectively counter the

[23] Saunders, *Haytian Papers,* i.

derogatory assumptions "which the enemies of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and the foes of all attempts at the improvement and elevation of the African race, would, by their misrepresentations and false statement, endeavor to excite."[24] Saunders' editorial material in *Haytian Papers* rejects assertions that the political documents of Haiti could not have been the product of black authors.[25] He lauds the Code Henri as a document of unparalleled political genius, boasting that "nothing that white men have been able to arrange is equal to it."[26]

Without validating European and white American appraisals of Haitian political and racial inferiority, Saunders' concern for authenticity seem at times to be at odds with his desire to foster universally positive public estimation of Haiti. Compared to the Haitian books, pamphlets, and broadsides from which he assembled his collection, Saunders' *Haytian Papers* evidences purposeful omissions. In the most dramatic example of just how liberally Saunders exerted his editorial prerogative, he condensed the 792-page *Code Henri* to a mere eight pages.[27] The vast majority of Saunders' sources are taken from a highly intertextual collection, authored and edited by Christophe's Secretary of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Julien Prévost, Comte di Limonade.[28] However, he avoids clear identification of this previous editor's publication of these

[24] Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, i-ii.

[25] Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, iii.

[26] Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, xviii. Rule XXIV dictates nightly prayer, invites Sabbath church attendance, fast days, and public prayers.

[27] *Code Henry*, (Cap-Henry, Haiti: Chez P. Roux, Imprimeur du Roi, 1812). Rare Books Department, Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts. This rare extant copy of the full *Code Henry* suggests it came from the Library of Benjamin P. Hunt. More work could be done to explore Hunt and how he may have acquired the rare volume.

[28] Julien Prévost, Comte de Limonade, *Relation des glorieux événemens qui ont portés leurs majestés royales sur le trone d'Hayti: suivi de l'histoire du couronnement Henry ler et de la reine Marie-Louise, Par le Comte de Limonade* (Cap-Henry, Haiti: Chez P. Roux, 1811). Held at the Library Company of Philadelphia.

letters, legal documents, and broadsides. Not only does he evade recognition of Prévost's authorship and assemblage, Saunders omits large portions of the Haitian-published collection.

These omissions in part speak to Saunders' intended audience. For example, Saunders cuts from his English publication some of the formality and flourish with which Prévost titles and introduces his 1811 Haitian collection. Saunders fails to include militaristic odes in praise of Christophe's violent might. While he takes pains to represent Christophe's Christian magnanimity, Saunders would rather not position him in command of "war machines; ...murderous mouths spewing lightning and death*"* and standing amidst the "rubble" of fallen colonial strongholds. While Saunders wanted to present Haiti's "valiant cohorts*"* ruled by Christian virtue and restraint, he did not want his English audience to "Dread their noble carriage."[29] These were important omissions given that a large part of the editor's English sponsors were also devout Quakers and his white readers on both sides of the Atlantic were generally terrified at Haiti's transition from colonial slave entrepôt to autonomous black state.

Beyond the praise of Haiti's fearful military might, Saunders also omitted texts that detailed Christophe's insistence on the social structures and performances of a black royalty and nobility. He took from Prévost's collection a section establishing "Constitutional Law" in the Kingdom, but Saunders certainly knew that prominent dissenting and republican-minded readers would not be encouraged by his assertions of hierarchical authority structures that established a hereditary nobility complete with a royally-dictated "Grand Costume," a religious hierarchy

[29] Prévost, *Relation*, 35. From the poem, "ODE Sur la prise du MOLE SAINT-NICOLAS." Translations mine.

accountable in part to himself, and minutes pertaining to the consecration and coronation of the King and Queen and public oaths and prayers offered before the new royals.[30]

The *Haytian Papers* also omit a number of ornate woodcuts that appear on political broadsides from Chrstiophe's Haiti. London job printers would not have had woodcuts of the Haitian Royal Seal laying around their shops, but these flourishes were of critical importance to the royal printer of Haiti, who no doubt took pains to replicate royal seals and visual embellishments in miniature on the pamphlets and books published in the Kingdom. The imposing lions and swords of Christophe's coat of arms find no place in Saunders' imprint, resulting in a work that has the feel of an Anglo-American collection of political documents absent the images that adorned their original formats.

Saunders' textual limitations (or choices) in terms of his printed form selectively mute the ways Henry and the Haitian government more closely formatted their own texts with uses of print culture that aligned with French rites and customs and used their own ceremonial icons and formal flourishes to (quite literally) illustrate the legitimacy of their black Haitian monarchy. These omissions suggest that Saunders' textual project undermined the Haitian kingdom and culture's own standards for legitimacy and authority, in order to legitimate Haiti (and the editor,

[30] Prévost, Relation, contains the following sections, omitted by Saunders, listed by my own translations of the document title into English, and pagination: Edict of the King, which created a hereditary nobility in the kingdom of Haiti , with titles and appendages to reward services rendered to the State, 49; Edict of the King, bearing creation of Princes, Dukes, Counts, Barons, and Royal Knights, 68; Edict of the King, which erected an archiepiscopal seat in the capital of Hayti , and Episcopalian seats in various cities of the Kingdom, 74; Ordonnance of the King, which determined the Grand Costume of the Nobility, 76; Edict of the King, bearing creation of the Royal and Millitary Order of Saint HENRY, 78; Titles and Lists of Military Commanders and Officers, Titles and Lists of the Royal Households of the King and Queen; Minutes for the Presentation of Oaths of Grand dignitaries, Civil and Millitary Officers, Land and Naval Troupes of the Kingdom of Hayti, to HIS MAJESTY, 116; Minutes of the Consecration and Coronnation of their Majesties the King Henry 1st and the Queen Marie-Louise, 127; Also omitted is an entire section detailing the service of coronation including many prayers and liturgies, descriptions of the parties in the honor of the coronation, a "grand review of the Royal Parade," a Hymn of the Society of the Children of Henry.

himself) for Anglophone audiences.[31] His choices selectively censor the Haitian authors, even as Saunders lauds the Code Henri as a text of unparalleled political genius. Saunders sought to alter the perceptions of English abolitionists, American philanthropists, and African American community leaders in order to promote an example of autonomous black statehood. In doing so, Saunders was less than a master translator but proved a master arranger of political texts, or at least a master interpreter of his audiences' diverse (and at times, competing or contradictory) concerns. His concern for authenticity was at odds with his project to foster universally positive public appraisals of Haiti. As a result, his editorial decisions in *Haytian Papers* conceal a larger corpus of Haitian documents that troubled the editor's idealized representation. His final product in many ways says more about the editor's English-speaking readers than about his Haitian subjects.

Distributing and Preserving *Haytian Papers*

Saunders' work was not done when his manuscript went to the printer, although no doubt his work continued to be sold by the dealer in law books who published the volume and may have posted the first ad for the book in English newspapers. Saunders (as far as the record shows) never returned to London. But outside of the commercial distribution of his *Haitian Papers,* Saunders certainly carried a number of copies across the Atlantic as he returned to Haiti shortly after his work came off the press. He was not tasked with publishing the documents, and the documentary record shows no commentary of King Christophe or Saunders' abolitionist

[31] Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession: Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 51-52 argues that it was the acts of coronation and the rites of the King in French logic and practice that served to legitimize the monarch and the court, in contrast to the English legal tradition.

benefactor, Clarkson, on the text or its reception. Both powerful men were more concerned with Haiti's political and social future, and continued correspondence without Saunders as a courier.

It is unclear if Christophe, his Minister Prévost, or his Royal Printer Roux, ever saw the product of Saunders' assemblage and editorial choices. But the Haytian King seemed pleased to post Saunders to a Haitian classroom in late November, 1816. Shortly thereafter, the teacher's *Haytian Papers* was in transit to Boston. On the 2nd of November, Prince Saunders addressed a presentation copy to William Smith Shaw, who had served as the founding librarian for the Athenaeum since the time Saunders had lived and worked as a teacher in Boston. The provenance records of the Athenaeum suggest that the copy "presented by Prince Saunders" was received December 23, 1816.[32] Saunders' presentation of the book to Shaw, a man the editor knew personally from his life in Boston, ensured that as he distributed the copies of *Haytian Papers* in his possession, his text would be publicly available at the Athenaeum.[33]

Though the Athenaeum copy of the British first edition would be of little use to readers outside of Boston, the detailed newspaper ad for the book Saunders himself positioned for public access was reprinted by other American editors and their newspaper audiences including by Southern papers in Norfolk, Virgina and Charleston, South Carolina.[34] Responsive to increased white interests in the removal of free African Americans from the United States, the pro-colonization editor of South Carolina's *Camden Gazette* reprinted the ad for *Haytian Papers* between reports of Christophe's desire for Anglican religion in Haiti and the Virginia state

[32] For Saunders' inscription on Shaw's copy, see the 1816 London edition of Saunders, *Haytian Papers* held at the Boston Athenaeum. The records of Shaw's volumes accepted by his institution is found in "Books Received" Bound Mss. B.A. 11 .3, 1816-1819, Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Massachusetts.

[33] "King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, English Trans., Citadel Henry, July 29th, 1819" *Christophe and Clarkson*, 149.

[34] The advertisement from the *Boston Daily Advertiser,* Jan 7, 1817, was reprinted in New York, by the *Commercial Advertiser*; by the *American Beacon* in Norfolk and the *City Gazette* in Charleston.

resolution to purchase land for a "Colony of Blacks."[35] Though the Haitian King harbored doubts about the black school-master's absence without leave, his interest in African American emigration to Haiti continued.[36] Not coincidentally, Saunders' continued efforts with his *Haytian Papers* increasingly revealed his own intentions to cultivate black emigration to Haiti as an alternative to white-controlled schemes for African colonization.

Toward a black-controlled emigration effort, the editor sought more widespread American assessment of Haiti's moral and political virtue in 1818, publishing his second edition of the *Haytian Papers* out of Boston. This American reprinting no longer listed Saunders as an Haitian government official, but continued to present his primary motivation as the "promotion of the best interests, the improvement, the definite independence, and happiness of the Haytian People." The advertisement makes clear Saunders' desire for "the perusal of the American Public" with respect to the virtues he saw in Haiti.[37]

Saunders' subsequent relocation to Philadelphia revealed similar patterns of educational, religious, and emigrationist activism through print-related practices. Just as Saunders was quick to have a public copy of his first edition available in Boston's Athenaeum, the first evidence of Saunders in Philadelphia is an inscription "by the editor" of September 16, 1818, presenting *Haytian Papers* "to William Rawle, Esqr.," then President of the Library Company of

---

[35] *Camden Gazette* (Camden, South Carolina), Jan 23, 1817. Much more could be said about the *Camden Gazette*'s editor, William Langley, on the subject of colonization.

[36] "King Henry to Thomas Clarkson, English Translation, Citadel Henry, July 29th, 1819," *Christophe and Clarkson*, 149.

[37] Saunders, *Haytian Papers* (Boston: Caleb Bingham and Co., 1818), quotation taken from Editor's "Advertisement" at the beginning of the text.

Philadelphia, where the book is still held.[38] He also managed within a few months in the city to gift an inscribed copy to influential US Supreme Court justice Bushrod Washington, who at the time served as the president of the American Colonization Society (ACS).[39] Perhaps more remarkable than his access to politically and socially powerful people, Saunders' work distributing his *Haytian Papers* proved his ability to get his book on their reading desks and into their libraries. To be sure, the printed volume also served an important role in enabling Saunders' introductions to these important people.

Saunders' provided copies of his book to the nation's leading libraries and philanthropists, seeking to offer an authoritative illustration of Haiti's black, politically autonomous counter to colonization. But consistent with the aims of this larger project he also worked among local African American institutions. Saunders spoke in one of the city's most influential black churches in late September 1818, addressing the Augustine Education Society of Pennsylvania, a black organization formed the year prior by James Forten and other black elites. His work with the organization not only earned him the esteem of local African American leaders, but his *Address, Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia* was quickly republished by request of those in attendance. As the subject was Christophe's education policy and Haiti as an outpost of black literary and political attainment, the work moved further away from his concern to present an authoritative corpus of Haiti's primary documents, and rather repackaged Saunders' own editorial estimation of Haiti's virtues and offered them to African American listeners (and readers) in the schoolteachers own voice. This time the primary text appended to Saunders' text

[38] See the 1818 Boston edition of Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, held at the Library Company of Philadelphia, for the inscription to Rawle.

[39] See the 1818 Boston edition of Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, held at the Boston Athenaeum.

was the "Constitution of the Society." In this text, Saunders' words to promote Haiti's example of autonomous black statehood were printed alongside the documents establishing a very different kind of autonomous black institution for black education and local African American empowerment.

Beyond distribution of the *Address* by and among the black Philadelphians who commissioned its printing, Saunders' distributed at least one himself, with a personal inscription on a copy of the pamphlet to Zechariah Poulson, Esq. Though Poulson's Philadelphia newspaper previously circulated skeptical reports of Saunders' exploits in London and Haiti, Saunders was swift to place a copy in the hands of the editor, who also served as the Library Company of Philadelphia's librarian.[40]

A similarly themed speech was offered to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race, held in Philadelphia in December 1818. Saunders' editorial work and intentional distribution of the book resulted in his being called upon to represent the state of Haiti and the emigration prospects of African Americans before a national body organized around abolition and black racial uplift. This time, Saunders ventured a less triumphal evaluation of Haiti's current affairs in order to carry forth a more immediate mandate for support. No longer representing authorities of the Haitian state, Saunders claims personal authority and authenticity entitling his speech *A Memoir*. Saunders select distribution of the printed pamphlet to influential people followed the pattern he set with gifts of his prior publications. After his speech was published in Philadelphia

[40] Saunders, *An Address, Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; on the 30th of September 1818* (Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1818), inscription to Poulson on copy held at Library Company of Philadelphia.

Saunders promptly presented an inscribed copy to Library Company President William Rawle, this time by "Prince Saunders, the author."[41]

Saunders continued to advocate for his project of black intellectual recognition and political autonomy, making use of the history and state of Haiti as a foremost example. He did so even after losing official commission from the powerful men of Britain and Haiti who initiated his work as a collector, courier, and circulator of papers. Saunders' work continued to use print in efforts to connect both elite white philanthropic networks and local black institutions to the project of black-controlled emigration and in favor of black political and institutional empowerment.

Other Haitian Papers, New Textual Cycles, and Emigration

Consistent with and more central to the aims of this larger project—black institutional autonomy and emigration to Haiti—Saunders' departure from Haiti by 1818 featured Saunders presence among a variety of local African American institutions. As already mentioned, his earliest known travels in that year included Salem and Boston, cities with considerable populations of free black people. But his project was not one of local uplift. Instead, Saunders circulated among at least a few black communities and wished to disseminate his message among them to promote Haiti among a regional collective of African Americans and encourage this numerous body's movement to the black island of revolution and abolition. Saunders joined his voice to others who opposed African colonization, promoted the autonomy of local black institutions of religion and education, and considered African American emigration to Haiti. In fact, Saunders' papers were not the only concerning Haiti that circulated by and for African

[41] Saunders, *A Memoir Presented to the American Convention* (Philadelphia: Heartt, 1818), inscription to Rawle on copy held at Library Company of Philadelphia.

Americans. His publication efforts contributed to a host of African American individual, institutional, and communal publication efforts that sought many of the same outcomes and voiced similar perspectives.

After some uncertain period of time in Boston, Saunders relocated to Philadelphia where similar sentiments were already published and where activism toward black institutional autonomy was perhaps even more prolific than New England. Saunders' reception in Philadelphia was among an African American community averse to white-controlled colonization schemes but to some degree receptive to black-controlled emigration alternatives. At the start of 1817, the black community in the Quaker City published a statement of their animus toward white-controlled colonization schemes. In January a publicly advertised meeting held at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church called together the black residents of the city to consider the proposals of the ACS. There, in one of Philadelphia's most influential black churches, and "mother" congregation of the autonomous black AME denomination, a decisive anti-colonization position was drafted. Further, the community nominated a committee of black community leaders to present those sentiments to the city's member of the US congress. Chaired by James Forten, the committee included the founding pastor and bishop of Mother Bethel and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Richard Allen; St. Thomas African Episcopal Church's founding pastor, Absalom Jones; First African Presbyterian Church's founding pastor, John Gloucester; and notable other black men of Philadelphia: Robert Douglass, Francis Perkins, Robert Gorden, James Johnson, Quamoney Clarkson, John Summersett, and Randall Shepherd. A similar body convened under the same chair of Forten and also with Russell Parrott serving as

secretary, and issued a similar statement, in August of 1817 as well, that published community opposition to the ACS's plan of West African colonization.[42]

From that pulpit in late September 1818, Saunders addressed the Augustine Education Society of Pennsylvania, and made sure his address spoke to his perspectives on Haiti as a shining example of black political autonomy and social advancement. Saunders wove together in his oratory theological themes with his convictions about his life's work in black education and his recent project of African American emigration to Haiti. The newly formed black seminary that invited Saunders to speak had been named after Augustine—the learned and influential African Bishop of the late-fourth and early-fifth century—an appropriate patron saint given the vision of the organization and the efforts of the occasion's orator. Formed the year prior by James Forten and other black elites, Saunders seized his opportunity to build connections with African Americans beyond New England. His speech struck a chord. Not only did Saunders earn the esteem of local African American leaders, but his oration was quickly published by request of the meeting's attendees. Though Saunders spoke to Christophe's education policy and presented Haiti as an outpost of black literary and political attainment, his oratory moved further away from the concerns for legitimacy evidenced by the *Haytian Papers* and used in marketing the work to white elites. Instead of presenting an authoritative corpus of Haiti's primary documents, the address repackaged Saunders' own editorial estimation of Haiti's virtues and offered them to African American listeners (and readers) in the schoolteacher's own voice.

---

[42] William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African colonization: or An impartial exhibition of the doctrines, principles and purposes of the American Colonization Society. Together with the resolutions, addresses and remonstrances of the free people of color*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), 9-14.

This time the primary text appended to Saunders' text was not a Haitian governmental document, but rather the "Constitution of the Society" that illustrated the local example of black autonomy and an institution for African American educational advancement.[43] It appears that Saunders from the end of 1818 through most of 1819 resided in Philadelphia. In June of 1819 Saunders sought a ministry position in another prominent pulpit in Philadelphia, at St. Thomas' African Episcopal Church, founded by the same Reverend Absalom Jones who served as the eldest among the 1817 committee representing the community's anti-colonization position and who died at the age of 71 in February of 1818. Saunders' prospects of becoming a pastor looked good from the standpoint of his "great popularity among the people."[44] But his popular approval and letters of recommendation from elite Londoners regarding his "gentlemanly bearing and fine scholarship" were not enough to secure ordination. The church's historian evaluating written and popular records decades later emphasized Saunders as "of pure African blood, unpreposessing in his external appearance, but of highly polished manners and brilliant parts." However, the institutional chronicler explains Saunders' departure in enigmatic terms. After months of service preaching for the church as a "Lay Reader" on "the eve of being recommended by the Vestry to the Bishop as a Candidate for Orders, a grave charge was preferred against

[43] Saunders, *An Address, Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; on the 30th of September 1818* (Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1818).

[44] William Douglass, *Annals of the First African American Church in the United States, : now styled the African Episcopal church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia, in its connection with the early struggles of the colored people to improve their condition, with the co-operation of the Friends, and other philanthropists; partly derived from the minutes of a beneficial society, established by Absalom Jones, Richard Allen and others, in 1787, and partly from the minutes of the aforesaid church* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, printers, 1862), 122-123.

[Saunders] from Hayti, which was not satisfactorily answered, and the lamentable result was, his dismissal from all connexion[*sic*] with the church."[45]

But other African American communities, even in places where the majority of the black population was enslaved, used print to disseminate their convictions. Black communities in Philadelphia, Richmond, and Georgetown explored alternatives to African colonization, and even more specifically, Saunders was not the only aspiring African American who visited Haiti in 1816 and assembled government communications for publication with designs to encourage African American emigration. James Tredwell pursued a similar emigration plan in contact with the southern and western republic led by President Pétion.

Both Tredwell and Saunders were interested in emigration to Haiti, but they pursued those interests at opposite ends of the island and in a Haitian political scene bitterly divided between Pétion's republic and Christophe's monarchy. In fact, Tredwell published the American version of Pétion's 1816 revised Constitution of the Haitian Republic in 1818, in the same year as Saunders' American edition of *Haytian Papers*. Tredwell's work seeks to rehabilitate President Pétion whom Saunders' collection, translated from the publications of Christophe's administration, excoriates as sympathetic to French designs for reconquest and pandering to pro-French, lighter-skinned Haitian elites. *Haytian Papers* presents "the wise and valiant King" Christophe as the only real hope "to establish our rights, our liberty, and our independence!" and asks rhetorically why Pétion still commanded support in the west and southern provinces: "Why is it that one weak portion of the Haytians still bends under the ignominious yoke of a traitor?"[46] After pages describing Pétion's associations with French spies and suggesting in no uncertain

[45] Douglass, *Annals*, 124.
[46] Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, 193.

terms his disloyalty to the cause of Haitian independence, the pro-Christophe propaganda ventures an anti-Pétion aphorism, "Blind must the man be who serves such a monster."[47] But Tredwell, like Saunders, put primary sources before the eyes of the American public so that they might see with acuity the virtues of Pétion and the Haitian Republic. To be sure, there were many reasons why the republicanism of Pétion might have appealed more clearly to the African Americans considering emigration.

Saunders eventually restored his relationship with Christophe and resumed communications with Clarkson. Sometime after his dismissal from service as a lay reader and with no hope for ministerial ordination in the African Episcopal church of Philadelphia in 1819, Saunders went back to Haiti. Upon his return, Saunders brokered a plan for the Haitian king to fund African American emigration, only to witness the incapacitation of Christophe by a stroke, the violent dissolution of his kingdom, and the king's own suicide within days of the date the much-anticipated agreement was to be signed. Despite his disapproval of Christophe's advisors during the King's final days, and initial tensions with President Jean-Pierre Boyer, who took advantage of Christophe's demise in the North and unified the island under the banner of the Haitian Republic, Saunders showed remarkable persistence in his hopes for Haiti. Saunders ultimately chose to remain in the black republic despite new leaders and a reframed invitation to African Americans.

While no attempts for emigration would materialize in the reign of Christophe, the unified Haitian state under President Boyer provided government interest and new guarantees of funding for such endeavors. The United States continued to deny Haiti diplomatic recognition despite Boyer's formal requests in 1822 and 1825. Even as surviving inscriptions and

[47] Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, 195.

commendations prove the success of Saunders' project in reaching elite white readers, the textual labors of Saunders would have little sway on diplomatic relations and the racially-conditioned fears of white Americans. As such, black leaders and communities who took up his project would serve as the measure of Saunders' success at distributing his message.

Black ministers like Saunders' longtime friend Thomas Paul visited Haiti to assess emigration, and black Protestant churches served as sites for community meetings discussing the prospects. Many black clergy from urban cities including Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia became involved in the movement. Bishop Richard Allen, one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, was perhaps the most well-known black church leaders to join the cause of emigration. Saunders' organizing at Allen's own Bethel Church and elsewhere in Philadelphia attracted the interest of Allen as early as 1818, but as the aging Bishop grew increasingly frustrated by ongoing racial oppression in Philadelphia he saw greater practicality in Saunders' hopes for African Americans in Haiti.[48] By June of 1824, Allen's expanding vision of church growth and the personal invitation of Haitian President Boyer led him to become a public voice for emigration to Haiti. Aiding Boyer's representative, Jonathas Granville, Allen was a catalyst for support by bringing together representatives from the city's African American churches. With this stage set, Granville's proposal was well-received by black Philadelphians despite the free black community's open opposition to West African colonization schemes. After Allen and others opened the door to ecumenical interest, the

[48] Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 246. Newman suggests that Allen was particularly bothered that for even free black people, the U.S. context "denigrated free black achievement, and denied most people of color the right to vote."

Haytian Emigration Society was formed in Philadelphia, and the members publicized the Haitian welcome. New York and other cities along the Northeast formed similar societies.[49]

By August of 1824, as a first group of émigrés was set to depart, Allen wrote to thank President Boyer for having "extended to a poor and oppressed people in the United States…an asylum where they will enjoy the blessings of liberty and equality." He remarked to the Haitian leader, "The voice of liberty is sweet in our ears."[50] Though many members of the African American community had doubts and reservations, the Bishop reported that his list of potential émigrés was over 500 people. His own son, John Allen, was among the émigrés and advocated for his father to join the colony in 1825. Even though Allen and the Methodist zeal for evangelistic preaching was at times an annoyance to Granville and Boyer, Allen's vision for the African American community in Haiti was not merely connected to church growth. Rather, Allen's emigration support sought to actualize a hope of liberty, autonomy, and dignity for all black peoples that Saunders had preached from the bishop's pulpit at Bethel and disseminated among the nation's leading African American communities. Conservative estimates suggest that between 2,000 and 8,000 African Americans emigrated to Haiti in the 1820s.[51]

Saunders watched these developments from the Haitian shore. He lived there alongside thousands of people he claimed as his own in the common struggle for black advancement and autonomy, and was joined in the country by thousands of African Americans in the 1820s.

---

[49] Julie Winch, "American Free Blacks and Emigration to Haiti," Centro de Investigaciones del Caribe y América Latina Documentos De Trabajo, no. 33 (San German: Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, 1978), 11.

[50] Richard Allen's personal letter, entitled "Allen to Boyer," August 22, 1824, is found in Jonathas Granville, *Biographie de Granville, par son fils* (Paris, France: E. Briere, 1873), 224-225, as cited by Winch, "American Free Blacks," 14.

[51] Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 28-30.

Though the majority of the African American community did not establish permanence in Haiti, Saunders remained and was buried there in 1839. Even as the circulation of black-authored and black-edited texts was critical to Saunders' work, the true pragmatism of his project in print distribution and activism among African American communities encouraged the movement of black people. And Saunders, while preserving his textual corpus in the libraries of white American elites, surrendered his own body to black Haitian soil.

Conclusion

The vast distances, various destinations, and diverse aims of Saunders assemblage, translation, editing, and distribution of *Haytian Papers* trace across the "fractal structure of the transcultural international formation" that has been theorized as the "Black Atlantic." His textual work reminds us that black contributions to Atlantic and abolitionist print culture existed beyond the black authorship of personal narratives.[52] While Saunders used influential contacts to bolster his own authority, he often exploited or undermined the interests of his own patrons, promoting institutional and political projects that most closely reflected his and other African Americans' visions of black empowerment. Saunders ultimately hoped to move people in reverse flow from the direction he distributed texts—to encourage African American emigration to Haiti. While he consistently sought to promote the Haiti's black sovereign state, he sought to subvert white schemes for West African colonization and encourage the autonomous political and institutional efforts of African Americans whether in the United States or in Haiti.

---

[52] For a study of the literary significance of these connections and use of the Black Atlantic frame, see the collection, *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic*, eds. Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001). The editors describe a deeper tradition of scholarship on the literature of African Americans and Afro Britons that stretched back to the 1960s, long before Gilroy's Black Atlantic theorization.

As a courier of letters and books, a collector of political documents, an editor, and a distributor invested in the influence and preservation of his work, Prince Saunders achieved a great deal of personal and political agency through print. As such, his text and his textual labors played a role in the development of early African American print culture in an era when few black authors, much less black editors, created and distributed texts that challenged racial inferiority and slavery in the early American republic and the broader Atlantic world. Saunders' editorial and distribution work with *Haitian Papers* encourages sustained and new investigations of intertextuality, diverse textual practices, and multiple avenues for agency in early African American print culture.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MOVEMENTS OF A RIGHTEOUS NATION

Early in 1827 at the New York City home of Boston Crummell, his neighbors, friends, and community leaders decided to collaborate on a new venture—they would start a newspaper. This group of would-be distributors pledged to support and disseminate the periodical before they decided on its editors and before they saw a prospectus or a first number in print. Crummell's neighbors and friends included black pastors and lay-people who shared a theological commitment to racial equality and ecumenical cooperation in efforts for social reform.[1] The group selected Reverend Samuel Eli Cornish, a black Presbyterian pastor, to be the publication's senior editor and John Brown Russwurm, a recent arrival in the city, as the junior editor. They wished to challenge racism in the press, from the pulpit, and throughout society. They committed themselves to this "new and untried line of business" trusting in the "expediency" of their efforts to establish "a paper for the dissemination of useful knowledge among our brethren, and to their moral and religious improvement."[2]

---

[1] For accounts of this meeting, see Irving Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, MA: Willey & Co, 1891), 28; Jacqueline Bacon, *Freedom's Journal: The First African American Newspaper* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2007), 38-41; Benjamin P. Fagan, *The Black Newspaper and the Chosen Nation* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 20-21. Attendees may have included Reverends Peter Williams of St. Philip's African Episcopal Church, Nathaniel Paul, the brother of Boston Baptist Thomas Paul and founding pastor of Albany's First African Baptist Church, and William Hamilton, a founding African Methodist Episcopal Zion trustee. The naming of these black religious leaders present in the meeting at Crummell's house is made by Swift, *Black Prophets of Protest*, 27, citing Ralph D. Carter, "Black American or African: The Response of New York City Blacks to African Colonization, 1817-1841" (Ph.D. thesis, Clark University, 1964), 135. Cornish knew Williams and Paul well, as leaders of New York City's black Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Baptist churches, respectively, and whose ministries all faced similar threats of systemic discrimination and violence.

[2] *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

The collaborative commitment of this informal gathering represented collective support for the establishment of the first African American newspaper in the United States. This group envisioned and effected mechanisms for social distribution before the printing of a single copy. They believed that such a publication might advance the efforts of their local black community in New York. But the prospective distributors, funders, editors, and readers gathered at Crummell's house claimed no shortage of personal connections beyond New York. Their birthplaces ranged from New Hampshire and Delaware to Jamaica and West Africa, and some came of age in locales as varied as Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. They could marshal the support of their business contacts, denominational networks, educational and social organizations, and families for this endeavor.

In similar meetings held outside of New York, other local leaders agreed to support, fund, and distribute the paper. One such meeting was held in Boston and noted in the first number of the newspaper. The Boston group was hosted by used clothing dealer David Walker and featured black attendees with no shortage of connections. Their resolutions acknowledged that their support preceded the paper's first number, and the group voted to send notice of their support to the would-be editors before there was anything to read or distribute.[3] By the time of the first issue, the editor set forth the hope that "one half" of "the FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND free persons of colour" in the United States "might peruse" *Freedom's Journal* "and the whole be benefited by the publication." This bold aspiration surely did not voice the pragmatic considerations of printing costs and the actual number of copies, but rather gave voice to the

[3] *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827. Attendees included Boston's Reverend Thomas Paul with whom Russwurm had likely lived during his teaching tenure in the same city. Others included John Telemachus Hilton, leader of the Prince Hall Freemasons in which Walker and Paul participated, and James Gould and George B. Holmes, who chaired the meeting and recorded its minutes, respectively.

hopes of those gathered in New York and Boston whose own life experiences and social, commercial, and religious networks extended across myriad regional geographies of the early American republic and beyond.[4]

In their new venture, editors, funders, distribution agents, advertisers, and readers used print to strengthen local communities, connect geographically and socially disparate institutions for black empowerment, and articulate an aspirational national platform for these efforts. The content of *Freedom's Journal* included local concerns, but simultaneously opposed the pervasive racial discrimination faced by enslaved and free African Americans and challenged the institution of slavery. The paper articulated a sense of black nationhood within and independent of the United States that refused white-controlled schemes to relegate black freedom and nationhood to plans for a West African colony. *Freedom's Journal* and its successor publication the *Rights of All*, edited solely by Cornish and distributed across the same network of agents, offered a distinct challenge to the denials of black freedoms and rights that black people faced in the early American republic. These newspapers challenged slavery, racial inequality, and colonization, and simultaneously built a network for material exchange and collaborative effort.

Cornish's sense of calling to pastoral service extended to his role as a newspaper editor and architect of this aspiring and expansive national network. Elucidating the various people, efforts, places, and cultural contexts across which Cornish's periodicals moved, the local participation of pastors and civic leaders who distributed the periodical established a geographically-extensive network foundational to the dissemination of black abolitionist ideas. They managed financial obstacles and limitations and fostered vigilance against internal divisions and external threats to their common cause. Their attempts at building enduring African

[4] *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

American communication networks countered the designs of the American Colonization Society (ACS) and its elite philanthropist and evangelical backers. This implication frustrated Cornish's prospective white supporters and ultimately was undercut by the Russwurm's ideological capitulation to colonization which resulted in his departure from the editorial desk in favor of an administrative post in Liberia. Even so, Cornish and the agents and communities opposed to colonization continued in accord with their founding intentions. Exploring the seldom-studied roles and material exchanges in the textual life cycles of early African American newspapers reveals how these collaborative endeavors of print distribution networks sought to unite and empower an extensive black collective.

Reading *Freedom's Journal*

Freedom's Journal has long represented the genesis of African American journalism. In an early laudatory analysis, *Frederick Douglass' Paper* praised this first black newspaper in 1855, noting some of its more famous contributors and distributors while memories of them remained fresh in the minds of Northern black communities.[5] Oral histories of the paper's founding meeting still circulated when the first study of African American journalism was published by I. Garland Penn in 1891.[6] Penn's celebration of the *Journal* and its agents gave way to Bella Gross's 1932 article "Freedom's Journal and the Rights of All" that remained the authoritative treatment for most of the century.[7] Forty-five years later, Kenneth D. Nordin argued that *Freedom's Journal* worked "to produce a nationally circulated newspaper which

[5] "From our New York Correspondent," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Vol. VIII Is. 9 (16 Feb 1855), 3.

[6] See Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*. Douglass himself assisted Penn in the creation of his late-nineteenth century survey.

[7] Bella Gross, "Freedom's Journal and the Rights of All," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 1932), 241-286. Gross, 245, claims that "*Freedom's Journal* marked the beginning of a national movement among the colored masses, and ushered in the Negro Renaissance. It was the first attempt at national race-solidarity."

would develop a sense of fraternity, a black consciousness, as it were, among the freemen and ex-slaves living in scattered communities throughout the northern states." [8] Nordin's formulation of *Freedom's Journal*'s important work of consciousness-building persists and has been reconsidered in various streams of more recent scholarship of African American literature.

Among more recent treatments by literary scholars, Cornish's periodical is given as a foremost example in Frances Smith Foster's argument that collaboration provides the dominant interpretive frame for understanding the early African American literature and the black experience in the nineteenth century.[9] Dickson D. Bruce Jr. argues that *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* provide a pivotal point in the history of black literature, closing "the Era of Colonization" by offering a black response that outlived the newspaper.[10] Jacqueline Bacon's scholarship on the history of *Freedom's Journal* is without equal, in terms of arguing the newspaper's cultural and literary significance, and presents details regarding the specific people and actions that made the newspaper possible. She interrogates the paper's finances, print practices and distribution efforts, and in doing some promotes further consideration of the significance of these people and practices beyond the text itself.[11]

---

[8] Kenneth D. Nordin, "In Search of Black History: An Interpretation of the Content and Function of 'Freedom's Journal,'" *Journalism History* Vol. 4 No. 4 (Winter 1977), 123.

[9] Frances Smith Foster, "Creative Collaboration: As African American as Sweet Potato Pie," *Post-bellum, Pre-Harlem: African American Literature and Culture, 1877-1919*, eds. Barbara McCaskill and Caroline Gebhard (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 27-30. In her sweeping analysis of collaborative efforts in African American literature, Smith Foster offers nearly four pages on the ways *Freedom's Journa*l utilized a highly coordinated work of various agents and communities to achieve expansive circulation.

[10] Dickson D. Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 163-174.

[11] Jacqueline Bacon, "The History of *Freedom's Journal*: A Study in Empowerment and Community," *Journal of African American History*, 88, no. 1 (2003), 1-20; *Freedom's Journal*.

Benjamin Fagan provides a fresh reconsideration of *Freedom's Journal* within his larger study of black newspapers. Building on Smith Foster's suggestion that black print culture in the first half of the nineteenth century "is virtually synonymous with the Afro-protestant press" Fagan's affirms "the impossibility of separating the religious and the worldly" in these texts. He argues that "chosenness" provides the central theme of nineteenth-century African American periodicals as a comprehensible and important literary canon. While acknowledging his predecessors and colleagues in this work, he notes that tools developed in the study of the history of the book have rarely been plied with respect to black newspapers of the nineteenth century, leaving them relatively "neglected despite a renewed attention to early African American cultures of print."[12]

The primacy of the periodical as the first black newspaper accounts for its regular mention in textbook treatments of free black communities of the North in the nineteenth century and by historians of the early American republic. Robert S. Levine's 2001 essay moves beyond shallow mentions to argue the historical importance of *Freedom's Journal* in the broader antislavery movement, its circulation's connection to David Walker, and how these African American efforts to disseminate print must be understood within the context of the Missouri Compromise and rising sectional tensions.[13] Timothy Patrick McCarthy also considers *Freedom's Journal* agents connected to other antislavery texts. Both of these articles revise a more common historical narrative of abolitonism that credits the intellectual, publication, and

[12] Fagan, *The Black Newspaper*, 9-10; Smith Foster quoted on 9, quote of "reciprocal relationship" is Fagan's own phrasing on 10.

[13] Robert S. Levine, "Circulating the Nation: David Walker, the Missouri Compromise, and the Rise of the Black Press," *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 17-26.

activist efforts of elite white Northerners. In the words of McCarthy, the emphasis on *Freedom's Journal* corrects a longstanding tendency that "obscures the important role that free blacks, especially, played in making the struggle for racial equality a primary goal of abolitionism."[14] Important as this project of recognition remains, my own work in this chapter seeks to dig deeper into the religious and personal character of Cornish's editorial labors and probe the social histories of more than just a few black distributors, to gain greater understanding of the practices and networks that moved early black newspapers.

Called to Deliver the Word: Cornish's Early Ministry

The life, ministerial calling, and movements of Cornish set an important context for understanding the significance of the newspapers that he brought to life, imbued with theological purpose and content, and set in motion across a network of agents he labored to expand. The cultural world of the early American republic in which Cornish came of age was composed of vastly different local and regional realities. Geographic and social differences were perhaps most distinct with respect to the African American experience across a nation in which chattel slavery served as a pillar of the national economy and the social and political manifestations of anti-black racism intensified in both the places where slavery was perpetuated and where the institution was in gradual decline. Though the origins narrative of *Freedom's Journal* has too often been told as a localized black response to racist publications in New York, the diverse

[14] Timothy Patrick McCarthy, "To Plead Our own Cause:' Black Print Culture and the Origins of American Abolitionism," *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, eds. McCarthy, Timothy Patrick and John Stauffer (New York: The New Press, 2006), 116.

origins and geographically expansive experiences of Cornish informed the *Journal*'s distribution strategy that used networked agents spread across diverse geographies.[15]

Cornish was born in 1795 to a free black family in Delaware, a status that the majority of black people in his natal state were denied.[16] While Delaware's easement of manumission laws in the late-eighteenth century offered new-found freedoms for some of its enslaved population, free and enslaved alike participated in the evangelical fervor that swept through the mid-Atlantic. Richard Allen's was perhaps the most famous Christian conversion that took place in Delaware in the late-eighteenth century. Allen, an enslaved seventeen year old, accepted Christ in response to the preaching of one white Methodist pastor and fostered the conversion of his master. His conversion in the late 1770s afforded him opportunities to preach as a Methodist itinerant himself in 1783, and eventually was a tool Allen used to secure his own emancipation. Freed from slavery to preach the gospel, Allen left Dover, Delaware to preach throughout the region. By 1785, Allen was invited to travel as an itinerant alongside the famed white Methodist preacher Francis Asbury, and by 1786 accepted an invitation to minister among Philadelphia's growing black population. Asbury and Allen initiated a current of revivalist Methodist preachers who circulated the region during Cornish's upbringing.

---

[15] Jacqueline Bacon suggests that scholarship on *Freedom's Journal* overstates the paper's response to racism as its raison d'être. She argues the limitations of seeing the paper as merely a response to "the attacks of one particular editor," the Jewish New York politician and newspaper publisher, Mordecai Noah. Bacon, "The History of Freedom's Journal," 2.

[16] A concise biography of Cornish can be found in James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 144; David E. Swift's fine-grained investigations of Cornish and various other black Presbyterian and Congregational pastors proved invaluable to my own research. David E. Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989). One scholar, Dorothy Sterling, ed., *Speak out in Thunder Tones: Letters and Other Writings by Black Northerners, 1787- 1865* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 373, claims that Cornish was born in Baltimore, Maryland. The 1790 US Census for Delaware reveals twice as many enslaved black residents as free, with all black residents comprising less than a quarter of the state's population. The free non-white population of 3,899 and the enslaved non-white population of 8, 887, for a total of 12,786 non-white population, making up 21.6 percent of the states total population of 59,096.

Records do not indicate the denominational or faith tradition in which Cornish was raised, and he never published a record of his conversion or calling experience. The Cornish family certainly witnessed the growing Methodist movement and at least two of Samuel's brothers, John and William, took to Methodist theology and served as itinerant preachers following in the wake of Allen. Both served as elders in Allen's AME connection in churches in Carlisle and Philadelphia by the early 1820s.[17] Nearly two decades after Allen relocated to undertake his gospel labors in Philadelphia and had grown to prominence, Cornish moved from Delaware to the City of Brotherly Love. By the time of Cornish's arrival in 1815, the work of Allen and a cohort of other black ministers played a vital role in establishing black churches and proved important public leaders in the regional hub for the religious, social, and political pursuits of a growing free black population.[18]

In contrast to his brothers, Cornish found a spiritual home and experienced a calling to ministry at the city's African Presbyterian Church. This was by no means inevitable. Noted preachers such as Allen and Reverend Absalom Jones served large AME and Episcopal churches in Philadelphia and the start of 1815 marked a legal victory for Allen's autonomous black denomination. Cornish, however, found a mentor in the Rev. John Gloucester, the pastor and founder of the city's First African Presbyterian Church.[19] Gloucester proved a passionate

---

[17] Daniel Alexander Payne, *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Nashville: Publishing House of the AME Sunday School Union, 1888), 49.

[18] On easing legal barriers to manumission, on Methodist antislavery preaching, and on Allen's conversion and early ministry in Delaware and circuits through the mid-Atlantic before settling in Philadelphia's increasingly numerous and prominent black community, see Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 39-50.

[19] Gloucester, formerly enslaved in Tennessee, came to Pennsylvania involuntarily by his Presbyterian minister master, and was granted freedom only after the city's elite were sufficiently satisfied with his evangelistic preaching and singing on Philadelphia street corners. Gloucester's master was the white Presbyterian Reverend Doctor Gideon Blackburn, who initially took him to Philadelphia. Support came from a range of white witnesses

evangelist and a powerful orator. White and black auditors noted his skill and responded to "the hammer of the word as it fell from his lips."[20]

Gloucester founded the church in 1807 and achieved the formal incorporation of the city's First African Presbyterian Church in 1811, boasting 123 members and a session that included some of the city's wealthiest and well-educated African Americans. The congregation provided the aspiring pastor a mentor with no shortage of evangelical fervor, but his time among them also situated the young intellectual within a relatively well-educated black community supportive of Cornish's continuing education, teaching, and vocational discernment. It is unclear where Cornish enhanced his own education, but his pastor entrusted him to teach others and nurtured Cornish's desire to seek ordination as a minister in the Presbyterian Church. Preachers in Methodist connections faced few educational and examination requirements, but Cornish's Presbyterian process proved long and intellectually rigorous.[21]

In addition to Gloucester, the white Reverend Ezra Stiles Ely, Archibald Alexander's successor at Pine Street Presbyterian in Philadelphia, sponsored Cornish's ministerial training

---

to Gloucester's preaching effectiveness and among them was Archibald Alexander, who at the time ministered at Pine Street Presbyterian Church, but the Philadelphia Presbytery delayed Gloucester's formal ordination for three years, until he eventually was orally examined by the presbytery of Union, Tennessee, bypassing a more rigorous written examination process by Philadelphia's presbyters. It seems that an oral examination similar to the ordination proceedings of Gloucester was the mode of ordaining black Presbyterian John Chavis as a Presbyterian missionary in 1801 by the Presbytery of Lexington, Kentucky. For in depth discussion of Gloucester's ordination, and mention of Chavis, see William T. Catto, *Semi-Centenary Discourse: Delivered in the First African Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, on the fourth Sabbath of May, 1857: with a history of the church from its first organization : including a brief notice of Rev. John Gloucester, its first pastor* (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1857), 19-34.

[20] Catto *Semi-Centenary Discourse*, details the numerous white Philadelphia elites beyond Alexander who supported Gloucester's ministry and raved about his skillful preaching, including Dr. Benjamin Rush.

[21] Swift remarks that Cornish was "the first black man to undergo the normal exacting training and testing procedures required for Presbyterian ordination." Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 19.

and examination process in lieu of a formal college education.[22] Ely's service in New York put him in close contact with efforts for black education and evangelical social reform, and his first pastorate in 1806 placed him in Colchester, Connecticut, where at the time Prince Saunders was the teacher of the city's African School. Ely's Yale education and interest in the press made him an apt tutor among the four that the Presbytery appointed for Cornish, even though Ely was considered unorthodox and later was criticized by the Philadelphia Presbytery for his own theological periodical.[23] Under the guidance of Ely, Cornish spent eighteen months studying and submitting a series of written and oral exams for ordination.[24]

While immersed in his education for ministry in the Presbyterian Church, Cornish also served as the secretary for the Augustine Society, an ecumenical educational institution that brought together a cohort of the city's black religious and civic leaders. The educational organization was non-sectarian and featured important participation and leadership from black Episcopal and AME church leaders in addition to Cornish's fellow Presbyterians. Here, Cornish came in contact with the Saunders, in Philadelphia promoting his black-led alternative to West

---

[22] For mention of Ely's sponsorship of Cornish's examination process, see Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 20. Preceding his installation at Pine Street Presbyterian, Ely garnered national attention for his work as a missionary among the poor in New York. His pastorate at the almshouse placed him in close contact with both destitute and enslaved black New Yorkers, but also allowed Ely to witness how the free black community's various religious and educational institutions played important roles in the evangelical movement in New York. For more on Ely and this movement, see Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[23] For discussion of Ely's controversial periodical, *The Philadelphian*, see William B. Davidson, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Presbytery of Philadelphia, *A report of the debates in the Presbytery of Philadelphia, at a special meeting held in the city of Philadelphia, on the 30th of November* (Philadelphia: Printed by Wm. F. Geddes, 1831), 74.

[24] Cornish had to pass a sequence of three written exams and one oral discourse on scripture, and then passed written exams on systematics, natural theology, and was examined on various sciences by the Philadelphia Presbytery. The schedule and rigor of Cornish's ordination examinations has been recovered in Minutes of the Philadelphia Presbytery manuscripts at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, and cited by Swift, *Black Prophets of Protest*, 20-21; 21, n. 5.

African colonization. Cornish was the secretary at the time the society recorded their constitution and published this founding document with an address delivered by Saunders to the society convened at Bishop Allen's Mother Bethel AME Church in September of 1818.[25] Whether or not Cornish worked with Saunders to prepare the manuscript for print, he served a key role in the social authorship practices promoting the group's autonomous black educational institution and their opposition to colonization.

Cornish was ordained in October of 1819 alongside another young Presbyterian intellectual, the Rev. Charles Hodge.[26] Given the intellectual aptitudes of both young ministers, race seems to have contributed to significant differences in their vocational paths. While Hodge studied at Princeton Seminary during their examination period, Cornish labored over his theological education in Philadelphia. He also preached each Sunday at First African Presbyterian Church for at least a year prior to his licensure, filling in for a gravely ill Gloucester. After ordination Hodge was sent back to Princeton where he boarded with Alexander's family and borrowed from the professor's library while Cornish was sent to Maryland's eastern shore to minister to the enslaved for six months.[27] Despite lack of parity in the assignments of these young Presbyters, the two no doubt shared a Reformed theological perspective about the sovereignty of God directing their paths. Their ideas on the issue of

---

[25] Saunders, *An Address, Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; on the 30th of September 1818* (Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1818), 12. The Augustine Society's leadership is recorded at the end of the Constitution published as an appendix to Saunders' speech, promoting the autonomous and ecumenical black educational institution that sponsored the speech and made possible its publication and distribution. Gloucester was the organization's president, Robert Douglass the treasurer, and Quamino (*sic*) Clarkson the secretary to the finance committee.

[26] Hodge and Cornish are subsequently numbered 169 and 170, respectively, in Alfred Nevin, "Roll of Ministers and Licentiates" in *History of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and of the Philadelphia Central* (Philadelphia: W. S. Fortescue & Co., 1888), 14.

[27] Archibald Alexander Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge…: Professor in the Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J.* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1880), 69.

colonization soon diverged as well, with Hodge rising to serve in the leadership of the New Jersey state auxiliary to the ACS along with Alexander.[28] Cornish recorded no complaint over where the governing body assigned him to serve. His return to a slave state as an ordained minister was in obedience to his sense of calling, as he preached among communities not dissimilar to those of his Delaware childhood.

After his brief placement in Maryland, Cornish was summoned to one of New York's poorest neighborhoods to build a mission church. Cornish witnessed Rev. Gloucester's struggles to raise money for a growing black church and had no doubt heard similar stories from Rev. Ely about missionary work in New York.[29] Service to Christ's poor in New York would have given Cornish an opportunity to tend the fires of evangelism and mercy that was previously kindled by Ely. The start of Cornish's own ministry in 1821 met with esteem from New York's white Presbyterian elites. The church suffered financial obstacles despite growing to several hundred worshipers and eighty formal members by 1824. Cornish married Jane Livingston around this time. His first letter to the editor of a major newspaper touted his wife's status and intellectual attainment calling her "a coloured daughter of one of the most worthy gentlemen of this state, and by him educated according to his rank and standing in life."[30] Jane's upbringing and elite

---

[28] *Proceedings of a Meeting Held at Princeton, New Jersey, July 14, 1824 to form a Society in the State of New Jersey, to Cooperate with the American Colonization Society* (Princeton: Borrenstein, 1824), 39. The most recent discussion of this history of New Jersey Presbyterians and professors and trustees of Princeton Theological Seminary connected to colonization efforts is taken up by Gordon Mikoski, "A failure of theological imagination: Beginning to deal with the legacy of Princeton Seminary on matters of slavery and race," *Theology Today* Vol. 73 (2016), 157-167.

[29] Despite increasing membership at First African in Philadelphia, Gloucester's health failed as he tried to carry the weight of the church's debt labored with personal urgency to raise $1,500 to redeem his wife and four children from the bondage of slavery. White Presbyterian funds failed to keep pace with their pledges to aid the black pastor and his tireless fundraising likely caused Gloucester's rapidly declining health that thrust Cornish into the pulpit prior to his ordination.

connections in New York certainly helped cement Cornish's standing but did not alleviate the financial stresses that beset his fledgling ministry.

White Presbyterians eager to encourage the effort pledged financial support that convinced Cornish into building a brick sanctuary at Elm and Canal to accommodate the growing church. But within a year, white donations dried up and the church was unable to service a debt of $10,000. When a dismayed Cornish in 1825 sought to resign, the Presbytery of New York auctioned off the brand-new house of worship but did not allow Cornish to withdraw from his pastorate.[31] The logic of Presbyterian connections dictated that Cornish restart his fundraising efforts, assuming that somewhere among the city's white Presbyterian elites Cornish could find ample funds to continue the ministry. This assumption and similar failures to achieve its design were not unique to Cornish's efforts or black churches, as the struggle to achieve permanence was experienced by white and black ministers alike who sought to build new churches and organizations for social reform. However, the pervasive nature of racial prejudice complicated Cornish's efforts.

Cornish's designs to effect spiritual and social reform in the pulpit and in the press had much in common with his peers at the Presbytery and among white evangelical reformers. Yet these commitments and Cornish's own personal polish or religious authority offered him no guarantee of financial security. Emphasis on the behavioral regulation of the black community may speak to politics of respectability, but Cornish's emphasis on religious and moral uplift must be understood as consistent with his own elite social location and an understanding of his

---

[30] Samuel Cornish, "A Voice of the Oppressed!" *Genius of Universal Emancipation,* 16 December 1826, reprinted from the *New Brunswick Times*.

[31] Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 22-23.

ministerial calling. He also knew that the designs of New York's Presbyterian elite offered an insufficient program for achieving black freedom, equality, and autonomy. His eventual role in efforts to assemble, print, and distribute black voices (even conflicting and geographically diverse ones) stood in stark contrast to the backdrop of white elites' factional denominational alliances and gradualist philanthropic concerns.[32]

Cornish's sense of calling to educate and uplift his community informed his service beyond the parish, in joining others to found, edit, and distribute a periodical. The community he felt called to serve had its most local iteration in his newly-organized black Presbyterian congregation, but his ministry in the press proceeded in collaboration with other black ministers and black community leaders from a range of professions that extended beyond New York. The periodical's religious character was consistent with the constellation of black Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist ministerial colleagues of Cornish who first called for the paper and named him to the editorship in the start of 1827. Moreover, the early movements and ministry of Cornish communicated an important commitment and religious calling that the astute pastor contributed to the periodicals he edited. Despite the inability to secure funds from black congregants and white Presbyterian donors to secure his church's physical space of worship, Cornish eventually built a network in print that served community needs in New York and garnered the collective action and support of black communities throughout the nation and beyond. Navigating the difficulties of funding New York's first black Presbyterian church amidst the city's crowded spiritual marketplace proved instructive for his later struggles to fund the nation's first black periodical.

[32] Fagan, *The Black Newspaper*, 15, identifies in *Freedom's Journal* "a record of the local struggles that shaped black chosenness" that included the promotion of black respectability and gratitude to white benefactors.

Against Slavery, Racial Discrimination, and Colonization

Even as Cornish understood his own editorial work as an extension of his personal religious vocation, the impetus for creating and distributing the paper cannot be understood outside collaborative efforts by various black communities to protest slavery, racial discrimination, and colonization. The Presbyterian editor and the journal's supporters would have understood that both their opposition to, and the arguments for the colonization movement developed within a burgeoning matrix of evangelical print.

In 1820s New York, the religious impulse could be found both at the congested area near Bancker Street where Cornish was called to minister and around Nassau Street which served as the hub for the printing industry. The proliferation of religious print, such as Bibles, tracts, and sermons, signaled the rise of national evangelical publishing. Though this period witnessed both the proliferation of religious print material and growth of organizational efforts to advance the cause, much of the printing in New York and throughout the early American republic was handled by job printers. These printers were leery of publishing texts that would not sell or turn a profit and reticent to publish or reprint black authors' works.[33] Evangelical appeal played a considerable role in the early-nineteenth century publications of black authors' texts by printers in New York. While the critique of slavery was present in these works, the religious form and fervor tended to be more explicit.

[33] White New York printer John C. Totten's publishing of evangelical materials and at least one black-authored antislavery pamphlet illustrate this point. He edited and published a number of Methodist Episcopal texts including revisions to the *Book of Discipline* and Methodist Hymnals. These official documents of a growing Methodist connection could expect a ready network of evangelical readers (or singers), and the formalized endorsement or bulk purchasing of churches and denominational conferences. Totten likely had no such assurances of audience and profit as he printed the black Reverend William Miller's antislavery sermon in 1810. Totten was merely the job printer, and the committee formed of the African Church in New York where Miller delivered the sermon claimed rights as publishers. Reverend William Miller, *A Sermon on the abolition of the slave trade: delivered in the African Church, New York, on the first of January, 1810* (New York: Published by the Committee, Printed by John C. Totten, 1810).

New York served as a key node for the distribution of various newspapers that were printed elsewhere in the American republic, but by the time of Cornish's arrival New York had not yet developed as a leading publishing site for antislavery literature. Many early attempts at publishing American antislavery periodicals in the late 1810s and early 1820s actually took place in slaveholding states sought dissemination of their papers in the Old Northwest. A few presses run by Quakers and Presbyterians spoke out against slavery, offered minimal opposition to colonization, and advocated for black education and literacy.[34] Still, many of New York's presses produced materials that offered racist caricatures to amplify proslavery and colonization arguments against the freedoms and civic participation of African Americans.

Legal measures to gradually abolish slavery in New York began in 1799, and Gotham's early nineteenth-century presses responded with racist objections, counter-measures to limit the political activities and social mobility of black communities, and lampoons of free black people. Despite the heavily regional character of most periodical networks during this period, a unifying element was most white editors' willingness to print and reprint anti-black perspectives.[35] The same city that emerged as a center for evangelical print distribution simultaneously served as a hub for the dissemination of insidious racist media. If proslavery arguments and "bobalition"

---

[34] One Presbyterian involved in these frontier antislavery press efforts included John Finley Crowe. After leaving Princeton after one year of study, Crowe started a school in Shelbyville, Kentucky in 1815. Beginning in May 7, 1822 publication of his *Abolition Intelligencer and Missionary Magazine* likely caused his ouster from the Fox Run and Bullskin Presbyterian Churches. Driven from his charge in Shelbyville by March of 1823, before he could complete even one year's full volume of the publication, he was installed to a new pastorate at Hanover, Indiana and served as a teacher and principal at the school for ministerial education he started there. For a bibliographical sketch of Crowe, and archival holdings of a select few pieces of Crowe's correspondence, see archivist Clinton D. Christensen's unpublished "Finding Aid to the John Finley Crowe, 1787-1860, Family Collection, 1811-1954," (Hanover, Indiana: Hanover College Archives, 2000), 2-3. For other Quaker and Presbyterian early efforts at antislavery presses, see Asa Earl Martin, "Pioneer Anti-Slavery Press," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 2, no. 4 (March 1916): 509-528.

[35] For discussion of imprints illustrating anti-black racism and these texts presence in early American print culture beyond New York, see Capers, "Black Voices, White Print: Racial Practice."

cartoons offered the more virulent anti-black imprints of the period, a much softer approach to the early American republic's hegemonic racism was couched in the organizational logic and literature in favor of colonization.

By the early 1820s, the periodical presses of New York generally supported plans to end American slavery through a forced relocation and relegation of formerly enslaved black people to the colony of Liberia. The city's elite philanthropists and evangelical reformers held the ACS in high esteem. Many who understood the institution of slavery to be immoral lacked belief in racial equality and wished to exclude free black people from religious, economic, and civic participation in American society. The work of the ACS was presented as an ethical answer to both the problem of slavery and white Americans' racist aversion to growing free black populations in the United States. Many from Cornish's own denomination founded and advocated the ACS. His white Presbyterian mentors, colleagues, and early supporters in Philadelphia and New York tended toward these designs and had already advocated for colonization in print by the close of the preceding decade.[36]

Cornish, however, brought his opposition to colonization with him from Philadelphia. His black Presbyterian mentor, John Gloucester, and two of his church's founding elders, were among those commissioned by the free black community of Philadelphia to consider and oppose African colonization. Their function in this capacity shaped Cornish's thoughts on the subject,

[36] These included his mentor Ezra Stiles Ely. Ely, *The Quarterly Theological Review*, Vol. II, No. 3, (Philadelphia: Published for the Author, Adam Waldie, Printer, 1819).

and led of one of Philadelphia's largest anti-colonization meetings while he lived there and studied for ministry under their care.[37]

After Cornish relocated to establish the African Presbyterian Church in New York, the issue of colonization was the subject of Cornish's own first entry into periodical culture. Like in Philadelphia, this issue promoted ecumenical collaboration among black clergy and social authorship. Cornish and the black Episcopal minister Peter Williams offered black New Yorkers' opposition to the ACS and offered the possibilities of black-led emigration to Haiti instead.[38] They simultaneously struck at the overt and covert racial prejudices that underpinned discrimination against free blacks and the argument for colonization. A white editor summarized that they expressed "in strong and feeling terms, the regret which they feel at the language too frequently made use of in papers and communications, respecting the moral character and condition of their people." The pastors contended that while free black people suffered under "prejudice and oppression… they are not *all*, without any exception, the miserable and degraded and vicious beings that they have been represented to be."[39] They wished to present their community as intelligent, industrious, and striving, despite threats and challenges to their community advancement and well being.

---

[37] Minutes of that meeting were discussed in more detail in the preceding chapter. The report, detailing participants was reprinted in William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African colonization: or An impartial exhibition of the doctrines, principles and purposes of the American Colonization Society. Together with the resolutions, addresses and remonstrances of the free people of color*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), 9-14. Robert Douglass and Quamoney Clarkson were Presbyterian elders selected.

[38] "Emigration to Hayti," *New-York Commercial Advertiser*, June 26,1824; reprinted *Niles' Weekly Register*, July 3, 1824. Williams' deep knowledge of the subject dated back to James Tredwell's and Prince Saunders' editorial and distribution efforts in New York, and the pastor's own endorsement of and correspondence with the white Quaker whom British abolitionist allies had hoped would serve the cause in place of Saunders.See "Grellet Manuscripts 1701-1818," Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 219. A letter from Williams to Grellet on the subject was dated June 1st 1816.

[39] "Emigration to Hayti," *New-York Commercial Advertiser*, June 26,1824; reprinted *Niles' Weekly* Register, July 3, 1824.

Though they opposed white-led African colonization, many individuals and families chose to emigrate and settle in Haiti and a select few ministerial colleagues and associates of Cornish proved important leaders within the movement. Shortly after Cornish's submission was published, William G. Pennington, a graduate of the Free African School in Parsippany, New Jersey and recently ordained minister within Cornish's newly-joined Synod of New York and New Jersey, left in October 1824 with about 200 African Americans departing for Haiti. And in the same month Benjamin F. Hughes, a native of the West Indies who succeeded Cornish at Philadelphia's First African Presbyterian, requested leave from the ministry there in order to serve as the superintendent of the African American community's Protestant mission church.[40]

The black-controlled efforts for emigration to Haiti differed from colonization in that they never suggested the repatriation of the whole or the majority of free black Americans. Ministerial leaders like Cornish and Williams in New York and Allen in Philadelphia who remained in the United States supported the interests of their congregants and colleagues and children (this was the case for Allen, with the departure of his own son, John) who chose to settle in Haiti. In the same breath that African American intellectuals embraced Haiti's historic overthrow of slavery and consider the potential benefits of citizenship in the black republic, they voiced their aspirations for abolition and the civic participation of a free black citizenry in United

[40] *The missionary gazetteer, comprising a view of the inhabitants, and a geographical description of the countries and places, where Protestant missionaries have labored.* Ed. Walter Chapin (Woodstock, Vermont: Printed by D. Watson, 1825), 284-285. Phillip Everhard, *History of the American Baptist African and Haytien Missions, for the Use of Sabbath Schools* (Boston: Printed by T. R. Marvin for the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, 1831), 64-65. Julie Winch, "American Free Blacks and Emigration to Haiti," Centro de Investigaciones del Caribe y América Latina Documentos De Trabajo, no. 33 (San German: Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, 1978) citing Hughes in *United States Gazette*, April 18, 1825. In Catto, *Semi-Centenary Discourse*, 82, the historical memory regarding Hughes' departure seems to be mistaken or conflated with perhaps a later move by Hughes to West Africa, as Catto claims that "Mr. Hughes, as we have seen not only left his pastoral charge and engaged in mercantile speculations, but left the city, in fact the United States, and when last heard from was in Africa, where, after a brief stay, he died."

States. These appealed to African American thinkers whether or not they were subject to bondage in the institution of slavery, and wherever they were from within or beyond the borders of the United States. The expansive intellectual framework that Prince Saunders used print to advocate for with respect to Haiti proved of great utility for the subsequent generation of black thinkers who opposed colonization. The Jamaican-born New Englander and a successor of Saunders as teacher of the Free African School in Boston, John Brown Russwurm chose the subject of black-controlled emigration to Haiti for his 1826 commencement address delivered in connection with his studies at Bowdoin College, in Maine.[41]

The printed and reprinted summary of Cornish and Williams' sentiments against racist slander of the black population and rejection of colonization, and Russwurm's separate composition promoting African American emigration to Haiti, reveals the centrality and intersection of these concerns among a number of local free black communities in the mid-1820s United States. These explorations unseat notions that the founding of *Freedom's Journal* was a single black editor's response to single white editor's racist publication. The voices of Cornish and Russwurm addressed these issues in print before they were selected to edit a black periodical effort. Their early black editorial labors promoted collective concerns and a constellation of interrelated social imperatives that were already shared across a number of local black communities, including Philadelphia, New York and New Jersey, and New England.

Explicit racism in the periodical culture of New York and throughout the early republic proved complementary to the implicitly-racist philanthropic angle taken by the advocates of gradual emancipation and colonization. *Freedom's Journal* countered the racist attacks against

[41] "A Coloured Graduate," *Christian Watchman*, 28 September 1826. The article itself notes that the piece was reprinted from the *Essex Register*, whose editor had extracted portions of the commencement speech published first in the *Eastern Argus*.

African Americans made by Mordecai Noah, who was Jewish, a Democratic politician, and a newspaper publisher in New York.[42] But Noah's *New-York Enquirer* and the *New-York National Advocate* were only two among many who believed southern slaveholders had an inescapable duty and constitutional right to persist in the institution, and that Northern abolitionists "designedly abused and misrepresented" the way that the Southern master class treated the enslaved.[43] Noah offered racist caricatures of free black New Yorkers and supported measures requiring African Americans to carry papers certifying their freedom. He openly disdained the Manumission Society and others who offered support to fugitive slaves or opposed the kidnapping and enslavement of northern black residents.[44] But he saw no future for free black communities in a post-slavery United States. Historians Bacon and Swift argue that Cornish's efforts in print challenged the work of a number of white editors, including the "calm reasoning" in favor of colonization that came from fellow Presbyterian-affiliated David Hale. [45]

The route to print for Cornish and his collaborators was informed by and undertaken as a larger collaborative effort by black community leaders whose explorations of Haitian emigration and use of print challenged both proslavery and colonization ideologies. By the end of 1826, these collective concerns came together in Cornish's own words, offering "A Voice of the Oppressed!" printed in *New Brunswick Times* and reprinted by Lundy's *Genius of Universal*

[42] Bacon, "The History of *Freedom's Journal*," 2. Noah "relentlessly trumpeted the scandalous doings of blacks and doubted the wisdom of" abolition.

[43] Manuel Mordecai Noah, "Slavery," *New-York Enquirer*, April, 24 1827.

[44] Bacon, *Freedom's Journal,* 29.

[45] Bacon, *Freedom's Journal*, 38-41. Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, 27.

Emancipation.[46] This activity prefigured Cornish's editorial service to a larger constituency of prospective funders and readers and distributors who wanted more than just "a voice" acknowledging their oppression. Their subsequent periodical culture served as another black controlled alternative to racial discrimination and colonization, whereby they not only refuted white-distributed print that threatened the well-being and deportation of their communities, but also promoted a black social network that served as an expansive and collaborative platform for a multiplicity of black voices and facilitated the material exchange of these voices in print.

Works of Righteousness

Cornish's editorial labors set to type a black ecumenical anti-racist theology and explicitly political vision committed to the uplift of a black "nation within the nation."[47] Cornish set this collective conviction to print in italicized uppercase in *Freedom's Journal* slogan, quoting Proverbs 14:34: "*RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION*."[48] This served to simultaneously claim a black nationhood and promote collective uplift of African American communities, but also called for a national reckoning concerning slavery and racism that mired the United States in systemic injustice. The theological significance of this biblical slogan added moral heft to the task of distributing the paper. To put the periodical into the hands of readers was to participate in a sequence of material exchanges in the hopes of informing and connecting citizens of an aspirational black nation. And those who conceived of themselves as a nation in

[46] Samuel Cornish, "A Voice of the Oppressed!" *Genius of Universal Emancipation,* December 16, 1826, reprinted from the *New Brunswick Times*.

[47] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois originally formulated this construction of "nation within the nation" in his 1934 speech printed as "A Negro Nation Within The Nation," *Current History 41* (June 1935) 265-70.

[48] *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

need of God's liberation and exaltation understood that the tasks of disseminating this particular black newspaper amounted to works of righteousness.

The meetings in Crummell's home in New York and Walker's home in Boston in early 1827 were local gatherings, but at the same time representative of a diversity of geographies, personal histories, education levels, religious perspectives, commercial interests, and social commitments. This local fraternity was comprised brought together a diverse group that claimed birthplaces as far afield as West Africa, the Caribbean, the Tidewater, the Mid-Atlantic, and the North. Their social status ranged from formerly enslaved to free born, included both illiterate and college educated, and featured occupations as varied as oysterman, used clothing dealer, and pastor. But this diversity informed their hopes that their periodical venture could both serve local community interests and promote black unity on a national scale.[49]

This identification of a national audience and use of a scriptural slogan spoke on behalf of an African American collective within the United States and to their distinct interests. African American newspapers role in formulating "black chosenness" is identified by the literary historian Fagan as a central and enduring contribution of *Freedom's Journal* and other black newspapers throughout the nineteenth century. He argues that these ideas at times "could appeal to American exceptionalism" but also "involved a distinctly black exceptionalism that offered an alternative to exceptionalist understandings of the United States."[50] The motto of *Freedom's Journal* stands in stark contrast to Lundy's—taken from the Declaration of Independence: "We

[49] *Freedom's Journal,* March 16, 1827.

[50] Fagan, *The Black Newspaper*, 5, 6.

hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal…"[51] While Lundy encouraged white America to live up to a national ideal, *Freedom's Journal* offered a more distinctly subaltern voice drawing upon scriptural tradition rather than America's founding document.

In addition to being foundational to the religious commitments and theologically informed intentions of the newspapers original supporters, the scripture was perhaps another expression of Cornish's ministerial vocation. When Cornish departed from his senior editorial role after six months citing "health and interest" and desire to "devote" his time "exclusively to the work of the Ministry, as a Missionary, or otherwise," Russwurm removed the biblical slogan from the sheet.[52] Perhaps the scripture did not have the same centrality in the vocational and national vision of Russwurm, who himself was neither a minister nor born in the United States.

Russwurm's own personal history, from his birth in Jamaica in 1799 to his boarding school education in Quebec, Canada by 1807, revealed that his own identity and education were not tied to the American nation. Unbeknown to his colleagues whose protest against colonization had been made clear, Russwurm had expressed interest in serving as a teacher or administrator for the colony in Liberia and was invited to do so by the ACS before declining the offer and agreeing to co-edit *Freedom's Journal* in New York.[53] Russwurm left the editorship and ended the publication in 1829 to participate in the colonization of Liberia.

However, this did not signal the end of the national vision for the black community set forth in the periodical. Cornish, who remained a general agent for the paper and served to

---

[51] See Benjamin Lundy, ed., *Genius of Universal Emancipation.*

[52] Cornish, "To our friends and patrons," *Freedom's Journal*, September 14, 1827.

[53] Bacon, *Freedom's Journal*, 45.

bolster its distribution in the field, resumed his editorial career in 1829 with publication of *The Rights of All.* Proving his intention to resume participation in the same print network and adopt the same national clarity of purpose that he envisioned at the beginning of *Freedom's Journal*, Cornish's *Rights of All* boldly proclaimed the same slogan of Proverbs 14:34. His second newspaper motto used the entire scripture, "Righteousness Exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People."[54] This was not merely an uplifting call for black communities to live respectably and for the American nation to act more justly with respect to freedom and equality, but also might have implied more broadly that slavery and racial injustice brought down the judgment of God upon the American nation.

Freedom's Journal highlighted black achievement and a range of black perspectives. Perhaps because of its early anti-colonization clarity under Cornish, the white-edited and colonization-friendly antislavery periodical of Benjamin Lundy's paper did not actively advertise or reprint from it. Yet when the *Genius* reprinted the *New-York Advertiser*'s commendation of the editors, material appearance, and important function of the new paper "intended for the 'people of colour," the entry closed with the same tropes of philanthropic sympathy for "this unfortunate and deeply oppressed and injured race." For the backers and editors of *Freedom's Journal*, "the moral, religious, civil and literary improvement" of the black community was not merely a bid to evoke sympathy or police black behavior, but offered a mode of deep, transformative education.[55] They hoped to acknowledge and foster real gains in black community-building while simultaneously challenging the racist perceptions of mainstream American print and the racial injustices that upheld slavery and political exclusion.

---

[54] *The Rights of All*, May 29, 1829.

[55] *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

Their content and their efforts offered something altogether new. Rather than claiming a space within the well-established flurry of religious and moral reform that thrived in New York, the editors told their "patrons" that "we feel all the diffidence of persons entering upon a new and untried line of business." In the first issue the editors noted that "whatever concerns us as a people will ever find a ready admission into the *Freedom's Journal*, interwoven with all the principal news of the day." Discontent to remain silent and "let others speak for us," they resolved to disseminate content relevant to their primary African American audience. The editors believed that the difficulty of their endeavor would be overcome by the "noble objects" of the paper's publication "and the expediency of its appearance at this time, when so many schemes are in action concerning our people."[56]

Freedom's Journal was much more than an antislavery newspaper. The publication sought to educate and inform the black community. The advertisers and the networks who made the publication possible illustrate the way that the paper served a variety of needs in the local black community of New York, and how the paper itself constructed in print a model of a flourishing black community. African American perspectives were offered throughout the *Journal's* editorials, coverage of current events, biographical or historical pieces highlighting black accomplishments, literary submissions, political and social criticism of slavery and racism, and exhortations concerning black education, moral uplift, and political participation. Much of the content blurred these subjects and genres, mingling social commentary and theology, conflating individual experiences and communal virtues, and at once promoting both global critical thinking and personal moral behaviors. But at the margins of these more substantive literary contributions and more explicitly political or religious appeals, *Freedom's Journal* also

[56] *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

printed entries that, beyond their traditional literary character, promoted black community building.

The promotion of a new co-educational school in the basement of St. Philip's African Episcopal Church was a recurrent one among a growing number of advertisements. This first advertisement was taken out by Benjamin F. Hughes, a one-time pastoral successor of Cornish at First African Presbyterian in Philadelphia and former superintendent of the religious efforts among the African American émigré community in Haiti. Not only was Hughes well known to the black Presbyterian senior editor, but he was among the initial cohort of distribution agents for the paper, stationed as the agent for nearby Newark. This educational notice that served as the only ad in the *Journal*'s first number is used by the scholar Fagan as a paradigm for the editor's overall mission to educate and empower black communities through the publication of the *Journal*.[57]

The ad itself speaks to collaboration. Hughes was a Presbyterian, but as the black Presbyterians of New York had no permanent property in 1827, Hughes collaborated with the black Episcopalians of that city. Further, the advertisement includes endorsement of the school by an interdenominational group of reference, including the ministers Peter Williams, James Varick, Cornish, Benjamin Paul, and William Miller. In the course of the *Journal* and the *Rights of All*, Hughes purchased many more advertisements, and most advertisers placed repeating submissions. His is but one valuable example of a black pastor not merely working within churches, but in broader public efforts including those to distribute print. Leaving the pulpit of Philadelphia's black Presbyterian Church, Hughes took up an international post in Haiti, then

[57] Fagan, *The Black Newspaper*, 27.

served as a teacher within the black community, and served as an agent to distribute the Cornish-edited newspaper along with an ecumenical cadre of black activists.

Black pastors who participated in the creation, ongoing publication, and distribution of *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* did not abandon their traditional duties as ministers of local congregations and builders of community. Their efforts in print sought to solidify and expand these efforts, and the pages of the black newspapers actually cast direct attention upon their ministerial duties and the various goings-on in their congregations. For a time, Cornish used the medium in search of a property that might serve his dispossessed black Presbyterian Congregation as a site to build a new sanctuary.[58]

Perhaps the best illustration of the role of *Freedom's Journal and* the *Rights of All* in highlighting traditional pastoral roles can be understood in the newspapers' marriage announcements. This area of the paper continued both during and after Cornish's editorial service, demonstrating his continued pastoral service among other black pastors in this important ceremonial and civic ministerial capacity. Cornish officiated two weddings in June and two in August of 1827. Matrimonial notices also highlighted the work of other ministers, including the Baptist Reverend Benjamin Paul.[59] One matrimonial notice highlighted the duties of three pastors representing different denominations and churches, and illustrated the unions of African Americans from different cities.[60] By November of 1827, free black citizens of other cities such

[58] Cornish himself took out an advertisement seeking two lots for the erection of a Presbyterian Church. *Freedom's Journal*, April 20, 1827.

[59] See *Freedom's Journal*, June 29, 1827; August 31, 1827.

[60] *Freedom's Journal,* September 21, 1827. Peter Williams, Benjamin Paul, and Christopher Rush are listed as officiants, in this case, representing Episcopal, Baptist, and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches, repsectively. Paul in Septmber of 1827 performed two weddings of black couples in New York, but Williams

as Albany also advertised their marriages in *Freedom's Journal*. [61] Later in the same month, another announcement, with an original poem, highlighted a couple married in Maine.[62] Though these are just a sampling of some of the paper's marriage announcements, they illustrate the function of the newspaper in print celebrating the bonds of black marital commitment and the ways that those familial ties also fostered new economic and social cooperation that connected various families from different cities and states, and affirming those in print.

In Cornish's decision to leave the editorship, he endorsed Russwurm and asked the continued "liberal patronage of our brethren and friends.[63] The subsequent number of the journal also published notice that in addition to his new ministerial service Cornish "will be travelling through different parts of the country" to conduct business transactions relating to the paper, as a general agent. A separate but immediately following notice read, "Subscribers are informed that the second half-yearly payment, in advance, for the "JOURNAL," is now due.[64] These two notices seem to bear a direct relationship. Cornish traveled as a general agent to transact the *Journal*'s business, and the *Journal* notified its readers that the business of the time was the collection of subscription money.

Freedom's Journal continued to publicize a variety of Cornish's activities after he left the editorial desk. More importantly, the paper highlighted the ongoing efforts of other black

---

officiated at a marriage of Mr. James C. Morelle of Albany to Miss Catherine Jackson of Albany, and Rush married Baltimore's Mr. James Coker to Miss Eliza M. Collins of New York.

[61] *Freedom's Journal, November 2,* 1827. The matrimonial notices of black New Yorkers married by Williams and Paul were bracketed by announcements of marriages in Albany (Rev. Dr. Chester married Mr. Henry Jackson to Miss Mary Brown) and Charleston (Rev. Dr. Gadsden married Mr. J. G. Lewis to Miss Isabella Canty).

[62] *Freedom's Journal,* November 23, 1827.

[63] *Freedom's Journal*, September 14, 1827.

[64] *Freedom's Journal*, September 21, 1827.

women and men to build families, businesses, and schools in projects reinforcing local and geographically-extensive community empowerment. Collaboration was not only essential to the founding of the paper, but the periodical provided attention upon the broad range various local communities' efforts to build the black civic sphere. These projects involved continued local pastoral service to his black New York congregants, and he officiated two weddings in the subsequent months.[65] Cornish's travel fostered connections with various efforts to advance black community interests outside of New York. He also received goods and advertisements and conducted business pertaining to the *Journal*. In one example of long-distance commerce, Cornish posted his own endorsement of a black business venture in tobacco out of Baltimore after he received a large sample of the product.[66]

Cornish's travel was mostly local in January 1828 but his movements among the black population of New York explicitly championed an effort for black education and empowerment. He visited more than one hundred black New York families as the "general visiting agent" of the African Schools set up by the city's Manumission Society.[67] Cornish, Russwurm, and two others registered the names of the founding women of the African Dorcas Association, who fed and clothed children so that they could be equipped to attend school. Cornish served on an ecumenical advising committee for that organization with other black New York pastors.[68]

---

[65] *Freedom's Journal*, October 5, 1827; November 23, 1827.

[66] *Freedom's Journal*, October 5, 1827, Here, there is no reference to any form of enslaved labor that generally made such businesses possible (which would be a valid question in wondering why Cornish would back a black-owned tobacco company), but for some reason Cornish recommends the product and its availability "should the experiment succeed."

[67] *Freedom's Journal*, January 11, 1827

[68] *Freedom's Journal*, February 1, 1827, namely Miller, Rush, Todd, Quinn, Williams, and Paul.

Even though the women of the African Dorcas Association understood themselves as an outgrowth of the work of the all-male Manumission Society that ran the African Free Schools, the association's formal organization and the newspaper's publicity of the its efforts acknowledged the essential roles that these women already performed. The collaborative effort among unnamed women to support education, encourage literacy, alleviate poverty, and challenge discrimination began long before Cornish arrived in the city and before his newspaper printed notice of their institution's official formation.[69] These women made black education possible by providing for the most elemental needs of black students. Their association was foundational to the literacy and education of future readers, writers, agents, and supporters of African American print. Even in unnamed labors for community building, these women acted upon the biblical admonition from the epistle of James, to "receive in meekness" God's saving word, but to respond as "doers of the word, and not hearers only."[70] Like Cornish, their belief in the saving power of Jesus Christ was paired with a hope for the empowerment of their communities through their religious and educational activism. For these women, faith necessitated action that both metaphorically and literally made possible the work of the word.

Local black educational efforts became a prime locus for the distribution of their newspaper and the editors understood these institutions as critical for empowering literate and informed communities. To make black readers and shape young minds, the editors and agents made possible free distribution of their publications to the schools that educated their

[69] Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 85, argues that these women's literary and mutual aid societies already called for "revision and expansion of their functions to include more deliberate writing and public presentation of their condition" in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

[70] James 1:21-22; This scripture also serves as the title for Carla Peterson's excellent study of black women speakers, *"Doers of the Word": African-American Women. Speakers and Writers in the North, 1830-1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

communities. Charles C. Andrews, the teacher of the second free African school in New York, thanked Russwurm and wished "to acknowledge …your generosity in furnishing gratuitously, the regular weekly number of the '*Freedom's Journal*,' for the benefit of the Library in the School in Mulberry-street." He remarked, "much good may be calculated to result from *such a journal* being perused by *such readers*, as will have access to its pages." Andrews reported with pride that the library at the school "now consists of about three hundred well selected volumes" but his commentary spoke directly to the unique content of the *Journal*. Black students were not at a loss for reading materials, but the *Journal* provided a unique organ of black dignity and industry and community.[71] Among these young intellects, *Freedom's Journal* no doubt made an impression on those who later led black communities and shaped black abolitionist advocacy.[72]

The diverse advertisements throughout *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* also provide a close-up of local black community building in New York. Unlike other antislavery periodicals that advertised businesses whose products clearly appealed to the shared values of the readership, such as stores for free produce or antislavery bookstores, the papers edited by Cornish and Russwurm pieced together advertisements that represented a range of goods and services offered by local black-owned businesses. These businesses, predominately located in New York, represented a localized support base for the early efforts to establish a black

[71] *Freedom's Journal,* November 9, 1827.

[72] Students at the African School on Mulberry Street around that time included Charles L. Reason, George T. Downing, and Ira Aldridge. They were joined in 1825 by a ten-year old named Henry Highland Garnet who had been born into slavery a decade prior but had fled with his family from Maryland to settle in New York City in that year. Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro*, 294.

newspaper. Even by 1829, after *Freedom's Journal* concluded publication and Cornish began *The Rights of All*, advertisements still promoted black businesses in New York.[73]

But beyond these decidedly local offerings, the most frequent type of advertisement spoke to aspirations to build regional black networks and provide recognition of black mobility. In the first issue of *Rights of All*, a third of the entries (six out of eighteen) advertised boarding and lodging for "genteel persons of colour" or "respectable persons of colour." Here is an explicit nod to the extensive readership of the paper beyond New York. While the advertisement speaks explicitly to a degree of mobility among the "genteel" free black people in other cities who might visit or who frequented New York, it provided a listing of black establishments in New York. Any reader of the periodical could have derived from these listings a sort of imagined map of black businesses and institutions, which might have appealed even to African American readers and prospective travelers deemed less-than-"genteel" or legally unfree. Publicly advertising respectability, these black businesses and boarding houses also provided their addresses in connection with newspapers that even from their titles advocated "freedom" and the "the rights of all."[74]

This category of advertisements for boarding and lodging extended outside of New York City. One of the boarding advertisements in the first issue, was for lodging available in New Haven, Connecticut, and in a subsequent number, in Albany. These advertisements not only signaled spaces of refuge in New York, but suggested the mobility of black New Yorkers as

[73] *The Rights of All*, May 29, 1829. Two out of the eighteen ads on the back page the initial issue marketed businesses outside of New York City. The relatively small range of locally-available goods and services included boots and shoes, from store proprietors on 22 Leonard Street and 551 Pearl Street, leghorn bonnets, clothes dressing, and scouring and tailoring. A more recreational offering was for a mead garden on Mulberry Street, and educational offers included a notice that the African Free School was accepting pupils, and an ad requesting inquiries from qualified black teachers open to a station at an academy or as a tutor in a family home.

[74] *The Rights of All*, May 29, 1829.

well. These advertisements, with increasing frequency over the six months that *Rights of All* was published, were accompanied by icons of houses and buildings. Cornish printed stock woodcuts, but he published the addresses of actual buildings where black homeowners claimed a place in the built environment of New York, and where both respectable and fugitive black travelers might locate havens of freedom and equality in and beyond the city. [75]

In contrast to the fixed locations and spatial presence claimed in boarding ads, one of Cornish's own advertisements provides a metaphor for the mobility of print. While it was common for newspaper editors to offer job printing, Cornish's willingness in this regard provided a point of access specifically marketed to the black readers of the *Rights of All*, whether they were members of the local community or those traveling to New York.[76] Cornish promoted job printing at the newspaper's office, but also advertised to printers a set of "pica type" for sale.[77] This practice of advertising and selling type among printers was also customary in the periodicals of the day, but this advertisement's placement in *The Rights of All* signaled a chance for another black editor or printer from among the periodical's black readership to obtain an important component of the means of print production—to literally take print into their own hands.

One individual advertiser of a business in Boston best exemplifies the long-distance support for *Freedom's Journal* and *Rights of All*. David Walker was by far the most famous (and infamous) black author whose work was featured in *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All.* He contributed content, assembled in his own home Boston's prospective supporters prior to the

[75] *The Rights of All,* May 29, 1829; September 18, 1829.

[76] *The Rights of All*, June 12, 1829.

[77] *The Rights of All,* May 29, 1829.

paper's launch, and served as an agent. Walker's Boston business appeared regularly on the pages of *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* in the form of advertisements. [78] He advertised clothes for sale throughout 1829, the same year that Walker self-published his own *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*. Walker certainly advertised his business to provide for himself and his family, but proceeds from his shop undoubtedly also bankrolled his self-published manifesto of black racial equality and against slavery. Walker publicly supported the *Journal* and *The Rights* and marketed his own business in the publications, but would ultimately earn far greater publicity for his efforts to distribute his own printed *Appeal* among black audiences in the South.

Agents and Networks

Walker was one among many agents of *Freedom's Journal* whose subsequent service to black communities and antislavery literary contributions were celebrated among African Americans.[79] An emphasis on the individual heroism and the degree of subsequent fame that some of these agents achieved as individuals, however, undermined the way their work as distributors illustrated a collective effort that embodied and empowered black communities. Agents for these newspapers made possible the movement of copies. They acquired subscribers and collected money. They corresponded with the editors to deliver notes for the subscription funds. They communicated names and addresses of subscribers or advised editors on appropriate means of delivery. They promoted the use of the U.S. post office for mail delivery of

[78] In *The Rights of All,*Walker's business is advertised May 29, 1829; June 12, 1829; August 7, 1829; September 18, 1829; October 9, 1829.

[79] Examples of recognition given to these agents by African Americans in the nineteenth century include: "From our New York Correspondent," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Vol. VIII Is. 9 (16 Feb 1855), 3; Penn, *The Afro-American Press*, 6.

periodicals, or in some cases accepted copies for others, and delivered the folded-up issues to eager readers. These practices were not specific to black newspaper agents, but were informed by and participated in the practices common to the agents of other newspapers and periodicals.

However, in the context of the early American republic's repression of black civic participation, the service of African American agents of black-edited periodicals in this capacity bore greater symbolic significance. Black agents promoted a new literary and cultural venture that affirmed their communities' dignity and challenged the oppressive structures of their society. And, they did it in public, proudly displaying their names and locations where they served as the papers' agents. In the face of tangible exclusions from the public sphere, their publicity in print countered those limitations and asserted alternative ways for their community's voice to be heard, or more appropriately, for their words to be read.

Neither subscription publishing nor the use of publicly named agents to facilitate the exchange of subscription money and printed texts was new in 1827. In fact, agents were used to circulate religious papers and tracts since at least the seventeenth century in the English Atlantic world. But the agents enlisted and the networks that collaborated for the distribution of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* were different from the subscriber networks of British Atlantic evangelicals and reformers used by Wheatley and Equiano in the late-eighteenth century. Those authors relied on a patron's payment or promise of payment upon receipt of a single printed book. These efforts used the outmoded subscription model that predominated in the colonial Atlantic book printing of an earlier period, and relied upon white benevolence. By comparison, Cornish and the founders of *Freedom's Journal* participated in an emergent

periodical culture of the early American republic that required a regular schedule for collecting materials, editing copy, printing numbers, and distributing them to an expansive base.

Preceding antislavery periodicals instituted agents less systematically, leaning into Quaker and Presbyterian denominational networks. These publications printed their roster of agents only intermittently, with little expectations of their active participation in the physical exchanges of the paper beyond an initial subscription submission. While Cornish's own denominational connection and regard among New York's white social reformers may have resulted in some initial support, the publications' limited financial resources relied upon the subscription fees derived from among the black networks of agents and readers. *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* relied primarily upon black subscribers, readers, and their communities, even as the publications' content and the exchanges that promoted these newspapers' dissemination were enmeshed in distinctly African American interests and black civil society.[80]

The newspaper required neither substantial outside investments nor the movement of cumbersome material texts. The unbound leaves of *Freedom's Journal* could be efficiently folded into a rather compact size. Each number was four pages long with four columns per page. The second volume doubled in length to eight pages, but that could still be easily moved. The price of a subscription for *Freedom's Journal* was three dollars per year. The subscription rate from the outset evidenced a desire to make the publication affordable and widely accessible. They required at least a one-year subscription, paid in two half-yearly installments, but indicated

[80] Bacon, *Freedom's Journal*, 46-49. Bacon discusses the way that Cornish appears to have received early financial support for the *Journal*, from wealthy white evangelical reformers and philanthropists. These may have included wealthy members of urban abolition society, such as Thomas Hale of Boston, Isaac Barton in Philadelphia, and noted reformer Gerrit Smith of New York.

that an advance payment for a full year would only cost two dollars and fifty cents. Further, agents were given incentives for securing payments from subscribers, stating that "agents who procure and pay for five subscribers, are entitled to a sixth copy *gratis.*"[81] This practice speaks to their desire to move as many copies as possible, and a willingness to distribute them with or without faithful and full subscription payments. Despite the financial difficulties that *Freedom's Journal* faced, Cornish's successor publication *The Rights of All* was offered at a dollar cheaper per year, for the annual subscription cost of two dollars.[82]

Many of the agents who worked to ensure dissemination of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* were early subscribers themselves. Well-connected black entrepreneurs in New York and Boston, galvanized by figures like Crummel and Walker through meetings in their homes, offered foundational support and were joined in time by influential black businessmen from other cities. Relatively well-off black distributors of the paper included hairdresser John Remond in Salem, Massachusetts, and lumber merchant Stephen Smith in Columbia, Pennsylvania. Memory of Remond in the history of abolitionism in New England was surpassed by the reputation of his son, Charles Lenox Remond. Smith's business partner William Whipper is remembered as a more public voice among Philadelphia's literary and activist circles. But these agents of *Freedom's Journal* marshaled their entrepreneurial capital to enable the distribution of the first black newspaper.[83] Initial agents also included the entrepreneurial Reuben Ruby of Portland, Maine, who held his own land and operated a carriage service that gave him

[81] *Freedom's Journal*, March 16, 1827.

[82] *The Rights of All*, May 29, 1829.

[83] Martin Delany said that Smith, as the "principal lumber merchant" of Lancaster County was "a remarkable man in many respects, and decidedly the most wealthy colored man in the United States." Martin Robison Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered* (Philadelphia: Published by the Author, 1852), 95-96.

both financial independence but also put him (literally) in contact with a wide range of people. Walker, Remond, Smith, and Ruby were likely among the wealthier agents of the *Journal*, but their roles as agents were more dependent upon their social capital.

Agents not only represented black commerce, but built networks that reflected denominational affiliations, organizational connections, and family ties. These included black Presbyterian Rev. Hughes in Newark, who served in the same Presbytery as the paper's editor. Brothers Nathaniel and Thomas Paul served Baptist churches in Albany and Boston. Walker, also in Boston, was deeply involved in both the city's black Methodist church and the city's black freemasons. Other black New Englanders who shared these connections included Isaac Rodgers of New London, Connecticut and George C. Willis who served as the Master of the Harmony Lodge of black Freemasons in Providence, Rhode Island. Denominational connections and Masonic fraternity were not the only form of kinship shared across the network of agents. The newspaper's agent in Princeton, New Jersey, Theodore S. Wright, had Presbyterianism in common with Cornish and other agents but also encouraged his father R. P. G. Wright of Schenectady, New York, to serve as an agent.

Freedom's Journal's original fifteen agents also featured a number of prominent AME leaders in Baltimore and Washington, DC. Even though Baltimore had provided a hub for Lundy's antislavery press, *Freedom's Journal* did not enlist Lundy or his fellow Quaker editor Niles of that city. Rather, the newspaper's agents in Baltimore were Robert Cowley and Charles Hacket, visible black leaders in the African Methodist Episcopal churches and seasoned antislavery activists. By 1827 Hacket was an experienced AME church leader, an educational

organizer, and involved in the covert movement and liberation of black people.[84] His efforts in the city spoke to the ways that the moving people and texts of the newspaper's distribution network from the onset worked to bridge local and regional communities of black activism rather than rely on established channels of abolitionist print.[85] The agent in the District of Columbia was John W. Prout, who also had preaching and teaching experience connected with the AME churches, schools, and other social institutions in the black communities of the Washington-Baltimore corridor.[86]

Highlighting agents' denominational affiliations, lodge memberships, families, and participation in other linked religious or social organizations suggests that these individuals contributed much to their local communities, but this also indicates that their efforts to move texts relied not on their personal interests or virtues. They drew upon preexisting commercial, religious, social, and educational networks that already functioned to link communities in a shared cause or identity. In doing so, agents brought their diverse constituencies and community members into contact with this emergent network of black print. Existing social connections, black enterprise, religious and civic organizing, and kinship that connected various local

---

[84] Daniel Alexander Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Ed. C. S. Smith, (Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1891), 88. In 1801 Hacket played a role in hiding then fugitive Daniel Coker and contributing money to purchase Coker's freedom. Not only did that make Hacket an essential friend to Coker, but he also became a founding member of the black Methodist church that organized locally into Baltimore's Bethel church and nationally into the AME.

[85] Hacket's connection with nationalized activism for the movement of black people and texts certainly informed the future prominence of Hacket's own son, George Alexander, who prior to his own leadership in national black organizing efforts and the smuggling of enslaved fugitives was already twenty-one years old when his father served as an agent for Freedom's Journal. James P. Wind, *American Congregations, Volume I: Portraits of Twelve Religious Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 239; Leroy Graham, *Baltimore, The Nineteenth Century Black Capital* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 148-156.

[86] Graham, *Baltimore, The Nineteenth Century Black Capital*, 73, mentions that Prout occasionally taught as an assistant to Coker at the Sharp Street Methodist Church.

communities also facilitated the growth of an African American periodical network across which people moved texts across long distances.

Though the paper began with just fifteen agents, the number more than doubled to thirty-two by the end of the run of *Freedom's Journal* and the inception of *The Rights of All*, extending beyond its initial Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic constellation of agents. Many more agents enlisted to circulate the paper in the Northeast, in places that also came to include North Yarmouth, Maine; Rochester, Flushing, Schenectady, Brooklyn and Buffalo, New York; Trenton, New Jersey; and New Haven and Norwich, Connecticut. This growing network of distribution agents stretched along the Erie Canal toward Waterloo, Canada where the Rev. Samuel George was listed as the agent to a location that the newspaper encouraged as another black-led alternative for emigration outside the United States.[87] The network also featured agents in Liverpool, who were likely connected with the activities of James Cropper and his associates who more frequently collaborated with white Quaker Americans but whose regular list of correspondents for shipped packets of antislavery imprints came to include Russwurm, and subsequently a number of other black abolitionists.[88]

The emergent network for the newspapers' distribution ultimately counted no less than twelve agents in slaveholding regions of the American South. These agents operated in places much less cosmopolitan and international than Baltimore and Washington, D.C., and in societies where the enslaved black population outnumbered the free. Despite increasingly restrictive state

[87] George is first listed as an agent in *Freedom's Journal,* June 6, 1828. The article entitled "Negro Enterprize" discussed the economic prospects of black resettlement in "upper Canada" in *Freedom's Journal,* August 3, 1827. It is important to note that *Freedom's Journal* made clear that the Canadian effort was not affiliated with the ACS.

[88] Samuel Thomas is listed as the agent to Liverpool beginning in *Freedom's Journal*, November 11, 1827. The numbers beginning with July 25, 1828 include Thomas Dickson and September 12, 1828 indicates R. Dickinson.

laws prohibiting the distribution of antislavery literature these agents' public functions on behalf of the paper could have met with intense repression and violent opposition. Black agents in Virginia included Thomas Braddock in Alexandria, W. D. Baptist of Fredericksburg, and the Rev. R. Vaughan of Richmond.[89]

Agents not only received *Freedom's Journal* but they also submitted news from their free black communities back to the editors in New York. Baptist was likely responsible not just for public service as a named agent in the pages of the paper, but also seems to have reported on some of the patriotic anti-slavery meetings of the local free black community. A report written for *Freedom's Journal*, for example, detailed a gathering in Wilkinsville, Virginia, composed of "a respectable number of the Coloured Inhabitants of Fredericksburgh" to celebrate the ending of slavery in New York on July 4, 1827. One of the leaders of the gathering, Isaac N. Cary, read the Declaration of Independence at three o'clock, and then the company gathered for dinner. Cary was named the secretary for the occasion, and Edward D. Baptist and Alexander Duncan the President and Vice-President, respectively. Among the reported toasts, which began in honor of New-York's accomplishment and aspirations for Virginia and black Virginians, Mr. Charles Davis toasted: "May the Anchor, now cast for freedom, by the State of New-York, sink deeply in the breasts of our Southern States." Mr. Elijah Rollings toasted: "Success to men, and freedom to slaves." Isaac Cary saluted "Cornish & Russwurm, Editors of Freedom's Journal — justly entitled is the gratitude of their brethren: may they never want patronage to sustain them in advocating the cause of a much injured people."[90]

---

[89] The first listings of these agents in *Freedom's Journal* correspond to the following dated numbers: Braddock, August 24, 1827; Baptist, July 27, 1827; Vaughan, November 2, 1827.

[90] *Freedom's Journal,* July 13, 1827.

The agent to Alexandria illustrated that these black Virginians enjoyed vast social connections and held real property in their respective communities. Braddock worked as a carpenter who owned rental properties himself. Even though Braddock was a tradesman, he emphasized the importance of learning, and provided for his sons and daughters to receive the benefits of full-time schooling until age sixteen before learning a trade. He also believed it would be unfitting for his sons to become sailors. He not only promoted his children's education, but maintained his own "library" which he mentions in his last will and testament. His personal collection of books indicates that Braddock and other landowning black Virginians of the period counted printed materials an important resource, and privileged access to print and black education critical for their personal, family, and community advancement.[91]

Three agents for the paper in North Carolina illustrate the diverse and perhaps unexpected constituencies who read and distributed *Freedom's Journal*. In January 1828 all three North Carolina agents—Seth Henshaw in New Salem, John C. Stanly in New Bern, and Lewis Sheridan in Elizabethtown—were added to the list of the paper's agents.[92] While Seth Henshaw, a Quaker postmaster, represents a white antislavery ally uniquely empowered for print distribution, Stanly cuts a more problematic figure. The formerly enslaved Stanly rose to prominence in the region and accumulated wealth, eventually becoming a free black slaveowner. Stanly was likely in contact with the newspaper in some way thanks to his active lay participation in the Presbyterian Church of New Bern, where he was repeatedly entrusted with

[91] A discussion of Braddock's will, and how it indicates his property ownership, educational and vocational designs for his children, and mentions his library can be found in Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 138. Full citation of the will, on 346, n.80, is Records of the County Probate Court, Alexandria County, Va., Wills, vol. 1821-31 (November 25, 1829), p. 342, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

[92] *Freedom's Journal*, January 11, 1828. Stanly is alternatively spelled as Stanley, and New Bern as Newbern.

the settling of estate matters for deceased white slavemasters from his congregation. These activities resulted in Stanley moving enslaved people in ways that at times facilitated their freedom, but in others perpetuated their bondage—sometimes in his own household. The bonds of others made possible Stanley's own fortune as one of the wealthiest men in the county and his role as a financial savior to his white half-brother who represented their district in Congress. Stanley carefully exerted this seemingly conflicted form of agency with respect to participation in the institution of slavery even as he came to serve as an agent for *Freedom's Journal*.[93]

The network of agents extended further south than North Carolina and beyond its eventual agent in New Orleans, to feature a number of agents in Haiti. Thousands of African Americans lived in Haiti at the time *Freedom's Journal*. Their engagement with the arguments of Saunders and embrace of the revolutionary black abolitionist history resulted in their participation in the black-led movement to Haiti even as they opposed West African colonization. William R. Gardiner served as the first international agent for the paper, listed as an agent in Port-au-Prince by just its second number and prior to the newspaper's listing of agents to Canada and England.[94] Gardiner made at least one trip to New York during the period he served as the *Freedom's Journal*'s agent in Haiti, and the surviving record suggests that the 38-year-old merchant who arrived in New York City on board the brig *Paragon* was returning to the Caribbean. When he made his return voyage, he certainly would have been in an ideal position to personally deliver subscription funds to Cornish and to bring copies of *Freedom's*

[93] For more on Stanly, see Loren Schweninger, "John Carruthers Stanly and the Anomaly of Black Slaveholding," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 67 (April 1990), 159-92.

[94] *Freedom's Journal*, March 23, 1827. Gardiner, alternatively spelled Gardner, served in 1792 as a deacon of the "African Church" that would eventually become Saint Thomas African Episcopal Church of Philadelphia, demonstrating a longstanding career of community-building by the 1820s. By 1827 Gardiner functioned as a merchant, but appears to have been based in the Haitian capital city.

Journal on his return voyage to the black Republic.[95] Eventually Gardiner was replaced as the newspaper's agent to Haiti, by William B. Bowler from Richmond who had been a catalyst for opposition to African colonization before settling in Haiti. [96] Other agents proved the limits of Haitian emigration efforts, but had wealth and mobility enough to return to the United States, as was the case for Philadelphia agent Francis Webb. Webb had attempted Haitian emigration with his family, but returned to Philadelphia with his wife Louisa and two daughters in November of 1826.[97] The thirty-eight year old Webb participated as an agent for a periodical that consistently featured and often praised Haiti, despite his own apparent inability to resettle and a broader disappointment with Haitian emigration prospects by the late 1820s.

The agents of *Freedom's Journal* support the paper's literary promotion of black nationhood but also worked to achieve the literal dissemination of those ideas among black communities beyond the United States. These perspectives and labors necessarily challenged colonization schemes, and agents faced firsthand the rejection of these ideas by white antislavery advocates that might have otherwise supported their paper. Cornish never suggested white reformers and philanthropists were the paper's primary audience, but his and the paper's rejection of colonization certainly infuriated and drove off initial white supporters. This is most apparent in Theodore Wright's recollections of being the paper's agent to Princeton while he

---

[95] Sara Connors Fanning, "Haiti and the U.S.: African American Emigration and the Recognition Debate" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 177. Fanning's table displays the name W. Gardner, for entry to New York on Sept 22, 1827.

[96] *Freedom's Journal*, September 19, 1828, is the first number to list Bowler. While Gardiner perhaps illustrated the commercial mobility of black community leaders enhanced by Haitian emigration efforts, Bowler seems to suggest a more permanent intention. Bowler played a role in the free black community of Richmond protesting African Colonization schemes and suggesting domestic or Canadian alternatives in 1817, he seems to have left Richmond sometime after legal trouble involving an alleged mail theft in the early 1820s and resettled to Haiti where he served as the agent for both the *Journal* and *The Rights* and remained with his family long thereafter.

[97] Fanning, "Haiti and the U.S.," Webb and his family arrived on the schooner, Cyrus from Port-au-Prince to Philadelphia Nov 7, 1826.

studied for the Presbyterian ministry. Despite the host of black Presbyterians serving as editor and agent and Wright's apparent success in securing subscriptions at the seminary, Professor Samuel Miller openly denounced the publication in an open letter published in the *New-York Observer*. Miller claimed he had subscribed eagerly but soured at the paper's attempt "to defeat the success of the colonization system."[98] Miller publicly preached against *Freedom's Journal* as well "and all the faculty and the students gave up the paper." Wright continued to serve as an agent, however, even as his Princeton professors and fellow students were frightened away from the publication that "came like a clap of thunder!"[99]

Agents served in various ways to advance the newspaper's much broader base of social and financial support. They enabled the newspaper's growing number of readers by ensuring the paper survived the challenges of shipping and postal interference and landed in the hands of prospective readers. In that effort, they largely succeeded, securing at least 800 subscribers to the newspapers and a readership beyond those who officially subscribed.[100] Not only did local black collectives initiate *Freedom's Journal* but agents and readers brought the printed word back to their communities through social dissemination and social reading practices. One witness of an example of these practices recalled his visit to "a slave state" where "one morning, very early" he observed "a mulat[t]o with a newspaper in his hand surrounded by a score of colored men, who were listening, open mouthed, to a very inflammatory article the yellow man was reading. Sometimes the reader dwelt emphatically on particular passages, and I could see his auditors

---

[98] Samuel Miller, "Letter to the editors of the *New-York Observer*," *Freedom's Journal*, September 21, 1827.

[99] Theodore S. Wright, "Address of the Rev. Theodore S. Wright," *Colored American*, October 14, 1837.

[100] Bacon, *Freedom's Journal*, 51, discusses various estimates of the subscription totals and concludes that the Cornish's published reporting of 800 subscribers for *The Rights of All* serves as a useful, perhaps conservative estimate of subscribers.

stamp and clench their hands. I afterward learned that the paper was published in New-York, and addressed to the blacks."[101]

In securing new readers and subscribers, agents set the newspaper before racially and geographically diverse publics. Readers beyond the local community wherein the publication was printed perceived these black-edited periodicals to be an important new venture. In one such report, "a gentleman of high and deserved standing in Albany" wrote to the editors on July 9, 1827, noting his gratitude to receive two issues of the *Journal*. He commented that he was "much pleased with the design, and so far as I have seen, the execution of it," and went on to assert that "no man since the Christian era has engaged in a more important enterprize than the one you have commenced." The correspondent praised the newspaper for its work to remedy the discrimination African Americans faced in society. He understood the periodical a counterpoint to reformers and preachers whose benevolence toward black people was rooted in assertions of black racial inferiority. Beyond the regular subscription cost, this reader enclosed five dollars along with his letter to the editors so that he might receive the paper's first fifteen numbers.[102]

When subscribers proved less than reliable with their payments for the journal, it was often agents themselves who brought forward more substantial contributions hoping to secure the financial survival of the publication. In one such example, John B. Vashon of Pittsburgh, illustrated the way that agents served both to distribute but also financially support the paper to enable liberal practices of distribution that did not always secure readers' payments. Vashon and a handful of other black supporters made additional contributions to *Freedom's Journal* after the

[101] V. *"Walker's Appeal No. 2," The Liberator,* May 14, 1831.

[102] *Freedom's Journal,* July 13, 1827.

departure of many white sponsors over the paper publishing anti-colonization material, to alleviate what may have been six or seven hundred dollars in outstanding debts. [103]

This network built in connection with *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* as the origins of a national movement for black collective empowerment. Hezekiah Grice, who replaced Hacket as the agent to Baltimore, played a pivotal role in conceiving of the convention movement of the 1830s.[104] Grice's various employments as a butcher and ice-peddler placed him on the wharves and markets of Baltimore where he participated in the commercial movement of goods and the more dangerous transit of black literature and people. But beyond his role in local commercial exchanges, Grice's service as an agent for *Freedom's Journal* connected him to an expansive network that aspired toward national and selectively international dissemination. Grice's own subsequent role in 1830 as "one of the moving spirits, if not the moving spirit" behind the establishment of national conventions for free people of color began a movement that refigured and sought to enact some of the aims of these earliest black newspapers.[105] Grice was not the sole participant who evidenced connections between the black newspapers and the convention movement. In addition to Grice and illustrating the long-distance connections common to the publication and the conventions, the *Freedom's Journal* agent to

[103] Thanks to supporters was publicly given by Russwurm, "Our Own Concerns," *Freedom's Journal*, December 21, 1827, J. B. Vashon, Letter to the Editor, *The Colored American*, November 18, 1837. Cited by Bacon, *The History of Freedom's Journal*, 6.

[104] Grice is first listed as an agent in *Freedom's Journal*, July 3, 1827, as a co-agent with Robert Cowley (listed as R. Cooley), until February 22, 1828, and is subsequently listed just by his own name as Baltimore agent.

[105] Dickson D. Bruce, *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 177.

Rochester, New York, Austin Steward, served as the first convention's vice president.[106] Grice and others who had their names appear together on the pages of a black-edited newspaper sought an institutionalized forum where they might actually meet together, foster long-distance connections among African American communities, and develop collaborative strategies for black empowerment.

Many of the same communities where agents moved *Freedom's Journal* and *Rights of All* also supported new, explicitly abolitionist periodicals in 1831. These included the black-edited *African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty* started by John G. Stewart out of Albany and the Boston published *Liberator* edited by William Lloyd Garrison. Other communities even participated in the clandestine movements of print and people in Southern states where these circulations were made illegal and increasingly dangerous for those brave enough to attempt them. This network of agents proved foundational for continued resistance against colonization and the support of immediate abolition.

International Alternatives and Black National Commitments

Opposition to colonization was a consistent early emphasis of these black newspapers, despite Russwurm's prior private interest in partnering with the ACS. His views diverged from

[106] The proceedings of this first meeting which served as a forerunner to the convention movement was published as *Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Colour, for improving their condition in the United States; for purchasing lands; and for the establishment of a settlement in upper Canada, also, The Proceedings of the Convention with their Address to Free Persons of Colour in the United States* (Philadelphia: Printed by J.W. Allen, 1831). Steward first appears as an agent to *Freedom's Journal*, June 15, 1827. In addition to Grice and Steward present at the convention, other delegates who served as agents to newspaper included delegates Charles Leveck, agent to Philadelphia, *The Rights of All*, August 7, 1829; Scipio C. Augustus, agent to New Haven, Connecticut *Freedom's Journal*, January 2, 1829 and continuing through *The Rights of All*; George C. Willis, agent to Providence, Rhode Island for the entirety of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All*; Robert Cowley, listed with Grice as co-agent for Baltimore (listed as R. Cooley) in *Freedom's Journal*, July 3, 1827 through February 22, 1828. For a listing of each of these agents as delegates to the convention, see *Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Colour*, iv. Overlap between representatives to the 1830 convention and the committee of vigilance for promoting the circulation of *The Rights of All* is even more dramatic. See, *The Rights of All*, October 9, 1829.

Cornish and those supporters of Haitian emigration who were willing to consider only black-led emigration proposals. The black republic was perhaps the most radical and tangible example the readers of the newspaper had of a black nation that dismantled slavery and demanded racial equality or even a preferential option for the black people of the western hemisphere.[107]

In contrast to the emigration project of Saunders, the *Journal* did not explicitly promote large-scale black relocation, but acknowledged the interests of many African Americans regarding emigration to Haiti. Through a literary offering of a serialized novel set in Haiti that appeared from January 18 to February 15, 1828, the newspaper invoked Haiti as an embodiment of the community's hopes for black liberty and equality.[108]

The prominence of Haiti in the pages of the *Journal* offered an example of black political empowerment outside the United States that offered freedom from the institution of slavery but also freedom from the racist schemes of the ACS who sought to dictate the terms of emigration. Agents among the African American émigré community provided proof of this promise of mobility. They came back and forth, and moved print that connected the diverse local communities from which they came to new interests and international geographies. African American writing about Haiti and from Haiti moved in ways and at a pace even the former editor

---

[107] Commentary on Haiti in the newspaper came in a recurrent series of articles by a writer named "Africanus," who wrote a number of entries in the paper on the Haitian leader L'Ouverture, and others reflecting on the political state and historic revolution of Haiti. Scholars have suggested was in fact Russwurm writing under a pseudonym.The writings "From the Scrap Book of Africanus" in the newspaper share the same perspective of Russwurm's earlier speech on Haiti, and even some of the phrasing of the speech appears verbatim in the newspaper. See Gabriele Pisarz-Ramirez, "'The Darkest is Before the Break of Day:' Rhetorical Uses of Haiti in the Works of Early African-American Writers," *Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (April 2007), 45; Philip N. Edmondson, "The St. Domingue Legacy in Black Activist and Anti-Slavery Writings in the United States, 1791-1862," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Maryland, 2003), 127 and 142.

[108] In addition to unpacking the power of this narrative with respect to black international alternatives and the function of the newspaper in emboldening the African American community, Frances Smith Foster's scholarship on "Theresa" also argues that this first African American novel or short story written by "S." was penned by none other than Prince Saunders. Frances Smith Foster, "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Theresa's?" *African American Review*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (December, 2006), 631-638.

and distributor Saunders could not have himself achieved. The pseudonymous serialized fiction about the Haitian Revolution would have required a manuscript prepared in Saunders' home office in Haiti to pass through the hands of an agent or courier before its publication, and after it was printed, each installment travelled across more expansive networks of black readers than the black intellectual could have ever hoped to reach through his own extensive personal travel or efforts to disseminate his own published volumes.

Further, agents themselves participated to a degree in the remarkable mobility of print between the United States and Haiti. Gardiner during his tenure with the paper traversed back and forth between Haiti and the United States. Following the conclusion of *The Rights of All* and shortly after initiating some early developments for the national convention movement, the Baltimore agent Grice joined Saunders and Bowler and the émigré community in Haiti. These movements revealed divergent views and experiences with respect to domestic and international prospects for black liberty. However, these communications evidenced shared strategies for black communal empowerment in connection with the coordinated distribution of print.

The unity across this national and even international network of black agents was all the more remarkable in light of the rifts that schemes for African colonization revealed in the broader abolitionist movement in the first half of the nineteenth century. Despite his sustained efforts as a Presbyterian pastor and the deep religious and personal connections that Cornish had to some of the most influential thinkers of his denomination, the editor could not sustain the support of his white fellow-ministers and Presbyterian intellectuals because of his and the publication's forceful criticism of the black-removal schemes of the ACS. Even though *Freedom's Journal* featured the colonization-friendly Paul Cuffe as a profile in black dignity,

and sustained interest in and favor for emigration prospects in Haiti and Canada, that was not enough to satisfy Cornish's pro-colonization associates. Opposition over the issue of colonization came not only from Cornish's religious colleagues, as Wright encountered most forcefully at Princeton, but even resulted in termination of support for the paper from educational reformers including Gerrit Smith who at the time remained fixated on the necessity of African colonization for the free black population of the United States.[109]

Russwurm's writing from the editorial desk eventually revealed his capitulation to the interests of ACS. To the surprise of Cornish and the dismay of many readers, Russwurm by the end of 1828 turned increasingly favorable and supportive of West African colonization. Russwurm's pivot on this position ultimately led to his departure to serve as an administrator in Liberia and the end of the publication. However, in the final number of *Freedom's Journal*, Russwurm revealed his ongoing good will for the black newspaper project and esteem of Cornish. He made an impassioned plea for subscribers and agents to remit remaining balances so that the editor might pay the paper's debts and close accounts in the hope that Cornish might continue the publication.

The potential crisis of Russwurm's ideological surrender and departure across the Atlantic and the end of the run of *Freedom's Journal* might have signaled failure to the agents and communities who subscribed, read, and disseminated the paper. Instead, they again pledged their material and social capital in service to a renewed effort. In October of 1829 "A numerous meeting of people of colour, of the city and county of Philadelphia" gathered to make public

[109] Swift, *Black Prophets*, 36-40.

resolutions and formed what they called "a committee of vigilance."[110] Similar gatherings, also led by James Forten and many of the same black community leaders, had been previously assembled to publicly reject schemes of West African colonization and to consider black-led emigration to Haiti. These concerns still loomed, as was evidenced by Russwurm's willingness to repatriate to Liberia under the banner of colonization.

The gathering resolved that *The Rights of All*, edited and published in New York by Cornish, should be read and supported. "Regard[ing] it as the principle vehicle through which our rights are impartially asserted," the black community of Philadelphia resolved "that we deem it expedient to use every fair and honorable means in our power to increase its subscription list." They explicitly wished for not merely the survival of the paper, but to increase its frequency through the raising of subscription funds, "in order that the Editor may be encouraged to publish it weekly."[111] The twenty-one men appointed to carry out this mission and collect monies for the newspaper represented the leading figures of black churches, aid societies, and businesses in Philadelphia. Their names were recorded in the minutes of the committee and submitted for publication in the newspaper's next issue, so that their efforts would be made public and so that patrons might know from whom they might procure a subscription.[112] Decades later, in the 1830s and 40s vigilance committees were formed in New York City, Albany and even Philadelphia to facilitate the clandestine movements of formerly-enslaved black fugitives, but

---

[110] *The Rights of All*, October 9, 1829.

[111] *The Rights of All*, October 9, 1829.

[112] The men listed as comprising the newly formed committee were Joseph Cassey, Frederick A. Hinton, Geo. Miller, Benjamin Paschal junr., John L. Hart, Charles Shorts, William Whipper, Caleb Hill, William S. Gordon, James Cornish, Junius C. Morel, Scipio Sewel, Cyrus B. Miller, Leonard Harman, James Forten, Elisha B. Brown, William Robinson, Robert B. Ayres, John P. Thompson, James Bird and Peter Gardiner. *The Rights of All*,October 9, 1829.

before these organizations publicly convened for these purposes, Philadelphia's 1829 vigilance committee gathered to support and enable the movement of a black-edited newspaper.

As a result of renewed and vigilant community support, the initial network of agents for the Cornish-edited *The Rights of All*, lists nearly all the same names as the final roster for *Freedom's Journal*. Cornish understood himself as editing the successor newspaper, and using the same funding, advertising, and distribution strategies he used as the editor and general agent for *Freedom's Journal*. In many respects, *The Rights of All* reveals Cornish's own convictions on slavery, religion, temperance, and other issues even more clearly than does the former paper. Even as he understood missions to Africa as a favorable development by the terms of his Western and Euro-centric understanding of civilization, Cornish opined in *The Rights of All*'s opening editorial:

> "My views, and the views of the intelligent of my brethren generally, are the same as ever in respect to colonisation[*sic*]; we believe it may benefit the few that emigrate, and survive, and as a missionary station, we consider it as a grand and glorious establishment, and shall do all in our power to promote its interests, looking forward to the glorious period, when civilisation[*sic*] and religion, shall spread over the vast and important continent of Africa. But as it respects three millions that are now in the United States, and the eight millions that in twenty or twenty five years, will be in this country, we think it in no wise calculated, to meet their wants or ameliorate their condition."[113]

After the end of *Freedom's Journal* and Russwurm's departure, *The Rights of All* was engaged in its own project to build up, empower, and connect black communities within the United States. Cornish understood the paper's role in the American public sphere as tearing down not just slavery, but also the ideologies of racial inequality that promoted both slavery and colonization. He felt his own newspaper work and community building within "this great

[113] *Rights of All*, May 29, 1829.

Republick[sic]" must encourage "the improvement of all its parts."[114] His was not just a project of black respectability. He believed his efforts and those of black communities the vanguard of social righteousness on a national scale.

Believing that "every constituent must become perfect, as far as human perfectability goes, before the body politic can be made perfect," Cornish saw his efforts to distribute print as the perfecter of freedoms and equal rights. He believed these transcended local projects of black propriety and education, and built through print a more righteous and exalted nation even as it boldly chanted down the sins of slavery and racial injustice. Cornish claimed that he was "as much interested in the General improvement in Society, as any other citizen; and hopes through the divine blessing, to devote these pages and his other humble abilities successfully, to the general benefits of the Society." But this prayer illustrated a greater interest than most and a more earnest belief in the power of the printed word. He argued that "as humanity, and more especially the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, inculcate sympathy and love, to the oppressed and the afflicted, this paper will more especially be devoted to the rights and interests of the coloured population." Cornish elaborated that his paper served as a corrective to the frequent slander of black people by other organs of the public media, and portray truth and dignity concerning the black population.[115] His work in print was bound up in his faith in God's work of justice and love as articulated in the word of scripture, and the unbound periodicals he printed were quite literally carried out by black communities.

---

[114] *Rights of All*, May 29, 1829.

[115] *Rights of All*, May 29, 1829.

Conclusion

Examining the distribution of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* illustrates local engagement by advertisers, agents, and readers and the growth of a long-distance network. Cornish and those who founded the papers invoked national unity on the printed page and worked to enact it through the material exchanges that moved their publication. Specific practices for procuring subscriptions and ensuring payments were neither revolutionary nor all that successful in the long run.

In order to acknowledge Cornish's service as a pioneer of black periodical culture many scholars, textbooks, and public memorials refer to him as an editor or journalist. But this would not be gathered from Cornish's own last will and testament near the close of his life. Early in his pastoral career white Presbyterian ministers and elite philanthropists failed to lend sufficient financial support for the black congregation Cornish founded, but he continued to count some of them among his most trusted friends. He opposed many within his denomination who pushed for colonization yet still wished to support church growth in West Africa, requesting that one-quarter of the sale value of one of his properties be donated to "the Mendi African Mission." Though he never received an opportunity to study at Princeton, he bequeathed half of the proceeds from two of his properties "to the old School Theological Seminary located at Princeton New Jersey" so that he could support "the education of young men for the Gospel Ministry." He expressed his "desire that a[t] least two young men shall be continually in the course of education by the funds to be derived from my estate." Enumerating these intentions toward the end of his days reflected a vocational constant from his first days of pastoral service. Cornish made no mention of his

editorial or journalistic labors as a pioneer in the development of African American periodical culture, and in his will he simply referred to himself as a "Minister of the Gospel."[116]

Cornish's work with *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* did not define his sense of calling and could not sustain these publications. The liberal strategies and occasional gratuitous distribution of these newspapers ultimately disadvantaged the black newspapers' economic viability. Despite the publications' fits and starts and ultimate unsustainability, the founders' and operators' aspirations toward extensive black community collaboration were partially realized in the practices of long-distance print exchange. This network moved printed copies from hand to hand and community to community. Supporters, contributors, advertisers and agents in some cases continued to serve these roles in other publications and for other causes that they and their communities deemed worthy of their support. In this collaborative work, editors, agents, advertisers, and contributors who supported these publications and sought to move them across long-distances did not ultimately sustain long-running black-edited periodicals. Their efforts were at times thwarted, copies were delayed, lost, never paid for, diverted, or undelivered. However, these involvements emboldened many of the same operators to create new publications or endeavor to print their own perspectives and community interests. They laid the groundwork for subsequent incendiary and prolific abolitionist print culture and used these networks to effect its expansive, threatening, and ultimately illegal movement.

[116] See probate entry for "Samuel E. Cornish," Wills and Indexes, 1787-1923, New York. Surrogate's Court (Kings County), Wills, Vol 0021-0022, 1858-1860, in New York, Wills and Probate Records, 1659-1999. Online: Ancestry.com. Regarding friendship and trust, Cornish was not only close to white Presbyterian minister George Potts, to whom he gifted his most personal effects: "my Gold Watch and Seals as a token of my great esteem to my friend the Reverend George Potts." He entrusted Potts and his black Presbyterian colleague and periodical editor Charles B. Ray to serve as the executors of his estate.

Though individual black newspapers were relatively short lived, these efforts were foundational in the enduring significance of the newspaper in African American and abolitionist print culture throughout the nineteenth century. Their collaborative efforts shifted the strategies of abolitionist print by formally recognizing black men as creators and distributors, and building up local communities and long-distance connections through print. Beyond just featuring black voices and printing black writers, these papers publicized the diverse concerns of black people and promoted their empowerment. Together, these collaborative efforts ultimately served to distribute a liberating word.

CHAPTER FOUR

NETWORKS OF BLACK ACTIVISM AND WALKER'S *APPEAL*

In September 1829 David Walker wrote an antislavery manifesto that he wanted to get his text into the hands of black readers as soon as possible. Despite his own participation in the strategies that moved black edited periodicals, Walker did not merely submit his writing for serial publication. He had his own work printed in a seventy-six page pamphlet entitled *Walker's Appeal in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Colored Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America*.[1] Rather than slowly grow a network of subscribers and public agents that characterized the distribution of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All*, Walker endeavored a very different strategy for his text's extensive dissemination.

Walker's activism and literary production were embedded in networked efforts for black empowerment. His aspirations to embolden and unite a black American citizenry through informal but strategic networks for the exchange of abolitionist communications were informed by his own history and mobility. Walker made use of these connections to attempt numerous, diverse, and covert channels. For all his urgency, Walker waged no indiscriminate campaign to push his text as an individual abolitionist provocateur. Walker envisioned a black audience as the primary readers and hearers—and distributors—of his *Appeal*. His Southern mobility

[1] David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829* (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1829).

evidenced Walker's ability to navigate various contexts and his civic participation and advocacy in New England suggests his sense of collaborative imperative. He urged readers to share his text, and provided typographical clues for how they might read his words aloud, ensuring its reception among the illiterate. At least one public channel for the *Appeal's* distribution in the North existed, but Walker made strategic choices regarding the content and form of his *Appeal* in hopes that the text might also move by informal exchange and reach prospective black readers and hearers throughout the United States, including those in the South. Walker composed a document that spoke from the diversity of geographies and social networks in which Walker lived. He published and sought to disseminate a single pamphlet that might represent and reach an extensive black citizenry throughout the United States and beyond.

Writing the History of the *Appeal*

Historical memory and scholarly interpretations of David Walker's *Appeal* reveal deep racial and ideological rifts in the American experience. Walker's work remained important among his immediate ideological descendants. Within two decades of Walker's death, abolitionist and Presbyterian Minister Henry Highland Garnet offered the first account of Walker's life and assessment of his text as early as 1848, when he reprinted the *Appeal* alongside his own *Address to the Slaves of the United States of America.* Garnet argued the *Appeal*'s historical importance as "it is 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."[2] Frederick Douglass continued that tradition, reflecting in 1883 that "Walker, a colored man, whose appeal against slavery startled the land like a trump of coming judgment,

[2] David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, With a Brief Sketch of His Life. By Henry Highland Garnet. And Also, Garnet's Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*, ed. Henry Highland Garnet (New York: 1848).

was before either Mr. [William Lloyd] Garrison or Mr. [Benjamin] Lundy."[3] These black abolitionists used Walker to reject assertions that Garrison originated calls for immediate abolitionism and to counter the tendency of the white American mainstream to direct the spotlight of popular memory onto white abolitionists and relegate efforts of their black predecessors to shadows.

Even as black abolitionists preserved the work of Walker in public memory, a few white abolitionist contemporaries and their children also wished to credit the boldness of Walker's *Appeal*. White antislavery advocate Samuel J. May wrote in his memoirs that Walker stoked "the excitement which had become so general and furious against the Abolitionists throughout the slaveholding states" before and independent of Garrison and other white proponents of immediate abolition. May offered early notes on the work's publication history and the importance of Walker's efforts to promote the work's distribution.[4] Garrison's own children also preserved memory of Walker's *Appeal* as "original, able, and important" even within their account memorializing the efforts of their father.[5]

After the failures of Reconstruction, early twentieth-century scholarly appraisals openly judged Walker and his *Appeal* as dangerous and deranged. An 1908 monograph describes the

---

[3] Frederick Douglass, "Our Destiny is Largely in Our Own Hands: An Address Delivered in Washington, D.C., on 16 April 1883," in John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan, eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers* 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 69.

[4] Samuel J. May, *Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, and Co. 1869), 133. May also reflects that this work was published in September of 1829. May says, 133-134 that the "pamphlet of more than eighty octavo pages, [was] ably written, very impassioned, and well adapted to its purpose. The second and third editions of it were published in less than twelve months. And Mr. Walker devoted himself until his death, which happened soon after, to the distribution of copies of his *Appeal* to colored men who were able to read it in every State of the Union."

[5] Wendell Phillips and Francis Jackson Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of his Life, Told by his Children*, Vol. I (New York: 1885), 159-160.

Appeal as "a most bloodthirsty document."[6] This treatment suggests Walker's work offered an exceptional case of black abolitionist provocation that was condemned by and made matters worse for leading white abolitionists.[7] Fear and derision of Walker's influence continued in an 1936 article discussing the circulation of Walker's "dangerous and revolutionary" pamphlet," in which historian Clement Eaton asserted that suppression of the *Appeal* and the subsequent repressive laws were well-deserved.[8]

The intellectual labors of black historians and the rise of African American history redeemed Walker's *Appeal* from the contempt of early nineteenth-century white historians. W.E.B. Du Bois in 1940 marked the ideological significance of "that tremendous indictment of slavery by a colored man published in 1829."[9] A few years after Du Bois, the young John Hope Franklin considered Walker's *Appeal* in an essay presenting the "virtually free" status of many

---

[6] Alice D. Adams, *The Neglected Period of Anti-slavery in America, 1808-1831* (Boston: 1908), 94.

[7] Ibid., 94. Adams suggests Walker was roundly condemned by Lundy, Garrison, and white antislavery writers, and that the *Appeal* only served as "pretext for a large number of attacks upon the abolitionists, and later perhaps on Garrison." Adams, 91, also generally presents free and enslaved black Americans as ignorant and silenced victims. She asserts that there exists "no definite account of any real anti-slavery work by the colored people [of the South], save assistance to fugitives and comfort and sympathy to the abused, when it was possible," and that even Norther black communities faced such educational, economic, and social limitations resulting in minimal "participation" in the antislavery movement. Adams marvels of black Northerners that "Few were educated sufficiently to write or speak publicly in behalf of their people; fewer still had money or social position to put their sayings or writings into a form preserved to our day. Under the circumstances the fact that we have record of any such negroes is almost wonderful." Her dramatic statements emphasizing ignorance and victimization and minimizing black influence and agency seem out of touch with her subsequent discussion of James Forten, Russell Parrott, Samuel Cornish, Richard Allen, John Brown Russwurm, and other leaders of black-led emigration and the colored conventions movement in addition to Walker; see 92-93.

[8] Clement Eaton, "A Dangerous Pamphlet in the Old South," *Journal of Southern History* 2 (August 1936), 326-329. Eaton leans into this adjective "dangerous" throughout his analysis, and suggests that the second and third "editions were more dangerous and revolutionary than the first one," as on 324. For Eaton's own assessment of the ethical imperative of suppression, see 333: "That this publication with its doctrine of servile revolt and its instigation to commit illegal acts deserved suppression hardly admits of a doubt." Eaton also copied his own wording in his subsequent monograph, Clement Eaton, *Freedom of Thought in the Old South* (Durham: 1940), 125.

[9] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1940), 193.

enslaved black North Carolinians in the era of Walker's upbringing and in consideration of restrictive manumission laws the state revised the year after the appearance of Walker's text.[10] Even as he cited Eaton's research, Franklin's own treatment esteemed the *Appeal* as "one of the most powerful antislavery tracts written by any of the enemies of the institution.[11] Franklin also discussed Walker in his seminal 1947 monograph, *From Slavery to Freedom*, arguing that it was the *Appeal* and other black-authored antislavery texts in 1829, closely followed by publication of Garrison's *Liberator* and the rebellion led by Nat Turner that most significantly signaled the growth of immediate abolitionism.[12] Franklin's important interpretation of African American history rejects the denials of black agency that typified earlier writing and frames Walker's work within a tradition of "Black Abolitionists."[13]

By the 1960s, white historians of slavery and abolition joined Du Bois and Franklin in favorable appraisals of Walker's *Appeal* and its historical significance. Dwight Lowell Dumond praised the *Appeal* as "one of the greatest pieces of anti-slavery literature" in his magisterial history of American abolitionism.[14] By 1965, Herbert Aptheker explored the historical context

---

[10] John Hope Franklin, "Slaves Virtually Free in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 28, No. 3. (July, 1943), 284-310.

[11] Franklin, "Slaves Virtually Free," 288. First quotation cites *Laws passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina, 1830-1831* (Raleigh, 1831), 10. On 289, Franklin also cites that another law passed in the wake of Walker's *Appeal* also restricted "all persons from teaching slaves to read and write, the use of figures excepted," citing the same *Laws*, 11.

[12] John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947), 240, discusses Walker, Garrison, and Turner, as together indicating a shift in the abolitionist movement from 1829-1831. On 247, Franklin stresses the importance of 1829 not only for Walker's text, but also noting publications of at least two other antislavery writings including Robert A. Young's *Ethiopian Manifest and George Moses Horton*'s Raleigh, North Carolina published *Hope of Liberty*.

[13] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 246.

[14] Dwight Lowell Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 329.

of Walker's *Appeal* and explicitly concurred with Dumond's opinions of the *Appeal* in his reprinting.[15] Aptheker presents Walker as "one of the great Prophets" of black theologies of liberation and argues that his *Appeal* bore direct relationship to slave rebellion in the South.[16] In his introductory material's final chapter, Aptheker suggests Walker's enduring value for efforts to critique "the hypocrisy of a jim crow Christianity" in the historian's own civil rights era. But the leftist bent and presentist urgency in his work earned at least one sneering review that discounted the introduction of "Aptheker, the American Communist dialectician," and saw historical value only in the volume's reprint of Walker's "most extreme, incendiary, and extravagant language."[17] Despite shared Marxist sensibilities, Eugene Genovese wrote a critical review of Aptheker's work and another 1965 reprint of the *Appeal* edited by another historian. Genovese's lauds efforts to read and reconsider the *Appeal*, but finds Aptheker's argument "erroneous" in overstating the severity of American slavery and asserting that black people within that system generally "fought desperately, bravely, and consistently for freedom." Genovese's review essay meditates upon Walker's "biting indictment against the Negroes themselves" rather than "pretending to see wonderful revolutionary virtues and militancy in his people—in the manner of present-day liberal and radical historians."[18] This substantive analysis of Walker offered Genovese proved consistent with and foreshadowed the publication of his own

---

[15] Herbert Aptheker, *One Continual Cry: David Walker's* Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World *1829-1830: Its Setting and its Meaning* (New York: Published for the American Institute for Marxist Studies, by Humanities Press, Inc., 1965), 5.

[16] Aptheker, *One Continual Cry*, 15.

[17] "Review of *One Continual Cry: David Walker's* Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World *1829-1830. Its Setting and its Meaning*," the *Georgia Historical Quarterly,"* Vol. 50, No. 3, (September 1966), 348. The derision of Aptheker's leftist affiliations continues, to suggest that his treatment of Walker's *Appeal* "presents its background in the most approved Marxian style."

[18] Genovese, "Review of *David Walker's Appeal*, by Charles M. Wiltse (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965) and *One Continual Cry*, by Aptheker," *Science & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer, 1966), 363; 364.

seminal thesis about the limits on both planter brutality and black resistance within the slave system's hegemonic paternalism.[19]

With the rise of African American history and reprinting of Walker's *Appeal* during the civil rights era, more scholars began to explore the local contexts that shaped Walker's life and literary work. New material recovered aspects of his life and information about the movement of his text. Scholars who contributed to these recoveries from the 1950s to the 1970s examined specific Southern locations and offered new documentary findings where Walker's appeal was distributed or referenced.[20] In the same era, Gayraud S. Wilmore's history of African American Christianity critiques historians for "shamefully" neglecting Walker, arguing that Walker's "genius as a lay theologian and prophet of black radical religion is indisputable."[21]

The most comprehensive treatment of Walker to date is Peter Hinks' monograph that interprets the *Appeal* in the context of antislavery resistance. Arguing that "Walker's *Appeal*, and his efforts to circulate it among the slave population, was one of the boldest and most innovative plans for slave empowerment and resistance ever executed in America," Hinks carefully examines the intellectual and religious traditions present in the *Appeal* and Walker's southern circulation.[22] Hinks makes careful use of the previous scholarship on Walker, to state

---

[19] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974).

[20] Examples include John E. Talmadge, "The Burritt Mystery: Partisan Journalism in Antebellum Georgia," *Georgia Review* 8 (Fall 1954): 332-341; Cary Howard, "The Georgia Reaction to David Walker's *Appeal*," MA Thesis (University of Georgia, 1967); Ira Berlin, editor and introduction, "After Nat Turner: A Letter from the North," *Journal of Negro History* 55 (April 1970): 144-151; William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Walker's *Appeal* Comes to Charleston: A Note, and Documents, *Journal of Negro History* 59 (1974): 187-292; Marshall Rachleff, "Document: David Walker's Southern Agent," *Journal of Negro History* 62 (January 1977): 100-103.

[21] Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972), 54.

[22] Peter P. Hinks, *"To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren": David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), xv.

the importance of Walker's *Appeal* not as the sole cause of "the turbulence of 1829-1831," but as a text that acted "in concert with the insurrectionary spirit, broadened its meaning and hope, and sought to direct it in a way that would unite blacks throughout the South."[23] More recent treatments by Timothy Patrick McCarthy and Robert S. Levine have situated Walker's *Appeal* and its distribution strategies in the broader context of black antislavery print of free black Northerners. McCarthy offers close readings of both *Freedom's Journal* and the *Appeal*, with more in depth analysis of the former.[24] Levine pays attention to the practices of print culture and distribution of Walker's *Appeal* to argue that Walker aimed to use the *Appeal* "to achieve a circulation of his text rivaling that of the nation's increasingly secular newspapers." He presents the analysis that "for Walker, black nationalism was a matter of circulation, and in *Appeal* he sought to national circulation with a national (and even international) black voice—a voice, it must be emphasized, that exists in print."[25] However, Levine's placing of Walker within the context of an increasingly sectional American periodical culture after the Missouri Compromise draws more upon Walker's connection to the preceding distribution network of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* without specifically interrogating how the strategies for dissemination of the *Appeal* diverged from those of the black newspaper networks in which he was an active participant.

---

[23] Hinks, *To Awaken,* 172.

[24] Timothy Patrick McCarthy, "To Plead Our own Cause:' Black Print Culture and the Origins of American Abolitionism," *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, eds. McCarthy, Timothy Patrick and John Stauffer (New York: The New Press, 2006), 144.

[25] Robert S. Levine, "Circulating the Nation: David Walker, the Missouri Compromise, and the Rise of the Black Press," *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 18.

In the current era where Walker is well recognized and included in any major synthesis and textbook treatments of the abolitionist movement or early nineteenth-century African American history, the most innovative scholarship in recent years draws upon methods from the History of the Book and scholarship on print culture. Marcy J. Dinius' research on the radical typography of Walker is perhaps one of the most interesting and important contributions in this regard.[26] Dinius makes a compelling argument that Walker's "voice and the emotion in the text are visible and thereby audible in its typography—in the printed form of words that Walker speaks through the text and wants voiced to those who cannot read."[27] Her scholarship on this radical typography not only pays attention to the material text Walker wrote or dictated for publication, but also how those details encouraged and informed the oral dissemination of Walker's *Appeal*.

The research of Benjamin Beck also pays close attention to the *Appeal* beyond the pamphlet's content and in consideration of inscriptions and marginalia on extant copies. Beck explores the textual practices of what he terms "everyday abolitionism," revealing the reading practices of at least one white northerner and the ways the book may have been gifted among northern white abolitionists and to institutions that ensured these texts' preservation. Beck argues these material details illustrate "a different use value than what is usually assumed for Walker's *Appeal*, one of careful consideration and methodical reading which sharply counters the "rushed" radical tenor usually ascribed to the pamphlet."[28]

---

[26] Marcy J. Dinius, "'Look!! Look!!! at This!!!!': The Radical Typography of David Walker's 'Appeal,'" *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 126, no. 1 (January 2011): 55-72.

[27] Dinius, "'Look!! Look!!! At This!!!!,'" 57.

[28] Ben Beck, "David Walker's 'Appeal' and Everyday Abolition," MA Thesis (University of Colorado at Boulder, 2011), 8.

In a different direction than Beck's analysis of the white Northern reader, my research also takes seriously the extant material texts of Walker's *Appeal* to explore the various methods by which Walker intended to reach black readers through the largely informal distribution efforts of agents who moved the *Appeal* among black communities, including and especially in the slaveholding states of the South.[29]

Walker's Southern Upbringing and Mobility

"What I have written," Walker assures his reader, "is what I have seen and heard myself. No man may think that my book is made up of conjecture--I have travelled and observed nearly the whole of those things myself, and what little I did not get by my own observation, I received from those among the whites and blacks, in whom the greatest confidence may be placed."[30] Walker was most likely born and raised in the Lower Cape Fear region of southeastern North Carolina, where according to historians, free and enslaved African Americans possessed great skill in a range of trades and relative mobility.[31] While details evade confirmation, Walker was likely born sometime in 1796 or 1797 in Wilmington, North Carolina, the son of a free black mother and an enslaved father.[32] The various states of freedom and bondage, and relative

---

[29] I must credit Leon Jackson for a series of lively, generative email exchanges and phone conversations on these subjects. Jackson's unpublished research into David Walker's used clothing business, his probate records, and his frequent appearances in court in Boston have already shaped some of my own thought on the subject and how important the illegal used clothing market. Of note, Jackson has pointed out to me that Walker's facility with the Boston legal system as both a defendant and a plaintiff would invariably shape his distribution efforts. I am grateful for his generosity sharing sources and information for research collaboration, and I look forward to the forthcoming publication of his innovative investigations of Walker's relationships to other black Bostonians, his work in the clothing trade, and frequent appearances in court.

[30] Walker, *Appeal*, 86.

[31] See Franklin, "Slaves Virtually Free," argues the "virtual" freedom for many of the region's residents; Hinks, *To Awaken*, 9, describes the "black world" of the region as "skilled, prolific, and enslaved."

[32] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 10-11, sheds doubt upon the September 28, 1785 birthdate given for Walker by Henry Highland Garnet, *Walker's Appeal, With a Brief Sketch of His Life. By Henry Highland Garnet. And Also,*

mobility Walker experienced in his Southern upbringing and relocation to the North speak to the diverse geographies and people who shaped Walker's abolitionism. The author and the distribution of his pamphlet specifically utilized the organizational connections of African American Protestant Christian communities and informally passed through the hands of black pastors. Exposures to black evangelical Christianity and his witness to violence and discrimination against black Americans in both his Southern upbringing and his Northern relocation shaped not only who Walker was, but also influenced what he wrote and how he sought to disseminate his *Appeal*. As, such, Walker's background offers valuable clues as to where or through whom he aspired to strategically distribute his *Appeal*.

Christian instruction offered early routes to literacy for black people of Walker's natal region. As early as 1767 the Anglican Associates of Dr. Bray noted some degree of literacy among enslaved black and Native Americans in some middle and Southern colonial locations, and by 1770, these efforts sent printed materials with "directions to a Friend there to distribute them among those Negroes who can read a little." The Anglicans' limited and flagging presence, however, meant that black reading and access to printed texts would have relied primarily on the informal educational efforts of African Americans themselves, who developed traditions of literacy and autonomous educational mechanisms in Wilmington and the surrounding region.[33]

Garnet's Address to the Slaves of the United States of America (New York: 1848), v-vii. While this requires a rejection of the date given Garnet by Walker's widow, Mrs. Dewson, it actually confirms the age Dewson gives for Walker at the time of his death, that being age 34 in August of 1830. Hinks gives additional evidence independent of Garnet's reliance on Dewson, that seems confirm this more likely date. At stake for Hinks, is his suggestion that a later birthdate makes better sense of Walker's absence from the historical record in Wilmington.

[33] John Barnett to John Waring, June 9, 1770, in John C. Van Horne, ed., *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery: The American Correspondence of the Associates of Dr. Bray, 1717-1777* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 273; Hinks, *To Awaken*, 15.

Not only did African Americans devise their own means to literacy apart from early Anglican efforts, but black leaders were the most steadfast organizers of Methodist faith communities in Wilmington and along the lower Cape Fear during Walker's early life in the region. Methodist itinerants, including a few black preachers, fostered the growing Methodist movement and established a number of worshiping communities where black members and church leaders variously enjoyed some degree of autonomy or achieved leadership roles within racially integrated congregations. Wilmington boasted hundreds of black worshipers in the first decade of the nineteenth century, led by black elders and "stewards" who were appointed by Francis Asbury himself and whom the noted Methodist visited repeatedly. [34] Because Methodism was the only formally established church in Wilmington that actively encouraged black membership and religious participation during his early years in the town, this congregation might have been a source of Walker's early religious education and predated his connections with black Methodist leaders as an adult in New England. Black worshippers in Wilmington operated with a great deal of autonomy and relied upon black leadership until the joining of white members gave way to white oversight by 1813. Eventually, the organization of Wilmington's racially integrated but white-controlled Methodist church overtook and subsumed the African Methodist meeting house that birthed the congregation.[35]

---

[34] Asbury indicated no less than 878 black Methodists in Wilmington in1803 in contrast to only a few whites. Asbury met in 1803 with Wilmington's black elders whom he appointed. He documented meeting with them in his travels, through 1810.Hinks, *To Awaken*, 18, citing Asbury in Clark, *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, 2:325, 380, 628. William Wightman, *Life of William Capers, D.D., One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; Including an autobiography* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1902), 160, indicates that Asbury visited Wilmington again in 1813 and stayed with the white Reverend William Capers who had recently been assigned to serve that church.

[35] Wightman, *Life of William Capers*, 161 describes the financial contributions of Wilmington's black Methodists that led to the purchase of the land for the wooden meeting house that served as the African Methodist meeting house. Reverend William Capers, the white Methodist preacher stationed to the pulpit was transparent about this

Walker's religious formation was clearly the product of both black efforts for religious autonomy and white efforts for suppression. The "almost exclusively" black Methodist church in Wilmington saw their meeting house burned to the ground and a white Methodist preacher in their community thrown in jail at some point during Walker's early years.[36] The patterns of violence against black congregations of the Cape Fear threatened the lives of black preachers and leaders, sometimes destroyed austere sanctuaries forcing clandestine and impermanent gatherings for worship, and in multiple cases featured the inclusion of white parishioners giving way to racial segregation and black surrender of church control and property. Even so, Methodism in the Cape Fear region perhaps owed more to the work of a famed black Methodist preacher in Fayetteville than it had to the sporadic efforts of whites throughout the region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. According to a white minister of Wilmington, the black preacher Henry Evans was "confessedly the father of the Methodist Church, white and black, in Fayetteville, and the best preacher of his time in that quarter." Evans, a free black shoemaker from Virginia endured years of persecution in his efforts to minister among the black Christians of Fayetteville, sometimes withdrawing "to the sand-hills, out of town, and held meetings in the woods, changing his appointments from place to place" in order to avoid legal challenges from the city's council and the constant threat of mob violence.[37]

---

transition, which saw the church's black founders and stewards required to construct the galleries to which their overwhelming majority of the membership would be relegated in the sanctuary.

[36] Wightman, *Life of William Capers*, 162. Capers

[37] Wightman, *Life of William Capers*, 125. See 127 for an account of the growth of the white membership at Evans' church in Fayetteville. The white members segregated worship space and took control of the church and Evans bequeathed the church property to trustees. Capers, 128-129, relates a quotation attributed to Evans' last testimony to his church the Sunday before his death in 1810, in which he also discusses repeated threats against his life for the sake of his preaching. The deed to the church being passed from Evans to the trustees of the church is clear in the extant last will and testament of Henry Evans, in Wills and Estate Papers (Cumberland County),

In his early life in Wilmington, Walker would have certainly heard of and been witness to a range of threats to black faith communities and these worshippers efforts to persist in autonomous worship and instruction. In his *Appeal,* Walker described white "patrols" who terrorized black worshipers. His *Appeal* describes lurking mobs who would "wait almost in breathless silence for the poor colored people to commence singing and praying to the Lord our God" and "the wretches would burst in upon them and drag them out and commence beating them as they would rattlesnakes—many of whom, thy would beat so unmercifully, that they would hardly be able to crawl for weeks and sometimes for months."[38]

Walker likely left Wilmington for Charleston, South Carolina between 1815 and 1820, where he certainly experienced similar struggles by black religious communities seeking autonomy in Christian worship and institutions for black advancement. As John Saillant has recently shown, the violence against the interracial but majority-black Methodists of Charleston had a deep history preceding the alleged conspiracy in 1822 that led to organized violence against the city's black churches. By 1815, Charleston's black Methodists numbered 3,793 members, and that number grew to 5,690 by 1818. Walker's likely arrival in the city during or immediately after that period may have placed him among those who contributed to the growth of the black Methodist church there, and would have offered him no shortage of opportunity to find religious classes led by and made up of black believers. However, this same period saw the autonomy of black religious leaders subject to increased scrutiny. The local white minister suspected subversive use of the "funds collected from black Methodists, which had remained

---

1663-1978, North Carolina. Division of Archives and History; Cumberland, North Carolina, in Original Wills, Crow, Harriet E - Hair, George Franklin, in folder "Evans, Henry - 1811," in North Carolina, Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998, image 883, online: Ancestry.com.

[38] Walker, *Appeal,* 37. A more extended quotation of this passage is also reprinted in Hinks, *To Awaken,* 20.

with black class leaders" and ultimately restricted black class leaders from receiving offerings from the black parishioners. In response, black class leaders traveled to Philadelphia in 1816 and 1818, where Morris Brown and Henry Drayton were on their second visit ordained elder and deacon, respectively, in the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal church headed by Bishop Richard Allen. Their ordination set the stage for the founding of an autonomous black Methodist church in Charleston named Zion and comprised of more than 4,300 members, representing an exodus of more than 80 percent of the black membership of Charleston's interracial but white-controlled Methodist Bethel congregation. [39]

Though the religious institutions of Charleston struggled with a long tradition of religious violence that threatened the growth of these efforts for black religious autonomy, the free black people in Charleston sought to build various autonomous black social institutions that included civic and mutual aid, education, and burial rights. These organizations and the successful business endeavors of the city's black leaders were likely known to Walker or provided a model for his own social mobility. Before his arrival, some of the earliest efforts to establish black civic organizations in the city dated back to the city's influx of black and mixed African and French descended immigrants to Charleston at the time of the Haitian Revolution.[40] A number

[39] John Daniel Saillant, "Before 1822: Anti-Black Attacks on Charleston Methodist Churches from 1786 to Denmark Vesey's Execution," *Common-place* 16, no. 2 (Winter 2016). Saillant points out that with respect to these charges "a modern account mentions that some donations were used to purchase the freedom of slaves who were to be sold away, but there was no indication in the primary documentation that Methodist preachers objected to that as corrupt."

[40] As early as 1790, Charleston was home to an influx of people of African and French descent who had left the colony of Saint-Domingue during the early developments of the Haitian Revolution. Within their first year in the city these lighter-skinned people of color formed the Brown Fellowship Society in Charleston, and a Society of Free Dark Men of Color open to black men of darker complexions formed the following year. More organizations formed in the city by 1813 as well, including the Humane and Friendly Society, the Minors Moralist Society, and the Friendly Union. See Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow and the Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 197-198. Hinks, *Appeal*, 23-24 points out these societies and that they often "restricted their membership to the upper echelons of free black society—and even to

of these societies joined the church in Charleston to educate and advocate for the rights of the free black community Walker joined.[41] Walker's subsequent trade and Methodist affiliations would have given him good reason to know Charles Corr among the black leaders of Charleston. Corr was a prominent founder of the church and a black tailor who certainly interacted regularly with those in the city's clothing trades.[42] He was listed alongside Brown and Drayton as a petitioner for the black burial ground that likely predated the founding of the separate congregation.[43]

Blowback from the alleged Denmark Vesey conspiracy in 1822 hit the black community of Charleston and the city's black Methodist church hard. The court sentenced twenty-one

---

complexional distinctions within that caste…—they nevertheless offered financial and educational assistance to impoverished and orphaned free black children and showed some concern for the situation of free blacks in general."

[41] In one example from during Walker's likely presence in Charleston, the Minors Moralist society in 1819 began to educate an eight-year-old Daniel Alexander Payne, who was born to free black parents London and Martha Payne who attended the Methodist Episcopal Church. This effort toward black education identified the adolescent Payne's superior intellect, arranged for his elite tutoring, and contributed to his sense of calling to start his own school in 1830, where he taught both free black children during the day and enslaved black adults at night. Daniel Alexander Payne, *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Publishing Company, 1968), 15-19.

[42] On Corr, see Alexander W. Wayman, *Cyclopædia of African Methodism* (Baltimore: Methodist Episcopal Book Depository D. H. Carroll, Agent, 1882), 44. Hinks Appendix A: Analysis of Names on the Charleston AME Petition" lists Corr and mentions his trade as a Tailor, noting that he is listed in that capacity on the City Directory in 1816, 1819, and 1822.

[43] Corr, with Brown and Drayton who would become future ministers in Charleston's autonomous black Methodist church were joined in an earlier, but undated petition signed by 19 other free black men of Charleston.Petition signed by Morris Brown, Henry Drayton, Charles Corr, William Eden, Marcus Brown (his X mark), Abraham Ash (his X mark), Malcom Brown, Amos Crukshank (his X mark), Harry Bull (his X mark), Smart Simpson, John Matthewes, Peter Matthewes, Isack Matthews, Water Hanes?, John Ancrum?, James Mack, Joseph Brown, Benjamin Berry, James Holmes, Cato Mack, Aleck Harleston (his X mark), J.S. (James Savage/his mark/). Names listed at close of petition: "Free Persons of Color from Charleston belonging to the Methodist Denomination Petition Asking for a Burial Ground in the Village of Wraggs-Borough," (no date), Mss. Item number 03997, in Series S165015: Petitions to the General Assembly, State of South Carolina, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, accessible online at: http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/SearchResults.aspx. The names of white subscribers who supported the petition included Robert Wilson, Robert Howard, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, W. S. Smith, Thomas W. Bacot, and Simon Magwood.

church members to death, three were ordered to unfree labor in workhouses, and ten were transported out of the state, including three church members who were acquitted of wrongdoing but exiled nonetheless.[44] Charles Corr's family and his cohort of Methodist leaders Brown, Drayton, and Cruckshanks, were among a large number of free black people who appear to have left Charleston shortly after Vesey and his fellow conspirators were tried and judged. Walker might have joined this exodus.[45] Among a highly literate cohort of free black men who in their youth benefited from the educational and religious institutions built by black founders in Charleston, Walker seems to have joined those who left the city in the wake of the conspiracy.[46] Their departure coincided with a larger movement of free black people departing the slave-holding South during the 1820s, who relocated in large number to Northeastern and Middle Atlantic cities, such as Boston where Walker established himself, Philadelphia where the Corr family resettled and joined the ranks of AME clergy. Walker's mobility and subsequent

[44] Though the proceedings and the sentences located the conspiracy most firmly among the enslaved, at least two of those implicated and sentenced were free black church members. In addition, those church leaders who had been absent from the city attending the AME Conference in Philadelphia during the proceedings had little hope of returning to residency in Charleston. See Hinks, "Appendix B: Salve and Free Black Members of the African Church Who Were Associated with the Vesey Affair," *To Awaken*, 263-264.

[45] Corr and his family moved to Philadelphia, where he and his son, Joseph M. Corr, who received formal education in Charleston, were both ordained in the AME church. This education that the younger Corr began at Charleston, and the zeal which was not tempered by this experience of relocation. By 1824 Joseph was considered by some "the best educated, and …the most gifted preacher" in the AME's Philadelphia Conference, and was named secretary for that year's annual proceedings despite being "the youngest man in the Conference." Payne, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, 42.

[46] Charles Corr's son, Joseph certainly left Charleston with a formidable level of education that served him well in Philadelphia, and Daniel Alexander Paine also received early education in Charleston. The younger Corr, served the AME denomination as the General Book Steward and publisher of the church's Hymn Book and Discipline before his own untimely death just five years after that of Walker. Wayman, *Cyclopædia of African Methodism*, 44. After the Vesey verdicts, the black Methodist Church in Charleston church building itself was razed to the ground, and renewed efforts to suppress the activities of Charleston's black Methodists led Corr, his family, and a number of free black residents of Charleston to leave the city. Among the remnants, the much younger Daniel Alexander Payne later recollected that "the slaveholders of South Carolina were not satisfied with punishing with death the conspiracy against slavery in that State; they did not stop their proceedings till our Church in that State was entirely suppressed." Payne, *Recollections*, 45.

connection with black activist networks in the North was not an exception, but rather part of a larger trend in the demographic shifts of free black people from the South in this era. These cases of black mobility not only responded to local manifestations of racial discrimination, but also intensified white fears that fueled efforts to restrict the movements and economic endeavors of free black people.

Efforts for free black resettlement in the mid-1820s extended beyond the urban centers of the East Coast, including the Old Northwest and the Caribbean, and Walker's own travel and exposure during this period perhaps ranged farther afield than was previously assumed. One David Walker is listed traveling aboard a schooner from Cape Haitian to Philadelphia in June of 1825, along with goods connected to Joseph Cassey, the wealthy black Philadelphian previously affiliated with Prince Saunders, Samuel Cornish, and other black community leaders.[47] This possibility of Walker's travel to Haiti, would extend Walker's claim to "have travelled and observed" even beyond the borders of the United States.[48] While Walker read about Haiti in *Freedom's Journal* and welcomed the paper's treatment of Haitian history, Walker's own brief treatment of Haiti in his *Appeal* does not read like a digest of *Freedom's Journal*'s news and

[47] Though there is no indication as to his race, age, or national origin, the manifest suggests that a David Walker traveled on a ship with only a few other passengers, and his name is listed after the ship's provisions of bread, beef, pork, and coffee. The sure connection of the merchant endeavor to at least one leading black Philadelphian is found in the manifest listing limes and oranges as an "order of Jos. Cassey." Beyond Cassey's order, the ship was loaded with orders including forty-five bundles of goat skins, a case of turtle shells, old copper, and one trunk of clothing that were attributed to other merchants. Walker's name is listed below these goods, placing his name as either the agent for or in possession of what appears to read "Two thousand Spanish dollars." Schooner *Jane* Manifest, June 27, 1825, departing from Cap Haitien [*sic*] to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, "Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania" in Records of the United States Customs Service, 1745-1997," Record Group Number 36, Series M425, Roll 36, The National Archives at Washington, D.C. Accessible online at www.ancestry.com, Pennsylvania Passenger and Crew Lists, 1800-1962.

[48] Walker, *Appeal*, 86.

fiction on the subject.[49] His information on Haiti may have also drawn upon his own experience there in 1825, putting him in contact with Haitians and African Americans whose commercial and political interests intersected in the revolutionary black republic.[50]

Whether or not Walker traveled to Haiti and Philadelphia in 1825, Walker's participation in the struggles to assert black institutional autonomy, foster educational and religious development, and seek community empowerment began long before he relocated to Boston. He was brought up among religiously, socially, and politically active free black communities in Southern states, who sought various expressions of black freedom in places where many still suffered under slavery. The *Appeal* speaks to Walker's understanding of the black people of the United States, and even of the world, as a diverse but coherent whole. His unified picture of a black citizenry drew from Walker's own diverse experiences made possible by his Southern upbringing and relative mobility. The diverse vistas of Walker's own life informed his vantage point for envisioning black collective consciousness. These experiences also inspired the ways he hoped to disseminate his *Appeal* to the black "citizens of the world," including free and enslaved black readers and hearers in the North, the South, and beyond.

Walker's New England Networks

Walker established himself in his new home of Boston, among activist networks that advanced private and public efforts to benefit the local black community advancement and to promote abolition. Walker witnessed the importance of efforts to establish autonomous black

[49] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 191, suggests *Freedom's Journal* informed Walker's opinions of Haiti.

[50] Walker's treatment of "Hayti, the glory of the blacks and terror of tyrants," suggests the Caribbean events should prove "enough to convince the most avaricious and stupid of wretches" of slavery's inherent violence. But Walker also critiques Haitian Catholicism in line with the sentiments of other African American pastors and emigres, most acutely voiced by the Methodists on the island. *Appeal*, 24.

organizations in the South, but in Boston he participated in these institutions' informal and formal lives, including their strategies for public protest and practices of print. His involvements shaped Walker's thoughts on topics of slavery and racial discrimination, black advancement, Christian faith, and justice in society. Ultimately, these networks informed Walker's own project to see his ideas set to the page and proved critical for the distribution of his text.

Walker's most obvious connections in Boston were those of his family and his business as a used clothes dealer. Ensuring his relationships among Boston's black elites, the newly arrived Walker married Eliza Butler in February of 1826, joining her affluent and well-respected free black family and no doubt benefiting from the connections of her status within the community. In the same year, Walker set up his used clothing store on Brattle Street, renting one of the many properties owned by Boston mayor Harrison Gray Otis.[51] Ventures by black entrepreneurs near the central wharves featured a number of aspiring shops and a number of the city's well-established black barbers, bootblacks, and small business owners. Other neighbors to Walker's business included the shops of James G. Barbadoes and John Pero, who were free black hairdressers.[52]

Prince Hall Freemasons provided Walker with sense of connection and a network that extended beyond his family and business, and operated largely under the cover of secrecy. He joined neighboring business owners Barbadoes and Pero who were Freemasons at Boston's African Lodge number 459. Walker was quickly initiated into the lodge and elevated to full

---

[51] *Boston City Valuation Books for 1826,1827, 1829*, this discovery that Otis was Walker's landlord is cited in Marc M. Arkin, "'A Convenient Seat in God's Temple': The Massachusetts General Colored Association and the Park Street Church Pew Controversy of 1830," *The New England Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (March 2016): 25, n. 49.

[52] An excellent survey of these locations and gathering of some of the deed records and images of the residences (many remodeled or replaced since the nineteenth century) can be found in Kathryn Grover and Janine V. da Silva, "Historic Resource Study" of the Boston African American National Historic Site (December 31, 2002), which was brought to my attention by George R. Price.

membership by leaders John Telemachus Hilton and Thomas Paul, in the very same lodge that was previously led by the likes of Hall and Saunders.[53] The networks of the black Freemasons extended beyond Boston. They had established lodges in Providence and Philadelphia by 1788 and in New York by 1815.[54] These networks of Masons among the free black communities of the North built mechanisms for correspondence across their connected lodges and arranged for the printing and distribution of Masonic sermons decades before Walker joined their ranks. In fact, an early masonic sermon delivered in 1792 by Prince Hall himself, was given to masons in Charleston, and presumably distributed to them after the imprint was published out of Boston.[55]

By the middle of the 1820s black Freemasons opened lodges in Baltimore, Alexandria, Virginia, and Washington D.C. Across these connections of Freemasons, members increasingly participated in and led public antislavery events, and those lodges in the nation's capital and nearby Alexandria were "known especially for their opposition to the slave trade in the District

[53] Walker was initiated to the first degree in July of 1826 and elevated him to the masters degree of full membership in August of 1826. Ibid., 70. His associates in the African Lodge, the MGCA, and Freedom's Journal are listed in "Appendix C: David Walker's Associates in Boston," 265-266.

[54] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 71-72, argues that black Freemasons organized "unprecedented institutional interconnectedness among black communities in the Northeast, regardless of how irregular that correspondence may have been." He suggests that "no black organization even vaguely resembling that of the African lodges for institutional durability, long term political objectives, and geographical extent existed during their first decades. Not until the appearance of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816, many of whose leaders were also Masons, would its eventual superior in breadth be formed." For a valuable list of scholarship on this subject and some of the primary sources Hinks uses to make this argument, see 72 n. 21.

[55] Prince Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren of the African Lodge at the Hall of Brother William Smith in Charleston* (Boston: 1792). It may be the case that some of Charleston's black population already had some knowledge or involvement in masonry early in the nineteenth century, among the city's wealthy black and mixed-race exiles from Saint-Domingue. There was speculation and public rumor regarding possible involvements of Haiti's revolutionary general, Freemason, and sitting President, Jean-Pierre Boyer in response to the alleged conspiracy of Vesey in 1822. Suspicions at this time were so intense that they resulted in various newspaper commentaries enhancing the suspicions, rejecting them as paranoid, or even arguing against diplomatic recognition of Haiti on these grounds. Sara C. Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 54.

of Columbia and for their willingness to assist runaway slaves."[56] Stimulating the anxiety of proslavery Southerners, they evidenced a willingness to expand those organizational and communication networks, even among the black communities where slavery remained dominant. The secrecy of Freemasonry offered a powerful symbol of black autonomy, and thereby a potent threat to slavery and anti-black prejudice throughout the United States. However, and more importantly for the building of communications networks that linked various black communities, these networks of Prince Hall Freemasons illustrated at once a bold public presence that made use of print and a complex and clandestine set of practices that featured both local communications and the extensive movement of black print and black people.[57]

Not only did Walker's new home afford him new local connections and access to the established networks of Freemasons, but his house served as a rally point for a gathering of black Bostonians that joined with black New Yorkers to support an emergent distribution network for *Freedom's Journal.* A number of black community leaders met together at Walker's home on March 20, 1827 to consider the publication to be edited out of New York. The group submitted resolutions supporting the publication, and saw their own recommendations in print on the pages of the first number in less than one month after their gathering at Walker's.[58] Walker and Boston's Baptist minister Paul's continued to serve as *Freedom's Journal*'s agents in Boston.

---

[56] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 72.

[57] One of the more visible functions of Walker's local lodge in Boston illustrated this important connection between Haitian Revolution and African American's struggle for political rights and the end of slavery. At a ceremony celebrating the Caribbean republic and welcoming the recently emancipated West African Prince Abd al Rahman Ibrahima of Futa Jallon in September of 1828 Walker was actually named Second Marshall of the event. *Freedom's Journal*, September 5, and October 24, 1828. Additionally, Haiti receives an interesting mention by Walker in a speech before the Massachusetts General Colored Association in December of that year, speaking with in vague terms about a recent conspiratorial attempt against Haiti. *Freedom's Journal*, December 19, 1828.

[58] *Freedom's Journal,* March 16, 1827.

Roughly one year later, the assessment of these aims were the subject of a meeting held at the Methodist meeting house of Reverend Lee, and their recorded praise and support was again published in the black newspaper.[59] Unlike the MGCA, or an African Lodge, or even black churches whose networks were linked to officially defined memberships and local meeting places, this effort in print promised to serve many of the same aims and utilize formal agents for the gathering of subscriptions and distributing select copies, but in many ways used print to effect a much more diffuse network and unpredictable extension.

Walker was well connected with Boston's black Methodist minsters James Lee and Samuel Snowden. Together they were among the founders of the Massachusetts General Colored Association in 1828. Reverend Snowden lived across the street from Walker's home on Belknap Street in the Beacon Hill neighborhood, and like Walker was born and raised in the slaveholding South before coming to Boston.[60] Their public organization, the MGCA, articulated an expansive vision of black empowerment and advanced the particular aim of support for black education. On the pages of *Freedom's Journal*, Walker offered a public examination of the association's "primary object… to unite the colored population, so far, through the United States of America, as may be practicable and expedient; forming societies, opening, extending, and keeping up correspondences, and not withholding anything which may have the least tendency to meliorate our miserable condition."[61] Walker and the Southern-born Snowden would have been among those in the MGCA who understood the denial of black literacy key to the Southern proslavery argument. Walker's words in address to the MGCA and

---

[59] *Freedom's Journal*, April 25, 1828.

[60] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 76, 76 n. 33. Snowden was born and raised in Maryland.

[61] *Freedom's Journal*, December 19, 1828.

shared in print with the readers and hearers of *Freedom's Journal* interrogated "those who delight in our degradation" and "glory in keeping us ignorant and miserable, that we might be the better and the longer slaves." To make his point, Walker told the story of a slaveowner beating a young enslaved child "half to death" when he found him "with a small spelling book in his hand."[62] Walker and the MGCA sought to encourage the black community to harness the power of literacy and education to undermine the power of slavery, and to do so through educational and civic networks throughout the nation.

While Walker's marriage, lodge membership, service as an agent for *Freedom's Journal*, and leadership with the MGCA situated him among networks of black respectability in Boston, his used clothing business likely placed him in contact or close-proximity to a world of less-than-respectable exchanges. In February of 1828, Walker along with his fellow black clothing dealers John Scarlett and John Eli were put on trial for receiving stolen goods, but Walker and Scarlett were "acquitted by the Jury without hesitation" on the word of reputable witnesses who vouched for their "integrity and fairness in their dealings." After Walker and Scarlett's acquittal, the court also dropped charges against Eli.[63] While the historian Peter Hinks uses this trial to suggest that Walker was "known and respected by people of merit in the community" and assert that "the testament to Walker's civic and personal uprightness, is unmistakable," there is perhaps another side to this trial and Walker's alleged connection with illicit exchange.[64] No hard evidence

---

[62] *Freedom's Journal*, December 19, 1828.

[63] *Boston Daily Courier*, February 12, 1828, cited in Hinks, *To Awaken*, 68. Also discussed in Arkin, "'A Convenient Seat in God's Temple,'" 25, n. 49. Arkin also points out the close proximity of these men's businesses on Brattle Street, with Walker at number 42, Scarlett at 24, Eli at 38, and another black MGCA member Frederick Brinsley whom Arkin explores throughout her article as a church desegregation activist who kept shop at 34 Brattle Street.

[64] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 68.

suggests notable backers or a preponderance of white public support for Walker in this case. His business put him in occasional contact with those on the illegal shadow-side of the clothing trade, but Walker seems to have been a shrewd manager of his business in this regard in order to evade legal problems and was also capable of using the legal system for himself as a plaintiff when his commercial interests merited litigation in the courts. Not only does this illustrate Walker's willingness to risk legal trouble and ability to navigate the Boston municipal legal system, but reveals he would have had at least some contact with those in the clothing trades and near the docks who smuggled illicit goods. These possible connections to the illicit networks and illegal trade in stolen goods indeed appear to have informed Walker's later use of his co-defendant Eli to initiate a clandestine shipment of copies of his *Appeal.*[65]

These networks in which Walker participated not only connected people but expanded the possibilities for how they might communicate the causes that mattered most to their collective well-being. Walker no doubt considered how the printed word might give voice to the world's "Colored Citizens," and how the very networks that unified them as a collective might offer various channels for the movement of a printed appeal for their collective empowerment.

The Form and Publication of the *Appeal*

The *Appeal* was the product of religious and print networks that connected free black people of the North and South. Walker's knowledge of and participation in those networks shaped the pamphlet's form, content, and publication history. Walker's own distribution efforts eventually mapped across a similar social and geographical terrain as the emergent networks of

[65] Literary historian Leon Jackson is currently researching the Boston Municipal Court records. Jackson indicated in personal correspondence that some of Walker's associates were later successfully prosecuted. His work in these sources may reveal exciting new findings that support far stronger claims about Walker's proximity to Boston's world of illicit exchange.

black periodical culture in which he participated. However, Walker's *Appeal*'s departed from the public methods that formalized the network of agents who served black newspapers. Agents were not formally solicited or publicly listed on Walker's printed page.

His pamphlet also offered a departure from the serial format that required regular and predictable channels for dissemination and proved susceptible to interruption. Walker offered his four-part black abolitionist theological and political manifesto in the form of a single pamphlet that offered the whole of Walker's argument. The *Appeal* did not require readers to wait on serial installments of Walker's abolitionist argument. Walker took a personal financial risk by publishing the *Appeal* as a single pamphlet. However, the pamphlet offered him a cheap format that did not force him to rely on the favor of benefactors, the payments of advertisers, or hopes of securing payments from fickle prospective subscribers. The pamphlet format suited Walker's aims, as its dissemination would only informally make use of agents, could deliberately and strategically avoid post masters. Walker and his associates in New England could place the pamphlet in the hands of people they trusted, or move it cheaply across long distances. They were able to select handlers who either approved of the *Appeal*'s content or were willing to remain ignorant to the radical contents of the pamphlet they carried.

Walker conveyed through his own "radical typography" the rhetorical strategies and accessibility of black evangelical preaching and black antislavery oratory, but sought to encourage black collective consciousness and antislavery revolution with more force and militancy than was previously set to print.[66] The *Appeal* grew out of his participation in recent efforts by African Americans to marshal the power of the printed word, and in the black

[66] Dinius, "'Look!! Look!!! At This!!!!,'" 55-72, argues that Walker's typography not only communicated his impassioned argument, but encouraged readers to read the work to others by providing typographical clues as to how the work might be effectively read aloud.

homiletical tradition that challenged oppression and spoke hope to the downtrodden. His own prior speech published in *Freedom's Journal* at the close of 1828 had certainly engaged both facets of these print and oral traditions, with his speech printed on the pages of a black newspaper.[67] Walker's black-life-affirming words were themselves reborn on the published page, and countless resurrections as those words were read quietly and aloud by those who participated in the print network of the periodical. The piece by Walker prefigured both the ideas that Walker later published in his *Appeal* and the mode of communication in which Walker would similarly bridge oral and printed traditions. His great esteem for Samuel Cornish and Richard Allen, the only black figures Walker cites in the *Appeal,* also illustrate his works convergence of the printed and oral traditions of black organizational and religious culture.[68] While much of his historical interpretation invoked a providential framework common in black print and periodical culture, Walker also offered more culturally-specific reliance upon an African American Protestant Christian homiletics and a politically and socially-engaged black liberation theology that used the bible and doctrinal understandings to argue against slavery.[69]

---

[67] *Freedom's Journal*, December 19, 1828.

[68] Walker, *Appeal,* 76, cites Cornish from *The Rights of All,* and commends him as a black editor worthy of ardent support by the black community: "Let me make an appeal brethren, to your hearts, for your cordial co-operation in the circulation of 'The Rights of All,' among us. The utility of such a vehicle if rightly conducted, cannot be estimated. I hope that the well informed among us, may see the absolute necessity of their co-operation in its universal spread among us. If we should let it go down, never let us undertake any thing of the kind again, but give up at once and say that we are really so ignorant and wretched that we cannot do any thing at all!!--As far as I have seen the writings of its editor, I believe he is not seeking to fill his pockets with money, but has the welfare of his brethren truly at heart. Such men, brethren, ought to be supported by us." Walker, *Appeal*, 63-66 extracts a letter from Allen in *Freedom's Journal,* November 2, 1827, and praises the virtues of Allen.

[69] Hinks, *To Awaken,* 194, argues that "Walker favored the homiletic because it was the very heart of the oral culture he himself came out of. The greatest structural influence on the *Appeal* was unquestionably the hundreds of extemporaneous sermons that Walker had heard in black churches and that we will never be able to see or discuss because they were never written down." Much of his exegesis of the text, from 234-246, discusses the explicitly religious language of Walker.

Walker's exposures to various black communities informed his work of crafting a text with broad appeal across those communities that might stoke a collective consciousness and unified activism among black people throughout the world. His publishing of the *Appeal*, however, appears to have been a personal pursuit. Rather than seeking out a newspaper editor to offer Walker's arguments in serial format, his *Appeal* was published as a literary whole. The choice not to pursue serial publication in the *Rights of All* might speak to, knowledge of the paper's fiscal instability and impending termination. But given his endorsement of the periodical on the pages of the *Appea*l, this choice more likely speaks to Walker's intended modes of distribution. Rather than build an expanding network of print that might support local black communities efforts and foster a visible, long-distance network for communication, Walker envisioned his work moving as a distinct literary unit across those networks but also beyond those established points of communication through more covert exchanges.

The *Appeal* was likely printed by printer David Hooton shortly thereafter, in the fall of 1829. Publishing his work in pamphlet form, Walker joined in the robust tradition of black protest pamphlets. But Walker's *Appeal* was not specifically linked to an organization, group, or event. This independent printing of Walker's text as a freestanding pamphlet certainly would have involved much greater cost to Walker than if he sought some form of institutional funding, which was common in black pamphlet literature. Walker was well aware of this form of support for a black-authored oration or manuscript text, and had arranged publication for a pamphlet from his fellow-Freemasons. He was previously tasked with arrangement of institutional publishing on behalf of the African Lodge, when in the summer of 1828 he and Thomas Dalton

arranged the printing of *An Address* delivered by the Lodge's Grand Master John T. Hilton.[70] Walker most likely used Hooton's shop to print his *Appeal* in the fall of the next year.[71] Even so, and despite Hooton's name being credited on the title pages of imprints from Walker's associates, his *Appeal* was published with no mention of the name of the printer. Why Hooton elected not to detail his printing credit for Walker's *Appeal* is unknown, but might have exempted him from liability for publishing the radical passages of Walker that provoked disdain and fear among white readers in the North and South. Whether the omission was the choice of the printer or the author, Walker certainly expected the furious responses of white authorities who read the *Appeal* as an encouragement slave rebellion as he alone shouldered liability for publishing his words. Unlike other texts for which the printer's shop doubled as an important point of sale, Walker's printer may not have been up to that task or Walker may have dictated that the white Hooton not be credited with the work's printing or utilized for its sale. Walker used more informal, diffuse, and covert networks as he oversaw the *Appeal's* dissemination himself.

---

[70] John T. Hilton, *An Address, Delivered Before the African Grand Lodge of Boston, No. 459, June 24th, 1828, By John T. Hilton: On the Annual Festival of St. John the Baptist* (Boston: Hooton, printer,1828). Institutional printing tasked to Walker and Dalton for Hilton's pamphlet is discussed in Hinks, *To Awaken*, 116 n. 1.

[71] Absent of a visible partner, a committee, or any form of institutional support, Walker lived the short remainder of his days becoming more indebted to a white job-printer who published subsequent editions of his work. Hinks and Beck have researched the probate records of Walker to show that the author was indebted to printers Hooton and Teprell at the time of his death. Hinks, *To Awaken*, 116, and 116 n. 1, citing Probate Records of David Walker, No. 29332, Suffolk Co. Registry of Probate. Beck, "David Walker," 30-36 discusses the work of these job printers, and their roles in printing Walker's work. I have followed up in personal correspondence with Beck regarding 51 n. 75, and his further examination of the probate records. Since my correspondence with Beck, Leon Jackson has conducted further work in the probate and court records and generously shared with me his digital images of the probate records of Walker. Jackson's findings prove these probate records more extensive than any publication has previously addressed, and I look forward to Jackson's forthcoming examinations of this subject

The *Appeal* and Walker's New England Associates

The *Appeal* was certainly read and discussed in the city where Walker wrote and printed it. Walker's friends and associates in Boston certainly would have been his first readers and their mostly informal sharing of the work throughout New England and beyond provided the most immediate networks for the work's initial distribution.

Walker's *Appeal* reveals his intentions to have the work disseminated among advocates of black education. Walker reminded his readers to continue the "great work" of educating and spreading knowledge among the black community. He urged readers, "let the aim of your labours among your brethren, and particularly the youths, be the dissemination of education and religion." Since Walker envisioned his initial audience among his friends exerting themselves for autonomous black educational and religious institutions, he could have envisioned his work passed along these same networks.[72] He also believed these efforts must go beyond penmanship or literacy, and demanded that black people be trained to edit works for publication, read in public, understand geography, and "post a set of books in a mercantile manner." This set of skills would allow someone to write in a way that would merit publication or to edit the work of another, proclaim texts effectively to auditors lacking literacy or access to texts, and inform the geographical mobility of people and print.[73] Walker spoke as someone who understood

[72] In a footnote, Walker made clear that efforts for universal black education served the best interests of all black people irrespective of social class: "Never mind what the ignorant ones among us may say, many of whom when you speak to them for their good, and try to enlighten their minds, laugh at you, and perhaps tell you plump to your face, that they want no instruction from you or any other Niger, and all such aggravating language. Now if you are a man of understanding and sound sense, I conjure you in the name of the Lord, and of all that is good, to impute their actions to ignorance, and wink at their follies, and do your very best to get around them some way or other, for remember they are your brethren; and I declare to you that it is for your interests to teach and enlighten them." *Appeal*, 35.

[73] Walker, *Appeal*, 35-6. Walker describes a conversation that he had among an elderly black man who believed his son well served by education on account of how much the father paid and his son's penmanship. Walker in turn

commercial exchange and had published the work of at least one other black Bostonian. His *Appeal* argued for and illustrated the author's own knowledge at navigating the market of print. He made use of a job printer to see his manuscript set to type, contracted with his printers for the payment of his publishing debts through multiple editions of the text, and made provisions for their distribution through a variety of exchanges, including local informal transactions, agents, mailed correspondence, and cargo packets.

Walker's home and shop in Boston evidenced a range of commercial transactions that certainly facilitated the distribution of the *Appeal*. Not only had his home been a key hub in gathering support for *Freedom's Journal*, but his used clothing shop "was popular for clothing purchases among black mariners and laborers, as well as a famous gathering spot for conversation."[74] Walker's own activist networks granted him a natural audience with a range of prospective buyers and readers of his text. Walker's neighbors represented some of the most literate and affluent in Boston's black community. But sailors and laborers who lodged at his Bridge Street residence also might have had more bought or borrowed and read Walker's *Appeal* before it was the subject of public advertisements, report, and criticism. While the author himself was exonerated of legal allegations that he purchased or sold fenced goods, his clothing shop certainly put him in close contact with a commercial scene that involved some illegal dealings. Henry Highland Garnet's suggestion that Walker also provided for a variety of poor

---

interrogated the man and identified a set of skills he deemed more important: "What else can your son do, besides writing a good hand? Can he post a set of books in a mercantile manner? Can he write a neat piece of composition in prose or in verse? To these interogations[*sic*] he answered in the negative. Said I, did your son learn, while he was at school, the width and depth of English Grammar? To which he also replied in the negative, telling me his son did not learn those things. Your son, said I, then, has hardly any learning at all--he is almost as ignorant, and more so, than many of those who never went to school one day in all their lives. My friend got a little put out, and so walking off, said that his son could write as well as any white man."

[74] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 85.

black people and contributed generously to formerly-enslaved who arrived in Boston as fugitives deserves credibility, and the many people with whom Walker came into contact certainly gave him an ample number of prospective hearers, readers, and agents, who knew the importance of preserving secrecy.[75]

Beyond the primary, private exchanges that took place among Walker's associates in the Massachusetts General Colored Association, the *Appeal* was publicly sold by one MGCA member of in Providence, Rhode Island. The Rev. Hosea Easton first public advertisement of Walker's *Appeal* took place on December 8th, 1829. While the *Appeal* moved informally for months without public commentary, Easton publicly commented on Walker's text and advertised its sale. In addition to being associated with the MGCA, Easton actively collaborated with Boston-based efforts for black community advancement and at the time ran a store out of Providence.[76] Easton's advertisement and sale of Walker's *Appeal* in Providence reveals how he and Walker both comprised a diverse cohort of black activists whose efforts were linked across New England and beyond, sharing community and efforts to disseminate their published materials in service to their shared cause.[77]

---

[75] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 85, explores this suggestion made by Garnet.

[76] Hosea Easton, "Notice," *Rhode Island American* (Providence), December 8, 1829

[77] Easton came from a mixed-race family in North Bridgewater, Massachusetts, where his father James converted their successful iron foundry into a manual labor school. While his brothers came to run the school and foundry in the 1820s, Hosea became deeply involved in the efforts of black organizing in Boston late in the decade and moved in the same networks as Walker. For more on Easton, see "Introduction: Hosea Easton and the Agony of Race," *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice: The Life and Writings of Hosea Easton,* eds. George R. Price and James Brewer Stewart (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999). For substantive discussion of James Easton, his family's black, Native American, and European ancestry, and his descendants significant contributions to the abolitionist movement and black education in New England, see George R. Price and James Brewer Stewart, "The Roberts Case, the Easton Family, & the Dynamics of the Abolitionist Movement in Massachusetts, 1776-1870," *Massachusetts Historical Review* Vol. 4, Race & Slavery (2002), 89-115. William Cooper Nell, the black historian of the community counted Hosea and his brother Joshua Easton among the founders of the Massachusetts General Colored Association, alongside his own father, William G. Nell, John Scarlett, Thomas

In at least one public instance of their collaboration Easton and Walker took turns speaking as public advocates against slavery and racism.[78] Later reflecting on his experiences of anti-black racism in Boston during and after the time that Walker lived there, Easton argued that racist sentiments were reinforced by printed materials and taught through systematic efforts. Beyond oral instruction that featured early efforts to have children fear black people, the use of anti-black slurs in the home, and segregated seating in education and worship, Easton noted the ways Americans learned racist tropes through the extensive distribution of anti-black depictions in print.[79]

Easton and Walker shared commitments to print that challenged slavery and racial discrimination. Easton published his own antislavery sermon late in the fall of 1828, using the same printer Hooton that Walker used to publish Hilton's oratory. Easton noted that he was rushed into publication by "the ardent request of a Committee chosen for that purpose, by the

---

Cole, James G. Barbadoes, Thomas Dalton, John T. Hilton, Frederick Brinsley, Coffin Pitts, Walker Lewis and other deceased black abolitionists he counts in the "Old Guard." William Cooper Nell, *Colored Patriots*, 345. Nell spells Brinsley's last name Brimley. Regarding variance between Nell's account and other listings of the MGCA's founders, see Arkin, "'A Convenient Seat in God's Temple'," 28-29, 29n. 54. For more on Nell and Walker's proximity in Boston, see Hinks, *To Awaken*, 67, 77.

[78] On March 26 of 1828, Easton chaired "a large and respectable meeting…held at the Rev. James Lee's Meeting House" in Boston, and after a few speakers acknowledged Walker "who addressed the floor at some length." Walker "stated largely the disadvantages the people of Colour labour under by the neglect of literature—and concluded by saying, that the very derision, violence and oppression, with which we as a part of the community are treated by a benevolent and Christian people, ought to stimulate us to the greatest exertion for the acquirement of both literature and of property, for although we may complain of the almost inhospitality with which we are treated; yet if we continue to slumber on and take our ease, our wheel of reformation will progress but slowly." The meeting also went on to pledge public support for *Freedom's Journal*, as they had done in the meeting in Walker's home prior to the paper's inception. *Freedom's Journal*, April 25, 1828.

[79] Hosea Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People in the United States* (Boston: Knapp, 1837); Reprinted in *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice*, 106-107.

Coloured population of Providence," and had the text printed in Boston, but certainly brought copies to Providence in keeping with the committee's request.[80]

Easton sold Walker's *Appeal* out of his shop on Main Street in Providence, and his commentary on the work addressed to fellow subscribers of the *Rhode Island American* revealed his expectations of racist opposition and indifference. He feared that their derision "the plainness of style" would "misconstrue the motives of the author, and thus make his labors subservient to the continuation and increase of those prejudices already established in the public mind against us, rather than the truth should come to light."[81] Even so, Easton believed that black and white New Englanders committed to antislavery and in support of human rights would be cheered by Walker's work. These kinds of people built networks for advocacy that linked Easton's sales of the appeal (and other goods) in Providence, with he and Walker's black civic and religious (and business) efforts in Boston.[82]

One copy of Walker's *Appeal* that likely passed through the hands of Easton, was owned by a Providence resident who clearly marked the book as her own in 1830. Jane Congdon not only read the *Appeal*, but inscribed her name and labeled the copy "my book."[83] It is unclear as to whether Jane was black or white. She may have been kin to either the elite white Congdon family of Providence or to the black Hodge Congdon, who was a founder of the city's black

---

[80] Hosea Easton, *An Address: Delivered before the Coloured Population, of Providence, Rhode Island, on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27, 1828* (Boston: Hooton, 1828). Reprinted in *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice*. Because the reprint did not include the printer detail, I am indebted to George Price, who located, scanned, and shared with me a digital image of the title page.

[81] Hosea Easton, "Notice," *Rhode Island American* (Providence), December 8, 1829. Easton's shop address, listed at 66 South Main Street in Providence had not been long established and did not prove long lasting in the city.

[82] Linkage between the two cities is illustrated in Easton's own relocation to Boston in the same year, where he lived until he accepted a call to pastor a church in Connecticut in 1833.

[83] This inscription is written in a first edition copy of Walker's *Appeal*, held at the Library Company of Philadelphia

Baptist congregation a decade prior. The African Union Meeting House, a name chosen by the committee of Baptist worshipers that included Congdon, was established in 1819. Congdon and the committee that founded the church were already by 1819 cultivating networks that secured finances for their effort at black religious autonomy and educational advancement. Significant investments by that community bolstered black religious and educational efforts that enabled literacy, worship, and social organization, and linked the community to other African Americans in and beyond New England. Further, by the early 1820s they were already interested in publishing political and social critiques related to their institutional.[84] This community was the very same that heard Easton's Thanksgiving sermon in 1828 and encouraged him to print it. Those nurtured by the efforts of the church and school would have not only been receptive to the word of Easton, but also to the *Appeal* of Walker which Easton offered for sale and Jane Congdon called her own.

The Methodist preacher Easton was certainly one distributor of the *Appeal* in Providence, but his singular visible point of sale was one node among a larger hidden network of Walker's associates throughout New England and beyond. Around the time Walker would have released his second edition, a Boston newspaper reported widespread distribution among the black community, claiming that "it is evident they have read this pamphlet, nay, *we know* that the larger portion of them have read it, or *heard* it read." The paper reported with ridicule the

[84] *A short history of the African Union Meeting and School-House, erected in Providence (R.I.) in the years 1819, '20, '21: with rules for its future government, Published by Particular Request,* (Providence: Printed by Brown and Danforth, 1821), 4. This text has an interesting inscription before the text, that reads "The design of publishing the following pages, is to prevent any misunderstanding among the people of colour, respecting their Meeting and School-House, and thereby laying a foundation of future difficulty. It also is a fascinating case study for reprinting of other works, including the black community's submissions to the *Providence Gazette*, the writings of Benjamin Banneker to Thomas Jefferson, newspaper clippings citing Haitian statesman DeVastey, and other excerpts on classical history and black capacity for learning from "English papers." It also reprints a fillable form that would be used to rent pews, and the deeds of the land on which the church was founded. It closes with the procedures, including voting practices and school and worship schedules to take place at the Meeting House.

excitement of the *Appeal*'s black readers and hearers who "glory in its principles, as if it were a star in the east, guiding them to freedom and emancipation."[85] White commentators asserted that black New Englanders were emboldened by the "flagitious pamphlet," writing "we have noticed a marked difference in the deportment of our colored population." Even this Northern editor called for its suppression, blamed "fanatical white men [who] will have to answer" for emboldening the likes of Walker, and arguing that "the colored man …has been treated too well, both for his own interest and that of the community.—He has been made too much of."[86] Even without public commentary from free black Bostonians, the more extensive informal circulation among black New Englanders met with white fury and calls for suppression even in New England.

Conclusion

Walker was a black reader in the South before he was ever a black author in the North. He hoped his *Appeal* would cultivate shared consciousness among the broadest possible collective of black readers, including and especially those in the Southern states. Walker's own Southern upbringing and proximity to formal and public educational and religious institutions in Wilmington and Charleston gave him an understanding of the constant threat of local disruptions to any black organizational efforts and the risks faced at the prospect of distributing antislavery literature in the South. Even though his connections in that northern bulwark of black organizing afforded him a fertile ground for developing his ideas and publishing the *Appeal*, his text reversed Walker's northern trajectory.

---

[85] *Boston Evening Transcript*, September 28, 1830. This selection of the report is cited in Hinks, 116.

[86] *Boston Evening Transcript*, September 28, 1830.

Walker's participation in the African American periodical press demonstrated to him the problems of the serial form, the problems with the economic viability of maintaining those ventures, and the unreliability of subscribers and delivery modes, especially the postal service, that proved critical to sustain circulation. His role as an agent for the nation's first black newspapers impressed upon Walker the potential for print distribution across an increasingly sectional nation. He certainly took notice of the names and locations of numerous Southern agents listed in the same column as his own. Walker could read reports submitted from free black Southerners such as Isaac Cary regarding the abolitionist hopes of free black people in Virginia.[87] He certainly would have known the threats to the permanence of black periodical print distribution at the hands of these Southern agents or the white postmasters who may have threatened to intercept copies sent via the postal service.

His own experiences of black mobility in the South and North shaped Walker's *Appeal* and his hopes for its distribution. Involvements in the fits and starts of black institutions and black print distribution across these varied social and geographical contexts also informed Walker's varied informal strategic efforts to distribute his published *Appeal*. Unlike the local institutions and organizations in which Walker participated, print represented an opportunity for black unity and communication. The means of long-distance black abolitionist print exchange was accessible to even a Southern-born, Boston-based used-clothing dealer. Not only did these extensive networks provide a conduit for Walker's ideas, but those who received his printed *Appeal* could exploit the vast distances and multiple hands involved in the work's dissemination to avoid local detection or maintain a degree of deniability when subjected to the scrutiny of

[87] *Freedom's Journal,* July 13, 1827.

authorities. Walker considered print a way to unite communities where black people and autonomous black institutions were subject to powerful threats to their survival.

Walker's networks of family, neighborhood, lodge membership, civic organization, black periodicals, and commercial exchange fostered Walker's personal advancement and promoted the causes of his new black community in Boston. The places where he started a family, ran his clothing shop, contributed to the civic life of his community, and built social and business contacts informed the writing of his antislavery manifesto. Those same networks not only informed his content and publication of the *Appeal*, but assisted Walker in his texts early dissemination. Walker's life among various black communities and involvement in diverse black activist networks informed his creation and distribution of a pamphlet that he hoped would unite black communities and advance the work of black abolitionism throughout the United States and beyond.

CHAPTER FIVE

"THAT VOLUME OF FIRE"

On December 8th, 1829, just months after David Walker penned his *Appeal* the author sent a letter to Thomas Lewis asking him to distribute copies of his "book" to the black people Richmond, Virginia. In a rare example of instructions written in his own hand, Walker revealed his desire to have his agent distribute it "among the Coloured people." It was to be sold cheaply, at just twelve cents per copy, and given gratis to those who could not afford to pay. Walker reassured his would-be agent that he could make more copies available. He welcomed Lewis' further communication and advice. [1] Walker intended that his *Appeal* be proclaimed and shared in Richmond and the surrounding area without concern for the work's profitability, and with an eye toward how his words might profit the cause of black unity among free and enslaved, and their collective efforts to overturn the system of slavery.

Walker's letter to Lewis and copies of his text made it to black readers in Richmond. But other copies were soon in the hands of white authorities as well, who scrambled to confiscate the texts that were distributed among black readers at the start of January, 1830. Joseph Mayo, commonwealth attorney of the Hustings court, sent a seized copy of the *Appeal* and Walker's personal letter to Virginia Governor William B. Giles on the morning of January 1. Mayo

[1] David Walker to Thomas Lewis, December 8, 1829, Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0430, Virginia State Library, Richmond. A partial transcription of this letter has been transcribed and briefly discussed in Peter P. Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 35-36. A full transcription is given by Hinks in *David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, ed. Peter P. Hinks (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 92.

communicated to the governor that the recipient Lewis died "some short time before the letter had reached this place" and explained how another black man in Richmond obtained the letter and an alleged 30 copies of Walker's *Appeal*. "At a loss, as to the disposition he should make of them," the free man of color was advised to distribute them by "a gentleman of the City" who failed to read the text and assumed "them to be of the class of fanatical tracts on the subject of religion, now profusely scattered through the country." Receiving no objections, the free black man put the copies "into immediate circulation."[2]

Following the frantic hand-off from Mayo, Governor Giles in turn shared the *Appeal* with other white authorities. Giles then convened a secret cabal to devise legal means "for preventing the introduction and circulation of papers and writings or publications and for the prohibition of practices designed or having a tendency to produce insurrections or insubordination amongst the people of color."[3] Authorities conducted a second interview with the distributor who claimed ignorance of the pamphlet's antislavery content and applauded themselves for the confiscation of twenty copies. In confidential sessions, lawmakers vented outrage at "the mischievous tendencies of the contents of the pamphlets," and "immediately attempted to prevent their further circulation" by seizing print and proposing legislation.[4]

This commotion in Richmond centered on just one distributor and only the first of the *Appeal*'s three editions. The frantic response of white authorities evidenced how deeply they feared the subversive power of Walker's pamphlet and his distribution strategy that encouraged

---

[2] Governor William Giles to Linn Banks, January 7, 1830, Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0427, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

[3] Ms. Copy of Notes "In Council," January 5, 1830, Wm. H. Richardson, CC, Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0433, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

[4] Governor William Giles to Linn Banks, January 7, 1830, Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0428, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

various formal and informal exchanges to ensure the free and enslaved black audience for the *Appeal* in the slaveholding South.

Walker had Southern roots. He hoped that through print distribution, his mature articulation of a radical abolitionism might branch out among his Southern brethren and bear fruits of black empowerment. Walker and his associates used a variety of strategies to disseminate the *Appeal* in the South. Walker used various routes and modes of travel, and diverse collaborators. The *Appeal* passed both from Walker's own hands and those of his associates in Boston and New York. At least one case indicates that a free black church leader in Pennsylvania gifted a copy to his friend, another free black pastor serving a circuit that extended into slaveholding states. Copies traveled in multiples or even packages of dozens and hundreds, with white seamen or by mysterious agents. These came into the possession of black Southerners, whose vocations included dockworkers, pastors, and even an enslaved tavern keeper. The *Appeal* was also sent through the postal system, delivered in the mail to at least one newspaper editor in the south. Walker's text also made its way to influential white antislavery newspaper editors. A number of those involved faced conflict with white Southern authorities. Their responses featured selective disclosures, misdirection, and patterns of deference by black distributors and white intermediaries alike.

White Seafaring Intermediaries and Black Recipients in Savannah and Charleston

On December 11, 1829 police in Savannah seized sixty copies from a white, Boston-based sailor at the Southern port. This discovery set in motion a series of communications in Savannah that led Mayor William T. Williams to write a letter to Boston Mayor Harrison Gray

Otis, demanding that Walker be apprehended.[5] The panicked correspondence of Williams also set in motion a first confirmed copy of the *Appeal* sent to South Carolina, from the Savannah Mayor to the Intendant of Charleston. By the end of the month, Williams also sent a copy of the *Appeal* to Milledgeville, with his letter to Georgia Governor George M. Gilmer.[6]

The case of Savannah offers an initial chain of textual exchanges that reveal one of Walker's strategies for distributing the *Appeal* to the South. The white sailor from Boston claimed that copies were returned to him by their intended recipient, the Rev. Henry Cunningham. When questioned, the seaman managed to keep his own identity hidden from the historical record, but divulged that "a Negro man named Ely a clothier in Brattle Street" in Boston commissioned the delivery.[7] John Eli, a neighboring used-clothing salesman who with Walker stood accused of an earlier clothes-fencing scam, apparently commissioned the sailor to deliver the package of texts to Cunningham in Savannah. Walker's associate secured the white steward of a Boston based vessel to facilitate the passage for at least sixty copies of the text packaged for delivery to Savannah.

Remarkably, neither the white steward nor the white captain of the brig were jailed or prosecuted. They even retained anonymity in the interrogation process at Savannah. Walker and

---

[5] Savannah Mayor William T. Williams to Boston Mayor Harrison Gray Otis, December 12, 1829, Records of Chatham County, Georgia, Mayor's Letter Book, 1821-44, Georgia Historical Society. Cited in Hinks, *To Awaken*, 118.

[6] Williams to Governor George Gilmer, cited by Hinks, *To Awaken*, 119 as December 28, 1829, File II—Names, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta and alternatively offered in a full transcription in the letter, dating it December 26, 1829, and citing Records of Chatham County, Georgia, Mayor's Letter Book, 1821-44, Georgia Historical Society, publishing it as "Document IV: Walker's *Appeal* Arrives in Georgia," in the Hinks annotated edition of *David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 93-94.

[7] Savannah Mayor William T. Williams to Boston Mayor Harrison Gray Otis, December 12, 1829, Records of Chatham County, Georgia, Mayor's Letter Book, 1821-44, Georgia Historical Society. Cited in Hinks, *To Awaken*, 118

Eli certainly had familiarity with black sailors, but could have expected far more disastrous consequences had their seafaring intermediary been black. The mariner's claim of being "totally ignorant of the nature of the contents" extricated him of legal repercussions, whether it was a strategic lie or a convenient truth.[8] The sixty copies Cunningham returned may not have been the entire number of pamphlets sent via Eli, or that Cunningham may not have been the sole recipient. But the black pastor's identity, by comparison to the white seamen, was preserved in Savannah authorities' investigations. How both the white sailor and the black preacher dealt with these copies of the *Appeal* in Savannah, however, illustrates the way each denied willful participation, claimed ignorance and sought to perform public deference to authorities even though some interaction with Walker or his associates prompted their inclusion in plans for the Southern dissemination of the *Appeal*. In both cases, these responses ensured that the sailor and pastor escaped with impunity.

By distributing copies to Cunningham in Savannah, Walker and his northern acquaintances identified a local figure of standing within the Southern black community with hopes he would locally distribute the *Appeal*. Despite being the first publicly known black Southern recipient of a large stack of Walker's radical pamphlets, the black Baptist pastor avoided public and legal scrutiny. The Rev. Cunningham's selective deference to white authorities was certainly well practiced due to the many obstacles that the formerly enslaved minister of Savannah's Second African Baptist church overcame in order to obtain and maintain his freedom and his pastoral charge.[9]

---

[8] Testimony of the sailor follows the letter of Williams to Henry L. Pinckney, Intendant of Charleston, December 12, 1829, as cited in Hinks, 119.

Cunningham was the designated recipient but he managed to escape legal suspicion by putting the pamphlets back into the hands of the white sailor before he alerted authorities. Savannah's mayor seemed pleased to report that after the "negro preacher named Cunningham" received the parcel from the white ship steward he "immediately returned it upon ascertaining the character of its contents."[10] Cunningham's own appreciation of Walker's *Appeal* merits consideration even if he returned the sixty copies. After all, Walker strategically directed a large number of copies directly to Cunningham, entrusting him to make choices that might enable or halt the text's local movement.[11] Cunningham's public deference clearly extricated himself and his community from scrutiny, but because Cunningham certainly read the *Appeal*, there remains the possibility that an artful Cunningham held back a few of the copies, or shared them privately before returning them. Walker's choice of Cunningham utilized the pastor who as a respected, literate, and likely sympathetic prospective local agent made his own choices to limit the mobility of the *Appeal*, no doubt considering the ramifications he and his community would face if they freely disseminated the *Appeal*.

---

[9] Cunningham's challenges included even the refusal of his own former pastor, the Reverend Andrew Bryan of the 1788-organized First African Baptist church in Savannah, to ordain and commission Cunningham for service to an emergent second African American congregation in the city in 1803. As a result, Cunningham's ordination was obtained in a deferential relationship to the city's white baptist authorities and the management of his church was more contingent upon their approval. In 1809 Cunningham relocated to Philadelphia to assist in the formation of that city's African Baptist congregation and returned in 1811 to purchase his own freedom and resume his pastorate in Savannah. Hinks, *To Awaken*, 118-120. Fraser, *Savannah*, 150. Fraser also notes on 157 that like Marshall, Cunningham was also a "lighter skinned" member of Savannah's black population. Even though his congregation was the church home to highly skilled and mobile black residents, Cunningham's own fragile freedom still depended upon a white pastor's who served as his registered guardian and his ministry relied upon tenuous financial support of white benefactors.

[10] Williams to Governor George Gilmer.

[11] Hinks uses evidence of Cunningham's fellow black minister in the city, Andrew Marshall, to discuss a pattern for black religious leadership in Savannah that "regularly enacted a ritual of deference." Hinks, *To Awaken*, 119-122.

Somewhat similar to the delivery method for copies sent to Savannah, a white Boston seaman brought the *Appeal* to Charleston in March of 1830. But in contrast to how the previous white mariner maintained anonymity by naming a black man who initiated the exchange, Edward Smith, revealed neither the identity of his black Boston commissioner nor those of his black recipients at Charleston.[12] Smith arrived in Charleston only three weeks after reprinted correspondences regarding Walker's *Appeal* in Savannah and reports in Charleston's *Gazette* noted in early March that authorities had already thwarted local efforts to distribute subversive print.

As a result, Smith's free distribution of the *Appeal* to black dock-workers later that month met with the response of a city police on high alert. Following up on a tip of Smith's free dissemination of the appeal among black stevedores, Charleston's authorities sent a complicit black informant who "requested Smith to give him one of the Books which he had been distributing among the negroes." By indicating that he only took six copies from Boston and "that he had none left," Smith incriminated himself. In subsequent interviews, he admitted carrying a parcel of copies from a "decent looking black man whom he believed to be a Bookseller" who asked him to "give them secretly to the Black people." Smith's testimony during his imprisonment was self-contradictory, suggesting to authorities that the "package of pamphlets" only contained three rather than the six copies he admitted to the black informant.[13]

---

[12] Smith,was a shipwright whose permanent address was at 10 Lynn Street in Boston and who served as a steward to the *Columbo* that arrived in Charleston in March of 1830. *Boston City Directory* (Boston: Stimpson, 1829).

[13] "Testimony and Confession," March 27, 1830, Peter J. Shand, Chairman, Guard Committee, from The State v. Edward Smith, March-May 1830, Records of Charleston County, South Carolina, Court of General Sessions, Indictments and Subpoenas, South Carolina Archives, Columbia, South Carolina, transcribed and introduced by William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Walker's *Appeal* comes to Charleston: A Note and Documents," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1974), 287-292.

Claiming that he knew neither the name nor profession of his solicitor in Boston, Smith alternatively told authorities "that a colored man of decent appearance & very genteely dressed" requested the "favor," but had told his black stevedores to whom he gave copies at Charleston "that he got them from a person in Boston, who, from his appearance, he thought was a minister."[14] These competing descriptions might have fit Walker or Eli who previously were involved in distributing the appeal, or even Easton who by that time was engaged in ministerial duties in Boston. Claiming his agent was clergy provided an excuse for Smith's black recipients, suggesting they were merely seeking religious tracts.

Smith testified that he did the favor for the man without knowing the contents of the pamphlets, and felt bound by his word to give them away even after he curiously but only partially perused one of the copies which he kept secretly stowed "at the head of his berth." Even though Smith testified that he was commissioned to distribute them in secret, decided to covertly stow them on the trip to Charleston, and was "anxious to get rid of the pamphlets," he maintained that "he did not know that he was doing wrong or violating the law in distributing said books." Smith "denied that he received any reward or promise of reward from the man who gave him the pamphlets, and said he was to get no good from distributing them." Smith offered authorities an inconsistent and unreliable testimony, and authorities ensured that "no good" came to him for his role in the *Appeal's* distribution.[15]

This admission that he read a copy of the *Appeal* on-board also reveals how a simple change to the physical copy of the *Appeal* could enhance claims of ignorance about the work's radical rhetoric. He very well may have known the well-dressed, respectable black bookseller or

[14] "Testimony and Confession," March 27, 1830.

[15] "Testimony and Confession," March 27, 1830,

minister that commissioned him in Boston. He told his inquisitors that he distributed three copies and also reported giving away six copies. When presented with his interrogator's battered copy, he attested that the parcel of pamphlets contained one new copy, one mildly worn, and the present one that "had no cover." He claimed that this copy with the missing cover had been the one he read on his voyage to Charleston, but may have indicated this to avoid incriminating himself. Someone very intentionally could have removed the outer wrapper and the title page. Had the sailor kept that copy in his bunk, removal and destruction of that "cover" would have left only a much more innocuous title, "APPEAL, &c." and an opening preamble resembling that of a Pauline Biblical epistle, beginning "*My Dearly Beloved Brethren*." Removal of the wrapper and title page also would have left the author and place of authorship unknown, and removed the print-details indicating rather prominently that this was indeed a "SECOND EDITION, WITH CORRECTIONS &c." Not only did Walker indicate this on the front wrapper and title page, but he had also taken the expense to include a back wrapper emphasizing this fact and repeating his responsibility for the work, using bold decorative typeface and manicules to advertise his "NOTES, CORRECTIONS, &c." that provided "ADDITIONS" to "THIS WORK." [16] If the testimony of Smith may be trusted, this removal before the text was packaged might have spoken to someone's choice to obfuscate proof of a second edition so soon after the first. If Smith lied about the missing portions of the book he may have made a strategic choice to reduce suspicion that recipients had removed the wrapper or title page to keep for themselves or as a means to request more copies.

[16] For these details, see the second edition of Walker, *Appeal*. An extant example of the original wrapper to the second edition is held at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

While Smith kept his word to the black Bostonian who commissioned him, his actions merited no honor in Charleston. Smith was arrested and brought before a grand jury that indicted the mariner of "falsely and maliciously contriving and intending to disturb the peace and security of this State and to move a sedition among the Slaves of the people of this state with force and arms at Charleston." Subsequently, on May 17 a jury of the court of General Sessions found him "guilty of seditious libel" and left his sentence to the "clemency of the Court." By May 22 the court fined him $1,000 and sentenced him to one year in jail.[17] Smith's whiteness afforded him no protection from legal backlash, although a black seaman would have likely fared far worse. Unfortunately for Smith, he could not keep his story straight nor keep his distribution of the *Appeal* secret.

Black Agents in Richmond and the Cape Fear Region

Another packet was already sent to Richmond. On December 8, 1829 in Boston, Walker wrote a personal letter sending copies and advising Thomas Lewis to use his discretion to sell or freely distribute the text among the black residents of Richmond. This letter's rare extant example of Walker's personal instructions on the *Appeal*'s distribution directed Lewis to distribute the copies to the city's black residents. As was the case in Savannah, Walker's strategy relied upon the discretion of a free black Southerner and freely entrusted the method of the *Appeal*'s distribution up to a local agent's discernment. Even as the intended local agent seems not to have been found, the parcel of texts made its way to another reputable member of Richmond's black community.

[17] "Grand Jury Indictment," May 10, 1830, Attorney General James L. Pettigrue, from the The State v. Edward Smith, March-May 1830, Records of Charleston County, South Carolina, Court of General Sessions, Indictments and Subpoenas, South Carolina Archives, Columbia, South Carolina, transcribed and introduced by Pease and Pease, "Walker's *Appeal* comes to Charleston," 291-292. For the dates of Smith's court proceedings and sentencing, see 287.

This local black recipient claimed ignorance about what to do with the copies and obtaining a hasty encouragement to distribute them from "a gentleman of the City." Here, the agent and Walker benefited from the rapidly expanding evangelical print of the period and the paucity of Southern-distributed antislavery texts, as the presumably white "gentlemen" felt it unnecessary to read the pamphlet and encouraged its circulation on the assumption that it was "of the class of fanatical tracts on the subject of religion, now profusely scattered through the country." The free black distributor's deference of the white gentleman secured his freedom from prosecution and preserved anonymity. But his putting the copies put into "immediate circulation" struck panic into authorities, and their modest satisfaction at the recovery and seizure of only twenty copies reveals that the *Appeal* continued to be read and shared in and around Richmond.[18]

Richmond's sizeable free black community fostered numerous connections to black periodical print culture and religious networks likely informed Walker's targeted dissemination. Walker's letter bears no marks of personal familiarity, repeatedly addressing Lewis as "Esteemed Sir" and "your Hon[or]," and closes "assum[ing] the Liberty… to subscribe myself Yours very affectionately." But he must have on good authority that Lewis was literate and well-respected in Richmond but entrusts him with a packet of copies of the *Appeal*. He also encourages Lewis' correspondence, saying it would be received "with hearty and greatful[sic] reception." Walker believed Lewis a sympathetic reader and able distributor of the work, and

[18] Governor William Giles to Linn Banks, January 7, 1830, Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0427, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

historian Hinks has suggested Lewis may have been a contact or kin of any number of Walker's associates in Boston who also bore that last name.[19]

Walker's letter to this agent reveals another key clue as to why the pamphlet format of the *Appeal* was critical to his strategy for disseminating his abolitionist ideas. Walker's letter to Lewis shows how the *Appeal* as a single, standalone text containing the whole of Walker's message, only required one exchange to put the work into the hands of an interested reader. All it took was twelve cents and a chance meeting with the bearer of the *Appeal*. The cheap format meant that anyone could function as a one-time agent, and anyone regardless of economic status could be a recipient of a text that any such agent gave out "for nothing." Easton noted no such offer in his public advertisement of the work in Providence. This difference explicitly stated to the would-be distributor of the *Appeal* in Richmond might be reflective of Walker's contrasting strategies and expectations for the text's Northern and Southern dissemination. Eliminating the

[19] Lewis was a popular name in both Richmond's Henrico County and in Boston. Hinks, *To Awaken*, 136 explores Boston residents who featured natal connections to Richmond. At least a generation before Walker came north, black abolitionists with the names Walker and Lewis had featured prominently in Boston's black community, and David Walker's own friend and fellow black Freemason Walker Lewis descended from these intermarried families. Walker Lewis was among the nine sons and two daughters of Peter P. Lewis and Minor Walker Lewis who raised their family in Cambridge. His mother was the sister of a Quok Walker who sued his Barre, Massachusetts slave owner on the grounds of the 1780 Massachusetts constitution and successfully won his freedom by 1783. She named her son Walker Lewis after his uncle who had so publicly used constitutional law to secure his freedom from slavery. Martha Mayo, "Profiles in Courage: African Americans in Lowell," Exhibit, University of Massachusetts Lowell, The Center for Lowell History at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center, (Lowell: April 19 through June 30, 1993), accessible online at: http://library.uml.edu/clh/Prof/Pro.Html. Walker Lewis's MGCA connection is claimed by Nell, *Colored Patriots*, 345. Walker Lewis, a fellow Prince Hall freemason and founding member of the MGCA, certainly had close ties with David Walker but may have been a relative of he and Walker's contemporaries, black hairdresser A.J. Lewis and Joseph Lewis, who also sold clothes on Brattle Street. Black Bostonians in the 1831 City Directory also included a waiter named Darius Lewis, who lived on Belknap street, and lists the firm of Roberts and Lewis as running a clothes shop at number 16 on the same Brattle Street where the deceased Walker's shop at number 42 was replaced by that of a John Robinson. *Boston City Directory* (Boston: Stimpson, 1831), 345. Another possible connection to a Thomas Lewis in Richmond might have been a Thomas Lewis of Boston who in the preceding generation of black activists was an officer of the African Society, a founder of Boston's African Baptist congregation, and an active freemason early in the founding of the African Lodge. That Thomas Lewis of the early black organization was likely deceased by the time of Walker's letter. Nell, *Colored Patriots*, 97. Arkin, "'A Convenient Seat'," 29 suggests that Walker Lewis was a used clothing salesman alongside David Walker, in contrast to Hinks, *To Awaken*, 265, which presents him as a hairdresser in "Appendix C." Arkin, ""A Convenient Seat'," 30, also claims that Walker Lewis was the son of Thomas Lewis mentioned above, in contrast to Mayo, "Profiles in Courage."

cost to free or enslaved black Virginian readers unable to purchase it, Walker encouraged the gratuitous distribution of his *Appeal*.

Even if Walker's fellow agents who served to distribute black newspapers were involved in the exchanges, he certainly would have anticipated that they would need to preserve a measure of deniability with respect to any role they might play in connection with Walker and his *Appeal*. Walker might not have known much about his addressee, and might have in fact mailed it to a dead man. However, the black community networks in Richmond still functioned in part to serve Walker's intent. The distribution mechanism did not require a specific Lewis, and moved just as well, at least for a time, through an unnamed agent who performed a ritual of deference to local authority that maintained his anonymity and distributed copies.

Further south, enslaved and maroon communities the Cape Fear region of Southeastern North Carolina utilized even more subversive, illicit, and informal strategies to disseminate the *Appeal*. It was reported that by August of 1830, a black agent distributed some 200 copies via Wilmington to the surrounding Cape Fear region in which Walker was raised. As in Richmond, distribution along the Cape Fear River involved unknown couriers or carriers of parceled copies and no clear indication that Walker used the mail. Walker also appears to have used well-connected black agents in both locations, whose own knowledge of the local context might have guided their distribution efforts and dictated where and whether copies might be sold or given away. The reported 200 copies offer an additional parallel in terms of the liberal quantities Walker entrusted to previously unknown or little-known prospective agents.

Black agent Jacob Cowan reportedly received instructions for the work's distribution from Walker, but somehow with the packaged copies or letter indicating they were shipped from

New York. Cowan was formally enslaved but apparently managed to operate a tavern with minimal oversight from his master or other authorities.[20] This choice of agent, who was eventually apprehended and imprisoned with at least two accomplices, reveals both the mobility of enslaved people and the prevalence of marronage in the lower cape fear as a key strategic feature of Walker's distribution in the region.[21] Though this region had been home to Walker, his own departure and distance from the sizable covert maroon communities that remained in the area might have informed Walker's use of an intermediary in New York. This New York facilitator may have had greater commercial or social connections with the region that made it possible to direct a parcel of copies to an appropriate black agent in Southeast North Carolina. Black networks of exchange were rumored to have brought the *Appeal* from Wilmington to Fayetteville within just a month's time.[22]

By the following month, authorities sought to extract copies of the *Appeal* they believed to be among the black community of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Reports of the text's subversive distribution were reported in New Bern and Elizabethtown, where free black agents

---

[20] Hinks, "To Awaken," 137, suggests Jacob might have been owned by a Thomas Cowan, who placed a runaway add for a Primus in the *Cape Fear Recorder*, April 5, 1817. However, another possibility much closer to the date of Jacob's activity was a runaway add placed in the *Cape Fear Recorder* July 21, 1830, which reads as follows: "Ten Dollars. Will be given for the apprehension and delivery to me of my man Isaac Wingate, who ranaway from my plantation in April last. Isaac is 5 feet 8 or 10 inches, high, 25 to 30 years of age, in color a mustee and has a remarkable bushy head of hair, with large heavy eye brows. I have reason to believe he is now lurking in Duplin where he has a mother. R. H. Cowan." Whether Cowan was owned by a Thomas Cowan or an R. H. Cowan remains unclear, but both masters took out ads for runaway slaves in the period, and the latter did so in the year before Walker's *Appeal* arrived in the region.

[21] *Cape Fear Recorder*, August 28, 1830. An ad published in the *Cape Fear Recorder* on August 28, 1830, details the another self-emancipated Bill Cain as being a hesitant speaker but "unusually intelligent." His noted mobility and family connections throughout the region was similar to that noted by R.H. Cowan's months-earlier ad. The fugitive's master said that the smart and slender Cain was and "well known in Wilmington and the vicinity; and has a wife in Fayetteville, in the neighborhood of which place he may possibly be lurking."

[22] Hinks discusses the unsuccessful attempts to place covert operations in Fayetteville to uncover distribution networks, and the prevalence of self-emancipated runaways in the region. He mentions key scholarship that has highlighted the practices and impact of marronage in the region. See Hinks, 136-144.

of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All* resided. Eventually, the presence of Walker's pamphlet shined a new light of suspicion upon these black newspaper distributors of the Lower Cape Fear, including New Bern's wealthy free black slaveholder John C. Stanly and Lewis Sheridan of Elizabethtown. The *Cape Fear Recorder* aired suspected grievances and lumped the *Rights of All* and the *Appeal* together, suggesting that both Walker and the local agents of the black press shared the aim of inflaming antislavery violence among the region's black population and overturning slavery's status quo. Rumors that Stanly's New Bern provided a haven for runaways might support the latter possibility. Stanly did little to dispute the rumors about New Bern, but Sheridan sought public refutation of those alleging his connection to Walker. He did so in the *Cape Fear Recorder*, but based his argument upon the shaky assertion that he had never heard of Walker, even though his name had repeatedly been printed in the black newspapers' lists of agents just a few lines removed.[23]

The role of Cowan and several accomplices as distributors of Walker's appeal, coupled with widespread speculation about the involvement of maroon communities in the lower Cape Fear indicates deliberate covert dissemination of the pamphlet among the enslaved and illegally free black people of the region. The subversive nature of these exchanges cannot be overstated. Not only was the text considered incendiary, but black literacy in the region was already considered an affront to social control, and the prior distribution of black newspapers by reputable free blacks in the region had already initiated a slow burn of white suspicion. The implausible refutation of Sheridan that most certainly presented his own ritual of deference on the printed page, endeavored to remove himself from the heat of interrogation but neither extinguished the fears of the region's whites.

[23] *Cape Fear Recorder*, September 3, 1830; September 10, 1830.

Moreover, this elusive and illicit literary body was being strategically moved among fugitive black bodies that defied custom and law and apprehension. The same black runaways who razed plantations and evaded authorities now shared incendiary abolitionist print among enslaved. Walker certainly would have expected the claims of ignorance and rituals of deference used by Cunningham, the unnamed Richmond distributor, and Sheridan to evade affiliation with the *Appeal*. But in his home region of southeastern North Carolina, those who had everything to lose took the greatest risks in disseminating Walker's radical abolitionist text. Walker promoted a liberal distribution strategy which proved most effective when Southern agents and communities proved willing to facilitate covert exchanges of the *Appeal* among their own communities and across clandestine channels for the flow of people and information.

Postal Distribution and White Newspaper Editors

Walker diverged from the strategies of early black newspapers that generated revenues from subscribers and often delivered copies through the mail. He did, however, selectively utilize the postal system to distribute copies of his *Appeal*. Milledgeville, Georgia proved the most inland appearance of the *Appeal*, and Walker's use of the postal system to send copies there may have spoken to the Georgia capital's distance from maritime commerce that facilitated other modes of dissemination from Walker and his intermediaries.

Elijah Burritt, the Connecticut-born editor of the *Statesman and Patriot* utilized the postal service to write Walker in early January of 1830, requesting that copies of the *Appeal* be sent to his office in Milledgeville, Georgia. The state capital of Georgia, where Burritt worked as an editor, was no hub of free black community activism. To the contrary, 4,542 enslaved black people and only 27 free people of color lived in Burke County in 1830. Whether or not Walker

imagined how limited and controversial the mailed copies of his *Appeal* would be in Milledgeville, he went beyond obliging Burritt with a copy. Walker, always the enthusiastic distributor, sent twenty copies in reply to Burritt. This reception via the postal service quickly landed the Northern-born editor in trouble with authorities of the town. Even though he requested them and initiated the use of the mail for their correspondence and transmission of the copies, Burritt offered no public endorsement of Walker or sympathetic read of his *Appeal*. He did publish some extracts as early as January 2, 1830, reprinting some of the *Appeal*'s "angriest and most vengeful sections" that were previously selected by a Boston editor, but offered far less condemnation than had characterized discussion of Walker's work by editors at Richmond, Philadelphia, and even Boston.[24]

Some who came to the defense of Burritt ventured a convoluted rationale for his request for Walker's text. They argued that Burritt wanted to receive the pamphlet in order to warn people about the dangers of its dissemination. A Philadelphia-printed report that speculated the Burritt, the "respectable gentleman from the north," requested Walker mail him copies because he wanted to ensure the public "be put upon their guard." They attributed Burritt's request to the author's "zeal to disseminate the work" but interpreted it as unauthorized by Burritt that Walker "transmitted to his address *twenty copies*, through the mail." These friends of Burritt printed the story in the *Philadelphia Album and Ladies Literary Gazette* seeking to absolve the white editor of blame and highlight the audacity of Walker. They noted that the black author even demanded

[24] This case is discussed at length by Hinks, *To Awaken*, 123-131. Hinks discussion of Burritt also explores fascinating possible connections to other white Northerners who served as missionaries in Indian territories allegedly investigated for having copies of the *Appeal*. Hinks, *To Awaken*, 124. Quote from Hinks. Burritt's January 2, 1830 selection reprinted selections taken from the *Boston Centinel*, so Burritt may or may not have had his own copies received at Milledgeville at that time. Hinks cites the *Richmond Enquirer*, January 28, 1830, and the *Niles' Register*, March 27, 1830, as characteristic of the vitriolic "standard opprobrium heaped on" Walker's *Appeal* by most newspaper editors.

"the fulfillment of a certain promise, (meaning, merely, payment for the pamphlets)."[25] Here, Walker sent the pamphlet in the mail, by request, and expected payment for the number of copies he sent to the white editor, unlike in Richmond where Walker indicated he would be pleased even if the black Richmond agent sent no payment in return. Walker must have had some reason to think that Burritt was willing to pay for the copies and perhaps distribute them in Georgia himself. Perhaps Walker took a gamble with these copies hoping that being a Northern-born editor of a Southern newspaper may have made Burritt a sympathetic reader, an able reprinter, a willing distributor, and a paying customer. But when Burritt faced public scrutiny he quickly distanced himself from the author with whom he corresponded and the pamphlet he requested.

Other editors did not believe Burritt. Those critics suggested that any and all dissemination of Walker's *Appeal* was wrong and dangerous. This perspective rested on the notion that Walker's publication was "calculated to inflame our colored population." Given this suspicion, papers such as the Warrentown, Kentucky *Rural Cabinet* reported the correspondence between Burritt and Walker and delivery of "18 or 20" copies *Appeal* to Georgia as "the most villanous[*sic*] transaction." Fear about black-authored or abolitionist print sent through the mail was not unique to this Kentucky editor, and was subsequently critiqued as widespread Southern proslavery paranoia on the pages of the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*.[26]

Whether or not the white antislavery editors Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison in Baltimore requested the text or received it via the postal system, they had a copy on their desk within six weeks of when the *Appeal* came off the press. By the middle of January 1830 William Lloyd Garrison, then serving as an assistant editor to Benjamin Lundy, admitted in

[25] "Walker's Pamphlet" *Philadelphia Album and Ladies Literary Gazette*, April 17, 1830.

[26] Garrison,"More of the Pamphlet," *Genius*, March 5, 1830.

the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* that the Baltimore editors "have had this pamphlet on our table for some time past."[27] Garrison, who was in charge of editorial content for the *Genius* at the time, apparently did not read the text until after he read the stark condemnations of white southern editors commenting on the *Appeal*'s southern distribution among black readers.[28] Garrison reprinted an article from the *Richmond Whig* calling the *Appeal* a "seditious" and "insidious" pamphlet "circulating among our colored population" in Richmond and another resulting in restrictions on black seamen in Savannah after discovery of Walker's *Appeal.* Garrison was "not surprised at [the *Appeal*'s] effect upon our sensitive Southern brethren" and spoke for both him and Lundy saying "we deprecate its circulation."[29]

However, Lundy and Garrison voiced different opinions of Walker's argumentation and distribution strategy.[30] Lundy claimed in April of 1830, "I had not seen this far-famed

---

[27] Garrison, "Singular Panic," in the "Black List" Column, *Genius*, January 15, 1830. It is a certainty that these were Garrison's own first reflections on Walker's *Appeal*, given that he signed the reprinting of these articles and initialing his own commentary "G" in accord with he and Lundy's arrangement to clarify each editor's content.

[28] Garrison, *William Loyd Garrison*, 159-160. Garrison's son and biographer reflected on the "sensation" resulting from "a pamphlet written by an obscure and unknown colored man in Boston, who printed and circulated it among people of his color as widely as his means would permit." While the younger Garrison notes the black audience primary to the pamphlet's distribution he removes it from any systematic antislavery distribution efforts and presents the work as a seeming anomaly. His analysis of his father's distance from the *Appeal*'s publication history also considers the text unique in its autonomy from the periodical press and institutional support, commenting, "It seems singular that a production so original, able, and important, coming from such a source, should not have been promptly noticed in the *Genius*, even if critically and with exceptions." He goes on to note that "it was not until the Richmond *Whig* had reported, with ridicule, the secret session of the Virginia Legislature to consider a message from Governor Giles on the subject, and the Savannah Georgian had announced similar action on the part of Governor Gilmer and the Georgia Legislature, that Garrison alluded to it in any way."

[29] Garrison, "Singular Panic," in the "Black List" Column, *Genius*, January 15, 1830.

[30] By October of 1829, Garrison assumed the editorship of Lundy's *Genius* and their differences of opinion resulted in the agreement that each editor would initial their columns to indicate the editor. Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879*, Vol 1, 140. The first issue of the *Genius* with Garrison's inclusion as the assistant editor is September 2, 1829. Garrison did not openly oppose the ACS until January of 1830, criticizing the efforts of the "doubtful auxiliary."[30] He indicated his break with the Colonization position that continued in Lundy's work was informed by the anti-colonization arguments of the free black people of Baltimore. These arguments against the racist schemes of the ACS were articulated on the pages of Lundy's paper by "A Colored Baltimorean," likely William Watkins, in June of 1828.[30] The same black commentator's

production until within a few days." While Lundy granted the validity of the complaints of "the colored race," he rejected Walker's words suggesting the role of violent struggle. While admitting that "a more bold, daring, inflammatory publication, perhaps, never issued from the press, in any country" the senior editor suggested that he "can do no less than set the broadest seal of condemnation upon it. Such things can have no other earthly effect than to injure our cause."[31] Even in the context of a recent setback to his own print distribution strategy, Lundy felt that his own moderate, more gradualist efforts provided the only model for the movement against slavery.[32]

Garrison treated Walker's argument more favorably than did Lundy, and granted the importance of his dissemination of the *Appeal* his fellow black Americans. [33] Garrison placed responsibility more squarely upon the forceful reactions and increasingly repressive legal measures of Southern slaveholder society, critiquing laws in Virginia and Georgia rushed through legislatures immediately after "the discovery of Walker's incendiary pamphlet." Garrison noted that the "the circulation of this 'seditious' pamphlet,'" proved "one thing conclusively—that the boasted security of the slave States, by their orators and writers, is mere

---

work, were also made to greater extent on the pages of *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All*, publications that Walker read and distributed.

[31] Lundy, "Walker's Boston Pamphlet," *Genius*, April, 1830.

[32] Lundy, "The Editor to the Public," *Genius*, April, 1830. Arguing that his paper experienced steady growth and an expanding network from the time of its inception until late in 1829, Lundy cited "many difficulties that… occasionally produced some irregularity in its publication… together with the unpopularity of the subject upon which it treats, in a portion of the country, and the general apathy among those who are friendly to the undertaking, have prevented as extensive a circulation as had been anticipated." Lundy's admission explained the previous month's reversion to a monthly format for the periodical after the organ's weekly printing in January and February.

[33] Garrison, "Astounding Legislation" in "Black List" column, *Genius*, February 26, 1830. Garrison believed it "a most injudicious publication, yet warranted by the creed of an independent people."

affectation, or something worse."[34] He derided measures taken in South Carolina, and thought it "a little ridiculous …that those very states have been thrown into hysterics, in consequence of the appearance of a pamphlet among them written by a colored man in Boston"[35] Garrison imagined violent backlash against the enslaved by their fearful Southern masters and prayed that such catastrophic consequences would not occur, but used the scenario not to condemn Walker but rather Southern proslavery authorities whom Garrison portrayed as arrogant, violent, cowards.[36] Walker's work and the repressive reactions to its distribution provoked and clarified Garrison's deviation from Lundy's approach, and the number in which he offered his own commentary proved Garrison's last as associate editor for the *Genius*.

Walker and Black Sailors

Walker and Eli solicited white seamen to make deliveries of the *Appeal* in Southern ports of Charleston and Savannah. In this strategy Walker did not necessarily need these sailors to be sympathetic to or even aware of the *Appeal*'s antislavery content, even as they may have been transporting the packaged copies. However, Walker personally knew black mariners in Boston and likely had one boarding at his own home at the time he made these arrangements for the *Appeal*'s distribution. When black sailors distributed the *Appeal*, they were by far the most clandestine of Walker's modes of dissemination.

Copies most certainly moved without needing a specific or strategic directive from Walker, but those movements among black mariners and merchants poses one of the most intriguing mysteries. Historian W. Jeffrey Bolster infers that "from the used clothing store that

[34] Garrison, "More of the Pamphlet," *Genius*, March 5, 1830.

[35] Garrison, "A Flurry," *Genius*, March 5, 1830.

[36] Garrison, "A Thought," *Genius*, March 5, 1830.

he operated on Brattle Street, near the Boston wharves, Walker buttonholed sailors and asked them to spread his message." Walker and his associates in the used clothing business certainly counted mariners among their frequent contacts and these seaman likely needed little buttonholing.[37] Black seafarers interested in his *Appeal* could have brought the text aboard schooners, shared it at port, and discussed it at boardinghouses and taverns within and beyond Boston. Ample possibilities for Walker to network with the black seamen of Boston certainly existed. Among the black residents listed in the 1829 Boston City directory, twenty-seven list their occupation as mariners.[38] After the passage of the 1822 laws, travel to Southern ports became dangerous for and sometimes refused entrance by these black sailors.

By 1830, at least one black mariner named James Middleton lived in the home of David Walker.[39] Middleton provided Walker an in-house link to seafaring intermediaries for his print distribution strategy and may have informed Walker's strategic variety in how his copies moved. No hard evidence links Middleton to the distribution of Walker's texts, but by 1831, curious biographical details demonstrate that Middleton and Walker had more than just a residence in common. A sudden illness came upon Walker and he quickly died on August 6, prompting the black community of Boston to harbor conspiracies of foul play. Sharing either the household

[37] W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 197, 198.

[38] From Stimpson's *Boston City Directory* in 1829, the names of all the mariners listed among residents of color are: Samuel H. Adams, Anthony Anderson, Samuel Benjamin, William Brooks, George Chambers, Henry Curtis, Thomas Fisher, George Hall, John Henry, James Hill, James Middleton, Peter Osborn, James Phillips, Thomas Phillips, John Rogers, Edward Scott, Benjamin Seun, Isaac Sherud, John Silver, Joseph Silver, John Spry, Adam Stockbridge, Abraham Thompson, John Vose, James Williams, James Williams, Thomas Williams.

[39] Hinks, *To Awaken*, 84. Middleton appears to have been born in Concord in September of 1801, and also appears in the *Boston City Directory* as a mariner in 1829, living "rear Poplar street."

pathogens or the suspected poisons that claimed Walker's life, Middleton died just four days later.[40]

By the time that Walker published a third edition, that revision explicitly addressed the responses of white authorities who sought to repress distribution of the *Appeal*. Walker asked, "Why do the Slave-holders or Tyrants of America and their advocates fight so hard to keep my brethren from receiving and reading my Book of Appeal to them?" His musings specifically addressed the distribution of his book by seamen to Southern ports, asking, "why do they search vessels, &c. when entering the harbours of tyrannical States, to see if any of my Books can be found, for fear that my brethren will get them to read?"[41] This indicates that in the short span of time between Walker's printing his first and third edition, Walker was aware of repressive efforts against black sailors. His awareness of suppression of Southern distribution and the danger that this would pose to black sailors caught disseminating the *Appeal*.

The *Appeal* Gifted to a Friend

Perhaps the most informal mode used to disseminate the *Appeal* was personal gift giving. One example of this kind of intimate transaction is recorded in an undated inscription signaling that the pamphlet was Jacob D. Richardson's, and that "His Friend John Peck presented to him" an 1829 first edition of Walker's pamphlet.[42] This rare extant copy has multiple other names inscribed on the title page, and a much later purchase date inscribed inside the front cover, but

[40] Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. Town and City Clerks of Massachusetts. Massachusetts Vital and Town Records. Provo, UT: Holbrook Research Institute (Jay and Delene Holbrook). His death was reported in the *Columbian Centinel* on August 17, 1831.

[41] Walker, *Appeal*, 72n. This note appears on the third edition. Hinks, *To Awaken*, brings this up and discusses how Walker was likely strategic in soliciting Edward Smith and another white mariner to carry the *Appeal* to Charleston.

[42] See Walker, *Appeal* copy held in the special collections at the University of Virginia Library.

the inscription indicating the informal presentation of the book from Peck to Richardson involved contemporaries of Walker. In fact, Peck was Walker's fellow agent in service to the newspapers edited by Cornish. Peck, who lived in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, gifted a copy of the *Appeal* in his possession to his friend and colleague in ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Peck served as an AME elder and was an important financial backer of the AME congregation in Carlisle and Richardson was an itinerant AME preacher. Richardson first ministered in connection with the Baltimore conference and around 1820 was serving Frederick County Maryland. Beyond their denominational connection, Peck and Richardson served in close proximity to one another when the latter came to serve as the AME itinerant for the Harrisburg circuit nearby Peck's Carlisle community. However, the likely connection between the two men and friendly exchange of the *Appeal* on Pennsylvania soil put the text into the hands of an AME preacher who had served to establish churches in Maryland and whose circuit included communities along the Susquehanna River down toward Maryland's Eastern Shore.[43]

White Authorities Respond

In reaction to the Southern dissemination of Walker's *Appeal* white authorities devised new legal mechanisms to suppress abolitionist print and black literacy. Fears of black literacy and abolitionist print in relation to slave resistance did not begin with Walker. In fact, these anxieties were a fundamental and persistent feature of all societies in the early modern Atlantic

[43] James A. Handy, *Scraps of African Methodist Episcopal History* (Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Concern, 1902), 25, indicates that Richardson initially was involved with the Baltimore Conference in 1818; 28, served Frederick County in 1820; 29, was present at conference and affiliated with Baltimore in 1823. Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Ed. C. S. Smith, (Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1891) details many of the same mentions of Richardson, but on 34, notes Richardson's service to the Harrisburgh Circuit in 1822, also, on 46 indicates Richardson on the Easton circuit in 1825.

world that featured chattel slavery. The fear of communication networks among enslaved and free black southerners loomed large in Southern authorities' efforts to expose and eliminate suspected large-scale abolitionist conspiracies and threats. Certainly, the educational efforts and independent activities of the autonomous black Methodists in Charleston were suspected to be a contributing factor in the alleged conspiracy of Vesey and others in 1822 and were subsequently repressed.

The reading and communication practices of free and enslaved blacks was only a small part of a larger spectrum of activities that white authorities deemed subversive. Before Walker's text and its Southern appearances were decried as incendiary, actual fires periodically raged in much of the slaveholding south. These took place even in the same year that Walker wrote his *Appeal* and first tried to distribute it in Georgia.[44] But with the arrival of Walker's *Appeal*, Southern whites increasingly applied metaphors of damage and fire to the distribution of abolitionist texts. In his earliest correspondence regarding the *Appeal* in Savannah, Mayor Williams suggests that the seizure of those copies would prove insufficient on account of his expectation that "similar dangerous publications" will be disseminated in southern ports and that "measures" might "be necessary to detect or defeat these destructive efforts."[45] The Governor of Virginia claimed "many reasons for believing; that during the last year; and up to the present time, there has been an increasing activity in circulation amongst the people of color

[44] Fires that destroyed homes and property in Yamacraw, Georgia in March of 1829 and in Savannah in April and December of that year, were suspected to be the result of conspiracies among the enslaved. By the end of that year, some attributed these incidents to subversive abolitionist print distributed in the region. On fires burning more than 40 homes in Yamacraw, see Mary Telfair to Mary Few, March 5, 1829, Mary and Francis Few Papers, Georgia Historical Society; Savannah City Council Minutes, April 23, 1829; Mayor W. T. Williams to Mayor Harrison G. Otis, December 12, Governor George W. Gilmer December 16, 1829, Mayor's Office Letter Books, vol. I, 1817-1851, Georgia Historical Society. Cited in Walker J. Fraser Jr., *Savannah in the Old South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 222, 375 n. 156-158.

[45] Williams to Governor George Gilmer, December 26, 1829.

insurrectionary pamphlets and speeches, to an extent, which in my judgment requires the best attention of the general assembly."[46]

Southern authorities sought the help of white Northerners in apprehending operators and halting the movement of the *Appeal*. Northern white authorities shared a disdain for Walker's rhetoric, but Boston mayor Harrison Gray Otis made few efforts at suppressing abolitionist texts. He suggested that repressive action was not necessary because of "the insignificance of the writer" and "the extravagance of his sanguinary instruction," which that the mayor believed would result in "the very partial circulation of his book." Otis believed that it could not possibly be "a subject of excitement and hardly of serious attention." He added for good measure that he even had "reason to believe, that the book is disapproved of by the decent portion even of the free coloured population in this place."[47] To the mayor of Savannah, Boston's Otis voiced disdain for Walker and continued the destructive metaphors that southern authorities ascribed to the *Appeal*, but countered the need for legal measures. "Notwithstanding the extremely bad and inflammatory tendency of the publication," Otis conceded that Walker's pamphlet was published and distributed lawfully. He suggested that the pamphlet was not publicly circulating in Boston, and that his initial awareness of the pamphlet's extensive dissemination outside of the city was through an alderman of Boston, who had also been contacted about the matter. Otis also detailed Walker's declared desire "to circulate his pamphlets by mail, at his own expense, if he cannot otherwise effect his object." He promised that Boston officials would "avail themselves of any lawful means for preventing this attempt to throw fire-brands into your country" and "publish a

[46] Governor William Giles to Linn Banks, January 7, 1830, Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0428, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

[47] Boston Mayor Harrison Gray Otis to Virginia Governor William B. Giles, February 10, 1830, reprinted in the *Richmond Gazette,* February 18, 1830.

general caution to Captains and others against exposing themselves to the consequences of transporting incendiary writings." Despite his "deep disapprobation and abhorrence," the Boston mayor presented himself as powerless and advised Southern authorities not to publicize the incidents, so as not to "make matters worse."[48]

But Southerners did publicize the matter. They feverishly attempted to write new statutes that would render these exchanges illegal. In the Virginia legislature's first meeting where Walker's *Appeal* and its distribution strategy were offered up for consideration, lawmakers offered a bill "*To prevent the circulation of seditious writings, and for other purposes."* The editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*, bristling at the lawmakers' fundamental disregard for the liberty of the press and transparent legislative processes, indignantly publicized the hasty lawmaking strategy, describing the proposed legislation and multiple amendments demanded by the floor: "It punishes, by penitentiary confinement, the printing and circulation (knowingly) of writings intended to excite slaves to insurrection and rebellion—It declares all meetings of free negroes or mulattoes at any schoolhouse, church &c. or other place for teaching them reading and writing, &c. to be unlawful meetings." Other lawmakers proposed amending this to provide for punishments applicable "to any man's teaching or having taught his own or other persons slaves on his own farm or tenement." In debate, some objected and at least one argued the bill was "abhorrent to all his feelings of right." Eventually, the bill was moved to indefinite

[48] Boston Mayor Harrison Gray Otis to Mayor of Savannah, February 10, 1830, reprinted in the *Richmond Gazette,* February 18, 1830.

postponement, but the vocal majority of the legislators remained committed to legislation to suppress black literacy and antislavery publications.[49]

None of the white Southern editors in 1829 or 1830 reprinted Walker's invitation for white Americans to "throw away your fears and prejudices" for the sake of harmony. They avoided his request: "treat us like men, and there is no danger but we will all live in peace and happiness together. For we are not like you, hard hearted, unmerciful, and unforgiving. What a happy country this will be if the whites will listen." Walker promised on this contingency the possibility of interracial friendship, "that the whole of the past will be sunk into oblivion, and we yet, under God, will become a united and happy people."[50] Proslavery officials instead publicized the *Appeal*'s most searing passages to intensify their efforts suppressing black reading practices, literary education, and religious instruction.

Walker did not aim to inspire new mechanisms of legal repression and reactionary proslavery legislators did not wish to inspire more public abolitionist activism in print. But in this chain of responses, Walker's *Appeal*, written for black people and distributed independently of formal white antislavery organizations, activated Southern hysteria and legal measures for print suppression. In the text of his *Appeal*, Walker used unflinchingly bold, highly divisive, and incendiary language in his condemnations of slavery and the complicity of the American political and religious systems with the institution of bondage. But he was not seeking to sabotage the fragile freedoms of free black communities in the South, or provoke racist

[49] *Richmond Gazette*, February 18, 1830. The Enquirer ends this report of the legislature's proceedings as follows: "The question was then put on indefinite postponement and last, by a large vote—and then the question on the commitment of the bill was carried, ayes 82, noes 69."

[50] Walker, *Appeal*, 70.

repression that would bar the enslaved from their limited forms of religious and literary engagement.

As editor of the *Liberator*, Garrison continued to examine the increased suppression of black Southerners' already-limited freedoms. Black distributors who formally and informally disseminated Garrison's own abolitionist newspaper confronted many of these same mechanisms of suppression. In early 1831, before the subversive actions of Nat Turner presented a violent iteration of abolitionism, the violence of proslavery suppression struck first. Both the *Liberator* and the *Genius*, printed concurrently from different cities, picked up a story from New York papers reporting news out of North Carolina. While Lundy published the story in his recurring collection of violence and injustice attendant to slavery in a column titled "BLACK LIST," Garrison reprinted the report from Wilmington, North Carolina, under the heading, "MORE BLOOD!!!" with punctuation that Walker certainly could have appreciated. The reprinted January 7 letter to the editor of the *New York Sentinel* reported "much shooting of negroes in this neighborhood recently, in consequence of symptoms of liberty having been discovered among them. These inhuman acts are kept profoundly secret—wherefore I know not. Two companies of troops have very lately been stationed here." After the report, in bracketed editorial addition, the editor of the *Genius* used a manicule pointing to "United States' troops." Here, the Quaker editor perhaps pointed his own finger at the federal government's responsibility for this violent support of slavery, and signaled the culpability of a government whose troops had literal blood on their hands in this manifestation of local violence against the enslaved.

In contrast to Lundy's provocative image, which is open to interpretation, Garrison could not help but add his own editorial analysis of prophetic judgment citing a biblical verse. He

followed the report with "'Whatsoever ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' Tremble, ye murderers."[51] While Lundy made use of a Walker-favored manicule, Garrison invoked a Biblical allusion and a condemnation of murderers in line with Walker's own justice-demanding scriptural canon and incessant equating of slaveholding with murder. Still, even for a Lundy less likely to offer the same forceful criticism, these ongoing violent measures kept the elder Quaker editor deeply aware of the legal mechanisms for black suppression in the wake of Walker's *Appeal*. The same "BLACK LIST." section within Lundy's *Genius* also noted that "A law has been passed by the council of Savannah, laying a fine of one hundred dollars on every free colored person visiting the place." The violent interventions were not merely the mechanisms of proslavery state legislators or federal troops, but include local authorities in places like Savannah whose concerted efforts attempted to further constrain black mobility or long-distance communications for fear of the reach of abolitionist networks.[52]

As Garrison came to articulate a more forceful critique of these repressive measures, and Lundy continued to offer a slightly milder criticism, the pro-colonization *African Repository* took a more ambivalent approach to the matter in keeping with their designs to gradually eliminate both slavery and free African Americans from the South. But even these pages highlighted only selective dissent in response to the efforts of southern legislators to restrict not only the distribution of antislavery print but also to completely prohibit literacy. They reprinted a report that one North Carolina state senator "moved to strike out the clause of the bill which prohibits slaves from being taught to read" because he thought print literacy essential to his

[51] *Liberator*, March 19, 1831; *Genius*, March 1831, the *Genius* credits the story to the New-York *Working Man's Advocate*.

[52] *Genius*, March 1831.

constituents' desires to teach "a knowledge of the Scriptures." William Belvidere Meares, state senator from Walker's birthplace of Wilmington, challenged this objection while he held high a copy of Walker's *Appeal*. Mears, the owner of a large Cape Fear rice plantation in the same region where an enslaved distributor disseminated some 200 copies, demanded the complete ban on black literacy and education. With *Appeal* in hand, Meares argued that literate slaves would not be interested to read the Bible, but "would be more likely to read the inflamatory[*sic*] publications of the day." The politician completed his stunt by reading selections of Walker aloud, effectively silencing the objections and enabling the state's complete suppression of black literacy. The editor of the *African Repository* made no comments, perhaps mirroring the likely ambivalent positions of his pro-colonization readership with regard to the suppression of black liberties by the North Carolina Legislature in 1830.[53]

Copies of Walker's *Appeal* at Savannah had proved sufficient inducement for repressive measures by authorities there. In addition to the destruction of the texts that the black pastor Cunningham turned over to the authorities, racist laws sought to eliminate all black literacy. White authorities understood black literacy to be a more significant threat to slavery than the presence of any single pamphlet. Even though it was a white seaman who delivered the copies of Walker's *Appeal* to the Rev. Cunningham, the repressive measures in Savannah sought to eliminate the presence and the mobility of black seamen in the city. In these measures, "any vessel with black mariners aboard were subject to a forty-day quarantine, and any black seaman

[53] "Slaves at the South," *African Repository*, January 1, 1831. The move to strike this complete ban on literacy by the enslaved came from John McClintock Dick the State senator from Guilford County. Dick was a well-educated lawyer and son of a prominent landownwer, as well as a very active Presbyterian and Freemason, who went on to become a judge. Meares was an Episcopalian, inheritor of a large rice plantation on the Cape Fear. Meares was also the director of the Bank of Cape Fear as early as 1822. Interestingly enough, both Meares and Dick were subsequently trustees of the University of North Carolina.

who met with Savannah's slaves was subject to imprisonment."[54] Lundy's *Genius* of March 1831 publicly reported this measure, eliminating the entrance of black mariners, but restrictive laws also repressed the literary and educational activities of the city's black residents. The city of Savannah and the State of Georgia also passed laws prohibiting black people from being taught to read and write. Savannah's authorities sought not only to smother the incendiary pamphlets, but understood this print distribution as directly related to fires that had been set in the city and the region. In response, they also passed a law at the same time that made arson by a black person a capital offense. By 1833, when another black pastor of Savannah received copies of *The Anti-Slavery Reporter,* published out of New York, it was also understood by Savannah's mayor as a means "to excite insurrection and bloodshed" and prompted the city's postmaster to pledge his surveillance and seizure of antislavery print sent to black people via the mail.[55]

African Americans of the North and South were the most important and interconnected movers of Walker's subversive texts across informal networks for print exchange. These efforts were met with increasing violence, threat, and legal challenge. And, as a result, Walker and other black community leaders and antislavery activists devised increasingly covert and illicit pathways for the distribution of texts that at times relied upon some white intermediaries and recipients, but generally put the largest quantities of texts and local distribution decisions in the hands of free or enslaved black agents. Walker's strategic moves evidenced his own willingness to part with large numbers of copies without commercial advantage, to use various informal routes and some risky means, and to trust that his black agents would read their own context and

---

[54] Fraser, *Savannah*, 222.

[55] [Mayor William T. Williams] to Governor Wilson Lumkin, December 7, 1833, Mayor's Office Letter Books, vol. I, 1817-1851, Georgia Historical Society. Cited in Fraser, *Savannah*, 222, 375 n. 159.

make their own choices as they distributed his pamphlet. In writing and publishing his *Appeal*, Walker certainly aspired to champion the cause of black empowerment. But Walker's diverse strategic mechanisms for distributing that message to black readers evidenced an awareness that more local struggles for black liberation or uplift would be as many and diverse as the hands that held and shared his printed pamphlet.

Conclusion

David Walker used a range of methods to distribute his *Appeal*. The movements of his text featured his own associates in the used clothing trades, seafaring intermediaries, postal distribution, and practices of gift giving. Copies were sent strategically to agents, pastors, newspaper editors, and also passed among black dockworkers and other black Southern readers. The pamphlet format was critical to his putting the entirety of his argument into his recipients' hands through a single transaction, and purposeful or mistaken removal of the wrapper and title page of the *Appeal* in the case of at least one copy made its incendiary content less conspicuous at first glance. Some of these methods are evidence of Walker's various strategies for distribution among a geographically expansive and socially diverse readership, and other practices speak to the choices and contexts of other that Walker neither predicted nor controlled.

Walker's distribution of his *Appeal* was deliberate but employed no singular strategy. His remarkably diverse collective of distributors represented Walker's design for expansive and often free distribution of his *Appeal*. They willingly or unwittingly participated in these textual exchanges, faced various some forms of interrogation, and sometimes bore the brunt of local and legal scrutiny concerning Walker's abolitionist text. In these ways, Walker employed varied participants, modes of exchange, and means of transportation in the intentionally informal and

often secretive movements of his *Appeal*. Strategies for the *Appeal*'s distribution varied across these contested geographies and cultural spaces.

While Walker's detractors were frantic in their efforts to suppress the pamphlet's distribution among black Southerners, the abolitionist words of the *Appeal* and the strategies for its dissemination were deliberate, flexible, and adaptive. While the mania of white authorities was predictable, Walker's text aimed to empower black readers and hearers rather than to stoke a repressive racist frenzy. Even as late as 1863, a black Congregationalist minister from Connecticut, recognized a lingering spark in Walker's *Appeal* that he felt might inspire an abolitionist sentiment among Union Soldiers during the Civil War. The black abolitionist Rev. Amos Beman believed "that some books and publications of special importance in the present crisis of our affairs, which should be in the hands of all, especially of all our soldiers" included "that volume of fire, 'Walker's *Appeal*'" reprinted alongside Henry Highland "'Garnet's address to the slaves.'" He believed the radical black abolitionist book "should be scattered over the land, as thick as autumnal leaves."[56] Three decades before Beman desired the work be disseminated among union soldiers and the general public, white Southern authorities believed the *Appeal*'s distribution among black Southerners was a reckless throwing of firebrands.

[56] Amos Gerry Beman Scrapbooks, Vol. II, 4, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

CHAPTER SIX

SUPPRESSION, BLACK RESISTANCE, AND THE MOVEMENT OF PRINT AND PEOPLE

While white authorities frantically searched for Nat Turner, the Virginia legislature gathered in Richmond in September of 1831 to discuss their belief that abolitionist print served as the firebrands that inflamed such violent challenges to slavery in the commonwealth. Unable to seize all of the people who participated in Turner's August 22, 1831 armed uprising against slavery in Southhampton County, authorities tried instead to apprehend texts that attacked slavery and promoted black liberation. Their efforts bore a striking similarity to the January, 1830 gathering in response to the distribution of the *Appeal* among the black residents of Richmond, even though no blood was shed at the arrival of Walker's publication. But these authorities renewed their crusade against abolitoinst print in the wake of antislavery violence in their state, concerned about the rhetoric of these texts and deeply troubled by the modes through which these printed materials moved.

Among the confiscated texts were a printed sheet entitled the *African Hymn*, a copy of David Walker's *Appeal,* and other antislavery newspapers and pamphlets. In some cases, documents were accompanied by letters from postmasters or white officials detailing the distribution efforts of local free black people who trafficked these materials into Virginia.[1] The printed materials comprised only a fragment of the antislavery productions distributed in slaveholding regions of the upper south between 1828 and 1836. After these illicit exchanges

[1] For the documents presented to authorities, see Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0430, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

reached a flashpoint in Walker's *Appeal,* these movements of print in the South featured frustrated white interceptors, more-or-less careful white sympathizers, and deliberate black distributors. Their practices relating to antislavery print distribution comprise the countless nodes of a complex network of people who interacted with these incendiary antislavery materials.

Proslavery white authorities and antislavery sympathizers responded variously to Walker's clandestine Southern dissemination of his *Appeal* and Turner's subsequent abolitionist violence. In this period, neither reaction managed to fully suppress the covert mechanisms of distribution by which black Southerners moved abolitionist texts and challenged the evolving legal apparatus of slavery. The clandestine and even illegal nature of these exchanges, networks, and actions left scant evidence, both because of antislavery advocates' designs to avoid incrimination and because of proslavery authorities' efforts at elimination. But in some cases, the very authorities who sought to halt black distribution strategies preserved some information about these exchanges. Reading these accounts against the grain, alongside paratextual details from the surviving material texts and paying attention to the African American individuals and communities involved with these documents offers clues about the texts and distributors that defied Southern proslavery ideology and evaded legal modes of suppression to reach black communities of the south and encourage their illicit designs for freedom.

The new repressive realities in the wake of Walker and Turner, however, were acutely felt and valiantly resisted by black communities of Northern Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. Brave individuals who took risks to resist these forms of suppression were the very people who coordinated the institutional efforts of churches, lodges, and schools in hopes of

fostering networked activities for black empowerment. These people and networks not only continued the movement of Northern-published antislavery print to the South despite legal obstacles, but at times attempted to facilitate the more subversive reverse flow of the self-emancipated black Southerner to the North. Networks of free black Southerners defied suppression and at times broke the law, advancing liberation in both word and deed.

Suppression in the Wake of Walker and Turner

After the insurrection led by Nat Turner, which seemed to prove white fears about black Christian preachers turning into abolitionist militants, Virginia legislators convened another meeting to consider antislavery texts and their black distributors. In September of 1831, before the October seizure of Turner, white authorities considered a much broader collection of texts than they did the year prior. These abolitionist documents featured ideological variations, were printed out of different locations, and represented various modes of transport and mechanisms for distribution. But, those authorities who were present the prior year surely could not have missed a second copy of Walker's pamphlet presented alongside the other printed texts in 1831.

Those who had seen Walker's *Appeal* at the first iteration of the gathering and had sought to suppress its dissemination witnessed another copy of the *Appeal* thrown onto the legislators' table. Their initial cabal failed to enact legislation blocking black literacy and censoring antislavery print. At this meeting, the *Appeal* was not the only confiscated document to be printed out of Boston. The very city where Walker published his pamphlet was now home to Garrison's new periodical, and this *Liberator* had been found among free black communities in Virginia. The *Liberator*'s presence in Virginia and black Virginians' involvement in its distribution was derided in a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*. The letter writer

argued that abolitionism exposed Southern whites to discrimination on the part of Northerners, but that antislavery sentiments were most dangerous in printed form. He believed serial distribution of periodicals a greater threat than Walker's pamphlet. The writer argued the danger of these ideas circulated "through the press, to this unfortunate class of our community, calculated to mislead them."[2] The author wrote that "the free [black] people would be better off" without "this officious interference of their pretended friends." In the logic of the proslavery commentary, the dissemination of this abolitionist organ was the direct cause of new waves of Southern legal repression "as it forces us to pass laws bearing harder upon them than we could wish, but which we consider our safety and good government require."[3] This commentary offered the convenient "truth" of proslavery white authorities, that the well-being of free blacks would be better entrusted to the paternalist controls of white Southerners free from agitations of Northern abolitionist print.

On top of the ways the institution of slavery in American society actively promoted the dehumanization and social death of the enslaved, the laws passed in 1831 and 1832 further denied literacy and education to enslaved and free black people in the South. Some states had already sought to prohibit literacy among the enslaved before 1831 and intensified these efforts after the appearance of Walker's *Appeal*. But after the Turner rebellion and the subsequent confiscation of various subversive printed materials, the authorities in favor of these repressive measures successfully codified new laws against black literacy and print distribution. Virginia

[2] Veritas, "To the Editor" *Enquirer* (Richmond) September 2, 1831. "How astonished have I been to hear that a pamphlet of this description, equally obnoxious as Walker's pamphlet, and perhaps more dangerous, because it is a periodical, finds its way to this town."

[3] Veritas, "To the Editor," *Enquirer*.

presents a useful example. In March of 1832, the *Enquirer* publicized a compilation of laws restricting black literary, religious, and organizational practice in the Old Dominion. This "act to amend an act, entitled an act reducing into one the several acts concerning slaves, free negroes and mulattoes," set into a single law a series of repressive measures. The acts attempted to eliminate black peoples' autonomous Christian preaching, teaching and worship and catechesis. They also disregarded any African American claims to property or slave ownership, denied their abilities to keep arms or ammunition, and prevented them from selling or sharing alcohol. The beating of a white person became a capital felony. Regarding literacy and print distribution practices, the law:

> …punishe[d] with stripes for the first offense, and with death the second, any slave, free negro &c. Who shall hereafter write, print, or cause to be printed a book, pamphlet, or other writing, (or knowingly circulating the same,) advising persons of color in this State to make insurrection, or to rebel; and if the offender be a white person, imposes a fine of not less than one hundred, nor more than one thousand dollars; punishable with stripes free negroes, &c. Guilty of riots, routs, unlawful assemblies, trespasses, and seditious speeches…

The laws eliminated distinctions in the legal processes of free and enslaved black people, with the exception of alleged homicide or other capital cases.[4]

Black communities in Southern states suffered the closure of their educational institutions that had in some cases been built over the course of decades and by the cumulative efforts of multiple generations of literate black activists. In the case of Charleston, where Walker had lived as a youth, these repressive efforts were not immediately enforced. But by 1834, the city's young black teacher Daniel Alexander Payne was forced to shut down his school for free and

[4] This restriction now specified that free black Virginians would "be hereafter prosecuted, tried, convicted and punished for any felony, by the justices of oyer and terminer, in the manner slaves are now tried, &c." These measures were set "to take effect" in July of 1832. *Richmond Enquirer*, March 30, 1832.

enslaved African Americans as a result of the laws passed by the state of South Carolina, which prohibited teaching any black people to read or write.[5]

Certainly, there had been restrictive racial codes throughout the colonies of the early modern Atlantic world and black racial inferiority was enmeshed in the legal foundations of the United States and many of the new nation's constituent states. But after Walker's efforts to promote abolition through print distribution and Turner struck for abolition through armed resistance, the legal framework of Southern states rejected earlier legal distinctions between the free and the enslaved.

These new measures sought to repress the already-limited freedoms of black communities. Ordained preaching and casual liquor drinking were condemned together. When black hands passed an evangelical tract, thumbed through an antislavery pamphlet, or loaded a hunting rifle, they constituted the same class of violations. Practices of self-defense, relaxation, mobility, literacy, and faith that black people had previously practiced were no longer tolerated, and any of these would be punished by the same "stripes" of the lash. In Virginia and elsewhere in the South, fearful and reactionary white authorities literally legislated away any difference between the pen and the sword.

Northern Responses and Ongoing Print Distribution to the South

Northerners responded to this suppression in Southern states in complex and contradictory commentary. Some free black people in the North opined that the work of Walker and the ongoing dissemination of abolitionist print in the South should continue in the face of

[5] Payne, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, 27-28.

new repressive laws. Others considered the *Appeal*'s Southern distribution unwise in view of the retaliatory erosion of black rights.

Even before Turner's violent efforts for liberation escalated these debates, the early numbers of the *Liberator* printed contrasting black perspectives on Walker's *Appeal* and the repressive measures. One free black Philadelphian, writing under the pseudonym Leo, excoriated Walker's pamphlet. He admitted that the *Appeal* circulated in his city at the favor of many in his community, but he believed the *Appeal* and the Southern distribution of abolitionist materials provoked unnecessary repression in the South.[6]

In more forceful reply, another free black Northerner writing under the name "J.I.W." used Walker's own language whic anticipated criticism from some in the free black community. He quoted Walker's insistence that the abject state of affairs for black people could not get worse. He suggested that "Leo" had not actually read Walker's *Appeal* for himself, and argued that rejecting Walker's argument on account of subsequent repressive measures was tantamount to betraying the interests of the enslaved and participating in slavery.[7]

This exchange illustrated a number of realities about black abolitionist discourse and printed texts. The reception of Walker's *Appeal* was not universally positive, among black

---

[6] "Leo," Philadelphia, Jan 21, 1831, *Liberator*, January 29, 1831. Leo asks: "Why then cast this firebrand so injudiciously among the stubble? Behold its injurious effects! In many of the southern states, the free people of color enjoyed some privileges and good situations, which not only afforded them the means of support but also of education—so that the rusty mind was daily becoming bright, and its brilliancy beaming forth to the destruction of prejudice. These privileges are now taken away. I am opposed to the pamphlet, therefore, in the second place, because I believe it to be at the bottom of the recent enactments of severe laws in the southern states, such as are too notorious to be mentioned. There is no man among us, who is more sensible of his political degradation than I am; but, at the same time, I am unwilling to resort to any dishonorable means of deliverance—such as Walker points out." Leo's letter was printed in the *Liberator* but the editor's footnotes call into question some of the criticisms launched against Walker.

[7] J.I.W., "The Appeal" *The Liberator,* Feb 5, 1831.

readers. Some black Northerners expressed apprehensions about the Southern distribution of black antislavery print. Those who hailed from Southern communities or feared the suppression of literacy, education, and faith practices questioned the wisdom in circulating the *Appeal*. The divergent analyses of Leo and J.I.W. reveal the complex calculations made by free black readers and prospective distributors of antislavery print. They encountered the *Appeal* and other texts in the context of reports of repressive legal responses.

One enterprising black abolitionist in 1831 sought to revive a black-edited periodical to facilitate discussion of these developments and continued to use the postal service to send his newspaper to the South. John G. Stewart began publishing his *African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty* out of Albany in the same year that Garrison started his Boston-based *Liberator*.

While the limited extant records of the *African Sentinel* suggest Stewart's inability to build a network of agents and subscribers sufficient to support his publication, the trove of documents seized at Richmond reveal Stewart's efforts to publicize his work in the South. Stewart used the mail to send his Albany-published periodical to the white editor of a leading Richmond newspaper. The inscription at the top of this black-edited periodical indicates that it was sent to the offices of the *Richmond Enquirer*. That publication voiced concerns about the secret meetings of the 1830 Virginia legislature to consider Walker's *Appeal* and the proposal to suppress the rights of the press with regard to antislavery. But by 1831, the *Enquirer*'s owner and editor Thomas Ritchie took it on himself to provide this copy of a black-edited, Northern-printed periodical to the legislature. Ritchie, who beyond his ownership of the *Enquirer* was also the state printer at the time, could have himself reprinted articles or editorial content from the *African Sentinel* or publicized its existence. However, the generally free-press-advocating editor

"furnished" this black periodical for perusal by the very authorities who cited its presence in Richmond as justification for new legal mechanisms for the suppression of print.[8]

Rather than intending to provoke Virginia postmasters, Stewart had hoped that an unimpeded mail delivery and a reprinting of some of the content of his *African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty* might inform the Virginian public, or at least reach free black people among the papers' southern readership. Just below the title, his black-edited newspaper featured as its slogan a quote from the famed Virginian Thomas Jefferson: "I tremble for my country when I think that God is just, and that his justice cannot sleep forever!"[9] Stewart's prospectus for his *African Sentinel* argued that "there should be *at least* one public JOURNAL, conducted by a coloured man, and devoted to the interest of the coloured population throughout this country."[10]

Stewart's intentions with the postal service demonstrated his knowledge and attention to how mailing copies to editors of other periodicals might extend his own paper's influence. Use of the mail in ensuring the flow of newspapers to subscribers was the standard practice of the era, and even though Southern states sought to repress black literacy and impose strict penalties upon distributors of antislavery print, the federal government's instruction against postal censorship afforded Stewart a time-tested, increasingly efficient, and federal-government-protected means

[8] For all of the newspapers submitted to the Virginia legislature, see Executive Communications, Box 10, Folder 13a, Executive Letterbook, Reel 14, Image 0907, Virginia State Library, Richmond. The copy of the *African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty* (Albany, New York), is from October 1, 1831. The copy is inscribed to the "Richmond Enq." and was presumably mailed through the U.S. post office. There is also an inscription on the bottom of the newspaper's front page indicating it was "furnished by Mr. T. Ritchie."

[9] *African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty* (Albany, New York), October 1, 1831.

[10] "African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty," contains both Lundy's commentary and excerpts from Stewart's prospectus, *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, March 1831.

of moving his newspaper.[11] Not only did Stewart have reason to believe his sheet would safely arrive via the mail to Richmond, but be also believed it might find favorable reception with the editor of the *Enquirer*. His was not the only Northern-printed abolitionist newspaper that arrived in Richmond that month. Virginia Governor John Floyd received the October 1 number of Garrison's *Liberator* in Richmond on October 14. His inscribed note on the copy he shared with other white Virginia authorities indicates not only the time of just two weeks between the paper's printing and its reception in Richmond, but also records with certainty that the copy was "received by mail—or rather through the post office."[12] The copy of the *Liberator* mailed to Richmond which Floyd submitted to the meeting of white authorities was also joined by a copy of the same publication that was inscribed to Ritchie's *Enquirer*.[13] Despite his commitment to the local free press Ritchie proved hostile to both the black editor Stewart and the white editor Garrison, presenting both the *African Sentinel* and thee *Liberator* copies to Virginia lawmakers in the wake of Turner's rebellion.

Use of the postal service to disseminate the *African Sentinel*, however, was gratefully received by a white editor in a different city where slavery persisted. When the prospectus or some early number of Stewart's paper arrived on the desk of Lundy in Washington, D.C., the editor reprinted the prospectus for the *African Sentinel* and lauded Stewart's effort as

[11] The pressing of the postmaster general to rule on the issue of the suppression of antislavery mail delivery did not come to a head until 1835. Amos Kendall, Postmaster General to Andrew Jackson, offered a deeply conflicted ruling that neither barred the use of the postal service for abolitionist print nor compelled postmasters to deliver or receive it. See Russell B. Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963); also Clement Eaton, "Censorship of the Southern Mails," *American Historical Review* (January, 1943).

[12] *The Liberator*, October 1, 1831, in Executive Communications, Box 10, Folder 13a, Executive Letterbook, Reel 14, Image 0921, Virginia State Library, Richmond. See front page for John Floyd's inscription.

[13] *The Liberator*, October 15, 1831, in Executive Communications, Box 10, Folder 13a, Executive Letterbook, Reel 14, Image 0936, Virginia State Library, Richmond. See front page for inscription to the Richmond "Enquirer."

participating in a great collective effort for moral reform in the world. Lundy noted that he "would cheerfully copy the whole" but could not because his "limits are too narrow," and cut short the extract of Stewart's prospectus to report on Virginia laws banishing free black people from the commonwealth and making legal the re-enslavement of emancipated slaves remaining in the state past a year's time. It continues that "all meetings of free negroes at any school house, or meeting house, for teaching them reading or writing, is declared an unlawful assembly." Lundy summarized these as an "attempt to shut out the light of knowledge from the mind of the African," and points out that Garrison at the *Liberator* commented that none of the religious periodicals in Virginia made any condemnations and that the Richmond *Telegraph* edited by a pastor actually supported this effort at black suppression.[14]

Stewart mailed his periodical to Ritchie and Lundy hoping to participate in the era's widespread practice of editors publicizing each other's work. In the case of the copies Stewart sent to Lundy's *Genius*, the exchange worked as the sender intended. A month after reprinting the *African Sentinel*'s prospectus, Lundy reported receiving a second number and commented on the "tact and talent" of Stewart's "essays and selections." Lundy suggested that white "friends of the African race should use every exertion to patronize" the paper, but that responsibility for the paper's success required the financial backing of black elites in order for Stewart to continue where Cornish and Russwurm's earlier editorial efforts failed.[15]

These relationships with white editors also might reveal a shift toward greater reciprocity in the dealings of black and white antislavery periodical editors. Lundy expressed his own

---

[14] African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty," *Genius,* April, 1831.

[15] African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty," *Genius,* April, 1831.

willingness to publicly reprint "copious extracts" of the *African* Sentinel and his "great pleasure to receive subscriptions for it, with the view of assisting the proprietor in his praiseworthy career." Lundy's gracious endorsement and willingness to solicit subscriptions, however, undervalued the annual cost of an *African Sentinel* subscription by a whole dollar in his advertisement.[16] However, the Southern based white editor pledged to assist Stewart, and whether or not Stewart returned the favor, evidence shows that the Albany-based black editor served as a subscription agent for the Boston-printed *Liberator* edited by Lundy's former junior editor. Even as Stewart sought to use the postal service and mailed copies of his newspaper to benefit from the support of white antislavery editors, he certainly offered his support for their publication efforts in return.[17]

More important for the *African Sentinel*, however, was the support of Northern black funders and distributors. The paper promised it would be "deposited in New York, at Messrs. Sipkins, Rich's, and at Messrs. Phenix and Price's hair-dressing establishment, foot of Barclay Street." This made the paper available in the same city where *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* were printed. The notice also advertised the active role of black New Yorkers in the distribution of the *African Sentinel*, including William Rich who served as the Troy, New York agent for both prior black-edited papers (and by 1837 would be an agent for the *Weekly Advocate*). Mr. and Mrs. Rich and Francis Wiles also supported the *African Sentinel* through the purchase of advertisements for their New York City boardinghouses. Stewart called to his readers' attention to black correspondence across international and national networks that

[16] African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty," *Genius,* April, 1831. Lundy indicated it cost $1.50, rather than $2.50.

[17] For evidence of Stewart as an agent see the *Liberator*, September 10, 1831.

contributed to the content of his periodical, as "the address of our coloured brethren of the Island of Grenada" included in the issue was thanks "to the kindness of a correspondent at New-York, who will accept our sincere thanks for his unwear[i]ed attentions." These black connections were already serving to contribute to, promote, and distribute the *African Sentinel* before Lundy lectured black readers to support Stewart's venture.[18]

This number of the *African Sentinel* also illustrates how an antislavery pamphlet was received by the black editor in Albany, reprinted on Stewart's sheet, and mailed out to a Southern recipient who may have received the same source materials in advance of or alongside the serial reprinting. Stewart makes editorial note that his leading feature, the "circular and expose," was included in the number because it "was politely handed to us by a friend immediately on its receipt per one of the late arrivals." After it was reprinted on Stewart's sheet, that number was mailed to Ritchie of the *Richmond Enquirer*. The piece charged the American Colonization Society (ACS) with advancing "a falsehood as cruel to the coloured people, as it is disgraceful to themselves," and Stewart's postal delivery put his reprint of the argument in Virginia where the ACS enjoyed considerable support. The argument fleshed out a powerful critique, suggesting that the ACS and white-controlled emigration schemes "powerfully tends to veil the existing and outrageous atrocity of Negro slavery; and it corroborates against the people of colour, whether enslaved or free, one of the most base, groundless, and cruel prejudices, that has ever disgraced the powerful, or afflicted the weak." [19]

[18] *African Sentinel*, October 1, 1831.

[19] *African Sentinel*, October 1, 1831.

When Ritchie turned the copy of the *African Sentinel* over to Virginia lawmakers, Stewart's Albany-printed newspaper and a copy of the same circular that Stewart received and reprinted on his newspaper's front were gathered together in Richmond into same cache of confiscated print. Independently of Stewart's activities, the same leaflet was mailed to Governor John Floyd and received by him in Richmond by October 11, 1831.[20] The convergence of the circular and the periodical that reprinted the circular that were both used to justify the incursion of antislavery literature into the South highlights not only the range of abolitionist media but also a variety of personal textual exchanges in service of distributing or suppressing the texts' further motion. These also illustrate the significance of the geographically expanding, rapidly improving, and increasingly facile postal transactions that facilitated some of these movements of print.

In his own editorial voice, Stewart remarked that he felt "great satisfaction in laying before our readers" the reprinted content from the circular, "hoping it will meet the eye of every unsophisticated philanthropist of the age."[21] Stewart likely did not imagine that his reprinting would be laid before the eyes of Virginia legislators alongside the original. Though his paper passed under the gaze of this sophisticated panel of readers, the authorities in Virginia granted no philanthropic consideration to the black editor's arguments against colonization and slavery. His words troubled them. But how he distributed his printed words to readers in Virginia proved a greater disturbance in the estimation of the authorities.

---

[20] *American Colonization Society, in Liberia*, in Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0781, Virginia State Library, Richmond. This text contains an inscription of John Floyd, speculating that the printed circular was a production of Garrison and Knapp, and indicates it was received in Richmond by Floyd on October 11, 1831. The front page of the circular, with the postal mark and addressed to Floyd entitles the communication "Contribution to the Insur[r]ection," see Image 0784.

[21] *African Sentinel*, October 1, 1831.

Not only would Stewart continue to support the distribution of other abolitionist publications and printed opposition to the ACS's white-controlled African colonization schemes, but he and his community also utilized print to advertise their own efforts considering the movement of African Americans out of the United States. Despite the *African Sentinel* reprinting of forceful condemnation of the ACS, Stewart and his local black community in upstate New York led national black efforts for black emigration to Canada. Even as places like Albany and Ithaca provided relative security to Stewart and black residents of upstate New York, this design for Canadian settlement held in view a future for self-emancipated black Southerners to find refuge beyond the borders of the United States. A public meeting held in Ithaca in September of 1831 proposed that Stewart preside over these discussions, and scheduled a convention to be held in Albany on November 1st. They resolved that the decisions and minutes be published in Stewart's *African Sentinel*, and, hoping the subject would be of value beyond their own black community of Tomkins County, New York, they publicized these resolutions and the scheduled convention in the *Liberator*.[22] They wished to develop their own designs for the freedom and empowerment of the formerly enslaved. They knew that these plans would require the power of the press and coordinated black networks of print distribution. But implicit in these public gatherings was the idea that these networks might ultimately foster the liberation, empowerment, and physical movement of formerly enslaved black people.

White Postmasters and Black Distributors in the South

While Turner remained elusive after the violent events in Southampton County, postmaster John C. Harris wrote a letter to his state governor on September 25, 1831. In the

[22] *Liberator*, September 17, 1831.

town of Orange Court House, Virginia, the postmaster took it upon himself to confiscate an antislavery text that was broadly shared among his black neighbors. In his letter to Governor John Floyd in Richmond, Harris' enclosed the "assassin like production" that concerned him. He articulated his fears in connection to the antislavery rebellion that occurred less than one month prior. But his local issue did not involve the movement of weapons among the enslaved, but rather the movement of printed material through the informal exchanges of free black people and the use of the United States postal service.

Even though the text in question had not come through the postal system, he seized and submitted it to state legislators. His submission of the text was paired with a letter that explicitly expressed fears about black Southerners distribution of antislavery texts, but also implicitly communicated his extralegal assertion that his role as a postmaster deputized him to serve as an arbiter of information in service of social control. The postmaster apologized "that the sheet is so much soiled, and mutilated." He explained that the tattered condition of the text was on account of "the interest which it excited in our village" that was "so great as to produce a desire in everyone to read it." Harris feared "the recent tragic & atrocious outrages committed in Southampton" about 150 miles south of his hometown, and was sure this text was among those that "would be ready instruments, at all times, to heed the Insurrection Banditi of negroes, of this, and our sister states-to engage in the murder of our wives, our daughters, our infant sons & aged and helpless parents and to apply the incendiary torch to every cottage, mansion or hamlet in our country."[23]

[23] Letter, John C. Harris to Gov. Floyd, September 25, 1831, Folder f, .Roll 14, Item 0750-0752Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

Harris reported that his black neighbor acquired the text in Washington, D.C., much closer in proximity to their Virginia town than the events in Southampton. But this was no plot scribbled down by and passed among the local enslaved. The text in question was a printed paper, published out of Boston and distributed by free blacks in the nation's capital city. The incendiary printed material was a number of the *Liberator*, and Harris' anger raged against the "Authors, Editors, and Publishers of such fiend like productions—these manifestoes of Insurrections." But his fears and indignation were not stoked merely by this single text. Harris was most troubled by the prospect that this battered pamphlet was just the sample copy. Due to the black man's advance-paid subscription given to an agent in Washington, *The Liberator* would be mailed to Orange Court House each week for the next six months. Asserting that "such licentiousness, treason & sedition delight in secret & systematic circulation," Harris understood that the covert movement of antislavery print that began with person-to-person exchange was designed to utilize the United States postal service for sustained distribution of serial publications.

Harris' letter fails to name the subscriber from Orange Court House, whose identity evades the historical record. This elision was to his advantage in keeping him free of more widespread public scrutiny, but also evidences that his actions deftly avoided legal or public scrutiny from the town's outraged white populace. But the letter of Harris suggests this was largely by the subscriber's careful design. He subscribed to the antislavery newspaper in Washington, D.C. and by submitting payment in person through an agent for an advance subscription he set in motion the postal delivery of copies to be made in his own town without producing a paper trail or sending mail himself. The black man went straight to Harris upon

return to Orange Court House, informing Harris of his subscription that would be expected to arrive in ten days. The proactive steps of the recipient with his local postmaster ensured the legal rights he exercised in subscription to the newspaper and caused Harris to believe his fellow black resident's claim to ignorance of the paper's contents. Harris repeats to the governor the subscriber's claim that he purchased the six month subscription unaware of "the incendiary character of the paper." This certainly could not be the case, given the cost of an advance subscription, the black man's eagerness to receive it of his local postmaster, and that it was later found that he came back from Washington with a copy he held or perhaps even loaned out until Harris grew suspicious. [24]

Though the letter of Harris and the number of *The Liberator* he submitted to Governor Floyd are not clearly paired in the archive, one number among a number of antislavery newspapers Floyd received appears to match the description of the *Liberator* copy taken from Washington D.C. and widely shared among the black and white readers of Orange Court House. A visibly stained and tattered number of *The Liberator* gathered into Floyd's and is the only one among the Governor's extant archive that could have been sent by Harris. Harris made no mention of the inscription of a name on the copy, but the number of July 23, 1831 that matches his description is inscribed with the name "Isaac Cary."[25]

---

[24] Letter, John C. Harris to Gov. Floyd, September 25, 1831, Folder f, Executive Letterbook, Reel 14, Images 0750-0752. Virginia State Library, Richmond.

[25] Isaac Cary's name is faint but visibly inscribed on a tattered number of the *Liberator*, July 23, 1831, in Executive Communications, Box 10, Folder 13a, Executive Letterbook, Reel 14, Image 0918, Virginia State Library, Richmond. Of the fourteen held by Floyd in these Executive Communications files, only 8 were printed before the date of Harris' letter, and seven of those eight bear inscriptions indicating they were "purchased of J. Sharpless" in Philadelphia by L.N.Q. in October of 1831, after Harris' letter was already sent. His last name is alternatively spelled Carey, in various contemporary records. An apparent space where a middle initial could have been inscribed evidences a tear that has ripped out the section of paper between first and last name.

Though the faint inscription eluded comment from Harris, Isaac N. Cary was a free black man who was involved in the movement of the black-edited, New York-printed *Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All*. In July 1827 Cary's words were recorded among the antislavery toasts uttered by black Virginians at an abolitionist celebration co-chaired by distribution agent Edward D. Baptist. Cary, the secretary for the occasion, honored the editors of the black newspaper, wishing them, of all things, enduring "patronage to sustain them in advocating the cause of a much injured people." If there were any doubt about the antislavery implications of this endorsement and in the sentiments of the gathering, the final toast recorded by Cary and reported to *Freedom's Journal* came from Mr. Elijah Rollings, saluting "Success to men, and freedom to slaves."[26] The postmaster may have had no knowledge of Cary or the black abolitionist company he kept in nearby Fredericksburg and publicized through the black press. But Harris was correct in believing that *The Liberator* and the distribution network that put it in the hands of his free black neighbor threatened the institution of slavery.

To address this threat, Harris informed Governor Floyd that he planned to abuse his own responsibilities as a postmaster and knowingly violate federal law in order to suppress rights enumerated in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. "I know that our laws, happily do, and that they ought to protect the rights of the Press, and the means of deciminating[*sic*] knowledge; **yet** in times like these, such seditious <u>incentives</u> to insurrection and murder, ought, with some discretion, to be prohibited." Harris took the initiative to deputize his own discretion

[26] *Freedom's Journal,* July 13, 1827.

to prohibit further circulation in Orange Court House, promising to seize any future numbers of the paper that might arrive as a result of the black man's advance subscription.[27]

White authorities such as Harris feared the illicit conspiratorial exchanges that mobilized violent slave insurrections, but also trembled at the prospect of printed antislavery materials passing through black Southerners' various informal commercial and personal networks moving easily through an increasingly efficient United States postal system. This forceful interest by white postmasters and willingness to subvert the delivery of the mail to suppress antislavery print challenges historian Russell B. Nye's argument that "the conflict over the distribution of antislavery literature in the mails became an issue" only after the American Anti-Slavery Society's 1835 pamphlet campaign which dramatically increased the volume of abolitionist print mailed in bulk to Southern ports and disseminated through the post to officials and prominent citizens.[28]

Isaac Cary, the free black southerner who subscribed or served as an unofficial subscription agent for the *Liberator* in 1831, previously promoted black-edited periodicals in order "to sustain them in advocating the cause of a much injured people."[29] Cary recorded these words that he and other black abolitionists spoke a few years earlier in Fredericksburg, sent them to New York to be published in *Freedom's Journal*, and likely saw them return to Virginia through fellow free black and celebration co-chairman Edward Baptist who served as a distribution agent for the newspaper, or perhaps even through the mail. But after they were

---

[27] Letter, John C. Harris to Gov. Floyd, September 25, 1831, Folder f, Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, Virginia State Library, Richmond. For my own future reference, this letter is microfilm item numbers 0750-0752. Bold letters and underline follow Harris' handwritten manuscript letter.

[28] Nye, *Fettered Freedom,* 67.

[29] *Freedom's Journal,* July 13, 1827.

published, the words Cary spoke, transcribed, and submitted to New York also passed through the hands of David Walker. Before penning his own "appeal to my much afflicted and suffering brethren" and distributing his pamphlet to southern readers, Walker, another free black Southerner, read and distributed Cary's report in *Freedom's Journal* that declared "freedom to slaves."[30] Though he was in the North by the time he read these words and moved copies of the newspaper as one of the paper's Boston agents, Walker would have no doubt felt connected to the sentiments and the experiences of these free black southerners. Cary (like Walker and Cornish) knew intimately the bondage and repression suffered by the enslaved and free black people in the South. But Cary (unlike Walker and Cornish) continued to live in the South and to distribute abolitionist texts even under the crush of new repressive measures to deny black literacy and halt the flow of abolitionist print.

Harris, the white postmaster, was not deputized to monitor print that circulated in his town or to censor the mail. To the contrary, he advocated new legal designs to suppress the movement of such incendiary texts and to expose those who moved them. Until these measures took effect, he notified the governor that he would indeed take illegal measures into his own hands should he come across controversial texts distributed through the mail.

The letter and the newspaper sent to the Virginia governor from Harris in Orange Court House was one submission among many, and a number of others also came from postmasters. Many other texts besides Ritchie's copy of the *African Sentinel* and the Cary-inscribed copy of the *Liberator* were brought to the attention of the governor and the General Assembly. One submitter offered up a four-year-old copy of Lundy's *Genius of Universal Emancipation*,

[30] Walker, *Appeal*, 4. *Freedom's Journal,* July 13, 1827.

illustrating either the long afterlives of antislavery texts that remained on the desks or shelves (if not in the trembling hands or on the minds) of white Southerners. The records of Governor Floyd also included a second copy of David Walker's *Appeal* that was confiscated and presented in the wake of the Turner-led liberation efforts in Southampton. In that collection, the governor's gathered submission to the assembly also included a manuscript letter claiming to be from a free black "Nero" threatening a continued plan of insurrection that hinged on the activities of black preachers and clandestine communication networks. Accompanying letters suspected the overreach of these claims and suspicions of a hoax designed either to stir agitation or justify the legal repression of black preaching and religious organizing, but another confiscated document, the printed *African Hymn*, was the production of a very real, black itinerant preacher.

Walker's stated interest in using the mail for abolitionist print distribution, communicated openly to an inquisitor and shared with Southern authorities by the disclosures of the mayor of Boston, gave rise to others doing just that, and in short order. This same trove of confiscated texts reveals that by late 1831, the Albany-based white abolitionist Sherlock S. Gregory used the postal service to move printed antislavery petitions to the South and openly targeted Virginia postmasters as recipients of a deliberate mail campaign. Though Gregory's texts were printed in the same city where Stewart published the *African Sentinel* and ended up in the same collection of confiscated antislavery print, the white Gregory pursued a very different strategy. He was not trying to communicate on behalf of or in an effort to reach black communities or sympathetic editors. Gregory directly addressed county postmasters throughout Virginia for the sake of

provocation.[31] The postmaster at Caira in Cumberland County received the same printed letter and submitted it to the governor October 5, 1831.[32] The postmaster at Chancellorsville notified the governor of the speed and route the mailed antislavery letter took, indicating the Albany printed letter was signed and dated by Gregory on September 16 and arrived at in Chancellorsville ten days later, and was then "remailed at Washington Sept 28" to Richmond, after the postmaster had a few days to consult with associates in Fredericksburg first.[33] This nearby town where the Chancellorsville postmaster sought advice was where at least one subscription agent for *Freedom's Journal* would have received his copies, most likely through the mail, and where Isaac N. Cary reported on activities of black abolitionist gatherings.

By the time the postmaster of Chancellorsville sought advice in Cary's hometown of Fredericksburg, the free black Cary had relocated to Washington, DC, where the publication in question had been "remailed." The story of a black agent in the nation's capital and Cary's name inscribed on the *Liberator* copy seized at Orange Court House indicates how the black Virginian

---

[31] For an explanation of how one postmaster received the Gregory text see Letter from George Chancellor to Gov. Floyd, 29 September 1831, Folder g, Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, Virginia State Library, Richmond. Microfilm item number 0755. The printed letter from Gregory to Chancellor is in the same folder, item number 0756. Gregory inscribed his own signature at the close of pre-printed circular letters expressing the author's arguments against slavery and notice of his opposition to the institution. The printed text of the letter addressed to the Postmaster at Chancellorsville, Virginia, dated September 16, 1831 read: "As our constitution says that all men are created equal and as God has made of one flesh all the nations of the earth; and as the negroes are no worse when born than the whites; And as there is no good prospect that a voluntary release of the slaves will be effected to any great degree — I hereby make known that for these and other reasons I will as an individual use all honorable means to sever the Iron bonds that united the slaves to their masters. And so long as this national ulcer (slavery) remains upon one of the republic, a disunion is highly desirable. It is a disgrace to the United States. It is looked upon as such by the most of Europe—What? A republic boasting its equal rights when a worse system of slavery is hardly (if at all) to be found. It is a shame."

[32] Letter from William L. McAshan to Gov. Floyd, 5 October 1831, Folder h, Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, Virginia State Library, Richmond. Manuscript letter from McAshan to Floyd is microfilm item number 0762, and the enclosed printed letter from Gregory to Chancellor is item number 0764

[33] Letter from George Chancellor to Gov. Floyd, 29 September 1831, Folder g, Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

was facilitating the distribution of antislavery print in Virginia at the very same time that a cohort of white Virginia postmasters sought to repress it. But Cary's activities were very different than those of the rogue white provocateur Gregory, in that they connected him to a local network of collaborators who sought to protect and advance the interests of black Southerners even as they participated in the dissemination of antislavery print.

Black Resistance in the Washington-Baltimore Corridor

Cary was just one among many free black agents who created and distributed antislavery print in the cities and counties adjacent to the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. Collaborators moved print across the Washington-Baltimore region's complex and contradicting cultural geographies that featured some degree of free black mobility despite slavery's persistence and new legal efforts to suppress antislavery print culture and enterprise among black communities. Literate black businessmen, such as Cary, alongside pastors and teachers, moved antislavery print in the Washington-Baltimore corridor by means of the social infrastructures that they themselves were actively building in their black communities. These networks featured independent black churches and schools, lodges and social organizations, business ventures, and well-connected families.

Among the antislavery texts seized in Virginia in the wake of the 1831 uprising, the *African Hymn* represented a confiscated religious imprint from a black pastor who ministered as an itinerant within the growing African Methodist Episcopal church networks of the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. corridor. This hymn authored by Shadrack Bassett struck terror in proslavery Virginians as it advanced a theological argument for black liberation and rhetoric of apocalyptic violence that was common to the *Appeal* and the alleged preaching of Turner in

advance of his uprising. On the single sheet lacking date or publishing information, the formerly enslaved and Maryland-born Bassett admonished "Africans" to "join the armies in the skies" and "break the slavish power." He proclaimed, "since Jehovah took the field, I determined not to yield, I will wield the sword with pleasure." Beyond the way his apocalyptic lyric invoked God's weapon of justice, white authorities were disturbed at how the song in printed form offered yet another manner in which the subversive song could be shared. They shuddered to think that black itinerants and covert black communication networks were silently distributing the sheet among black Christians of the South who then set them to tune with zeal, or who might feel a divine calling to enact the song's abolitionist vision by the sword.[34]

Bassett's efforts in ministry and itinerant preaching were the products of black community networks based out of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. that aided the cause of black education, worked to see select materials published, and advanced efforts for autonomous black churches and civil society. A number of black leaders in Baltimore and Washington sought to empower their community by establishing schools and churches in tandem. One black itinerant who shared the central Maryland and Northeast Virginia circuit with Bassett recollected that, the educational thrust and the intellectual brilliance of the Baltimore Bethel pastor and teacher Daniel Coker had inspired him to ministry.[35] Coker served as both a preacher and a teacher, and

---

[34] Shadrack Bassett, *African Hymn*, in Executive Communications, Box 14, Folder 61, Executive Letter Book, Reel 14, Image Number 0778, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

[35] See David Smith, *Biography of Rev. David Smith of the A. M. E. Church: Being a Complete History, Embracing over Sixty Years' Labor in the Advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom on Earth. Including [Daniel Alexander Payne's] "The History of the Origin and Development of Wilberforce University."* (Xenia, Ohio: Printed at the Xenia Gazette Office, 1881). See 134 for Smith citing Coker's "wit, talent, and education" among the "first" reasons why he joined Bethel in Baltimore. He joined the ministry under the conviction that the AME church "could do more good among my people" than any other institution. Smith's own earliest preaching was in the shadow of Bassett in the late eighteen-teens, along a large circuit encompassing "Little York, Pennsylvania;

also wrote and published his own antislavery pamphlet entitled "A Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister."[36] The Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore pastored by Coker formally declared their autonomy from the white-controlled Methodist connection in 1815, and eventually their efforts converged with those of the Philadelphia Bethel congregation that achieved legal recognition for the African Methodist Episcopal connection from Pennsylvania Supreme Court for in 1816.

A printed sermon that illustrated the intersecting commitments of the faith community networks in which Bassett participated was offered to the first Annual Convention hosted at Bethel Baltimore in April of 1818, by John W. Prout, then teacher of the Bethel school. Prout voiced a commitment to autonomous black churches and schools that rejected slavery and affirmed black humanity. He offered a classically-themed introductory poem on education, and then a sermon offering sophisticated biblical exegesis in defense of the black churches' autonomy that gave way to a grander argument for the virtue of resistance on the part of the oppressed. [37] Prout's sermon reused previously spoken and published compositions of William Smith, a Scottish-born white minister and professor but reinterpreted them in his own argument

---

Wrightville, on the Susquehanna river, Columbia, Lancaster, Harrisburg, Carlisle, Shippingburg, Chambersburg, Greencastle, Hagarstown, Funcktown, and Fredericktown." Smith, 37.

[36] Details of Coker's early life and his ministry in Baltimore can be found in Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 131-138.

[37] John W. Prout, *An Oration, on the Establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Kennedy and Magauran, 1818). I am grateful to the Virginia Baptist Historical Society and Darlene Herod, Research Assistant. The VBHS holds the only extant copy of Prout's rare imprint, and took the time to assist me in locating this original, verifying that the Readex digitized scan of the Early American Imprints microfilmed image of a photocopy was complete, and confirming the inscriptions were original to the extant copy. Prout likely understood the works he modified and re-delivered as the product of two authors (father and son), but in fact had gathered multiple sources that were all originally penned by the elder Smith. Following a precedent set by Smith's own son Charles, Prout reused Smith's words without attribution in the context of yet another American institution, an autonomous black church and its coupled programs for African American education.

in support of the newly autonomous African Methodist Episcopal churches.[38] Smith's exegesis of Joshua 22, originally preached in Philadelphia's Christ Church in 1775 at the request of a battalion of patriot troops was carefully reused by Prout in the context of black leaders struggling toward an independent black church. Smith used the text to offer a biblical justification for the colonies' political resistance to the British crown, but Prout brought it to bear on the black churches' departure from the white-controlled Methodist Connection.[39] This example shows the way Baltimore's black Methodist community sought opportunities to see their leader's orations set to print, not unlike black communities of Philadelphia and New York and Boston whose antislavery orations after 1808 also saw church-raised funding for the publication of antislavery sermons. Prout's role as a teacher in Baltimore earned him the place at the convention's dais and access to print, much like the contemporary prominence Prince Saunders achieved in Boston and Philadelphia. Also like Saunders, Prout used this position to repackage as his own the texts of

[38] Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African American Race Histories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 76, discusses the sermon as "perhaps the most creative and organizationally intricate biblical history" with respect to drawing upon biblical texts to justify a separate black tradition within the Methodist tradition. However, she does not discuss that Prout's sermon was not exactly original. No scholars, to my knowledge, have considered this rare text of Prout, or interrogated the fact that the work of the school-teacher was hardly an original argument and was not even Prout's own composition. Prout's opening poem and sermon were slightly modified versions of original works by the Rev. William Smith, the Scottish-born Anglican Doctor of Divinity who was the first Provost of Philadelphia College. Prout's use of Smith's lofty verses on education closely followed a version that Smith's son, Charles, delivered and reprinted under his own name in 1783, as his own address at the inaugural commencement ceremony of Washington College, Maryland, where his father had just begun his service as the founding President of that institution. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 16, 1783. Presumably, the Reverend William Smith sitting as College President was present and approved of his son's reuse of his own 1753 published poem "Verses Spoken at the Opening of the College of Miriania" in *A General Idea of the College of Mirania* (New York: J. Parker and W. Weyman, 1753), 5-7. The elder Smith's initial book was a treatise on education that employed the conceit of the founding of an independent American college at New York City. Thirty years later, Smith founded a real American college named after and with the patronage of George Washington. On occasion of Washington College's inaugural commencement, the elder Smith's verses written for a conceit were delivered by his son without attribution to his father but in praise of an actual institution headed by the poem's original author and educational visionary.

[39] Even Prout's introduction to his printed text, follows almost verbatim Smith's disclaimer regarding the haste with which his Revolution Era sermon was forced to the press. But the 1818 text printed in Baltimore credited only the black schoolteacher Prout as author and gave no attribution to Smith.

others for the sake of his projects of African American institutional autonomy. To explain this within African American literary criticism's theoretical understanding of "signifying," Prout's reuse and reinterpretation of the sermon may perhaps be understood in what Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls "repetition with a signal difference."[40]

Many from the free black Prout families from adjacent counties came to reside in the region's cities of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. by the 1820s and 1830s, in the same period that Bassett preached throughout the region and when the free black Virginian Cary moved to the capital.[41] The influx and economic rise of these free black educated free people made the black community of Washington an obvious hub of antislavery print distribution in connection with their peripheral home communities.[42]

---

[40] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, xxiv.

[41] Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 146 explains that "The majority of black people in the city prior to 1816 had come to the city as recently freed slaves from rural counties; however by the 1850s the free black population had changed dramatically. While natural increase, which continued to accelerate as the century progressed, augmented an already large black population, after 1830 Baltimore's black population was composed largely of those who were not only free but had been born free." A large number of free black Prout households lived in Anne Arundel County, between Baltimore and Washington at the turn of the eighteenth-century. Prouts in Anne Arundel County on the 1800 census include William Prout with a family of 3, a Robert Prout with a family of one and a James Prout with a family of 3, a Jack (no last name) listed right below William Prout is listed for a family of 7. Further down on the same record, a Nancy Prout is listed with a family of 4. See 1800 United States Census of Anne Arundel County, Maryland, M32, roll 9, page 100, image 59. Family History Library Film: 193662.Online: Ancestry.com. A household of nine headed by William Prout resided in the city of Frederick, by 1820, and in the early 1820s young free black men of the Prout family formed a significant cohort in Baltimore. The city directory of 1822 and 1823 listed seven men of the Prout family. Robert was a cordwainer, Jacob, John, Richard, and a first William were listed as laborers, a second William sold oysters, and Edward was a blacksmith. *C. Keenan's Baltimore Directory for 1822 & '23* (Baltimore, 1823), 225-226. The same document lists a number of free black Smith, households, including one headed by a David Smith, whose occupation is also just listed as a laborer. Given the repetition of names, it is likely that many of the Prouts previously living in Anne Arundel and Frederick Counties either kept homes or had relatives remaining in these nearby locations. The free black community in the city had grown exponentially during the late 1820s, from less than two dozen black property owners in 1824 to seventy five listed in the city's records by 1830.

[42] Dorothy Provine, "The Economic Position of the Free Blacks in the District of Columbia, 1800-1860," The Journal of Negro History (January 1 1973) vol.58, no. 1, 68.

Already by 1818, the same year that he taught in connection with Bethel Baltimore, Prout was active in Washington City building the autonomous black institutions foundational to that black community's cohesion and antislavery activism. In 1818 he helped to organize the Resolute Beneficial Society that provided mutual aid among Washington's black residents and advocated against slavery in the District. Prout, who claimed membership in the Prince Hall Lodge of Philadelphia, also organized black Freemasons in his own home until they successfully petitioned Philadelphia's Lodge for a new charter in the District of Columbia in 1822. The following year Prout taught black children alongside Anna Maria Hall, and served as manager for a new schoolhouse erected by Henry Smothers at 14th and H Streets.[43] While John W. Prout worked to establish autonomous black institutions in the capital, his labors contributed to a range of efforts for black education and social elevation that attended the emergent black churches of the region. His founding of Washington City's black school, benevolent society, and lodge, created institutions that proved foundational for black literacy and organizational power in the region, and afforded Prout and others opportunities to distribute print across these networks.

[43] William H. Grimshaw, *Official History of Freemansonry Among the Colored People in North America* (New York: Broadway Publishing Company, 1903), 131-137. Others who served with Prout to found the society were George Bell, John Francis Cook, James Harris, Stepney Forrest, and William Costin. At least one report suggests that the schoolteacher Prout received his education in the North and came to Washington, D.C. as early as 1800. If Prout was educated in Philadelphia, he would be a fascinating connection between two (sometimes rival) hubs of AME church organizing, and likely would have been known by (educated by or alongside) the advocates for black education and black print culture in Philadelphia. The 1820 Census shows a John Prout, aged 14-25, as a free black head of household in the capital city's Second Ward. His household included a free black woman in the same age range, and one free black male under 14 years of age. 1820 U S Censusof Washington, D.C., Ward 2, M33, roll 5, page 77, image 84. Online: Ancestry.com. Prout's listing in 1820 suggests that he may have lived nearby other free black families, in the 2nd Ward of the Capital City. Entries on the same page of the census include heads of household Simeon Bassett, Benj. Hackett, Geo. Robertson, Cath[erine?] Rhodes, Ann Phillips, Fanny Stewart, Thomas Green, and Frances Posey and James Drun?. Other black families whose records were adjacent and on the same census page as Prout's in 1830 were George McKay, Polly Ross, and Lynch Wormley. Also on the census page was a V[?]. Ray free black family. Just pages away from Prout and these free black families is the entry for R[alph].R[andolph]. Gurley's residence in the same 2nd Ward, where the ACS secretary still enumerated two enslaved black people as part of his D.C. household on the 1830 census of Washigton, D.C. Ward 2, M19, roll 14; page 73, online: Ancestry.com. For the Gurley entry, see page 79.

At the time that Prout continued to advocate for black civil society in Washington, D.C., Bassett and a ministerial associate illustrated the mobility and influence of black preachers from Baltimore throughout the region and how those efforts linked local communities in the connected efforts of the church. Basssett's much younger fellow AME itinerant who was drawn to Coker's example married Nancy Prout, a possibly relative of John W. Prout. Though Bassett was "the best speaker," Smith coordinated the financial contributions of white and black supporters across their circuit and conducted the business of buying lots and building churches.[44]

Their successes led the Baltimore Conference to split their circuit and station Smith in Frederick, Maryland, which he vacated after just three months with hopes to establish the first AME congregation in the capital.[45] Quickly, Smith's small congregation, called Israel, secured the lease to a school house where they began to meet, and among the new recruits to the connection were a number who became AME preachers, including one Peter Schureman, whom Smith appointed to serve the Fredericktown congregation he had left vacant.[46] In addition to establishing this first congregation comprised mostly of black artisans not affiliated with the

[44] Smith, *Biography*, 38. Smith recalls that "The white as well as the colored people were so much taken up with us that they would contribute very liberally to the support of colored churches."

[45] Though John W. Prout, George Bell, and others had already founded autonomous black institutions and maintained connections with Bethel Baltimore and Bethel Philadelphia, Smith recalled many black residents' initial opposition to a new AME church in Washington. After being driven out of Georgetown, Smith connected with Scipio Beanes, a black resident of Capital Hill, and Beanes' brother-in-law, Bell, who made the introductions that made possible Smith's preaching in Washington. Beanes, though he had been born enslaved in Prince George County, had the privilege of a basic English education and had been emancipated by his owner, a Dr. Beanes, in 1818. Smith recollected that "St. Cypian[Scipio] Beanes who was a noble hearted man and was then in good circumstances" made possible his introduction to a white lawyer and his brother-in-law, a free-black tavern keeper who arranged Smith's preaching to a group of intoxicated white elites in order to secure protection of his ministerial credentials in Washington. Smith, 46, names George Cole as the tavern keeper, but Beanes' brother-in-law was George Bell. Payne, 104, indicates that Beanes was married to "Harriet Bell, of Washington City, daughter of one of the most influential members of our church in that city for many years, being trustee and leader at the time of his death, in 1845." Multiple accounts of Scipio Beanes' life and ministry experiences are found in Payne. For his early life and conversion, see 104.

[46] Smith, *Biography*, 53, mentions George Hicks, George Simms, and Rev. [Peter D.] Schur[e]man.

white-controlled but racially integrated Methodist Episcopal church, Smith started a second church comprised of many enslaved people of Washington, D.C upon approval from area slaveholders. Smith admitted that his public preaching "did not say anything to their slaves about becoming free from their earthly masters, but impressed upon them the necessity of becoming free from the devil."[47] Smith led camp meetings in Prince George County as well, with the help of the Baltimore-stationed AME Reverend Jacob Matthews. Despite his seminal work among these three Washington, D.C. area churches, Smith also passed on this post to Schureman. Unlike Smith's initial preaching which demurred to the slaveholders who sanctioned his efforts, Schureman's more forceful antislavery preaching among the enslaved saw him "arrested and put into jail by the slave holders" of the capital city.[48]

The arrest of Schureman revealed the dangers faced by AME ministers of the region who preached freedom from sin and liberation from slavery. While Smith's successor endured jail because of his antislavery-inflected preaching, Smith's fellow itinerant Shadrack Bassett endured persistent threats to his own personal freedom. Bassett labored in connection to the Baltimore Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and regularly shared sermons and songs with the Bethel congregation, where his homiletical skill and musical style were lauded by and inspirational to future AME leaders.[49] However, he spent years preaching outdoors among the

[47] Smith, *Biography*, 53.

[48] Smith, *Biography*, 54.

[49] Alexander Walker Wayman, a future bishop and early church historian of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, began his own *Reflections of African M.E. Ministers* with a description of Shadrack Bassett. Wayman, born in 1821 into a free black family in Caroline County, Maryland, began with descriptions of Bassett's famed preaching in Easton, Maryland as the opening vignette for Wayman's own memoir. He described Bassett selecting a cart for a pulpit and singing a hymn that prompted the establishment of an early AME church on Maryland's Eastern shore. Not only was this experience a first recorded memory in Wayman's text, but he described a

enslaved in the region's more rural reaches, especially along Maryland's eastern shore, where he was known to use a borrowed cart for his pulpit.[50]

Even as Bassett exercised this mobility and won the favor of some white benefactors in the region, he faced persistent and dangerous threats to his own personal freedom. Bassett was enslaved at birth and faced ongoing dispute over his manumission. This situation compelled the Baltimore conference to consult a lawyer about the legality of Bassett's movements on the itinerant circuit in 1822. The future Bishop and historian Payne's description of that year's meeting suggests "There seems to have been some doubt about the employment of Bassett as a traveling preacher, in view of the circumstance that having been a slave he had petitioned for his freedom, and having been delivered by the courts from the claims of one slave-holder, it was feared he might be subject to the claims of another." Because the body feared that Bassett's successful freedom suit might not mitigate against his seizure by another claimant, they had Abner Coker consult a lawyer on Bassett's behalf. He presented counsel's opinion that Bassett's successful petition against one owner did not protect him from another claimant. The final word of the attorney was to recommend that the conference let Bassett preach, but carefully restrict his

---

personal knowledge of this elder preacher who "came over from Baltimore City" and spoke with the author's father en route to recruiting a future Reverend (Samuel Todd) for service to the AME church. The account also suggests that another future Reverend in the AME connection (Robert Collins) came to faith as a result of Bassett's singing during a service in Baltimore. Alexander W. Wayman, *My Recollections of African M. E. Ministers, or Forty Years' Experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Introduction by Rev. B. T. Tanner (Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Rooms, 1881), 1-2. The same Collins who testified to conversion at Bassett's singing in Baltimore, was by another pastor's account a founder of a school for free black children and securing support from some white wealthy patrons even though these efforts proceeded "in opposition to the laws of the state." David Smith, *Biography*, 35. In addition to his service as a teacher alongside Daniel Coker, who then pastored the Baltimore Bethel Church, Collins also made significant contributions himself to the music ministry of the Baltimore church.

[50] See Wayman, *My Recollections…*; Alexander W. Wayman, *Cyclopædia of African Methodism* (Baltimore: Methodist Episcopal Book Depository, 1882), 19, 55, 165; James A. Handy, *Scraps of African Methodist Episcopal History* (Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Concern, 1902).

mobility: "It is my opinion that the Conference of Colored People incur no risk in sending Shadrack Bassett forth to preach the Gospel, provided he does not go south of the State of Maryland."[51] Before Virginia authorities considered any legal mechanisms to suppress Bassett's confiscated *African Hymn*, he faced legal challenges to his mobility, ministry, and most basic personal freedom.

The hymn Bassett wrote and any forms of print he may have distributed in the region before 1831 participated in an ongoing resistance against the deeper legal traditions whereby white authorities sought to deny black freedom. Bassett's hymn not only put the preacher's robust abolitionist theology into a hymn accessible to literate and illiterate alike, but set to type God's promise of liberation. Moreover, the means by which Bassett and other itinerant ministers or literate black congregants distributed the *African Hymn* were more informal and clandestine than those attempted by abolitionist periodicals.[52] Black communities of the South certainly

---

[51] Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Ed. C. S. Smith, (Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1891), there are numerous mentions, but 23 notes Bassett's suit for freedom and recommendation from legal counsel that he not preach south of Maryland. The attorney used was John Tyson. These earliest ministry involvements of Bassett, however, were supervised by the Baltimore conference and featured preaching engagements and other points of connection with the AME congregations of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. But these threats to his own mobility might have necessitated a transfer of that circuit to the Philadelphia Conference. By May 22, 1824, Bassett was received into connection in the Philadelphia Annual Conference, along with fellow southern-born preachers William Cornish and Marcus Brown, at the very meeting where the much younger Charleston-born and educated Joseph M. Corr was named the Philadelphia Conferences secretary. For those minutes, see James A. Handy, *Scraps of African Methodist Episcopal History* (Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Concern, 1902), 68.

[52] There are a number of features of Bassett's apocalyptic imagery and lyrics that seem to be increasingly common in the era. There are a number of hymn-books in the 1820s that also used violent apocalyptic metaphors discussed swords in multiple instances. Perhaps the best example of this contemporary to Bassett's "African Hymn" is "Hymn 205" in *The Zion songster: a collection of hymns and spiritual songs, generally sung at camp and prayer meetings, and in revivals of religion*, ed. Peter D. Myers (New York: M'Elrath & Bangs, P. D. Myers and J.C. Totten, 1831), 216-217. This hymn that says in similar language "Go blow the gospel trumpet, go sound the Jubilee," is included in that year's ninth edition of the *Zion Songster*. In the same year that Bassett's hymn was seized, this number contained remarkably similar language: "Oh Watchmen where are you? Their blood will cry against you, If idle you should be:You see the sword is coming, Then sound the jubilee. Come, oh my Father's children! Redeem'd for liberty! …Come brethren all, and sisters, Though but a little band, The vict'ry I'll ensure

came in contact with printed materials that made theological arguments against slavery, but the *African Hymn* represented a song written and published by Southern black itinerant ministers such as Bassett, easily distributed his printed song sheet among the enslaved. Even though Bassett's prior legal struggles to secure his freedom resulted in the AME convention's demand that he not preach south of Maryland, the distribution of his hymn would defy this constraint. His antislavery anthem allowed the words of the preacher's song to carry beyond the sound of his celebrated voice.

After the execution of Turner and the seizure of black abolitionist print, including Bassett's *African Hymn*, the Virginia Governor Floyd wrote to the Governor of South Carolina that "the spirit of insubordination" among black Virginians could be attributed to "Yankee pedlars and traders." Floyd asserted that Northern designs began with conversion into an egalitarian Christianity "telling the blacks, God was no respecter of persons; the black man as good as the white; that all men were born free and equal." The Governor believed Northerners the source of a dangerous abolitionist equivocation "that the white people rebelled against England to obtain freedom; so have the blacks a right to do."[53]

Floyd was wrong. He attributed to Northern interlopers the arguments that black Southerners made for themselves. The printed texts that circulated among free black communities of the region were not only those published by Northerners to provoke agitation, but included the printed texts of Coker, Prout, and Bassett, black Methodists from the Baltimore-

---

you, Stand fast with sword in hand; Then wield the sword with pleasure, The battle goes aright…" The song goes on to discuss bondage in Egypt and other themes similar to those of Bassett. Bassett's Hymn made use of themes and scriptural themes used beyond the hymnody of the AME church or of black worshiping communities, but his composition seems to have had significant afterlife among these bodies.

[53] Governor John Floyd to Governor James Hamilton, 19 November, 1831, reprinted in Eric Foner, *Nat Turner* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 58.

Washington corridor. Floyd must have had Bassett's abolitionist hymn and the other confiscated imprints in mind as he further asserted that black preachers in the South had organized the abolitionist rebellion at Southampton, using their pulpits to publicly read "the incendiary publications of Walker, Garrison, and Knapp of Boston; these too with songs and hymns of a similar character were circulated, read, and commented upon." While outsized blame was cast upon Northern writers and printers, Floyd voiced deep fear of Bassett's fellow black ministers as participants of a broader strategy for black political revolution. The governor was "fully convinced that every black preacher, in the whole country east of the Blue Ridge, was in on the secret, that the plans as published by those northern prints were adopted and acted upon by them, that their congregations, as they were called knew nothing of this intended rebellion, except a few leading intelligent men, who may have been head men in the church." Floyd interpreted Bassett's hymn not as an apocalyptic hope, but a political manifesto for white extermination and establishment of a black abolitionist theocracy. Governor Floyd received and believed the information that rebels "settled on the form of government to be that of the white people, whom they intended to be cut off to a man, with this difference that the preachers were to be their governors, generals, and judges."[54]

Bassett's preaching led him increasingly apart from the enslaved communities that proslavery southern governors feared he would incite to rebellion. This may not have reflected a rejection of his work among the enslaved, and the preacher's placement appears consistent with his church's efforts to protect Bassett's freedom. His itinerant ministry under Baltimore's oversight eventually was transferred to Philadelphia and featured more preaching in

[54] Floyd to Hamilton, 19 November, 1831, in Foner, *Nat Turner*, 58. See also, Scot French, *The Rebellious Slave: Nat Turner in American Memory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 51-55.

Pennsylvania, a move that no doubt quelled some of the fears of his possible re-enslavement and further removed him from the context of violence that Floyd believed a direct consequence of Bassett's printed hymn and itinerant preaching. Smith left Washington to return to his wife Nancy in Baltimore to tend "some family matters" that may have included his child or multiple children's death.[55] In the District, leaders such as Prout, Schureman, and Cary continued to serve the black community. Even some involved in the founding of the Israel AME congregation of Washington which expanded the mission of the church in Haiti during this period.[56] The local and regional connections of these resilient black abolitionists were essential for their efforts to build up black institutions and participate in the movement of antislavery print. Bassett saw his hymn in print and no doubt distributed it and sang it along his rural circuit, but was rarely stationary enough to cultivate the longer-term institution building that supported his roving ministry.

The post-Walker and post-Turner cultural and legal obstacles to the personal freedoms and community building efforts of free black communities in the South extended beyond the

[55] Smith recollected that "death visited us quite often" and only four of he and Nancy's twelve children lived to adulthood. Smith, *Autobiography*, 133. By 1823, Smith had given up the pastorate of his Washington Israel AME church, and John Prout was well established in Washington. Smith's whereabouts in 1823 were recorded in connection to the Baltimore conference of that year, as one of the six present in Baltimore at the start of the 1823 Baltimore Conference, alongside Bishop Allen, Charles Corr, and a few others, who that year named the young layman Charles Hacket the steward of the conference. Payne, *History*, 39.

[56] The literate and enterprising Beanes, would not only join the ranks of the AME clergy, but would depart from Washington to preach in the capital of a black republic, as a minister in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. For details concerning Beanes' ministry in Haiti and 1835 death in Port-au-Prince, see Payne, 105-106. The record seems to indicate that he first went to Haiti in 1826, received AME appointment to serve at Port-au-Prince in 1827, and spent periods of time back in service to churches in Baltimore and Washington, and to report at conferences, but served at the Haitian capital from 1832 to his death in 1835. Payne, 106, records that the infirm 42-year-old Beanes' insisted on dying in Haiti, saying "Heaven is as near to Port-au-Prince as to Washington." This is a rather interesting testament of formerly-enslaved black preacher's political identity, that not only expressed his faith in God's provision for the afterlife but also carried political implications in suggesting the rival capital cities of the United States and the black Haitian Republic are equally near to heaven.

persistent efforts to repress their roles in the distribution of antislavery print. Threats to antislavery print distribution were just one feature within a larger system of repression that threatened black Southerners' personal freedoms and their efforts to build black churches and civil society. The black communities of the Washington-Baltimore corridor not only connected individuals such as Cary, Bassett, Smith, and Prout, but built up social infrastructure—the networks that served as a conduit for their politically-charged activities for black empowerment and the movement of antislavery print in the region.

Divergent Visions of Black Freedom

The persistent institution of slavery and increasingly repressive laws in the 1820s continued to frame two very different visions for freedom and black empowerment that were shared among African American communities. Some continued efforts for slavery and uplift within the United States and others argued that those aims could only be achieved beyond the borders of the republic. The growth of churches and other black institutions in the Washington-Baltimore corridor facilitated the work of John W. Prout and others, but many still searched for a way out of the region and out of the country. Judging from experiences of life in the Capital City, the United States proved unfriendly to black freedom (as in the case of Bassett's suit) and to an abolitionism-inflected gospel (as in Schureman's arrest and church closure). The founding pastor and former-Bishop-elect Daniel Coker never regained his stature in the church and community. He was destitute by 1818 and departed for Liberia by 1820. Although many free African Americans already opposed the ACS's scheme as a racist plot to rid the United States of black people whom they deemed unfit for American civic participation, Coker and others

including Jacob W. Prout explored the possibility of building their own free black society in Liberia.

Those in the community who opposed African colonization were more open to voluntary, black-controlled discussions about emigration from the United States to Haiti. This conversation, led by Saunders in the 1810s, gained traction among a number of black Presbyterian, Baptist, and AME pastors and educators of other urban communities in the 1820s. Baltimore's leading AME church hosted a meeting chaired by Robert Prout that concerned Haitian emigration in 1824. A Baltimore visit by Citizen Granville, agent of the Haitian Republic, resulted in the community's assessment of emigration prospects to the Caribbean.[57] Submitting notice of their meeting on the pages of Lundy's *Genius*, Prout and other leaders of the meeting including Bethel pastor Moses Freeman and the AME conference steward Charles Hacket publicized their community's autonomous decision making with regard to alternate colonization and emigration proposals. By 1825, many AME ministers from Baltimore and Washington were interested in ministry assignments to Haiti. While the Washingtonian Beanes' request was granted and he went to Haiti as an AME minister in 1826, the denomination wished to retain some of the region's literate ministers and laypeople in service of its publishing efforts. Two educated laypeople who remained alongside Baltimore pastor Freeman, Hacket and Cowley, respectively collected

[57] After Granville addressed "a numerous meeting of the respectable people of color" gathered at Baltimore Bethel, Robert Prout, was nominated to chair a committee to confer with Baltimore's people of color on the subject of emigration. Those interested in emigration to Haiti were directed to make application at Bethel with Robert Cowley, who served on the Prout-chaired committee alongside Bethel's pastor Moses Freeman, the AME conference steward Charles Hacket, and numerous other respected black men of Baltimore. Prout served in a prominent role, and the efforts of the meeting ensured that the black communities' resolutions were printed in a local newspaper and reprinted in Benjamin Lundy's *Genius.* Lundy's *Genius* of course, served a much larger network of readers with various pro-colonization designs and antislavery sensibilities. "Baltimore Emigration Society," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, November 4, 1824. This story in the *Genius* indicated that it had been reprinted from the *American*, September 4, 1824.

money for denominational publication and recorded names of prospective emigrants in 1825, serving in these roles two years before their duo served to collect subscription funds for *Freedom's Journal*.[58]

Those who left from this region played an important role in transatlantic print communication, serving as agents for Lundy's paper and rising to prominence in the Liberian colony. Not only had the *Genius* publicized black decision-making around Liberian colonization and Haitian emigration, but chronicled the ascendancy of the black Baltimorean Jacob W. Prout. By 1829 Prout served the *Genius* as its Liberian subscription agent and Black Virginian William B. Bowler received subscriptions at Port-au-Prince.[59] In Monrovia, Prout received subscription funds and on at least one occasion had a letter to the editor detailing Liberian news printed in the *Genius*. [60] This Prout also sent to Lundy, via Philadelphia, a copy of the *Liberia Herald* created by *Freedom's Journal*'s former editor Russwurm. [61] The pages of American periodicals continued to document the black Baltimorean Prout's prominence among the colony. The Washington-printed colonizationist periodical in 1827 listed him as a sergeant in the artillery

[58] A number of the same figures prominent in the meeting at Bethel Baltimore had also organized and printed the proceedings of the AME conference hosted there in 1823, where Hacket was the conference steward. Pastor Freeman's request of that year was rejected by the denomination and instead he and Hacket were tasked with reprinting the denominations' rule of order, the AME *Discipline*. Payne, 46.

[59] By September 1829, an updated list of agents authorized to distribute Lundy's *Genius* included Jacob W. Prout in Monrovia, Liberia, Citizen Granville and William B. Bowler in Port-au-Prince, and James Cropper, Liverpool (Cropper was also first listed as an agent for the black newspapers printed out of New York). Likely contacts from Lundy's own trip to Haiti, the agents list also included John B. Salgues in Aux Cayes and A. H. Gardere in Gonaives, Haiti. At this moment in the expansion of the journals, correspondence and business were to be directed to Lundy and Garrison in Baltimore."Authorized Agents." *Genius*, September 2, 1829 1830.

[60] Prout's letter, dated Sept 22, 1830, was printed in the *Genius*, November 1830.

[61] "Liberia," *Genius.*

corps, and the Baltimore-printed *Genius* listed him as "Dr. J. W. Prout" by February 1833.[62] By 1835, Prout was nominated a "manager" of the "Liberia Temperance Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church," and listed as Dr. J.W. Prout; he was the only manager for the society not bearing the title of Reverend.[63]

The other J. W. Prout from Baltimore, John, whose personal and professional stock rose with his relocation to Washington D.C., also saw his name on the pages of periodicals in the late 1820s, as a regularly listed agent of the black-edited antislavery periodicals printed out of New York. He was a subscription agent for *Freedom's Journal* and the *Rights of All* in the nation's capital, from the beginning of Cornish and Russwurm's periodical through the closure of the more anti-colonizationist successor publication edited by Cornish.

John W. Prout's own stance in opposition to colonization was made public through his local antislavery press, Lundy's *Genius*, in 1831. Despite the white editor's sympathies for colonization schemes, the *Genius* covered colonization discussions happening in Baltimore and Washington and offered subtle support for the importance of autonomous black community decisions, regarding colonization or emigration. Lundy felt "reluctantly compelled to omit a notice of the proceedings of the coloured people of several of the free states," but did include the proceedings of a meeting chaired by Prout and held in Washington's AME church. The published minutes indicated that Prout gave an opening address, and the gathering he chaired offered sharp criticism of the American Colonization Society. The meeting registered their "distrust" for the colonization society and their "declared opinion… that the soil which gave

---

[62] *African Repository*, June 1, 1827, 127. *Genius*, February 1833.

[63] "Temperence in the Colony," *African Repository*, June 1 1835, 180.

them birth, is their only *true and veritable home*—and it would be impolitic, unwise, and unproper[*sic*] for them to leave their home without the benefits of education." While admitting "many true and sincere friends" endorsed colonization and held good intentions for the proposal, the meeting resolved that their community could not approve of the colonization system. [64]

On the same occasion that Prout and the black community of Washington offered a profound rejection of colonization, they also expressed support for antislavery periodicals and signaled their intention to use those same as a means to publicize their position. They stated "that we believe the *Press* to be the most efficient means of disseminating light and knowledge among our brethren" and recommended both the *Genius* and the *Liberator*. The meeting's final resolution stipulated that the proceedings be signed by Prout and the meetings secretary and be published.[65] These resolutions indicate that the meetings where free black communities developed and drafted public (and deeply political) statements against colonization were the same gatherings that fostered and formalized collective support of antislavery print culture. They resolved to endorse the periodicals that might afford their resolutions access to print. This embedded acknowledgment of their prospective media outlets strategically encouraged their inclusion therein. They linked their critique of colonization with their promotion of the antislavery press, reinforcing the very platform from which their community's voice might be heard and amplified.

The Prout-chaired colonization meeting gave publicity to the strong objections of the local black community. It was neither the first nor the last antislavery press to which Prout

---

[64] "African Colonization," *Genius,* April 1831.

[65] "African Colonization," *Genius,* April 1831.

subscribed and for which Prout's community in the region served to distribute. Though Prout was not, his neighbor and friend William Wormley was a named distribution agent for the *Liberator*. Wormley, a well-educated son of Prout's wealthy black neighbor Lych Wormley, was among the first group of black abolitionists to gather at Prout's house in 1822 to found the city's black lodge.[66] Wormley not only inherited considerable assets from his father, but by 1830 operated his own livery business that provided him with financial success and geographic mobility, a perfect set of resources for an agent to distribute print. Like Prout, Wormley cultivated social connections outside the Washington-Baltimore corridor and connections to Philadelphia's black abolitionist leaders who promoted black education and used print to challenge colonization.

Black women from these communities also featured important service and leadership in the educational and religious institutions of the region. Wormley sent at least one of his much younger sisters, Mary, to Philadelphia between 1825 and 1830, to attend the Colored Female Seminary where she was instructed by free black abolitionist, educator, artist Sara Mapps Douglass.[67] Just as Prout's northern education (likely also in Philadelphia) was put to use

---

[66] Grimshaw, *Official History of Freemasonry*, 132-135.

[67] Wormley's wealth, family connections, and early life is discussed in Carol Gelderman, *A Free Man of Color and his Hotel: Race Reconstruction, and the Role of the Federal Government* (Washington, District of Columbia: Potomac Books, 2012), 10-11. Gelderman suggests that Wormley's connection to Philadelphia was on the basis of recommendation to the black Quaker's school by Quaker educators in Washington, D.C., however, Sara Douglass's family was prominent among the black community of Philadelphia. Her grandfather, Cyril Bustill was a member of the city's first Free African Society, her mother Grace Bustill Douglass a black Quaker and a founder of the Philadelphia Female Antislavery Society, and her father, Robert Douglass a founder and Elder of the First African Presbyterian church in Philadelphia and an officer and supporter of various institutions. See Katherine L. Culkin's entry "Sara Mapps Douglass" in *Encyclopedia of Emancipation and Abolition in the Transatlantic World*, ed. Junius P. Rodriguez (New York: Routledge, 2015). Robert publicly protested colonization as early as 1817, served in 1818 as an officer alongside Gloucester, Cornish, Forten, and Tapsico to establish the Augustine Society in Philadelphia, in Saunders, *An Address, Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; on the 30th of September 1818* (Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1818), 12.

teaching African Americans in the capital, Mary Wormley returned in 1830 to begin her own school for black women. After Mary returned to the capital, Sara Mapps Douglass in 1831 led a Literary Society for black women of Philadelphia and contributed her own writing to the Boston-printed *Liberator*. While William distributed the paper among the city's black residents, Mary empowered young black women of the capital to read and engage with her former teacher's ideas.

Wormley's public role as a subscription agent would not long last. Both Wormley and Lundy were added to the *Liberator*'s printed list of agents in May of 1831, but after Nat Turner's attempt to violently overthrow slavery, Garrison in September of 1831 ceased publicizing his black agent's efforts to move abolitionist print in the nation's capital.[68]

Affluent members of the black community gave material support to Lundy and Garrison personally, beyond the scope of subscription fees. Isaac Cary shared his own recollections of this cohort's support for these editors years later with the grandson of his deceased contemporary Jacob Greener. Discussions with an aged Cary informed Greener's description of how this black network proved foundational to the work of these editors. Greener reported Cary's description of Lundy, citing the black abolitionist who personally "knew 'the little, pale, thin man,' and he says Lundy never departed empty handed."[69] Greener remarked how these black community

[68] Wormley is listed as an agent for the *Liberator* only on those numbers printed between May 7 and September 24, 1831, after which only Lundy's name continues to be printed as an agent to Washington, D.C.

[69] Richard T. Greener, "The White Problem," in *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience at Harvard* eds. Werner Sollors, Caldwell Titcomb, Thomas A. Underwood, and Randall Kennedy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 47. Greener says Lundy and Garrison enjoyed the support of "the leading colored men of Washington, Carey, and Fleet, and Cook; of Philadelphia, Forten, Allen, Burr, and Purvis; of Baltimore, Grice, Greener, and Watkins; of Boston, Paul, Easton, Barbadoes, and Walker… [who] corresponded with, aided, lodged, and fed the apostle Lundy, in his mysterious journeyings through the southern states, and circulated his Genius of Universal Emancipation."

leaders, including his own grandfather, Jacob, specifically cared for Lundy. Historian Manisha Sinha has recently argued for greater recognition of the impact of Jacob Greener and William Watkins upon Garrison's "conversion to immediatism" since "in a way, Garrison served an apprenticeship not only with Lundy but also with Watkins and Greener."[70]

Perhaps the influence of the region's black leaders upon Garrison can be seen even in his initial designs to publish his own weekly *Public Liberator, and Journal of the Times* out of Washington. This earliest iteration of Garrison's *Liberator* prospectus states that "the primary object of this publication will be the abolition of slavery, and the moral and intellectual elevation of our colored population." Garrison's proposed choice in Washington, D.C. was argued for on the logic that "the Capital of our Union is obviously the most eligible spot whereon to build this mighty enterprise:— first, because (through Congress and the Supreme Court) it is the head of the body politic, and the soul of the national system; and secondly, because the District of Columbia is the first citadel to be carried."[71]

An inscription from an 1833 number of the *Liberator* indicates that the black abolitionist John W. Prout continued to subscribe to the *Liberator* even after Wormley's departure from the public roll of agents and the discovery of Cary-distributed copies in Virginia. This number of the *Liberator*, inscribed to "J. W. Prout" by the *Liberator* staff in Boston was mailed directly to the black abolitionist subscriber without passing through the hands of an intermediary. Stamped upon arrival in Washington on October 10, it illustrated that mailed copies of the Boston-printed *Liberator* took less than two week to reach a black abolitionist readership in D.C. However, this

[70] Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 216.

[71] Manuscript in the personal collection of Francis Jackson Garrison, cited by Garrison and Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison*, Vol. I, 199.

extant number never made it into Prout's hands and was marked "Dead" by the post office.[72] But this status assigned to Prout's copy was likely not because he forget to retrieve his mail and more likely a function of Prout's being jailed and indicted that year for his abolitionist activities.

The social persecution and legal prosecution that threatened the freedom of Prout in 1833 was not on the basis of his moving antislavery texts, but because of his alleged efforts to forge documents emancipating enslaved black people. That April, Washington's Grand Jury offered two indictments against Prout, for allegedly providing a forged certificate of freedom to one Joseph Dozier and enabling his flight from Lucy Miller, the lawful owner of Dozier in Washington County. The District Attorney Francis Scott Key prosecuted Prout before the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, hoping to achieve multiple convictions and the strictest of penalties for Prout's alleged involvement. However, the Chief Justice Cranch refused to allow Key's witness comparing Prout's handwriting to the forged pass as sufficient evidence, and dismissed the first indictment against Prout "for forging a certificate of freedom under the seal of this court." However, Cranch heard Key's arguments for the first count of the second indictment, that Prout "as a free man, did… entice and pursuade a certain slave… to run away, which the said slave did then and there actually run away from his mistress and owner."

The jury found Prout guilty on this count, but Prout's lawyer moved the court to suspend Prout from any judgment of fine or corporal punishment. Key's argument led Chief Justice Cranch to suggest a judgement that Prout be forced to pay six hundred dollars, the sum Key argued was the full market value of the enslaved Dozier, plus the costs of legal fees of Dozier's

[72] See inscription on *Liberator*, Sept. 28, 1833, held by the Massachusetts Historical Society. It is important to note that this is only a partial inscription, but legible for J. W. Prout and accompanied by a postal mark from Washington City.

Mistress. Cranch recommended that if Prout's levied assets and properties did not amount to the sum, he be forced to serve no less than one year in prison. However, the court's verdict did not follow its chief judge's suggestion, and (with Cranch dissenting) ruled that Prout pay a fine of just fifty dollars.[73] Even though Dozier's escape was foiled and he was returned to bondage, the Chief Justice and the District Attorney certainly shared frustration at the way Prout escaped serious penalty for his convicted role in the illegal plot for one black man's freedom.[74]

Prout narrowly avoided legal and financial ruin but constables and at least one magistrate in Washington found other ways to extort and terrorize the city's free black people in the subsequent months of May and June of that year. Local authorities robbed and extorted a gathering of some forty "people of quality" among the city's free black community and that harassment from a local constable was responsible for the drowning death of a free black Virginian woman. Commenting on these events, Lundy remarked "there was neither mercy nor

[73] The court's verdict suggested that the simpler fine was in keeping with the Maryland Act of 1796, Chapter 67, but Cranch objected to the ruling on the basis that there was no averment of loss of service. The strange logic of Cranch's technical read of these various laws indicates that a simple fine for the cost of lost labors would only be appropriate if that were stated by the slave owners, but since the Millers indicated no loss of service in connection with Dozier's attempted escape, the court was compelled to count the whole market value of the enslaved Dozier against Prout for enticing his flight. "Case No. 16,094. United States v. Prout. [4 Cranch C. C. 301], in *The Federal Cases,* Vol. 27 (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1896), 625-626. Also, see William Cranch, *Reports of Cases Civil and Criminal in the United States Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, 1801-1841,* Vol. 4 (Little, Brown, 1852), 302. In an interesting point of comparison, Cranch ruled nearly 30 years earlier, in 1804, against one W. Prout for distributing liquor among black people on the Sabbath, and fined him one hundred dollars, double the sum that his bench colleagues assessed to John W. Prout in 1833 for much more subversive abolitionist involvements.

[74] Jefferson Morley, *Snow Storm in August: Washington City, Francis Scott Key & the Forgotten Race Riot of 1835* (Talese/Doubleday, 2012), 80, suggests that a driver, Abraham Johnson, was a driver whom Prout arranged for Dozier, and "his girlfriend" to escape to the North. I have yet to find the court document for Johnson whom Morley indicates also faced a $50 fine. Morley asserts that "Key registered a victory for local slave masters when Prout left town," but I cannot find any evidence of Prout's departure, and it would seem a rather frustrating outcome for both Key whose first indictment was wholly dismissed and for Cranch whose suggested sentencing was contra the ruling of the court.

justice for the colored people in this district."[75] By November of 1833, Lundy himself and his Washington-based printer William Greer faced prosecution by District Attorney Key, being indicted for libel for merely publicizing their mistreatment of free black people of the district.[76] In the case of Key's 1833 libel indictment of the editor and the printer, the white men evaded repurcussions through respective flight and legal fight; Lundy skipped town before his case could be tried, and Greer defended himself against the charges and was found not guilty by a jury.[77]

Beginning in July of 1835, the New York-based American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) inundated Southern post offices with antislavery print. Opponents of these measures sought to implicate the *Liberator* and local free black communities of participation in the AASS's mail campaign. The August 29 *Boston Recorder* claimed that free black residents of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. regularly received the abolitionist newspaper through the mail and read it publicly among the enslaved in the nation's capital.[78] These distribution strategies used by black subscribers and the collective reading practices of African American communities predated and bore no direct relationship to the intentionally provocative efforts of the AASS to flood Southern

---

[75] *Genius*, June, 1833.

[76] "Distict of Columbus—Petitions to Congress" *Genius*, August 1831. In August of 1831, Greer and Lundy proudly advertised that they were among twelve agents each circulating 100 printed antislavery petitions in the capital to solicit signatures for presentation to the US Congress. But, just a little more than two years after they distributed antislavery print concurrent with Turner's insurrection, Key would indict Lundy and Greer for libel merely for publicly reporting D.C. authorities' abuse of black citizens.

[77] National Archives, Circuit Court for the District of Columbia, Case Papers 1802-1863, Docket Book, Vol. 70, Records Group 21. This trial is also discussed in Jefferson Morely, *Snow Storm in August*, 80-82.

[78] This story was originally reported in the *Boston Recorder,* August, 29 1835, and reprinted by the *New York Evangelist* as an "Astounding Disclosure" that "must cause every ear to tingle." The New York Evangelists story was reprinted in the *Liberator,* October 10, 1835.

post offices with massive volumes of abolitionist print. By that fall, it was reported that the Baltimore Post Master communicated to the Post Master General at Washington that he would "select what newspapers he would condescend to transport by mail, and what he would reject." A Baltimore-based correspondence noted that the Post Master General failed to rectify this unlawful suppression of the press. He questioned if President Andrew Jackson himself would "*nullify* the laws regulating the Post Office Department" and asked, mockingly, "Will not the South Carolina nullifiers be mortified at being so outstripped in nullification by the President and his army of Post Masters?"[79] The repressive impulse of these authorities was in response to the established demand for abolitionist print and the active role that free black communities of Baltimore and Washington played in reading those materials to the enslaved and distributing them within that corridor and to surrounding counties. White authorities' suppression of the legal functioning of the postal service and the rights of the press in turn fueled abolitionist outrage in the North.[80]

This rising free black population and its threat to slavery's stability in the region led to new legal restrictions on free black residents of D.C. after the so-called Snow Riot at end of 1835. At the end of 1835, white mob violence that initially targeted Beverly Snow, a successful free black restaurateur, broke out against Washington, D.C.'s black residents and their properties. Despite widespread destruction, the Snow Riot has received little scholarly attention

[79] "The Mail," *Liberator*, October 10, 1835, citing "Baltimore Correspondence" of the *Boston Atlas*.

[80] "A Nuisance," *Liberator*, November 28, 1835. Garrison in November of 1835 was not merely encouraging abolitionist petitioning of congress, but condemning the persistence of slavery in the capital. He suggested antislavery petitions were essential in order "to see our national metropolis purified from the foul pollution and redeemed from the deep disgrace of slavery." He argued that "while slavery exists in the District of Columbia, the North is directly implicated in the guilt of slaveholding."[80] Garrison's subsequent piece reported that the national "Refuge of Oppression" was also on display in neighboring Virginia, where a grand jury ruled the state's free black population "a nuisance" and recommended the legislature "facilitate their removal out of the country."

due to the high volume of violence against black communities and antislavery advocates between 1834 and 1837. Sinha discusses the high frequency of violence in this three-year window, during which more than half of the era's "seventy-plus instances of anti-abolition violence" occurred, "just as the movement was gaining ground."[81]

Black residents faced indiscriminate mob violence late in 1835, but by early 1836 the legal apparatus of Francis Scott Key was set in motion to prosecute the recently relocated white Northerner Dr. Reuben Crandall on charges of distributing abolitionist print with the intent to incite free and enslaved black people to violence in the U.S. capital city. Key charged Crandall with seditious libel for his role in antislavery print distribution, contending that the act of distributing these materials amounted to "publishing libels with intent to excite sedition and insurrection among the slaves and free coloured people of said district."[82] Eventually acquitted, the trial of Crandall made national headlines in ways that Prout's indictment by Key had not. Crandall's freedom was also detailed and celebrated on the pages of the *Liberator*, and the editor suggested a connection between powerful colonization interests and the desire to suppress all abolitionist print. The editor voiced outrage that circulation of antislavery print was grounds for prosecution, and resulted in Crandall's eight-month imprisonment. While Garrison believed the Crandall's acquittal had barely saved him from an "ignominious death," Crandall's extended stay

[81] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 232.

[82] Francis Scott Key, *A part of a speech pronounced by Francis S. Key, Esq. on the trial of Reuben Crandall, M.D.: before the Circuit court of the District of Columbia, at the March term thereof, 1836, on an indictment for publishing libels with intent to excite sedition and insurrection among the slaves and free coloured people of said district* (Washington, 1836). This claim of Key's was so central to his prosecution of Crandall, that it made it to the title page of his published speech.

in the Washington prison resulted in contraction of a severe illness that shortly thereafter took Crandall's life.[83]

The inability of authorities to halt the flow of abolitionist print and the community organizing of free blacks of Washington likely played into an ordinance of 1836 that sought to greatly limit the commercial activities of the city's African American community. The statute sought to bar free black people from any occupation but carriage and cart drivers, and halt any further growth of the capitol city's free black population. In accordance with these licensing mandates, Isaac Cary was fined $50 for selling perfume without possessing the sufficient licensing paperwork. Cary fought the case, and the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, overturned the enforcement of this racist statute. The same Chief Judge Cranch that Prout faced three years earlier specified that "among these civil rights" owed to free black residents "is the right to exercise any lawful and harmless trade, business, or occupation." Although the ruling saved Cary from the judgment against him, Cranch affirmed the racist legal and social premise that "free colored persons have not the same political rights which are enjoyed by free white persons." For Cary's sake, it was fortunate that he had only been charged with exchanging perfume for money. Had he been found distributing antislavery print to and collecting subscription fees from a black Virginian, the logic of Cranch would have likely found against his actions as political in nature, illegal by the laws of the state, and well beyond the bounds of "harmless trade."[84] Small legal victories did not change the persistent refusal of black

[83] "Acquittal of Dr. Crandall," *Liberator*, May 7, 1836.

[84] "Isaac N. Carey vs. The Corporation of Washington, V Cranch CC 13" (November 1836), and is cited in Dorothy Provine, "The Economic Position of the Free Blacks in the District of Columbia," 66.

political equality that afforded no protection for Cary and other black southerners' efforts to distribute antislavery print.

Conclusion

In 1836, Jacob W. Prout was not only exercising black voting rights in Liberia, but was successfully elected the "Register of Liberia" in "the annual election of Civil Officers" and 1837 reports printed the news that "J.W. Prout, Esq. is appointed by the Agent, Notary Public for Liberia."[85] The free black man from Baltimore by 1847 went on to serve as the secretary of the Convention held in Monrovia that established the West African republic's Declaration of Independence and wrote the Constitution of Liberia. His relocation removed him from the project of moving print and empowering black communities in Baltimore and the surrounding region. But his choice to seek black empowerment across the Atlantic came with an ongoing interest in moving periodicals and afforded him new responsibilities that enacted and educated a new black citizenry and inscribed the Republic of Liberia into existence.[86] In this capacity, however, Prout participated in the free black colony's ultimate rejection of the control of the American Colonization Society and assertion of an independent black republic.[87]

---

[85] *The African Repository*, April, 1837, 134.

[86] Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia: A Documentary History of the Constitution of...* (New York: Central Book Co., 1947). For Prout's name listed as secretary to the Convention, on the Declaration of Independence, see 832; for mention of Prout's selection as secretary for the Constitutional Convention, see 821.

[87] The Commonwealth of Liberia's Constitution of 1839 is a strange document written by the ACS and granting limited powers to the governor and council. The document's second article, on Legislative Power indicates "that all laws by [the governor and the council] enacted shall be subject to the revocation of the American Colonization Society." Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia,* 650.

Isaac N. Cary at some point emigrated to Canada after 1850.[88] There in the late 1850s, he married the free black teacher Mary Bibb, who successfully managed a school predominately for black children but that included some white pupils as well by 1855. In addition to her prominence in the black community in Canada, Bibb suffered the death of her first husband, Henry Bibb in 1854, when she was age 34. Cary's brother Thomas who also emigrated from the U.S. to Canada also married a black teacher and even more decorated intellectual and newspaper editor, Mary Ann Shadd. By 1861, Mary Bibb took Cary's name and the couple lived in a two-story home in Windsor and were listed in the Canadian census as Methodists. That same year, in his tour of Canada, William Wells Brown commented on the activities of the Cary family.[89]

However, by 1880 Cary was back in the capital with his wife Mary and a fifteen-year old adopted daughter attending school. The same Cary who once faced the city's mob violence against black people and trumped up charges for unlawful perfume distribution was in his old age employed as a deputy marshal to the police court of Washington, D.C. Not only was his return to the capital a testament to his personal resilience, but in part was a vindication of Cary in a city where the context of racial discrimination had previously conditioned his choice to leave.

---

[88] 1850 US Census for Washington, D.C. lists Isaac N. Cary as a D.C.-born mulatto barber, living with a Black, Virginia-born, 60 year old Sarah Fleet (perhaps his own mother, or an older relative after whom he likely named his own second daughter). The household also lists five children, also described as mulatto: a son, 18, Isaac N. Cary, also a barber, and daughters Ann, 16, Sarah, 14, Julia, 13, and Larena, 11.

[89] Afua P. Cooper, "Black Woman Teacher Mary Bibb," *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian*, Peggy Bristow, coordinator, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994; reprinted 1999), 157. Regarding citations of Brown's descriptions from his tour in Canada, see *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 460, 478. Cooper mentions a Julia Carey living in their household, with no age given in the Canadian census, leaving open the possibility that she could have been a child of Isaac and Mary together. This, however, cannot be, as Isaac Cary had a 13 year old daughter Julia already in his household in Washington D.C. on the 1850 census.

EPILOGUE

BUILDING INSTITUTIONS AND DISSEMINATING PRINT

In 1837, the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society offered twenty-seven year old Daniel Alexander Payne a three-hundred dollar annual salary. This proposal entailed extensive travel, and provided that all of Payne's professional expenses would be covered by the society. This lucrative commission and the prospect of celebrity awaited him if he might serve as a "public lecturer" against slavery. The opportunity to be a full-time, paid abolitionist was presented to Payne just two years after South Carolina's legal prohibition of black education expelled him from his work as a schoolteacher in Charleston. After two years of study at the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg and only months into his pastorate of the black Presbyterian church of East Troy, New York, Payne faced a momentous vocational choice.

The offer came after Payne's recent stop in New York City, after serving in Philadelphia as a delegate to the Convention of the American Moral Reform Society. Though he had only just begun his ministerial career in East Troy, Payne considered it an honor to represent the black community he served and to be among the delegates at Philadelphia that included the Rev. Samuel Cornish and a generation of pastors that founded black newspapers, churches, the convention movement, black schools, and civic organizations. As he passed through New York Payne spent time with Theodore Dwight Weld, a noted abolitionist orator who represented and served on the AASS executive committee. Both Payne and Weld suffered vision problems in their teenage years, and by 1836 the celebrated young white orator and abolitionist lost his ability

to speak in public. Perhaps Weld was looking to find the voice of another that might champion his own well-reasoned and theologically grounded arguments against slavery. Weld arranged for Payne to preach at the city's Shiloh Presbyterian Church, at the request of the church's Princeton-educated black pastor, the Rev. Theodore S. Wright. Payne later reflected that he and Wright "were so much alike in temper and general views that we never met or parted, in public or private, without kissing each other."[1] Cornish, Wright, and Weld served on the executive committee of the AASS, as did Lewis Tappan, who was also present to hear Payne's sermon at Shiloh. The word Payne preached that day did not return void.

By the time he returned to East Troy, the AASS's "inducement" to become a professional abolitionist awaited him. Payne considered his chance to work in "an inviting field, yet as laborious and dangerous as it was flattering to the pride and ambition of a young man twenty-seven years old." Payne knew that "heroism and consequent fame offered their laurels to any young man of talent and intelligence who might be willing to become the fearless and successful opponent of American slavery, and the eloquent defender of liberty and human rights." But he wondered how full time engagement in this work would square with his consecration to "the pulpit and the work of salvation." He asked himself, "Could I turn aside from so high a position and so holy a calling?"[2] After consulting a trusted friend who affirmed Payne's sense that God had called him to ministry in the church, he "respectfully declined" the offer.

Though Payne declined the chance to be a full-time, well-paid antislavery lecturer in 1837, his acceptance of his own calling to preach, write, and educate played an important role in

[1] Payne, *Recollections*, 49.

[2] Payne, *Recollections*, 67.

the work of liberating slaves, furthering the abolitionist movement, and promoting black empowerment in the period. Historians James and Lois Horton suggest that "the earliest paid full-time black abolitionist, traveling agent" was Charles Lenox Remond who in 1838 joined the payroll of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.[3] But was already recruiting paid white agents for the AASS as early as 1836, and by 1837 Payne was sought out as perhaps the AASS's first full-time black agent even earlier than Remond began service to the Massachusetts' state organization.

In the late-1830s and 1840s, Payne was among a cohort of black ministers who filled their daily lives with tasks more attendant to the local needs of black parishoners and neighbors. They preached to lift the spirits of the oppressed, and often called out the injustices of chattel slavery and anti-black racial discrimination that threatened the most basic bodily freedoms and most complex psychological well-being of their communities. They led local efforts for education and participated in national efforts to voice collective concerns. They used print to support the efforts of their local religious and civic institutions. They subscribed to, served as agents for, distributed, read, and shared antislavery periodicals. They brought these printed abolitionist texts to bear upon their preaching, simultaneously proclaiming their antislavery-interpretations of the Word of God and commanding an oral resurrection of the printed abolitionist word. They prayed for the liberation of the enslaved, and at times harbored and moved the self-emancipated.

Payne's respectful rejection of the offer to work as a full-time abolitionist was an acceptance of the work he felt called to as a black pastor, teacher, and community advocate.

---

[3] James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 227 gives this distinction to Remond.

Black leaders and communities were not always the most vocal and vehement voices of abolition. Many exercised a prudent caution about efforts to publicize their antislavery convictions through print, but sought to use print to further grow and mature their autonomous black institutions. Publishing and distributing texts in connection with other black collectives not specifically organized around the singular cause of abolition communicated a broader range of commitments. Linked efforts built up the infrastructure of religious and civil society to increase access to literacy and engagement with print, that leaders and operators of these collaborative strategies believed essential for informing and empowering black communities.

By the mid-1830s and throughout the 1840s, distributors who served as the most active nodes in networks of black print culture anchored much of their identity and community service in the work of African American churches. Pastors, parishioners, class leaders, and church-affiliated-school teachers were crucial in advancing black literacy in various local contexts. They served as the eyes and mouthpieces of collective reading practices for their communities. To be sure, black pastors and church leaders founded and served on the boards of antislavery organizations, as did Cornish and Wright, and black agents continued to distribute explicitly antislavery periodicals. Those organs offered black abolitionist writers avenues to publication, and an increasing number of black antislavery newspapers were founded in the late 1830s. However, the growth of local, Northern, and aspiring to be national or international antislavery societies did not address the range of concerns that various black collectives sought in terms of promoting black education, institutional autonomy, and racial equality. The work of the women and men who led black religious and social institutions was essential in sustaining antislavery

movement. Their efforts often relied upon print or made use of it to advance a range of projects and causes for the sake of black empowerment.

If abolitionists failed to topple the idolatry of slavery, African American churches would persist in their hope and advocacy for black liberation. If abolitionists succeeded and the American altar to Moloch could be smashed, it would fall to the churches to continue their work educating the free and formerly enslaved black communities in faith, literacy, civics, and the exercise of spiritual and political freedom. The black churches also subsumed the persistent spiritual, psychological, and social challenge of professing racial equality and black dignity contrary to the persistent anti-black racism that would persist whether or not slavery could ever be abolished.

By the late 1830s and early 1840s, institutional efforts often endeavored to make permanent the very organizational and activist networks that were essential to the distribution of African American print. Leaders of these efforts, in print and in community organizing, explicitly and implicitly advanced the antislavery movement and worked for black empowerment through their service to black churches and para-church institutions. The texts they created and distributed in the late 1830s and 1840s did not all concern abolitionist organizing directly, but advanced ideas of black empowerment that African American intellectuals understood to be an even larger cause than most abolitionists were willing to support.

Most significantly, black leaders challenged the racist myths of black inferiority that undergirded both slavery and anti-black discrimination in at least four ways. First, they exercised their own mobility in ways that made permanent the channels of communication that had distributed earlier black print. In so doing, they made their own aims known among white

and interracial antislavery organizations. Second, they penned articles, printed broadsides, and published minutes and denominational periodicals in hopes to build black churches and denominations that cultivated the spiritual and political empowerment for black people. Third, they wrote educational texts and taught black communities in ways that affirmed black identity and intellectual equality. Finally, they used all of these public facing goals and visible networks to maintain invisible passages for the formerly enslaved.

Notably, their mobility was not the function of white abolitionist support, but came to motivate more white support for the travel of black abolitionist speakers. Their churches and schools were not necessarily supported by white antislavery organizing, though they raised up and educated countless leaders of interracial abolitionist organizations. Subsequent denominational periodicals, black educational texts and institutional print fostered a more radical view of racial equality than most white antislavery sympathizers and laid foundation for black educational efforts that would continue to stress racial equality even after the formal abolition of slavery. These efforts by black communities enabled the flight of the formerly enslaved predated and prefigured most of the subsequent white expansion of these efforts, in contrast to the more self-congratulatory white conductors.

African Americans created and distributed print in varied and creative ways in the late 1830s and 1840s through churches and para-church organizations. They forged new ways of being people "of the Word," both in living out their interpretation of biblical theology in socially-relevant expression, but also in connection to the broader forms and uses of print culture in America. The efforts of leaders from different Protestant Christian denominational traditions were deeply intertwined. For example, Payne went to a Lutheran Seminary, first pastored in a

black Presbyterian church, and became best known for his service as a pastor and bishop of the AME church. Payne's ministerial service bridged various faith traditions and his closest friendships and allies in black institution building included pastors in other denominations. These leaders of diverse black Protestant Christian churches were distributors of print both within and beyond these religious institutions. They sought to begin denominational publishing efforts, and partnered with their religious brethren to form and distribute independent print ventures.

Many also created educational and literary spaces for black communities within and beyond the structure of their churches. They served national bodies that sought to build local communities, develop modes for national collaboration, and establish networks to move print across the nation. They worked for recognition within other national movements and even among international bodies. Their uses of print sought to bring attention to the plight of enslaved individuals, but also to make broad political and intellectual appeals for black equality. They strove to protect the records of their efforts, and grew increasingly aware of their role in preserving and interpreting their own histories, within various black institutions and more generally as a black "nation within the nation."

These black communities offered an unflinching critique of slavery. They also offered full-throated critiques of white abolitionists' complicity in racial prejudice. These concerns were voiced in public settings, shared through private communications, and recorded in print. They wrote in new periodicals dedicated not merely to abolition but to the full spectrum of concerns of their black communities, and edited and distributed those publications. Before and after new

restrictions on black education, they taught black pupils in order to promote black literacy and educational advancement.

They cultivated this much broader platform through diverse projects advancing black education, establishing and serving black congregations. But in addition to efforts for black institutional autonomy, many of the same figures came to champion the cause of racial equality among white and interracial organizations for religious and social reform and in the American public sphere. Such efforts were not merely aimed to promote bourgeois respectability among black communities, nor to terrify Southern slaveholding society about the scope of black and abolitionist communications and reach the enslaved with the hope of promoting insurrection. The perspectives and experiences of black creators and distributors of print were by no means monolithic. But the joint efforts of black teachers, pastors, intellectuals, writers, editors, newspaper agents, and convention representatives, sought to use print to foster an institutional permanence to the structures that would encourage, sustain, and empower their communities.

These creators and distributors of print and builders of black institutions believed that slavery and racism in the United States needed to be torn down. Though there were countless things that they wished to dismantle in society, their short and long-term goals also necessitated a thoughtful building-up of black individuals, institutions, and communities in ways that even some of their most stalwart white abolitionist allies failed to recognize. They prepared themselves and their communities to do that work, through education, and Christian faith formation and community-based and national organizations. A few radical efforts rained pamphlets down upon Southern post offices or strategically used agents or intermediaries to get incendiary abolitionist literature into Southern hands where it might have been weaponized.

However, these attempts rarely met with success and instead came to stimulate increased suppression. Even the more measured uses of print for black institutional means faced backlash or faced challenges sustaining the financial difficulty of publishing for the sake of social causes and for the benefit of people facing economic marginalization or exploitation and racial discrimination.

Their involvements and their words were generally used as tools to build and shape institutions. Those who labored for black empowerment from the pulpit or in the pew, in the schoolroom or literary society, at the convention or civic organizations at times brought texts related to their projects and institutions into the printer's shop. Those operators and their fellow congregants generally provided the funds for these works' publication and the hands that moved the resultant texts. In so doing they not only created and moved print and built institutions, but fostered local and geographically extensive black networks that moved print affirming black community and promoting racial equality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Periodicals

Abolition Intelligencer and Missionary Magazine (Shelbyville, Kentucky)
African Repository
African Sentinel and Journal of Liberty (Albany, New York)
American Advocate and Kennebec Advertiser (Hallowell, Maine)
American Beacon (Norfolk, Virginia)
Boston Daily Advertiser
Boston Daily Courier
Boston Centinel
Boston Evening Transcript
Boston Gazette
Boston Weekly Messenger
The Camden Gazette (Camden, South Carolina)
Cape Fear Recorder
Christian Watchman
City Gazette (Charlestown, South Carolina)
The Colored American
*Columbian Centinel (*Boston)
Commercial Advertiser (New York)
Dedham Gazette
Frederick Douglass' Paper
Freedom's Journal
Genius of Universal Emancipation
The Liberator
New-York Enquirer
New Brunswick Times
Niles' Weekly Register
Philadelphia Album and Ladies Literary Gazette.
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser (Philadelphia)
The Quarterly Theological Review (Philadelphia)
The Repertory (Boston)
Rhode Island American and General Advertiser (Providence)
Richmond Enquirer
Richmond Gazette.

The Rights of All
Washington City Weekly Gazette

Manuscript Collections

Beman, Amos Gerry, Scrapbooks. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Bentley, William, Papers. American Antiquarian Society.

Books Received Bound Manuscript, 1816-1819. Boston Athenaeum.

Boston Port and Seamen's Aid Society records. Massachusetts Historical Society.

DeGrasse-Howard papers. Massachusetts Historical Society.

Garrison, William Lloyd, papers. Massachusetts Historical Society.

Grellet manuscripts. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Gardiner, Leon, collection of American Negro Historical Society records. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church records. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Papers. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Parker, Theodore, papers. Massachusetts Historical Society.

Virginia. Governor's Office. Executive Papers of Governor John Floyd, 1830-1834. State Records Collection, The Library of Virginia.

Other Primary Sources

The Boston City Directory for 1829. Boston: Stimpson, 1829.

Catto, William T. *Semi-Centenary Discourse: Delivered in the First African Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, on the fourth Sabbath of May, 1857: with a history of the church from its first organization : including a brief notice of Rev. John Gloucester, its first pastor*. Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1857.

Code Henry. Cap-Henry, Haiti: Chez P. Roux, Imprimeur du Roi, 1812.

Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Colour, for improving their condition in the United States; for purchasing lands; and for the establishment of a settlement in

upper Canada, also, The Proceedings of the Convention with their Address to Free Persons of Colour in the United States. Philadelphia: Printed by J.W. Allen, 1831.

Chapin, Walter, ed. *The missionary gazetteer, comprising a view of the inhabitants, and a geographical description of the countries and places, where Protestant missionaries have labored*. Woodstock, Vermont: Printed by D. Watson, 1825.

C. Keenan's Baltimore Directory for 1822 & '23. Baltimore, 1823.

Cranch, William. *Reports of Cases Civil and Criminal in the United States Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, 1801-1841* 4. Little, Brown, 1852.

Davidson, William B. *A report of the debates in the Presbytery of Philadelphia, at a special meeting held in the city of Philadelphia, on the 30th of November*. Philadelphia: Printed by Wm. F. Geddes, 1831.

Delany, Martin Robison. *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*. Philadelphia: Published by the Author, 1852.

Douglass, Frederick. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. Boston: Anti-Slavery Office; Dublin: Webb and Chapman, 1845.

_____. *My bondage and my freedom*, with an introduction by Dr. James McCune Smith. New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855.

Douglass, William. *Annals of the First African American Church in the United States, : now styled the African Episcopal church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia, in its connection with the early struggles of the colored people to improve their condition, with the co-operation of the Friends, and other philanthropists; partly derived from the minutes of a beneficial society, established by Absalom Jones, Richard Allen and others, in 1787, and partly from the minutes of the aforesaid church*. Philadelphia: King & Baird, printers, 1862.

Easton, Hosea. *An Address: Delivered before the Coloured Population, of Providence, Rhode Island, on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27, 1828*. Boston: Hooton, 1828.

_____. *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People in the United States*. Boston: Knapp, 1837.

Everhard, Phillip. *History of the American Baptist African and Haytien Missions, for the Use of Sabbath Schools*. Boston: Printed by T. R. Marvin for the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, 1831.

The Federal Cases, 27. St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1896.

Garrison, Wendell Phillips and Francis Jackson Garrison. *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of his Life, Told by his Children*. New York: 1885.

Garrison, William Lloyd. *Thoughts on African colonization: or An impartial exhibition of the doctrines, principles and purposes of the American Colonization Society. Together with the resolutions, addresses and remonstrances of the free people of color* Vols. I and II. Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832.

Granville, Jonathas. *Biographie de Granville, par son fils*. Paris, France: E. Briere, 1873.

Hall, Prince. *A Charge Delivered to the Brethren of the African Lodge, delivered on June 24, 1797 to the African Lodge in Menotomy, Massachusetts*. Boston: Bible and Heart, 1797.

_____. *To the Brethren of the African Lodge on the 25th of June, 1792, At the Hall of Brother William Smith, In Charlestown*. Boston: The Bible and Heart, 1792.

Handy, James A. *Scraps of African Methodist Episcopal History*. Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Concern, 1902.

Haynes, Lemuel. ""Liberty Further Extended": A 1776 Antislavery Manuscript by Lemuel Haynes." Edited by Bogin. *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1983).

Hilton, John T. *An Address, Delivered Before the African Grand Lodge of Boston, No. 459, June 24th, 1828, By John T. Hilton: On the Annual Festival of St. John the Baptist*. Boston: Hooton, 1828.

Hodge, Archibald Alexander. *The Life of Charles Hodge…: Professor in the Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1880.

Jones, Absalom. *A Thanksgiving Sermon, Preached January 1, 1808, in St. Thomas's, or the African Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, On Account of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, On that Day by the Congress of the United States*. Philadelphia: Fry and Kammerer, 1808.

Key, Francis Scott. *A part of a speech pronounced by Francis S. Key, Esq. on the trial of Reuben Crandall, M.D.: before the Circuit court of the District of Columbia, at the March term thereof, 1836, on an indictment for publishing libels with intent to excite sedition and insurrection among the slaves and free coloured people of said district*. Washington, 1836.

Laws passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina, 1830-1831. Raleigh, 1831.

Marrant, John. *A Sermon Preached on the 24th Day of June 1789, Being the Festival of St. John the Baptist, At the Request of the Right Worshipful the Grand Master Prince Hall, and the Rest of the Brethren of the African Lodge of the Honourable Society of Free & Accepted Masons in Boston*. Boston: The Bible & Heart, 1789.

May, Samuel J. *Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict*. Boston: Fields, Osgood, and Co. 1869.

Miller, William. *A Sermon on the abolition of the slave trade: delivered in the African Church, New York, on the first of January, 1810*. New York: Published by the Committee, Printed by John C. Totten, 1810.

Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Church, 1773-1828, 2 vols. New York: T. Mazon and G. Lane, 1840.

Minutes of the Fourth Annual Convention for the Improvement of the Free People of Colour, In the United States, Held by the Adjournments in the Asbury Church, New-York. New York: Published by order of the Convention, 1834.

Myers, Peter D. ed., *The Zion songster: a collection of hymns and spiritual songs, generally sung at camp and prayer meetings, and in revivals of religion*. New York: M'Elrath & Bangs, P. D. Myers and J.C. Totten, 1831.

Patten, William. *A sermon delivered at the request of the African Benevolent Society*: In the Second Congregational Church *Newport, 12th April, 1808*. Newport: Printed at the Office of the Newport Mercury, 1808.

Payne, Daniel Alexander. *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Edited by C. S. Smith. Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1891.

_____. *Recollections of Seventy Years*. Nashville: Publishing House of the AME Sunday School Union, 1888.

Prévost, Julien. *Relation des glorieux événemens qui ont portés leurs majestés royales sur le trone d'Hayti: suivi de l'histoire du couronnement Henry ler et de la reine Marie-Louise, Par le Comte de Limonade*. Cap-Henry, Haiti: Chez P. Roux, 1811.

Proceedings of a Meeting Held at Princeton, New Jersey, July 14, 1824 to form a Society in the State of New Jersey, to Cooperate with the American Colonization Society. Princeton: Borrenstein, 1824.

Prout, John W. *An Oration, on the Establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Baltimore: Kennedy and Magauran, 1818.

Ripley, Peter C., ed. *The Black Abolitionist Papers*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Saunders, Prince. *An Address, Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; on the 30th of September 1818*. Philadelphia: Rakestraw, 1818

____. *A Memoir Presented to the American Convention*. Philadelphia: Heartt, 1818.

Saunders, Prince. *Haytian Papers*: *A Collection of the Very Interesting Proclamations and other Official documents; Together with some account the rise, progress, and present state of The Kingdom of Haiti*. London, England: W. Reed, 1816.

____. *Haytian Papers*. Boston: Caleb Bingham and Co., 1818.

A short history of the African Union Meeting and School-House, erected in Providence (R.I.) in the years 1819, '20, '21; with rules for its future government, Published by Particular Request. Providence: Printed by Brown and Danforth, 1821.

Smith, David. *Biography of Rev. David Smith of the A. M. E. Church; Being a Complete History, Embracing over Sixty Years' Labor in the Advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom on Earth. Including [Daniel Alexander Payne's] "The History of the Origin and Development of Wilberforce University."* Xenia, O[hio]: Printed at the Xenia Gazette Office, 1881.

Smith, William. *A General Idea of the College of Mirania*. New York: J. Parker and W. Weyman, 1753.

Walker, David. *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*. Boston: Printed for the Author, 1829.

Walker, David. *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*. Boston: Printed for the Author, 1829.

Walker, David. *Walker's Appeal, With a Brief Sketch of His Life. By Henry Highland Garnet. And Also, Garnet's Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*. Edited by Henry Highland Garnet. New York: 1848.

Walker, David. *David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. Edited by Peter P. Hinks. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Watkins, William. *Address Delivered before the Moral Reform Society, in Philadelphia, August 8, 1836*. Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1837.

Wayman, Alexander W. *Cyclopædia of African Methodism*. Baltimore: Methodist Episcopal Book Depository, 1882.

_____. *My Recollections of African M. E. Ministers, or Forty Years' Experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Introduction by Rev. B. T. Tanner. Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Rooms, 1881.

Wheatley, Phillis. *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral By Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley, of Boston, in New England.* London: Printed for A. Bell; and sold by Messrs. Cox and Berry, Boston, 1773.

Secondary Sources

Adams, Alice D. *The Neglected Period of Anti-slavery in America, 1808-1831*. Boston: 1908.

Albaugh, Gaylord P. *History and Annotated Bibliography of American Religious Periodicals and Newspapers Established from 1730 Through 1830*. 2 vols. Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1994.

Amory, Hugh. *Bibliography And The Book Trades: Studies In The Print Culture Of Early New England*. Edited by David D. Hall. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Amory, Hugh, and David D. Hall, eds. *A History of the Book in America: Volume I: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 2006.

Aptheker, Herbert. *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989.

_____. *The Negro in the Abolitionist Movement.* New York: International Publishers, 1941.

_____, ed. *One Continual Cry: David Walker's* Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World *1829-1830: Its Setting and its Meaning*. New York: Published for the American Institute for Marxist Studies, by Humanities Press, Inc., 1965.

Arkin, Marc M. "'A Convenient Seat in God's Temple': The Massachusetts General Colored Association and the Park Street Church Pew Controversy of 1830," *The New England Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (March 2016): 6-53.

Bacon, Jacqueline. *Freedom's Journal: The First African-American Newspaper*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2007.

_____. "The History of *Freedom's Journal*: A Study in Empowerment and Community." *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 1 (2003): 1-20.

_____. *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment and Abolition*. Univ of South Carolina Press, 2002.

Baldasty, Gerald J. *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Barker, Nicolas, ed. *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society: the Clark Lectures 1986-1987.* London: British Library, 1993.

Baron, Sabrina A., Eric N Lindquist, and Eleanor F Shevlin, Eds. *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, in Association with the Center for the Book, Library of Congress, 2007.

Bay, Mia. *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Bell, Howard Holman, ed. *Minutes of the proceedings of the national Negro conventions, 1830-1864*, I. Arno Press, 1969.

Berlin, Ira, "After Nat Turner: A Letter from the North," *Journal of Negro History* 55 (April 1970): 144-151.

_____. *Many Thousands Gone: Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.

Blassingame John W. and John R. McKivigan, Eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers* 5. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Blue, Frederick J. *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

Bly, Antonio T. "From Manuscript to Print: Authorship and Design in the Poems of Phillis Wheatley." *Old Dominion University Historical Review*, 7. 2000.

Bolster, W. Jeffrey. *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Branson, Susan. *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Bromell, Nicholas K. *By the Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America*. University Of Chicago Press, 1995.

Brooks, Joanna. *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

_____. "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic." *William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (Jan. 2005): 67-92.

Brown, Candy Gunther. *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Brown, Richard D. *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

_____. *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Bruce, Dickson D. *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974.

_____. *Black American Writing from the Nadir: The Evolution of a Literary Tradition, 1877-1915*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

_____. *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.

Bullock, Penelope L. *The Afro-American Periodical Press, 1838-1909*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.

Cahill, Edward. *Liberty of the Imagination: Aesthetic Theory, Literary Form, and Politics in the Early United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Carey, Brycchan. *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

Carretta, Vincent. *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-made Man*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2005.

_____. *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Carretta, Vincent, ed. *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996.

_____, and Philip Gould, eds. *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001.

Chartier, Roger. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the 14th and 18th Centuries*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Charvat, William. *Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959.

Cohen, Lara Langer and Jordan Alexander Stein, eds. *Early African American Print Culture.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Cohen, Matt. *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Condit, Celeste Michelle, and John Louis Lucaites, *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African Word*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Curry, Leonard P. *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow and the Dream.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Dain, Bruce R. *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Danky, James Philip, and Maureen E. Hady. *African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Darnton, Robert. "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* III (1982): 65-83.

Davidson, Cathy N. *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Davis, David Brion. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation, 1770-1823* 1st ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975; Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Delbanco, Andrew, ed. *The Abolitionist Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012.

DeLombard, Jeannine Marie. *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Dierks, Konstantin. *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

Dinius, Marcy. "'Look!! Look!!! At This!!!!': The Radical Typography of David Walker's *Appeal*." *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 126, no. 1 (January 2011): 55-72.

Dixon, Chris. "An Ambivalent Black Nationalism: Haiti, Africa, and Antebellum African American Emigrationsm." *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, 10 (December 1991): 10-25.

Dorsey, Bruce. *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Duberman, Martin B., ed. *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965.

Dumond, Dwight Lowell. *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961.

_____. *A Bibliography of Antislavery in America.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961.

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. "A Negro Nation Within The Nation," *Current History 41* (June 1935): 265-70.

_____. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1940.

Eaton, Clement. "A Dangerous Pamphlet in the Old South." *Journal of Southern History* 2 (August 1936): 326-329.

____. "Censorship of the Southern Mails." *American Historical Review* (January, 1943): .

_____. *Freedom of Thought in the Old South*. Durham: 1940.

Eastman, Carolyn. *A Nation of Speechifiers: Making an American Public after the Revolution*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2009.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Ernest, John. *Chaotic Justice: Rethinking African American Literary History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

_____. *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861*. First Edition. The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Evans, Curtis J. *The Burden of Black Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Everton, Michael J. *The Grand Chorus of Complaint: Authors and the Business Ethics of American Publishing*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Fabre, Genevieve, and Robert O'Meally, eds. *History and Memory in African-American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Fagan, Benjamin P. *The Black Newspaper and the Chosen Nation*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2016.

Fanning, Sara C. *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.

_____. "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Slavery and Abolition* 28 (April 2007): 61-85.

Febvre, Lucien, and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*. Third Edition. Verso, 2010.

Felker, Christopher D. "'The Tongues of the Learned are Insufficient: Phillis Wheatley, Publishing Objectives and Personal Liberty." *Resources for American Literary Study*, 20. 1994, 149-79.

Finkelman, Paul, ed. *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Finkelstein, David, and Alistair McCleery. *An Introduction to Book History*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Fisch, Audrey A., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Foner, Eric. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

_____. *Nat Turner*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971.

Foner, Philip Sheldon, and Robert J Branham, eds. *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998.

Foster, Frances Smith. "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Theresa's?" *African American Review* 40, no. 4 (December, 2006): 631-638.

_____. *Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947.

_____. "Slaves Virtually Free in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," *The Journal of Negro History* 28, no. 3 (July, 1943): 284-310.

Frasca, Ralph. *Benjamin Franklin's Printing Network: Disseminating Virtue in Early America*. Columbia: University of Missouri, 2006.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text*, 25-26. (1990): 56-80.

Fraser Jr., Walker J. *Savannah in the Old South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

Fredrickson, George M. *The Black Image in the White Mind: the Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Freeman, Joanne B. *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.

French, Scot. *The Rebellious Slave: Nat Turner in American Memory*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

Frey, Sylvia R., and Betty Wood. *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Fulop, Timothy Earl, and Albert J Raboteau, eds. *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Gardner, Eric. *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-Century African American Literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009.

Gardner, Jared. *The Rise and Fall of Early American Magazine Culture*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

Gates Jr., Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

_____. *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003.

Gelderman, Carol. *A Free Man of Color and his Hotel: Race Reconstruction, and the Role of the Federal Government*. Washington, District of Columbia: Potomac Books, 2012.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Pantheon, 1974.

George, Carol V. R. *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches 1760-1840*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993: Verso, 1993.

Glaude, Eddie S. *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Gomez, Michael Angelo. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Goodman, Paul. *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Graham, Leroy. *Baltimore, The Nineteenth Century Black Capital*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.

Gravely, William B. "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808–1863." *Journal of Negro History*, 67 (Winter 1982): 302–17.

Green, James. "The Publishing History of Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*." *Slavery and Abolition*, 16 (1995): 362-375.

Greener, Richard T. "The White Problem," in *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of African-American Experience at Harvard*. Edited by Werner Sollors, Caldwell Titcomb, Thomas A. Underwood, and Randall Kennedy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Griggs, Earl Leslie, and Clifford H. Prator, eds. *Henry Christophe & Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952.

Grimshaw, William H. *Official History of Freemansonry Among the Colored People in North America* (New York: Broadway Publishing Company, 1903.

Gross, Bella. "Freedom's Journal and the Rights of All." *The Journal of Negro History* 17, no. 3 (July 1932): 241-286.

Gross, Robert A. and Mary Kelley., eds. *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840, A History of the Book in America,* Vol. II. Chapel Hill: American Antiquarian Society, The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Gruber, Ira D. *Books and the British Army in the Age of the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Gubert, Betty Kaplan. *Early Black Bibliographies, 1863-1918*. New York: Garland, 1982.

Gustafson, Sandra M. *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989.

Hackel, Heidi Brayman, and Catherine E. Kelly, eds. *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Hall, David D. *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book*. Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996.

_____. *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Harris, Leslie M. *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Harrold, Stanley. *American Abolitionists*. Harlow, England: New York: Longman, 2001.

_____. *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

_____. *Gamaliel Bailey and Antislavery Union*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986.

Harrold, Stanley. *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828-1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003.

_____. *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1995.

_____. *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

Heyd, Uriel. *Reading Newspapers: Press and Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain and America*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012.

Hinks, Peter P. *"To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren*:" *David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Hoffer, Peter Charles. *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Printed Word*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.

Horton, James Oliver, and Lois E. Horton. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Howard, Cary. "The Georgia Reaction to David Walker's *Appeal,*"MA Thesis (University of Georgia, 1967.

Howe, Daniel Walker. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Huberich, Charles Henry. *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia: A Documentary History of the Constitution of…* New York: Central Book Co., 1947.

Hutton, Frankie. *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860*. Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Hruschka, John. *How Books Came to America: The Rise of the American Book Trade*. State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012.

Iannini, Christopher. *Fatal Revolutions: Natural History, West Indian Slavery, and the Routes of American Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Jackson, Blyden. *A History of Afro-American Literature*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

Jackson, Leon. *The Business of Letters: Authorial Economies in Antebellum America*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008.

_____. "The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian: African American Cultures of Print—The State of the Discipline." *Book History* 13 (2010): 251-308.

Jackson, Ronald L. and Elaine B. Richardson, eds. *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Jacobs, Donald M. *Courage and Conscience: Black & White Abolitionists in Boston*. Bloomington, IN: Published for the Boston Athenaeum by Indiana University Press, 1993.

John, Richard R. *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Jordan, Winthrop D. *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

_____. *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Joyce, Donald F. *Black Book Publishers in the United States: A Historical Dictionary of the Presses, 1817-1990*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Kachun, Mitchell A. *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.

Kaplan, Catherine O'Donnell. *Men of Letters in the Early Republic: Cultivating Forums of Citizenship*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Kenny, Gale L. *Contentious Liberties: American Abolitionists in Post-Emancipation Jamaica, 1834-1866*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010.

Kielbowicz, Richard Burket. *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700-1860s*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Kraut, Alan M. *Crusaders and Compromisers: Essays on the Relationship of the Antislavery Struggle to the Antebellum Party System*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983.

Library Company of Philadelphia, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. *Afro-Americana, 1553-1906: A Catalog of the Holdings of the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.* New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2008.

Litwack, Leon F, and August Meier. *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Litwack, Leon F. *North of Slavery: the Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Lopenzina, Drew. *Red Ink: Native Americans Picking Up the Pen in the Colonial Period*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012.

Loughran, Trish. *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Maffly-Kipp, Laurie F. *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African American Race Histories*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Martin, Asa Earl. "Pioneer Anti-Slavery Press." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 2, no. 4 (March 1916): 509-528.

Mayer, Henry. *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

McCarthy, Timothy Patrick and John Stauffer, eds. *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism.* New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.

McCaskill, Barbara and Caroline Gebhard, Eds. *Post-bellum, Pre-Harlem: African American Literature and Culture, 1877-1919*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

McGill, Meredith L. *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting: 1834 - 1853*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

McHenry, Elizabeth. *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

McKivigan, John R. *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984.

McKivigan, John R, and Stanley Harrold, eds. *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999.

McPherson, James M. *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964.

Melish, Joanne Pope. *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Miller, Floyd J. *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

Millner, Michael. *Fever Reading: Affect and Reading Badly in the Early American Public Sphere*. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2012.

Mitchell, Henry N. *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004.

Monaghan, E. Jennifer. *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America*. Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005.

Morgan, David. *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture and the Age of American Mass Production.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Morley, Jefferson. *Snow-Storm in August: Washington City, Francis Scott Key & the Forgotten Race Riot of 1835*. New York: Talese/Doubleday, 2012.

Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

_____. *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism: 1850-1925*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

Nash, Gary B. *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988.

_____, and Jean R Soderlund. *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Nevin, Alfred. *History of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and of the Philadelphia Central*. Philadelphia: W. S. Fortescue & Co., 1888.

Newman, Richard S. *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers.* New York: New York University Press, 2008.

_____. *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

_____, and James Mueller, eds. *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia: Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011.

Nord, David Paul. *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Nordin, Kenneth D., "In Search of Black History: An Interpretation of the Content and Function of 'Freedom's Journal'" *Journalism History* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 123.

Nye, Russell B. *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963.

Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. New York: Routledge, 2002; First ed. Methuen & Co., 1982.

Parks, A. Franklin. *William Parks: The Colonial Printer in the Transatlantic World of the Eighteenth Century*. State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012.

Pasley, Jeffrey L. "*The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001.

Pease, Jane H, and William H Pease. *Bound with Them in Chains: a Biographical History of the Antislavery Movement*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972.

_____. *Black Utopia: Negro Communal Experiments in America*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963.

_____. "Walker's *Appeal* Comes to Charleston: A Note, and Documents." *Journal of Negro History* 59 (1974): 187-292.

Penn, I. Garland. *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*. New York: Arno Press, 1969.

Perry, Lewis, and Michael Fellman, eds. *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

Peterson, Carla. *"Doers of the Word": African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North, 1830-1880*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Phillips, Christopher. *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Pisarz-Ramirez, Gabriele. "'The Darkest is Before the Break of Day:' Rhetorical Uses of Haiti in the Works of Early African-American Writers." *Atlantic Studies* 4, no. 1 (April 2007).

Plummer, Brenda Gayle. *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Power-Green, Ousmane K. *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle Against the Colonization Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.

Price, George R., and James Brewer Stewart, eds. *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice: The Life and Writings of Hosea Easton*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

Price, George R. and James Brewer Stewart, "The Roberts Case, the Easton Family, & the Dynamics of the Abolitionist Movement in Massachusetts, 1776-1870." *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4, Race & Slavery (2002): 89-115.

Price, Harriet H., and Gerald E. Talbot. *Maine's Visible Black History: The First Chronicle of Its People*. Tilbury House Publishers, 2006.

Pride, Armistead Scott and Jack Lyle,. *The Black American and the Press*. Los Angeles: W. Ritchie Press, 1968.

Pride, Armistead Scott, and Clint C Wilson. *A History of the Black Press*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997.

Provine, Dorothy. "The Economic Position of the Free Blacks in the District of Columbia, 1800-1860," The Journal of Negro History 58, no. 1, (January 1 1973): 68.

Quarles, Benjamin. *Black Abolitionists.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Raboteau, Albert J. *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

_____. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

_____. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. Rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Rachleff, Marshall, ed. "Document: David Walker's Southern Agent." *Journal of Negro History*, 62. (January 1977): 100-103.

Rael, Patrick, ed. *African-American Activism before the Civil War: The Freedom Struggle in the Antebellum North*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

_____. *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Raven, James. *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748-1811*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002.

Ripley, C. Peter. *Witness for Freedom: African American Voices on Race, Slavery, and Emancipation*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Roberts, Kyle B. *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Rusert, Britt. "Types of Mankind: Visualizing Kinship in Afro-Native America." *Common-place*. 13, no. 1. (October, 2012).

John Daniel Saillant, "Before 1822: Anti-Black Attacks on Charleston Methodist Churches from 1786 to Denmark Vesey's Execution." *Common-place* 16, no. 2 (Winter 2016).

_____. *Black Puritan, Black Republican: The Life and Thought of Lemuel Haynes, 1753-1833*. Religion in America Series. Oxford : New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Sammons, Mark J., and Valérie Cunningham. *Black Portsmouth: Three Centuries of African-American Heritage*. UPNE, 2004.

Sanneh, Lamin O. *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Schlesinger Jr., Arthur M. *The Age* of Jackson. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1945.

Schweninger, Loren. *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

_____. "John Carruthers Stanly and the Anomaly of Black Slaveholding." *North Carolina Historical Review* 67 (April 1990): 159-92.

Seed, Patricia. *Ceremonies of Possession: Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Sellers, Charles Grier. *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Sernett, Milton C. *Black Religion and American Evangelicalism: White Protestants, Plantation Missions, and the Flowering of Negro Christianity, 1787*-1865. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1975.

Sinha, Manisha. *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Snay, Mitchell. *Horace Greeley and the Politics of Reform in Nineteenth-Century America*. Lanham, Maryland.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011.

Stauffer, John. *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformations of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Sterling, Dorothy, Ed. *Speak out in Thunder Tones: Letters and Other Writings by Black Northerners, 1787- 1865*. New York: Doubleday, 1973.

Stewart, James Brewer. *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1976.

_____. *Wendell Phillips, Liberty's Hero*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998.

Strong, Douglas M. *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

Swift, David E. *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

Sweet, Leonard I. "The Fourth of July and Black Americans in the Nineteenth Century: Northern Leadership Opinion within the Context of the Black Experience." *Journal of Negro History*, 61 (July 1976): 256–75.

Talmadge, John E. "The Burritt Mystery: Partisan Journalism in Antebellum Georgia," *Georgia Review* 8 (Fall 1954): 332-341.

Taylor, George Rogers. *The Transportation Revolution*. New York: Rinehart, 1951.

Taylor, Nikki Marie. *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Turley, David. *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860*. London: New York: Routledge, 1991.

Van Horne, John C., Ed. *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery: The American Correspondence of the Associates of Dr. Bray, 1717-1777*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985.

Vogel, Todd, ed. *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Waldstreicher, David. *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Walters, Ronald G. *American Reformers, 1815-1860*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.

Walters, Ronald G. *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.

Warner, Michael. *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

_____. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2002.

Webber, Christopher L. *American to the Backbone: The Life of James W. C. Pennington, the Fugitive Slave Who Became One of the First Black Abolitionists*. Open Road Media, 2011.

Wesley, Dorothy Porter. *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995.

_____, and Library of Congress. *The Negro in the United States: A Selected Bibliography*. Washington: Library of Congress, 1970.

Weyler, Karen A. *Empowering Words: Outsiders and Authorship in Early America*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2013.

White, Arthur O. "Prince Saunders: An Instance of Social Mobility Among Antebellum New England Blacks." *The Journal of Negro History* 60, no. 4 (1975): 526-535.

White, Shane. *Stories of Freedom in Black New York*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002.

_____. "'It was a proud day': African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741–1834," *Journal of American History*, 81 (June 1994): 13–50.

Wilcox, Kristin. "The Body into Print: Marketing Phillis Wheatley." *American Literature*, 71. 1999.

Wilentz, Sean. *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln.* New York: Norton, 2005.

Williams, Julie Hedgepeth. *The Significance of the Printed Word in Early America: Colonists' Thoughts on the Role of the Press*. no. 55. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972.

_____. "Black Religion: Strategies of Survival, Elevation, and Liberation." *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 21, no. 1–2 (1993): 145–64.

Winch, Julie. *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

_____. "American Free Blacks and Emigration to Haiti." *Centro de Investigaciones del Caribe y América Latina Documentos De Trabajo* no. 33 San German: Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, 1978.

_____. *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.

Warner, Robert Austin. *New Haven Negroes. A social history. By Robert Austin Warner.* New Haven, 1940.

Wightman, William. *Life of William Capers, D.D., One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; Including an autobiography*. Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1902.

Wind, James P. *American Congregations, Volume I: Portraits of Twelve Religious Communities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Yee, Shirley J. *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992.

Zboray, Ronald J. *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

_____, and Mary Saracino Zboray. *Literary Dollars and Social Sense: A People's History of the Mass Market Book*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Ziff, Larzer. *Writing in the New Nation: Prose, Print, and Politics in the Early United States*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991.

Unpublished Theses and Reports

Beck, Ben. “David Walker's ‘Appeal’ and Everyday Abolition.” M.A. thesis. University of Colorado at Boulder, 2011.

Carter, Ralph D. “Black American or African: The Response of New York City Blacks to African Colonization, 1817-1841.” Ph.D. thesis, Clark University, 1964.

Edmondson, Philip N. “The St. Domingue Legacy in Black Activist and Anti-Slavery Writings in the United States, 1791-1862.” Ph.D. thesis, University of Maryland, 2003.

Fanning, Sara Connors. “Haiti and the U.S.: African American Emigration and the Recognition Debate.” Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2008.

Greene, Ousmane Kirumu. “Against Wind and Tide: African Americans Response to the Colonization Movement and Emigration, 1770-1865.” Ph.D. thesis. University of Massachusetts, Amherst. 2007.

Grover, Kathryn and Janine V. da Silva. “Historic Resource Study” of the Boston African American National Historic Site. December 31, 2002.

Mayo, Martha. “Profiles in Courage: African Americans in Lowell.” Exhibit, University of Massachusetts Lowell, The Center for Lowell History at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center. (April 19 through June 30, 1993): accessible online at: http://library.uml.edu/clh/Prof/Pro.html.

VITA

Nathan Jérémie-Brink was born in Chicago, Illinois and raised in Bellflower, California. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, he attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, with honors, in 2005. From 2006 to 2009 he attended McCormick Theological Seminary, where he received a Master of Divinity, with academic distinction. He also took courses in the History of Christianity at the University of Chicago Divinity School toward the completion of his McCormick degree.

While Jérémie-Brink pursued the Doctor of Philosophy in History at Loyola, he was awarded an Arthur J. Schmitt Dissertation Fellowship in Leadership and Service. His archival research enjoyed fellowship support from the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Omohundro Institute, and the Newberry Library. Jérémie-Brink was also awarded a Dissertation Fellowship from the Louisville Institute. He has presented his work at numerous conferences, including the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR) and the Omohundro Institute for Early American History.

New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Brunswick, New Jersey recently appointed Jérémie-Brink as Assistant Professor of the History of Global Christianity and the L. Russell Feakes Memorial Assistant Professor of Church History.