

AN ALTERNATIVE DIASPORA:
AFRICAN AMERICAN 'OUT' MIGRATION TO TRINIDAD AND THE BRITISH WEST
INDIES, 1783-1865

By

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This dissertation is dedicated to my family

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INTRODUCTION

The history of free people of color is one of resistance. This resistance manifested itself in the form of violent uprisings, accommodative tactics, and emigration efforts. The American Revolution generated tens of thousands of black loyalists who were evacuated from the United States and resettled in London, Nova Scotia, and eventually Sierra Leone. Black resistance and departure after the Revolutionary era foreground an early form of territorial separatism that occupied a space between discourses of colonization and emigrationism. Amongst black intellectual communities, this mechanism of territorial separatism contributed towards the formulation of the precepts associated with nineteenth century Black Nationalism. Historian, Wilson Jeremiah Moses expresses that an inclination towards separatism “is reinforced by outsiders whose behavior toward a national group reinforces its self-perception as a separate entity.”¹ Dissatisfied with the conditions of enslavement and oppression, American blacks contributed to the gradual articulation of an ideological movement that promoted black independence and self-determination through the creation of an autonomous all-black nation state and government.² The action of separating oneself from the confines of the newly formed American republic, enabled black loyalists to extricate themselves from the confines of American slavery and oppression.

Prominent black intellectuals, political figures, organizers, and religious leaders publicly engaged with one another in a discourse that glorified the benefits of migrating “out” of the United States. Reverend Lewis Woodson, Theodore Holly, and J. Dennis Harris played an

¹ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996), 4.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

integral role in criticizing the conditions of American discrimination and oppression for both the enslaved and free people of color.³ Together, Harris, Holly, and Woodson among many others helped lay the groundwork for a national-emigrationist movement that ultimately inspired many black Americans to consider emigration. Reverend Lewis Woodson, a Pittsburgh minister advocated for black emigration to Canada and the British West Indies by using newspaper editorials he published in the New York based newspaper, *The Colored American*.

Floyd Joseph Miller comments that Woodson “formulated an ideology which fused emigrationism and nationalism and set the intellectual basis for the development after midcentury of a cohesive movement advocating emigration for basically nationalist purposes.”⁴ Woodson articulated an ideological framework that advocated racial solidarity. In a series of letters published in *The Colored American*, Woodson used the pseudonym “Augustine,” which allowed him to speak openly about the “prejudice of caste” that many black Americans endured. While he acknowledged there were some blacks “who think it impolitic and improper for us to acknowledge and speak of ourselves as a distinct class,”⁵ he nonetheless insisted that:

The relation in which we have for generations been held in this land, constitutes us as a distinct class. We have been held as slaves, while those around us have been free. They have been our holders, and we the held. Every power and privilege have been invested with them, while we have been divested of every right.⁶

For Woodson, it was necessary to move beyond this legacy of enslavement in order to foster a collective national feeling that would encourage free people of color to pursue a “natural and legitimate means” though the creation of separate nationalist institutions grounded in “moral

³ Floyd Joseph Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863 (Blacks in the New World)*, (Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1975), 93.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁵ Lewis Woodson, “Original Communications. For the Colored American. Moral Work for Colored Men,” *The Colored American*, December 2, 1837. Accessible Archives Online.

⁶ Miller, *The Search for Black Nationality*, 96.

elevation.”⁷ Woodson further argued that no matter where blacks relocated geographically within the United States, even migrating West, “every other part of this country, prejudice exists; in some places with much virulence...” the ramifications of which indicated that “CONDITION and not color, is the chief cause of the prejudice, under which we suffer” an unwavering condition that, Woodson maintained forced black Americans to endure the “prejudice of caste.”⁸ Woodson specifically recommended Canada and the British West Indies as locations where emigrants could experience a “living freedom” unlike any other. He explicitly stated that if blacks moved there, they “would not be abandoning their brethren in chains.”⁹ They would instead exist in “*a colony of our choice*” where black Americans could protect themselves while obtaining economic mobility.¹⁰

Proponents of emigration such as Nathaniel Peck and Thomas Price sought to distinguish their plans for the emigration of a select group of black Americans from proposals for a broader colonization scheme. However, individuals who supported the ‘stay-and-fight’ platform believed that black Americans would eventually be accepted as equals. Emigrationists did not oppose the ‘stay-and-fight’ platform, but they instead argued that emigration was the means by which African nationality and self-determination could successfully be achieved.

According to Miller, one way black Americans could achieve the privileges of full citizenship, freedom from oppression, and respect for human dignity was “shoulder[ing] the full burden of their own self-betterment” through emigration and the acquisition of land.¹¹ For that reason, emigration served as a symbol of hope that “economic prosperity, religious freedom, and

⁷ Woodson, “Original Communications.”

⁸ Lewis Woodson, “The West No-2,” *The Colored American*, February 16, 1839.

⁹ Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality*, 101.

¹⁰ Lewis Woodson, “For the Colored American,” *The Colored American*, September 22, 1838.

¹¹ Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality*, 6, 9-12.

political liberty” could be achieved.¹² In this way, emigration itself represented a viable option for black Americans to shed themselves of the oppressive burdens of American society and communities in what leading Pan-African scholars describe as a “Negro Nationalism” or “Black Nationality.”¹³ Piecing together the dialectic discourses derived from black newspapers, connects these fragments in such a way that they reveal an expression of solidarity, self-determinism, diasporic, political, and cultural transnationalism. Migration to Trinidad served as a central yet early component to Black Nationalism by helping to forge a “racial-cultural bond between continental Africans and diasporan Africans” as agents of pride and achievement.¹⁴

Meanwhile the War of 1812 brought about another wave of free people who departed the southern United States again for London, Nova Scotia, and the British island colony of Trinidad. Seeing the black refugees in Nova Scotia as a threat to the economic viability of the region, Nova Scotian officials facilitated the removal of a small group of them to Trinidad. The transnational migration of color from a setting steeped in racial oppression that sought to “remove” or “deport” them to a place where they could become a “class of British subjects” who were considered to be unfit “for temperate climates.”¹⁵

The dissertation attempts to illustrate the connective pieces between blackness and labor. The British island colony of Trinidad is at the center of this project. Trinidad functioned as a region where free people could embody the dignity of freedom and obtain land. While historians have studied each of these migrations independently, an even closer exploration of the conditions and motivations that led people of color to participate in colonization and emigration movements

¹² *Ibid.*, vii.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2

¹⁴ Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley, *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora*. (London: Verso, 1994), 3.

¹⁵ Ikuko Asaka, *Tropical Freedom: Climate, Settler Colonialism, and Black Exclusion in the Age of Emancipation*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 9.

contributes to a broader historical understanding of race, nation, self-determination, and diaspora.

As rhetoric concerning colonization, emigration, and separatism circulated throughout colonial spaces, a select number of American free blacks seized on offers of resettlement in British territories. The dissertation follows the transnational and resettlement journeys of American blacks to Trinidad that began in 1815 with the departure of ex-colonial marines, and continued through 1840 with their voluntary departure from New York and Baltimore. Many of the emigrants who embraced these freedoms associated emigration with emancipation. The free blacks who accepted their emancipation and positionality as British colonial subjects, aligned themselves alongside the interests of Great Britain that stood in direct opposition to the socio-political values ascribed by political leaders in the United States and Nova Scotia. In turn, the social and national identity of these emigrants came into question, further inciting tensions that disrupted racial hierarchical structures.

While scholars have largely characterized the departure and resettlement of both enslaved and free people during the Revolutionary Era within the historiographical and geographical boundaries of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and Western Africa, this dissertation, by contrast illustrates the processes through which free black decided to leave for Trinidad, and how they resisted and maneuvered around obstacles of oppression, imperialism, and racial identity through trans-national migratory movements. A comprehensive assessment of public editorials circulated by African American newspapers in New York, Baltimore, and Trinidad alongside British colonial records demonstrates just how these iterations shaped the actualization of economic and political self-determination of these black American emigrants.

The dissertation begins with a discussion of the failed military strategies enacted by Great Britain during the revolutionary period, and the subsequent process of British evacuation and black resettlement abroad. An analysis of the conflict over slavery during the Revolutionary era provides the historical context in order to understand how the first of a series of black migrations unfolded. The dissertation aims to connect the migration of American blacks from the United States after the American Revolution and War of 1812 to discussions of diasporic identity and resettlement in the British Caribbean in the years preceding British colonial emancipation and the years immediately following, in order to connect the conditions under which a pattern of migration was continued.

As scholars explore the rhetoric of emigration, migrants themselves become the tools of analyses. By utilizing a multifaceted approach to transnational migration, the dissertation focuses on how American black migrants witnessed and participated in the process of resettlement. The departure of American blacks produced multiple subjective positions—a process of moving, adapting, and witnessing people move and transition within spaces. Drawing upon the theoretical concepts of identity politics, migrants represent malleable subjects whose presence and resettlement experiences function as “historical and cultural forms” that are “shaped in complex, related, multiple ways through [their] interaction with numerous and diverse communities.”¹⁶

I argue that the black American migrants who voluntarily departed from the United States re-fashioned themselves as emancipated British subjects—grappling with the process of inventing themselves as free people within the parameters of a defined British colonial context. I refer to Saidiya Hartman’s *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth*

¹⁶ Henry Giroux, “Living Dangerously: Identity Politics and the New Cultural Racism” in *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*, ed. Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 35.

Century America as a tool for this dissertation to examine the “modes of self-fashioning and figurations of freedom” that black migrants experienced as they attempted to maneuver around the cultural, political, and economic barriers presented by their host society.¹⁷ With the abolition of slavery and emancipation throughout the British Empire in 1834, the arrival of black American migrants to Trinidad represented an independently emancipated group whose resettlement experiences serve to demonstrate how one particular trajectory of emigrants socially identified themselves and developed an African diasporic identity in the decades following British emancipation.

With diaspora defined as an “often involuntary, dispersal of a population from a center (or homeland) to multiple areas, and the creation of communities and identities based on histories and consequences of dispersal,” evolving conceptualizations of diasporic identification serve to provide supplemental understandings of the relationship between diaspora, nation, and empire.¹⁸ What did American black migrants envision for themselves upon arrival? What did the host societies intend to receive or extract from newly arrived emigrants? How did diaspora function within these colonial contexts? While the majority of scholarship on the African diaspora explores the politics of diaspora as “a tool deployed by African descended people against the racial hegemony of the nation and imperial state,” these particular formulations of diaspora are essentially antithetical to and in tension with “nation” and “empire.” The dissertation veers away from this traditional historiographical trajectory of diaspora by concentrating on specific groups of black migrants, and uses them as a lens to examine how

¹⁷ Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America*. (Oxford University Press, 1997), 11.

¹⁸ “Diaspora,” Dr. Jemima Pierre, Oxford Bibliographies.

emigrant populations were integrated into new transnational communities and explores the rhetoric surrounding emigration.

This dissertation strives to make two central contributions to the historiographical fields of the Atlantic World and African Diaspora. It first attempts to explore conceptualizations of “empire,” “nation,” and “identity” through the lens of black migrants who functioned as transnationally mobile subjects as opposed to regionally or territorially bound subjects. Both the structure and analyses of the dissertation draw attention to the racial and political impasses that served to motivate blacks to depart from the United States and emigrate elsewhere, as well as attempt to demonstrate the ways in which specific historical and social constructions contributed to the process of reinforcing and contesting dominant understandings of race, labor, belonging, citizenship, and land ownership in the United States and the island colony of the British Empire.

This project also seeks to make another contribution; to present another way to assess the relationship between black migration and the African diaspora within the Atlantic World. While these typical narratives largely focus their attention on answering questions concerning social and cultural iterations created by the dispersal of African populations, this dissertation examines the formation of a diasporic subjectivity that black migrants acquired as they resettled abroad.

By situating themselves at the nexus between the British Empire and the Atlantic world, the departure and resettlement of American blacks in Trinidad raises numerous questions that problematize the prevailing conceptualization of a homeland-diaspora paradigm. Based on the understanding that a diaspora endures an ongoing *process* “in the making” and *condition* that is “situated within global race and gender hierarchies,” Tiffany Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelly, argue that the African diaspora must be analyzed through a framework of overlapping

locations.¹⁹ As Patterson and Kelly use the African diaspora as a unit of analyses, they argue that it must be used as an “approach to transnational/global histories” that draw attention to the construction and reproduction of diasporic identities.²⁰ I also draw upon corresponding definitions to help further examine diaspora as “a process” that forces subjects to maneuver around “particular structural and historical conditions that change over time.”²¹ This dissertation asserts that this particular emigration of American blacks from the United States to Trinidad must be evaluated as an African diasporic migratory movement that placed black migrants alongside other diasporic people scattered throughout the British Empire.

These black American emigrants contributed to the local economy, endeavored to purchase land, and practiced subsistence farming as a means of entering the British empire and embracing a new found British identity. By embracing this new British identity, black migrants accepted a diasporic identity that serves to further inform how black American migrants responded to the oppression of prejudice in America. This project also strives to demonstrate just how nineteenth century American black migrants functioned as colonial subjects that defined the territorial and racial landscape of the British Atlantic world system that sought to structure people and institutions. Continuing alongside historian Alexander Byrd’s historiographical trajectory, this dissertation furthers the questioning of “how black migrants came to understand and insinuate themselves into the British empire,” by examining the demonstrative powers of British imperial forces on the experiences, identities, and subjectivities of American blacks

¹⁹ Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World,” *African Studies Review*, Vol 43, No.1 Special issue on the Diaspora (April. 2000), 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

²¹ Deborah A. Thomas and Kamari Maxine Clarke, “Introduction: Globalization and the Transformation of Race,” in *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness*, ed. Clarke and Thomas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 12-13.

residing in colonial territories.²² As this project explores how both the “African diaspora and British empire overlapped,”²³ the dissertation in its entirety helps to demonstrate the ways in which racialized structures of geography, labor, and land ownership contributed to shaping and forming the perspectives of emigrants traversing the Atlantic.

²² Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyages: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 251. (Alexander X. Byrd)

CHAPTER 1

From Slavery to Freedom—Black Removal, Emigration, and Resettlement

In the summer of 1777, Mary grabbed her daughter and fled from a plantation in Princess Ann County, Virginia. Mary, an enslaved woman belonging to John Willoughby Sr., the patriarch to one of Virginia's most prominent agricultural families, escaped to British lines.

Mary and her ten-year-old daughter, Patience, were two of the many slaves scattered throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the Chesapeake Bay region who heard the news that Lord Dunmore, the British colonial governor, had offered freedom to all Patriot's slaves in exchange for their labor and military service. In his proclamation, Dunmore stated, "I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort to His *Majesty's* standard...And I do hereby further declare all indented Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His *Majesty's* Troops as soon as may be..."²⁴ Mary and Patience seized the opportunity and defected to Lord Dunmore's fleet at the mouth of the James River. In the following months, sixteen men, twenty-one women, and fifty-five enslaved children joined the slave exodus from the Willoughby plantation.²⁵ The ninety-four slaves who defected from the Willoughby plantation represent but a small portion of enslaved black Americans who were successfully able to obtain freedom through the Dunmore Proclamation. As the Revolutionary crisis deepened, both Mary and Patience's departure represented the first of what would become a wave of defections from plantations throughout the southern United States.

²⁴ *The Middlesex Journal, and Evening Advertiser* [London] 9-11, 1776.

²⁵ In 1778, John Willoughby Jr. submitted a petition to the Virginia Legislature for compensation for the loss of ninety-four slaves, who escaped after the Dunmore Proclamation of 1776. Even though the Virginia Legislature rejected Willoughby Jr.'s petition for compensation, the petition itself documents a pattern of slave flight and defection. The Willoughby petition can be found in the *Journal of the House Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, page 55.

Upon her arrival in the British controlled territory of New York in the winter of 1777, Mary initiated a relationship with a fellow escaped slave, Caesar Perth, who had fled from Norfolk Virginia. Shortly after their marriage, Mary, Caesar, and Patience adopted two children who were orphaned as their family escaped from the Willoughby plantation. While in New York, Caesar worked for the wagon master general, helping to repair and equip wagons for military transport. Nevertheless, the family of five boarded the *L'Abondance* in 1783 for Nova Scotia, Canada. And after nine years residing in Birchtown, Mary, Caesar, and their daughters departed Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone, Africa in 1792. The Perth family's escape from Virginia, arrival in New York, relocation to Nova Scotia, and their final voyage and resettlement in Sierra Leone evolved into a multi-regional and transnational migratory movement that is emblematic of the removal and resettlement journeys of thousands of runaway slaves and free blacks that began with the Revolutionary War and continued down through the Civil War to Western Africa and the British West Indies.

Black Loyalists

As momentum built in the period leading up to the Revolutionary War, the American colonies were confronted with three distinct dilemmas: how to wage a war against tyranny while operating as a slaveholding society; how to prevent enslaved populations from usurping their freedom via the circulation of notions of liberty and equality; and how to suppress sporadic slave revolts while preserving slavery. For Patriots this dilemma is captured in their articulation of liberty and their simultaneous dependence on the economic wealth derived from the exploitation of slaves. With the economic success of the colonies grounded in an extraction of natural resources, autonomy and political agency was integral to the region's future.

Before examining the endeavors of the American colonies and the strategies deployed by the British to undermine the efforts of colonial forces, a contextualization of the pre-Revolutionary era south serves to help delineate the social and economic conditions of enslaved people, as well as better understand the conditions under which black immigration from the United States occurred. The imposition of strict political enactments and restrictions on the social and economic mobilizations of free people of color further solidified the impetus for enslaved men and women to achieve manumission by seizing the alliance-building opportunities offered by the British. Meanwhile, the objective of southern black separatists to acquire land overshadowed the premise that the post-Revolutionary era would yield more equitable treatment of blacks and improved labor conditions. The political and economic momentum of the Revolutionary era demonstrated to enslaved people just how perilous and uncertain the future would be in the south. In addition to aspirations for freedom, colonial republican ideology centered on a discourse of liberty, equality, and evangelical faith that helped to lay the foundation for an early form of black removal and resettlement that evolved into a form of grass-roots emigrationism.

Even as the Continental Congress wavered over the feasibility of declaring independence from Great Britain, the thirteen American colonies sought to create an independent nation under a unified republican government. The Revolution itself represented an endeavor of the colonies to finally obtain political and economic autonomy. This new American Republic intended to elect members of congress and provincial assemblies to represent and advocate for each region's constituents. A severing of political ties with Great Britain along with a declaration of independence represented not only a protest, but also a preservation of the "unalienable

rights...of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”²⁶ Despite proclamations of universal rights derived from the laws of nature, the Revolution ultimately served to divide the new republic into two social orders, one region that pursued free and another region that preserved slavery.

The republican ideals of *liberty* and *equality* directly conflicted with the institution of slavery. From the very start of the Revolutionary War, enslaved men and women were drawn to the rhetoric of equal and unalienable rights. Decisively aligning with Great Britain, enslaved people seized opportunities for freedom under the British Empire. These “black loyalists” would serve the British military in a variety of capacities, as “teamsters, harbor pilots, and spies, as well as being aids and personal servants to British officers.”²⁷ Enslaved people who served as black loyalists trusted that the British military and the British colonial government would validate their manumission with certificates of freedom in exchange for military service.

At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War in 1783, British officials were responsible for evacuating approximately 100,000 black loyalists from ports in Savannah, Georgia, Charleston, South Carolina, St. Augustine, Florida to Nova Scotia, England, Sierra Leone, and the British West Indies. Slaves belonging to white loyalists were not offered the same assurances of freedom. In turn, the Revolutionary War launched a transnational migratory phenomenon in which black Americans were removed from the United States and resettled throughout various regions within the British Empire. From Georgia alone, approximately five thousand enslaved men and women defected to British territories exchanging their military labor for emancipation. Ten thousand left South Carolina and another thirty thousand departed from Virginia.²⁸ The process of slave defection that began after the revolution was also replicated by the Corps of

²⁶ *Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776.

²⁷ John W. Pulis, *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World* (New York: Garland, 1999), xiv.

²⁸ Sylvia Frey, *Water from Rock: Resistance in the Revolutionary Age*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 211; Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976), 20-22.

Colonial Maries during the War of 1812, in which slaves fled from plantations in Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia.²⁹

While scholars such as Benjamin Quarles, Sylvia Frey, and Douglas Egerton have identified the roles that black loyalists performed during the war, and James Walker and Roger Buckley have traced the evacuation and resettlement experiences of black loyalists to Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, comparatively less research has been conducted on the dispersal of black loyalists to the British West Indies. Simon Schama updates the historiography by chronicling the routes of slave flight and recapture at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Likewise, Gordon Wood and Gary Nash agree that the Founding Fathers failed to push forward concrete initiatives to end slavery during and after the Revolutionary Era. However, the removal of black Americans to Canada, Europe, and the West Indies did not stop after the evacuation of the British; it in fact, would continue through the years leading to the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861. The American Revolution, in other words, initiated a century of African diasporic migration from the United States to British territories throughout the Atlantic. The discourse of liberty and equality was simultaneously accompanied by calls for racial “separatism” led by Thomas Jefferson, a pattern that persisted through the first two years of the American Civil War when Abraham Lincoln attempted to implement deportation and colonization projects of black Americans to Chiriqui, Panama and Ile A’Vache, Haiti. The Caribbean lay at the center of all these proposals for colonization, emigration, and separatism. The removal and resettlement of black Americans after the Revolutionary Era and the War of

²⁹ Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 138-142; Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings, Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution*, (New York: Ecco, 2006), 7-8.

1812 commenced a pattern of emigration to regions in Central America and the Caribbean with an established common language, English law, and familiar colonial system.

Herbert Aptheker was the first to explore the services provided by enslaved people to the British during the Revolutionary War. Since Aptheker, historians have examined and chronicled the dispersal, resettlement processes, and struggles experienced by black loyalists who emigrated to both London and Nova Scotia. Building upon Aptheker's work in 1961, Benjamin Quarles, estimated that "tens of thousands" of enslaved men and women escaped and were evacuated to British territories.³⁰ According to Sylvia Frey, the blending of republican ideology with radical evangelism helped to shape perceptions of morality and slavery. Frey argued that a black revolutionary potential emerged during the war. Between Frey's account, and that of Cassandra Pybus, a clearer picture emerges about the total number of escaped slaves who were settled throughout the British Empire. Rather than the 80,000 to 100,000 escaped slaves that Aptheker and Frey initially estimated. Pybus insists that the figure was closer to 20,000.³¹

As noted by Frey, the British Royal Army sought to exploit rising conflicts between whites and blacks. She argues that the conflict functioned as a "rally[ing] cry for white southern unity" that further "impelled" southern states towards independence.³² Frey centers her analysis of British evacuation and black American relocation as a mechanism through which black loyalists facilitated the transmission of "culture, experience, and revolutionary sentiment to other parts of the world."³³ In such a manner, Frey foregrounds the migratory connections shared

³⁰ Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1961), 24; Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States: From Colonial Times Through the Civil War*, (New York: Citadel Press, 1975); Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, (New York: International Publishers, 1983).

³¹ Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), 220-222.

³² Frey, *Water From The Rock*, 45.

³³ *Ibid.*, 172.

between black Americans the Caribbean, the United States, and West Africa. Through the process of tracing the removal, emigration, and resettlement of men and women from the southern United States to Trinidad and the British Caribbean, this dissertation addresses a specific temporal and geographical gap within existing histories of separatism, colonization, and resettlement projects. For the men and women of African descent who joined British military forces and were removed from the southern United States after the Revolutionary War, emigration and resettlement presented an opportunity for obtaining land, liberty, and self-sufficiency.

As the War for Independence was punctured by surges of slave resistance, the British Royal Army deployed a three-prong strategy to undermine the supply of labor to the south's plantations. By examining the strategy deployed by the British to undermine the efforts of colonial forces in the south, a clearer picture emerges about the specific ways in which the turmoil and chaos of war presented opportunities for enslaved people to escape the oppressive confines of slavery. Furthermore, promises of liberty and land ownership offered by the British served to incentivize enslaved people to abandon plantations and join the British Royal Army at regional ports and territories. The Revolutionary Era played a significant role in ushering in a series of military decrees that incentivized slaves to defect from Patriot controlled regions. This military strategy initiated the first wave of black removal to Europe, Canada, and the British West Indies.

The British Strategy for the South—the Dunmore and Phillipsburg Proclamations

In response to a wave of rising attacks by Patriot forces in the summer of 1775, the British Royal Army deployed a policy aimed at undermining the economic viability of the south's plantation economy. On November 7, 1775, the British colonial governor, John Murray,

Lord Dunmore, issued a proclamation granting freedom to enslaved people in exchange for assistance in suppressing the insurgency of Patriot forces. Through the execution of martial law, Lord Dunmore declared freedom to any Patriot's slave in exchange for service in the British Royal Army.³⁴ Realizing the tactical usefulness of fugitive slaves, the Dunmore Proclamation stated, "I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort to His *Majesty's* standard, or be looked upon as Traitors to His *Majesty's* Crown and Government...And I do hereby further declare all indented Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His *Majesty's* Troops as soon as may be..."³⁵ For southern states in particular, the Revolutionary War emerged not only as a quest to separate from Britain, but it also evolved into a contest over the institution of slavery itself.³⁶

Within days of the Dunmore Proclamation's publication in the *Virginia Gazette*, enslaved Virginians such as Mary Perth were motivated by declarations of freedom, and slaveholders such as John Willoughby were infuriated by the potentiality of slave defection.³⁷ Tens of thousands of enslaved men and women fled to British controlled territories.³⁸ Despite the circulation of retaliatory threats from slave owners, runaway slaves "flock[ed] to him [Dunmore] in abundance."³⁹ Escaping to British controlled territory presented real danger, and evoked fears of brutal punishment, yet runaway slaves in spite of the "psychological pressures of abandoning

³⁴ *The Middlesex Journal, and Evening Advertiser* [London] 9 -11 January, 1776.

³⁵ William James Van Schreeven and Robert L. Scribner eds., *Revolutionary Virginia The Road to Independence*, vol. 4, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1977), 334; Madison to Bradford, June 19, 1775, in Madison, *Papers of James Madison*, vol. 1, 153.; *The Middlesex Journal, and Evening Advertiser* [London] 9 -11 January, 1776.

³⁶ Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1969), 227.

³⁷ Woody Holton, *Black Americans in the Revolutionary Era: A Brief History With Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford, 2009), 53.

³⁸ Wilson, *The Black Loyalists*, 21.

³⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, November 24, 1775.

family” undertook the dangerous trek across unfamiliar terrain to access Dunmore and his fleet cruising through the Chesapeake Bay in eastern Virginia.⁴⁰

Lathan Windley provides an invaluable demographic profile of escaped slaves from both Virginia and South Carolina as the war unfolded. During the spring of 1776, Windley asserts that the majority of runaways who managed to join Dunmore’s fleet consisted not only of young men, but also of women with children of all ages.⁴¹ Family members previously separated and scattered across different estates, including husbands, their wives and children, and grandparents escaped together to reach British controlled territories.⁴² Widespread slave desertions prompted by the British military operation represented a risky gamble, circulating both panic and fear among slaveholders about the dangerous potential of further escapes. It is important to remember that while both the Patriots and the British shamefully exploited slaves, escaped slaves made conscious and personal decisions based on their individual circumstances as to whether to accept British offers of freedom.

Pilots and maritime slaves escaped from Hampton, Norfolk, and Portsmouth, Virginia. As runaways joined British troops, Dunmore reported that, “Between two to three hundred [runaways] [had] already come in and these I form into a Corps as fast as they come.”⁴³ The Dunmore proclamation was intended to promote slave defection and economic destabilization of southern states. Slaveholders warned slaves that if they were caught attempting to reach British lines, to expect harsh punitive measures. In anticipation of mass slave defection, Virginia “invoked the death penalty from the early days of the Dunmore scare.”⁴⁴ The fear was real.

⁴⁰ Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 10.

⁴¹ Lathan A. Windley, *A Profile of Runaway Slaves in Virginia and South Carolina from 1730 through 1787* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 31.

⁴² Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 14.

⁴³ Dunmore to Howe, November 30, 1776 in Schreeven and Scribner, *Revolutionary Virginia*, 426.

⁴⁴ Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 128-129.

These enslaved men and women were familiar with the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay, many were skilled carpenters and metal workers. As such, their departure posed a threat to the region's economy.

To facilitate the circulation of his proclamation, Dunmore and his troops seized control of a local printing press in Norfolk, Virginia. Employing several escaped slaves to operate the press, Dunmore managed to “circulate his proclamation and intelligence through the country.”⁴⁵ The vast majority of runaways who reached Dunmore in Norfolk came from surrounding loyalist estates in Virginia and Maryland. They also helped to construct two fortifications including a “wooden fort” located directly in front of Norfolk's town center. Norfolk's wooden fort became the first defense post for Dunmore's Loyal Virginia Regiment—the 14th Regiment, a group of one hundred and twenty escaped slaves.⁴⁶ Captain Samuel Leslie, leader of the 14th Regiment explained that the regiment consisted of “one Serjeant, one Corporal, and twenty five private men...some volunteers, & a good many negros.”⁴⁷ In a skirmish with Patriot troops just outside of Norfolk, the Ethiopian Regiment suffered severe casualties losing seventeen with forty-nine wounded.⁴⁸ The *Virginia Gazette* branded Dunmore, “the king of the blacks,” as escaped slaves abandoned the appalling conditions of slavery for building entrenchments and fighting as armed patrols.⁴⁹ Despite the unsanitary conditions, high death toll, and a lack of proper clothing and

⁴⁵ “Extract of an authentic letter from North Carolina, dated December 29, 1775,” *Middlesex Journal*, 8 February to 10 February, 1776.; Pulis, *Moving On*, 8.

⁴⁶ “Copy of a letter from a Merchant in Virginia to a Merchant in London, by the last ship from Virginia, dated on board ship, January 12, 1776,” *Middlesex Journal*, 7 March to 9 March, 1776.

⁴⁷ Captain Samuel Leslie of the 14th Regiment, to Major General William Howe, 1 December 1775. Papers of the Continental Congress, M247, reel 65, i51, Vol. 1, pp. 433-434, United State National Archive.

⁴⁸ Return of the killed and wounded of a Detachment of His Majesty's 14th Regiment of Infantry at the Great Bridge Virginia 9th December 1775.” PRO Colonial Office, Class 5, Vol. 1353, 683.

⁴⁹ Williamsburg *Virginia Gazette*, November 16, 1775; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 28.

supplies, the Ethiopian Regiment provided an early invaluable pool of labor to help buttress the British military. The creation of the Regiment modeled the first initiative to arm black Americans and deprive Patriot forces of both integral household and agricultural labor. Dunmore's proclamation, however, was inspired not by humanitarian concerns or altruism, but rather by the expediency of war.⁵⁰

The runaway slaves who escaped during the chaos of war are characterized as both skilled and unskilled free black tradesmen, who possessed little if any money or precious valuables. Even while occupying a position at the bottom of the social strata, enslaved people had acquired a wide range of skills, including those of highly valued artisans. The thousands who made their way to British strongholds consisted of men, women, and children enslaved and free—driven by an unrelenting desire to obtain freedom. Because of the shortage of white wageworkers, runaways residing within British lines in New York and New Jersey, for example, were presented with numerous employment opportunities. A select number of men were employed by civil departments of the British Army, some participated in the corps of Black Pioneers, while others worked as servants to officers and helped to construct barracks and fortifications, while others worked as masons on rebuilding projects, carting supplies for troops, even as valets.⁵¹ Women served as laundresses, seamstresses, nurses, cooks, and washers. While both men and women were compensated with a wage for their services, those individuals with specialized training in essential artisanal trades earned even higher wages.⁵² Likewise, escaped slaves in North and South Carolina accessed employment as carpenters, pine tree loggers, and dock workers. As a result, runaway slaves became an integral part of the British military

⁵⁰ Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 16; Broadside, [November 7,] 1775, in John Murray (Earl of Dunmore) Papers, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 28.

workforce during periods when British troops were in desperate need of supplemental support and reinforcements.

In Virginia and South Carolina in particular, punishment for escaped slaves included whippings, bodily mutilations, exhaustive labor in the lead mines of southwestern Virginia, death, or potential sale and relocation to plantations in the West Indies. Robert Carter Nicholas, a prominent Williamsburg slaveholder assembled a group of his slaves to caution them not to join Dunmore. Nicholas threatened that those who attempted to runaway would be sold to “white people living in the West [Indian] Islands.” Despite Nicholas’ threats, those present at the gathering vowed to “take [their] wives, children, [and] male and female acquaintances” and flee at the first sight of a British vessel. Within days of Nicholas’ vengeful warning, thirty-two of his slaves placed “themselves under the care and direction” of British forces.⁵³ Just seven months after the publication of the Dunmore Proclamation, a young male slave fled from the Edward Hack Moseley plantation in Princess Ann County, Virginia. Following his capture and return in May of 1776, the young man was transported to Antigua where he was sold and re-enslaved.⁵⁴ Despite threats of seizure by Patriot troops, and fear of being returned to their masters, an exodus of five thousand slaves from plantations in Maryland and Virginia continued, largely unabated, in the months immediately following Dunmore’s proclamation.⁵⁵

Out of fear and suspicion that their slaves would defect to Dunmore, Edward Hack Moseley and John Willoughby Sr., requested assistance from Virginia’s Committee of Safety for

⁵³ Robert Carter Nicholas to the Virginia Delegates in Congress, November 25, 1775, in the Jefferson Papers, LC; William Woodford to Edmund Pendleton, December 5, 1775, in *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence*, ed. John H. Rhodehamel (New York: Library of America, 2001), 89.

⁵⁴ Schreeven and Scribner, *Revolutionary Virginia*, Vol. 6, 425.

⁵⁵ Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousand Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 257.

permission to move their enslaved property thirty miles further inland. Nevertheless, ninety-four slaves from the Willoughby plantation and eleven slaves from the Moseley plantation defected. Those who defected from the Moseley and Willoughby plantation included young women and children and even several elderly individuals. In his 1778 petition to the Virginia legislature, John Willoughby Jr. requested compensation for the loss of his family's enslaved property. Willoughby Jr. wholeheartedly believed that the Virginia government's Committee of Safety failed to protect the interests of not only his property, but that of all Virginian planters. Even though the Virginia Legislature rejected Willoughby Jr.'s petition, his request for compensation tangibly demonstrates the economic hardship created by the departure of enslaved people who were drawn to Dunmore.

Dunmore allowed entire families from both Princess Ann and Norfolk counties to board his fleet. Mary Perth was one of them. A woman in her late thirties, Mary had learned to read the Bible which became a source of strength and reassurance during her bondage. In many ways, Wesleyan Methodist preachers who proselytized and traveled throughout the Chesapeake region also inspired Mary. These Wesleyan Methodist preachers emphasized the redemptive potential of the slave as articulated by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty where with Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

As Mary reflected on her faithful journey in a communication with the Reverend Mr. Clark, she recounted how weekly she secretly strapped her infant daughter to her back, and made the ten-mile trek into the woods of Princess Ann county to gather with fellow slaves to pray for a future free from bondage and sing about God's great salvation. After the evening service, Mary made the trek back to the Willoughby plantation. Eight years later, when news of Dunmore's

proclamation circulated, Mary seized the opportunity to liberate herself and her daughter. It is reasonable to assume that several other slaves who attended similar clandestine worship services in the country also chose the freedom offered by Dunmore.

Similarly, in December of 1775, Nathaniel Snowball, an enslaved man in neighboring Norfolk County, coordinated his family's escape to join Dunmore. Even though Violet and her son, Nathaniel, were enslaved to a Mr. Richard Murray in Princess Ann County, and her brother-in-law, Timothy, belonged to a Mr. Cornelius Colbert of Norfolk county, the family fled together as one unit determined to obtain the freedom granted by the Dunmore Proclamation. By February 1776, Nathaniel, Violet, Timothy, and young Nathaniel were a part of a group of three hundred and fifty slaves who were successful in reaching Dunmore's fleet stationed on the Potomac River.⁵⁶

By May 1776, overcrowding followed by a food shortage, and an outbreak of smallpox forced Dunmore to construct a temporary encampment on Gwynn's Island. The Gwynn Island camp was located off the coast of Virginia's middle peninsula at the mouth of the Piankatank River. Dunmore immediately set up "good barracks for [the] Ethiopian corps," however, smallpox quickly spread throughout the camp.⁵⁷ In an effort to fight the spread of the contagion, Dunmore's surgeons implemented a mass inoculation. Nevertheless, escaped slaves died by the hundreds; many new recruits succumbed to the disease immediately upon their arrival.

Some of those who were lucky to recover, Dunmore sadly lamented, succumbed to an outbreak of fever which "carried off an incredible number of...people, especially the blacks." The July 20, 1776 publication of the *Virginia Gazette* described, "The deplorable situation of the miserable wretches left behind." Dunmore's recruits lay dying, bleeding from pustules that

⁵⁶ Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 16.

⁵⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, March 8, 1776; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 19.

appeared to consume entire bodies, such that “In one place you might see a poor wretch half dead making signs for water,” while another “endeavor[ed] to crawl away from the intolerable stench of bodies lying by their side.”⁵⁸ Another *Virginia Gazette* report described bodies scattered “in a state of putrefaction...without a shovelful of earth upon them.”⁵⁹

A demoralized Dunmore departed Gwynn’s Island on August 6, 1776 for New York City. Only three hundred men, women, and children of the Ethiopian Regiment and their families had survived. Among the survivors was Mary, her daughter Patience, Nathaniel Snowball, his wife, son, and a brother, Timothy. These two families had endured the appalling conditions of slavery and a smallpox outbreak in their quest for freedom.

After the Battle of Saratoga in September of 1777, British and Patriot forces shifted their attention to regions in the west and south, where the last of the conflict of the Revolutionary War unfolded. The occupation of Georgia enabled British Commander and General, Sir Henry Clinton, to lead an expedition to seize South Carolina between 1778 and 1780.

Clinton sought to increase slave desertion in the aftermath of a successful full-scale campaign to secure British outposts between Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina. From a military outpost in Westchester County, New York, Clinton issued a proclamation that functioned as a continuation of Dunmore’s efforts to undermine the economic livelihood of southern Patriots. In the Phillipsburg Proclamation of June 30, 1779, Clinton declared all enslaved men and women held under Patriot authority free. Like Dunmore, Clinton aimed to booster British resources in an effort to undermine the economic sustainability of southern Patriot holdings. More importantly, Clinton promised sanctuary to any slave who sought refuge in British occupied territories, thereby granting “full security to follow within these lines, any

⁵⁸*Virginia Gazette*, July 20, 1776.

⁵⁹*Virginia Gazette*, July 19, 1776.

occupation which he shall think proper.”⁶⁰ The proclamation was published in the *New York Gazette*, a loyalist newspaper on July 21, 1779. News of Clinton’s declaration quickly spread throughout the southern colonies. Thousands of runaway slaves responded to the offer of protection. In the weeks following, those same slaves fled to British lines, including recently captured Charleston, South Carolina.⁶¹

An additional five thousand enslaved men and women deserted Patriot slave holders to join the British military forces of Lieutenant General Edward Cornwallis’s army as it headed north to Yorktown, Virginia.⁶² Not only did the Phillipsburg Proclamation replicate the pattern of slave desertion that began with the Dunmore Proclamation in 1775, it also allowed escaped slaves to serve as wartime auxiliaries and domestic servants for the British Army. Despite these initiatives, Patriot forces were able to surround and confine the British control to coastal cities.

The British strategy to weaken the resistance of the colonies in rebellion by depriving southern Patriots of their labor, in the long run proved unsuccessful. But slaves who deserted their masters and sought refuge in British lines during the chaos of the Revolutionary War, were motivated by the freedom that British loyalism offered. These same runaways experienced an unprecedented form of freedom, self-autonomy, and relative mobility.

Demoralized after the Battle of Saratoga and Cornwallis’s surrender at Yorktown, the British Royal Army accepted defeat. Beginning in Savannah, Georgia, in July of 1782 and continuing to East Florida in August of 1785, British troops, white loyalists with their certified

⁶⁰ Proclamation, June 30, 1779, PRO 30/55/17 also printed in Rivington’s *Royal Gazette*, July 3, 1779, and February 12, 1780; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 40.

⁶¹ <http://www.ouramericanrevolution.org/index.cfm/page/view/p0422>

⁶² Frey, *Water From The Rock*, 169.

property, as well as black loyalists and freemen were evacuated from the United States.⁶³ Those implementing the evacuation of both white and black loyalists underestimated the total number of military vessels needed. Because escaped slaves served in a wide range of capacities in various departments, it became increasingly difficult for British forces to maintain constant supervision over the movements of sequestered slaves and freedmen. Historians continue to revise their estimation of exactly how many sequestered slaves, freedmen, and black loyalists were evacuated and relocated to British controlled regions in Europe, Canada, the West Indies, and subsequently Western Africa. Nevertheless, Colonial Office Records along with secondary materials provide estimates of the numbers evacuated.⁶⁴

According to Sylvia Frey, approximately ten thousand black loyalists departed Savannah, Georgia.⁶⁵ Likewise, 2,613 black loyalists sailed aboard British convoys leaving Charleston, South Carolina for Jamaica while another 350 disembarked in St. Lucia before the evacuation from East Florida.⁶⁶ Even though sequestered slaves were undoubtedly being removed from America aboard military vessels from Charleston, exact numbers are difficult to come by. Some historians, however, have been able to unearth documentations of small numbers of slaves forced to evacuate under the supervision of their white loyalist masters. Loyalists awaiting evacuation in New York were primarily resettled in Nova Scotia. Another 1,300 slaves were taken to white loyalist settlements in Quebec, Edwardsburg, and townships east of Montreal.⁶⁷ Black loyalists

⁶³ Eldon Jones, "The British Withdrawal from the South, 1781-1785," in W. Robert Higgins ed., *Revolutionary War in the South—Power, Conflict, and Leadership: Essays in Honor of John Richard Alden* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 259-295.

⁶⁴ The term "sequestered slave" was used by to describe the illegal trade or traffic of enslaved people in the American south during and after the Revolutionary War.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Coleman, *American Revolution in Georgia*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 145-146; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 174.

⁶⁶ William H. Siebert, *The Legacy of the American Revolution to the British West Indies and Bahamas: A Chapter out of the History of the American Loyalists* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1913), 15.

⁶⁷ Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 193.

who escaped to New York and provided military service were granted British certificates of manumission and transported as free people of color to Nova Scotia. These included 1,336 men, 914 women, and 740 children. From New York alone, 14,162 loyalists departed for St. John and New Brunswick, Canada. The 2,530 loyalists fleeing Annapolis, Maryland, departed for Halifax, Nova Scotia, included 936 freed slaves.⁶⁸

The last British convoy that departed East Florida on August 29, 1785 carried both white and black loyalists in addition to sequestered slaves to the Bahamas and Jamaica. The Bahamas received the majority of these evacuees. Great Britain had acquired East Florida from Spain through the Treaty of Paris of 1763. Prior to the Treaty of Paris, both St. Augustine and the surrounding terrain were sparsely populated. However, in January of 1782, Great Britain designated East Florida an asylum for loyalists. In turn, East Florida became a refuge for white loyalists, their slaves, and a primary point of evacuation for approximately 9,000 black loyalists. 5,700 of these black loyalists and sequestered slaves were evacuated from East Florida to the Bahamas, resulting in the first in a series of migrations to the British Caribbean.⁶⁹ Michael Craton and Gail Saunders broadly capture the transformation of Abaco, Eleuthera, and Nassau in the wake of the arrival of black and white loyalists to the Bahamas.⁷⁰ Even though black loyalists in the Bahamas had to settle for smaller tracts of land than their white counterparts, they were

⁶⁸ Marion Robertson, *King's Bounty: A History of Early Shelburne, Nova Scotia* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Museum, 1983), 79.

⁶⁹ Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 178.

⁷⁰ Prior to the migration and resettlement of black and white loyalists to the Bahamas in 1782, New Providence, Harbour Island, Eleuthera, Cat Island, and Exuma were already settled by the British. The arrival of the loyalists added new settlements to Abaco, Andros, Long Island, San Salvador, Rum Cay, and Crooked Island, thereby opening up islands in the region. Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 421.

vulnerable to urban employers and large-scale landowners.⁷¹ The largest number of black loyalists, however, often resided along the margins of their new host societies.⁷²

Recently, Christopher Curry traced the 1,000 white and 4,000 black loyalists who were resettled in large concentrations in Providence, Great Abaco, and Exuma in the Bahamas.⁷³ Curry recounts the process through which black loyalists in Nassau and Abaco “struggled to gain access to land” and overcame obstacles to land ownership and employment opportunities. These expatriates’ success in acquiring land and gaining employment attests to the struggles of slaves to achieve freedom and socio-economic mobility.

The Bahamian black loyalists were strategic and creative in their expressions of freedom while struggling within the confines of local legal proclamations and British imperial policies. They maneuvered around institutional promises of freedom in ways similar to enslaved men and women in Spanish Florida.⁷⁴ Curry contextualizes the distinct geopolitical characteristics of Bahamian black loyalists living in a “non-plantation slave holding society that bordered the Anglo-American world to the north and the sugar islands of the Caribbean in the south,” occupying a precarious yet interconnected position within the colonial world.⁷⁵ Feeling emboldened by their new circumstances, many appealed to “Negro Courts,” for their freedom and civil liberties. In turn, these court cases demonstrated efforts to not only accommodate, but also oppose slavery. Curry also draws attention to the ways in which several black loyalists

⁷¹ Ikuko Asaka, *Tropical Freedom: Climate, Settler Colonialism, and Black Exclusion in the Age of Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 26.

⁷² Alexander Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth Century British Atlantic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 167-169; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 24-32.

⁷³ Christopher Curry, *Freedom and Resistance: A Social History of Black Loyalists in the Bahamas* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2017), 11-15; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 185.

⁷⁴ Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida: Blacks in the New World* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999) 2.

⁷⁵ Curry, *Freedom and Resistance*, 14.

solicited “white patronage” and emulated the practices of colonial whites to circumvent racial inequality and access social mobility. Regardless of the creative approaches they deployed, Bahamian black loyalists managed to advance their claims for freedom and land ownership. But racism and social inequality ultimately limited their options.

During the Revolutionary War, the Dunmore and Philipsburg Proclamations functioned as two military strategies that granted freedom to escaped slaves in exchange for military service, and consequently resulted in their evacuation and resettlement outside of the United States. These proclamations must be viewed not as altruistic or humanitarian, but rather as strategic endeavors on behalf of the British to economically destabilize American colonies during conflict.

Black Colonial Marines and the War of 1812

Emerging as a fierce economic competitor in the years immediately following the American Revolution and intent on demonstrating its strength through territorial expansion, the United States declared war on Great Britain in June of 1812. President Madison declared that British assaults on American ships represented a strike against a newly independent people. In response, the British Royal Navy issued yet another military proclamation offering freedom and resettlement land grants to escaped slaves who aided the British military.

In the spring of 1814, British forces were successful in wresting control of Nova Scotia and Massachusetts. Next, the British Royal Navy sought to gain access to the American Gulf Coast. The Mississippi River represented an opportunity for British troops to reassert authority in the ongoing conflict between the Spanish and American battalions over both the western and eastern regions of Florida.⁷⁶ Both the Dunmore and Philipsburg Proclamations issued during the

⁷⁶ Carl Benn, *The War of 1812*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 67.

Revolutionary War set a precedence for slave defection. In an effort to persuade slaves to defect, Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Inglis Forrester Cochrane, fleet commander for the British Royal Navy, issued a proclamation on April 2, 1814, granting freedom, resettlement, and land grants to escaped slaves in Maryland and Virginia who aided the British. Slaves throughout the Chesapeake Bay region fled estates in response to the Cochrane Proclamation. Written in his own hand while stationed in Bermuda, Admiral Cochrane declared:

That all those [enslaved people] may be disposed to emigrate from the UNITED STATES will, with their Families, be received on board of His Majesty's Ships or Vessels of War, or at the Military Posts that may be established, upon or near the Coast of the UNITED STATES, when they will have their choice of either entering into His Majesty's Sea or Land Forces, or of being sent as FREE Settlers to the British possessions in North America or the West Indies, where they will meet with all due encouragement.⁷⁷

Cochrane intended to weaken the resolve of American forces, by depriving the south of its labor force, and in so doing undermine the ability of the region to participate in international trade. The Cochrane Proclamation ultimately functioned as a mechanism to curb the process of American expansion by allowing escaped slaves to enroll in British forces as Corps of Colonial Marines.

Prior to issuing his proclamation, Admiral Cochrane had sought to further incentivize enslaved families to defect together. In desperate need of young, strong men, the British “encouraged the desertion of ... [American] Seamen” as a way of persuading slaves to join their ranks.⁷⁸ Some 5,000 southern slaves accepted the claims for freedom that the British Royal Army offered, performing as guides and ships’ pilots.⁷⁹ From December 1813 to January 1814, Cochrane advised naval officers to welcome escaped slaves as they entered British controlled

⁷⁷ <https://pastnow.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/april-2-1814-cochranes-proclamation/>

⁷⁸ Douglas R. Egerton, “Reviewed Work: The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (Winter 2014), 694.

⁷⁹ Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 86, 176

territories. Cochrane believed that such a friendly reception would be successful in fostering trust and confidence between runaway slaves and the British Royal Navy.⁸⁰ In turn, the preservation of familial bonds played a significant role in motivating slave defections.

The escaped slaves who fought in the Corps of Colonial Marines in the New Orleans campaign played a significant role in the naval and land attacks of December 1814. On December 14th and 28th, American naval vessels made successful advances, including an attack against the Corps of Colonial Marines on the New Orleans Villere Plantation. Demoralized and fatigued from battle, British battalions waded through the swampy terrain of New Orleans' waterfront. In a final and "ill-executed frontal assault against [Major-General Andrew] Jackson," British forces "collapsed."⁸¹ In the end, the British Navy suffered heavy casualties, losing a total of 2,450 marines, forcing it to withdraw from New Orleans.

The British defeat in New Orleans signaled the end of the War of 1812. Sixteen hundred former colonial marines, which included several freedmen, were evacuated to Nova Scotia. The remaining 4,000 ex-colonial marines were dispatched to the British West Indian colony of Trinidad. Between May of 1815 and August of 1816, the British government fulfilled its commitment by granting land to these "refugees" who became locally known as "Merikan" settlers.⁸² Abiding by the guidelines of British colonial office policies, the first Governor of Trinidad, Sir Ralph Woodford, sought to maintain colonial supervision over the Merikan settlements.

The disbanded marines were evacuated, resettled, and granted sixteen-acre plots in the Naparima District of southern Trinidad. Arriving in Trinidad in three waves, they forged

⁸⁰ John McNish Weiss, *The Merikens: Free Black American Settlers in Trinidad, 1815-1816*, (London: McNish & Weiss, 2002), 5.

⁸¹ Benn, *The War of 1812*, 70.

⁸² Weiss, *The Merikens*, 2-3.

community villages that became known collectively as the ‘Six Companies.’ Aboard the first vessel departing New Orleans, the *H.M.S. Levant* carried sixty-one men, eighteen women, and seven dependent children to Trinidad to serve as a “Black yeoman class” in the region. As the forests were cleared, the Merikans cultivated cocoa, sugar, coffee, rice, corn, bananas, yams, cassava, eddoes, tannias and arrowroot.⁸³ The villages functioned as socially insulated communities with distinct religious and cultural practices, allowing Merikan farmers to foster economic enterprises that transformed their land grants into a regional agricultural export industry. Even though Governor Woodford was not initially prepared to receive the first arrival of refugees in May of 1815, they were “offered a chance between being apprenticed as servants to local employers and being settled on small plots of land.”⁸⁴ Chapter three will further examine the resettlement experiences of the Merikans in Trinidad.

Invitations for Black American Immigration to Haiti

In the years immediately following Haitian independence in 1804, the Haitian Revolution contributed to debates on slavery and abolition throughout the Atlantic World.⁸⁵ As a result, the Haitian Revolution made an undeniable contribution to discourses on slavery through the emergence of Haiti a peaceful nation that could then influence free people of color in the United States. When rebels in St. Domigie fought for and won freedom from slavery and colonialism, they directly challenged ideas of white supremacy. As they defined the parameters of their independence, they further undermined the prevailing view of the world by challenging the

⁸³ Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years after Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 38; Alfred B. Huggins, *The Saga of the Companies: A History of the Merikans Settlers in Trinidad* (Trinidad and Tobago: Plain Vision Publishing, 2015), 43.

⁸⁴ K.O. Laurence, “The Settlement of Free Negroes in Trinidad Before Emancipation,” *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. ½ (March/June 1963), 27; C.O. 295/37: Woodford to Bathurst, 5 June 1815.

⁸⁵ David P. Geggus, ed. *Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

notion that both slaves and free people of color were incapable of achieving and sustaining independence. With the Haitian Revolution itself, it changed the paradigm of possibilities for militant slaves, such that with strategy and agency, independence could be achieved. The establishment and progress of Haiti as an independent black nation marked itself as a political and cultural milestone could inspire and motivate other enslaved people to eventually consider immigrating to the island. In turn, both Haitian leaders promoted Haiti as an island as a “quintessentially black nation.” According to historian Sara Fanning, the process of codifying the Haitian constitution as quintessentially black, black Americans would be better able to identify with the aspirations and progress of Haiti as a newly independent black nation.⁸⁶ During independence, Haiti identified itself by color declaring in Article 14 of its Constitution: “Haitians henceforth will be known by the generic name of blacks.”⁸⁷ Such that all inhabitants, regardless of their skin color would thereby be considered “black” and therefore open and inclusive of others sharing a black identity. The Constitution also outlawed all white landownership, indicating a heightened sense of color consciousness. Around this same time, black Americans in the United States began looking to Haiti and embracing their color as an identifier and in association with a sense of pride. This strategy was also deployed in Haiti as a mechanism to unify against white oppression and racism.⁸⁸ In both cases an emerging black identity was not based on essentialist or biological notions of difference, but rather a characterization by shared goals of unity, autonomy, and freedom from white oppression.⁸⁹ General Jean Pierre Boyer, among others leaders invited free black Americans to immigrate as a means of encouraging

⁸⁶ Sara Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement*, (New York: New York University, 2015), Kindle Edition 249.

⁸⁷ *Les Constitutions d’Haiti* (Paris: Louis-Joseph Janvier, 1886)

⁸⁸ James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 12-19.

⁸⁹ Wilson Moses, *Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, (Hamden: Archon, 1978).

American leaders to acknowledge Haiti's independence, igniting diplomatic relations, and provide Haiti with much needed workers who would help with the transition from a subsistence mindset. By making Haiti accessible, promoting the island as an entirely black republic, and incentivizing free people of color from the United States to immigrate, Boyer pressed to = American political leaders to consider Haiti as a nation deserving of recognition.

British Emancipation & the Demand for Agricultural Labor

The British Imperial Abolition Act of 1833 legally emancipated slaves throughout the British Empire. At the time of abolition, 22,359 slaves and their children were emancipated in Trinidad.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, emancipated slaves were not granted immediate and absolute freedom. Instead, the Emancipation Act of 1834 compelled free people to work for their former masters for wages for a period of six years. Planters and merchants believed that an intervening period of “apprenticeship” would provide a guaranteed labor force. A mere five years later, the British government abolished apprenticeship on August 1, 1838. With the end of apprenticeship, free people could not only sell their labor to whomever they pleased, but also leave plantation estates. Defection from plantation estates was a natural impulse, for the “hoe” symbolized oppression.⁹¹ Even William Burnley, one of Trinidad's largest plantation owners and an advocate for the planters acquiesced that free people of color would rather live on their own plots than continue to live on plantations where they would remain in the shadow of the master who once exerted “absolute control over them.”⁹²

⁹⁰ *Trinidad Standard*, 21 August 1835; Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 39.

⁹¹ *Trinidad Standard*, 22 March 1839; Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 48.

⁹² Parliamentary Papers, 1840, VIII, 527, ‘Report from the Select Committee on East India Produce’; Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 48.

In the years immediately following the end of apprenticeship, free people of color in Trinidad engaged in a wide variety of enterprises, including participating in small-scale trading of ready-made clothes, flour, salt, wine, gin, and tobacco. Many bought or rented lots of land on which they practiced subsistence farming, while others squatted on uncultivated land. Of the over one million square acres of undisturbed land, by 1838, 208,379 acres were privately owned, but only 43,265 was under cultivation.⁹³ Despite its illegality, freedmen squatted and cultivated unoccupied land. Planters maintained a disdain for squatters, deploying a paternalist belief that squatting prevented freedmen from developing a sense of pride in themselves and the land they cultivated, while also undermining the potential for improved moral conditions.⁹⁴ Even with colonial opposition to squatting, plantations continued to rely on the labor of freed people who lived nearby.

In an effort to encourage freedmen to return to plantations as laborers, planters offered a series of inducements, including high wages, payment for completed tasks rather than an assigned daily wage, and allowances. When compared to other British colonies in the Caribbean, plantation workers in Trinidad earned 30 cents a task, a wage much higher than the 20 cents workers in Barbados earned for a complete day's work. By June of 1840, wages rose to 50 cents a task, while other estates paid upwards of 60 cents for specific fieldwork tasks.⁹⁵ Because of the ongoing shortage of labor in Trinidad, planters were forced to offer additional inducements including free housing, provision gardens for workers who agreed to live on estates, rations of

⁹³ Both estimates are derived from a sub-committee report issued by the Agriculture and Immigration Society of Trinidad and published in William H. Burnley, *Observations on the Present Conditions of the Island of Trinidad*, London, 1848, p. 45; Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 49.

⁹⁴ C.O. 295, Vol. 125, Mein to Normanby, 18 May 1839; Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 51.

⁹⁵ Burnley, *Observations*, 27.

salt fish, a daily cooked meal, and often rum. Despite these inducements, the labor shortage persisted.

During slavery, enslaved people were compelled to work extended hours, after emancipation free people chose to work based on their own discretion.⁹⁶ Even with higher wages, free people did not work continuously. As a result, planters desperately needed a reliable work force. The continuous turn over and the mobility of freedmen ultimately slowed the development of the plantation economy.⁹⁷ For example, before abolition slaves were expected to clear 240 acres of weeds within three months, after the end of apprenticeship in 1838, free labor managed to clear only 175 acres of weeds in the same amount of time.⁹⁸ The reduced efficiency of agricultural production made it increasingly difficult for planters to meet yearly production demands. The last crop of sugar cultivated using 927 apprenticeship laborers in 1838 by William Burnley's Orange Grove plantation produced 14,312 tons of sugar. Production fell to 13,433 tons, in 1839 and to 12,288 tons the following year.⁹⁹ With the decline in agricultural production and a diminished labor supply, Trinidadian planters turned to the immigration of black Americans and Africans and later East Indians as a source of labor.

In April of 1839, a group of planters formed the Trinidad Agricultural and Immigration Society, an organization focused on the recruiting of immigrants. The following year, the Legislative Council of Trinidad appointed William Burnley an immigration agent to Britain and the United States. Together, the Society along with the West India Committee under the leadership of Burnley, endeavored to implement a recruitment initiative to bring foreign

⁹⁶ Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1962* (Kingston, Jamaica: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), 77.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹⁸ Parliamentary Papers, 1841m Session 2, XII, 479, 'Report from the Select Committee on West India Colonies,' p. 274; Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 55.

⁹⁹ Norman Lamont, *Burnley of Orange Grove*, (Port of Spain, 1947), 253.

immigrants to Trinidad. In August, Burnley published the first of a series of articles and advertisements in *The Colored American* describing the landscape and employment opportunities that would be available to free black Americans in Trinidad. Designed to portray Trinidad as an open and inviting nation, Burnley published his “Description of the Island of Trinidad and the Advantages to be derived from Emigration to that Colony.” Through romanticized prose, it offered a rosy description of Trinidad. Burnley described the land as vast, with numerous agricultural opportunities. Most importantly, the article offered a description of what immigrants could expect upon their arrival in the colony.

Once the vessel docked in Port of Spain, Trinidad, Burnley claimed that an emigration agent would come on board to inquire about the passengers’ satisfaction with their voyage, and provide instructions on how to go about finding accommodations, employment, and purchasing land. He declared, “no man disposed to work shall be obliged to lay out a cent for the maintenance of himself and family, whilst in search of employment.”¹⁰⁰ With a large portion of the financial burden covered by the Colonial Government, Burnley stated that “So great is the demand for help,” that the immigrant will probably have the choice of several situations” available on sugar or cocoa estates with planters willing to pay “every able adult in his family.” Immigrants stood to earn up to sixteen dollars per month. Furthermore, based on his skills and abilities, the emigrant can easily find “comfortable lodging, and medical attendance.”¹⁰¹ By November, 216 black Americans recruits boarded the first vessel orchestrated by Burnley, departing New York City for Port of Spain, Trinidad.¹⁰² Recruitment continued in Baltimore, Maryland and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

¹⁰⁰ “Description of the Island of Trinidad.” *The Colored American* (New York, NY). 31 August, 1839. Accessible Archives Online. Page 4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰² C.O. 295, Vol. 126, Mein to Macgregor, 14 December 1839.

Liberated Africans

Great Britain had imported hundreds of thousands of slave into her colonial possessions in North America and the Caribbean between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In the wake of the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, there was a significant decline in the number of Africans brought to the Americas. But it also gave rise to illegal slave trading practices. The British countered by blockading the African coast and forging international treaties with a number of European countries. By seizing 476 ships that violated the ban, and prosecuting those who violated both the bilateral treaties and the slave trade laws that Great Britain negotiated with European countries and the United States, the British Royal Navy rescued approximately 94,329 Africans.¹⁰³ An estimated 15,000 liberated Africans were resettled in the Bahamas, British Guiana, and in the islands of Jamaica and Trinidad. These liberated Africans constituted the majority of the African-born population in these territories. Those who settled in Trinidad between 1808 and 1838 became agricultural workers.¹⁰⁴ While the liberated African as a whole forged significant cultural and social connections that defined the ethnic

¹⁰³ Records pertaining to the liberated Africans who were resettled in Freetown, Sierra Leone, throughout the nineteenth century (Special Liberated African Department) cite a total of 476 captured vessels and the rescue of an approximate 94,329 liberated Africans. Adderley references Richard Meyer-Heiselberg's *Notes from Liberated African Department: Extracts from Sources on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade 1808-1860 from the Archives at Fourah Ball College, the University College of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976) to ensure that the figures referenced by the Special Liberated African Department in Sierra Leone did not in fact include calculations for the captured ships processed in Spanish and Portuguese territories (Havana, Cuba or Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Adderley also maintains that these same calculations do not include the numbers of liberated Africans who were rescued from illegally operating ships that were unfortunately disabled or shipwrecked. Adderley also cites economic historian, E. Phillip Leveen in *British Slave Trade Suppression Policies, 1821-1865* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), who gives an estimate of "almost 160,000 slaves" rescued by the British navy, inclusive of the 66,000 liberated Africans who were directly processed at Freetown, Sierra Leone (Leveen does not provide a source for this estimate). Adderley sets the figure at 94,000 liberated Africans.

¹⁰⁴ Carl Campbell, *Cedulants and Capitulants: The Politics of the Coloured Opposition in the Slave Society of Trinidad, 1783-1838* (Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.: Paria Publishing Co. Ltd, 1992), 56.

currents and identities of the island, they arrived not as slaves but as immigrants, and consequently joined the ranks of free people of color. In many ways, their life experiences represent an integral piece of the broader struggle against slavery in the Americas.

The island's free people of color remained largely disadvantaged by British policies that denied them access to professional occupations or acquiring the skills needed for lucrative trades.¹⁰⁵ Even though they were able to purchase and sell goods, and could qualify to receive free land grants, they remained largely disenfranchised. The arrival of liberated Africans and black Americans after the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 resulted in the creation of designated settlements that were geographically dispersed along the eastern coast of Trinidad.

With the abolition of slavery throughout the British Caribbean in 1834, planters desperate for labor, sought to attract "industrious" black American "agriculturalists" from New York City, Baltimore, and Philadelphia to immigrate to Trinidad with offers of free transportation aboard "first class vessels." These incentives and recruitment initiatives reflected planters' desperation as freedmen abandoned plantations.

The Jeffersonian Solution

While "whiteness" functioned as the cornerstone of American citizenship, many white reformers considered the continued presence of free black Americans as a direct threat to the unifying efforts forged by America's nation building project.¹⁰⁶ Thomas Jefferson, a leading

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁶ Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 18, 126; George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 7-9; Melish's work on northern white attitudes is the most recent contribution to white national identity construction. Melish adds a significant contribution that builds upon Winthrop Jordan's *White Over Black* and George Fredrickson's *The Black Image in the White Mind*. Also, see James Brewer Stewart's essay, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North" *Journal of the Early Republic*,

politician of the American republic, regarded colonization as the most effective way to promote emancipation on a large scale and national level by presenting slaveholding whites with a decisive plan for “purifying” the nation of black Americans who were deemed unworthy of citizenship.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, another group of proponents asserted that individual manumission and colonization in Africa or in other territories outside of the United States would provide slaveholders with a pragmatic method to end slavery without federal intervention, or the prospects of having to live alongside free black Americans.

As white state representatives attempted to define the parameters of the new American Republic in the 1780s, the free black Americans who participated in that Revolutionary War for the Patriots began to assert their American identity through petitions and letters to state legislatures. These individuals argued that they had just as much right to live in the United States as whites.¹⁰⁸ Collectively, these petitions claimed that the institution of slavery fundamentally violated the principles of the American Revolution.¹⁰⁹ Several black Americans even used their military service records as evidence that they were deserving of citizenship. Their words advocated for an acknowledgement of their humanity and pointed to the inherent contradiction of a Christian nation that enslaved fellow human beings. How could a nation, they asked, that

Vol. 18, No. 2, (Summer, 1998), 181-217, which provides additional context on the attitudes of white northerners in the years immediately following the American Revolution.

¹⁰⁷ P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1-5. Allan Yarma, *The American Colonization Society: An Avenue to Freedom?* (New York, NY: University Press of America, 2006), 9-11, 20-22.

¹⁰⁸ In his text, *Black Patriots and Loyalists*, Alan Gilbert characterizes that American Revolution as “Two Revolutions” that “ran together, in parallel...[that were] more often at odds,” such that the Patriot revolt against Great Britain unfolded alongside an enduring struggle for emancipation by both enslaved and free people of color. Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), viii.

¹⁰⁹ For a list of the African Americans petitions submitted to both state and federal officials, see Herbert Aptheker, ed. *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951).

proclaimed equality in accordance with the philosophy of natural rights, continue to rely on the labor of enslaved people? As Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington among others began to outline the parameters by which American would function as a democratic republic, they were confronted with the contentious nature of the institution of slavery. The Founding Fathers were forced to consider the inherent contradiction of holding humans in bondage while charging Great Britain with the indignity of treating the colonists like “slaves” themselves.

The institution of slavery remained a divisive issue. Even as the Second Continental Congress outlined a unified government in which most power remained within the states, it failed to adequately resolve the issue of slavery. What should become of these non-citizens? What rights did free black Americans have? How should individual states deal with free people of color whose status as black and free potentially threatened both the institution of slavery and the social order of the new republic?

Thomas Jefferson’s attitudes towards slavery laid the groundwork for colonization ideology. Jefferson not only condemned Great Britain for introducing slavery to the colonies, he also rationalized that colonization could ultimately serve as a means for adequately dealing with the problem of slavery. In his first attack against slavery, a pamphlet entitled, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, Jefferson disapproved of the “barbaric” traffic of slaves from the African continent to the West.¹¹⁰ Jefferson expressed these same views in the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, in which he both chastised and charged King George III with not allowing the English colonies to abolish slavery. Jefferson derived this argumentation from the action of various colonial assemblies that prohibited the slave trade, only to have those same

¹¹⁰ The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, <https://www.history.org/Almanack/life/politics/sumview.cfm>

prohibitions overturned by the Royal Privy Council. In like fashion, Jefferson's early views were also incorporated into his draft of the Virginia state constitution, which outlined a provision for a gradual emancipation of slaves. These early writings of Jefferson should not be viewed as an iteration of abolitionist sympathy, but rather as an attempt to set a precedence for excluding black Americans from being incorporated into American society.

Likewise, Jefferson's views on slavery, black inferiority, and miscegenation represented the deeply rooted prejudices of American society. The social stigma of racial difference, he argued, was too great a burden to overcome. He also questioned the intellectual capabilities of black Americans. In Jefferson's opinion, black Americans were not worthy of American citizenship. As historian Benjamin Quarles succinctly states, "The inferiority of the Negro did not signify, in Jefferson's thinking that he was to be deprived of his rights. A man's rights were not contingent upon his abilities, hence, the Negro should be free. But since Jefferson did not believe whites and blacks could live together in peace, his conclusion was that Negroes should be sent away."¹¹¹ Therefore, the only option remaining for black Americans was to simply leave the United States. For Jefferson, colonization served as a vehicle for removal.

As Jefferson completed *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he expected that slave emancipation to be immediately followed by colonization. Jefferson rationalized that this specific "separatist strategy" was derived from a historical precedent that dated back to the ancient Romans.

Among the Romans emancipation required but one effort. The slave, when made free, might mix, without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second [effort] is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reaches of mixture.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 188.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 139

Jefferson assumed a pragmatic stance, such that the removal and deportation of black Americans from the United States served to respect not only the “property rights” of the slave-holding class, but also prevent the formation of inter-racial relationships that could potentially “stain” the purity of white American society. Within the confines of a doctrine of white supremacy, Jefferson justified his position as an endeavor to protect the political and social integrity of the American republic.

From Jefferson’s perspective, colonization represented a means by which gradual emancipation could be achieved. More importantly, emancipation followed by the deportation of black Americans from the United States, provided them with what Jefferson described as an opportunity to live free from the “Deep-rooted prejudices” of whites. Natural distinctions, he insisted, created an unrelenting animosity between both races, such that “the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of the other or the other race.”¹¹³ Jefferson’s proposed solution to the slavery question was based on “perceptions of difference” that existed between the races.

Once Jefferson’s efforts were solidified as policy in 1786, his stance towards gradual emancipation and colonization were coupled with other “separatist strategies” for colonizing black Americans. Immediately after the failed slave insurrection lead by Gabriel Prosser in Richmond Virginia in 1800, Jefferson supported the members of the Virginia legislature in their efforts to adopt a resolution that would allow the current Virginia governor, James Monroe, to evaluate the possibility of purchasing land outside of the United States to be used as sort of a

¹¹³ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia, edited with Introduction and Notes by William Peden* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 132-133.

penal colony to confine threatening slave populations. In response to Monroe's request to support this particular resolution, Jefferson replied:

Questions would arise whether the establishment of a colony within our limits, and to become a part of our Union, would be desirable to the State of Virginia itself, or to other states—especially those who would be in its vicinity. Could we procure lands beyond the limits of the United States to form a receptacle for these people? ...Spain, France, and Portugal hold possession on the southern continent, as to which I am not well enough informed to say how far they might meet our views. But either there or in the northern continent, should be constituted authorities of Virginia fix their attention, of preference, I will have the disposition of those powers sounded in the first instance.¹¹⁴

Jefferson's affirmation demonstrates a clear political partiality towards separatism and colonization, but it also serves to buttress his negative opinion of black Americans and their inability to be equitably incorporated into the social fabric of American society.

As Jefferson prepared to send a group of black Americans to Sierra Leone, his plans faced an intervention from the Virginia Legislature. By 1804, the Virginia Legislature attempted to pressure Jefferson to move forward with purchasing and establishing a location to deport unwanted and unruly slaves. The Virginia Legislature discussed the financial costs and feasibility of utilizing a portion of the newly acquired territory of Louisiana as a designated colony.¹¹⁵ But this process was stalled as the legal proceedings for the Louisiana Purchase took precedence. As a result, Jefferson began to consider the possible conflicts that could arise if Louisiana existed as a separatist colony while being incorporated into the United States.

Meanwhile several other schemes for colonizing free people of color also made their way to preliminary planning stages. In 1790, one of Virginia's wealthiest planters, Ferdinando Fairfax, believed that free people of color did not have a future in the United States, and began

¹¹⁴ Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson's Thoughts on the Negro: Part 1," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 3. No. 1 (Jan., 1918), 80.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

drafting a plan for their deportation and colonization. Admittedly influenced by Jefferson, Fairfax advocated for the establishment of a black colony under the protection of Congress on the African continent. Fairfax not only believed that the United States Federal Government should be financially responsible for overseeing the colony, but the Federal Government should also compensate slave owners for manumitting their slave property. By urging Congress to provide the fledgling colony with military protection until such point that the colony could function as an independent nation, Fairfax believed that the United States would be able to in any of protect any potential economic interests in the colony. More importantly, Fairfax emphasized the fact that a black colony could also serve as a vehicle for Christian evangelism.¹¹⁶

Philadelphia Quaker, John Parrish, was also inspired by Jefferson's colonization rhetoric. While Parrish envisioned using colonization as a method for achieving gradual emancipation, he was however convinced that instead of creating a colony in Africa, that Congress should designate two hundred acre of land in the "Western wilderness" for a black colony. With each family receiving an assigned land grant, Parrish reasoned that black Americans would be more inclined to resettle in the Western United States rather than immigrating to an unknown region in Africa. Like Jefferson and Fairfax, Parrish believed that the establishment of a black colony would also encourage slave-holders to manumit a greater number of slaves. Parrish argued that even though the black Americans were free, they would live in a segregated territory and would still be entitled to the rights and protections of American citizenship.¹¹⁷

Anthony Benezet, a fellow Quaker also appealed to Congress asking that Congress allocate provisions for the colonization of free people of color in "that large extent of country

¹¹⁶ Henry Noble Sherwood, *Our Country's Beginnings*, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1924), 490-491.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 492.

from the West side of the Allegheny Mountains to the Mississippi, on a breadth of four or five hundred miles.”¹¹⁸ And even though Thomas Branagan, a prominent American author, extensively criticized slavery as an institution, he argued in favor of colonization, but also he reasoned that deportation and coloinziation in Africa would impractical and expensive.¹¹⁹ Instead, Branagan recommended to his peers that they consider establishing a black colony somewhere within the newly acquired Louisiana territory, preferably on a tract of land at least two thousand miles away from the nearest community of white Americans. Branagan, just like Parrish supported the creation of a separate black colony or state that would co-exist tangentially with the United States.¹²⁰ Even though these three colonization schemes did not materialize, each strategy represents an example of the growing popularity of racial separatism. It was not until the founding of the American Colonization Society in 1816 that the first effort to colonize free people of color outside of the United States came to fruition.

The American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States, more commonly known as the American Colonization Society (ACS) was created in 1816 with the primary purpose of colonizing black Americans in West Africa. With the explicit intention of “ridding us [white American society] of free people of color, and preparing the way for getting rid of slaves and slavery,” members of the ACS argued that black Americans would never be

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 494-495.

¹¹⁹ Beverly Tomek, “‘From motives of generosity, as well as self-preservation’: Thomas Branagan, Colonization, and the Gradual Emancipation Movement,” *Journal of American Nineteenth Century History*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, 2005; Branagan delivered his poem, *The Penitential Tyrant, or, Slave Trader reformed a Pathetic Poem*, to the Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom in September of 1790 in an effort to demonstrate the immorality of slavery and the urgency needed to implement a process for gradual emancipation. In *The Penitential Tyrant*, Branagan asserted that “for slavery is in itself inconsistent, that it seems strange it ever should have a defender...[it is] hateful to God and man, and, in my estimation, the greatest evil under the sun, and inflicted by Americans.” Thomas Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant, or, Slave Trader reformed a Pathetic Poem, in Four Cantos*, (New York, Printed and Sold by Samuel Wood, no. 362, Pearl-Street), 1807.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 495.

able to elevate themselves and achieve socio-economic mobility within the United States. Existing in “a state of hopelessness, inferiority, and consequent degradation,” the ACS believed that these conditions would cause black Americans to “lose the most powerful incitements to industry, frugality, good conduct, and honorable exertion.” As a result, the ACS maintained that black Americans would ultimately lose all meaningful purpose for living, and would sink “into a state of sloth, wretchedness, and profligacy.” Therefore, living in a “colony composed of themselves,” could free black Americans to truly “enjoy real equality,” which would allow them to “become proprietors of land, masters of mechanics,” and assume other dignified professions. Without whites constantly around “to remind them of and to perpetuate their original inferiority,” the ACS supposed that black Americans would experience “true freedom,” dignity, and a sense of pride.¹²¹

Founding members, Robert Finlay, Elias Caldwell, and Francis Scott Key were concerned with several political and social imperatives. First, both slaveholders and white political leaders firmly believed that black Americans could not and should not be considered citizens of the United States, regardless of their military service and economic status. Second, any attempt to forge a truly national identity would be contingent upon the removal of free black Americans, whom whites believed posed a serious threat to the social, political, and economic order of American society. Third, the colonization of free black Americans in Africa offered whites a humane way of dealing with the uneasiness of slavery.

Despite the religious leanings and sympathies of its founding members, historian Nicholas Guyatt posits that “benevolent colonization,” the process of using black Americans to religiously evangelize and gradually share the benefits of civilization to the masses in Africa,

¹²¹ *The First Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 20-21.

functioned as a mechanism to reconcile the contradictions between racial prejudice and a “national commitment to equality.”¹²² Both the racial attitudes and prejudicial undertones of the American Colonization Society reflected a universal fear among slaveholders that the presence of black Americans posed a threat to the survival of the slave system.

¹²² Nicholas Guyatt, “The Outskirts of Our Happiness:” Race and Lure of Colonization in the Early Republics,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 95, No. 5, March 2009, 986-987.

CHAPTER II

Colonization, Emigration, and the Rise of the American Colonization Society

As early as 1776, Thomas Jefferson began advocating for the establishment of designated colonies for free black Americans. With the support of George Washington, Jefferson insisted that racial separation through colonization should serve as a precondition for emancipation. By 1790, a mere three years after the ratification of the United States Constitution, the United States census counted a total of 59,557 free people of color and an additional 697,624 enslaved persons. Within the next decade the number of free people of color increased to 108,435 while an enslaved population grew to 1,191,446.¹²³ As the demographics of free people of color continued to expand, white politicians reasoned that the presence of free black Americans who they considered were racially inferior, created a social nuisance and threatened the institution of slavery. Because the American republic did not have a place for free people of color, many white Americans agreed that free black Americans should be deported and resettled outside of the United States.

White leaders who promoted a separatist strategy sought to preserve America as a “white man’s land.” This chapter situates the expatriation of men and women who performed military service in exchange for freedom within a broader historical context of “black separatism.” Likewise, the endeavors achieved via “black separatism” are derived from a broader discourse surrounding schemes to colonize and strategies to separate and deport free people of color. Therefore, the ante-bellum period (1817-1861) was characterized as an era of contending concepts of: *assimilation, separation, colonization, and emigration.*

¹²³ Patrick L. Mason, ed., *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, 2nded, (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference, 2013), 129.

While some people of color considered the merits of voluntary emigration to West Africa, Canada, Haiti, and Trinidad, few were partial to colonization. When the American Colonization Society (ACS) was founded in 1816, its primary objective was “to promote and execute a plan for colonizing (with their consent) the Free People of Color residing in our Country, in Africa, or such other place as Congress shall deem most expedient.”¹²⁴ It was a position condemned by many black leaders and communities. Critics considered colonization to be a scheme for mass deportation deployed by slave-owners in an attempt to rid themselves of free blacks and consolidate slavery. In addition, those opposed to colonization provided a platform to openly reject American racial inequality and slavery. The arguments used to advance strategies for separation and colonization, however, help to clarify the social and political conditions that motivated some free black Americans to accept offers of emigration and resettlement in the British West Indies.

As the ideology of white colonization was solidified by the founding of the American Colonization Society, it simultaneously fostered the creation of a black protest tradition that was connected to an emigration platform. Not only did this emigration ideology attempt to challenge assertions of African inferiority that were circulated by white intellectuals and political leaders, but it also enabled black Americans to advocate for their dignity and their rights as humans. It was through anti-colonization agitation that black Americans endeavored to acquire fertile soil abroad, and organize against the institution of slavery. The protest discourse that opposed colonization bonded black Americans in an effort to uplift themselves, and ultimately inspired several emigration movements, which includes Haiti’s emigration initiative in the 1820s. Thus, an examination of the rhetoric of colonization and emigration helps to further understanding the

¹²⁴ Philip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization after Emancipation*, (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2011), 8-9; *The American Colonization Society*, 1842, Vol. 18., page 101.

transnational journeys of black Americans as they fought against slavery and racial oppression. This chapter historicizes the evolution of colonization and clarifies the ideological differences and contours of both colonization and emigration.

After the Revolutionary War, white supremacy remained at the forefront of the new republic. Black Americans continued to face discrimination and exclusion, such that free people of color in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia were systemically denied access to economic opportunities that would allow them to achieve social and political mobility. Even as whites in New England attempted to distance themselves from slavery, many used a variety of methods to force black Americans into segregated communities and eventually out of the United States. In turn, colonization emerged as a mechanism to remove people of color and whiten the American landscape. Historian Joanne Pope Melish maintains that whites utilized a two pronged approach to justify colonization. By deploying symbolic representations as both “threatening” and “absurd,” white politicians strategically maligned black Americans. Next, white leaders scrutinized specific episodes of social conflict and violence within black communities to justify racial oppression.¹²⁵ An unwavering desire to protect America as a “pure white” nation evoked expressions of individual acts of terror and violence aimed at driving black Americans from specific neighborhoods and communities.¹²⁶

In response to the continual degradation and the structured segregation of American colonization, an early form of grass-roots emigrationism emerged at the turn of the nineteenth

¹²⁵ Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Global Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 2-4.

¹²⁶ The imposition of racial exclusion through targeted racism and violence coincided with state issued mandates that denied black Americans access to education along with several other social and economic rights. Historian Leonard Richards contends that whites eagerly embraced colonization as an expression of white supremacy through racial violence. Leonard L. Richard, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*. (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1970), 29-30.

century. With prominent politicians and statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson and Henry Clay emphasizing the racial inferiority of free people of color, their rhetoric affirmed perceptions of difference, and served to solidify the opinion that assimilation between races was not possible. While whites with humanistic and religious views were more sympathetic, they were nonetheless confronted with a moral dilemma. As British Historian, Nicholas Guyatt, contextualizes the ideological premise along with the merits posed by anti-slavery activists who turned to the deportation of black Americans to West Africa as a plausible solution to achieve racial separatism.¹²⁷ Guaytt’s discussion of the colonization movement is grounded on the premise that southern slave-holders would be more inclined to manumit their slaves, provided that the manumitted populations would not remain in Chesapeake Bay region as free people. And even though Guyatt concedes that arguments against intermarriage were “wearily and reactive” statements vocalized within in a “climate of violence,” the cultural landscape of American opposed racial amalgamation above all else.¹²⁸

With the center of his discussion of the colonization movement surrounding William Lloyd Garrison, who broke with colonizationists and briefly chronocles how Garrison spent the next four decades on a quest to denounce the American Colonization Society as a ploy by slave-holders to remove troublesome free blacks while simultaneously strengthening the institution of slavery, Guaytt’s analyses demonstrates just how powerful the momentum was behind schemes to colonize free people of color. In the face of American racism, equality seemed irredeemable. In turn, a substantial number of black Americans chose not to struggle, but simply to leave.

Samuel Hopkins & William Thornton—the Early Precepts of Colonization

¹²⁷ Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation*, (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 12.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

An exploration of the origins of colonization rhetoric provides a foreground to better understand why several black Americans embraced a discourse of emigration. To them, emigration functioned as a mechanism to fight against American racism as well as represent an opportunity to obtain the dignity and self-respect offered by land ownership outside of the United States. Reverend Samuel D. Hopkins, of the First Congregational Church of Newport, Rhode Island was one of the earliest advocates for colonization. In the 1770s, Hopkins envisioned the establishment of a religious colony in West Africa. A zealous advocate of Christian morality, Hopkins played a pivotal role in facilitating a religious revival of Protestant orthodoxy in New England theology.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, Hopkins emerged as one of the first American abolitionists to condemn the African slave trade and the institution of slavery in America. Hopkins characterized the widespread brutalities of slavery and the slave trade as a “moral evil,” and argued that their continuation would ultimately tarnish America’s image as a beacon for civil and religious liberty.

Even though Newport operated as a central slave trading market for Rhode Island, Hopkins vehemently opposed slavery. In his sermons, Hopkins criticized the depravity and deplorable conditions of American slavery. Hopkins maintained a close adherence to the doctrine of benevolence, an earnest belief that Christian fulfillment could be derived from the process of spreading the Christian gospel, along with a self-motivated desire to ameliorate the conditions of human suffering. His religious beliefs coincided with a literal interpretation of John IV: 16, “God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” In Hopkins’s opinion, to exercise benevolence was to behave in accordance with God’s nature. By defining benevolence not as a grace, or a religious attribute, but rather a disposition derived from an inner

¹²⁹ Stanley K. Schultz, “The Making of a Reformer: The Reverend Samuel Hopkins as an Eighteenth Century Abolitionist,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 115, No. 5 (Oct. 15, 1971), 2.

holiness and essence, Hopkins re-conceptualized the essence of benevolence.¹³⁰ The act of benevolence he mentioned, was an expression of God and his moral nature. Therefore, Hopkins' sermons promoted the gradual abolition of slavery, as a means of rectifying its inhumanity.¹³¹ Hopkins's practice of personal piety along with his passion for social reform laid the ground work for his proposal for the deportation of free black Americans to Africa. As Hopkins deepened his convictions towards emancipation, he deployed the principles of natural rights philosophy to buttress his arguments for abolition.

With the assistance of a fellow cleric, Ezra Stiles, of the Second Congregational Church in Newport, Hopkins was able to raise funds for two former slaves, Bristo Yamma and John Quamine, to receive religious training at Princeton College in preparation for a missionary trip to Africa in 1776. Hopkins believed that by transporting free people of color to Africa civilization and religious enlightenment would be successfully effected. In that same year, Hopkins proposed another plan for colonization that moved beyond his initial appeal for a benevolent and religious colonization project. Influenced by fellow opponents of slavery, including William Thornton, Hopkins revised his initial plan. In addition to his original assertion that the resettlement of black Americans in Africa would serve to edify native Africans and help with the spread of a Christian gospel, Hopkins' now believed that the creation of an African colony could benefit American trade interests. More importantly, Hopkins claimed that an African colonization settlement would provide free people of color with an opportunity to practice the act of self-government.¹³²

¹³⁰ William Patten, *Reminiscences of the Late Reverend Samuel Hopkins, D.D.*, (Boston, 1843), 64-66.

¹³¹ Oliver Wendell Elsbree, "Samuel Hopkins and His Doctrine of Benevolence," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Dec., 1935), 8.; John Ferguson, *Memoir of the Life and Character of Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D.D.* (New York, NY: John P. Haven, 1830), 82-83.

¹³² Henry Sherwood, "Early Negro Deportation Projects," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, II (March, 1916), 494-495.

Despite his many efforts, Hopkins' vision of colonization did not come to fruition at the time of his death in 1803.

Almost simultaneously, the British established the colony of Sierra Leone on the western coast of Africa as a "catchall colonization destination" to deposit free people of color who settled in Britain following the American Revolution. A contemporary of Hopkins, Dr. William Thornton, also articulated the merits of a racial separation. Born in the British Virgin Islands, Thornton went on to become an architect and physician. By 1785, however, Thornton inherited his family's West Indian plantation and slaves. A devout Quaker, Thornton was strongly opposed to the institution of slavery, and was confronted with the dilemma as to how to dispose of his enslaved property. In an effort to address his dilemma and demonstrate a keen sense of economic astuteness, Thornton devised a plan for removing, emancipating, and colonizing seventy of his slaves in a way that would be profitable, humane, and would adhere to his religious beliefs.

Aware that issuing manumission to a large group could potentially incite rebellion, Thornton devised a plan for the deportation and resettlement of his slaves in Africa. Thornton sought to secure an area of land in Africa that would allow him to create a colony, "a Community [that] would increase rapidly, and as any province is rich only by the number of its Inhabitants such a settlement would doubtless soon acquire an immense property." Thornton intended the African colony to operate as a small plantation society in which emancipated slaves, "would annually be rescued from the most oppressive slavery, or Death, would be adopted into a Family of Peace on Earth, and taught Doctrines of Him, the King of Kings who has promised peace to his followers, in Heaven."¹³³ Thornton envisioned the expansion of a self-governing and

¹³³ Gaillard Hunt, "William Thornton and Negro Colonization," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 30 (April, 1920), 47; According to historian, David Brion Davis, the dehumanizing tactics of

prosperous colony in which free people of color could successfully elevate and improve their social, economic, and religious conditions.

Working as indentured servants until such time that they would be able to purchase their freedom, Thornton believed that the profits from agricultural production and trade would allow indentured black colonists to “buy out the slave trade.” Thornton felt that the price offered indentured black colonists to purchase their freedom would greatly surpass the price that a slave trader could receive for a slave in any other slave market in the Western hemisphere. Thornton hypothesized that over time, colonization and indentured labor would ultimately bring the slave trade to an end.¹³⁴

In Thornton’s opinion, a colony in Africa would provide a new frontier for free people of color to escape the oppression and discrimination of American slavery. Traveling throughout the eastern United States, Thornton shared his vision with others and his efforts to convince black Americans to support his endeavor to establish a colony in Africa. He reassured those to whom he spoke that his colony would develop into an independent black nation. In his address to a Philadelphia assembly, Thornton described his proposal as one in which:

The Blacks who form this Settlement should be a free and Independent People, governed by their own election. Their Ports would be open to trade with the whole World, whereby they would have the advantage of procuring everything at the cheapest rate, which would not be the case where the settlement monopolized as a dependent colony, by any power either of Europe or America; but it is imagined the

slavery ultimately led to an “animalization” of enslaved people that ultimately “severed ties of human identity and empathy.” Davis contends that specific animal references demonstrate how enslaved persons were worked, beaten, and sold allowed many white abolitionists to eventually embrace a rhetoric of animalization that envisioned colonization as the only viable way to end slavery. While this animalization discourse helps to contextualize experiences of racial oppression by black Americans, it also illuminates justifications for black emigration. For those black Americans who sought equity and citizenship, emancipation required that they reject this premise and demonstrate their ability to perform as free people of color within American society; David Brion Davis, *The Problem in the Age of Emancipation*, (New York: Vintage, 2015), 9.

¹³⁴ Hunt, “William Thornton and Negro Colonization,” 47.

Slave Trade will be soon abolished, and that the Europeans and Americans will - operate in the establishment of this laudable undertaking.¹³⁵

Even though he was successful garnering interest and support for a modest number of free people of color to participate in the establishment of a colony in Africa, Thornton failed to secure transportation for the voyage and acquire the land necessary for the colonial settlement.

Nevertheless, Thornton's personal failings did not deter him from continuing to share his interest in a separatist strategy. In a personal letter addressed to Henry Clay, a founding member of the American Colonization Society in 1816, Thornton praised Clay and offered him his support in achieving the society's overarching objective. Thornton encouraged Clay to consider incorporating a trade venture into the goals of the Society and establishing the colony as a separate black country:

Public schools & places of worship should be established...for when the surrounding Nations of Africa now wrapt in miserable ignorance should incline to join their emancipated brethren they would find them truly emancipated—not from the chains of slavery alone, but from the thralldom of mind...Thus would slavery, the darkest stain on Christian Professors, be finally rendered subservient to the work of heaven & the poor Africans be in a manner repaid for the long suffering of their unhappy children. The wilderness would flourish in Arts, Agriculture & Science, their ports would be open to the whole world, the Native African would be taught the principles of Christianity & be happy; thus millions of unnumbered in singing hallelujahs to our God, would bless the children of the West.¹³⁶

Hopkins and Thornton represent the separatist strategies and interests of early colonization advocates. Together, their rhetoric exemplified a combination of missionary zeal, religious benevolence, white supremacy, and economic trade endeavors—both directly and indirectly controlled by the government of the United States. Hopkins and Thornton envisioned their African colony to be a deterrent to the institution of slavery. Their views also reflected a growing universal sentiment of the ante-bellum period, one in which the United States was seen as exclusively a white man's land. Ahead of their time, theirs was a solution to address both the problem of slavery and the presence of free people of color. In the two decades after Hopkins

¹³⁵ Hunt., 48.

¹³⁶ Hunt., 60.

and Thornton, leading American intellectuals and statesmen turned to other schemes for colonizing free people of color.

Paul Cuffe's Plans for Emigration

In the midst of the chaos and frustration of black Americans' struggle for equality, Paul Cuffe insisted on the feasibility of emigration to Africa. Born on January 17, 1759 on Cuttyhunk Island, off the southern coast of Massachusetts, Paul Cuffe was the seventh of ten children of Kofi Slocum, a former Ashanti slave from Ghana and Ruth Moss, an Aquinnah Wampanoag native woman from the Gay Head cliffs region of Massachusetts.¹³⁷ While Cuffe's father was enslaved he converted to Christianity and was later granted manumission. While perusing employment as a fisherman, carpenter, and farmer, Kofi married Ruth in 1746, and purchased a 116 acre farm in Westport, Massachusetts.¹³⁸ In turn, Cuffe's birth represented a multi-racial union between two individuals marginalized by American society.

Even with a limited formal education, Cuffe spent the vast majority of his youth working on his father's farm. When his father passed away when he was just thirteen, Cuffe assumed the burden of looking after both family and his family's farm. While the farm provided sustenance to meet the immediate needs of his family, the farm did not intellectually stimulate him or provide him with the financial income he desired. Following in his father's footsteps Cuffe along with his brother, David, pursued careers in ship building. Cuffe's training as a mariner laid the foundation for his later success as a ship operator and maritime business owner. Beginning at the age of

¹³⁷ Sheldon H. Harris, *Paul Cuffe: Black America and the African Return*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), 15; Paul Waker, "Captain Paul Cuffe (1759-1817): Nineteenth-century African American Seafarer and Entrepreneur," *Black Theology*, Vol. 13 No. 3, November, 2015, 221.

¹³⁸ <https://howafrica.com/meet-paul-cuffee-the-black-millionaire-who-helped-resettle-freed-american-slaves-in-sierra-leone/>

sixteen, he sailed aboard several fishing vessels throughout the Gulf of Mexico.¹³⁹ Cuffe garnered additional sailing experience aboard cargo ships that plied trade between New England and the West Indies. During his third voyage in 1776, the vessel that Cuffe was employed on was captured by a British crew, and he was imprisoned in British New York for three months. Despite the hardship of imprisonment and pirate attacks, Cuffe returned to Westport, Massachusetts and embarked on another voyage to the West Indies which furthered his training in navigation and business acumen.¹⁴⁰ Cuffe continuously invested in larger vessels, and by 1800 he was successful in amassing a small fortune as he maneuvered around racial obstacles and negotiated commercial shipping agreements. Through his business proceedings, Cuffe was determined to “undermine the beliefs that Black people were lazy, mentally incapable and licentious, for he, himself, was scrupulously sober, industrious and well-mannered.”¹⁴¹

Cuffe’s religious sensibilities were also shaped by his Christian faith. He became a Quaker in 1808, and through his intellectual prowess, piety, zeal, and religious sermons Cuffe rose to a position of great prominence in Massachusetts. The Quaker’s emphasis on personal sacrifice, service to humankind and their growing involvement in the abolition movement that quite possibly influenced Cuffe’s sensibility towards alleviating the suffering of enslaved people in the United States. This concern evolved into a mission for rescuing enslaved people by removing them from the United States and establishing a homeland for them in West Africa.

From Cuffe’s perspective, emigration would provide an escape for individual free blacks who felt stifled by American prejudice and racism, provide an opportunity for emigrants to share Christianity, and create a settlement community that could undermine the slave trade. Cuffe also

¹³⁹ P.C. and F.L. McKissack, *Black Hands, White Sails: The Story of African-American Whalers*, (New York: Scholastic Press, 1999), 32-39.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Waker, “Captain Paul Cuffe (1759-1817),” 221.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 222.; McKissack, *Black Hands*, 20.

believed that a West African colony would facilitate a process of racial redemption, allowing black Americans to “civilize” Africans and help raise native Africans to western standards of greatness. Cuffe’s deepened conviction about the redemptive potential of Africa was in the words of historian Sheldon Harris, a “personal crusade.”¹⁴² Cuffe’s crusade inspired him to survey potential regions for settlement, to lay down Christian roots, and initiate an economic initiative against the slave trade. Cuffe’s trips to West Africa encouraged black leaders to consider the efficacy of emigration from the United States in the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

During his first trip to the British colony of Sierra Leone in 1811, Cuffe began to consider how the process of emigration could potentially eradicate slave trade. “I have for these many years past felt a lively interests in their behalf,” Cuffe recalled, “wishing that the inhabitants of the colony might become established in the truth, and thereby be instrumental in its promotion amongst our African brethren.” According to one particular account, “it was these sentiments that first influenced...[him]...to visit [his] friends in this colony.”¹⁴³ Even though Cuffe stated that his first trip to Sierra Leone was not meant to encourage a large scale exodus of black Americans to West Africa, he admittedly acknowledged that he hoped to create a settlement community in which missionaries would be able to evangelize, and spread the Christian gospel to native Africans who practiced non-western religions. More importantly, Cuffe believed that a settlement of black Americans would also promote racial uplift and “redemption,” which he felt was closely entwined with the spread of Christianity. A well-orchestrated settlement would inevitably prioritize trade in commodities over the trade in slaves,

¹⁴²Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 37-39.

¹⁴³ Paul Cuffe, *A Brief Account of the Statement and Present Situation of the Colony of Sierra Leone in Africa*. (Kraus Reprint, 1970), 3-4.

and would thereby encourage the creation of alternative sources of wealth. In like fashion, Cuffe anticipated that whaling could also provide Africans living in Sierra Leone with a significant boost to the colony's economy.¹⁴⁴ The trade of agricultural products and manufactured commodities between West Africa, Europe, and America would also undermine the economic viability of slave trading.¹⁴⁵ Carrying official letters of recommendation from a group of Quakers from Westport, Massachusetts, Cuffe departed for his second trip to Sierra Leone.¹⁴⁶

When Cuffe arrived, the British authorities amicably greeted him. But they were growing suspicious that Cuffe's plan for black emigration would threaten their authority. They also recognized that Cuffe could potentially exploit Sierra Leone's economic interests.¹⁴⁷ Having already visited and observed the colony's commercial activities, Cuffe considered Sierra Leone to be a suitable site for his settlement of black Americans. In one of his journal entries, Cuffe exclaimed, "I have cause to rejoice in having found many who are inclined to listen and attend to the precepts of our holy religion." Even though there were certain aspects of Sierra Leone's social hierarchy that concerned him, this second trip only reaffirmed his desire to promote emigration to West Africa.

Religious salvation was central to Cuffe's plans. Believing that Christian salvation was connected to the broader struggle against slavery, Cuffe garnered support from members of the African Institution in Sierra Leone, British abolitionists who were successful in ending the slave trade in Great Britain's colonial territories. In another journal entry, he acknowledged the overarching principles that both he and the African Institution shared, "...we feel from an awful

¹⁴⁴ Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 53.

¹⁴⁵ Lamont D. Thomas, *Rise to Be a People: A Bibliography of Paul Cuffe*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 45.

¹⁴⁶ Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 50.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, *Rise to Be a People*, 51.

experience the distress that many of our African brethren groan under. Therefore we feel our minds engaged to desire all of the sain[t]s and professors in Christ, to diligently consider our cause, and to put our cause to the Christian query, whether it is agreeable to the testimony of Jesus Christ for one professor to make merchandise of another. We desire that this may be made manifest to all professors of all Christian denominations who have not abolished the holding of another.”¹⁴⁸ These shared sentiments not only ignited Cuffe’s enthusiasm, they also reassured him that his emigration plan would also receive support from people within the colony.

Immediately upon his return to London in May of 1811, Cuffe began to solicit financial support for his emigration plan. He wanted to recruit allies who could help his vision of a settlement to fruition. British audiences, including abolitionists groups, eagerly embraced Cuffe as he shared his reflections on Sierra Leone. The British chapter of the African Institution convened a special session to hear directly from Cuffe as to why he felt that Sierra Leone would be the best location for his settlement.

Cuffe successfully received the endorsement of Thomas Clarkson, a British abolitionist, and the Duke of Gloucester, among others, who agreed to work with him. Even though Cuffe struggled to secure all of the financing he needed, his tour of London was not a failure. The process of discussing his emigration plans and soliciting support demonstrated the importance of maintaining a clear long-term plan for African empowerment and the emigration of black Americans.¹⁴⁹ Next, Cuffe successfully secured a trading license with the backing of several British policy-makers including the African Institution.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Cuffe, *A Brief Account of the Settlement and Present Situation of the Colony of Sierra Leone*, 10.

¹⁴⁹ Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 31.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas, *Rise to Be a People*, 64.

On September 20, 1811, Cuffe departed England for Freetown, Sierra Leone. During this third trip, Cuffe identified industries that could be refined for economic development, and established The Friendly Society of Sierra Leone with the support of a Methodist congregation in Freetown. The Friendly Society sought to provide the infrastructure and commercial contacts needed to facilitate trade among newly arrived black Americans. The Friendly Society hoped that black American merchants would not be reliant upon English merchants who primarily dominated trade relations along the western coast of Africa. With the support of an English benefactor, William Allen, Cuffe used Allen's generous donation of £70 and Thomas Clarkson's assistance to orchestrate exports from Sierra Leone to Britain. In turn, Cuffe was equipped to lay the building blocks for a black-owned cooperative venture in preparation for his return to the United States in February of 1812.¹⁵¹ His next phase was to recruit a group of skilled and venturesome black Americans to participate in the settlement.¹⁵²

As Cuffe embarked on his recruitment tour of the United States, he was not prepared for the chaos and disruption that ensued. Cuffe's vessel was seized by American federal authorities for violating a ban on imported British goods. Frustrated and distraught, Cuffe made a direct appeal to the Secretary of Commerce and President James Madison in Washington, D.C. In his appeal to Albert Gallatin, the Secretary of the Treasury, Cuffe attempted to explain the circumstances under which his vessel was seized. While it is quite possible that Gallatin was more intrigued by Cuffe's experiences in Africa, he did nothing to address Cuffe's problem. However, President Madison was successfully able to intervene to help Cuffe retrieve his vessel. Even though he did not explicitly endorse Cuffe's plans for the emigration of black Americans to

¹⁵¹ Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 57; Miller, *The Search for Black Nationality*, 31.

¹⁵² Miller, *The Search for Black Nationality*, 33

Africa, Madison would later sympathetically align himself with the American Colonization Society (ACS), and work to support a similar initiative aimed at eliminating slave trading along the western coast of Africa.¹⁵³ With the outbreak of the War of 1812, Congress was unwilling to approve any trade agreement with England.

Once Gallatin and Madison became aware of the circumstances that led to the seizure of Cuffe's vessel, they both acknowledged that Cuffe had not intentionally violated the United States ban on trading with the enemy. With his vessel back in his possession, Cuffe was able to resume his endeavor of recruiting free black Americans to participate in his emigration project. Sending letters to various leaders of the African Institution in New York and Boston, Cuffe hoped to garner financial support.¹⁵⁴

It is important to connect Cuffe's emigration project with broader concerns for black Americans enslaved throughout the southern United States. As historian Floyd Miller points out, a federally funded colony would provide white southerners with the option of emancipating their slaves, which as Cuffe feared could precipitate a bloody insurrection that would ultimately lead to a massive race war in the south. The ramifications of the Haitian Revolution still being felt across the Atlantic, a race war in the south seemed inevitable to many.¹⁵⁵ The creation of an African colony could alleviate this possibility as well as end the harsh brutalities and oppression of American slavery. Cuffe also floated the idea of a second settlement somewhere in a western part of the United States. He wrote to his friend, James Forten: "...I have suggested the settling of 2 colonies, 1 in the United States, and the other in Africa."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 56-60.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵⁶ Paul Cuffe to James Forten, March 1, 1817, see Appendix in Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 249.

In January of 1814, Cuffe petitioned President James Madison, the House of Representatives, and Congress requesting federal support for travel to Africa. In it he outlined his hopes for “civilizing” Africa and spreading Christianity. He also justified his belief that a black American colony near Sierra Leone would undermine the slave trade, which had been banned in the United States in 1808. He estimated that all raw materials and goods exported from Africa to the United States would help to cover the costs of his emigration plan.

On January 7, the United States Senate voted 18 to 6 in favor of a bill to support Cuffe’s plans. The bill, however, faced substantial opposition from the House of Representatives. Proponents of Cuffe’s plan emphasized the potential benefits of American colonization in West Africa; opponents felt that Cuffe could not act without the approval of Congress. Ultimately the bill failed to pass the House. Cuffe’s defeat did not dissuade him from continuing his mission. Despite the rejection of Congress, Cuffe continued his pursuit of black emigration. Utilizing some of his own resources, Cuffe financed the transportation of thirty-eight free black Americans to Sierra Leone in 1815. Cuffe had achieved the first successful removal and resettlement of emancipated black Americans.¹⁵⁷ Even though Cuffe was unable to relocate a large number of free blacks, his advocacy for emigration attracted the attention of several prominent black community leaders and fostered a relationship with Reverend Robert Finley, a founding member of the American Colonization Society.

Cuffe would later hold meetings with white philanthropists which would lay the groundwork for what would become the American Colonization Society (ACS). Yet, unlike the supporters of colonization, Cuffe envisioned the formation of an entirely black-led emigration movement that could be achieved by the creation of a black nation in Africa, as a means of

¹⁵⁷ Henry Sherwood, “Paul Cuffe,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 8, (April, 1923), 153-229.

sharing the benefits of “civilization” and “Christianity” with Africa. When Reverend Robert Finley, a minister from Basking Ridge, New Jersey, wrote to Paul Cuffe concerning his efforts to gather support for African Colonization in December of 1816, Cuffe expressed interest. Finley’s vision for African Colonization, however, differed from Cuffe’s. Finley’s was a “benevolent” (and fundamentally paternalistic) endeavor which aimed to banish black Americans, who be deemed unable to rise to a level of middle-class respectability. Even though Cuffe’s initial response to Finley’s plan for colonization was favorable, believing that hand-in-hand emigration and colonization could place black Americans in a position to challenge the slave trade and undermine slavery in America Cuffe died before the formation of the ACS. Yet, perhaps if Cuffe had lived to witness the ACS’s plans, he may have changed his opinion.

Finley petitioned the New Jersey legislature for support for the colonization of freedmen because of the “...degraded situation in which those who have been freed from slavery remain; and from a variety of considerations will probably remain while they continue among whites.”¹⁵⁸ Even as Finley gathered support for African colonization from others in New Jersey, the *Niles Weekly Register* reported that “At a meeting held in Princeton, New Jersey, on November 6, 1816, at which col Ercuries Beatty presided, and James S. Green, seq. officiated as secretary, it was resolved, that a committee of five be appointed to obtain signatures to a memorial to the legislature of this state, praying them to “use their influence with the national legislature” to adopt some plan for colonizing the “free blacks.” Immediately following, Finley published his petition, “TO THE HONORABLE THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW JERSEY” outlining his plan for colonizing free black Americans to regions outside of the United States.

¹⁵⁸ *Niles Weekly Register*, December 14, 1818; Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 231.

Finley believed that colonization provided the only means for “uplifting” and “ameliorating” the conditions of black Americans. He maintained that “the great desire of those whose minds are impressed with this subject is to give an opportunity to the free people of color to rise to their proper level, and at the same time to provide a powerful means of putting an end to the slave trade, and sending civilization and Christianity to Africa.” Finley’s correspondences with Cuffe initially expressed a desire to improve the plight of black Americans, whose conditions, he believed, worsened as more unskilled black workers moved from southern to northern cities. In another correspondence with Cuffe, Finley stated: “Many indulge a hope that could be more virtuous and industrious for our free people of color to be removed to the coast of Africa, with their own consent.” As Finley saw it, black Americans would “carry with them their arts, their industry, and above all, their knowledge of Christianity and the fear of God” to a “dark” land in an effort to spread Christianity such that the lasting benefits would help elevate those who considered emigrating to Africa.¹⁵⁹

More importantly, Finley’s sentiments on race were likely shaped by an “environmentalist” view of racial difference that was prevalent during the Revolutionary Era. According to this belief, black Americans were continuously degraded by the conditions of slavery, discrimination, and an inaccessibility to education that ultimately rendered blacks inferior to whites. In turn, this particular perspective of race were predicated on the practice of racial science which emphasized the biological superiority of whites. By the mid-nineteenth century, these beliefs in racial determinism were used to defend slavery.¹⁶⁰ As he continued to raise funds for his deportation and colonization plans, Finley and his supporters were all in

¹⁵⁹ Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 232.

¹⁶⁰ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1971), 2, 4-6.

agreement that black Americans could become “civilized,” only if they were removed from the United States.

The American Colonization Society and Anti-Colonization Protest

The first meeting of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States was held on the 21st of December, 1816 at the Davis Hotel in Washington, D.C. The organization which became popularly known as the American Colonization Society (ACS), sought to achieve three primary objectives: first, to create a “haven for free blacks whose continued presence in the United States was seen as posing insoluble problems of civic and social integration;” second, to promote “‘civilization’ and Christianity in Africa through their presence there;” and third, “to develop receiving stations for enslaved Africans taken from vessels illegally transporting them on the high seas.”¹⁶¹ The inaugural meeting attracted white political leaders and intellectuals who maintained varying opinions on how to address “the slavery question,” and who were residents in different parts of the United States. Founding member, Robert Finley was joined by U.S. Congressman, Henry Clay; Elias Boudinot Caldwell, clerk of the Supreme Court; Richard Rush, attorney general; General Andrew Jackson; and Francis Scott Key among others. Elias Caldwell, President Madison’s brother-in-law, strictly adhered to his Calvinist beliefs, and led a local Bible society in Washington, D.C. Caldwell’s charitable reputation served as a reputable connection for Finley to advance his colonization plan. Meanwhile, Francis Scott Key garnered increasing popularity from black community members in D.C. for his support of Jesse Torrey, Jr., a black physician from Philadelphia, who

¹⁶¹ Patrick L. Mason, ed., *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, 2nded, (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference, 2013), 128; P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 32-35.

sought legal redress for several blacks who had been kidnapped and enslaved. Historians have also identified Charles Mercer as a major contributor to the founding of the ACS.¹⁶² Mercer helped Virginia's General Assembly adopt a series of resolutions for the promotion of emancipation and the resettlement of black Americans outside of the United States in 1800.

After Finley convincing Caldwell and Key of the benefits of colonization, both Finley and Henry Clay discussed the religious merits of colonization. Even though Clay and Finley shared the opinion that Christian charity should be at the forefront of colonization, Clay adamantly believed that the ACS would take great strides in promoting emancipation through resettlement. Nevertheless, other proponents of colonization, like John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia, aligned themselves with Clay. Clay and Randolph among others believed that slave-owners would ultimately be elated and supportive of the ACS's mission to deport free people of color, since free blacks posed a public nuisance and threatened to destabilize the continuation of slavery.

Regional ACS chapters were soon established in New York, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Maryland, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Ohio. The members of these state chapters reasoned that removal and evangelism functioned as a humanitarian tactic as well as a mechanism to preserve American slavery. When the national board of the ACS outlined its constitution, it attempted to appeal to both anti-slavery and proslavery groups. In an effort to garner the support of humanitarians and clergymen, ACS officials continued to maintain that among their primary

¹⁶² Charles Fenton Mercer, *An Exposition of the Weakness and Inefficiency of the Government of the United States of North America*, (London: Houlston & Wright, 1863), 380; Carter G. Woodson, ed., "The Formation of the American Colonization Society," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol II., 1917; Douglas R. Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer and the Trial of National Conservatism*, (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1989).

objectives, they were committed to affording free people of color “unfettered freedom” and to promote “Christianity” and American “civilization.”

The ACS sought to convince the free and enslaved people to participate in colonization. Many found the colonization platform unacceptable. James Forten, a wealthy black dry-dock owner in Philadelphia, and Reverend Richard Allen of the AME Church, for example, rejected the prevailing belief that the United States was strictly a “white man’s land,” and sought to demonstrate that black Americans were deserving of an equal place within the American body politic.

Even though most black Americans immediately regarded Finley and all of those associated with the ACS as racist and disingenuous, Paul Cuffe was convinced by Finley’s sincerity. After Finley sent Cuffe a letter outlining his plans for colonization, Cuffe wrote directly to James Forten, to share his perspective on the ACS: “I have lately received a letter from a gentleman in the city of Washington announcing to me the concern that rests at the seat of the government for the welfare of the people of color. I have answered him thereto, informing [him] at the same time of the African Institute in Philadelphia, New York, etc. in order that a correspondence might be opened with them in which they may become useful to their fellow citizens.”¹⁶³

Forten seemed partial to Cuffe’s views of the ACS’s program. At first they were supportive of the ACS. In a speech addressed to community members in Philadelphia in January of 1817, Finley recounted Forten’s assertions:

He [Forten] gave it as his decided opinion that Africa was the proper place for a colony. He observed to those present, that should they settle anywhere in the vicinity of the whites, their condition must become before many years as it

¹⁶³ Paul Cuffe to James Forten, January 8 1817, in Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 237. Cuffe wrote directly to Forten to express his interest in the American Colonization Society and share Finley’s rationale.

now is, since the white population is continually rolling back, and ere long they must be encompassed again with whites.¹⁶⁴

According to Finley's account, Forten expressed warm words in favor of the ACS Colonization, Finley applauded Forten's efforts to encourage prominent black community leaders and free people of color to support Colonization. Reverend Richard Allen also supported the movement at the same gathering. Finley highlighted specific pieces of Allen's speech, recounting that "[Allen] spoke with warmth...declaring that [if he] were young he would go himself [to Africa]." Speaking about the advantages of colonization and about Paul Cuffe's endeavors, "he [Allen] considered the present plan of colonization as holding out great advantages for the backs who are now young."¹⁶⁵ Even though Forten articulated his support for the newly formed society in 1817, going as far as to even urge black community members in Philadelphia to participate in the ACS's colonization scheme, his opinion towards colonization would later change. Both men would re-examine the veracity of the ACS and acknowledged the racist premise of its scheme. Forten and Allen would soon abandon their support of the ACS's plans.

Together, Forten and Allen hoped to mobilize an anti-colonization movement that would force white Americans to accept blacks as equals. Only when complete equality was achieved between the races could blacks be granted equal social and political rights. A profound sense of racial duty and unity between free and enslaved black Americans coalesced in the first anti-colonization meeting in Philadelphia in 1818. Blacks in Philadelphia turned the logic of colonization on its head by claiming that, "...We never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering...and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering deprivations [sic] with them, than

¹⁶⁴ William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization: or an Impartial Exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles & Purposes of the American Colonization Society*, (Boston, 1832), Part II, v.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vii.

fancied advantages for a season.”¹⁶⁶ They rejected the “fancied advantages” derived from participating in the deportation and colonial project in West Africa.

After witnessing the rejection of the ACS’s scheme by the 3,000 who met in Philadelphia, Forten wrote to Cuffe:

Indeed, the people of color here was[sic] very much frightened. At first they were afraid that all the free people would be compelled to go, particularly [those] in the southern states...there was not one soul that was in favor of going to Africa. They think the slave-holders want to get rid of them so as to make their property more secure...My opinion is that they [black Americans] will never become a people until they com[sic] out from amongst the white people...¹⁶⁷

Forten explained the underlying fear and anxiety of black communities to the potential threat of compulsory colonization. His reflections on this first protest also suggests that once black Americans began to perceive colonization as a uniquely “white” endeavor, not orchestrated with the explicit purpose of protecting or enhancing the interests of free people of color that black communities in mass would stand in vehement opposition to the ACS’s plans.

Nevertheless, Forten struggled to rally support from members of the black community for Cuffe’s vision. Cuffe’s emigration plan and friendship with Finley was considered to be too closely associated with white colonization rhetoric. In another letter to Cuffe, Forten expressed a deep sense of regret about the negative views of his peers: “My opinion is that they will never become a people until they come out from amongst the white people. But as the majority is decidedly against me, I am determined to remain silence, except as to my opinion which I freely give as asked.”¹⁶⁸ Despite remaining publically silent about his reactions to the colonization scheme, Forten’s personal communications indicated a nod towards a separatist strategy, one in which blacks would be in control of the conditions of their emigration from the United States. Cuffe’s response to Forten on March 1, 1817, conveys his disappointment with the lack of

¹⁶⁶ Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*, Part II, 9-10.

¹⁶⁷ James Forten to Paul Cuffe, January 25, 1817, in Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 244.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

support from black Philadelphians. He explained: “I have been asked the question again and again concerning colonizing free people of color but it is quite useless to give thee my opinion on the subject when works speak louder than words...If the free people of color would exert themselves more and more in industry and honesty, it would be a great help towards the liberating of those who still remain in bondage.”¹⁶⁹

In addition to the fear that colonization evoked, black Americans also opposed the negative stereotypes that whites circulated about Africa. If Africa was “savage” and “barbaric,” many blacks wondered just how the creation of a black American nation outside of the United States could tangibly weaken or undermine the slave trade.¹⁷⁰ While a significant number of the ACS’s leaders were also slave-owners, the ACS did offer frustrated blacks the opportunity to begin a new life in a land where free people of color would not be burdened by their race. Nevertheless, Cuffe continued to promote emigration and to support the ACS even as his peers condemned the ACS as fundamentally racist.

Shortly after the adoption of its constitution in January of 1817, the same coalition of anti-colonizationists forged a convention that outlined a series of resolutions in direct opposition to the ACS. The resolutions reflected a deep seated frustration with the disingenuous motives of American colonization. The convention resolved the following:

Whereas our ancestors (not of choice) were the first successful cultivators of the wilds of America, we their descendants feel ourselves entitled to participate in the blessings of her luxuriant soil, which their blood and sweat manured; and that any measure or system of measures, having a tendency to banish us from her bosom, would not only be cruel, but in direct violation of those principles, which have been the boast of this republic.

Resolved, that we view with deep abhorrence the unmerited stigma attempted to be cast upon the reputation of the free people of color, by the promoters of this measure, “that they are a dangerous and useless part of the community,” when

¹⁶⁹ Paul Cuffe to James Forten, March 1, 1817, in Harris, *Paul Cuffe*, 244.

¹⁷⁰ Julie Winch, *Philadelphia’s Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988), 36-37.

in the state of disfranchisement in which they live, in the hour of danger they ceased to remember their wrongs, and rallied around the standard of their country.

Resolved, that we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them than fancied advantages for a reason.

Resolved, that without art, without science, without a proper knowledge of government, to cast into the savage wilds of Africa and free people of color, seems to us the circuitous route through which they must return to perceptual bondage.¹⁷¹

The first resolution reflected their sensitivity to the rhetoric of white colonization. Outspoken in their condemnation of the ACS, each resolution of the convention demonstrated a complete distrust of the ACS's benevolence and integrity. In stark opposition to the virulent rhetoric deployed by proponents of colonization to justify the removal of blacks from the United States, those meeting in Philadelphia reflected a growing opposition to colonization.

The response of black Americans to the ACS continued with the creation of several anti-colonization societies across the country. Black Americans reasoned that if the Society was successful in receiving federal assistance for their colonization scheme, achieving equity in America would be impossible. Nevertheless, ACS members presented the colonization society's proposal for deportation and colonization to Congress. In a memorial written by Bushrod Washington, a United States Supreme Court associate justice, the ACS's colonization plan was presented as an act of benevolence, Christian sentimentality, and patriotism. As historian P.J. Staudenraus recounts, the ACS's petition characterized the present state of free people of color in America as "pathetic," even as the petition attempted to emphasize the potential contributions that black Americans could provide in the "uplifting" and "civilizing" of the African continent.¹⁷² The Committee on the Slave Trade convened to discuss the ACS's petition. It debated not only the merits of the petition, but also considered to what extent should the federal

¹⁷¹ Herbert Aptheker (ed.), *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, (New York, NY: Citadel Press, 1969), 71; "A Voice From Philadelphia" January, 1817, in William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on Colonization*, 9 (Section II).

¹⁷² Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement*, 32-35.

government intervene and deal with the “human cargo” of captured slave vessels. In turn, colonization appeared to be a feasible option for the federal government to deal with the issue of “liberated Africans.” Still Congress rejected the ACS’s petition, and looked to British Sierra Leone as a possible alternative. Despite their disappointment, ACS members regrouped to decide how to restructure and resubmit their proposal for congressional approval the following year.¹⁷³

The American Colonization Society and Sherbro Island

During the two years that the American Colonization Society fundraised to finance its first voyage to Western Africa, the ACS sent two agents Samuel J. Mills and Ebenezer Burgess to survey potential locations for the creation of an American colony. On their way to Africa, Bushrod Williams encouraged them to meet first with several distinguished British philanthropists to learn more about the social and economic landscape of Sierra Leone. After acquiring the necessary information, Washington instructed Mills and Burgess to travel to Sierra Leone so that they would be prepared to “ascertain the character of the different nations or tribes on the coast...for the proper situation for the colony.”¹⁷⁴ Washington and ACS members were especially keen on Sherbo islands as a location for settlement. Thus, the ACS told Mills and Burgess to “consult with native chiefs of the different tribes...and the design which the board have in view.”¹⁷⁵

While in England, Mills and Burgess corresponded with ACS leadership, explaining that “His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, Patron and President of the African Institution, expressed his pleasure to see us at the Gloucester House, in company with Mr. Wilberforce.”

¹⁷³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Mills and Burgess went on to explain that “[the Duke of Gloucester] was much gratified with the language and spirit of our commission,” and claimed that they expected a favorable response to “the letter of the President of the American Colonization Society.” In Gloucester’s estimation, the “grand objects of the American Society, and the African Institution” were essentially one and the same. He hoped that both organizations would be able to engage in a “friendly intercourse” that would be mutually beneficial. Gloucester believed that both organization possessed an “earnest desire, that their judicious and well directed exertions might affect the entire abolition of the slave trade.” As a result, the ACS and the African Institution agreed to a plan that would contribute “to the best interests of the African race, both at home and abroad.”¹⁷⁶

After surveying a tract of land between Sherbro Island and Sierra Leone, Mills and Burgess began their return journey to Washington, D.C. Even though Mills died during his voyage home, Burgess immediately shared his observations with ACS members. He was particularly excited about sharing his success about acquiring land on Sherbro Island in the southern province of Sierra Leone. Consisting of approximately 231.66 square miles, Sherbro Island is separated from the West African main land by the northern Sherbro River and the Sherbro Strait located in the east. After the abolition of slave trade in 1808, Great Britain utilized the western coast of Sherbro Island as a naval base to monitor the Atlantic ocean for illegal slave trade vessels.

At the following ACS meeting held on January 9, 1819, its leadership proclaimed the “recent mission to Africa” a success leaving “no further room to doubt that a suitable territory, on the coast of that continent may be obtained for the contemplated colony, at less expense than

¹⁷⁶ Quotations taken as “Extracts from letters of the Rev. Mr. Mills and Mr. Burgess while in England, to the Secretary” London, January 17, 1818, reprinted in the *Second Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States*, Appendix.

had been anticipated.”¹⁷⁷ Once the prospect of surveying and acquiring land for the establishment of a colony was complete, the ACS could proceed with the process of deportation and resettlement. Samuel Mills’ surviving journal provides useful reflections on the prospects of an American colony. He was even “more convinced of the practicability and expediency of establishing American colonies on this [African] coast.”¹⁷⁸

Next, the Society initiated efforts to recruit free black Americans who would voluntarily travel to a new colony off the coast of Sierra Leone. Even though President Monroe did not directly set-aside federal funds for African colonization, the United States Congress used the Trade Act of 1819 as justification to cooperate with the ACS. With federal support, the colonization society contracted the *Elizabeth*, a three hundred ton British vessel, to transport eighty-six black Americans from New York to Sherbro Island.¹⁷⁹ The *Elizabeth*’s maiden voyage was a significant milestone in the ACS’s plans.

While many black community members continued to oppose African colonization and the ACS, others decided to embrace the Society’s cause. Daniel Coker, a Baltimore minister of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Bethel Society joined the group of black American emigrants and ACS agents to assist with the first trip to West Africa. Educated by the Methodist Episcopal Church in New York, Coker was elected the first bishop of the AME Church and became a prominent leader in his community. Coker’s professional acquaintance and personal familiarity with Paul Cuffe may have influenced his decisions to join the first settlement expedition. Coker agreed with Cuffe’s plans for black emigration, and even shared Cuffe’s vision for racial progress. As can be imagined, Coker’s alliance with the ACS in 1821 was not

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., Appendix, 6.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 67.

¹⁷⁹ Miller, *The Search for Black Nationality*, 58-61.

well received by anti-colonizationists, including Reverend Richard Allen. Nevertheless, Coker was inspired by Cuffe's vision for creating a settlement for black Americans in Western Africa and spreading the gospel.¹⁸⁰

Daniel Coker's journal entries serve as an invaluable resource in helping to understand the struggles and lived experiences of the first settlers in Sherbro Island. Even though Coker's journal chronicles his specific experiences, it also provides insight into a particular conflict that erupted early on in the colonial settlement process. When the *Elizabeth* departed from New York, Coker was deployed as the point-person and facilitator between ACS agents and black colonists. However, Coker's new role had its difficulties and he soon lost the favor of his fellow colonists. Several of the black colonists felt that Coker used his lighter skin complexion to his advantage, and others disdained the overt favoritism that ACS agents showed Coker. While Coker should not be held personally responsible for the actions of the ACS agents, the underlying tensions aboard the *Elizabeth* and in Sherbro Island were the result of circumstances beyond Coker's control. Conflict was ignited when Samuel Crozer, John Bankson, and Samuel Bacon, the three white ACS agents leading the voyage, began dictating the conditions under which the black colonists would procure land. In his role as facilitator, Coker moderated a heated debate between the black colonists and the white colonial agents, and was temporarily able to alleviate tensions between both factions.¹⁸¹

When the *Elizabeth* docked in Sierra Leone in March of 1821, Crozer, Bankson, Bacon, and the black colonists commenced their negotiations for how to approach acquiring land and governing the colony. However, the British governor refused to recognize the ACS as a legally legitimate enterprise. He insisted on speaking directly with the United States government and not

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 60.

the ACS agents. As a result, the colonists were unable to acquire land. Discouraged and frustrated, the ACS agents and colonists met with an ACS contact and Sherbro trader, John Kizell who offered to rent the group a track of land on his property in Campelar. As Kizell and the black colonists began to argue over how to limit the role of the ACS in the buying of land and the supervision of the settlement, Coker intervened, attempting once again to diffuse tensions. Despite his efforts, Coker became a scapegoat for the frustrations of the black colonists.

As the black colonists fought against disease and struggled to adjust to their new lives on Sherbro Island, they felt that Coker had abandoned them when he left for Freetown. By fleeing to Freetown, Coker prioritized his personal survival over the overarching mission of the Society. Coker recognized that without any real bargaining power, he and the other black colonists would remain vulnerable, subject to the discretion and competition interests of Kizell, British officials and the ACS leadership. Coker insisted that stability and personal agency could only be achieved when colonists acquired complete control over their own land, and clearly outlined a compact that reflected their specific interests.

In a letter from Sierra Leone, Coker attempted to garner additional support for African colonization from his peers back in the United States. Despite his criticisms, Coker revealed a sense of optimism rather than frustration about the difficult realities of reconstructing life in an unsettled region. He eagerly shared his excitement, exclaiming:

Dear brethren!—To all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, I would with pleasure inform you that I, with about 90 of our American coloured brethren, have arrived safe in Africa. We find the land to be good, and the natives kind, only those, who, from intercourse with the slave-traders, become otherwise. There is a great work here to do.¹⁸²

¹⁸² *Journal of Daniel Coker, A Descendant of Africa, From the Time of Leaving New York in the Ship of Elizabeth, Capt. Sebor. on a Voyage for Sherbro, In Africa, in Company with Three Agents and About Ninety Persons of Color, [and] Agents The Rev Samuel Bacon, John F. Bankson, and Samuel S. Crozer, with Appendix.* (Baltimore, MD: Edward J. Cole, in the aid of funds of the Maryland Auxiliary Colonization Society, 1820), a Kraus reprint in Nendeln, Switzerland, 1970.

Coker's letter reflects a sense of hopefulness. By acknowledging the safe arrival of the black colonists, Coker begins to paint a complementary characterization. Eager to participate in a noble cause and to spread Christianity, another letter however reveals a concern about the potential difficulties that lay ahead. Coker laments that, "We have had some hardships to encounter, and expect to meet with more; but on the whole I am encouraged...I hope that God will aid us; it is a dangerous attempt, I am much pleased with Africa, but I expect to suffer much."¹⁸³ Nevertheless, the ACS's settlement in Sherbro Island was short lived. Fever took the lives of several colonists. Together, the surviving colonists and ACS agents relocated to Providence Island at Cape Mesurado in April of 1822.

As the American Colonization Society's implemented its first voyage to Sherbo Island, Cuffe's vision for the emigration of black Americans evolved into a racial destiny inextricably linked to the regeneration of an entire race. A black American nation could challenge American and European hegemony. Moreover, Cuffe himself stood as a representative of black potential in direct confrontation with the ideology of white supremacy that reinforced the process of nation building, expansion, and colonization.

From Christophe to Boyer—the Plan for Haitian Emigration

Like Paul Cuffe and other black leaders of the early nineteenth century, Prince Sanders praised the independent nation of Haiti, viewing Haiti as an exemplar of African potential. This provided Africans in the African diaspora with a tangible point of reference when challenging the racist assumptions that underpinned white supremacy in the United States. In their defeat of one of the most powerful European nations, Haitians demonstrated their willingness to use any

¹⁸³ Daniel Coker to Philip E. Thomas, Baltimore, March 29, 1820, reprinted in the Journal of Daniel Coker, Kraus, reprint, 1970.

and all means necessary to obtain freedom and liberty. Such a demonstration of strength, agency, and self-determination inspired thousands of black Americans to voluntarily leave the United States and resettle in Haiti in the 1820s.¹⁸⁴

Black American leaders envisioned emigration to Haiti within nationalistic terms, which in many ways conflicted with their efforts to achieve racial equality and citizenship in the United States.¹⁸⁵ Black leaders in the north deployed a rhetorical strategy that praised Haiti as a nation of African greatness and racial unity, a means of challenging the racism of white supremacy.¹⁸⁶

An examination of Haitian emigration shows how black Americans were successfully able to demonstrate a sense of agency in the midst of the American Colonization Society's plans for mass deportation. The emigration of six thousand northern black Americans to Haiti represents the actualization of a transnational vision that combined Haitian national progress with American anti-slavery and anti-colonization advocacy. Leadership within Haiti during the early 1820s sought to encourage the development of various industries among Haitians and foreigners. Those who departed the United States for Haiti accepted a diasporic identity that allowed them to join a nation free from racial oppression. Haiti's early political leadership turned to the United States to recruit black Americans in an effort to help populate the island with both skilled labor and agricultural laborers.

¹⁸⁴ Paul Gilroy situates the Haitian Revolution within an ideological context that underscores an African diasporic identity as a "global phenomenon." Gilroy asserts that "In periodising modern black politics it will require fresh thinking about the importance of Haiti and its revolution for the development of African American political thought and movements of resistance." Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 17.

¹⁸⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the ideological infrastructure of Black Nationalism, see John Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliot E. Rudwick, *Black Nationalism in America*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Morrill Press, 1970); Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 9-15; Ronald W. Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements*, (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1993).

¹⁸⁶ Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 209-213.

Interestingly enough, before Haiti's leadership implemented its emigration plan, the nation set forth a historical and constitutional precedent for granting fugitive slaves and immigrants' asylum, by legally conferring freedom, protections, along with citizenship. Historian, Ada Ferrer outlines the political history of Haiti's "free soil" policy. Ferrer explains that Article 44 of Haiti's constitution proclaimed the country as legally free soil. Through Article 44 all non-white foreigners entering the country would be granted protection and citizenship. In this manner, Haitian leaders were then in the best position to promote Haiti as a sovereign and racially inclusive nation. They also attempted to make it clear that while "emigration would be welcomed and sought, 'colonization' would be impossible."¹⁸⁷ Ferrer maintains that the concept of free soil serves as a "useful prism through which to think about the Haitian state's participation in revolutionary discourses about slavery, freedom, and rights."¹⁸⁸ In this manner, both enslaved people and free people of color who could reach the shores of the Haitian republic would be granted the protection of asylum and citizenship. Haiti's "free soil" policy demonstrates the republic's endeavor to reshape its global image and insert itself into a discourse over slavery and freedom. Representing an accessible place of refuge and freedom, Haiti came to symbolize an antithesis of the oppression and discrimination faced by black Americans in the United States.

King Henry Christophe rose to a position of power in Haiti immediately after the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines in Port-au-Prince in October of 1806. Christophe was described as a "fine portly looking man...quite black, very intelligent, pleasant, and expressive," who possessed a domineering personality that was "useful on the battlefield, but a liability as a

¹⁸⁷ Ada Ferrer, "Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic," *American Historical Review*, (February 2012, 41).

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

political leader.” Shortly after he named himself king, Christophe faced oppositional leader, Alexandre Petion, leader of the “mulatto faction” who wanted to implement an executive system centered on an assembly of representatives from different regions of Haiti. When Christophe learned of Petion’s plans to restructure Haiti’s Assembly, he prepared for battle. After two days of combat, Christophe retreated to the north while Petion maintained his ground. As a result, Haiti became a divided nation with Christophe in control of the North Province and the Valley of the Artibonite, with Petion in control of a large portion of the Southern Province and a small region of the West.¹⁸⁹

Following Haiti’s independence in 1804, the nation struggled to rebuild its export industries of coffee, sugar, and other raw materials. Since Haiti’s colonial industry was primarily focused on sugar exports, the region operated with limited agricultural diversification and only a few established manufacturing industries. As a result, Haiti remained economically dependent upon exporting cash crops and importing food, clothing, and manufactured goods.¹⁹⁰ According to historian Sarah Fanning, in order to continue with this agricultural system, “Haitian leaders sought to reimpose plantation labor regimes from colonial days, believing this was the only route to economic and military security.”¹⁹¹ However, ordinary working Haitians became resentful of Henry Christophe and Alexandre Petion for imposing a plantation system that was “reminiscent of slavery.” After independence, ordinary working Haitians preferred to independently cultivate small-scale plots of land. As a result, Haitian leadership struggled to reconcile the economic

¹⁸⁹Earl Leslie, Griggs and Clifford H. Prator, eds., *Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 38-40.

¹⁹⁰ Sarah Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 32; During the colonial era, planters relied on the import of flour, salt, rice, codfish, and dried salted beef to feed slaves, and enslaved people often cultivated small plots of land to provide supplemental food; Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment Since 1700*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 40-43.

¹⁹¹ Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, 32.

demands of international markets with the desires of newly emancipated people to practice subsistence farming.

In turn, both Christophe and Petion re-instituted a series of labor laws that were first implemented by Louverture in the 1790s to promote agricultural productivity. Christophe's and Petion's labor laws were nicknamed the "Code Henry" and "Code Rural," in which both labor systems endeavored to "revitalize the export-driven economy that had been so productive—and lucrative—during colonial days."¹⁹² Even though both labor systems differed in terms of how they were implemented, both Christophe and Petion sought to secure labor for plantations.

Christophe's approach which relied on police surveillance to ensure that planters adhered to his economic labor system succeeded in increasing exports of coffee from 5,608,253 pounds in 1806 to over 10,232,910 pounds in 1810. In the same fashion, sugar production increased exponentially from 522,229 pounds in 1810 to 6.2 million pounds in 1815.¹⁹³ As a result, annual revenues rose to approximately 3.6 million in gold and silver coins.¹⁹⁴ In a manner similar to Christophe, Petion implemented a number of labor policies in which Haitian workers received compensation for all completed tasks, but he did not impose a military force to regulate his plantation workers. With a series of crop incentives and harvest festivals, Petion was successfully able to expand sugar planting in southern Haiti. A decrease on export taxes on sugar and an increase on coffee resulted in higher profit margins for sugar producers and reversed treasury's financial deficit from 1808 to 1812.¹⁹⁵ Even though sugar production remained more

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Petion believed that increasing taxes on coffee production and exports could help to replenish the treasury's coffers. Ibid.; Robert K. LaCerte, "Evolution of Land and Labor in the Haitian Revolution, 1791-1820," in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepard eds., *Caribbean Freedom: Society and Economy from Emancipation to the Present*, (London: Currey, 1993), 42-47.

profitable, Fanning maintains that Petion struggled to “stimulate the economy” while also “generate[ing] operating costs” to pay for government salaries, ammunition and arms for the military.¹⁹⁶ Despite Petion’s efforts to distribute over four thousand acres of land to employees in lieu of salaries, Petion’s treasury remained behind in remitting payments.

The financial burden of maintaining a standing military, especially with threats of French military intervention, led Christophe to seek counsel and assistance from British abolitionists. Afraid of a possible French invasion, Christophe solidified an alliance with England by declaring English the official language of Haiti’s Northern Province. Christophe reached out to William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, hoping that British abolitionists would be able to utilize their considerable influence to help Haiti foster ties with England. In a response to Christophe’s advances in 1814, Wilberforce stated that, “I am very sure I should not lose a day in embarking for Hayti. To see a set of human being emerging from slavery, and making most rapid strides towards the perfection of civilization, must I think be the most delightful of all food for contemplation.” Embracing both Christophe and Haiti, Wilberforce pledged to provide ploughs to farmers, instructors to teach Haitians English, and supplemental financial assistance.¹⁹⁷ Christophe hoped that his friendship and alliance with Wilberforce would provide him with “the positive reassurance” that England would “recognize [Haiti’s] independence” so as to improve the nation’s ailing reputation.¹⁹⁸

Determined to populate Haiti, Christophe attempted to negotiate an agreement with the British navy. After Great Britain declared the Atlantic slave trade illegal in 1807, British naval ships stationed along the western coast of Africa routinely seized illegally operating slave ships.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹⁷ Leslie et al., *Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson*, 62.

¹⁹⁸ Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, 36.

It was British policy to resettle seized and then liberated slaves in the British African colony of Sierra Leone or to transport them to the British island colony of Trinidad. Christophe offered to bypass the British navy's expense of resettling seized slaves by purchasing them from the British government for forty-five dollars a head and then resettling the liberated slaves in Haiti.¹⁹⁹

Next, British abolitionists, Thomas Clarkson and the Duke of Gloucester, recommended that Christophe reinstate a project previously implemented by Dessalines; the emigration of black Americans. In a personal correspondence with Christophe, Clarkson outlined the advantages that the settlement of black Americans would bring to Haiti, including the "strengthening" of the king's position "at home and in the eyes of foreigners, and of France in particular." The arrival of American emigrants would serve to not only improve Haiti's tactical position against France, but also provide several practical benefits—including a laboring middle class.

Thomas Clarkson was also swayed by Christophe's requests for an alliance. He kept Christophe apprised of any potential French invasion and offered advice on how to operate his military efficiently. When a close contemporary of Clarkson shared information about the American Colonization Society's plan for West Africa, Clarkson sent word directly to Christophe encouraging him to reach out to black Americans who were interested in leaving the United States. Clarkson outlined the potential advantages of having black Americans emigrate to Haiti, insisting that "such persons would be very useful to your Majesty. They would form that middle class in society which is the connecting medium between rich and the poor which is the great cause of prosperity in Europe, but which cannot at present have been raised up by your

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.,36; *Niles' Weekly Register*, October 28, 1820; Ada Ferrer, "Speaking of Haiti: Slavery, Revolution, and Freedom in Cuban Slave Testimony," in eds. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2009), 223-247.

Majesty's Dominion." Clarkson realized the potential benefits that free black Americans would contribute to the Haitian republic, hoping that Christophe "...would of course give to each family a few acres of land."²⁰⁰

Clarkson also encouraged Christophe to consider both the financial and social capital that black Americans would bring. He believed that the emigration of black Americans to Haiti would be a positive government policy. The presence of black Americans in Haiti, he asserted, would compel the United States to recognize Haiti as a new republic.²⁰¹ But Clarkson was unaware that many white American southerners were vehemently opposed to recognizing Haiti as an independent republic, which presented an obstacle to any plans to encourage the emigration of black Americans from the United States.²⁰² Eager to embrace Clarkson's plan for resettling black Americans in Haiti, Christophe accepted Clarkson's donation of \$25,000.

More importantly, historian, Richard Blackett, argues that the Caribbean was important in the struggle for freedom in the United States, such that the circulation of information between the Atlantic, British and the Americas facilitated a trans-Atlantic abolitionist movement that placed pressure on the United States to make reforms.²⁰³ Blackett sees the *Hamic Connection* as a platform for arguing that emigration to the Caribbean was motivated by four central purposes: abolition, nationalist sentiment, a desire to leave American racism and oppression, and appeals for labor from the Caribbean.²⁰⁴ Most importantly, Blackett addresses Haitian emigration and symbolism as part of a larger out-migration pattern that occurred during the early nineteenth

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, 10-13.

²⁰² Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776-1891*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 314,

²⁰³ Brian Moore and Within Wilmot, eds., *Before & After 1865: Education, Politics, and Regionalism in the Caribbean*, (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998), 319.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

century; the newly independent nation that aided the abolitionist movement by becoming a place of “hope in the face of America’s refusal to live up to the promise of its revolution.”²⁰⁵

In order to push forward his plan to incentivize black Americans to immigrate to Haiti, Christophe turned to American educator, Prince Saunders for assistance.²⁰⁶ Saunders, an influential black educator and Secretary of the African Masonic Lodge in Boston, felt the independent republic of Haiti was the best place to build a nation free of slavery and prejudice.²⁰⁷ Born in Connecticut in 1775 and raised in Vermont, Saunders’ social and political values were largely shaped by a prominent lawyer, George Hinckley.²⁰⁸ As an educator at both the African School in Colchester, Connecticut, and Boston, Massachusetts, Saunders nurtured relationships with respectable blacks from Philadelphia to Boston. While Saunders was employed as an instructor at the African School in Boston, he was introduced to Paul Cuffe. With Cuffe’s mentorship, Saunders ascended to the role of secretary of the African Masonic Lodge in 1811 alongside Baptist clergyman, Thomas Paul.²⁰⁹ While serving as a representative of Boston’s Masonic Lodge during a tour in England, Saunders worked with Christophe to begin promoting Haitian emigration.

Saunders and Paul were not the first black Americans to tour England in search of anti-slavery and emigration allies in 1815. Paul Cuffe had already toured England in an effort to garner support for his emigration project. Cuffe was well received by the British public, including by the Directors of the African Institution who endorsed his plans for a settlement of

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 322.

²⁰⁶ Arthur O. White, “Prince Saunders: An Instance of Social Mobility among Antebellum New England Blacks,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 60, No. 5, (October 1975), 526-535.

²⁰⁷ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 302-305.

²⁰⁸ White, “Prince Saunders,” 526.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 527.

black Americans in West Africa. Which would both spread Christianity, civilization, and disrupt slave trade. Cuffe argued that a strong black American nation in Africa could undermine the slave trade, while also demonstrating the ability of blacks to operate a society equal to those in Europe and America. Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce were two of several anti-slavery advocates who planned to work alongside Cuffe to implement his plans for African colonization.²¹⁰

According to the Bostonian newspaper, *The Yankee*, at a meeting with British abolitionists both Saunders and Paul listened to William Wilberforce praise “Christophe, the black king of Hayti,” for having a “princely quality.” Wilberforce declared to everyone present at the meeting that Christophe was “more legitimate than the ex-emperor of France, or the kings of Spain and Naples.” “[B]esides being the Farther[sic] of his people,” Wilberforce characterized Christopher as “a patriot, liberator and hero...and pious Christian[sic]...[who] wanted nothing but Bibles, prayer books, implements of agriculture, and information respecting the arts, sciences, and humanity of Europe.”²¹¹ Wilberforce’s complements about Christophe demonstrates the efforts of both Great Britain and Haiti to mobilize a global network in an efforts to advance the African race.

²¹⁰ Prince Saunders’ trip to garner support for Haitian emigration in England reflects the transnational nature of African American agitation against slavery and racial oppression, and also illuminates how Paul Cuffe was successfully able to lay the groundwork for an open dialogue between African American leaders and renowned abolitionists, including William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson. While scholars often highlight the important roles that African Americans played in forging ties with their European peers after 1830, considerably less work explores the contributions made by Paul Cuffe and Prince Saunders. In turn, such a historiographical void typifies the marginalization of black leadership within current scholarship on the Abolition Movement, and also demonstrates how infrequently black leaders are presented as *progenitors* of the transnational character of anti-slavery activism. Richard J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

²¹¹ “African Institution, Philadelphia, September 6, 1816,” *The Yankee*, September 13, 1816, Vol. V, Issue 38, 2.

Even though Cuffe considered Haiti to be a shining symbol of African potential, his emigration plan was primarily focused on West Africa and a region beyond the Mississippi River in the United States, rather than on colonies in the Caribbean. It is possible that the economic instability that Haiti endured during its first two decades of its statehood deterred Cuffe from considering Haiti as a viable option for resettlement.²¹² Regardless of Cuffe's preference for Africa over Haiti, his meetings with British abolitionists helped to lay the groundwork for Saunders's promotion of Haitian emigration years later.²¹³

In turn, Saunders's visit to England in 1815 built upon the previous efforts of Cuffe to unite both American and British abolitionists who were invested in dismantling the African slave trade. However, when Saunders arrived in London his focus was largely centered on garnering support for implementing an emigration and resettlement plan in Haiti rather than in West Africa. After speaking with Thomas Clarkson and several other British abolitionists, Saunders realized that his experience as a school teacher equipped him with the training needed to help

²¹² Chris Dixon maintains that while some "Historians have disagreed over Cuffe's motivations for supporting colonization...[however] it is clear that Cuffe betrayed the cultural and hierarchical assumptions that were characteristics of African American emigrationism...his scheme aroused little support within the free black community, and ended with his death in September, 1817." Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 20. Even though Dixon's claim appears plausible, his position fails to take into account that free black leaders, such as Prince Saunders, Daniel Coker, and James Forten supported Cuffe's plan. It is with the rise of the American Colonization Society that they turned on African Colonization, and looked instead, to Haiti. For example, Julie Winch asserts that "Despite his growing antagonism towards the ACS, James Forten had been careful not to denounce all plans of colonization." Even as late as August, he had not apparently given up on the plan to establish a colony in Sierra Leone, West Africa; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 197.

²¹³ The following publications serve as useful studies on Haitian independence and African Americans' opinions about Haiti as an independent republic: Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; Sybille Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

serve as an educational consultant for the first black republic. Saunders sailed to Haiti in order to learn more about Christophe's proposal for incentivizing black Americans to immigrate to Haiti.

At Saunders and Christophe's first meeting, both seemed impressed with each other. Saunders praised Christophe's vision for Haiti as expressed in his "Manifesto of the King," in which Christophe proclaimed that "...true to our oath, we will sooner bury ourselves beneath the ruins of our native country, than suffer an infraction of our political rights."²¹⁴ Christophe was determined to promote Haiti as a symbol of racial uplift and economic potential. Upon meeting Saunders and witnessing his refined manners and intellect, Christophe appointed Saunders an "official courier" to Haiti. Christophe anticipated that Saunders would be able to use his special appointment to help Haiti garner diplomatic recognition from Britain. With letters of recommendation in hand, Saunders traveled to London to meet with leading abolitionists in an effort to gather support. With the publication of the first edition of Saunders's the *Haytian Papers*, a compilation of official proclamations and documents from Christophe's reign, Saunders was prepared to promote Haitian emigration among British abolitionists.²¹⁵

Shortly after Saunders returned to Boston in 1818, he published the second edition of the *Haytian Papers*, in which he reaffirmed the "natural intelligence" of black people in an effort to combat the prejudice of white Americans who "have endeavoured [sic] to impress the public with the idea that those official documents, which have occasionally appeared in this country, are not written by black Haytians themselves."²¹⁶ Saunders toured black communities and organizations in the Northeastern United States promoting emigration. He demonstrated African resourcefulness and intelligence by emphasizing Christophe's economic success in implementing

²¹⁴ Prince Saunders, *The Haytian Papers: A Collection of the Very Interesting Proclamations and other Official Documents*, "Manifesto of the King" (Boston, 1816), 13.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, 192-193.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, vii.

Code Henry as a labor system. Saunders sought to impress upon black Americans the tangible ways in which a nation free of racial prejudice and slavery would ultimately result in a better life.²¹⁷

In an address delivered at the Bethel Church in Philadelphia, Saunders described Haitian emigration as a means to escape American oppression. He encouraged black Philadelphians to consider sharing the virtues of Christianity with Haiti in an effort to facilitate black education and self-determination. He declared there was perhaps never “a period, when the attention of so many enlightened men was so vigorously awakened to a sense of importance of a universal dissemination of the blessings of instruction, as at this enlightened age, in this, in the northern and eastern sections of our country, in some portions of Europe, and in the island of Hayti.”²¹⁸

Saunders’s advocacy of Haitian emigration spoke directly to the potential contributions of black Americans to the forging of ties with Haitians and their participation in racial uplift through education and nation building. Saunders’s speeches were effective in convincing prominent black American leaders such as James Forten, among others, who had previously condemned African colonization as formulated by the American Colonization Society, that emigration to Haiti and colonization to Africa were grounded in two separate traditions. Saunders excelled at promoting Haiti throughout the United States.²¹⁹ Historian Arthur White analyzes the ways in which free black Philadelphians differentiated between emigration proposals initiated by blacks as opposed to those propagated by whites. Black Americans, he argues, demonstrated greater interest in Haitian emigration than African colonization, and some

²¹⁷ Ibid., vii-xi.

²¹⁸ Saunders, *Haytian Papers*, “An Address Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia: on the 30th of September, 1818: Before the Pennsylvania Augustine Society, for the Education of People of Colour,” Philadelphia, 1818, 4.

²¹⁹ Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, 37.

individuals even began to seriously consider resettling in Haiti.²²⁰ Saunders played an integral role in connecting Haitian emigration with the global movement against slavery.

Unfortunately, before Christophe could implement his Haitian emigration plan, he died. Christophe's successor, Alexandre Petion, inherited the same labor shortage, and called on American blacks to join the "freedom and prosperity offered" by Haiti that could not be found anywhere else. Petion invited settlers from the United States to "abandon an ungrateful country" for a black republic that could offer its citizens religious freedom, universal manhood suffrage, and access to a maturing capitalist society.²²¹ He urged black Americans to consider participating in the economic opportunities available. He assured skilled workers they could receive up to twelve dollars a week, while farmers on average earned two for four dollars a week in the United States.²²² He also insisted that emigrants with disposable capital would be guaranteed returns on their investments in "commerce or in cultivation," at "fifty percent per annum." Petion went on to say that sailors and laborers were in high demand. For those who could not afford the cost of the emigrating, Petion promised to pay for their transportation and passage to Haiti, offering forty dollars for every adult and twenty dollars for every child.²²³ James Tredwell, accepted Petion's offer and resettled in Haiti during the 1820s.²²⁴

When Petion died in 1818, President Jean Pierre Boyer was left to complete his emigration project. Boyer relied on Saunders to continue his pursuit of garnering financial

²²⁰White, "Prince Saunders," 528.

²²¹Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, 38.

²²²Ibid.; James Tredwell, a member of the New York African American community, traveled to Haiti in 1816 to investigate the social and labor conditions of the region. Upon his return, Tredwell published his findings on the settlement project in 1817 in the *Constitution of the Republic of Hayti: to Which Is Added Documents Relating to the Correspondence of His Christian Majesty, with the President of Hayti; Preceded by a Proclamation to the People and the Army* (New York: James Tredwell, 1818), 7.

²²³Ibid.

²²⁴Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, 38.

support and soliciting immigrants. Most importantly, Saunders realized that a unified Haiti under a strong leader, such as Boyer would further motivate black Americans to seek refuge in a nation that was free from racial oppression. While Boyer recognized the potential benefits of black Americans immigrating to Haiti, his focus was primarily centered on acquiring recognition from the United States. Boyer hoped that the arrival of free black Americans would force the United States to acknowledge Haiti as an independent republic while also providing the nation with an invaluable supply of skilled workers and agricultural labor.²²⁵ He grounded his recruitment efforts on the presentation of Haiti as a land to achieve liberty, employment, and citizenship.

In correspondence with Thomas Clarkson in 1821, Boyer shared his admiration for the Haitian people, such that “in their pride at having raised themselves from the depths of misery to an independent existence, will never turn back along the path on which their steps were set by the horrible injustice of their oppressors and their own love of liberty.”²²⁶ Boyer was not only committed to challenging slavery, but he was also invested in furthering Haiti’s expression of political self-determination. In this manner emigration to Haiti emerged as a symbol of hope and freedom and the possibility of achieving respect, autonomy, and economic self-sufficiency.

The rise of American Colonization Movement was grounded in an ideology that believed that people of color were a burden to the new nation because they could never live as equals in the United States. As black leaders gathered together to discuss the viability of emigration in an effort to create and contribute to an independent black nation, they sought to prove that black

²²⁵John Edward Burr, “Mulatto Machiavelli: Jean Pierre Boyer, and the Haiti of His Day,” *Journal of Negro History*, (July 1947), Vol. 32, No. 3, 324-328.

²²⁶ Jean-Pierre Boyer quote taken from Leon D. Pamphile’s, *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope*, (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2001), 39; Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide: African Americans’ Response to the Colonization Movement and Emigration*, (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 89, 209.

Americans were as capable as whites at building a nation which could realize the Enlightenment ideals outlined in America's founding documents.

In turn, black Americans sought to affirm their desire for equality and inclusion by forging a relationship with Haitian leaders to implement an emigration plan, while also establishing the basis for a Black Atlantic and diasporic identity, which viewed slavery and white supremacy as a transnational phenomenon that maintained black Americans within an oppressed state. Through Paul Cuffe's voyage to Sierra Leone in 1812, he ushered forward a sense of racial loyalty and duty that could serve as the foundation for "uplifting" and "redeeming" Africa. For Cuffe, his vision of bringing "western civilization" and Christianity was akin to other black American emigrationists who also viewed their racial destiny as inextricably linked to the regeneration of Africa. Cuffe and others believed that the entire race, throughout the African diaspora, would benefit from a "regeneration" of Africa.

CHAPTER III

Labor Mobilization

With the complete abolition of slavery and apprenticeship in British territories finalized by 1838, government administrators in both Great Britain and Trinidad considered the merits of West Indian emigration and black migration from the United States. The chapter draws attention to the colonial figures and governmental administrations who attempted to mobilize black Americans and black Canadians to serve as agricultural laborers in the British West Indies. While Asaka maintains that both groups of potential immigrants were “homogenized into a mere type of body with an inherent aptitude for hard labor in a tropical climate, irrespective of individuals’ national affiliation or present location...[both were] subjected to biological racial determinism,” this project endeavors to situate the labor problems and subsequent recruitment of black Americans to Trinidad following slave emancipation as a distinct form of black freedom that was achieved by resettlement and eventually the acquisition of land.²²⁷

In 1797 Great Britain acquired the island of Trinidad from Spain. British planters pushed forward their efforts to develop a thriving sugar industry along with several agricultural economies. However, the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 restricted plantations from importing unlimited numbers of inexpensive laborers. In turn, abolition resulted in an initial contraction of agricultural labor throughout the British Caribbean. When Great Britain declared full emancipation in 1838, thousands of former slaves abandoned plantations. This large scale departure further exasperated the region’s shortage of labor along with the struggle of Trinidad planters to find new workers.

²²⁷ Ikuko Asaka, *Tropical Freedom: Climate, Settler Colonialism, and Black Exclusion in the Age of Emancipation*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 84.

The initial response of planters after abolition and emancipation was to turn to the British Navy who seized illegally traded Africans. As organized schemes were solidified to use liberated Africans as emigrant laborers in British colonies, the southern Caribbean became a central destination for them. Between 1808 and 1840, approximately 1,800 recaptured Africans were deposited in Trinidad to help supplement the loss of agricultural laborers.²²⁸ West Indian Labor agents who were acting on behalf of Trinidad planters first sought to recruit liberated Africans who spent years settled in Sierra Leone. These labor agents were particularly interested in recruiting Africans residing in Sierra Leone because they had learned the English language and had been exposed to Christianity by English missionaries in the region. However, the endeavors of Trinidad's early labor agents were ultimately unsuccessful. After rumors about the harsh working conditions from the first group of settlers in Trinidad reached back to those remaining in Sierra Leone, African settlers decided to reject the proposals made by recruiters. Next, labor agents shifted their attention to recruiting Africans who had been recently liberated from aboard slave ships. These Africans consisted of various ethnic groups who had been seized by the British navy before being deposited and settled in Sierra Leone. While these Africans struggled to cope with the trauma of their captivity upon their arrival in Sierra Leone, West Indian labor agents attempted to "persuade" the recent arrivals to emigrate to Trinidad, the Bahamas, and other British island colonies experiencing a shortage of labor.²²⁹ Shortly after these liberated Africans arrived in Port of Spain, Trinidad as immigrant laborers, "their appearance, language, and behavior set them distinctly apart from the New World Society around them." When compared to the first group of liberated African settlers who departed from Sierra Leone,

²²⁸ Rosanne Marion Adderly, *"New Negroes From Africa" Slave Trade Abolition and Free African Settlement in the Nineteenth Century Caribbean*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 9.

²²⁹ Ibid.

Adderley maintains that this second group was much less culturally adapted, resulting in an enduring cultural “distinctiveness.”²³⁰

Immediately following the end of colonial slavery, former slaves in Trinidad sought to achieve economic independence, while planters hoped that freedom would lead to nominal changes in the status of agricultural workers. With the introduction of the scheme of apprenticeship beginning in 1834, a large proportion of former slaves did not strictly serve as agricultural workers; one out of every three former slaves served as domestic workers. Despite the fact that during the six-year apprenticeship period, apprentices were granted limited freedoms, apprenticeship itself was a large disappointment. It was August 1, 1838 when the scheme of apprenticeship finally ended, granting approximately 20,656 apprentices in Trinidad absolute freedom.²³¹ Former apprentices were no longer required to perform labor on sugar, coffee, and cocoa estates. The departure of former slaves, then apprentices from plantation estates resulted in an agricultural labor shortage that slowed down Trinidad’s overall economic development as a plantation colony. With only 43,000 acres out of a total of 1.25 million acres already under cultivation by the time of abolition, planters in Trinidad struggled to maintain a consistent number of laborers working at a given time.²³²

After emancipation and the end of apprenticeship, formally enslaved men and women could sell their labor to whomever they pleased.²³³ Free people of color were in the best position to compete for available agricultural jobs. In turn, former slaves could also take advantage of the

²³⁰ Ibid.; Louis A. de Verteuil, *Trinidad: Its Geography, Natural Resources, Present Condition and Prospects*, (1858; London: Cassell & Company Limited, 1884).

²³¹ Bridget Brereton, “Emancipation Lecture”: University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago, August 2007.

²³² Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783-1963*, (Kingston, Jamaica: Heineman Educational Books, 1981), 76.

²³³ Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years after Slavery*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 39; *Trinidad Royal Gazette*, 21 August 1835.

vast amount of fertile land that was available, and planters could no longer rely on coercion. Relying only on enticements and wages for service rather than coercion, planters were confronted with a continuous labor shortage.

Trinidad had already demonstrated the potential to become a major sugar producer. With the dreaded exodus of over 20,000 laborers, Trinidad planters feared that the departure of former slaves followed by apprentices would cause the island's central plantation economy to fail. However, former slaves needed money for material possessions, to celebrate wakes, and to buy plots of land. While some free laborers bought or rented land, others chose to squat on accessible undeveloped land. By taking possession of land to which they had no legal rights, free laborers squatted on both private and Crown Lands. Many squatters cultivated the land they occupied, and began to consider the land their rightful property.²³⁴ With the primary source of money coming from working as agricultural laborers, many emancipated people felt that they did not need to live on or near to estates while they were employed. Likewise, numerous women turned to small-scale trading of flour, salt, pork, wine, brandy, tobacco, and gin, as well as the creation of linens and clothing.²³⁵

During slavery, planters compelled slaves to work long hours and endure exhaustive labor. Following emancipation planters confronted an absolute labor shortage which affected production.²³⁶ William Hardin Burnley, Trinidad's largest estate holder and leading socio-economic advocate spoke in front of the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1842 to address the causes of frustration and distress among planters. Burnley insisted that all planters wanted was "a sufficient laboring population to enable them to keep the large capital invested in

²³⁴ Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 49.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48; Parliamentary Papers, 1842. XXIX, 379, "Papers Relative to the West Indies, Reports of Stipendiary Magistrates," 55-59.

²³⁶ Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad*, 77.

sugar estates in profitable employment.”²³⁷ In addition to Burnley’s testimony, Robert Bushe, a fellow plantation owner, expressed to the Committee that since emancipation he had employed the same number of workers who worked no more than nine hours a day, instead of the eighteen hours performed during slavery. Bushe asserted that if employed laborers maintained a twelve hour work-day instead of a nine hours during crop season, estates could maintain levels of production comparable to pre-emancipation.²³⁸ Together, Burnley and Bushe attempted to demonstrate the necessity of a reliable and consistent labor force.

As freemen and women fled estates, planters became increasingly alarmed. The departure caused a dire labor shortage. In response, planters deployed a series of “task” inducements to incentivize former slaves to engage in a form of consistent labor. With wages from 30 cents to 65 cents per completed task, agricultural laborers in Trinidad earned some of the highest wages in the region. Skilled laborers had the potential to earn even higher wages. Burnley maintained that an industrious worker could complete a task in four or five hours, allowing him to earn double wages for completing multiple tasks within the same day. The shortage of laborers forced planters to pay more competitive wages.

For the planter, task wages served to incentivize or stimulate workers to complete specific assignments. As a result, workers were clearly aware of exactly what was expected in order to receive payment. As soon as a laborer finished the first task, he or she could proceed to another. Based on this specific task system, it was possible for planters to plan their operations ahead of time and optimize the use of field laborer during assigned work hours.²³⁹ It also

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 78.

²³⁹ Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 52.

provided laborers with the option of starting work whenever they pleased. More importantly, laborers had the freedom and flexibility to walk away from their employer on their own terms.

When compared to agricultural workers laboring for 20 cents a day in Barbados, where there was a significantly larger laboring population, laborers in Trinidad received the most competitive wages. In his *Observation on the Present Condition of the Island of Trinidad*, Burnley scoffed at the discrepancy in earned wages between laborers on various islands. For example, “wages are at 6*d.* per day in Tortola; in Trinidad they are 4*s.* 2*d.* sterling will therefore be taken as the probable future price for a day’s labour,” meanwhile “one acre in Trinidad is deemed to be as productive only as four in Tortola.”²⁴⁰ While planters in Trinidad were aware that they paid some of the highest task wages when compared to neighboring islands, they quickly realized that such a small pool of labor that could not be sustained for the long-term.

The competition for task wages was temporary. By 1841 a group of Trinidadian planters came together and agreed to set task wages at 30 cents per task, per day. Field laborers refused to accept the decrease in compensation, forcing planters to back down, “and by February 1842 the wage on most estates was back to 50 cents.”²⁴¹ Nevertheless, the push back from workers was short lived. Within the next two years, planters were successful in lowering wages, to 25 cents per task. More importantly, the financial crisis that continued during the 1846 to 1848 crop seasons, made it even more pressing for planters to decrease wages to 20 cents per task. With reduced wages, agricultural workers were less inclined to work, which resulted in a steady and dramatic decline in sugar production. The labor exodus followed by the decline in the island’s economy had to be addressed. Without a guaranteed supply of labor, British West Indian planters

²⁴⁰ William Hardin Burnley, *Observations on the Present Condition of the Island of Trinidad*, London, 1843, 173.

²⁴¹ Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 52.

feared that they would lose their position as a global leader in sugar production to Brazil and Cuba.²⁴² Accordingly, planters attempted another ploy; they used housing and food rations as a form of leverage to coerce free people to perform agricultural labor. Offers of free housing, provisional gardens, and a daily allowance of salt fish and rum, planters claimed, were not cost effective. Burnley calculates the value of allowances to include “the fish, rum are worth ten cents (5*d.* sterling) per task; the house, ground, and medical attendance may be fairly calculated at not less than one dollar per week.”²⁴³ When asked about the average earning potential of labors, Burnley expressed that with a combination of allowances and incentives “it is not difficult for an ordinary labourer in this colony to lay by twenty dollars (4*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.* sterling) a month...if they please.”²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, these incentives and allowances failed to provide planters with the “kind of labour they considered essential to keep up their production and to meet in the British market the competition of slave sugar.”²⁴⁵ In turn, planters came to the realization that

²⁴² Ikuko Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 84; Historians debate the “exodus” along with the “absolute removal” of ex-slaves from plantations after emancipation. K.O. Laurence assumes that former slaves participated in a “complete” departure from plantations in *Immigration into the West Indies in the 19th Century*. Madhavi Kale’s *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor in the British Caribbean*. He contends that former slaves did not necessarily abandon field labor for “laziness” (as argued by planters), participate in self-employment, or conduct provisional farming and small-scale cultivation (as many historian argue); rather it may have been that “they [ex-slaves] left the plantation in pursuit of higher wages offered by owners and managers of rival plantations” (57, 64). Meanwhile, Walton Look Lai calls for scholars to interrogate “the extent to which the ex-slaves who removed themselves from the plantation did or did not remove themselves totally from plantation labor itself in the process,” and argues that “it is clear that the exodus from plantation to independent village life did not involve an absolute removal” such that “large numbers of freedmen continued to combine their new lives as peasant producers with wage labor on the sugar plantations” in *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 4.

²⁴³ Burnley, *Observations*, 80.; During crop season Burnley further explains that an ordinary laborer working in the “mill and boiling-house” earn wages from “fifty to sixty cents (2*s.* 6*d.* sterling), with an increase in allowance in the shape of pork, flour and biscuit, which are given to the people employed in the following proportions: two biscuits per day to the boiler-men, firemen, mangoes and cane carriers, carters and rock-boys, with two pounds of pork and two quarts of flour to the head men per week,” 80-81.

²⁴⁴ Burnley, *Observations*, 81.

²⁴⁵ Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 54.

allowances were not sustainable over the long term, and suspended offering allowances after January of 1842.

For these reasons, planters expressed a clear preference for “regular and docile” field laborers bound by contracts to specific plantation estates.²⁴⁶ With Trinidad’s principle plantations already cultivating over 33,845 acres of sugar cane out of 66,848 acres of potentially cultivatable land, planters wanted desperately to retain the high levels of commodity production achieved before abolition and emancipation.²⁴⁷ Prior to emancipation, slave laborers working 18 hour days cleared a 240 acre estate in less than three months. At the end of apprenticeship, only 175 acres were cleared by wage laborers in the same three months.²⁴⁸ As a result, there was an overall decline in production and a decrease in the overall efficiency of agricultural output. Likewise, the withdrawal of allowance incentives altogether made performing field labor even less attractive to ex-slaves.²⁴⁹

A Search for Laborers

With the massive exodus of freed people, West Indian planters created a narrative that demanded urgency. Planters needed agricultural workers who could perform steady and consistent labor. They could not exploit laborers in the same manner as before emancipation; freed people were now mobile workers who refused to sign binding labor contracts. More troubling, the “work patterns” of laborers was not always consistent.²⁵⁰ In the face of such unpredictability and an overall decrease in production, planters in Trinidad, Jamaica, and

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*, (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1970), 340.

²⁴⁸ Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 55.

²⁴⁹ Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad*, 78.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

elsewhere in the British West Indies launched a series of immigration projects to bring laborers from Africa, China, India, and British North America.

Historian Walton Look Lai describes the 1840s and 1850s as two “decades of multiethnic immigration experimentation” in which planters endeavored to replace Trinidad’s ex-slave work force.²⁵¹ Eventually, planters would turn to the British East Indies and pull laborers from the Eastern Caribbean. Over 400,000 East Indians were scattered throughout the British West Indies between 1844 and 1917.²⁵² While India would ultimately provide the largest and most consistent source of immigrant labor, Trinidadian planters first looked to China, the Canary Islands and even the Eastern Caribbean as places to derive labor. However, planters in British West Indies viewed immigrants of African descent in West Africa, Canada and the United States ultimately proved to be the most reliable and consistent demographic of laborers, requiring considerably less effort to adapt to the language and cultural norms of the region.

Liberated Africans from continental West Africa were among the first groups of laborers targeted by planters. The introduction of liberated Africans to Trinidad in 1835 was aptly welcomed by planters.²⁵³ While these immigrants were primarily rescued from slave ships by the British, Governor George F. Hill had already appealed to the Colonial Office in 1834 about the possibility of importing liberated Africans from Sierra Leone. Even though the Colonial Office initially rejected Governor Hill’s appeal fearful that London could be accused of indirectly participating in the slave trade by other foreign nations, the colonial government would

²⁵¹ Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar*, 12.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 18; Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, 107-9, Beginning in 1834 and 1838, indentured laborers from India arrived in Mauritius and British Guiana. After a brief suspension, the importation of Indian laborers resumed in Mauritius in 1843. On July 13, 1844, British Colonial Secretary Edward Smith Stanley announced the legalization of Indian emigration to British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad.

²⁵³ Rosanne Marion Adderley, “*New Negroes from Africa*,” 83; Johnson Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation, 1787-1861: A Study of Liberated African Emigration and British Anti-slavery Policy*, (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier, 1969), 91.

ultimately supervise a series of emigration schemes that carried approximately 14,000 liberated Africans from Sierra Leone and the island of Saint Helena to work in Trinidad and other British West Indian colonies.²⁵⁴

In his analysis of Great Britain's anti-slavery and emigration policy, Johnson Asiegbu contends that the British colonial government shifted its opinion in favor of the emigration of liberated Africans after the termination of the apprenticeship period in 1838. Asiegbu concedes that while the end of apprenticeship "produced more urgent [labor] demands" for West Indian planters, in his opinion, the Colonial Office "believed that a real possibility existed that West Indian colonies would secede over this issue."²⁵⁵ Likewise, increases in the price of sugar elicited complaints of "economic hardship" from both merchants and consumers. Asiegbu also insists that the failure of the Niger Expedition, an attempt by the British to create a series of model settlements using liberated Africans in West Africa from 1840 to 1841, provided a humanitarian justification for resettling liberated Africans from Sierra Leone.²⁵⁶ The inability of the Niger Expedition to engage in "modern agriculture, commerce, and Christianity" forced colonial officials and missionaries to reconsider the practicality of emigration to the British West Indies for "civilizing" Africans.²⁵⁷ The immigration of liberated Africans represented not only a viable solution to Trinidad's labor shortage following emancipation, but it also served as a signifier that

²⁵⁴ Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation*, 42-43.; Howard Temperley, *White Dreams, Black Africa: Anti-Slavery Expedition to Niger, 1841-42*, (New Have: Yale University Press, 1991).

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 39, 43.

²⁵⁶ Adderley, "New Negroes From Africa," 71-72; Temperley's *White Dreams, Black Africa* serves as a central text that chronicles Great Britain's humanitarian endeavors through the Niger River Expedition. By introducing the steamship to the region's inland waterways, sponsoring anti-slavery treaties and circulation of evangelical missionaries, the Niger Expedition intended to shape the socio-religious development of the region. According to Temperley, the Niger Expedition left a minimal impression on Africa.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

Sierra Leone had failed to evolve into the agriculturally productive region that Britain had initially envisioned it would be.

In addition to the labor of liberated Africans, Trinidadian planters briefly considered recruiting European and white American immigrants. However, the high rate of mortality amongst recent arrivals from England and Wales quickly dissuaded other potential emigrants from considering the possibility of immigrating. In response, the Governor of Trinidad, Henry MacLeod, attempted to rationalize the high rate of European mortality as a biological incompatibility of white laborers to tropical climates. MacLeod insisted that white laborers did not have the “constitutions” for “exposure to a tropical sun.”²⁵⁸ Collectively, high mortality followed by the desertion of hundreds of Europeans from plantations solidified planters’ position to continue their search for field laborers from elsewhere. In response, Trinidad’s governor asked the Colonial Office to reach out to its contacts in Europe to dissuade them from promoting immigration to the region. The devastatingly high rate of mortality of arriving Europeans proved disappointing to both planters and colonial officials, and fostered what historian Ikuko Asaka describes as “notion[s] of white incompatibility with tropical labor.”²⁵⁹ By May of 1840, Trinidad officially terminated its European emigration scheme. Even though this particular experiment failed, planters persisted in their pursuit of a reliable alternative pool of laborers, continuing their search in Canada and the United States.

As West Indian planters initiated their recruitment efforts in Canada and the United States in the 1830s and 1840s, the colonial governments of Trinidad and Jamaica appointed emigration agents and initiated legislation to encourage immigration. These emigration agents lobbied politicians and metropolitan officials for financial assistance and imperial approval.

²⁵⁸ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 85; Henry MacLeod to John Russell, May 29, 1840, CO 295/130, TNA.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

Trinidad's Legislative Council appointed William Hardin Burley, a member of its council and an owner of one of Trinidad's largest sugar plantations, to serve as an emigration agent in the intervening months between the death of Governor George Hill in March of 1839 and the arrival of Hill's successor, Governor Henry MacLeod in April of 1840. Likewise, Sir Charles Theophilus Metcalf, Jamaica's colonial governor, proposed an Immigration Act in April of 1840 which authorized the island's government to provide both financial and organizational assistance to Jamaica's emigration scheme. The Act authorized the appointment of designated emigration agents in the United States, Great Britain, and several other places along the Mediterranean and African coastal regions as potential areas for recruiting indentured laborers.²⁶⁰

While India was a principle source of immigrant labor, it was not the only source. A new wave of immigration continued with Trinidad's immigration law entitled "An Ordinance for Facilitating the Immigration into this Colony of Labourers Accustomed to Agriculture and Inured to Labour in a Tropical Climate." It affixed bounties for each African and African-descended person recruited. While Asaka maintains that Trinidad's attempt to enact immigration was grounded in a form of "climatic racial determinism," planters themselves were primarily interested in replenishing laborers in order to resume pre-emancipation levels of agricultural production.²⁶¹ Instead of dismantling the original 1838 immigration ordinance, Trinidad's government issued another proclamation to exclude immigrants from "any part of Africa" while still offering bounties of \$30 for each immigrant recruited from Canada, \$25 for each immigrant from the United States, and a varying sum of \$5 to \$16 for immigrants from neighboring island

²⁶⁰ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 86-90; Mary-Elizabeth Thomas, *Jamaica and Voluntary Laborers from Africa, 1840-1865*, (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1974), 16-18.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

colonies.²⁶² Trinidad along with several other British West Indian island colonies used the incentives of bounty rewards to justify the exclusion of immigrants from the African continent while affirming the practice of bringing “desirable” laborers to the region. More importantly, the Legislative Council and William Burnley recognized the urgency of acquiring an immigrant labor force to re-invigorate agricultural production on the island.

Nova Scotia’s Black Refugees

In his ongoing effort to procure laborers to meet to demands of Trinidad planters, Burnley embarked on a tour of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in August of 1839. Before heading to Baltimore and Philadelphia, Burnley endeavored to ascertain “whether any portion of the free Negro population inhabiting [those regions] could be induced to remove to Trinidad.”²⁶³ As Burnley addressed free black communities in chapels and social clubs through Canada he not only spoke frankly about the advantages that could be derived from the “glorious opportunities” awaiting emigrants, but he promoted Trinidad as a land where free people of color could move freely without restraint. He was determined to persuade black Nova Scotians to pack up their belongings, say goodbye to their friends and the communities that they had worked hard to forge, and ultimately uproot their families, all based on a promise of higher wages and greater self-sufficiency. It was integral to Burnley’s plan to begin the first leg of his recruitment tour for “increase[ing] [laboring] hands” in Nova Scotia. An earlier rapport was established between Nova Scotia’s Lord Dalhousie and Trinidad’s Sir Ralf James Woodford in 1821 to systematically

²⁶² Colonel John Alexander Mein to E. Murray Macgregor, January 10, 1840, CO 295/129; Murray Macgregor to John Russell, February 10, 1840, CO 295/129, TNA.

²⁶³ Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad: William Hardin Burnley and the Nineteenth Century Atlantic World*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018), 143; this quote is also an excerpt from a letter published as “Mr. Burnley’s Letters to Lord John Russell” in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, No. 8 (April 22, 1840).

implement a program to remove group of black refugees from Nova Scotia to Trinidad. This removal and resettlement of black refugees in Trinidad by the British served to continue a practice that initially commenced after the War of 1812 with the relocation of ex-colonial marines immediately after the Battle of New Orleans.

At the conclusion of the War of 1812, the 4,000 ex-colonial marines who served the British, were divided into two separate groups and deposited in two different regions within the British empire. Originally from Georgia, Maryland, Virginia, and the Chesapeake Bay, the marines were evacuated from New Orleans, Louisiana and deposited in Nova Scotia, Canada and Naparima, Trinidad. Between September of 1813 and August of 1816, 2,000 black American refugees disembarked British vessels to establish settlements in Halifax, Preston, and Hammonds Plains, and Melville Island Canada.²⁶⁴ A small group of 400 refugees separated themselves from the group of arrivals and they proceeded to establish an independent settlement in New Brunswick in May of 1815. The remaining 2,000 out of the initial 4,000 refugees founded individual settlements in the Naparima District of southern Trinidad.²⁶⁵

The 1,600 refugees arrived haggard and starving on the shores of Nova Scotia. They endured isolation and extreme poverty, the working of infertile soil. The refugees had entered another British colonial society that resented their presence. To the first few hundred who arrived in Nova Scotia in 1813, Lieutenant Governor Sir John Sherbrooke “opened the Poor House” and distributed rations.²⁶⁶ When the number exceeded the capacity of the Poor House, a special depot was opened on Melville Island, Halifax, a former prison, to accommodate approximately 800

²⁶⁴ <https://novascotia.ca/archives/Africanns/results.asp?Search=&SearchList1=4&Language=English>

²⁶⁵ K.O. Laurence, “The Settlement of Free Negros In Trinidad Before Emancipation,” *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. ½ (March/June, 1963), 26.

²⁶⁶ James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1976), 389.; Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976)

between April of 1815 and June of 1816. Originally built in 1808 to house French prisoners of war during the Napoleonic Wars, the Melville Island military prison was later used to house American Prisoners during the War of 1812. By 1815, the prison functioned as a temporary housing facility for refugees after the War of 1812. The following photograph of the military prison was taken by Gauvin & Gentzel in May 29, 1929. According to the African Diaspora Nova Scotia Photo Collection, the image appears “very much as it would have looked to the refugees of 1815.”²⁶⁷



While residing in the prison, many refugees were treated for their illnesses before being removed to other regions in Nova Scotia.²⁶⁹ Theophilus Chamberlain, a missionary from Massachusetts residing temporarily in Nova Scotia, recommended Preston as a viable location for refugees to settle. Preston had a previous history of black occupation that included black Loyalists from the 1780s and Maroon from Jamaica. The black Loyalists who occupied Preston had previously been granted eight to ten acre plots, provisions, clothing and farming instruments, which they used to

²⁶⁷ <https://novascotia.ca/archives/Africanns/archives.asp?ID=72>

²⁶⁸ African Nova Scotia Diaspora: Selected Government Records of Black Settlement, 1791-1838, “Melville Island military prison, Halifax, which served as temporary accommodation for African American refugees after the War of 1812,” May 29, 1929, Army: General, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM), N-6207.

²⁶⁹ Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 389-390.

clear a large portions of land. Other refugees settled in other parts of the province, principally in Hammonds Plains, located northwest of Halifax. According to historian James Walker, by 1820, 956 black refugees were residing in Preston, 469 in Hammonds Plains, another small group of 76 on Refugee Hill just outside of Halifax, and 20 families along “Windsor and Colchester Roads.”²⁷⁰

The refugees were granted licenses of occupation to cultivate the land they occupied. Males were organized into working parties assigned to clear land “to build one house each day.”²⁷¹ In order to supplement their government rations, several male refugees often “cut cord wood for neighboring white farmers,” while under the surveillance of a “general Constable” tasked with maintaining peace within the settlements.²⁷² Nevertheless, these small farms were not large enough to sufficiently support the refugees in either Preston or Hammonds Plains. Heavy frost and mice infestations destroyed potato crops, leaving many refugee families destitute. Because of limited employment options and scarce resources, the black residents of Nova Scotia, and others scattered throughout Upper and Lower Canada struggled to maintain a subsistence existence. Rendered vulnerable by the climate, and a scarcity of resources, the refugees struggled to establish a firm foothold in the region.

In the years immediately following, Nova Scotia suffered a devastating economic recession that corresponded with an influx of European immigrants to the region. At the onset of the recession, Lieutenant Governor Sherbrooke was neither prepared to help alleviate the

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 390.

²⁷¹ According to Canadian historian Robin Winks, blacks in Canada took initiatives to improve their social and economic statuses by accessing education and engaging with the black press. Despite these efforts, the marginalized conditions of blacks were slow to improve—due to a reluctance by predominant white Canadians to alter their moralistic sense of superiority and the region’s status quo; Robin Winks, *Blacks in Canada: A History*, (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 16, 78.

²⁷² Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 390.

hardships of a post-war decline nor take responsibility for settling a homeless immigrant population. There was also intense competition for a limited number of unskilled jobs, and “once the wooded areas had been stripped there was little other means of support for the refugee settlers; many were forced to steal or beg for a living in Halifax, or to engage in prostitution.”²⁷³ Due to the fact that the refugees were only granted Licenses of Occupation, and not free standing grants, they were unable to sell their land in order to finance their relocation elsewhere. Furthermore, the Nova Scotian government initially hoped that the black refugees would be temporary settlers, just like the black loyalists who had served the British during the American Revolution, and were evacuated to Canada, and who later immigrated to Sierra Leone, West Africa. Instead of developing a comprehensive plan of action to address the social and economic needs of refugees for both the short and long term, the colonial government sought to simply deport them from Nova Scotia altogether. Sherbrooke considered the deportation as a means of rectifying the economic competition between natives and refugees.²⁷⁴

In the early years of the black refugees’ settlement in Nova Scotia, they experienced intense racial hostility. Historian Harvey Whitfield explains that the Nova Scotian Assembly even attempted to ban black immigrants based on the reasoning that an influx of blacks “increased the depravity of the underclass and threatened to take away jobs from whites.”²⁷⁵ Such attempts to ban people of African descent from entering the country affirmed Nova Scotia as racially hostile. As new settlers, the refugees were not only racialized as inferior immigrants,

²⁷³ David A. Sutherland, “1810-1820: War and Peace,” in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Philip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 26-28.; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 390.

²⁷⁴ Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Boarder: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860*, (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2006), 49.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 48; Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 192.

but also denied inclusion into the Canadian body politic, and ultimately pushed to the fringes of colonial society.

Members of the Nova Scotian government also maintained many of the same deeply entrenched racial attitudes that were lauded by supporters of the American Colonization Society. Some believed that blacks were innately inferior, and all efforts to achieve equitable treatment or political inclusion would be met with resistance. Likewise, many colonial leaders felt that the black refugees were an economic drain on the Canadian treasury. In alignment with popular opinion, Lieutenant Governor Lord Dalhousie initiated a systematic plan to remove the black American refugees from Nova Scotia beginning in 1817.

In his correspondence with the Earl of Bathurst, Dalhousie described the black refugees as “slaves by habit and education.”²⁷⁶ Dalhousie felt that “little hope can be entertained by settling these people [refugees] so as to provide for their families and wants—they must be supported for many years—followed by habit, education, no longer working under the head of the lash, their idea of freedom is idleness and they are therefore incapable of industry.”²⁷⁷ Not only did Dalhousie view the recent arrivals as idle and unproductive, he quickly became resentful of the fact that both he and the Nova Scotia government would have to provide substantial and long term assistance to aid them in their transition. Likewise, Dalhousie alleged that “their constitution is unequal to the severity of this [Nova Scotia’s] climate.” Unfit to endure the bitterness of Canada’s harsh weather, Dalhousie surmised that:

Were it possible to procure for them a pardon from the government of the United State it would be most desirable to resettle them to their masters in America, or send them to the settlement of Sierra

²⁷⁶African Nova Scotia Diaspora: Selected Government Records of Black Settlement, 1791-1838, “Letter from Lord Dalhousie to Earl Bathurst about the black refugees,” December 29, 1816, RG. 1, vol. 112, pp. 6-9 (Microfilm no. 15262), Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM).

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Leone, in either of these places I believe would be agreeable to the greater part of them, but to the West Indies they will not go.²⁷⁸

Justifying the inability of the refugees to thrive in Nova Scotia, Dalhousie considered returning the refugees to the United States, or possibly deporting them to Sierra Leone. He firmly believed that they would never be successful, asserting that both he and the populace were in agreement, such that “The legislature & the inhabitants of this province generally consider them a class of people that never will do well as settlers, and therefore will not give them any countenance or assistance.”²⁷⁹ Nova Scotia’s economic distress compounded escalating black poverty and racial discrimination served to justify Dalhousie’s desire to remove refugees.

However, Dalhousie was quickly dissuaded in his pursuit of deportation to the United States and West Africa after he spoke with a group of refugees who insisted that they refused to return to the United States; they were not “willing to return to their masters, or to America.”²⁸⁰ Even though Dalhousie was initially unsure as to where to deport the refugees, he quickly acquiesced to the fact that Trinidad would potentially be the best place for their resettlement. With Trinidad already expressing interest in recruiting black immigrants in response to its labor shortage after the abolition of slave trade, Dalhousie began to consider the merits of resettling refugees in the region. Dalhousie also envisioned that the refugees would be able to reunite with friends and family members who had chosen to settle in Trinidad instead of Nova Scotia after the War of 1812.²⁸¹ With their removal, Dalhousie believed the refugees would cease to be a burden on Nova Scotia’s government.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ <https://novascotia.ca/archives/Africanns/results.asp?Search=&SearchList1=4&Language=English>

²⁸¹ Whitfield, *Blacks on the Boarder*, 60; John McNish Weiss, *Free Black Settlers in Trinidad, 1815-1816*, (London: McNish and Weiss, 1995).

Yet despite early opposition, Dalhousie's plan for the removal and resettlement of black refugees in Trinidad eventually came to fruition on a much smaller scale than he had initially anticipated. After three years of fund raising and securing support from Trinidad's Colonial Legislature, approximately one hundred refugees in Hammonds Plains expressed interest in immigrating to Trinidad in 1820.²⁸² The "African Nova Scotia Diaspora Collection" of the Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management Library and Holdings (NSARM) which contain digitized public records and correspondences between colonial officials in Nova Scotia and Trinidad serve as invaluable resources in helping to identify the ninety-five refugees who expressed interest in immigrating. The collection also serves to contextualize the conditions under which they were transported.²⁸³

Parry Brown, his wife and fourteen year-old-daughter were one of the first families to board the vessel, *Brig Rachel* in 1820 from Hammons Plain, Nova Scotia for Trinidad.²⁸⁴ In his earlier correspondence with Rupert D. George Esq., a Nova Scotian colonial administrator, describing the vessel's accommodations and the preparations that were being made for refugee passengers, John Starr, an administrator assigned by Dalhousie to coordinate the removal of refugees, stated that the *Brig Rachel* was equipped to carry "one hundred" passengers, charging "four pounds for each man or woman, and for children under twelve years old, half price."²⁸⁵ Starr attempted to assuage George's conscience by insisting, "I can assure you that every case

²⁸² African Nova Scotia Diaspora: Selected Government Records of Black Settlement, 1791-1838, "A list of Black Refugees at Beech Hill (Beechville) settlement who wish to go to Trinidad." No date. RG 1, vol. 422, doc. 22, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM).

²⁸³ <https://novascotia.ca/archives/diaspora/>

²⁸⁴ "Return of the black American refugees residing at Hammonds Plains," Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia, RG 1, vol. 422, no. 19, NSARM.

²⁸⁵ "Letter from John Starr addressed to Rupert D. George Esq. relating to a vessel to convey Black Refugees to Trinidad," Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia, December 8, 1820, RG 1, vol. 422, no. 24, NSARM.

possible shall be taken to help the poor people, many of which have experienced a strong wish to go in my vessel partly because the captain is well acquainted there, and there being a colored man belonging to the vessel with whom they are acquainted.” Starr reasoned that by having a free man of color as captain, who had previously steered a vessel to Bermuda would serve to inspire confidence and reassure refugees that their vessel was being steered by their brethren with an experienced hand.²⁸⁶ Meanwhile, John Clarkson a British Army Lieutenant along with Richard Ingles toured Preston and Hammonds Plains “extolling the virtues of Trinidad” to refugee families in an effort to emphasize “in the most particular manner the great advantage that would result to them from such a change.”²⁸⁷

Starr also maintained that each passenger would be “supplied with a sufficiency of good wholesome provisions,” including “water to be put on board equal to one gallon a day, for each person” for a total estimated “forty days,” along with an allotment of “one pound each bread, and meat or ½ a fish a day” as daily rations. Intending to meet all the nutritional needs of the refugees aboard the *Brig Rachel*, Starr expressed his anticipation that “I shall also put on board one hundred bushels potatoes, seventy five bushels [of greens]... fifty barrels of fish, one flask molasses, ten barrels Indian meal, a sufficient quantity of sugar, coffee, or chocolate and rice besides a large quantity of cod fish as cargo.”²⁸⁸ Even with a surplus of provisions, Starr indicated that there would be “no disadvantage” in maintaining more than the allotted amount of provisions per adult and child passenger. Starr hoped that by outlining explicitly what each passenger would be provided with while aboard, that potential immigrants would be reassured. Collectively, both Starr and Dalhousie sought to leverage the refugee’s struggles with economic

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 394.; “Return of Black American Refugees at Hammonds Plains and those willing to go to Trinidad,” 1820, doc. 29.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

dependence, difficulty acquiring employment, and impoverished conditions to encourage them and their families to accept Trinidad's offers of free passage, land, and the "promise of high wages."²⁸⁹

Likewise, the schooner *William*, a 107 ton vessel was contracted by Richard J. Tremains for the Nova Scotian government to transport an additional group of refugees from Halifax to Trinidad in December of 1820. Unlike the initial charge of four pounds per adult passenger that John Starr quoted earlier in his correspondence with Rupert George Esq. on December 8, 1820, Tremains confirmed that the government's contract for the *William* quoted a charge of "five pounds, fifteen shillings" for "each man, women" and "for children, three pounds each."²⁹⁰ With a "plush deck and three hatchways," George confirmed that the *William* a "fine fast sailing vessel."²⁹¹

With both vessels, the *Brig Rachel* and *William*, equipped to transport those who expressed interest in participating in the coordinated strategy between Lord Dalhousie and the Colonial Legislature of Trinidad, 95 black American refugees set sail for the island. Three ledgers document the names of the father and the number of family members who joined him. The "List of Tenders to Convey Black Refugees to Trinidad," also indicates the specific vessel on which nine families embarked from Nova Scotia.²⁹² Each register list that documented the names and passage cost varied. Brown and his wife, Carol, were charged 5 pounds and 15 shillings each, their daughter 3 pounds to travel on the *Brig Rachel*. The Fremain family were

²⁸⁹ Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 394.

²⁹⁰ "Mr. Richard J. Tremains contract to supply a vessel (Schooner William), to the Government to transport Black Refugees to Trinidad," Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia, December 15, 1820, RG 1, vol. 422, no. 25, NSARM.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² "A list of tenders to convey Black Refugees to Trinidad," Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia, December 18, 1820, RG 1, vol. 422, no. 26, NSARM.

charged a similar amount on *William* in December of 1820. Collins Allison, his wife and child were each charged 6 pounds and 3 shillings each, with an additional 3 pounds and 1 shilling for their child. George Smith, E. Vink, and W. G. Coehran were also passengers from Hammonds Plains who paid varying fees in order to board the *Brig Rachel* and *William* for Trinidad.²⁹³ Of those individuals who departed for Trinidad, the largest number came from a contingent who departed from Hammonds Plains, while a considerably smaller number departed from Preston.²⁹⁴ These families consciously chose to disintegrate their familial friendships, disrupt their communities, and resettle in an entirely new country. While slave labor was used as the primary vehicle for Trinidad's economic productivity at the moment of the refugees' arrival in 1820, they were nonetheless recognized as free people of color. Upon settlement in the south central region of Trinidad, the black refugees straddled not only two British imperial colonies, but also struggled to maintain the clearly demarcated boundaries between the labor they performed and the lives they lived as former slaves in the United States, their nominally free status as immigrant free people of color in Nova Scotia, and their newly acquired roles as independent laborers in Trinidad. The 95 Nova Scotians became in the eyes of Trinidad planters, a potential source of labor.

According to Whitfield, the remaining 1,505 refugees opted to remain in Canada for three reasons. Firstly, they felt that the Nova Scotian government's efforts to deport them to Trinidad was not a humanitarian endeavor, but rather a ploy to deny refugees political and social rights.

²⁹³ According to Nova Scotia's Selected Government Records, "A list of tenders to convey Black Refugees to Trinidad" indicate the specific vessel and rate paid for each male, female, and child passenger. The passage rate varied for children, for example, the cost of one child was listed as 3 pounds, another for 2 pounds and 19 shillings, while another child was charged a rate of 6 pounds and 7 shillings. However, the rate for both male and female passengers varied considerably less. According to the "list of tenders," adults paid anywhere between 5 pounds and 15 shillings up to 7 pounds.

²⁹⁴ "Those who wish to go to Trinidad," RG 1, vol. 422, doc. 20, NSARM.

These refugees felt that Dalhousie's strategy was largely reminiscent of the African colonization efforts promoted by prominent Americans in 1816; Trinidad essentially was a stand in for African colonization.²⁹⁵ The refugees also felt they had earned their rights to freedom and citizenship by fighting in the War of 1812. The Nova Scotian government's efforts to resettle them represented a negation of their military service and sacrifice. The refugees viewed a departure from Canada as a calculated endeavor "to appease hostile whites in the colonial government and in the local population" who opposed their presence as socio-economic competitors.²⁹⁶ Thirdly, the remaining refugees refused to believe that Nova Scotian officials had their best interests at heart. Deportation would result in the end of the budding friendships, communities, and reconstructed family networks. Even though the numbers who left were small, the process of financing and arranging transportation required skillful communication driven by a shared objective: to facilitate the immigration of African descended people to serve "as natural tropical workers" in the island.²⁹⁷

William Burnley's 1839 Mission to Recruit Black Canadians

Over the following two decades, refugees continued to endure economic hardships from crop failures and discrimination. In turn, the Nova Scotian government attempted to ascertain the conditions and sentiments of the remaining refugees and their families. After surveying 150 refugee families in both Preston and Hammonds Plains, the surveyors concluded that "there is not in our opinion any hope of them [refugees] ever being able to maintain themselves."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Whitfield, *Blacks on the Boarder*, 60.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 87.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 3; "Letter from Edward H. Lowe and Thomas B. Desbrisay to Rupert D. George, Provincial Secretary. Report regarding the condition of Black people at Preston," Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia, March 9, 1857. RG 1, vol. 422, no. 43, NSARM.

Instead of helping to alleviate the suffering of the refugees and their families, the surveyors recommended that the refugee depart Nova Scotia altogether and resettle in a warmer climate and welcoming environment. Asaka maintains that such a use of a climatic rhetoric disregarded the structural inequalities of land distribution along with the social marginalization that was imposed by the Nova Scotian government.

Nevertheless, Nova Scotia's lieutenant governor, Colin Campbell, blamed the economic shortcomings of refugees on the refugees themselves, their inability to adapt and harness the physical environment.²⁹⁹ In a correspondence with Charles Grant, London's Colonial Secretary, in August of 1837, Campbell stated, "that [Nova Scotia's] climate was ill adapted for them [the refugees], and that they never could prosper here."³⁰⁰ Campbell's correspondences further emphasized the biological incompatibility of refugees with Nova Scotia's climate, thereby reaffirming an underlying belief that black Nova Scotians were inferior to white Nova Scotians. In was Campbell's opinion that the descendants of refugees and free people of color should again be deported and resettled in Trinidad, a considerably more temperate region where they would be more biologically adaptive. He considered Trinidad's climate and receptiveness would allow free people of color to obtain an improved standard of living, to educate their children, and access greater employment opportunities. While Campbell shared his opinions and urged his contemporaries to consider removing refugees from the region once again, Trinidad's Colonial Legislature initiated its second attempt to encourage immigration to the island. With an established rapport between colonial governments and a tradition of refugees emigrating from

²⁹⁹ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 88.

³⁰⁰ Colin Campbell to Charles Grant, Lord Glenelg, August 25, 1837, Appendix 16, in C.B. Fergusson, *A Documentary Study of the Establishment of the Negroes in Nova Scotia between the War of 1812 and the Winning of Responsible Government*, Under the direction of archivist D.C. Harvey (Publication no. 8), Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1948.

Canada to Trinidad, Burnley considered Nova Scotia a reasonable location to commence his recruiting endeavors in the aftermath of British emancipation. Together, Trinidad's planters along with the support of colonial officials in both Nova Scotia and Trinidad sought to re-implement an emigration scheme that would serve to rid Nova Scotia of a racially inferior and economically dependent populace and transform black Nova Scotians into productive cultivators in another British colonial territory.

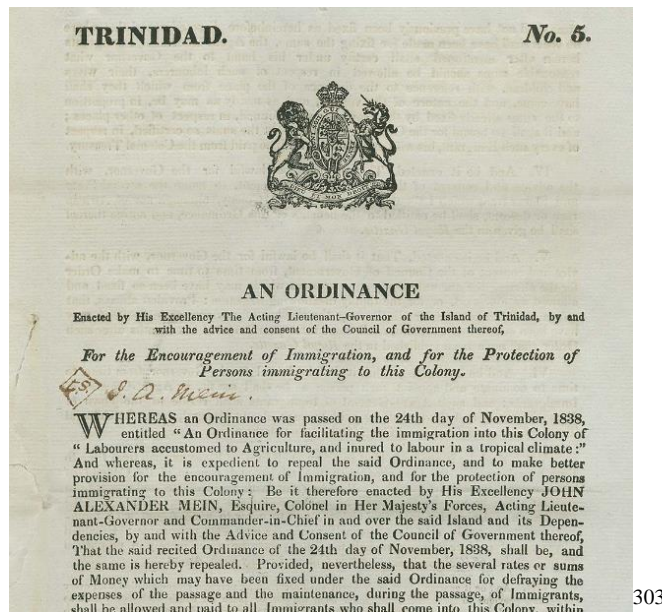
When Campbell requested financial assistance from the Colonial Administration in London to help cover the expenses of transporting free people of color to Trinidad once again, Charles Grant refused. In his response to Campbell, Grant expressed his personal opinion that facilitating the removal and resettlement of free people of color to more productive land would essentially enable "the mistaken & mischievous notion, that if they [free people of color] are to subsist at all, it must be as proprietors of Land and not as Laborers for hire."³⁰¹ Grant maintained the position that free people of color should remain outside, along the margins of society. For Grant, to help implement the removal and resettlement of black refugees to another colonial region where they could economically thrive, would ultimately function as a tactic counter-productive to the hegemony of settler colonialism, and anyone who felt that he or she was deserving of such privilege would be "mistaken & mischievous."³⁰²

Trinidad continued in its pursuit of black immigrant labor. In an effort to mobilize larger numbers of free people of color, Trinidad's Colonial Legislature not only appointed William Bunrley to serve as an emigration agent for the island, but the Legislature also enacted an

³⁰¹ Charles Grant, Lord Glenelg, to Colin Campbell, October 24, 1837, Appendix 17, in C.B. Fergusson, *A Documentary Study of the Establishment of the Negroes in Nova Scotia*.

³⁰² Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 88.

immigration ordinance. The ordinance of 1838 affixed bounties and offered assistance to each recruited immigrant:



The “Ordinance for Facilitating the Immigration into this Colony of Labourers Accustomed to Agriculture and Inured to Labour in a Tropical Climate” was specifically directed towards “Labourers of the African race or descent...from any Port or Place,” highlighting the fact that Trinidad’s Colonial government intended to pay for the expenses of “the passage and the maintenance, during the passage, of immigrants.”³⁰⁴ Furthermore, the third article of the ordinance stated that “the Agent-General of Immigrants herein after mentioned shall certify...what reasonable sums should be allowed in respect of such labourers, their wives and children, with reference to the distance of the place from which they shall come, and the nature of the voyage...”³⁰⁵

³⁰³ “Printed copy of an ordinance of the island of Trinidad for the encouragement of immigration to that island,” Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia, April 19, 1839, RG 1, vol. 422, no. 52, NSARM.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

More importantly, the coordinated strategy between Lord Dalhousie, Sir Ralph James Woodford, and Trinidad's Colonial Legislature in 1820 laid the foundation for a working relationship between both officials and their colonial governments. This is demonstrated in their ongoing communications with one another. The rapport established between colonial officials in Nova Scotia and Trinidad allowed the administrative governor of Trinidad, Henry Geroge MacLeod, to address an amicable letter of introduction to Sir Colin Campbell to aid in welcoming William Burnley as the island's emigration agent:

Government House,
Trinidad, 24th April, 1819
Sir,

I have the honor to introduce to your notice, Mr. William Hardin Burnley, he is a member of Her Majesty's Council of the Island of Trinidad and is deputed by the Lieutenant Governor and Council of this Colony to forward our efforts to obtain labourers for this island.

He will explain to your Excellence our views and wishes, and I think I may safely request your kindness to grant him your favor and assistance in forwarding the object of his mission.

To His Excellency, the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia.³⁰⁶

Despite the efforts of Burnley to draw attention to the advantages of immigration, free people of color in Nova Scotia rejected participating in a second exodus from Canada. In a correspondence between Trinidad's Governor Colonel John Alexander Mein, with Governor Campbell, Mein insisted that the blacks of Nova Scotia "seem to have some attachment to the soil they have cultivated, poor and barren as it is," such that several community leaders also refused to depart regardless of how "poor and miserable" their existence was.³⁰⁷ Having established roots in Nova

³⁰⁶ "Letter from the administrator of the Government at Trinidad to the Governor of Nova Scotia, recommending a Mr. Burnley of Trinidad who has proceeded to Halifax to obtain Black laborers to move to that island," Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia, April 24, 1839, RG 1, vol. 422, no. 52, NSARM.

³⁰⁷ Governor Mein of Trinidad to Governor Campbell of Nova Scotia, 24 April, 1839, doc. 52; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 394.

Scotia over a period of twenty five years that began after the American Revolution and continued with the arrival of refugees immediately following the War of 1812, it would take more than physical and economic hardships, and discrimination to induce them to move for a second time. Since only 95 refugees departed in 1820 for Trinidad followed by a resounding opposition in 1839, free people of color in Nova Scotia persisted in their refusal to emigrate despite their struggles to prosper on relatively infertile soil. They continued, however, in their efforts to secure new, larger, and even more fertile farms in Nova Scotia and elsewhere in Canada, rather than to emigrate.

CHAPTER IV

From 1821 to 1839, the Continued Inducement for Emigrants

In direct response to a printed copy of Trinidad's 1838 legislative ordinance "for the encouragement of immigration, and for the Protection of Persons immigrating to this Colony," Lieutenant-General, Sir Colin Campbell, of Nova Scotia, issued a "Proclamation" published in *The Colored American*, an African American newspaper published in New York City on August 8, 1839. In his effort "to make known" the benefits of immigrating to the island of Trinidad from Nova Scotia, Campbell encouraged black Americans to seriously consider the merits of Trinidad's fertile soil, the ability to purchase land, to freely practice religion, and to access public education.³⁰⁸

More importantly, Campbell's willingness to publicly express his support for emigration built upon the pre-existing relationship and collaboration between Nova Scotia's and Trinidad's Colonial Governments that began in 1820 with Nova Scotia's Lieutenant Governor, Lord Dalhousie. By agreeing to the payment of "fixed sums... for their transport and maintenance whilst on their passage to that colony," Campbell vocalized his support for emigration to Trinidad, representing a continuation of Nova Scotia's earlier efforts to remove black refugees from Canada to Trinidad. Even though the sum for "conveyance of laborers" was "fixed at twenty five dollars for each adult," Campbell's correspondences and logistical agreements with William Burnley functioned to reaffirm the confidence shared between both colonial governments.³⁰⁹ With a "perfect confidence in the feasibility of...emigration," William Burnley

³⁰⁸ *The Colored American*, October 5, 1839.

³⁰⁹ African Nova Scotia Diaspora: Selected Government Records of Black Settlement, 1791-1839, "Letter from Mr. Burnley to the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Colin Campbell on the Ordinance of the Island of Trinidad for the encouragement of Emigration to the Island," August 3, 1839, RG. 1, vol. 422, no. 53, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM).

built upon Trinidad's pre-existing relationship with Nova Scotia's colonial leadership.³¹⁰ The rapport that had already been cultivated between Lieutenant Governor, Sir James Kempt, and Trinidad's Governor, Sir Ralf James Woodford, made Canada a viable source for emigrant labor.

While the refugees of the War of 1812 had entered Canada as free British colonial subjects, few were successful in integrating themselves into the British Empire. Nevertheless, the act of immigrating to and resettling in Trinidad in 1839, rendered these individuals transnationally mobile subjects of the empire. Additionally, an analysis of their movements presents a new way to conceptualize the relationship between black migration and the African diaspora. By analyzing the rhetoric circulated to promote emigration to Trinidad, this chapter contends that the process of emigration and resettlement of blacks from both Canada and the United States differs from traditional diasporic migrations, which primarily focus on original dispersals from Africa. Ultimately, the free people of color who immigrated to Trinidad willingly embraced the hope for prosperity, social happiness and equality offered by the British Government.

Burnley used the *The Colored American* as a tool "to induce the colored people to emigrate."³¹¹ When placed alongside editorials published by Nova Scotian Lieutenant Governor Campbell, the editorials in *The Colored American* function as a material source that exhibits the opinions of opponents and proponents of emigration to the British West Indies between 1838 through 1842. By paying attention to the discourse surrounding "labor," and "agricultural advances," along with criticisms describing the "disadvantages" of emigration, an increasing consciousness emerged that held two perspectives. More specifically, the editorials published

³¹⁰ *The Colored American*, October 12, 1839.

³¹¹ "Emigration in the West Indies," *The Colored American*, 17 Aug. 1839.

outline the rhetoric used to recruit and promote Trinidad using lush vegetative imagery, as a region with available agricultural and skilled employment opportunities readily available to be seized by the “most industrious” individual. In contrast, opponents pinpointed the flaws and “dark side” of emigration itself.

The purpose of emigration to the island of Trinidad, as articulated by editors of *The Colored American* in the fall of 1839 attempted to “represent the advantages to be derived to the enterprising colored men, by a removal to a soil which holds out so much encouragement-social, moral, and political, and where his [the colored man’s] talents and industry will be appreciated and rewarded accordingly.”³¹² In response to inquiries, Burnley expressed the high demand for carpenters, masons, and metal workers whose specialized skills served to provide essential functions:

All good mechanics would find immediate employment, particularly carpenters and coopers. I have by me orders to send out houses ready framed in this country and staves made up in shooks for hogsheads and puncheons, in consequence of the scarcity of carpenters and coopers. Masons also would find ready employment, as well as sawyers.³¹³

However, even with the claims of readily available job opportunities that serviced the nation and recent emigrants, Burnley failed to mention how the process of emigration was organized, financed, or even how these important resources were to be distributed. Despite these early shortcomings, the process of emigration must fundamentally be viewed as an opportunity for black migrants with and without specialized skills to enter a space where personal autonomy and social mobility could be obtained. In the same manner, Burnley expressed the idealized circumstances that were directed towards “industrious and enterprising” people.³¹⁴ In October of

³¹² “Trinidad,” *The Colored American*, August 31, 1839.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ “Trinidad—An Explanation,” *The Colored American*, October 12, 1839.

that same year, *The Colored American* advantageously promoted emigration by capturing the attention and describing the wondrous possibilities and freedoms that emigration offers:

From the time of our first interview with Mr. Burnley, we have had perfect confidence in the good faith of the government of "Trinidad" and perfect confidence in the feasibility of an emigration to that Island. We esteem it the most promising and important opening made to the industrious and enterprising of our people - yet we feel confident that the success of an emigration to Trinidad or elsewhere depends, under God, wholly upon the character of the emigrants, the expectations under which they go, and the prudent measures they adopted in going.

The government of Trinidad wants *laborers* with capacity and willingness to work *in the field with the hoe &c.*, for liberal wages, or they want colored emigrants with *enterprise and means* to take lands and carry on themselves as proprietors; to do this they must take their laborers with them, *they cannot be got in the island.*³¹⁵

By emphasizing the “feasibility” and openings for “industrious and enterprising” peoples, Burnley situates emigration as accessible, viable, and in many ways glorious to potential African American emigrants. Additionally, by imbuing religion as a characteristic feature of the emigration movement, Burnley utilized it as an affirming mechanism that negated the difficulties or hardships presented by the possibility of emigration. Furthermore, both the newspaper and Burnley describe the labor force as primarily agricultural in nature, serving as a vital service sector providing agricultural subsistence while continuing the cultivation of sugar cane and other agricultural commodities essential for trade and transnational sales.

In a response to a statement written by Burnley published in *The Colored American*, a reader named Benjamin Clark from York, Pennsylvania offered his own comments and support of Burnley’s proposition for emigration:

I suppose it is conceded by all reflecting persons, that emigration as a general thing, never can benefit our people and if it could, their love of home and local attachments overbalances the prospective advantages by far. But should this prevent the industrious mechanic or agriculturist who has a family dependent on him, and who finds after contending for years against oppression and prejudice, that instead of advancing on the road to competence he is just where he started from. I think not, and so convinced am I of the fact, that should nothing unfavorable occur, I intend to remove with my family to the Island.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Benjamin Clark, “For the Colored American,” *The Colored American*, October 5, 1839.

Clark's comments demonstrate the early appeal and public support for emigration. Recognizing the insurmountable prejudice and racism within the United States, emigration was viewed by readers of *The Colored American* as a viable option to enduring continued racial oppression. Nevertheless, two years later in 1841, *The Colored American* shifted its stance from encouraging and advocating for emigration, to harshly criticizing emigration altogether. While in certain circumstances, the emigration project failed, it nonetheless contributed towards solidifying a diasporic transnational movement that brought together a diverse group of men and women.

Burnley's "Description of the Island of Trinidad"

In his effort to swiftly mobilize an international movement of people to rebuild Trinidad's road to economic prosperity, Burnley published a copy of his pamphlet the "Description of the Island of Trinidad and the Advantages to be Derived from Emigration to that Colony" in *The Colored American*. The "Description" allowed Brunley to not only emphasize the benefits to be gained by those who emigrated, but his deployment of a rhetoric of racial equality enabled him to tailor a message to the "enterprising emigrant." In this manner, Burnley wrote:

The island of Trinidad belongs to the British empire...the thermometer generally ranging from 72 in the morning to 85 at noon; being the ordinary temperature of a mild summer in New York. Flowers are always in blossom, and trees always in leaf...grows luxuriantly and yields abundantly; and every description of garden stuffs, such as cabbages, lettuces, beans, peas, cucumbers, tomatoes, and eggplants can be raised easily at all times...The soil of the island is many places of inexhaustible fertility...

The island contains about 2,400 square miles in surface, of which not more than one tenth has been yet granted. The remainder belongs to the Government, and can be purchased by settlers who require it; in which case it is up to public sale and granted to the highest bidder. The usual price of wild lands, in the most favorable situations, has not exceeded two dollars an acre. It is invariably covered with a thick forest of trees, some of which are variable as dye-woods, and others of most durable description are fit for buildings and millwork...³¹⁷

³¹⁷ "Description of the Island of Trinidad," *The Colored American*, August 31, 1839; William Burnley, *Description of the Island of Trinidad and the Advantages to be Derived from Emigration to That Colony*, (New York: James Van Norden, 1839), 4.

The island government had earlier enacted an ordinance “For the Encouragement of Immigration, and for the Protecting of the Persons immigrating to this Colony.” Both planters and the Legislative Council of Trinidad wanted to incentivize “labourers accustomed to Agriculture” residing in the United States to consider emigration. By advertising the “inexhaustive fertility” and the potential of Trinidad’s soil for “producing the finest quality” of agricultural commodities for planters and emigrants to Trinidad, Burnley laid the groundwork for the process of instilling confidence in the Colonial Government of Trinidad to finance and facilitate the passage of emigrants to the island.

At the time that Burnley wrote the “Description of the Island of Trinidad,” he and Governor Mein faced increasing pressure from desperate planters and merchants. When the price of sugar increased in 1839, planters became frantic, desperate to acquire more agricultural laborers in order to achieve modicum levels of profit. Even though small numbers of former slaves remained on sugar and coffee estates as employees working for their former masters, a central question arose, “How to best harness this new opportunity for increased profits that the rising cost of sugar offered?” Plantation owners and managers were unsuccessful in their efforts to coerce former slaves by destroying their provision grounds “in order to force them to comply with their terms.”³¹⁸ With the support of the stipendiary magistrates, the planter’s actions were affirmed; they had every right to defile former slaves in such a manner. In retaliation, the remaining laborers moved away from estates, seeking alternative employment. As a result, former slaves severed their ties with their former employers and distanced themselves from those same plantations. Next they squatted on open land, forming communities and small villages. In frustration, estate managers and planters claimed that the departure of the remaining laborers

³¹⁸ PO, July 13, 1888; Selwyn Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad: William Burnley and the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018), 138.

from estates exacerbated their labor shortage, thereby intensifying their crisis—“How to maintain production in order to benefit from the rising price of sugar?”

When Mein replaced George Hill as governor, he expressed the frustration of planters and merchants with the Marquis of Normanby. Mein informed the Marquis of his fears and those of planters: “unless steps be taken to increase the amount of and industry of the laboring population, the cultivation of this island will be most seriously impeded, and I fear a state of agricultural distress will be produced among the proprietors of the estates, which will, in its reaction, ultimately fall on the laborers themselves.”³¹⁹ By their actions, planters and merchants had contributed to the alienation and departure of laborers, ultimately creating the circumstances under which freed people were deterred from seeking and maintaining employment as agricultural workers.

On the 1st of April, Burnley presented a proposal to the Legislative Council to allow the colonial government to recruit laborers from Malta, Sierra Leone, the Isle of Man, along with free people of color from the southern United States with the “capacity and willingness to work in the field with the hoe.”³²⁰ Afraid that Burnley’s proposition was too closely reminiscent of the slave trade, the undersecretary of the Colonial Office, James Stephen, insisted that anywhere along “the coast of Africa [was] out of the question” to derive labor. Likewise, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* described Burnley’s proposal as “the bondage ordinance of Trinidad.”³²¹ Rather than acquiesce to these criticisms, Burnley forced his contemporaries to acknowledge the severity of their current circumstances and the validity of his proposition that all of Trinidad’s agriculturalists engaged in the cultivation of sugar, coffee, cocoa, or cotton and were faced with a

³¹⁹ CO 295/192, 1839; Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 139.

³²⁰ *The Colored American*, October 12, 1839.

³²¹ *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, November 14, 1842.

defiant labor free and so should look to immigration as their choice.³²² As a result, Burnley embarked on a recruiting mission to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and several black American communities in Baltimore, Boston, and New York along the eastern United States.

Selwyn Cudjoe maintains that Burnley altered his rhetoric on race during his travels in both Canada and the United States. That and his “Description of the Island of Trinidad” made him the principle salesman for Trinidad.³²³ His pamphlet reminds readers that not only was the island’s climate temperate from the early morning through afternoon, but more importantly land was accessible and affordable. Unlike other islands in the West Indies, Trinidad was “exempt from hurricanes and droughts” and that given the “agricultural advantages of Trinidad,” the island in “its happy position...cannot fail of becoming the great commercial emporium—the ‘New York,’ in fact, of that part of the world.”³²⁴ Its geographical position and commercial nexus made the island a beacon of limitless potential. Given that Burnley himself was initially an opponent of abolition in the British West Indies, he made sure to emphasize the fact that:

The great inducement however to an emigrant who wishes to rise himself in the scale of society, is the political advantages which the colored inhabitants of Trinidad enjoy over that of any other part of the world. Slavery has been utterly and entirely extinguished therein by the British government, and no exclusive privileges now elevates a white man above his colored bretheren...A perfect equality, therefore, of respectability and dignity is enjoyed by the colored population, not only by law, but socially and practically throughout the colony.³²⁵

Here Burnley emphasizes the sense of equality and mutual respect that emigrants would receive upon entering Trinidad’s society. An appeal describing the potential social and economic mobility to be earned from a daily wage affirmed confidence in Trinidad’s colonial government to protect members of rural and urban communities.

³²² *Trinidad Standard*, November 14, 1842.

³²³ Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 144.

³²⁴ *The Colored American*, August 31, 1839.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

There was little racial tension in Trinidad. Unlike in Haiti, the white man was not “excluded by an impolitic law” from all “capital and employment” free people of color in turn were capable of operating with greater self-agency.³²⁶ There Catholicism dominated the religious, landscape, and all other religious faiths Burnley maintained, were marginalized. In stark contrast to Haiti, Burnley maintained that Trinidad’s stance on religious inclusivity allowed for “a man [to] worship God as he pleases—and that, without regard to color or complexion, his conduct and talent alone shall elevate him to distinction.”³²⁷ This racial and religious equality made Trinidad a further attractive place for black settlers.

Upon their arrival, Burnley explained that all emigrants who disembarked in Port of Spain, Trinidad, would expect the following:

On his arrival there, the Agent-general of emigrants will visit the passengers the moment the vessel drops anchor...to inform those who have money and wish to purchase land, and how and where they can procure it in and the best situation and on the most reasonable terms...no man disposed to work shall be obliged to lay out a cent for the maintenance of himself and family, whilst in search employment.

So great is the demand for help, that he will probably have the choice of several situations. He can engage himself to a sugar or a cocoa planter who will readily pay every able adult in his family, male or female eight, ten, twelve and even as high as sixteen dollars per month according to their respective abilities and find them besides in comfortable lodging, food and medical attendance.

He can contract for 12, 6, 3, or only one month if he pleases. But a sensible man will select a period of twelve months, which will enable him to witness a whole revolution of the seasons; to ascertain the periods to sow, and the periods to reap; to learn the best modes of cultivation, which vary something in every country; and to accustom himself to the climate. At the expiration of his contract, if a prudent and temperate man, he will have the whole amount of his wages to receive without deduction from his employer. This sum will then be at his disposal to invest in land...³²⁸

Burnley’s summation of the entry and acclamation process aimed to instill confidence

that emigrants can improve their conditions by resettling in Trinidad. Additionally,

Burnley used his message to guarantee that the needs of emigrants would be met. A

reassurance that emigrants would be offered provisions and shelter immediately upon

³²⁶ *The Colored American*, October 12, 1839.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

their arrival aimed to relieve anxiety concerning the process of transitioning and adapting to the island. As Burnley explains the process through which “Crown Lands” could be purchased for reasonable rates, he demonstrates the ease and feasibility of acquiring land. In turn, land ownership represents an opportunity for emigrants to actualize a self-sustaining and dignified form of freedom. This portion of Burnley’s “Description” outlines the means by which black American emigrants could experience self-sufficiency and autonomy, rooted in the practice of farming.

In its entirety, the “Description of the Island of Trinidad” functions as a piece of recruitment material to incentivize laborers to immigrate to the island. The rhetoric of racial equality amplified by the economic potential of Trinidad’s soil represents the tactics tailored and deployed by Burnley. More importantly, Burnley used the pamphlet to create an illustration of Trinidad as an idealized and dreamlike tropical region waiting to be harnessed by the industry and determination of emigrants themselves who would labor under the protection of the British Colonial Government.

The publication of Burnley’s pamphlet was driven by two clear objectives, to incentivize agriculturalists and skills artisans (including mechanics, coppers, carpenters, mason, and sawyers) to labor for “liberal wages,” and for “enterprising” emigrants to invest and become proprietors of business. The “Description” functioned as a labor recruitment tool that aimed to facilitate the migration of blacks that began with the removal of black American refugees from Nova Scotia in 1821.

Burnley’s Continued Immigration Efforts, 1839-1841

In preparation for Burnley’s arrival in Nova Scotia, Trinidad’s acting Lieutenant-Governor, John Alexander Mein addressed a letter of introduction to Nova Scotia’s Lieutenant-

Governor, Sir Colin Campbell. Requesting that Campbell welcome Burnley as a “member of Her Majesty’s Council of the Island of Trinidad,” Mein explained that Burnley had been “deputed by the Lieutenant Governor and Council of this Colony to forward our efforts to obtain laborers for this island. He will explain to Your Excellence our views and wishes and I think I may safely request your kindness to grant him your favor and assistance in forwarding the object of his mission.”³²⁹ In order for Burnley to proceed with his scouting activities in Nova Scotia, he needed approval from Canada’s colonial leadership. This letter of introduction allowed Burnley to continue laying the groundwork for his tour throughout Upper Canada.

As he prepared to embark on his tour of Nova Scotia, Burnley expressed concern that Trinidad continued to struggle “to get the ex-slaves to work six days a week.” He even complained that he had heard that “every able-bodied laborer in this island can grow and manufacture 4 hogsheads of sugar. In some of the more fertile districts, they may certainly do more. The manager of some of my estates have told me that if I can guarantee them the services of thirty able bodies people who would work willingly, and work six days a week, they would guarantee me a crop of 200 hogshead of sugar.”³³⁰ In order to meet the demands of planters, as well as himself, who desperately sought to obtain workers who would be willing to work six days a week instead of the three to four days a week that former slaves had chosen, Burnley considered the viability of appealing to free people of color in Canada. Even while witnessing the efforts of the American Colonization Society to settler free people of color from the United States in Liberia, Burnley expressed an observation, “I think...that the inhabitants of the United States [and Canada] would be glad to see some foreign colony opened, where, at no expense, the free population could be removed and find themselves comfortable...If it were a known and

³³⁰ CO 295/125, 1839; Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 132.

established fact that our colonies in the West Indies presented a sure asylum where free negro labors could be comfortably located, and furnished with profitable employment, I think that a very large number of emigrants volunteered to move from the United States [and Canada]” would remove, if given additional encouragement.³³¹ An understanding of these circumstances functioned not only as a form of consideration, but also served to justify his actions for beginning his recruitment efforts in Canada followed by a tour of the United States.

By August of 1839, Burnley had launched the first leg of his recruitment tour in Nova Scotia followed by New Brunswick. To encourage free people of color in Canada to consider the practicality of emigration, Burnley first turned to black communities in Nova Scotia in hopes of successfully targeting black Americans who left with the British after the American Revolution and the War of 1812 who had resettled and established expansive communities.³³² Burnley sought to convince them that Trinidad was a much easier environment to cultivate and was therefore considerably more profitable, and more importantly to consider the island as racially much more inclusive and therefore a British colony that would allow them greater opportunity to achieve economic mobility. Nova Scotia’s Lieutenant-General, Sir Colin Campbell, warmly welcomed Burnley upon his arrival, issued him letters of introduction that functioned as both social and political credentials to allow him greater access to black Nova Scotian churches and organizations. Despite his efforts, Burnley was unsuccessful in his recruiting efforts in Nova Scotia. Burnley attempted to justify this failing through a deployment of climate theory. He felt that Nova Scotia’s cold climate created “discouraging difficulties” which caused free blacks in Canada to experience “a depression of mental energies,” thereby rendering them incapable of

³³¹ *Report from the Select Committee on the Disposal of Lands in the British Colonies*, August 1836-1838; Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 132-133.

³³² Julie Winch, *Between Slavery and Freedom: Free People of Color from Settlement to the American Civil War*, (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 39.

considering that Trinidad was the most proper place to provide them with dignity and a sense of belonging.³³³

Even though his scouting activities in Nova Scotia did not yield the results that he anticipated, Burnley persisted. Upon his departure from Nova Scotia and arrival in New York, Burnley circulated announcements to procure free people of color from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. But his emigration initiatives were geographically centered in New York and later in Baltimore. With an official emigration office located on the corner of Pine and Nassau streets in New York, Burnley drafted his editorials that were published in *The Colored American*, responded to inquiries on emigration, and dispensed printed copies of the *Description of the island of Trinidad* to visitors.³³⁴ Burnley also lectured on the merits of emigration to Trinidad in lecture halls in conversation with his editorials in the pages of *The Colored American*.

As he continued to promote emigration through the circulation of his pamphlet, the *Description of the Island of Trinidad*, Burnley drew the attention of Charles Ray, a free person of color in New York and contributing editor of *The Colored American*. Ray came to the realization that the interests of urban black communities was essentially “in conflict with those of the plantation colony.”³³⁵ Early editorials in *The Colored American* supported Burnley’s recruitment efforts, even going so far as to encourage readers that emigration to Trinidad was “worthy [of] the attention and careful consideration of our brethren.” The newspaper’s contributors promised both community members that they would “endeavor to collect all the information in our power”

³³³ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 98; “Mr. Burnley’s Letter to Lord John Russell,” *British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter*, April 22, 1840.

³³⁴ “To the Editor of the Colored American: Sir, in reply to the,” *The Colored American*, October 12, 1839. Accessible Archives Online.

³³⁵ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 104.

in order to assess the viability and fruitfulness of emigration from the United States.³³⁶ However, by October of 1839, the newspaper shifted away from this supportive stance. Within a matter of three months, *The Colored American* came to a new conclusion, that emigration would neither benefit free people of color in the United States nor the government of Trinidad. This shift in stance was grounded in decreasing interest in participating in agricultural labor. As a contributing editor, Ray stated that “we do not at all, like the course things are taking in respect to emigration to the island of Trinidad.”³³⁷ Ray’s views won support of fellow black New Yorkers. Co-editor, Samuel Cornish, reaffirmed Ray’s criticism. Cornish explained that Burnley’s emigration plan contained a fundamental flaw; the initial “500 persons who either wished or talked of going [to Trinidad]” in August of 1839 had by October changed their opinion all together. “Not a single one [was] willing to make his living by working in the sun with his hoe.”³³⁸ While a few individuals that Cornish spoke with admitted that they were willing to “work for the proprietors for a month or two, until we make enough money, but we must then go on our own book,” they assert that there “should be a perfect understanding between the emigrants and the government before any emigration takes place. If this be not the case, there surly will be a disappointment on both sides.”³³⁹ Not only did their published editorials from August and October of 1839 represent their personal opinions, but Ray and Cornish’s statements corroborate the shift in the popular opinion of fellow black New Yorkers. When placed in conversation with one another, a chronological analysis of Ray and Cornish’s statements in *The Colored American* reflect the opinions of a select group of free people who grappled with deciding to emigrate or remain in New York.

³³⁶ “Trinidad—An Explanation,” *The Colored American*, October 12, 1839.

³³⁷ “Trinidad Emigration,” *The Colored American*, October 5, 1839.

³³⁸ “Trinidad—An Explanation,” *The Colored American*, October 12, 1839.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

Together, Burnley, the Colonial Government, and Trinidad's planter class considered the immigrants themselves as tools to bolster the region's economy and expand the middle class, thereby declaring the statement that "From what we have heard and read of the colored population of America, we think they will be found imbued with much of the active speculative turn of their white brethren of the States, and are likely to infuse a fair proportion of these qualities in our African and Creole laborers, and render them more willing to undertake extra work for extra wages."³⁴⁰ The *Trinidad Standard* did not consider their statement an insult to Creole people, but rather reflected their conviction that they would carry and share their social values with the island.

Meanwhile, as Burnley continued to promote the advantages of resettling in Trinidad, he was blindsided by a series of criticisms that streamed from black emigrants who had resettled in Trinidad years earlier. A printed copy of meeting minutes from a congregation of aggrieved emigrants in Trinidad made its way from Trinidad to Theodore Wright, a black abolitionist and organizer of New York's Vigilance Committee, and eventually to Ray and Cornish at *The Colored American*.³⁴¹ The minutes from this particular group of black emigrants made its way from Trinidad to Wright through Wright's acquaintance, Thomas Hunt, a pastor of a Colored Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey. Quite interestingly, Hunt had previously left Newark for Trinidad with a group of hundred other emigrants, and while in Trinidad he attended a meeting of disgruntled and aggrieved emigrants. According to the meeting's minutes, the participants criticized Trinidad's exploitative labor conditions, describing it as a "substitute for

³⁴⁰ *Trinidad Standard*, November 15, 1839.

³⁴¹ The New York Vigilance Committee was organized by a group of abolitionists who were committed to "help[ing] fugitive slaves to places of safety." As black New Yorkers became increasingly involved in assisting fugitive slaves, the organization played an integral role in assisting fugitive slaves cross regional and international borders in the pursuit of freedom; Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 56.

slavery.” The minutes went on to convey that the emigrants themselves felt that they were being “brutally dragged in little groups to the different plantations” immediately after they disembarked in Port of Spain. They also stated that instead of receiving a range of wages from 45 cents to 1 dollar and 25 cents a task, they were “allowed [only]...30-60 cents per task, and three pounds of codfish and one bottle of rum, as their weekly allowance.”³⁴² At the conclusion of the meeting, all those who attended agreed that Burnley’s statements describing the island and its economic advantages to be “utterly false and deceptive.”³⁴³ Even though a select number of editorials refuted Burnley’s assertions, he was nonetheless effective in incentivizing a group of black Americans to emigrate from New York.

Nonetheless, Burnley was effective in his recruitment efforts. By November 1839, planters in Trinidad welcomed the “first contingent” of 239 black Americans from along the Northeast who embarked on their emigration voyage from New York. These individuals were convinced by Burnley’s promises that they could become successful entrepreneurs on the island. According to the *Trinidad Standard*, the black Americans who arrived witnessed “the first fruits of the arduous work of the Honorable Mr. Burnley in originating and promoting immigration here from the free colored population in the United States.”³⁴⁴ Even though this first vessel took nineteen days to complete the voyage from New York, all the immigrants arrived “in the best of health and extremely cheerful.”³⁴⁵ The *Trinidad Standard* viewed this first arrival as the beginning of a new era in which they hoped for a steady stream of immigrants from the United States. The newspaper’s editors applauded the emigrants for “abandoning a country where they

³⁴² “Important News from Trinidad,” *The Colored American*, April 18, 1840. Accessible Archives Online.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *Trinidad Standard*, November 15, 1839; Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 147.

³⁴⁵ Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 148.

are firmly exposed to oppression, contumely, and insult and adopting in its stead, a land whose inhabitants are most willing and anxious to afford them refuge, and enroll them among its free citizens.”³⁴⁶ As a society still reeling from the scheme of apprenticeship and struggling to recover from an economic depression just a year after the end of slavery, Trinidad welcomed the influx of free people of color from America.

Baltimore

Likewise, Burnley’s emigration rhetoric along with his descriptions of Trinidad as “very fertile and beautiful,” quickly caught the attention of black Baltimoreans who viewed African colonization as unjust and sought to obtain citizenship rights. Because Burnley repeatedly stated that there were no political distinctions between “aliens and British subjects,” several black Baltimoreans began to consider emigration to Trinidad in response to ongoing threats of forced removal by proponents of colonization.³⁴⁷ For these reasons, Burnley continued in his recruitment pursuits in Baltimore. Since Baltimore was the nation’s third largest city and strategically straddled the region location between the United States North and South, relied on slavery for the production of staple crops, but also maintained strong ties to grain production regions in the North, Burnley considered Baltimore’s 25,000 black residents as potentially malleable, a demographic that he could potentially convince and induce to emigrate to Trinidad. According to legal historian Martha Jones, black Baltimoreans developed a legal consciousness that enabled them to combat schemes for African colonization as well as use rights claims and the platform of birthright citizenship to combat efforts to forcibly remove them.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ *Trinidad Standard*, November 15, 1839.

³⁴⁷ “Trinidad,” *The Colored American*, August 31, 1839.

³⁴⁸ Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizenship: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), 13.

As Maryland's pro-colonization legislatures were buttressed by support from Baltimore's white public, colonizationists fostered an antagonistic environment that pressed for a "forced removal of black men and women from the state."³⁴⁹ Ray and Cornish acknowledge the hardships of their brethren in Baltimore, and even go so far as to state that:

...in the state of Maryland, we believe, to the white people and to the legislature, and afterwards to the colored people, the latter should have been mostly consulted, as they were the only persons concerned. We are aware, however, that it would be dangerous to broach any subject in that state...

Should any of the citizens of Maryland emigrate, and especially from the city of Baltimore, they will do so, not so much from pecuniary distress and perhaps not at all, as from the oppressive laws under which they live. They will go almost entirely for political elevation and business operations, the shrewd and intelligent of them...³⁵⁰

The editors appear to empathize with the struggle of black Baltimoreans, and go on to make a promise to readers that they will "inform the public that they may look to us for information in relation to this [emigration] enterprise" such that "we intend to hold ourselves as the organ of communication to our people in reference to Trinidad" as the newspaper continues to relay information from "friend[s] having gone" and are "conversant with the agent [Burnley]" as they intend to "watch [for] all the movements...[and] gather up everything for good or for evil as it may be, and inform our people with the least possible delay."³⁵¹ Burnley seized the socio-political chaos and the legal marginalization of Baltimore blacks to insert himself in public meetings, worship services, and political gatherings of black Baltimoreans to implement his recruit initiatives.

The editors of *The Colored American* also made sure to report on Baltimore's "radical colonizationists" as they pushed forward a series of legislative resolutions for implementing the forced removal of free people of color during Maryland's State Colonization Convention.

³⁴⁹ Ibid. 57.

³⁵⁰ "Emigration to Trinidad and British Guiana," *The Colored American*, March 7, 1840.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

Devoid of any sort of benevolent features, the editors sadly lamented that “it is most earnestly hoped that the free colored people of Maryland may see that their best and most permanent interests will be consulted by their emigration from this State.” Then, the editors essentially backpedaled a bit, insisting that black Baltimoreans would instead benefit from a form of colonization that was voluntary, quite possibly emigration to Trinidad. “While this Convention would deprecate any departure from this principle which makes colonization dependant [*sic*] upon the voluntary action of the free people themselves –yet, if regardless of what has been done to provide them with an asylum, they continue to persist in remaining in Maryland,” Ray and Cornish further maintained that black Baltimoreans would be mistaken if they remained in Maryland and expected to gain “an equality of social and political rights...” such that colonization would “deprive them of the freedom of choice,” that voluntary emigration offered.³⁵² Black Baltimoreans were justified in giving emigration to Trinidad serious consideration.³⁵³ Interested in learning more about the labor conditions, the climate, and legal status of emigrants in both Trinidad and British Guiana, black Baltimoreans turned directly to Burnley for insight into Trinidad as well as other immigration representatives to assess the viability of emigration. In front of church congregations and anti-colonization groups, Burnley issued promises of free passage and readily available employment, which functioned as valuable enticements for black Baltimoreans.³⁵⁴ In turn, Burnley strategically frames Trinidad as a colony, operating freely, without racial constraints.

As racial lines hardened, black Baltimoreans endeavored to confront escalating racism in employment directly as well as challenge the implementation of socially restrictive laws. Phillips

³⁵² “Maryland Colonization Standing—Boldly Out,” *The Colored American*, June 19, 1841.

³⁵³ Jones, *Birthright Citizenship*, 60.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

describes Baltimorean communities as “internally divided yet capable of coalescing in the face of external challenges,” such that the religious advocacy of Methodist congregations forged a distinctive religious identity while also motivating many Baltimoreans to become involved in the “color-conscious policies and activities of white Methodists.”³⁵⁵ Phillips also insists that since black Baltimoreans did not embody any of the extremes of class and internal color-consciousness that could be found elsewhere in the United States, they developed distinct cultural and political differences that shaped the parameters of reform organizations that considered and debated the various facets of the American Colonization Society.

Peck and Price & the Advantages to be derived by Colored People Migrating

While black Baltimoreans were drawn to “the prospect of wage employment in places advertising for laborers”³⁵⁶ that Trinidad offered, they remained just as vulnerable to the enticements of emigration as black New Yorkers. Meeting held in private residences along with public meetings in local churches and large-scale political rallies were convened throughout Baltimore’s black neighborhoods to discuss the merits of emigration. In response to Burnley’s efforts, the Board of Directors of the Emigration Society of Baltimore, an organization of free black Baltimoreans, convened a meeting at the city’s Bethel A.M.E Church on November 25, 1839. The meeting commissioned Nathaniel Peck and Thomas Price to visit Trinidad and British Guiana with the explicit purpose of “ascertaining the character of the climate, soil, its natural productions, and the political and social condition of the coloured inhabitants of the province.”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Christopher Phillips, *Freedom’s Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 215-220.

³⁵⁶ Phillips, *Freedom’s Port*, 215.

³⁵⁷ Nathaniel Peck and Thomas Price, *Report of Messrs. Peck and Price, Delegates to Visit British Guiana and the Island of Trinidad for the Purpose of Ascertaining the Advantages to Be Derived by the Colored People Migrating to Those Places*, (Baltimore: Woods and Crane, 1840), 5.

By sharing important information pertaining to the conditions of both Trinidad and British Guiana, Peck and Price were expected to advise their “brethren” who felt “disposed to emigrate” as to which region would be the best for resettlement.

Nathaniel Peck, a “wall colorer,” was also a “lay minister” at Bethel. Thomas Price worked as “a whitewasher” for the city.³⁵⁸ According to the Chairman of Baltimore’s Emigration Society, they were selected because they were “two of the most industrious, intelligent, and respectable of our coloured population.” The Society hoped both men would be “received and treated” well throughout their tour.³⁵⁹ Peck and Price were commissioned to assess the potential viability of either colony.

On January 21, 1840, Peck and Price left for British Guiana. Over a period of seven weeks, the pair traveled throughout the coast, touring plantations as special invited guests. On March 10, the pair left British Guiana, made a brief stop in Grenada before securing passage to Trinidad on March 17, 1840, where they spent an additional three and a half weeks touring and conversing with native Trinidadians and black settlers.³⁶⁰ As American delegates in both regions, Peck and Price received flattering hospitality and warm invitations from planters to tour plantation estates as well as invitations from emigrant laborers to tour their cottages and provisional grounds. It is quite possible that “acts of kindness” and welcoming hospitality of white planters may have also played a role in shaping their preference for British Guiana. The fourth chapter describes the conditions in British Guiana and Trinidad. *The Report* functions as a lens to explore the conditions under which American emigrant responded to their conditions, obstacles, and hardships upon emigrating to the British Caribbean. Even though their report was

³⁵⁸ Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 216.

³⁵⁹ Peck and Price, *Report of Messrs. Peck and Price*, 3.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4, 23.

largely centered on describing the landscape of British Guiana, they stated that work on Trinidad's sugar estates was "propelled by mules, or water," which was dwarfed by the power of British Guiana's steam-engines. Peck and Price expressed a clear preference for one region over another; they assessed British Guiana as the location for American emigrants to settle. Despite a clear partiality for British Guiana, their efforts ultimately laid the groundwork for 257 black Baltimoreans to depart Maryland to Trinidad between 1840 and 1842.³⁶¹

Shortly after Peck and Price arrived in Georgetown, British Guiana's capital, they observed the strategic positioning of both principal businesses and residences, the locations of churches, and the region's urban and country landscapes. With houses positioned "at least twenty feet apart," they agreed that this particular spatial orientation allowed for a "free circulation of air," and the accompanying "large balconies" that were covered in "ornamental trees, shrubbery, and flowers," allowed for greater comfort. Meanwhile rainwater collected in cisterns made of "iron plates" tasted "very pure, clear, and pleasant." In terms of Georgetown's religious communities, Peck and Price acknowledged that they passed by "two Protestant churches; one Presbyterian; three Wesleyan Methodist, and one Catholic" and felt "highly gratified" that each church was "well attended," and were eager to share the fact that each religious community "had entirely abolished prejudice." Even though these religious communities functioned as racially egalitarian spaces, an economic hierarchy was exhibited by one's "ability to purchase...pews and seats."³⁶²

On board an American-built steamer, Peck and Price approached Leguain and Wakanaam, islands positioned at the delta of the Essequibo River, directly off the coast of British Guiana. With a Mr. William Jones as their tour guide, they were both able to craft a fairly concise

³⁶¹ Ibid., 3.

³⁶² Ibid., 6 -7.

description of Legaun's and Wakanaam's landscape. They first described the land as "flat, with canals running throughout the cultivated portion of the colony." The canals were built to perform three distinct purposes, to "drain the land for the cultivation of sugar," to function as "fences or boundaries between plantations," and thirdly operate as a "means of transportation for the canes from the fields to the works, and from the works to the shipping."³⁶³ Because of these features, considerably less animal labor was required for carrying commodities to market.

As they continued their tour, Peck and Price described the countryside as a tropical climate having an "animated appearance." Legaun's and Wakanaam's fertile soil produced everything from "Oranges, limes, and coconuts... Sweet potatoes, yams, cassava...and corn," meanwhile sugar and coffee functioned as the region's central agricultural commodity. While spending two days in Wakanaam, a Capt. Williamson, a "proprietor who sent over one of his schooners" transported them between two of his plantations, entitled "Good Intent" and "Spring Garden." It was upon their thirty-mile-long expedition the Arabian Coast accompanied by another planter, a Mr. Charles Benjamin, that the two delegates surveyed a series of agricultural estates that had previously been under a "high state of cultivation" but had been "recently thrown out for the want of labourers." More importantly, the chief concern expressed by the laborers they encountered was that "there were many more acres of beautiful land only abandoned or thrown out the last year," such that "the canes and weeds growing up together...particularly at 'Spring Garden'...were canes decaying for the want of persons to cut and bring them to the works."³⁶⁴ Given that these first descriptions of British Guiana primarily framed the agricultural landscape as advantageous, their observations of this particular overgrowth and disarray

³⁶³ Ibid., 7.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

demonstrates an urgency, a need for additional labor. Nevertheless, the delegates' various tours and observations explained that:

Every estate presents quite an imposing appearance. The sugar works being very large, and all the machinery propelled by steam-engines; the proprietors, managers, and overseers' houses are very fine buildings; the hand-some cottages for the labourers, now being built on an improved plan, averaging from thirty to sixty in number gives them appearance of a considerable village.³⁶⁵

After attending a criminal court case back in Georgetown, the delegates felt reassured about the feasibility of economic mobility as they witnessed "coloured gentlemen" in positions of public office, participating in court trials, and working as "tellers in the bank[s]." This optimism, followed by conversations with several "white gentlemen" and free people of color, indicated a sense that "everything was in harmony with their [Guiana's] professions." They also made sure to mention that all social and economic divisions were grounded on the premise that "the only distinction in society is education, character and wealth, for the higher walks—then gradations down, according to condition." And even though legislation only allowed British citizens to hold official positions in government, thereby excluding emigrants, Peck and Price's assessment of both the agricultural and professional landscape of British Guiana served to affirm their favoritism.³⁶⁶

In terms of agricultural and domestic labor, the delegates mentioned that "wages paid for laborers and mechanics" started at 33 cents per task on most corn and sugar estates. Peck and Price learned that master carpenters earned wages ranging from 1 dollar to a 1 dollar and 25 cents per task. With this information they assert that "if our people would to emigrate there, they would [be in a position to] command [even] higher [wages]." Meanwhile, they also made sure to remark on the fact that they had encountered a young woman who worked on an estate called

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 12-13.

“Success” in Legau, and she had expressed to them that by the time she finished “her second task by twelve o’clock,” she was no fatigued at all, and had enough stamina to complete another “three tasks.” She also went on to mention that by the time the sunset, she could usually complete another task before returning home to her family’s “comfortable cottage.”³⁶⁷ These cottages frequently contained “two rooms on the first floor, and one above, with as much ground attached as they can cultivate in vegetables...”³⁶⁸ These family centered living accommodations were buttressed by “fine schools” on nearby estates with churches scattered “in every direction.”

In relation to many of the articles published in *The Colored American*, both *The Report* along with Campbell’s and Burnley’s published letters corroborate the critical demand for agricultural labor needed to cultivate commodities for both local consumption and export. As the pair continued to explain the earning potential of specific occupations for primarily male occupations, mechanics, carpenters, boat-builders, wood cutters, they also addressed the potential earning of women in both British Guiana and Trinidad, who could employ themselves as nurses, seamstresses, and washwomen upon arrival, earning as much as “1 dollar per dozen...for washing clothing.”³⁶⁹ By explaining these wage break downs, Peck and Price situated the two British colonies as increasingly financially advantageous locations for emigrants to resettle.

While agricultural labor was in high demand next to specialized laborers, female workers and gendered occupations were also necessary to sustain growing families and maintain domestic functions within emigrant communities. Even though emigrant women could usually obtain employment in highly gendered occupations, their presence reveals the necessity of such labor—

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 15.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 15, 18.

to heal, clean, and clothes, thereby playing a critical role in sustaining the daily operations of emigrant families and their communities. While their report only directly references women twice, emigrant women were to play integral roles in supporting the efforts of agricultural laborers.

By March 17th, Peck and Price arrived in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Immediately, the two were ushered to Naparima, a district of southern Trinidad, where they toured two estates owned by Robert Bushe and conversed with two different emigrant families. It was during their tour of the first estate that Peck and Price encountered a group of emigrants from the United States who expressed a clear dissatisfaction with their current circumstances. Meanwhile, another family employed on another of Bushe's estates appeared "determined" to overcome these obstacles as they pursued employment as agricultural laborers.³⁷⁰

On the first estate, the emigrants reported that their dissatisfaction stemmed primarily from three central challenges that they endured during their transition to life in Trinidad. They stated that many of them had "sold their furniture in the States, for little or nothing;" and upon their arrival, the purchase price for these same goods and pieces of furniture were much more expensive than the prices that they had originally paid. In turn, the initial cost of settling on the island was much higher than they had anticipated. Finally, they stated that the location of churches and religious communities were "a good distance from some of them." By not having a closely accessible community to socialize and share communion with, this group felt alienated, making the process of adjustment increasingly difficult. Another complaint included the high price of basic provisions.³⁷¹ The inflated cost of purchasing their necessities made their overall cost of living higher and more difficult to obtain. These difficulties made them increasingly

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 18-20. Robert Bushe purchased several estates in Naparima, Trinidad in 1829, a mere fifteen years after departing St. Vincent; Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years After Slavery*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 35.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 23.

“dissatisfied” with their current circumstances. Immediately after, Peck and Price encountered another set of emigrants, “who appeared to be in [much] better spirits.”³⁷² This particular group appeared to be “determined to surmount all temporary difficulties and show what can be done.”³⁷³ In an effort to make the best of their conditions and circumstances, they had planted personal vegetable gardens, which gave them with an profound sense of autonomy and allowed them to function independently such that to Peck and Price “they appear to be thriving.”³⁷⁴ In this manner, this group of emigrants utilized their enthusiasm and determination to not only overcome early obstacles and hardships of relocation and settlement, but also to appreciate the agricultural potential that the fertile land provided. While Peck and Price failed to mention from where specifically the emigrants they encountered immigrated from in the United States, their conversation was nonetheless informative.

The delegates attempted to capture descriptions of each estate, town, and conversation, recounting that they were received with the greatest hospitality. It is quite possible that the generosity and the warm reception that Peck and Price received while being hosted by white Guianans and Trinidadians may have been contributed to their descriptions. They in turn carried back to Baltimore an excitement for the emigration project. They provided vivid descriptions and recount the vast opportunities available for emigrants. They however failed to mention the conditions of most freed people or explain what roles they occupied, especially in relation to the arrival of black Americans.

Upon their return to Baltimore, Peck and Price made a series of public appearances to present “all [the] information [they had] acquired” and to explain just how “such

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

advantages...[could] justify the free coloured population of the City and State to migrate thither.”³⁷⁵ More importantly, Peck and Price provided a glimpse of the experiences, hardships, and most importantly insights into both the “satisfaction” and “dissatisfaction” of emigrants who had previously resettled in the region. Their pamphlet serves as useful material to gain greater clarity as to why free people of color from Baltimore considered emigrating from the United States to Trinidad.

By the beginning of April 1840, 70 “colored emigrants” from Baltimore boarded the brig *Porpoise* for Trinidad.³⁷⁶ Within the next three days, another 120 black Baltimoreans had already paid for their passage to Trinidad in the next three weeks.³⁷⁷ Likewise, the brig *Northerner* departed for Trinidad within the same month with an additional 93 black Baltimoreans aboard, while the *Belvidera* sailed for the island with another 135 “colored emigrants” aboard.³⁷⁸ According to Jones, the emigrants departed from Baltimore in family groups, and were required to appear before a Baltimore clerk to retrieve a “travel permit.” Even though were not required to retrieve permission from court before their departure, they were notified that, if they intended for whatever reason to return to Maryland, they would need a permit to re-enter the country. Despite these ominous warnings, “those bound for Trinidad hedged their bets with small slips of paper that affirmed their enduring claim to place, even as they would venture far from Maryland.”³⁷⁹ Even as late as November 1841, black Baltimoreans were leaving for Trinidad.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷⁶ Jones, *Birthright Citizenship*, 61.

³⁷⁷ “Colored Emigrants,” *Sun*, April 14, 1840; Jones, *Birthright Citizenship*, 61-62.

³⁷⁸ “For Trinidad,” *Sun*, April 14, 1840; “For Trinidad,” *Sun*, May 8, 1840.

³⁷⁹ Jones retrieved several travel permits assigned to Baltimore emigrants from the Baltimore County Court, Miscellaneous Court Papers, 1840; Jones, *Birthright Citizenship*, 61-62.

³⁸⁰ “Emigrants to Trinidad,” *Sun*, November 18, 1841.

However, letters sent from black Baltimorean emigrants to their loved ones back in Maryland shed light on the experiences of emigrants themselves and describe the conditions of laborers in Trinidad as “less than ideal.” For example, Edward Crew along with his wife, Belinda, shared their observations: “We had also the pleasure on Sunday afternoon, of seeing the soldiers in the barracks, there are some hundreds of them, all colored.”³⁸¹ Meanwhile Richard Freeman, another emigrant explained that many of his peers back in Maryland had struggled and were denied work as ship pilots and lawyers found Trinidad to be a “country of equal rights, and [I] have the satisfaction of seeing them administered in part by men of our own complexion... When we met the light boat in the river we had the satisfaction of taking the Pilot on board, who was a colored man.”³⁸²

In response to Peck and Price’s findings, black Baltimoreans would continue to emigrate to Trinidad through the spring of 1841. In January, a social convention was held at the Sharp Street Methodist Church in Baltimore to debate emigration and discuss its merits. At the convention’s conclusion, the participants strongly urged their “colored brethren who may be dissatisfied and discontented with their condition in their country, to accept the offers held out to them.”³⁸³ To those wishing to end their struggle in fighting against white racism and legal degradation, emigration represented a viable alternative. Out of the vast majority of black Baltimoreans who decided to remain in Maryland, they continued to endure the hard work in order to “fight” against the nation’s unjust laws.

The “push” of African colonization, the draw of Trinidad as presented by Burnley, and the “pull” for emigration from planters in Trinidad permeated black social groups, local religious

³⁸¹ Phillips, *Freedom’s Port*, 194.

³⁸² “Returning of the Rev. Mr. Hunt to Newark, N.J.,” *The Colored American*, February 13, 1841.

³⁸³ “Pursuant to Notice,” *Sun*, January 1, 1841; Jones, *Birthright Citizenship*, 62.

congregations, and political organizations. In response to Burnley's calls for emigration and the escalation of legal degradation, 250 black Methodists left Baltimore for Trinidad in 1840.³⁸⁴ Instead of remaining in Maryland and continuing to participate in the fight against white racism, colonization, and the restrictions of "quasi-freedom," Phillips argues that this particular group of black Baltimoreans represented an exodus of American emigrants who sought to claim the dignity and self-respect that citizenship granted, and that they felt could never be obtained if they remained in the United States. Of those who chose to depart Baltimore for Trinidad, they embodied what Phillips describes as "the accomplishments of Baltimore's black community," whose perseverance "bear[s] witness to the indomitable spirit of those not only geographically closest to freedom but also ideologically furthest from slavery."

Settling in Trinidad

As free laborers, these emigrants established themselves in communities alongside the descendants of the free blacks who immigrated to Trinidad before emancipation. Naparima, in southern Trinidad, was considered the best place to resettle refugee from the War of 1812, it possessed fertile soil, contained considerably less crown land than other regions, and it already had established settlements consisting of free people of color nearby. The six village companies who successfully forged their existence as black settlers in Trinidad served as inspiration for black Americans considering the merits of emigration. Knowing that previous Americans had already established themselves on small agricultural estates, obtained employment and helped to implement an educational, transportation, and commercial enterprise in the region provided evidence to *Colored American* readers that emigration to Trinidad was not only viable but also

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 3, 29-32.

represented a profound sense of freedom that could not be achieved by other free people of color residing in the United States.

The immigration of workers to the colony became a central concern for Burnley. By October of 1842, Charles Chipchase, Trinidad's Collector of Customs encouraged that the acting governor give Burnley the authorization "to hire a suitable and proper place for the reception and accommodation of all immigrants arriving from the neighboring West India islands and colonies, and [southern United States]...to provide (if necessary) proper food and sustenance for immigrants located at such place, for the space of three clear days at least after their landing; and that they may be at liberty to remain in such place during one week or longer."³⁸⁵ Chipchase insisted that colonial administrators and planters acquire a newer and much better equipped location to receive arriving immigrants. For these reasons, Chipchase understood the importance of creating a space in which planters would be best equipped to recruit as well as pick from the pool of new arrivals. The majority of the members of the Legislative Council were in agreement with this arrangement and voted to have immigrants brought into a public square where planters could better recruit laborers, and that the immigrants themselves could be granted additional time to consider where and for whom they wanted to work. However, Burnley was not pleased with the arrangements that Chipchase proposed.

According to Chipchase, this new arrangement would better allow both American and West Indian immigrants who were entering Trinidad to "cast upon the community as it were to the best bidder, who might offer for their services," in addition to ensuring that he or she would receive competitive wages. When newly arrived immigrants were not corralled into specific spaces, they were frequently "snapped up" and carried away to dark holes and dungeons" by

³⁸⁵ *Port of Spain Gazette*, November 3, 1842; Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 181.

those planters who first accessed them.³⁸⁶ In turn, the *Port of Spain Gazette* indicated that members of the Legislative Council eventually came to agree that a central meeting location for immigrants to be introduced and converse with planters was necessary in order for the colonial government and newly arrived immigrants to fully embrace the opportunities available.

³⁸⁶ *Port of Spain Gazette*, November 3, 1842; Cudjoe, *The Slave Master of Trinidad*, 182.

CONCLUSION

The 'Push' and 'Pull' of Trinidadian Emigration

By 1840, a wide range of societal pressures pushed groups of black Americans to leave everything they treasured in America, while a variety of hopes pulled and encouraged them to settle in Trinidad. Each wave of migrants to Trinidad were motivated by a combination of push and pull factors, meanwhile each migrant's motivations were also informed by the conditions they left behind in America as well as the aspirations they intended to embody by resettling in Trinidad.³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the backgrounds of these emigrants varied widely. These emigrants traversed the Atlantic often as family units, single men, and even as single women. They came to Trinidad from various socio-economic levels, formerly employed as laundresses, skilled artisans, unskilled day laborers, merchants, religious leaders, and farmers. And even though many of them had "gone out as agriculturalists and laborers [and were] doing well, and are perfectly satisfied," others who had previously held employment as "barbers and waiters [were] not accustomed to work on plantations," and were considered to be "dissatisfied." The testimonies of emigrants' lived experiences speak to tensions between their expectations and the harsh realities of resettlement.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ While several scholars have emphasized the limitations that the use of "push" and "pull" factors create when describing the influences of migrant, for other historians who examine patterns of migration, the "push" and "pull" model enables them to continue a method of organizing and explaining the particular motives of migrants. Turn to Bernard Bailyn's introduction to *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1994), 5, for a detailed discussion of this particular model. Meanwhile, Peter Meilander's *Toward a Theory of Immigration*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 196, provides a useful explanation as to why this model is still a useful organizational and analytical tool.

³⁸⁸ *Baltimore Sun*, April 4, 1840; Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 217-218.

Reverend Thomas P. Hunt, a member of Theodore S. Wright's Church in Newark, New Jersey, departed New York for Trinidad in February of 1839 with the intention of ascertaining the "condition of our people there," and seeking employment as a preacher.³⁸⁹ Mr. Bush, a young painter from Baltimore was satisfied with his daily wages of a dollar and hope.³⁹⁰ Meanwhile, a Mr. Merriweather, also hailing from New Jersey was described by Reverend Hunt as a "worthless idle person" who did nothing but drink alcohol from the moment he boarded the vessel *Metamora*, leaving New York for Port of Spain. The working-class Baltimore family led by patriarch, William Brown, his wife, Frances and their daughter Sarah Ann, left Baltimore for Trinidad shortly after Nathaniel Peck and Thomas Price had returned from the region to share their observations and recommendations with their congregation. These individuals and their stories function as a lens into the hardships and lived experiences of emigrant men and women who were driven to the island by promises and expectations, only to have their visions of fruitfulness shattered by the racial attitudes deployed by Burnley and his fellow planters, as well as economic hardship.

In turn, each narrative speaks to elements of enthusiasm and satisfaction felt by emigrants in addition to sentiments of alienation and frustration. More importantly, these reflections reinforce an overarching desire to assess one's circumstances and actions in the pursuit of financial advancement and receive affirmation from fellow free people of color. Pushed out from the United States and Canada by the country's refusal to treat them as equals, and witnessing the limitations to their socio-economic mobility, black Americans saw Trinidad as a place where

³⁸⁹ "Contradiction," *The Colored American*, May 9, 1840; "Trinidad—Return of Rev. Mr. Hunt," *The Colored American*, January 16, 1841.

³⁹⁰ "Contradiction," *The Colored American*, May 9, 1840

both economic opportunities and the acquisition of land that had been closed off to them in their home countries could now be made readily available.

Many black Americans lived in well-established communities throughout Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York served by schools, churches, and local institutions. Some blacks in neighborhoods that were interspersed, others lived close to one another, while several others clustered around certain streets or corridors. In 1840, Baltimore contained the largest population of free people of color, some 25,000. Philadelphia and New York City both contained approximately 12,000.³⁹¹ The number of enslaved people in both cities was miniscule in 1839. For the majority of black American emigrants, social life along with employment were centered in the city, in stark contrast to the rest of the United States, “where less than 4 percent of the population lived in urban communities.”³⁹² While not all emigrants to Trinidad came from urban communities, many rural folk chose to relocate to the island.

Colonizationists strategically excluded black Americans from not only contributing to discussions of citizenship and freedom, but they also rejected the idea that black Americans could participate in the Republic’s body politic.³⁹³ As the national colonization movement garnered the support of prominent political leaders and followers, free people of color were encouraged to consider potential locations for resettlement, which included not only West Africa, but also places such as the independent republic of Haiti and British plantation colonies such as Trinidad and British Guiana. Each of these locations proved attractive to black Americans. The complete abolition of slavery achieved in 1838, and the prospects for wage employment as

³⁹¹ Sarah Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing: African American and the Haitian Emigration Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 78.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom: Climate, Settler Colonialism, and Black Exclusion in the Age of Emancipation*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 102.

advertised by planters and emigration agents appeared particularly attractive to potential emigrants in New York, and who continued to grapple with securing employment in the aftermath of the economic depression and Panic of 1837.³⁹⁴ Black New Yorkers faced fierce competition and intense racism in their quests for employment. With limitations placed on their ability to participate in the legal process and earn competitive wages, black New Yorkers and Baltimoreans increasingly considered the merits of migration from the United States to Trinidad and British Guiana. They were intrigued by advertisements, public meetings, descriptive pamphlets, and published editorials that promoted the idea that they could “elevate” themselves in a manner that was not currently available to them.³⁹⁵

Departures from New York and Baltimore to Trinidad

The recruitment efforts of William Hardin Burnley, emigration representative for the colonial government of Trinidad, played an integral role in drawing attention to Trinidad and attempts to reconstruct colonial labor during Trinidad’s post emancipation era. Even though Burnley failed to persuade blacks in Nova Scotia to immigrate to Trinidad in December of 1838, his efforts in New York and Baltimore the following spring were significantly more fruitful. With his focus centered on acquiring the specialized skills needed by Trinidad’s planters, Burnley made tremendous headway in achieving his objective. The 239 black Americans who departed New York for Port of Spain, Trinidad, in November of 1839 were drawn to Trinidad not only for the economic potential that could be derived from settling there, but they were also drawn to the existing communities of black Americans who succeeded as agriculturalists and

³⁹⁴ Phillips, *Freedom’s Port*, 215; William Law Mathieson, *British Slave Emancipation*, (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1932).

³⁹⁵ “Emigration to Trinidad and British Guiana,” *The Colored American*, March 7, 1840.

regional traders. More importantly, Trinidad's 1838 "Ordinance for Facilitating the Immigration" of laborers into the colony solidified immigration law in an effort to accelerate the recruitment of free black laborers.

Within days of Peck and Price's return to Baltimore in April of 1840, three American vessels carrying 518 black Americans headed for Port of Spain. By June, another group of 257 arrived in the island. An analysis of the emigrants to Trinidad from New York and Baltimore reveals why they left the United States, and points to how they resettled and responded to the conditions on the island. Of the 257 individuals who left Baltimore for Trinidad, 175, or forty-three families traveled together. Twenty-four family units were described as being "male-headed," ten were "female-headed," and the remaining nine families "were siblings traveling together."³⁹⁶ Only fifty-five single males emigrated, "twelve of whom were brothers traveling together," while only twenty-four single women made the venture.³⁹⁷

Harsh Realities and Emigrants' Return

Despite promises of freedom and high wages, the majority of emigrants ultimately decided to return to the United States. According to *The Colored American*, they expressed frustration at the "inability of migrant women to practice female-specific labor." Such disadvantages functioned as points of contention amongst emigrants.³⁹⁸ In a scathing report submitted to *The Colored American* by a migrant who had settled in Trinidad in 1839, and returned to New York the following year, "the women can find nothing at all to do, excepting

³⁹⁶ Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 218.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ "New from Trinidad," *The Colored American*, April 11, 1840; Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 107.

men's labor, cutting cane in the field, which is so unlike the labor our American women are accustomed to, they cannot do it."³⁹⁹

Not only did this migrant's observation speak to gendered hardships that had not been mentioned by Burnley in any of his published editorials, or the observations of Peck and Price upon their return to Baltimore in 1840, it also functioned as a profound warning or denunciation of emigration to Trinidad. More importantly, the parallel drawn between gendered labor and ideals of "Americanness" serves to frame black female emigrants as "deserving of such gendered arrangements," such that it "endowed" black American women with both "normative gender attributes and [an] American identity."⁴⁰⁰ These public denunciations of Trinidad emigration also provided opponents of emigration opportunity to create a narrative that emphasized the "Americanness" of free black communities as well as the "femininity" of black American women, which up until 1840 had garnered only nominal attention in discussions on gender, citizenship, and racial discourses in the United States.⁴⁰¹

In June of 1840, opposition to emigration to Trinidad had garnered increasing momentum, such that prominent members of New York's American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society issued an official statement in direct opposition to Trinidad's continued recruitment efforts.⁴⁰² By that fall, the editors of *The Colored American* declared an outright end to their discussions of the merits of Trinidad emigration. The newspaper's co-editor, Samuel Cornish, even went so far as to call any further debates over emigration as "dead," insisting that black New Yorkers were opposed to leaving the United States.⁴⁰³ Despite these assertions, discussions

³⁹⁹ "New from Trinidad," *The Colored American*, April 11, 1840

⁴⁰⁰ Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 107.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² "Extracts from the Report of the Late Executive Committee," *American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter*, June 1840, vol.1, no.1; Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 107.

⁴⁰³ "Anti-Trinidad Meeting," *The Colored American*, October 31, 1840.

on emigration continued, especially among New York's black elite who readily reacted to editorials, reports, and commentaries in *The Colored American*. The announcement that 250 black American emigrants, originally from Baltimore, had died in Trinidad, solidified opposition to emigration.⁴⁰⁴ Of the estimated 1,333 black Americans who emigrated to Trinidad by 1841, the majority would return to the United States.⁴⁰⁵ Donald Wood maintains that by 1848, only 148 American migrants remained on the island working on plantations.⁴⁰⁶ The return of these migrants to the United States demonstrates just how they responded to their dissatisfaction with the limited opportunities available and the physically exhaustive agricultural labor to which they were not accustomed.

⁴⁰⁴ "West India Emigration," *The Colored American*, October 17, 1840.

⁴⁰⁵ Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 15; Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 108.

⁴⁰⁶ Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years After Slavery*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 68.

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