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The Haitian Evolution

Emigration And Diasporan Consciousness In Nineteenth Century America

by

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To Samuel and Seymour

Introduction
Old Homes, New Homes

Between the summer of 1824 and the spring of 1825, thousands of African Americans abandoned their homes and sailed for new ones in Haiti. In most cases these emigrants carried little more than the expectation that they could soon enjoy what life in the United States denied them. They dreamed of freedom. Serena Baldwin, an adolescent girl accompanying her mother, succinctly captured their hopes in a letter to her former instructor. "Dear teacher," she wrote of her new home, "if ever there was a country where Liberty dwells, it is here. It is a blessing enjoyed alike by all men, without respect to fortune or color – it cannot be otherwise, as our motto is, 'Liberty and Equality.'"[1] Others also spoke of liberty and equality without respect to race or class.[2] Free blacks who journeyed to the world's first black Republic hoped it would reward their blackness with these crucial elements of freedom. Yet their experiences there would dash these hopes, leading many to return to the United States. In the wake of their return African Americans could lay claim only to the land of their births.

These emigrants' story – the ideas with which they arrived, the hardships they endured, and the ambiguous role Haiti played in black consciousness after they left – complicates our understandings of freedom and blackness. Above all it reveals a level of intellectual complexity often overlooked by historians of these times and people. The inability of emigrants to integrate fully into Haiti's culture and nation left an indelible mark on how some African Americans conceived of themselves in relation to Haitians. By the late

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[1] Abigail Field Mott, ed., *Biographical Sketches and Interesting Anecdotes of Persons of Color. To Which is Added, a Selection of Pieces of Poetry* (New York, 1837), 330 – 335.
[2] For instance, see editorial by "Africanus" in *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, April 1825, Vol.IV, No.7 (Baltimore, MD), 105.

1820s, free black leaders were beginning to articulate a complex diasporan consciousness[3] – one that recognized both racial commonalities and cultural differences between African peoples in the Americas. A few began to identify as members of an emerging diaspora *and* as Americans.

The story of 1820s emigration to Haiti is hardly unfamiliar to historians.[4] There are, however, only two monograph-length treatments dedicated to it, and both works focus more heavily on the movement of the early 1860s – a period when African Americans again considered Haiti as a potential destination. James Jackson's dissertation, "The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism: Afro-American and Haytian Relations, 1800 – 1863," tells how the emigrations of the 1820s and 1860s "represented important developments in the evolution of Pan-African nationalism in the Americas."[5] In *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, Chris Dixon probes the roots of black nationalism and vaguely suggests nineteenth century Haitian emigration represented "a dramatic element of the black diaspora."[6] Both scholars emphasize the later movement's significance because of their obvious interest in the development of pan-Africanism and black nationalism. The 1850s and early 1860s were, at least by some accounts, one of the high-water marks of classical black nationalism in the United States.[7] Jackson and Dixon's placement of Haiti within the center of classical black nationalist discourse presents an important reinterpretation of black nationalism, as well as of its periodization.

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[3] Kim Butler defines a "diasporan consciousness" as group awareness among dispersed peoples forged through intellectual and personal contact outside the ancestral homeland. To use her visual metaphor, if the hub of a wheel connected to various spokes best represents a physical scattering of people, a diasporan consciousness completes the wheel, linking the spokes to each other as well as to the center. See Kim Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 10, no.2 (2001): 189 – 217.

[4] For earlier treatments, see Floyd Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787 – 1863* (Urbana, 1975), 74 – 82; James O'Dell Jackson III, "The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism: Afro-American and Haytian Relations, 1800 – 1863," Northwestern University, Ph.D., 1976; Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787 – 1848* (Philadelphia, 1988), 49 – 69; Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720 – 1840*, (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 243 – 245; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens, 1992), 28 – 32; Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *The Roots of African American Identity: Memory and History in Free Antebellum Communities* (New York, 1997), 145 – 166; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700 – 1860* (New York, 1997), 180 – 186; Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2000); Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: the Life of James Forten* (New York, 2002), 209 – 220.

[5] Jackson, "The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism," vii.

[6] Dixon, *African America and* Haiti, 2.

But the 1820s movement was not a mere prelude to the emigration of the 1850s. The story told here demonstrates that the historiography of black nationalism only partly accounts for the ways African Americans responded to their dynamic place in the worlds they inhabited. Scholars have yet to reach any consensus over the definition of nineteenth century black nationalism, its periodization, or which historical actors actually pursued its means and ends.[8] Even their broadest definitions – ones that conflate nationalism with pan-Africanism, or the movement to cultivate racial unity among disparate African peoples around the world – understate the complex nature of nineteenth century African American consciousness and identity construction. Contentious controversies over nationalism's meaning and periodization have misled scholars. Such debates have obscured the nuanced ways black Americans understood their places within the diaspora.

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[7] Many scholars actually point solely to the twentieth century for the rise of black nationalism. One exception is Wilson Moses, who marks the "golden age" of nationalist interest between the decade preceding the Civil War and the Garvey-led decade following the First World War. See Wilson Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850*-1925 (Hamden, CT, 1978). Also see his "Introduction" in Wilson Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York, 1996).

[8] In his seminal 1978 work *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, Wilson Moses argues black nationalism was inherently conservative, and maintains it only sometimes concerned itself with the quest for a nation in the geographical sense – that any impulse attempting to unify the entire black racial family is nationalist. Two decades later he limited the scope of his definition to an ideology whose goal was the "creation of an autonomous black nation-state with definite geographic boundaries." Chris Dixon, in his study of Haitian emigration, agrees with Moses' earlier, broader definition. He asserts black nationalism was "a racial consciousness and pride based around common – if not identical – experiences, leading to an emphasis on black self-reliance, and possibly, the establishment of a black nation-state." Sterling Stuckey, meanwhile, holds that black nationalism was an ideology that originated among slaves, and in contrast with Moses' classical periodization, argues the 1850s were merely the end of a decades-long nationalist process. Patrick Rael strongly disagrees with Stuckey's position on the origin of black nationalist ideologies. Relying on Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" model, he broadens the definition of black nationalism to an imagined discourse – one consciously constructed for political ends by an urban, bourgeois-looking black elite. As such, Rael concurs with Moses' thirty-year-old position that, even if cloaked in separatism, black nationalism was a conservative and assimilative ideology. See, respectively, Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, 17; Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism*, 1 – 2; Dixon, *African America and Haiti,* n1, 11; Sterling Stuckey, ed., *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston, 1972); Patrick Rael, *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill, 2002), 9 – 10, and 210 – 216.

Taken on its own terms, the story of 1820s Haitian emigration shows African American leaders beginning to grasp the distinct cultural differences that prevented the creation of a single black nation in the Americas. Those who rejected emigration to Haiti, yet still embraced it as a powerful political symbol, were not espousing contradictory worldviews. Nor were they, as Wilson Moses has suggested, merely anticipating the nationalist discourses of a later period.[9] Indeed, after the failure of Haitian emigration there were few free blacks who believed the creation of an actual black nation in the Americas was possible. By the late 1820s certain African Americans were beginning to articulate identities as both Americans and as members of a black diaspora. Those who retained their claims to Haiti did so because the idea of a black nation strengthened their fights for *American* freedom. Thus, a new diasporan consciousness encompassed, but was not defined by black nationalism.

This thesis traces the evolution of this diasporan consciousness through three stages. The first chapter traces the ideas originally motivating thousands to relocate to the Caribbean, and does so by exploring the dynamic relationship between emigrant constructions of freedom and blackness. Most emigrants sought political freedom from the racially-constricting society they inhabited. They desired self-governance, inalienable rights, and constitutional guarantees in a racially unified nation. They wanted, in short, American-style liberty without the problems their skin color aroused at home. Accordingly, then, did emigrants expect their black features to assure them at least the opportunity to enjoy freedom, for the Haitian motto was, as Serena Baldwin wrote it, "Liberty and Equality."[10]

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[9] Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism*, 7 – 19.

In reality Haiti assured neither liberty nor equality. The second chapter centers on the difficulties emigrants endured as they vainly attempted to adapt in a foreign country. Many arrived from urban backgrounds and possessed little or no knowledge of coffee cultivation, Haiti's main industry. Lacking the requisite agricultural skills to survive in the countryside, they often fled their allotted land. Emigrants also did not anticipate Haiti's unfamiliar disease environment, and in the weeks and months following their arrivals, many succumbed to it. Their faith also betrayed them; as Protestants they found themselves in a nation which viewed their evangelical beliefs with skepticism, and occasionally with hostility. But perhaps worst of all was that the newcomers encountered an alien racial matrix in the very nation they had hoped would regard their blackness as a virtue. Haiti's racialized class structure – different than that of the United States but no less disturbing – prevented emigrants' easy integration into the body politic. Of those who did not die or disappear into nearby cities, the majority returned home to live and struggle within the more familiar racial hierarchy they had hoped finally to escape.

This return left an ambiguous legacy. The third chapter suggests that the collapse of organized emigration facilitated a wide range of views among black leaders vis-à-vis Haiti, and among these views sprouted new visions alongside older conceptions. Most African Americans had, in the wake of the Haitian fiasco, rejected emigration movements anywhere, including to the Caribbean. The failure of Haitian emigration figured significantly in this shift, indicating that by some there was a rejection – perhaps, even, a loss – of Haiti. But several prominent black leaders continued to espouse visions that celebrated Haiti as a land of black strength and fortitude, unencumbered by the strife emigrants had witnessed and endured. Of these, a few propounded a nuanced vision, for their rejection of further emigration to Haiti only heightened the urgency of their radical arguments in favor of American freedom and equality. James Forten, Maria Stewart, David Walker, and others like them championed the legacy of a black Republic to further their own causes as black Americans. They did so as pragmatists, not as utopian nationalists. The black nationalist impulses which triggered the emigration remained prominent in various conversations, but only as part of a broader and more complicated diasporan consciousness.

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[10] Mott, ed., *Biographical Sketches*, 330 – 335.

A few sources help us chart the changing perceptions of a people left mostly voiceless. In 1824 and 1825, numerous mid-Atlantic newspapers published internal Haitian circulars, black leaders' statements, and emigrants' letters home. Hopeful of promoting the project within and without the black communities, several of these papers –*The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, *The United States Gazette,* and *The Niles Weekly Register*, among others – provided detailed, optimistic coverage of the events. Yet the overall scarcity of emigrants' voices from Haiti forces a reliance on more indirect methods. By carefully scrutinizing the letters and publications of Haitian officials and white promoters, the limited correspondence editors found for publication, and several travelogues, it is possible to tease out what emigrants hoped to attain in Haiti, as well as what happened to them once they got there. Meanwhile, the emergence of *Freedom's Journal* in 1827, coupled with the rising chorus of black denunciations of colonization in various 1820s milieus, allows for an analysis of the legacies Haitian emigration left in black consciousness. To borrow from Walter

Johnson, the combination of these sources "collectively tell a truth" about a people who generally lacked the literary and public resources to preserve their individual histories.[11]

Telling this story thus involves using the few voices that survived to discover why thousands left their homes for new ones on distant shores. It indicates that the history of African Americans is in many ways the history of a people exploring the tensions inherent in the ideas of freedom and blackness – a contest that appropriately stretched across both time and space. It demonstrates that by attempting to create new homes in Haiti, emigrants reconfigured their old homes in an emerging diaspora and, ultimately, in the United States. Through its telling this story helps us locate those homes as well.

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[11] Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 11.

Chapter One
Brothers and Friends

It was a mid-summer's day in 1824 when 120 black men, women, and children began their journey to Haiti. One ship had departed Philadelphia ten days earlier, and those who had just boarded the *De Witt Clinton* were about to become the second group of African American emigrants to set sail for the world's first black Republic.[1] Reverend Peter Williams, speaking on behalf of New York's Haytien Emigration Society of Coloured People, assured the passengers they were "going to a good country, governed by good laws, where a dark complexion will be no disadvantage." He told his audience that in their new nation they could expect "true freedom, and have as great advantages as any men in the world, to become independent and honourable, wise and good, respectable and happy."[2] With these words Williams iterated the "true freedom" African Americans sought in Haiti – equal advantages in a good nation "governed by good laws."

Most emigrants shared not only Williams' understanding of Haiti, but his definition of freedom as well. Put simply, emigrants believed that only in a black nation could they enjoy political equality. Two decades of contact between Haitians and various black communities helped spread awareness of the Haitian Revolution – as well as of its legacy – throughout black America.[3] As opportunities for free blacks faltered in the face of the early American Republic's intransigent racism, many began to see Haiti, with its radical antislavery heritage, as a black beacon in a white world. In 1824 Haiti's President Jean Pierre Boyer invited African Americans to emigrate, and thousands responded by moving their lives to the Caribbean. Believing Haitians were their "brethren," and that their emigration to Haiti would facilitate the union of an extended black "family," most emigrants linked their monolithic conceptions of blackness with their hopes for freedom.

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[1] Floyd Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787 – 1863* (Urbana, 1975), 79.

[2] Haytien Emigration Society of New York, *Address of the Board of Managers of the Haytien Emigration Society of Coloured People, To the Emigrants Intending to Sail to the Island of Hayti, the Brig De Witt Clinton* (New York, 1824), 3.

[3] There are several good renderings of the Haitian Revolution. For C.L.R. James seminal account, see C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London, 1938). For the most recent synthesis of scholarship, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

The ideas with which these African Americans arrived in the Caribbean constitute the first chapter in this story. Emigrants brought with them ideas of Haiti that derived not only from the rhetoric espoused by Haitian officials, but also from their own narrowly-defined diasporan consciousness – a consciousness that glossed over the significance of cultural differences between urban Americans and rural Haitians. Emigrants conceived of Haitians as their brothers and friends. They envisioned a land populated by members of the same "African" family. These were powerful ideas that motivated thousands to leave behind the land of their parent's bondage; they were also ideas that set emigrants on course for the tragic failures that followed.

In the early republican United States free blacks were only nominally free.[4] The four decades following American independence witnessed the dissolution of black hopes for equality in the face of poverty, segregation, and violence.[5] In cities such as Philadelphia and New York, commercial cores became richer and whiter while racially diverse peripheries became poorer.[6] Such areas became common sites of racialized violence, especially as poor whites who feared job competition fought equally poor blacks.[7] Worse still for African Americans was the realization that gradual emancipation in the North hardly translated into racial equality.[8] A distinct color line along geographical and socially constructed boundaries emerged throughout northern states, and with it came African Americans' exclusion from the body politic. An English visitor to Philadelphia noted that no amount of respectability, property, or character "will gain a man, whose body is (in American estimation) cursed with even a twentieth portion of the blood of his African ancestry, admission into this Society!!!"[9] Many free blacks concluded that true freedom was unattainable in such an environment. Some of them began to look beyond the nation's borders to get it.

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[4] The story of inequality within and without free black communities is a well-known one. For this immense historiography, begin with Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790 – 1860* (Chicago, 1961); Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800 – 1850* (Chicago, 1981); James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington and London, 1993); Nash, *Forging Freedom*; Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*; Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790 – 1860* (Urbana, IL, 1997); Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, especially 77 – 176; Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613 – 1863* (Chapel Hill, 1999), 162 – 226; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*; and Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626* – 1863 (Chicago, 2003), especially 72 – 169.

[5] Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 6.

One potential destination was Liberia, though by the early 1820s it held little appeal to most blacks. Founded by the American Colonization Society (ACS) along the western coast of Africa, Liberia was primarily the product of white racism. With its plan to relocate African Americans to West Africa, the ACS presented itself as a pan-Africanist organization. Yet southern politicians, particularly those interested in ridding the country of free blacks, channeled the society's aims towards their own pro-slavery goals.[10] The ACS initially attracted several black leaders, but in little time these leaders faced massive resistance within their communities.[11] A great number of African Americans quickly grasped that those who advocated Liberian colonization were working more towards removing them than towards eradicating slavery. In time, free blacks came to associate "colonization" with forced deportation and "emigration" with voluntary expatriation.[12]

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[6] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 181. New York's Five-Points serves as an excellent case-in-point. See Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 209; and Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 247 – 262.

[7] Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 144 – 158. For a general analysis of black occupations in antebellum cities, see Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America*.

[8] In New York, for example, the 1821 constitution disfranchised black men while black gatherings attracted violence. In the years preceding the 1827 emancipation, whites typically ignored distinctions between free blacks and slaves, particularly when black domestic servants worked in slave-owning households. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 96 – 98.

[9] Henry Bradshaw Fearon, *Sketches of America: A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles through Eastern and Western States*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1969), 167 – 168.

[10] Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 233 – 241. For an extended treatments of the ACS, see Philip J. Staudenrous, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816 – 1865* (New York, 1961); Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill, 2004).

ACS sponsorship thus made Liberia an unappealing destination, but free people of color refused to reject emigration to other destinations – including Haiti. A few had learned of Haiti through direct contact with natives of the French West Indies, who had arrived in the United States during Haiti's revolutionary days of the 1790s.[13] Black American conceptions also drew on extensive commercial contact between the United States and the Caribbean republic. According to one paper, trade with Haiti was, by 1825, "of more value to us than the joint trade" from Russia, Prussia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Malta combined.[14] Black seamen had been circulating first-hand accounts of their voyages for decades.[15] As such, they contributed greatly to a communal consciousness that transcended national boundaries.[16]

But Haiti occupied an important symbolic place in the psyches even of oppressed black men and women who had never met an actual resident of that nation. Haiti was, after all, an autonomous black Republic born out of a slave revolt – the only one in the Western Hemisphere that toppled the existing social order.[17] Its very existence proclaimed a challenge to enslavement everywhere.[18] Not only did the first article of its constitution outlaw slavery, but for decades black seamen, both enslaved and free, found sanctuary within its borders. From Dessalines to Boyer, Haitian officials had been actively encouraging informal immigration from other Caribbean locales, as well as from the United States. Their republic served as a constant reminder of the possibility of black freedom – a reminder that evoked as much fear in slave-owners as it did pride in African Americans.[19]

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[11] Richard Allen, for one, initially "spoke warmly in favor of colonization in Africa – declaring that were he young he would go himself." See Isaac Brown, *The Biography of Robert Finley* (1857), 123. For a broader discussion, see William Loren Katz' introduction "Earliest Responses of American Negroes and Whites to African Colonization" to William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization*, reprint of 1832 ed. (New York, 1968), i – xi.

[12] Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 28.

[13] Julie Winch asserts that interactions between Philadelphia's black elites and French-speaking "mulattoes" were unsurprising considering the "disproportionate number of mulattoes" arriving from positions of prosperity. Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, 50.

[14] *Niles Weekly Register*, July 30, 1825, 338.

[15] Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 27 – 28. Gary Nash and Jean Soderlund estimate that in Philadelphia, "Many young men, perhaps as many as one of every four, made their living at sea for at least a few years." Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath*, (New York, 1991), 170.

[16] W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 145.

Both James Forten and Prince Hall were leading black men in the early nineteenth century who expressed such pride. Their words hinted at the emergence of a nascent diasporan consciousness. That is, they articulated a sense that the fates of African Americans were interwoven with those of other African peoples in the Americas. Forten, the wealthy African American sail-maker, argued in 1817 that the Haitian Revolution proved blacks "could not always be detained in their present bondage."[20] A speech by the black Bostonian Prince Hall reflected a similar type of thinking. Speaking to the African Masonic Lodge in 1797, Hall entreated his

> "…brethren, let us not be cast down under these and many other abuses we at present labour under: for the darkest is before the break of day. My brethren, let us remember what a dark day it was with our African brethren six years ago, in the French West-Indies. Nothing but the snap of the whip was heard from morning to evening; hanging, broken on the wheel, burning, and all manner of tortures inflicted on those people for nothing else but to gratify their masters pride, wantonness, and cruelty: but blessed be God, the scene is changed; they now confess that God hath no respect of persons, and therefore receive them as their friends, and treat

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[17] For an excellent discussion of how the revolutionary currents of Saint Domingue's legacy traveled across space, see Julius Scott, "The Common Wind : Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (Unpublished Dissertation, Duke University, 1986).
[18] Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 28 – 29.
[19] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 144 – 147.
[20] Isaac V. Brown, *Biography of the Rev. Robert Finley, D. D., of Basking Ridge N. J. : with an account of his agency as the author of the American Colonization Society; also a sketch of the slave trade; a view of our national policy and that of Great Britain towards Liberia and Africa* (Philadelphia, 1857), 123.

> them as brothers. Thus doth Ethiopia begin to stretch forth her hand, from a sink of slavery to freedom and equality."

Thus did the 1791 slave revolt set a precedent for other blacks across the New World. Hall linked the fates of his countrymen with those who earned their freedom in the French Caribbean: one fight would engender another. And in evoking the biblical reference to Ethiopia, Hall demonstrated how black pride in Haiti could also take on religious meaning.[21]

To those in favor of emigration, Haitians constituted a more attractive 'Africa' than did native Liberians. John Henry Alexandre, a free man of color who had at various points called both the Caribbean and the northern United States his home, denounced the Colonization scheme and denigrated those who lived in Liberia as "heathens."[22] Haiti was, by contrast, a place where "the Creoles can speak the African language," and where African Americans could actually become Africans. He too quoted from the Bible: only in Haiti, not Liberia, could "Ethiopia... stretch forth her hands unto God."[23] Haiti was the antithesis of the barbarism and heathenism – traits that in Alexandre's formulation plagued Liberia, an actual African nation.[24] Haiti was thus more usefully "African" than Africa.

In the mid-1810s a free black man named Prince Saunders helped create and transform Haiti's symbolic potential by diligently working to facilitate large-scale emigration there.[25] Born free in New England, Saunders was the educated son of a West African woman and Revolutionary War veteran. In 1815 he traveled to London and met Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce. Among other things, the two famed British abolitionists shared a deep admiration for Henri Christophe, the black revolutionary hero who ruled Haiti's North.[26] Clarkson and Wilberforce convinced Saunders to journey to Haiti on their behalf, and once there the American responded by eliciting Christophe's interest in the potential of an American emigration movement. Returning to London later that year, Saunders penned the *Haytien Papers*, providing in it a glowing account of Christophe's kingdom and political acumen; in 1818 a second edition appeared in Boston. Saunders hoped that African Americans would be as receptive to Haiti's welcome as Christophe was to the possibility of their coming.[27]

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[21] Prince Hall, "A Charge, Delivered to the African Lodge, June 24, 1797, At Menotomy," in *Early Negro Writing, 1760 – 1837*, ed. Dorothy Porter (Boston, 1971), 74.
[22] The term "free colored" denotes a Haitian of mixed racial descent.
[23] *United States Gazette*, December 28, 1824.
[24] Dewey, *Correspondence*, 11.
[25] For Saunders, see Arthur O. White, "Prince Saunders," *The Journal of Negro History* 60, No.4 (October 1975), 526 – 535.

The *Haytien Papers* provide a unique lens into the ways some African Americans understood the junction of blackness and freedom. In it Saunders recollected the glory of the Haitian Revolution, often reverting to the first person in his exultations:

> "No, we are no longer the same men! …The cry of liberty made itself heard, and suddenly we broke our iron into pieces… Restored to the dignity of man, and to society, we acquired a new existence, our faculties developed themselves, a career of happiness and of glory unfolds before us!"[28]

Like Prince Hall, Saunders saw little difference between Haitian and American blacks: the West Indian slave who had broken his "iron into pieces" and "acquired a new existence" had done so for all African-descended peoples in the Americas. And much as Alexandre did, he emphasized that "we are all brethren: let us recollect that African blood flows in our veins."[29] The Revolution was exemplary; not only did it link blacks across space, it made them more African than those laboring in "barbarism" across the Atlantic.

Saunders quickly headed to Philadelphia with hopes that the largest free black community in the United States would rally to his emigration plan, but events in Haiti quickly intervened.[30] Henri Christophe's committed suicide in 1820. As Jean Pierre Boyer moved to consolidate the entire island under his sole authority, the island devolved into political chaos. Saunders' prospects, meanwhile, stalled, and after several frustrating years he wrote Clarkson about the "many thousands" whose prospects for emigrating had disappeared along with his own. "These same persons," he concluded, "*are waiting, anxiously waiting…*"[31]

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[26] In 1815, Christophe ruled the North while Alexander Petion, a mulatto, ruled the republican South. Petion's death in 1818 facilitated Boyer's rise to power. For this period of Haitian history, see David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, 1979), 33 – 66.
[27] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 211.
[28] Saunders, *Haytien Papers*, 210 – 211.
[29] Ibid., 218.

Within a year thousands of African Americas did judge the circumstances fortuitous enough to emigrate, attesting to the accuracy of Saunders' letter; yet, they did so not under the auspices of Prince Saunders, but of a former ACS official, Loring Dewey. Dewey worked for the ACS in New York during the 1820s and had realized that the probability of convincing free blacks to voluntarily relocate to Liberia was, at best, small. He also had discovered that many free blacks preferred "Hayti over Africa." In March of 1824 the ACS official acted without his employer's sanction and wrote to Boyer about the prospects for a large-scale emigration movement.[32] The Haitian President, as it turned out, received Dewey's letter at a propitious moment.[33] Rumors of a French invasion of Haiti circulated widely that spring, and Boyer, desiring the security of American diplomatic recognition and subsequent military protection under the Monroe Doctrine, saw in the white ACS official a potentially powerful friend.[34]

Dewey's lack of actual ACS sanction escaped the Haitian President's attention, as perhaps Dewey intended. Boyer saw an opportunity to secure much needed agricultural workers, while simultaneously providing asylum to oppressed American blacks. He replied to Dewey's entreaty in the affirmative and laid out his terms. His government would pay for the emigrants' passage, allot them small parcels of land upon their arrival, and grant them citizenship a year after resettlement. Boyer framed his motives altruistically, arguing African Americans would have full political equality in Haiti: "I have prepared for the children of Africa, coming out of the United States, all that can assure them of an honourable existence in becoming citizens of the Haytien Republic." He additionally told Dewey that emigrants would have "all the guarantees and rights that the constitution of the Republic has established in their favour."[35] "Happy days" awaited emigrants once they arrived.[36] Such happiness derived from freedom - freedom Boyer articulated primarily in political terms. After the two men reached this agreement, events moved quickly.

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[30] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color.* 211.

[31] Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford H. Prator, eds., *Henry Christophe, Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence* (Berkeley, 1952), 249. (italics in original)

[32] Loring Dewey, ed., *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Haiti of the Free People of Colour in the United States, together with Instructions to the Agent Sent by President Boyer* (New York, 1824), 2 and 3.

[33] Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 214.

[34] Rayford Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776 – 1891* (Chapel Hill, 1941), 214 – 216.

To help spread word of his offer Boyer dispatched an agent – a free colored named Jonathan Granville – to act as an intermediary between the free black communities, Dewey, and the Haitian government. Granville – with his success and refinement, with his vitality and culture – arrived in Philadelphia in June and triggered the movement that would see nearly eight thousand African Americans emigrate from the United States to Haiti in a ten-month span.[37] Immediately Boyer's emissary made "a fine impression of the excellence of the Haytien character" within both black and white circles.[38] To black community leaders there were none of the hindrances posed by the ACS plan in the terms Granville carried. As they eagerly responded to his overtures, Granville oversaw the formation of Haitian Emigration Societies in New York and Philadelphia.[39] The emissary's visit also interested sympathetic newspaper editors who saw in Haiti a practicable and attractive alternative to Liberia. White abolitionist Benjamin Lundy was the most vocal of these men; among pro-emigration papers, his Baltimore-based *Genius of Universal Emancipation* provided the earliest and most consistent support for Haitian emigration.

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[35] Dewey, *Correspondence*, 8.
[36] Ibid., 14.
[37] There is no consensus in the secondary literature over the precise number of those who traveled to Haiti. For a lower estimate, see Dewey's letter in *United States Gazette*, June 3, 1825. For a higher estimate, see Benjamin Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans and the Mulatto as a Race for the Tropics* (Philadelphia, 1860), 12.
[38] *United States Gazette*, December 14, 1824, 1; *Niles Weekly Register*, June 26, 1824, 271; and, *Columbian Centinel*, June 26, 1824.
[39] *Niles Weekly Register*, July 3, 1824, 284.

African Americans learned about the terms Granville carried from societies and newspapers. Haitian Emigration Societies, chaired by black religious leaders such as Richard Allen of Philadelphia and Peter Williams of New York, set up offices to receive applications, inspect departing ships, and publish pamphlets elucidating Boyer's offer.[40] Newspaper editors from Boston to Washington printed editorials, correspondence from Boyer's government, and emigrants' letters home. Black communal institutions made the dissemination of this information significantly easier. To be sure, divisions within black communities existed along lines of economic standing and class, yet 'high' and 'popular' culture still mixed easily, particularly in churches where black men and women of various ranks and privileges prayed together.[41] With religious leaders heading the emigration societies, large numbers of people within a largely illiterate community learned of Boyer's offer and sought passage to Haiti.

News of the emigration traveled beyond the confines of urban black communities into the Middle West. In one instance, a man appeared in New York,

> "Presented himself to the committee for promoting emigrants to Hayti, and inquired the way to that Island, having travelled with his pack upon his back from Whitewater, Wayne Country, Indiana, by way of Sandusky, Buffalo, Rochester, and Albany, to this city, a distance of 450 miles!"[42]

According to the *Niles Weekly Register*, in Troy, NY, blacks convened in the autumn of 1824 to consider Boyer's propositions. The same article noted that in Cincinnati, "a society has been formed with a view of ascertaining correct intelligence in regard to the soil and climate of the island [Haiti]."[43]

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[40] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 215 – 217.
[41] Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 222 – 223.
[42] *The Maryland Gazette and State Register*, November 25, 1824; and *The Genius for Universal Emancipation* IV, No.3 (December 1824), 47.

News also filtered into the slave communities in the South. Reports indicate that slaves occasionally escaped bondage in the upper South and sought passage for the Caribbean. One Virginia slave owner lamented how "Negroes have fled from us in numbers, especially since the visit of the Haytien Commissioner [Granville], and as many of the same color have been embarked from different northern ports."[44] Another complained that his most favored "servant… absconded in September last, shipped from Philadelphia for Port-au-Prince."[45] It is notable that these slaves did not stop once they reached the northern "free" states. They ran away *to Haiti*, where political life formed around the black nation.

Rumors of the emigration movement even penetrated networks of communication in the Deep South. Governor Holmes of North Carolina expressed fear that both recently-departed free blacks would return and jeopardize the public's tranquility. The existence of such a speech suggests that many southern blacks not only heard about Haiti's promise of "protection and the blessings of equality," but that a few actually traveled there to find it.[46] Some slaves even composed songs, like this one recounted by A.W. Wayman: "Sailing on the Ocean/ Bless the Lord/ I am on My Way/ Farewell to Georgia/ Moses is Gone to Hayti."[47] Like their brethren in the North, the enslaved saw in Haiti a symbol of freedom; and like their brethren elsewhere in the South, they had no intention of stopping once they escaped the legal constraints of the slave states.

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[43] *Niles Weekly Register,* November 13, 1824, 171

[44] *National Intelligencer*, January 8, 1825.

[45] Ibid., February 8, 1825; also see January 13 and January 29, 1825.

[46] *Niles Weekly Register*, December 11, 1824.

[47] Effie Lee Newsome, "Early Figures in Haitian Methodism," *Phylon* (First Quarter, 1944), 59.

These examples highlight the development and diffusion of a diasporan consciousness among African Americans in the early 1820s. The aforementioned speeches of James Forten and Prince Hall demonstrate how some African Americans attached the symbolism of the Haitian Revolution to the currents of news and information filtering in from the Caribbean.[48] Yet this meaning was more than symbolic: free blacks considered emigration to Haiti not only possible, but in the case of the thousands who went, advisable. As blacks began to think of the Caribbean as a possible destination, they also came to believe Haitians would recognize their blackness as a virtue, not a vice. It is impossible to know the extent to which knowledge of Haiti, let alone a precise understanding of its circumstances, permeated free black communities and minds. But African Americans undeniably attached symbolic meaning to the island Republic, thinking not of potential lifestyle or cultural differences, but of the assured power of racial unity.

Emigrants accordingly understood freedom to be the "advantages" white men possessed in a white man's world. Traveling to what they believed was the black man's world, most defined this freedom as the acquisition of political rights and equality. In part this definition originated from Haitian arguments levied to convince them to emigrate. Granville, for instance, informed Richard Allen that Haiti was "the only nation where a man of colour may enjoy the rights and privileges of a man."[49] He delivered a similar message to a New York crowd in July of 1824. "An efficient government offers you protection," he told them. It also "offers to share with you blessings and advantages which you cannot experience here." Women, meanwhile, would "find in our families all the attention, all the kindness which is due to your amiable sex."[50]

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[48] For a brief discussion of this legacy, see Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* (Athens, 1992), 28 – 29.
[49] *United States Gazette*, April 18, 1825, 1.
[50] *Niles Weekly Register*, August 7, 1824, 373 – 374.

Emigrants then could expect freedom to be epitomized by "the rights and privileges" afforded by an "efficient government."

In dialogue with these arguments African Americans began making similar arguments of their own. In one letter published by *The United States Gazette*, an emigrant admitted Port-au-Prince "is not so flourishing as Philadelphia," and yet wondered, "what is that compared with Liberty? Tis' here that we enjoy the greatest of blessings, Liberty."[51] After having spent several months in Haiti, the Baptist Minister Thomas Paul agreed. Haiti "is the best and most suitable place of residence," he wrote, "which Providence has hitherto offered to emancipated people of colour, for the enjoyment of liberty and equality with their attendant blessings." Paul lauded Haitians for their determination "to live free or die gloriously in the defense of freedom," concluding that the black Republic possessed "advantages highly inviting to men who are sighing for the enjoyment of the common rights and liberties of mankind."[52]

In their letters home emigrants repeatedly argued these "advantages" stemmed from Haiti's equitable distribution of rights. Two men originally from George Flower's English settlement in Albion, Illinois, explained that Haiti "is a free country, we find it so: Our rights are the same as every and any man in this Republic." They portrayed this vision of freedom through American eyes, certain that potential emigrants would "enjoy the same liberty and rights, under President Boyer, as the Americans do under the government of President Monroe."[53] A "Dr. B" also found the Haitian government "kind, generous, and humane." He assured those back in the United States that "This is the place for our black population."[54]

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[51] *United States Gazette*, March 24, 1825.

[52] See *Columbian Centinel*, July 3, 1824; also see Porter, ed., *Early Negro Writing*, 279 – 280.

[53] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.1 (October 1824), 9 – 10; for George Flower's account of these men's tumultuous journey down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, see George Flower, *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1882), 265 – 273.

[54] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.2 (November 1824), 24.

America was white; Haiti promised the political freedom of a land proudly black. Those who saw Haiti as a New World "Africa" believed they could gain political equality there just because they were "African." Thus the emigrant and former Philadelphia oysterman John Summersett could write that African Americans in Haiti would enjoy liberty precisely because it was an "African" nation. He supported his claim, noting that upon arrival he and his companions were received "more like brothers than strangers." Indeed, "no African of candid or industrious habits can deny this being the happy land of African liberty."[55] African Americans then were not just familiar to Haitians: they were family, and that family was "African."

The use of a familial metaphor was hardly unique. Both Haitian officials and American emigrants employed the comparison on numerous occasions. Joseph Balthazar Inginac, the Haitian Secretary General, announced in an editorial, "May [emigrants] hear our voice – may they arrive safe on our shores – Hayti will become to them a tender mother."[56] Later, Inginac thanked Richard Allen for reuniting "the great family."[57] Boyer expressed similar sentiments in thanking Dewey for "procuring [emigrants] a kind reception among their countrymen, their brothers, their natural friends."[58] Haitian leaders saw themselves – or at least they presented themselves – and African Americans as members of an extended kinship network. Emigration would reunify the disconnected family and make Haiti strong.

Emigrants were just as liberal in their use of such metaphors. One man wrote that he and his fellow travelers "were treated with a great deal of cordiality and affection, and more like brethren than strangers."[59] Abel Reed recounted how Inginac had greeted his companions with paternal affection, telling them they could "look upon me as your friend and father." Boyer, Reed added, later "took our hands, not as a stranger, but as a parent would the hands of his children from a voyage, whom he had long expected."[60] And there was also John Henry Alexandre, who argued that "it will most assuredly alleviate the sufferings of our colored brethren… to come to Hayti, where they will be received as children into a family."[61] Among these early arrivals was Richard Allen's son, John, who unlike the rest of the emigrants lodged with Inginac and his wife. In a letter to Richard, the younger Allen lauded his hosts as "more like a father and a mother to me than strangers."[62]

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[55] *United States Gazette*, December 28, 1824, 1.
[56] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* III, no.14 (June 1824), 178.
[57] *United States Gazette*, January 11, 1825.
[58] Dewey, *Correspondence*, 17.

Repeated references to Haiti as an "African" nation, to Haitians as "brethren," to the body politic as an extended "family," and to Haitian officials as "parents," demonstrate how the meanings most emigrants attached to freedom entwined with their beliefs that they formed a part of a black family. This family was African, yet it did not emerge in Africa. It emerged, rather, within the New World's diaspora, where African peoples either directly endured the hardships of racialized slavery or descended from those who had. Reuniting this New World "African" family would allow emigrants to be free. As one black editorialist put it, emigrants would only then be able to enjoy "the salubrious breeze of liberty and *equality*."[63]

For many of the thousands who left for Haiti in the mid-1820s, freedom thus meant the possibility of political equality precisely because African Americans and Haitians were members of the same family. The first arrivals, ushered into the Hall of Haiti's Philanthropic Society, would not have been surprised to hear Inginac welcome them in familiar terms:

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[59] *United States Gazette*, April 8, 1825.
[60] *United States Gazette*, September 24, 1824.
[61] Ibid., December 28, 1824, 1.
[62] Ibid.
[63] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, No.7 (April 1825), 105. (italics in original)

> "…all of those whom you see united in this assembly, are your brothers and friends: if we differ in language, we were born with the same interests, because we are of the same blood. – The blood of the *Great Africa*, which ought to render our union indissoluble, equally circulates in our veins."[64]

Racial similarities would outweigh cultural differences. Perhaps those in the Hall noticed the way these words echoed the arguments of others. Prince Saunders had written "we are all brethren: let us recollect that African blood flows in our veins." And just days earlier Peter Williams had assured emigrants that their "dark complexion" would facilitate their becoming "independent and honourable, wise and good, respectable and happy."[65] Saunders, Williams, and Inginac were of the same mind.

So too were many of the thousands who left behind their homes. Emigrants entered Haiti's unfamiliar environs and expected Haitians to provide for them a sanctuary, one that guaranteed them liberty and equality. They trusted their blackness would lead to citizenship, citizenship would lead to opportunity, and opportunity would lead to happiness. Such was the freedom emigrants envisioned as they embarked on their voyages to the Caribbean. In the coming months they hoped to make these visions real.

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[64] *United States Gazette*, April 19, 1825; also see *Genius of Universal Emancipation and the Baltimore Courier* 1, no.4 (September 12, 1825), 27 – 28.

[65] Haytien Emigration Society of New York, *Address of the Board of Managers*, 3.

Chapter Two
Haiti Lost

At the beginning of the 1830s, an American naval officer in Haiti came across several African American emigrants, a nearly invisible reminder of the thousands who journeyed there a few years earlier. Of those emigrants and the world they inhabited, he noted,

> "There can be no people more dissimilar, than the natives of this Island, and the colored emigrants from the United States; and I am inclined to think it will be long before they will coalesce, or that the latter will become reconciled to their situation here. They are too indolent to work, and finding themselves looked on as inferiors, become dissatisfied, and prefer living as they were wont to do, on contingencies and occasional depredations on their neighbors. I have been told that many of them have returned to the United States, and others that I have conversed with, are desirous of doing so."[1]

Within a few years of their departure from the United States, many of the original emigrants were either dead, crowded into Haiti's impoverished cities, or back in the United States. The cultural differences Inginac glossed over in his welcome address proved far more powerful than the racial ties he championed. And those racial ties proved to be as elusive as the freedom emigrants vainly sought.

As economic dislocations, disease, and religious differences took their toll, an unfamiliar racial matrix challenged African Americans' conceptions of blackness, as well as their places within the wider diaspora. These problems surfaced almost immediately. Consisting primarily of urban northerners with little understanding of coffee cultivation, emigrants lacked the requisite agricultural skills to survive in the Haitian countryside. Of those who escaped the pernicious effects of a foreign disease environment, many also struggled to practice their faith. But perhaps worst of all was that emigrants rarely enjoyed equal rights in Haiti's complex – and racially stratified – society. Within a year most of them had abandoned both their hopes and land.

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[1] *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* VIII, no.8 (October 1832), 225 – 229.

These problems largely resulted from a disjunction between the conceptions emigrants formed before departing and the realities of Haitian life. Haiti was not a New World African utopia. Locals, for the most part, did not acknowledge the Americans as returned siblings, and instead shunned them as strangers. Emigrants found that in Haiti skin color did not translate into citizenship, opportunity, *or* happiness. Thousands eventually returned to the United States, resigned to continue their search for freedom in the land of their birth.

Haiti's political economy was more complex and stratified than African Americans realized. A racialized social hierarchy, nurtured during centuries of slavery, continued to shape revolutionary struggles over land, labor, and capital between various leaders, "mulatto" elites, black soldiers, and black ex-slaves.[2] In Haiti's northern landscape, black leaders from Toussaint L'Ouverture to Henri Christophe had implemented intensive labor regimes designed primarily to revive the economic order under which a plantation economy had previously flourished. In areas where the black-dominated military was weak, the government had attempted to force ex-slaves back into de-facto slavery so as to revive the plantation system. Black ex-slaves, who unsurprisingly resisted these efforts, fought to create a subsistence-based economy where they could reap the benefits of their own labor.[3] Locals then associated freedom with property ownership and subsistence agriculture, and not with political rights as emigrants had hoped.[4] The newcomers' conceptions of freedom emanated from an imagined ideology, not from centuries of conflict rooted in a land to which they had no real claim.

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[2] The word "mulatto" signifies a person of mixed racial descent, and a "gen de couleur" signifies a free person of color. In many cases in Saint Domingue, mulattoes were also gens de couleurs.

[3] Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, TN, 1991), 179 – 182.

An even more complex system had arisen in Haiti's republican South under the leadership of Alexander Petion. The mulatto leader had granted veterans of the wars for independence – typically black soldiers upon whom the "gens de couleurs" heavily relied during the Revolution – portions of land according to rank. These soldiers eventually formed an intermediate class of landholders. Meanwhile, a considerable portion of the mulatto elite sold or abandoned land inherited from the French after they failed to secure enough labor to work it. They moved to cities and in time dominated commerce and government. The result was a racialized caste system that perpetuated a growing divide between the black countryside and mulatto-dominated towns – a problem that would persist into the twentieth century.[5] While most blacks lived in rural areas with little education or means, the elites were educated, cosmopolitan, and light-skinned. This was the stratified system into which emigrants entered, in search of political equality and racial harmony.

What emigrants found when they arrived were laws designed to keep black workers on the land. Known as the rural codes, such laws established working hours and strictly forbade anyone from moving beyond the plantation's boundaries. For instance, there was Christophe's "Code Henri": work would begin at daylight and proceed until nightfall, with a one-hour break for breakfast and a two-hour respite for lunch; most laborers, unless granted special permission otherwise, would work six days a week.[6] After spending years in Haiti as a missionary, M.B. Bird recalled how leaders adhered "to an undue and unjust force" to facilitate agricultural production, even at the expense of liberties and rights.[7] The "undue and unjust force" of a labor regime designed to reignite a formerly powerful plantation economy was more like American slavery than utopian freedom.

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[4] Robert K. LaCerte's "The Evolution of Land and Labour in the Haitian Revolution, 1791 – 1820" in *Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present*, eds. Hilary Beckles and Verence Shepherd (1993), 42.

[5] For more elaboration on this complicated process, see LaCerte's "The Evolution of Land and Labour," 42 – 47.

The basis for such labor regimes in part emanated from Haiti's lack of workers, and in part from leaders' attempts to rebuild an agricultural system geared towards maximizing workers' output. These two factors were not unrelated. Decades of warfare and political strife had destroyed not only the country's infrastructure and land, but its labor force as well. After two decades of independence Haiti had yet to reach Saint Domingue's pre-Revolutionary levels of agricultural production.[8] And although Boyer attempted to appear the altruistic parent, he clearly wanted the emigrants to replenish his rural labor supply.[9] As such, he and the American emigration societies explicitly advertised for "respectable, industrious farmers to go immediately, upon their arrival in Hayti, in considerable numbers to the lands designed for them."[10] This plan overlooked the fact that most emigrants possessed few of the skills necessary to facilitate a national agricultural revival.

One reason for this was that emigrants generally hailed from urban backgrounds. In an article which updated his readership on the movement's progress, Benjamin Lundy noticed that many of those recently departed from Baltimore "were chiefly residents of this city and its immediate vicinity."[11] Six months later Loring Dewey indirectly confirmed this claim. Arguing that emigration's collapse would destroy the admirable work done by emigrants, Dewey considered their sacrifice all the more impressive considering they were generally "waiters, coachmen, shoe blacks, &c. who went from our cities; engaging to become *cultivators* of the *land*."[12] Several of these emigrants were admittedly successful. But the majority of them were not, and that they were typically "waiters, coachmen, shoe blacks, &c." weighed heavily in their failure.

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[6] Saunders, *Haytian* Papers, xiii.
[7] M.B. Bird, *The Black Man; or, Haytian Independence. Deduced from Historical Notes, and Dedicated to the Government and People of Hayti* 2nd ed. (New York, 1971 reprint of 1869 edition), 131.
[8] Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 30.
[9] Boyer, in fact, explicitly rejected any suggestion that demographics influenced his decision to support an emigration movement. Yet no one, least of all Dewey, had suggested it. Dewey, *Correspondence*, 11. For a similar interpretation of Boyer's motives, see Dixon, *Haiti and the United States*, 35 – 36.
[10] Haytien Emigration Society, *Information for the Free People of Colour Who Are Inclined to Emigrate to Hayti* (New York, 1825), 5.

Emigrants also failed to bring needed farming implements. In his instructions to Granville Boyer had explicitly mandated it: "It will be necessary that the cultivators should possess farming implements." Benjamin Lundy even printed Boyer's order in November 1824.[13] A few months later Lundy published eleven directives from Dewey intended as advice for prospective emigrants. One of the directives ordered those planning for departure to "Bring some tools."[14] Few emigrants heeded the call. In a letter to Richard Allen, the emigrant Belfast Burton instructed the Philadelphian to remind emigrants to "bring farming utensils," for many continued arriving without them.[15] Another emigrant complained that most people arrived "wholly unprepared."[16] Such lack of preparation could be costly, like in the case when certain emigrants made a sharecropping agreement with a local man. He found "them horses, jacks, mules, carts and ploughs, and all farming utensils… and after that they g[a]ve him half the cane and coffee."[17] Emigrants who came without the tools of the trade thus put themselves in a disadvantaged, exploitable position. Recall that Haitians viewed "freedom" in agricultural terms: it came at the cost of farming implements that most emigrants simply could not afford.

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[11] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.2 (November 1824), 22-3.
[12] *United States Gazette*, June 3, 1825.
[13] Dewey, *Correspondence*, 27; also see *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.2 (November 1824), 29-30.
[14] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.7 (April 1825), 101.
[15] *United States Gazette*, February 22, 1825.
[16] Ibid., April 18, 1825.
[17] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.4 (January 1825), 58.

Worse still, many emigrants lacked knowledge of the trade altogether. The United States was unable to sustain a coffee economy domestically, and actually imported much of it from Haiti.[18] Even if they were experienced agriculturalists, then, few African Americans knew how to cultivate Haiti's primary crop. Criticism of "lazy" emigrants – denunciations often voiced by the few who managed to find some success – suggests that the great number of emigrants did not know how to farm, and never cared to learn. The emigrant Charles Fisher exclaimed, "There are some of the emigrants who are in distressed circumstances, - *because they will not cultivate their land*."[19] Another frustrated emigrant made a similar argument. "They prefer the land of slavery to that of liberty," he proclaimed, "because to be as well settled in this as they were in that, they have to use a little exertion and meet a few difficulties."[20] Yet another posited, "I am in no ways disappointed, as many are that expected to be gentleman without working. There is blessed prospect to all farmers."[21] Of course, most emigrants were *not* farmers. They were city-born barbers and waiters, mostly without the implements, knowledge, or interest to succeed in an economy geared towards the production of coffee.[22] As Charles Fisher admitted, "they are ignorant of the nature of the country."[23]

Emigrants' ignorance both of farming and "of the nature of the country" left them dissatisfied or worse. When in 1829 two separate observers traveled to Haiti to check the status of former emigrants still living there, both recorded unhappiness towards the agricultural system. One of the observers was Benjamin Lundy, who noted that many emigrants soon became "dissatisfied with the system of working on shares." The Quaker Thomas Kennedy, meanwhile, found former North Carolina slaves to be

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[18] *Niles Weekly Register*, July 3, 1824.
[19] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.10 (July 1825), 152. Italics in original.
[20] Ibid., vol.IV, no.11 (August 1825), 175.
[21] Ibid., vol.IV, no.6 (March 1825), 91.
[22] Flower, *History of the English Settlement*, 272.
[23] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.10 (July 1825), 152.

> "generally, unpleasantly situated, and very much dissatisfied. They complained to him (he observes) that the proprietors of the lands for whom they had laboured, for two years and a half, had entirely disappointed them; that they had received but from six to ten dollars each, as a compensation for their labour during the above time; and said they had rather be slaves in North Carolina, than to remain there under the treatment they had received since their arrival."[24]

Frustration with share cropping and deceptive landholders clearly agitated emigrants, even those familiar with the rigors of agricultural life. Widespread abuses undoubtedly disturbed others.[25]

Another problem that surfaced immediately was emigrant susceptibility to Haiti's unfamiliar disease environment. Most promoters of emigration echoed Benjamin Lundy in believing Haiti's tropical environment to be "peculiarly adapted to the people to whom it is offering so many and great advantages."[26] But this was a simple fiction.[27] Emigrants got sick in droves, and occasionally they got sick even before reaching their destinations. The emigrant John Cromwell wrote that "It has been remarkably sickly among the passengers of the brig Dove," a result of the inclement weather suffered at sea.[28] In the town of Jeremie another emigrant admitted that despite liking his new surroundings, "we have been sick." Even in Samana, a colony where many emigrants actually found some success, sickness was evident. There, the doctor Belfast Burton complained that he "had more practice than I could attend to among the Emigrants."[29]

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[24] *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* V (April 1829), 61 – 62.

[25] There was one isolated settlement in Samana that prospered, at least relative to other American settlements. See Harry Hoetink, "'Americans' in Samana," *Caribbean Studies* II, no.I, 2 – 20; and Elsie Clews Parsons, "Spirituals from the 'American' Colony at Samana Bay," *The Journal of American Folklore* 41, no.162 (Oct-Dec 1928), 525 – 528.

[26] *Genius of Universal* Emancipation IV, no.6 (March 1825), 87 – 91.

[27] Environmentalist beliefs that tied blackness to tropical adaptability had an ugly precedent. In 1793, during the Yellow Fever epidemic in Philadelphia, many white Americans argued African Americans were immune, in part because of Yellow Fever's alleged origins in the French West Indies. As whites fled the city, many blacks were left to deal with the sick and dying. Despite conventional wisdom blacks died that summer at about the same rate as did the city's whites, and in his written defense of the Philadelphia black community's actions during the crisis, Richard Allen went to great lengths to prove it. See J. Estes Worth and Billy G. Smith, eds., *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation : the Public Response to the 1793 Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic* (Canton, MA, 1997); and Richard Allen, *The Life, Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen : to which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of our Lord, 1793, with an Address to the People of Color in the United States* 2nd ed. (S.l. l: Lee & Yeocum, 1887).

Yet the countryside was relatively safe when compared to the conditions of Haiti's overcrowded cities.[30] A traveler in the early 1840s described Port-au-Prince as "perhaps the filthiest capital in the world," particularly during the seasons when malaria rendered "the lower quarter of the city very sickly."[31] African Americans who abandoned the countryside for Haiti's impoverished towns joined the ranks of the disaffected and inhabited such quarters. Jonathan Granville bemoaned it, wondering why they would "not stay in the country as they should do, but continually come into town" where sickness was considerably more prevalent.[32] Ignorant of the methods of cultivating Haiti's lands, emigrants were also unprepared for its germs.

But it was not just economics and disease hindering the success of African Americans in Haiti: it was also culture. In many cases, emigrants struggled to transport their brand of evangelical Protestantism to Haiti. In the Caribbean they not only confronted a hostile Catholic government, but a form of Catholicism infused with central African beliefs.[33] Such beliefs, along with those of Afro-Haitians who hailed from Senegambia, the Bight of Benin, and even East Africa, had fused with elements of Catholicism to form vodou, a religious form commonly attributed to the masses of black Haitians.[34] Most emigrants worried primarily about the avowed Catholicism of Haiti's rulers; what they discovered was a form of Catholicism with which they were almost wholly unfamiliar.

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[28] *United States Gazette*, April 5, 1825.
[29] Ibid., February 22, 1825.
[30] See, for instance, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Coffee Planters and Coffee Slaves in the Antilles: The Impact of a Secondary Crop" in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* eds., Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, 1993), 124 – 137.
[31] Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti* (London, 1842), 69.
[32] *United States Gazette*, April 18, 1825.
[33] The relationship between Haitian Catholicism, Kongolese religiosity, and vodou are complicated, and in the scholarly universe, highly contested. For varying interpretations, see John Thornton, "On the Trail of Voodoo:

Emigrants were not, it should be noted, the first Protestants to enter Haiti's complicated religious environment. In the South Petion had tolerated the existence of Wesleyan Methodist missionaries, who first arrived in 1811. In 1816, however, Petion died, and for many of these missionaries Boyer's ascendancy marked the beginning of a difficult new era. As President, Boyer ignored the missionaries' plights in the face of local resentment, persecution, and imprisonment. Several of these men, such as Charles Pressoir and Evariste, went underground, and there they persisted only under great duress.[35]

Boyer was hardly religious and wielded the Church as a political tool. Challenges to Haiti's national Church also became challenges to his political authority.[36] In one meeting with the missionary Pressoir, he ordered Methodists "not to assemble anymore… that the Government had given orders to disperse all meetings."[37] Combining the powers of church and state allowed Boyer to prohibit any non-Catholic from entering the body politic. Loring

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African Christianityin Africa and the Americas," The Americas 44 (1988): 261 – 278; Hein Vanhee, "Central African Popular Christianity and the Making of Haitian Vodou Religion," in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (Cambridge, UK, 2002): 243 – 264; and Terry Rey, "Kongolese Catholic Influences on Haitian Popular Catholicism: A Sociohistorical Exploration," in ibid: 265 – 285. For the role vodou played in the Revolution, or as the case may be, its lack of a role, see David Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington, 2002), 69 – 92.

[34] See, for instance, Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 70.

[35] Newsome, "Early Figures in Haitian Methodism," 51 – 58.

[36] The Roman Catholic Church, it should be noted, disavowed any connection with Haitian Catholicism, and it was not until 1860 – when Geffrard's regime reached a concordat with the Vatican – that it began to play a more assertive role in the country. Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 84.

[37] Bird, *The Black Man*, 124.

Dewey admitted as much, noting "the establishment is not supported by dissenters."[38] Protestants, and particularly Methodists, possessed no stake in the government and had little chance of participating in it.

Haitian officials recognized the religious gulf separating emigrants from Haitians and expressed doubts. Boyer himself voiced concern that emigrants might take advantage of the terms of passage and proselytize. He issued Dewey a warning: no Haitian authorities would "meddle" in African American "religious beliefs, provided they do not seek to make proselytes, or trouble those who profess another faith than their own."[39] Jonathan Granville more explicitly addressed this divide. During his stay in the United States he had grown wary of American insistence on religious freedom. In one letter to Boyer, he opined,

> "The Quaker wants to know if he will be obliged to join the national guard, the Protestant asks if we could pass a law preventing… reviews of the national guard from taking place on a Sunday, and the Methodist asks if a man can be deprived of the freedom to preach God's law. Unfortunately, it is among this last class of lunatics that most of our people are to be found."[40]

In fact, not only were many of the emigrants Methodists, but Richard Allen, the chair of the Philadelphia Haitian Emigration Society, was also the Bishop and co-founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Like their spiritual leader, emigrants defined "freedom" in part as the ability to "preach God's law" – a law learned and embraced under the peculiar conditions of the United States.

African Americans similarly recognized the religious gulf and looked for reassurances. The "Information" packets distributed in New York City, for instance, promised that "All religious professions are tolerated, and men left at full liberty to worship the Almighty Creator according to the dictates of their own consciences."[41] Granville, for his part, overcame his irritation by guaranteeing potential emigrants they would enjoy complete religious freedom.[42] Perhaps most impressive of all were the assurances given by Thomas Paul, the Baptist Minister who informed his constituents that he "never received the least molestation from any person" during his stay in Haiti.[43] As they departed, many emigrants hoped they would not either.

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[38] *Genius of Universal Emancipation and Baltimore Courier* 1, no.6 (October 1, 1825), 43 – 44.
[39] Dewey, *Correspondence*, 10.
[40] Quoted in Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 215. Original Citation in Jonathas Granville, *Biographie de Granville, par son Fils* (Paris, 1880), 217.

Yet many did. Boyer's government reneged on its initial allowance of "camp meetings" held in the countryside, for, as the missionary M.B. Bird noted, local authorities quickly determined such practices were "likely to be abused by revolutionists, or other ill-disposed persons." Bird added that such "fears were perhaps the greater from the fact that all was done in the English language."[44] Emigrants did succeed in erecting small churches in several towns, and at least one Methodist Church built by American-born blacks remained standing in Port-au-Prince a decade later. But according to another observer, the maintenance of non-Catholic structures was impossible without the help of foreign missionaries, and in the rural areas where most emigrants initially settled, foreigners had few rights and scant means to erect such edifices.[45]

Denials of religious intolerance – denials that increased in number as the seasons turned and emigrants began returning home – suggest that many of the Americans struggled in outwardly practicing their faith.[46] The *United States Gazette* printed letters containing "accounts of religious meetings which had been held, together with the success of certain licensed preachers."[47] In April the paper's editors insisted Methodists not only practiced their faith freely but actually prospered in doing so – and this even as stories of intolerance accompanied the streams of people coming back to the United States.[48] By July, a month after Boyer halted further support for emigrant passages, Lundy continued to confront rumors that "political and religious freedom exist there [Haiti] in name only."[49] Unable to hold meetings outdoors, dislocated by language, and frustrated by the lack of religious toleration in the Haitian countryside, many emigrants knew otherwise.

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[41] *United States Gazette*, August 6, 1824.
[42] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.2 (November 1824), 29-30.
[43] *Columbian Centinel*, July 3, 1824; also see *United States Gazette*, September 24 and December 14, 1824; and *Genius of Universal Emancipation and the Baltimore Courier* (July 4, 1825), 4.
[44] Bird, *The Black* Man, 153.
[45] Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti*, 16 – 17.
[46] See, for instance, *Niles Weekly Register*, September 25, 1824, 54.

Lundy's phrasing illustrates how alongside many published renunciations of religious intolerance there also appeared denials of political despotism. The rhetorical coupling of these arguments shows emigrants unable to practice their faith for the same reason they could not enjoy political equality.[50] In one case an editor repudiated reports that "blacks, as soon as they arrive in Hayti, are compelled into public service as soldiers." A line later he added, "Nor does it appear that any molestation has been offered to the new settlers on account of their religion."[51] The *United States Gazette* editor who insisted Methodists were free to prosper also denounced rumors that the Haitian government detained emigrants desiring to go home.[52] As winter turned to spring, the project's promoters continued to resist indictments of "Harsh treatment, starvation, no work," and worst of all, "no liberty to escape to America from these bitter calamities."[53]

Nineteenth century European traveler accounts provide a lens into the tense political world awaiting emigrants. The British traveler John Franklin charged that Haitian officials viewed mass poverty and ignorance as the "best safeguards" to their own wealth and power.[54] Writing two decades later, another Englishman, John Candler, argued that Haiti's Constitution was "often at variance with the liberties and true happiness of the people." In fact, Candler went so far as to call Boyer a "sovereign in all but the name." He noted how the President not only headed both the church and the military, but served a life-long term with the power to name his own successor.[55] Bird agreed: although the Constitution attempted to balance the Executive's power with an elected Legislature, "the initiative of all measures was with the Executive."[56]

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[47] *United States Gazette*, March 24, 1825.
[48] Ibid., April 22, 1825.
[49] *Genius of Universal Emancipation and the Baltimore Courier* 1, no.1 (July 4, 1825), 3.
[50] Also see Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 47.
[51] *United States Gazette*, December 21, 1824.
[52] *United States Gazette*, April 22, 1825.
[53] Ibid., March 22, 1825.

If emigrants knew Haiti was a constitutional republic, they were unaware that the Constitution conflated military and civil authority. According to the Englishman Charles Mackenzie, the island "is divided into seventy-six Communes, and thirty-four Parishes; these are classed under twenty-seven Military Arrondissements and six Departments." Army generals commanded the department, exercising "both military and civil authority, and is the medium through which the Government makes known its arrangements."[57] Boyer was then President for life, occupied the branch of government more dominant than any other, and controlled the church and military. Emigrants were entering into a foreign political system in which the Constitution granted the church and military – the two most powerful institutions in the country, and two institutions separated from the early American Republic's state – the power to organize daily life.

By the spring of 1825, many African Americans had realized that black equality in Haiti's chaotic political climate was a myth. In one instance several men attempted to place one of their own into a local political office, but at the polling station officials "civilly" led them out the back door, denying the men "a solitary vote."[58] In another instance emigrants recently returned to the United States complained that "Hayti is in an awful state: anarchy and confusion prevail in every part of the island." Certainly they exaggerated some aspects of this disorder – they claimed, for example, that Boyer's life was in imminent jeopardy – but their stories added another "lamentable" tale of "bad times" to others filtering in from the Caribbean.[59]

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[54] James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti* (London, 1826), 11.
[55] Candler, *Brief Notices of Hayti*, 87.
[56] Bird, *The Black Man*, 127.
[57] Mackenzie's description is taken from M.B. Bird, *The Black Man*, 128 – 129.

In day-to-day life these matters were not much better. Emigrants commonly encountered defiant neighbors, the very "brethren" they had believed to be brothers. In 1830 a British traveler spoke with sixty American ex-slaves (possibly the same people with whom Thomas Kennedy had interviewed). Unhappily attached to the plantation Estate Boutilier, they told "of their Haitian neighbours, whom they described as destroying their fences to admit their bullocks into their gardens, and as plundering them of their poultry and pigs."[60] Benjamin Hunt, yet another British observer, heard from several of "Boyer's old immigrants" that "[t]hey found their fences down, or their water let off, of a morning." The weary Americans cited evidence "that cattle had been fed on their grounds over night; or the neighboring idlers, of which there are many, had stolen all their plantains, or sweet potatoes, fit for market."[61] Reality had exposed the black "family" to be a fantasy. Haiti's government "parents" restricted religious and political freedom, while the general populace saw African Americans not as brothers, but as strangers fit to be exploited.

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[58] Mackenzie, *Notes on Haiti, Made During a Residence in That Republic* (London, 1830), 110 – 111.
[59] *United States Gazette*, June 14, 1825.
[60] Mackenzie, *Notes on Haiti*, 90.
[61] Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti*, 11.

Later in the nineteenth century the Haitian historian Beaubrun Ardouin eloquently articulated this, asking his readers to

> "imagine the impression produced on the minds of these unfortunates upon seeing a new country that so little resembled the one from which they came, a population whose language they did not understand, and although of the same color as themselves, on whose faces they noticed a mocking smile excited by their sad dress, in spite of all the kindness showed them nonetheless!
>
> "It is not without regret, without pain, that men decide to abandon their birthplace, without hope of returning, in order to go live in another country; there are so many things agreeable to a man's heart, in the games of his childhood, in the pleasures of his youth, in his parental relationships and friendships, whose memory he could not lose and which attach him to the place where he passed his first years!
>
> "…These sentiments undoubtedly acted upon the minds and hearts of the emigrants; and if one then examines that these misfortunes… that they were accustomed to living in the United States… that they did not speak the same language as did the Haitians, that they had a religion different from Catholicism, that they were obliged to contract suddenly other habits, one will not be surprised that many remained but a little while in Haiti.[62]

By the summer of 1825 most emigrants gave up their search for freedom in Haiti. Protestants in a Catholic nation, continually sick in a foreign disease environment, impoverished in an unfamiliar economic system, they discovered that the smiles on their neighbors' faces were not friendly, but mocking. They had come from poverty and arrived with little, yet to their dismay a year in Haiti left them even more destitute. Their expectations had failed to prepare them adequately for the rigors of Haitian life, or for the complexities of its society. As they demanded rights most locals saw as privileges, emigrants' pleas for brotherhood went unheard. All they earned instead was resentment.[63]

With dreams for a healthy, secure life in a tolerant, black nation crushed, emigrants learned that blackness in Haiti rooted itself in an unfamiliar cultural matrix. They could not secure political equality, and as such, never found "true freedom." To those who traveled there in vain, Haiti proved to be no home at all. The promise of her Revolution crumbled along with the emigration. Some fled to the cities. Most gave up and went back to the only homes they knew.

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[62] Beaubrun Ardouin, *Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haiti* 9 (Paris, 1860), 300 – 301.
[63] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 219.

Chapter Three
A Story Of American Freedom

It was a late summer's evening in 1825 when several black residents of Baltimore convened at the house of Reverend G. R. M'Gill. The men were gathered to celebrate France's formal recognition of Haiti, and spoke proudly of Boyer and his government. "May the Government of Hayti," effused J.C. Greener, "be the means of proving to the civilized world that education, alone, is necessary to place the colored inhabitants of the earth upon equal ground with others."[1] Mr. E. Brown wished "Success" to Haiti, its government, and its people. S.G. Mathews rejoiced at Haiti's rise "to an equal rank among civilized nations in modern days." And in one of several toasts of similar sentiments, Mr. Harvey wished the black Republic "repose under the guardian wing of Liberty. May her government be indissoluble as her mountains – And may truth, justice and mercy be her chief attributes."[2] Haitian emigration was over, a bitter failure by most accounts. But as this demonstration indicates, pride in Haiti remained prominent in certain African American conversations. Toasting to "truth, justice, and mercy," these black citizens hoped Haitian security and strength would reinforce their own battles for freedom in the United States.

While Haiti continued to evoke pride among many African Americans, this pride was by no means monolithic. Indeed, in the months and years following the collapse of emigration, there appeared a range of reactions among both whites and blacks. Colonizationists and some slave-owners responded to the failed movement by endorsing limited emigration to Haiti, speaking of it as a mere alternative to Liberian colonization. The failure of the organized movement, meanwhile, taught African Americans that the diaspora was diverse and complicated, not uniform and static. No longer did most free blacks see Haiti as a potential destination, and black leaders explicitly began to reject further emigration anywhere. Yet many of them continued celebrating Haiti as they had done for decades. Certain black men and women utilized Haiti's symbolic power to argue for immediate abolition, balancing their rejection of emigration with an embrace of Haiti's inspirational symbol. These complex uses of Haiti suggest that the impulses which triggered the emigration movement were, by 1830, but one aspect of a broader diasporan consciousness – one that recognized cultural differences *and* racial commonalities between African peoples in the Americas.

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[1] In reality French "recognition" did no such thing; Haiti's price for French recognition was enormous, and the debt incurred in 1825 has retarded its "civilization" to the present day. See Jackson, "The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism," 95 – 97; and Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 65.

[2] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.11 (August 1825), 167 – 168.

Emigrants' experiences revealed that blackness in Haiti differed remarkably from blackness in the United States. But from David Walker to Maria Stewart to Samuel Cornish, many communal leaders lauded Haiti's political achievements even as they rejected emigration. Wanting "to place the colored inhabitants of the earth upon equal ground with others," they symbolically used Haiti as a source of strength in their own story of American freedom. At the dawn of the antebellum period, many free blacks had begun to see themselves as both Americans and members of a larger black diaspora.

By the spring of 1825, emigrants were fleeing the Haitian countryside en masse. Rumors of problems circulated widely in the American press, and Reverend Peter Williams visited Haiti to see for himself; he returned a short time later accompanied by fifty-six unhappy emigrants.[3] President Boyer also grew displeased. He realized emigrants from a primarily urban background could not revive a plantation economy, and to make matters worse, that Loring Dewey never held the authority to speak for the American Colonization Society or its influential friends. In ten months of emigration the Haitian economy remained in shambles, the new Adams administration continued to refuse Boyer diplomatic recognition, and few emigrants remained on the land originally assigned to them.[4] In April, the Haitian President announced his government would cease paying for emigrants' passages. The order would take effect after the 15th of June.[5] This decision, coupled with the stream of returning, dissatisfied African Americans, effectively terminated the 1820s movement.[6]

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[3] Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality*, 80.

In the wake of emigration's demise, sympathetic slave-owners and conservative abolitionists began to embrace black relocation to Haiti as a vehicle for gradual emancipation. Although Haiti had once incited fear among many of these men, a few now viewed the island as an acceptable destination for blacks seeking refuge. The collapse of wide-scale emigration signaled the failure of a movement almost entirely sponsored and organized within free black communities. Some white men responded by accepting emigration on a more limited scale. Their 'use' of Haiti formed a rhetorical dialectic with black immediatists who adamantly opposed further emigration.

The problems emigrants encountered in Haiti did not, for instance, deter Benjamin Lundy. In the summer of 1825 the abolitionist initiated a campaign for slave-owners to free their slaves and send them to Haiti. Above all he wanted them to learn from David Minge, a Virginia slave-owner who emancipated his 88 slaves with that goal. According to Lundy, in the Caribbean their "shackles of slavery will be eternally torn from their limbs, and the broken fragments scattered to the four winds of heaven by the all-potent hand of *Universal*

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[4] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 219.

[5] *Niles Weekly Register*, May 21, 1825, 184.

[6] For Dewey's defensive response after Boyer terminated payments, see *United States Gazette*, May 31, 1825; also, for one report of "discontented" emigrants, see Ibid., June 14, 1825.

Emancipation."[7] Lundy then printed a letter from another man who desired to free his forty-three slaves and "procure a passage for them to Hayti," assuring his readers that it "was not the only letter that I have received of a similar purport." Evidently funding was a problem. But had he the funds, Lundy believed he could quickly emancipate hundreds of slaves, all with "the free consent of their masters."[8]

Benjamin Lundy was not the only one interested in Haiti. Gradual emancipationists repeatedly referred to the island Republic during the latter months of 1825. Hopeful that free blacks would emigrate, they – like Lundy – urged slave-owners to manumit their slaves and sponsor their trips to the Caribbean. The Tennessee Manumission Society's eleventh annual convention encouraged "all free negroes… to emigrate" and requested masters "to liberate, and prepare their slaves for emigrating."[9] Similarly, the constitution of a Virginia Manumission and Emigration Society invited philanthropists to "aid and encourage, by voluntary contribution, the emigration of our colored population to Hayti, Africa, or elsewhere." Ignorant of the difficulties emigrants endured the previous year, the society assured its public that Haitian authorities had recently received more than "5,000 free blacks… in the most cordial manner." The society did not view Haitian emigration as a failure. It saw the movement, rather, as a success and an inspiration – one whose example could inspire some whites to fight for slavery's "gradual, but final extinction."[10]

Other organizations like this Virginia society saw the possibility of post-1824 Haitian emigration as analogous to African colonization. Members of one "benevolent society" in

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[7] *Genius and Universal Emancipation and the Baltimore Courier* 1, no.2 (September 5, 1825), 9.
[8] Ibid., vol.1, no.8 (October 15, 1825), 57.
[9] Ibid., vol.1, no.9 (October 22, 1825), 68.
[10] *Genius of Universal Emancipation and the Baltimore Courier* 1, no.11 (November 5, 1825), 84 – 86.

Maryland "resolved... to aid the emigration of free coloured persons... to Africa or Hayti."[11] In another instance, Quakers, at their annual Philadelphia meeting, voted to allot $3,000 to support their North Carolina Friends who aimed to remove free blacks "to Liberia, Hayti, and the Free States, as they may prefer."[12] Haiti unquestionably remained a source of white anxiety, yet in some conceptions it served as an alternative to Liberia.[13] In the months following emigration's demise, there arose, then, a tepid acceptance of Haitian emigration among certain white gradualists.[14]

At the same time sympathetic slave-owners and more conservative abolitionists embraced black emigration to Haiti as a vehicle for gradual emancipation, black leaders explicitly called for immediate abolition and black equality. Many reasserted their firm opposition to the African Colonization Society in particular. Yet, not content to limit their attacks to the ACS, by the late 1820s black leaders largely rejected *all* emigration, voluntary or otherwise.[15] Although they had formerly been two of the biggest and most influential black promoters of Haitian emigration, Richard Allen and Peter Williams exemplified this transition.

Richard Allen had been at the forefront of the emigration movement. He had chaired Philadelphia's Haitian Emigration Society and dispatched his son John to Hispaniola as well.[16] And although he opposed African Colonization, Allen had enthusiastically endorsed Haiti as a destination, going so far as to allow Jonathan Granville the use of his church to speak with those who had doubts about their cultural assimilability.[17] Less than three years later, however, the Philadelphian attacked anyone who claimed African Americans were incapable of freely participating in a nation they helped build. Not only was emigration useless in the fight against slavery, but, he argued, "This land, which we have watered with *our tears* and *our blood*, is now our *mother country,* and we are well satisfied to stay where wisdom abounds, and the gospel is free."[18] Allen never invoked Haiti directly in his late-life opposition to the ACS, but it was not until after the emigration movement collapsed that he publicly opted to die on the land for which he – like others before him, and like others who would follow him – had fought to make his home.

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[11] *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* I, no.10 (December 1825), 319 – 320.

[12] Ibid., III, no.1 (March 1827), 27.

[13] Denmark Vesey's failed insurrection in South Carolina was only a few years past. Haiti had loomed large in that trial and its aftermath, for Vesey invoked the image of Toussaint L'Ouverture as inspirational. For Vesey, see Michael Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: the Transformation of African Identities in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, 1998), 1 – 16; Douglas Egerton, *He Shall Go out Free: the Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Madison, 1999); and David Robertson, *Denmark Vesey* (New York, 2000).

[14] It is important to note, however, that a wider acceptance of Haiti did not arise in the late 1820s. The United States did not formally recognize Haitian independence until 1862, and throughout the antebellum period the specter of Haiti continued to loom large in slave-owners' minds. See Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti.*

[15] For another discussion of this transition, see Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality*, 82.

Peter Williams' stance on emigration followed a similar trajectory. In a speech at St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church on July 4, 1830, the former leader of New York's Haitian Emigration Society spoke derisively about future emigration. "We are natives of this country," Williams told his listeners, "we ask only to be treated as well as foreigners… Let these moderate requests be granted, and we need not go to Africa nor anywhere else to be improved and happy."[19] The man who had once assured departing emigrants they could find "true freedom" and "happiness" in Haiti had shifted his position six years later. In 1830, he was lecturing audiences that only by remaining in their native country could they "be improved and happy."

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[16] A letter John wrote to his father appeared in the *United States Gazette*, December 28, 1824.
[17] Jackson, "The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism," 74.
[18] *Freedom's Journal*, November 3, 1827, 134.
[19] Peter Williams, "Slavery and Colonization," in *Voice of Black America; Major Speeches by Negroes in the United States, 1797-1971*, ed. Philip Foner (New York, 1972), 57 – 61.

Peter Williams' stance on emigration, however, was not simply oppositional. In this same speech he also requested financial support for the struggling Wilberforce colony in Canada. Believing Canadian resettlement was different from previous emigration movements, Williams cited the unique and urgent plight of the Cincinnati black community, who faced a deadline to abandon the city or be subject to violent retribution. Williams assured those interested that the Canadian idea "originated among our own people. It is not of the devising of the white men, or of foreigners, but of our own kindred and household."[20] Such a statement revealed a crucial rhetorical shift. Happiness was impossible in Liberia – it always had been, according to many free blacks – because "white men" created it. But Haitian emigration also appeared hopeless now: it was a plan devised by "foreigners." In Williams' estimate, Haitians had shown they were not brothers, but strangers.

In the years following 1825, other African Americans cemented their opposition to further black resettlement. Writing under the pseudonym "A Man of Colour," James Forten recalled how at an 1827 meeting none of the three thousand persons attending favored leaving the country under any circumstances. In fact, all opposed settling "in any foreign country whatever."[21] Thomas Jennings, another leading black citizen, penned an angry "oration" questioning "the "Crocodile tears and glass bottle faces" of those advising colonization. Much like Richard Allen, he contended that the United States "is the land of our nativity, we know no other country, it is a land in which our fathers toiled, they have watered it with their tears, and fanned it with their sighs."[22] And in an address three years later, members of the New York black community determined, "This is our home, and this our country. Beneath the sod lie the bones of our fathers: for it some of them fought, bled, and died. Here we were born, and here we will die." Any attempt to send them away was "gratuitous."[23]

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[20] Williams, "Slavery and Colonization," 58.
[21] *Freedom's Journal*, May 18, 1827, 38.
[22] *Freedom's Journal*, April 4, 1828, 12.

The first national black convention met in Philadelphia during the summer of 1831. Over the next four years, black leaders and activists crystallized their staunch opposition to the American Colonization Society, making clear just how far they had moved from supporting resettlement – voluntary or involuntary – by the beginning of the new decade. The 1831 Conventional Address sounded a familiar refrain:

> "[W]e would rather die at home. Many of our fathers, and some of us, have fought and bled for the liberty, independence, and peace which you now enjoy; and, surely, it would be ungenerous and unfeeling in you to deny us a humble and quiet grave in that country which gave us birth!"[24]

Among those present was Belfast Burton, the doctor who had emigrated and praised Haiti's fortuitous prospects; by the time the first Convention met, Burton was back in the United States opting to die in the land of his birth. The next year an adopted resolution recommended the discontinuation of "any emigration to Liberia or Hayti," so as not "to distract and divide the whole colored family."[25] In 1824, many blacks believed emigration would unite the far-flung black family; by 1832, they had determined such movements would only "distract and divide" the more tightly-defined African American one.

Over the next two summers delegates maintained their stubborn resistance to further black removal, expressing hopes that African Americans would channel their energy towards self-improvement at home. The 1833 "Report on Canadian Settlement" recommended blacks to "devote their thoughts and energies to the improvement of their condition, and to the elevation of their character, in this their native land, rejecting all plans of colonization any where." Delegates anticipated "that before long, the man of colour will be reinstated in his natural rights."[26] The following year delegates expressed a belief that freedom could be fought for and won only in the United States, affirming it was the "duty we owe to the land of our birth, the interest of our suffering brethren, the cause of justice, virtue and religion… to remain on our soil, and see the salvation of God and the true principles of *freedom*."[27] Most black leaders in the early 1830s thus hoped to remove prejudice, not their constituents. Only then could slavery disappear, black people gain their "natural rights," and all discover "the true principles of *freedom*."

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[23] "Resolutions of the People of Color, at a Meeting Held on the 25th of January, 1831. With an Address to the Citizens of New York, in Answer to those of the 'New York Colonization Society'" in *Early Negro Writings*, ed., Porter, 281 – 285.

[24] "Minutes and Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the People of Colour" Philadelphia, 6 June – 11 June, 1831 in *Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830 – 1864*, ed. Howard Holman Bell. (1969).

[25] "Minutes and Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention for the Improvement of the People of Colour in these United States" Philadelphia, 4 June – 13 June, 1832, *Proceedings*, ed. Bell.

Although the failure of Haitian emigration was not the only impetus behind the black rejection of emigration, the words of two black leaders, John Hilton and Maria Stewart, subtly demonstrate the degree to which events in Haiti pushed certain free blacks towards a more radical stance at home. Hilton addressed the African Grand Lodge in Boston in 1828, a mere generation removed from Prince Hall's signature address. Hall had reminded his audience to remember our "African brethren… in the French West Indies." Thirty years later and just three years after the collapse of Haitian emigration, Hilton made no mention of his Haitian "brethren." Instead, he reserved his rhetorical vessel of "brethren" for his brothers in a distinctly American Masonic Lodge: "Brethren, we are moving westward, our sun is fast approaching its meridian and will soon go down and envelope us in the veil of death. Let us be active then."[28]

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[26] "Minutes and Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention for the Improvement of the People of Colour in these United States" Philadelphia, 3 June – 13 June, 1833 *Proceedings*, ed. Bell, 22–3, 36.

[27] "Minutes and Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention for the Improvement of the People of Colour in these United States" Asbury Church, New York City, 2 June – 12 June, 1834, in *Proceedings*, ed. Bell, 30. (italics in original)

[28] *Freedom's Journal*, November 7, 1828.

More explicit was the black activist Maria Stewart. In an 1832 address to the Afric-American Female Intelligence Society, she lamented the inability of African Americans to better their positions in American society. In so doing she differentiated American-born blacks, dubbed them in fact "one of the most degraded races upon the face of the earth," from all other "nations of the earth" who had "distinguished themselves." These "nations" included not only the Greeks, French, and Poles, but also "the Haytians," who in Stewart's mind formed an entirely different nation *and* race.[29] The hardening of American racial lines, as well as a more general awareness of the racist objectives of the American Colonization Society, certainly factored in the black move away from emigration in the early antebellum period. But so too did the failure of a movement to an allegedly all-black nation. The change of heart among former emigrationists such as Richard Allen and James Forten, the conspicuous absence of Haiti from John Hilton's speech, the subtle rhetorical shifts of Peter Williams and Maria Stewart – together these all hint at an African American ambivalence about Haiti, and one that pushed many away from further emigration movements.

This ambivalence had, however, a two-fold effect: even as black leaders rejected emigration to Haiti, many also seized on the power and the glory of the black Republic to further their domestic struggles against American slavery. I have argued that in the immediate wake of emigration's collapse, most black leaders became advocates of immediate abolition and opponents of any form of colonization. To achieve those ends, I also contend, many of these same leaders embraced Haiti's revolutionary heritage, symbolic importance, and historic anti-slavery mission. The primacy of their anti-slavery fights made Haiti's symbolic appeal all the more attractive. In the weeks, months, and years following the demise of emigration, Haiti resonated freshly in black minds precisely because so many advocated change at home.

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[29] Marilyn Richardson, ed., *Maria Stewart. America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches* (Bloomington, 1987), 53 – 54.

France's recognition of Boyer's government in August 1825 served as a catalyst for many expressions of black solidarity. At one celebration in Baltimore someone toasted France, the "first to acknowledge our Independence"; one man hailed "The Haytien motto, liberty and equality"; and another implored Americans to "Wash slavery from your records, and stand the admiration of the world."[30] Most effective of these orators was William Watkins, who nicely captured the relationship between Haiti's independence and African Americans' quest for abolition. "Of all that has hitherto been done in favour of the descendants of Africa," he preached, "I can recollect nothing so fraught with momentous importance – so pregnant with interest to millions yet unborn – as the recent acknowledgement of Haytien Independence." Haiti embodied "a practical and ostensible realization of the prophecy – 'Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand.'" There were "symptoms of the fulfillment of the above prophecy to be seen in our land," and in Watkins assessment, Haiti's independence could effect the "total abolition of slavery."[31] Regardless of the failures of emigration – indeed, Watkins may not have known about it, or may not have cared – Haiti retained a symbolic power in the black fight for abolition.

John Browne Russwurm provides another case in point. In 1826, he celebrated becoming the nation's second black college graduate by giving a commencement address dedicated to Haiti's condition and prospects.[32] Arguing that anyone deprived of liberty would one day "claim his rights," he noted how the Haitian Revolution demonstrated slavery could never "entirely destroy our faculties."[33] Two years later Russwurm reiterated these ideas, suggesting that the birth of Haiti indicated "what man, even the descendant of Africa, may be, when blessed with Liberty and Equality and her concomitants."[34] In his articulation, African Americans could lean on the Haitian example – could adopt, even, Haiti's heroes – to secure their own forms of liberty and equality.

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[30] *Genius of Universal Emancipation and Baltimore Courier* I, no.3 (September 12, 1825), 19.

[31] *Genius of Universal Emancipation* IV, no.11 (August 1825), 168 – 170.

[32] According to Philip Foner, Russworm graduated from Bowdoin College two weeks after Edward Jones graduated from Amherst College. See Philip Foner, ed., *The Voice of Black America*, 41.

An altered diasporan consciousness emanated from the failure of Haitian emigration. In some cases, like those of Watkins and Russwurm, free blacks continued to identify with Haitians as they had done for decades; such arguments evoked the language and reasoning of Prince Hall, indicating there persisted a strong continuity in thinking about Haiti. Others, recognizing the ways Haitian and American cultures differed, had by the late 1820s rejected all forms of emigration to concentrate on their freedom struggles at home. The two groups were by no means mutually exclusive. Even with their hopes for forging a common political identity on the basis of shared blackness complicated, certain black leaders linked their domestic struggles with Haiti's plight. In creative ways, they began to identify as citizens of both an American nation and a variegated black one.

James Forten's thinking captured the complexity of this new diasporan consciousness. After the Haitian movement's failure, he, like other black leaders, rejected further emigration and reasserted his commitment to abolish slavery and secure equality in the United States. The independent black Republic, however, still captured Forten's imagination. Through several acquaintances, he continued receiving news from Haiti and maintained an active interest in the island's affairs. As historian Julie Winch writes, "Haiti might not be the land of African brotherhood he [Forten] had once hoped it would be, but it lived on in his consciousness."[35]

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[33] John Browne Russworm, "The Condition and Prospects of Hayti" Bowdoin College, September 6, 1826, in *The Voice of Black America*, ed. Philip Foner, 43.
[34] *Freedom's Journal*, December 12, 1828, 291.

Similar tensions arose in the writings of Maria Stewart. She saw Haiti as a separate nation from her own, and indeed, never surrendered her hope of joining the American nation she so angrily denounced. Stewart, like Forten, opposed both colonization and emigration, conveying ambivalence towards racial separatism not uncommon among black leaders of her time.[36] On more than one occasion, though, Stewart expressed frustration over the United States' refusal to grant Haiti diplomatic recognition.[37] She called herself an African and by the early 1830s was prophesizing about a black destiny distinct from that of other Americans.[38] These sentiments were no contradiction. Instead, they reflected a complicated diasporan identity: Stewart was American, and by linking her fate to the broader black diaspora, she sought her people's entrance into the American politic.

David Walker's writings resembled Stewart's and epitomized this broadly-defined diasporan consciousness. Amidst vociferous attacks on colonization and emigration in his 1829 "Appeal," he invoked what historians have interpreted as nationalist rhetoric. Wilson Moses correctly pinpoints a tension in Walker's thinking – that he expressed black messianism without advocating racial separatism – but never elaborates on this ambiguous stance towards the diaspora.[39] In Walker's thinking, in fact, there appeared a complex diasporan consciousness – one that acknowledged both commonalities *and* differences. For example, Walker described Haiti as "the glory of the blacks and terror of the tyrants" in the same breath he lamented how the island was "plagued with that scourge of nations, the

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[35] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 220.
[36] Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism*, 17 – 18.
[37] Richardson ed., *America's First Black Political Writer*, 39 and 54.
[38] Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism*, 17 – 18.
[39] Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, 38 – 39.

Catholic religion." He was more a pragmatist than a nationalist, and ultimately resigned himself to the simple hope that Haiti could maintain internal peace while keeping "a strict look out for tyrants."[40] That Walker coupled his connotation of Haitians as "brethren" with his rejection of emigration was also no contradiction. It was an acknowledgement of the variety of African experiences in the Americas.

Most importantly, elements of this diasporan consciousness emerged in the pages of *Freedom's Journal*, the first African American newspaper in the United States. During its brief run *Freedom's Journal* circulated widely along the Atlantic seaboard, even reaching several Caribbean ports – among them Port-au-Prince.[41] In the late 1820s it played a significant role both shaping and reflecting literate black consciousness. This dual function was common, for during the early nineteenth century the press disseminated information as well as provided the public a space for community participation.[42] *Freedom's Journal* thus created a space in which its readers could actively participate in the republic as citizens. Senior editor Samuel Cornish argued that his "columns are more accessible to our brethren than any others," and accordingly lined its pages with questions and issues of particular interest to African Americans.[43] By the time his paper went to press, no issue garnered more interest, or evoked more ire, than colonization.[44]

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[40] Herbert Aptheker, ed., *"One Continual Cry": David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World (1829 – 1830). Its setting and Meaning. Together with the full text of the Third – and Last – Edition of the Appeal* (New York, 1965), 84.

[41] Bethel, *The Roots of African American Identity*, 157.

[42] See David Paul Nord's "Readership as Citizenship in Late-Eighteenth Century Philadelphia," in *A Melancholy Scene of Devastation*, eds. Estes and Smith, 19 – 44. According to Nord, for an assessment of the leading role played by taverns, reform associations, and black churches in creating community, see Gary Nash, "The Social Evolution of Preindustrial American Cities, 1700 – 1820: Reflections and New Directions," *Journal of Urban History* 13 (1987): 119 and 133.

[43] *Freedom's Journal*, June 6, 1827, 50 – 51.

[44] Ibid., August 31, 1827, 98.

Most blacks understandably used *Freedom's Journal* as a forum to assert their rights as citizens in the United States. Some white colonizationists, aware of the paper's influence within black communities, begged the editors not to prejudice their readers against the Liberian plan.[45] Black community leaders and writers refused. Capitalizing on their opportunity to have their voices heard, they angrily denounced any suggestion that they lacked a stake in the American nation, or that they needed to look for a better life elsewhere.[46] Cornish, for instance, forgot his pro-emigrationist past and urged his readers to "Abide in the ship."[47] Another writer asserted that blacks "are as truly Americans, as the President of the United States, and as much entitled to the protection, rights, and privileges of the country as he." He admitted that while his was "but one voice," he spoke "the sentiments of nearly all my brethren."[48] Like these men, most black contributors decried the hypocrisy of the colonization society and its leaders.

Yet *Freedom's Journal* was more than just a medium through which free blacks asserted their centrality within the union; it allowed them to read about and assert their claim to Haiti's past and present as well. Recognizing this, the editors paid tribute to Haiti in the paper's very first edition. Haitians, Cornish and his junior editor John Russwurm exclaimed, "fear none; and so far from being on the eve of a revolution, never were all parties more united and determined to support their hard-earned liberty."[49] Celebrating a new era – the post-Haitian Revolution era – the editors stated in another edition that

> "times have changed. We have seen the establishment of an independent nation by men of our own colour… There is something in the firm establishment of a

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[45] *Freedom's Journal*, August 24, 1827, 94.
[46] See aforementioned Allen passage. *Freedom's Journal*, November 3, 1827, 134; also "A Coloured Baltimorean," in Ibid., July 6, 1827, 66.
[47] *Freedom's Journal*, June 8, 1827, 50 – 51.
[48] Ibid., September 7, 1827, 102.
[49] Ibid., March 16, 1827, 3.

> free government by those who but lately were in the bonds of slavery that strikes us as manifesting in a peculiar degree the interposition of Divine Providence… we are struck with astonishment and admiration."[50]

Haitian freedom had not translated into freedom for most emigrants; it did show, however, that "with the same advantages of liberty, independence and education, as their white brethren of Europe and America, the race would not be found deficient."[51] Cornish had abandoned Haitian emigration and allowed his paper's pages to reflect an anti-colonizationist stance, but he also believed the symbol of a black nation could help African Americans strengthen their positions in American society.

Freedom's Journal likewise contained historical accounts of Haiti amounting to little more than praise for the Haitian Revolution and its heroes. The editors ran a serialized column from "The Scrapbook of Africanus" tracing Haitian history from its days as a sugar colony to its contemporaneous culture.[52] They printed a lengthy biography of Toussaint L'Ouverture, and several months later, a four-part fictional narrative called "Theresa – A Haytien Tale."[53] Such accounts often eschewed accuracy for political purpose and rhetorical flare. A reader could find an editorial by James Forten renouncing settling "in any foreign country whatever" in the same edition he read about Toussaint L'Ouverture's martyrdom.[54] Although most free blacks no longer viewed Haiti as fit for permanent settlement, many continued to celebrate its revolutionary heritage.

A closer look reveals these two expressions reinforced each other. The general renunciation of large-scale emigration, accompanied by a more entrenched form of black militancy in the United States, actually perpetuated a greater need for a powerful black Republic. David Walker fought colonization and slavery while remaining hopeful that Haiti could maintain peace within its borders. His association with a 'black nation' supported his battles at home, and as he managed to construct a public identity as an American he also did so as a member of an emerging diaspora. So too did Samuel Cornish, and presumably, many of his readers. African Americans like Walker and Cornish acknowledged the differences between themselves and Haitians at the same time they linked the symbol of Haiti to their domestic fights against slavery and inequality.

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[50] *Freedom's Journal*, April 6, 1827, 14.

[51] Ibid., May 4, 1827, 30.

[52] *Freedom's Journal*, April 27, 1827, 26; May 4, 1827, 30; May 11, 1827, 33; June 15, 1827, 54 – 55; June 29, 1827, 62; and October 12, 1827, 122 – 123.

[53] For Toussaint L'Ouverture, see Ibid., May 4, 1827, 30; May 11, 1827, 33; and May 18, 1827, 37 – 38; for "Theresa," see January 18, 1828, 170 – 171; January 25, 1828, 174; February 8, 1828, 182; and February 15, 1828, 186.

[54] See, for this example, *Freedom's Journal*, May 18, 1827, 37 – 38.

The diasporan consciousness had evolved. Haitians and African Americans were black, but as many emigrants learned, Haitian 'blackness' differed dramatically from that of American 'blackness.' These cultural dislocations led thousands of emigrants to return from Haiti, an exodus that in turn facilitated new commitments among their countrymen to fight for abolition and civil equality. And yet, this renewed commitment at home reinforced the importance of Haiti's revolutionary legacy to free blacks' hopes for freedom. By the late 1820s, many who rejected emigration continued using the black Republic as a weapon in their domestic fights, thereby acknowledging both differences and commonalities within the diaspora.

Haitian emigration and the subsequent evolution of a diasporan consciousness also transformed understandings of the black nation. Emigrants risked their lives, traveled over land and water, and crossed borders for the political benefits they believed blackness assured them in a black nation. Their return to the United States signaled a physical rejection of this idea. The complication of their static understandings of 'black' had exploded their hopes for the realization of a universal 'nation.' Yet, the articulation of a diasporan consciousness in conversations about further repatriation – whether in David Walker's "Appeal" or *Freedom's Journal's* pages – suggests that hopes for a black nation, or expressions of early black nationalism, did not perish completely. Rather, a spiritually-unifying black nationalism became one of several possible expressions of a diasporan consciousness.

Walker provides a final case-in-point. Undeniably he exhibited black nationalist tendencies, yet rather than being defined by them, his nationalism formed only one aspect of his diasporan consciousness. As Moses explains, Walker addressed "the Coloured People of the World" and treated whites as if they were "a people distinct from his own."[55] He also labeled Haitians "our brethren."[56] Walker remained, however, uncertain about racial separatism and always identified African Americans as Americans first.[57] Recognizing a shared history and racial heritage linked his fate to that of others in the diaspora, he also grasped how cultural differences made the actual establishment of a universal black nation in the Americas impossible, or at the very least, not yet possible.

The failure of 1820s emigration was an important moment in the history of the African diaspora precisely because it did not mark a next step in the unimpeded march towards black nationalism. Haitian emigration – from the ideas with which the emigrants arrived, to the hardships they endured, and finally, to the role Haiti played in black consciousness after they returned to the United States – reveals instead how complex was the diaspora in the early nineteenth century. African Americans discovered blackness did not guarantee them political equality in a black nation, and responded by identifying as members of an evolving diaspora and also as Americans. Domestic fights for equality and abolition not only facilitated this dual identification, but made it necessary. In this story of American freedom, the black nation remained a critical ideal, if as yet a stillborn dream.[58]

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[55] Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, 39.
[56] Herbert Aptheker, ed., "*One Continual Cry*," 121.
[57] Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, 39.

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[58] Expression taken from Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York, 1998).

Conclusion
Diasporan Consciousness

In Haiti, African Americans discovered they were Americans. Blackness there assembled itself differently than in the United States. Thousands of men and women returned after months or years of fruitless toil in a foreign land, inspiring many back home into action. At the beginning of the era historians traditionally label the antebellum period, black leaders responded to emigrants' troubles in the Caribbean by rejecting further emigration schemes and embracing the sympathy and help offered by radical white abolitionists. The integrated movements of the 1830s and 1840s were only possible because black abolitionists identified their struggles as distinctly American, and ones that by necessity had to be fought on American soil.

At the same time, African Americans increasingly identified as members of a black diaspora. Although this identification emerged in part as a reaction to the racist republicanism of the United States, it was also much more than that. After the 1820s the fights at home were linked with the fights abroad, entwining African Americans' fates with those of other African-descended peoples in the Americas. The very nation that proved too foreign to allow for the successful integration of black emigrants remained vital in black conversations. In some ways, Haiti became even more significant in black consciousness than in the years preceding the emigration movement.

Historians of black nationalism and black intellectual movements would do well to see the events of the 1820s as significant on their own terms. They have limited themselves by debating the meaning and periodization of nationalism, and, in the process, relegated the story of 1820s Haitian emigration to being no more than a prelude to the events of a later generation. Scholars have ignored how black leaders, as well as the communities who gave those leaders strength, understood their evolving places in the diaspora. They have misconstrued how individuals like James Forten and David Walker could espouse seemingly contradictory worldviews – worldviews sometimes categorized as "protonationalist" – about integration and nationalism.[1] The historiographical trope of black nationalism only partly explains the ways such figures viewed their places in the world around them. True, they counted themselves as proud sons of Africa, but they were also Americans.

African Americans thus saved Haiti's inspirational dream of freedom. Despite the failure of emigration – and despite the many lives and immeasurable suffering emigration had cost – many of them retained their claims to the legacy of the Haitian Revolution, to the strength of a nearby black Republic, and to the empowering knowledge that they were not alone in their continuing struggle to secure "Liberty and Equality" in the white man's 'new' world.[2] They had begun to develop a nuanced understanding of the diasporan world they inhabited, and of their places within it. This was small recompense for the many who abandoned their homes and faded into historical obscurity for the fulfillment of the promise of an unfulfilled dream. But for many more, this new consciousness facilitated a renewed involvement in the struggle that would engulf them and the country they called home for decades to come.

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[1] Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism*, 8.
[2] Mott, ed., *Biographical Sketches*, 330 – 335.

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