Northward bound: Slave refugees and the pursuit of freedom in the Northern US and Canada, 1775-1861

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Chapter Five
Abolitionism, Citizenship, and Emigration: The Political Mobilization of Slave Refugees

On March 6, 1857, the US Supreme Court issued one of the most infamous rulings in its history. The case involved Dred Scott, an enslaved man from Missouri who sued for his liberty. Scott's legal team insisted that Dred and his wife, Harriet, were both entitled to their freedom because they had previously resided in Illinois and Wisconsin. Although Scott lost the first suit in 1847, a St. Louis jury sided with him three years later. However, the Missouri Supreme Court overturned the St. Louis courts' decision in 1852. The case was taken up by the US Supreme Court which, in *Dred Scott v. John F. A. Sandford*, ruled against Scott. Going even further, however, it also ruled that African Americans held no claims to US citizenship.[694] Chief Justice Roger B. Taney wrote, "We think that they are not, and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States." The Supreme Court essentially affirmed that the United States was essentially a *Herrenvolk* republic, in which only white Euro-Americans could become citizens.[695]

Understandably, African Americans, African Canadians, and white abolitionists were appalled by the *Dredd Scott* ruling. The *Anti-Slavery Bugle* stated, "The Federal Court declares that the laws of Missouri prevail in Illinois, no matter what the Constitution and laws of the latter may be." Some newspapers opted for passionate, fiery language. A letter in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* declared, "the Supreme Court of the United States has washed its hands in the blood of Dred Scott and his family, and in millions yet unborn[.]"[696] The Supreme Court's decision energized advocates of black emigration schemes. Mary Ann Shadd Cary urged African American men and women to join her and thousands more in British North America. "Your national ship is rotten and sinking," she proclaimed, "why not leave it?" Similarly, her brother Isaac D. Shadd wrote in the *Provincial Freeman*:

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[694] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 170-174. For the most authoritative analysis of the Dred Scott decision, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978)..

[695] *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 US 393 (1856), US Supreme Court, accessed Apr. 8, 2019. https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/60/393/. For more on the antebellum United States as a *Herrenvolk* democracy, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991; reprinted 1992), 172; Christopher Malone, *Between Freedom and Bondage: Race, Party and Voting Rights in the Antebellum North* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 57.

[696] "THE DRED SCOTT CASE," *ASB*, Mar. 14, 1857; Rook, "COLOURPHOBIA IN BOSTON," *NASS*, Mar. 21, 1857.

> Who are American citizens among the masses of colored Northern state men? There are none according to the lately declared meaning of the Constitution. We are of opinion that people proscribed in their native land, denied the rights of citizenship, without claim to government protection, must feel to be but little superior in condition to the slave, and according to the "Fugitive Slave Law" they are all as liable to arrest… The Canadas have been reputed by the people of the States to be but a suitable refuge for the fugitive; but permit us to say, that these fugitives are men! [M]any of them acknowledged British subjects, and those that are not, in due time will be.[697]

Mary Ann Shadd Cary, argues Jane Rhodes, "embraced Canadian citizenship, arguing that British North America offered great potential as a new black homeland that symbolically repudiated the United States while offering material refuge." Shadd pledged her loyalty and devotion to Queen Victoria and urged black men and women to follow her example. She embraced British customs, celebrated the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, and encouraged men and women to serve the Crown. While slave refugees fled from bondage, free African Americans "emigrated as an act of disidentification with the United States."[698]

The relationship between citizenship, race, and slavery in North America was sharply contested. In the United States, African Americans were afforded significantly fewer rights and protections than whites. Linda Kerber argues that there was no such thing as a truly "free black" in the antebellum era. "Before the Civil War," she writes, "free African American men could not serve in the militia or carry the mail. 'Free' blacks were forbidden to move into some states, and slave states often required emancipated slaves to move out of state and never return." The right to vote, own property, and myriad other liberties were denied to black men and women.[699] For slave refugees, the situation was even more precarious. Officially considered chattel under federal law, they were not even fully regarded as people. For black abolitionists, the abolitionist movement was not solely about eradicating slavery; it was equally about eliminating prejudice and racial discrimination in the North.

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[697] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 371-372.
[698] Jane Rhodes, "The Contestation over National Identity: Nineteenth-Century Black Americans in Canada," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 30, no. 2 (2000), 180-181.
[699] Linda K. Kerber, "The Meanings of Citizenship," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 3 (1997), 842.

In Canada, meanwhile, self-emancipated refugees and free African American newcomers also sought access to equal citizenship.[700] William Grose of St. Catharines told Benjamin Drew, "I am a true British subject, and I have a vote every year as much as any other man." Similarly, Alexander Hamilton of London declared, "I am naturalized here, and have all the rights and privileges of a British subject." Rev. Alexander Hemsley affirmed, "Now I am a regular Britisher. My American blood has been scourged out of me; I have lost my American tastes; I am an enemy to tyranny." That being said, most freedom seekers opted to remain in the northern US than immigrate to Canada. Rather than seek British subjecthood, they opted to remain in the North and fight for unqualified US citizenship.[701]

On paper, the northern states and Canada were dramatically different societies. Across the North, black people were largely denied the right to vote, barred from testifying in court, banned from using public transportation and accommodation, and disqualified from public office. African Americans organized protests and campaigned for equality.[702] Meanwhile, black refugees in Canada could vote, testify in court, use public transportation. In reality, African Americans and African Canadians people faced similar challenges, including discrimination, segregation, and inferior treatment, and occasionally acts of violence.[703] This chapter examines the political mobilization of slave refugees in the North and Canada. What roles did slave refugees perform in the North American abolitionist movement? How

[700] For the sake of ease, 'citizenship' and 'subjecthood' will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter. The author acknowledges that the two concepts technically differ in some regards (such as notions of identity). However, given that most discussions of both focus on a broadly similar array of rights, privileges and protections, they will be treated as largely identical concepts.

[701] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 39, 86, 179; For more on African American refugees conceiving themselves as British subjects, see Dann J. Broyld, "'Justice was Refused Me, I Resolved to Free Myself": John W. Lindsay Finding Elements of American Freedom in British Canada, 1805-1876," *Ontario History* 109, no. 1 (2017).

[702] One of the best appraisals of African American political activism in the antebellum North remains Leon Litwack's *North of Slavery*, esp. Ch. 3. Since then, many key works have greatly expanded our understanding of black political activism and racial discriminations in the 'free' states. Patrick Rael's *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) is the best recent study on African American activism in the antebellum North. For other recent works, see Patrick Rael, "Free Black Activism in the Antebellum North," *History Teacher* 39, no. 2 (2006), 215-253; James Brewer Stewart, "Modernizing "Difference": The Political Meanings of Color in the Free States, 1776-1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (1999), 691-712; Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom*; Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*; Hodges, *Root & Branch*; Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom*; Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, esp. Ch. 7.

[703] Surprisingly, there are only a handful of scholarly works dedicated to black political mobilization and abolitionism in British Canada. See Stouffer, *Light of Nature*; Robin W. Winks, "'A Sacred Animosity': Abolitionism in Canada," in Martin B. Duberman (ed.), *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 301-342; Paul, "Out of Chatham." The main works on black Canadian historiography also contain sections on black activism in British North America. See Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*; Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests*; and Henry, *Emancipation Day*.

did refugees campaign for equal citizenship? Manisha Sinha writes that slave refugees advanced a new form of black politics in North America: "fugitive slave abolitionism." Self-emancipators like Frederick Douglass, James W.C. Pennington, Samuel Ringgold Ward, Henry Bibb, and Harriet Tubman became some of the most influential figures in the nineteenth-century anti-slavery movement. Since the 1960s, historians have published important studies on black abolitionism. Yet few studies have focused exclusively on the contributions of slave refugees to this movement.[704] Self-emancipators published autobiographies and memoirs, established newspapers and wrote novels, held leadership positions in anti-slavery societies, organized public festivals, and addressed interracial audiences. They captivated northern and Canadian audiences with their stories of enslavement and self-emancipation.

Furthermore, slave refugees in the northern US and Canada were also central to militant abolitionism. They engaged in violent insurrections to forcibly eradicate the institution of slavery. John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry featured a mix of free-born and freed blacks, as well as slave refugees in the United States and Canada. Aside from abolitionism, slave refugees performed critical roles in other political campaigns. Most notably, they campaigned alongside free blacks and white abolitionists against segregation, prejudice, and discrimination. Moreover, they encouraged supporters to engage with electoral politics and throw their support behind abolitionist parties. In this regard, slave refugees pushed the abolitionist movement in an overtly political direction.

Lastly, slave refugees became involved in two other interrelated issues: opposition to colonization and voluntary emigration. White Quakers and enslavers believed that free blacks were incapable of living freely alongside Euro-American and European whites. "Colonizationists," argues Paul Goodman, "formally conceptualized the American republic in racial terms and offered a program for purifying the nation, North and South." African Americans and African Canadians opposed such proposals and asserted their claims to equal citizenship.[705] By the

[704] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause* (for 'Fugitive Slave Abolitionism,' see Ch. 13). For more on the historiography of black abolitionism, see Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*; John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Hodges, *David Ruggles*. The best scholarly work of black women's abolitionism is Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Manisha Sinha, "Coming of Age: The Historiography of Black Abolitionism," in Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (eds.), *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York: New Press, 2006), 23-38.

[705] Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998), 19. For more on colonization and its opponents, see Philip J. Stradenraus, *The African Colonization Movement: 1616-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1861* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); Douglas Egerton, "Its Origins is Not a Little Curious: A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5, no. 4 (1985), 263-280; Beverly C. Tomek, *Colonization and Its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration, and Antislavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind*

1850s, however, some free blacks and slave refugees came to endorse immigration to Mexico, the Caribbean, and West Africa. Martha S. Jones writes, "The line between emigration and colonization was real, distinguishing self-determination from compulsion." Disillusioned with their prospects in North America, many set their sights on beacons of liberty elsewhere. The British West Indies, Central and South America, and West Africa were considered the most viable alternatives. This chapter illustrates how slave refugees, working alongside legally free people of color, were integral to black emigration schemes in the northern US and Canada. Consequently, they promoted Pan-African identities and helped to solidify what Paul Gilroy termed the Black Atlantic.[706]

"What Shall we do with the free people of color?" African American and White Abolitionist Opposition to Colonization

Colonization was first conceived alongside manumission and gradual abolition. White Southerners (as well as northern whites) believed that free African Americans were incapable of living alongside them. Many began to formulate schemes by which African-descended people would be expelled from the continent. In his *Thoughts on the Colonization of Free Blacks*, Rev. Robert Finley asked, "What shall we do with the free people of color?... *the gradual separation of the black from the white population*." In 1816, Finley and others founded the American Colonization Society (ACS). Its aim was "to promote and execute a plan for colonizing (with their consent) the free people of color, residing in our country, in Africa, or such other place as Congress shall deem most expedient." Between 1820 and 1834, the ACS funded the forced removal of more than 4,000 African Americans[707]

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and Tide: The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Matthew Spooner, "'I Know This Scheme is from God:' Toward a Reconstruction of the Origins of the American Colonization Society," *Slavery & Abolition* 35, no. 4 (2014), 559-574.

[706] Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 38; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Rhodes, "The Contestation over National Identity," 175. Further readings on black nationalism and emigration schemes include Miller, *Search for Black Nationality*; Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, Chapters 2 and 3; Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); Sara Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Elena K. Abbot, "Beacons of Liberty: Free-Soil Havens and the American Anti-Slavery Movement, 1813-1863," (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2017).

[707] Finley quoted in Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 163, 164; American Colonization Society. The first annual report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States: and the proceedings of the Society for their annual meeting in the city of Washington, on the first day of January, 1818. Washington City [i.e., Washington, D.C.], 1818. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit

Before this, some African Americans had experimented with emigration schemes to West Africa. In 1811, Paul Cuffe, a black ship captain, sailed to Sierra Leone to join the black Nova Scotians. Over the 1820s, some black activists promoted emigration from North America to Liberia. John Brown Russwurm, a Jamaica-born abolitionist, advocated Liberian emigration schemes. In 1829, he moved to Liberia and encouraged others to join him. He wrote, "I long to see young men, who are now wasting their best days in the United States, flocking to this land as the last asylum to the unfortunate." Black newcomers faced many hardships in Liberia, including hunger, illness, and early death.[708]

African Americans opposed the forced emigration schemes spearheaded by the ACS. In May 1831, representatives met at the African Union Methodist Church in Wilmington, Delaware, to voice their opposition to the ACS. They resolved, "We are natives of the United States; our ancestors were brought to this country by means over which they had no control; we have our attachments to the soil, and we feel that we have rights in common with other Americans… Africa is neither our nation nor home[.]" Similarly, the *Christian Register* contended, "If the blacks choose to prefer America to Africa, is it humane or Christian to attempt to expel them, either by open violence or by the force of opinion?"[709] The most widely publicized essay against the ACS was David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured* [sic] *Citizens of the World*. He argued that remaining in the United States "is as much ours as it is the whites, whether they will admit it now or not[.]" Walker's *Appeal* was met with hostility among southern whites. The *Liberator* wrote, "a better promoter of insurrection was never sent forth to an oppressed people."[710]

Leiden/LUMC. 8 Aug. 2018. Pg. 2; Wilson Jeremiah Moses (ed.), *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), xxi-xxii; Felix Brenton, "American Colonization Society," *BlackPast.org*, Dec. 30, 2008. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/american-colonization-society-1816-1964/. Accessed Jun. 12, 2019. For more on the ACS and abolitionist response, see George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Ch. 1.

[708] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 161-162, 167; Sandra Sandiford Young, "John Brown Russwurm's Dilemma: Citizenship or Emigration?" in McCarthy and Stauffer (eds.), *Prophets of Protest*, 90; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 72.

[709] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 103; "COLONIZATION OF THE FREE BLACKS," *Christian Register*, reprinted in *Liberator*, Mar. 4, 1831.

[710] David Walker, "ADDRESS, Delivered before the General Colored Association at Boston, by David Walker," *Freedom's Journal*, Dec. 20, 1828; David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of the United States of America, written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*, 3rd ed. (Boston: David Walker, 1830), 62, accessed Apr. 8, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html; "WALKER'S PAMPHLET," *Liberator*, Jan. 1, 1831. For more on David Walker, see Peter P. Hinks, *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Gosse, "'As a Nation, the English Are Our Friends,' 1003-1028.

Black opposition to colonization shaped white abolitionist views of the ACS. In 1832, William Lloyd Garrison published his *Thoughts on African Colonization*, which rebuked the ACS and its members' claims. He challenged negative stereotypes regarding free people of color. "In Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New-York, and other places," Garrison wrote, "there are several colored persons whose individual property is worth from ten thousand to one hundred thousand dollars; and in all those cities, there are primary and high schools for the education of the colored population – flourishing churches of various denominations – and numerous societies for mutual assistance and improvement[.]"[711] By the 1830s, white abolitionists came to understand that the ACS was not truly an anti-slavery organization. On the contrary, abolitionists increasingly believed that colonization bolstered US slavery. Garrison's *Liberator* summarized the abolitionist criticism:

> The Colonization Society is for delaying restitution to the slaves for years – for an indefinite and distant period. The Anti-Slavery Society is for having justice done at once to the slaves. The former insists upon a gradual, the latter upon an instantaneous abolition of slavery. The former is the apologist and ally of southern kidnappers. The latter holds no fellowship with them, but faithfully exposes their guilt. The former insists upon a removal of the colored population to Africa, as the only condition of their freedom. The latter claims for them the protection of law as American citizens.[712]

Through their opposition to the ACS, black men and women had not only convinced white abolitionists that they should remain in the United States, but that they were also entitled to the same civil liberties and legal protections. "Had it not been for free blacks such as William Watkins and David Walker," argues Ousmane Power-Greene, "William Lloyd Garrison might have continued to hold colonization sympathies[.]"[713] Opposition to the ACS marked the beginning of the 'second wave' of abolitionism. This new wave differed from its predecessor in several respects. For starters, free blacks and slave refugees assumed leadership positions within second wave societies and organizations. Furthermore, second wave abolitionism was more transnational in scope. Slave refugees and free blacks in Canada formed anti-slavery

[711] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 214-221; Garrison, William Lloyd. Thoughts on African colonization, or, An impartial exhibition of the doctrines, principles and purposes of the American Colonization Society, together with the resolutions, addresses, and remonstrances of the free people of color by Wm. Lloyd Garrison. Boston, 1832. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 12 June 2019. Pg. 133.
[712] "A Strange Question," *Liberator*, Dec. 15, 1832.
[713] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 241; Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 48.

societies, staged meetings and protests, and published newspapers in conjunction with white abolitionists in Canada. Working across borders, US and Canadian activists forged a transnational immediatist movement.

Second Wave Abolitionism and Slave Refugee Activism

Beginning in the early 1830s, new anti-slavery organizations were established across the northern US and Canada. In 1832, abolitionists in Boston founded the New England Anti-Slavery Society (NEASS) at the Belknap Street African Baptist Church. William Lloyd Garrison, Samuel J. May, Theodore Weld, and Arthur Tappan attended its first annual meeting. The following year, New York abolitionists founded the New York Anti-Slavery Society (NYASS). A couple of months later, abolitionists met in Philadelphia to establish the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS). In 1835, the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society (OASS) held its first convention in Putnam, Ohio.[714] Women abolitionists also formed separate societies across the North. In 1833, they founded the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia (FASSP). The following year, women abolitionists founded the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS). In Henry County, Indiana, female activists established the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1841. Its constitution emphasized the duty of "Christian women" to campaign against the institution of slavery and aid African-descended people.[715]

African Americans also established separate abolitionist organizations. In May 1834, black activists in Newark, New Jersey, established the Colored Anti-Slavery Society of Newark (CASSN). It aimed "to endeavor by all honest means sanctioned by law, humanity and religion, to collect funds, to aid the American Anti-Slavery Society, to effect the immediate abolition of slavery in the United States, to improve the character of us the free people of color, to inform and correct public opinion in relation to our situation and rights, and to obtain for us, equal civil and

[714] Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 107; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 23-24; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 223-227; New England Anti-Slavery Society. Board of Managers. First annual report of the Board of Managers of the New England Anti-Slavery Society: presented Jan. 9, 1833: with an appendix. Boston, 1833. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 26 Sept. 2018. pp. 5-6; Anti-Slavery Convention (1833: Philadelphia, Pa.). Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention: assembled at Philadelphia. December 4, 5, and 6, 1833. New York, 1833. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 26 Sept. 2018; Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention (1835: Putnam). Report on the condition of the people of color in the state of Ohio: from the proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, held at Putnam. on the 22d, 23d, and 24th of April. 1835. [Ohio?], [1835?]. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 26 Sept. 2018.

[715] Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 120-122; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 25-27; Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society, 1841-1849. L211. ISL. Indianapolis, Indiana.

religious privileges with white inhabitants of the land." Elsewhere, African Americans founded their independent anti-slavery organizations. The rise of immediate abolitionism was a significant step for black activism across the North. In 1839, Charles B. Ray praised the ascendancy of the interracial immediatism; "Without the abolition movement," he asserted, "our colored citizens would have dragged out an intolerable existence of, at least, fifty more years, without energy, efficiency or elevation… 'ABOLITION' has awoke this dispirited people to the dignity of manhood and to the energy and enterprize [sic] of freemen."[716]

Slave refugees and legally free blacks became prominent figures within anti-slavery organizations, although they rarely assumed leadership positions. Frederick Douglass was a close friend of William Lloyd Garrison and other white abolitionists in the North. Others, such as Samuel Ringgold Ward, Henry Bibb, and William Wells Brown, also joined second wave anti-slavery organizations. Formerly enslaved men and women, writes Benjamin Quarles, "proved a godsend to the [abolitionist] cause." Schisms within US abolitionism, namely between the more radical 'Garrisonians' and conservative activists, ultimately led to the collapse of the national movement in the early 1840s. Nevertheless, free blacks and slave refugees from enslavement remained important figures in the abolitionist movement.[717]

Abolitionist organizations were also established in Canada, although the anti-slavery movement took longer to get off the ground. In 1827, black activists in Windsor founded one of Upper Canada's first anti-slavery societies. It quickly fell into obscurity, however. About ten years later, Methodist minister Ephraim Evans established the Upper Canada Anti-Slavery Society (UCASS) in Toronto. Article 2 of the UCASS Constitution stated that its main objectives were "the entire abolition of slavery throughout the world; the removal of existing prejudice against the people of color; and the elevation of their character and condition, by promoting their mental and religious improvement." Members reaffirmed their British subjecthood and fidelity to the Crown, as well as their objection to black enslavement on religious grounds. "It grew to claim 106 members," notes Robin Winks, "but did not last out the decade."[718]

The FSA 1850 inspired a new wave of Canadian abolitionism and anti-slavery societies. On February 26, 1851, abolitionists founded the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada (ASSC) in Toronto. Its executive committee included George Brown, editor of the Toronto *Globe*, Henry Bibb, and black businessman Wilson Anderson Ruffin. The ASSC Constitution stated: "The passage of the atrocious

[716] Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 28-31; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 132-135 (first quote), 311-313 (second quote).
[717] Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 56-67 (quote on 61).
[718] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 253-254; Stouffer, *Light of Nature*, 108. For the UCASS Constitution, see Thomas Price. Slavery in America: with of the present state of slavery and the slave trade throughout the world. London, 1837, 208. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 8 June 2020.

Fugitive Slave Bill gave a new impulse to the friends of justice, and of the sympathy of the oppressed. It seemed impossible to witness the arrival, in Canada, of so many sufferers under the law, without being convinced of the duty of crying aloud to our neighbours [sic] across the Line[.]" The ASSC's primary objective was "to aid in the extinction of Slavery all over the world, by means exclusively lawful and peaceable, moral and religious, by tracts, newspapers, lectures, and correspondence, and by manifesting sympathy with the houseless and homeless victims of Slavery flying to our soil."[719] News of ASSC meetings gradually trickled down to the US South, exacerbating concerns among enslavers. In October 1851, the Louisiana *Planters' Banner* wrote that anti-slavery conventions and meetings in Toronto openly disavowed the FSA 1850 and urged "runaway negroes to escape into Canada, where they intend providing means to enable them to settle there."[720]

Meanwhile, abolitionists across North America and the British Isles praised the ASSC's work. In April, abolitionist George W. Putnam wrote to William Lloyd Garrison that meetings in Toronto "have done great good" for the Canadian abolitionist movement.[721] Meanwhile, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* wrote, "If the members of the Society are disposed to extend the helping hand to the flying bondman, their friends on the other side of the line will keep them busy." Speaking at an anti-slavery meeting in Toronto, British abolitionist George Thompson contrasted Canada's 'free' soil with US slavery. "America," he claimed, "seems to have no actuating principle but slavery, no God but slavery. At the South, the soil is monopolized by it… Every portion of the population is under its direct and absolute influence." Thompson urged supporters to aid "the refugees from the house of American bondage," and promote the cause of abolitionism. He declared, "the time shall come when, from sea to sea, and from the Arctic regions to Panama, this soil shall be sacred to freedom."[722]

At its height, roughly 200 people belonged to the ASSC. Local chapters were established across Upper Canada. Women abolitionists also formed auxiliary organizations in the province. The Toronto Ladies' Association (TLA), for instance,

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[719] Nathan Barker, "Anti-Slavery Society of Canada," *TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca*, Feb. 13, 2018. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anti-slavery-society-of-canada. Accessed Sep. 2, 2018; *Constitution and By-Laws of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada* (Toronto: George Brown, "Globe" Office, 1851), 3-5. Obtained via: https://archive.org/details/cihm_67288/page/n7, accessed Apr. 20, 2019. For more on the CASS, see Fred Landon, "The Anti-Slavery Society of Canada," *Journal of Negro History* 4, no. 1 (1919), 33-40; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 254-262; Stouffer, *Light of Nature*, 215.

[720] "Movements of Abolitionists," *Planters' Banner* (Franklin, LA), Oct. 11, 1851.

[721] Putnam, George W., and William Lloyd Garrison. "Letter from George W. Putnam, Toronto [Ontario], to William Lloyd Garrison, 1851 April 13th." Correspondence. April 13, 1851. *Digital Commonwealth*, accessed Jun 3, 2020. https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:2v23wx41q.

[722] "ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY IN CANADA," *NASS*, Mar. 6, 1851; "SPEECH OF GEORGE THOMPSON, M. P., AT TORONTO," *Toronto Patriot*, reprinted in *Liberator*, May 16, 1851.

assisted slave refugees in the city. Over the decade, ASSC meetings were staged across Upper Canada. In June 1854, the *Frederick Douglass' Paper* reported that the annual ASSC meeting "was a highly interesting and satisfactory demonstration." Canadian, US, and British abolitionists attended the meeting, including Samuel Ward and John Scoble.[723] The ASSC continued to operate over the 1850s, although the relative scarcity of newspaper articles after 1855 suggests that the organization had already fallen into decline. Nonetheless, the ASSC continued to organize meetings into the following decade. In February 1863, abolitionist George Brown addressed an ASSC meeting in Toronto. In his speech, Brown praised President Abraham Lincoln and called for a Union victory in the Civil War.[724]

Other abolitionist societies were established across Upper Canada over the decade. In Windsor, black and white activists founded the Anti-Slavery Society of Windsor (ASSW) in October 1852. Its mission was "the abolition of chattle [sic] Slavery, and the elevation of the colored population of North America[.]" Henry Bibb became the ASSW's first president, while Mary Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd Cary were also members. Little is ultimately known about the ASSW's activities or lifespan.[725] Working in tandem with free blacks and white abolitionists, slave refugees were vital to the anti-slavery movement. The next section will examine the core tenets of 'fugitive slave abolitionism.'

Fugitive Slave Abolitionism: Literary Culture, Oratory, and Transnational Militancy

Slave refugees made an invaluable contribution to the North American abolitionist movement. Freedom narratives, memoirs, and autobiographies were among their most significant contributions. Frederick Douglass, Samuel Ringgold Ward, Josiah Henson, Henry Bibb, Lewis Clarke, William Wells Brown, James Pennington, Henry

[723] *First Annual Report Presented to the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada by its Executive Committee, March 24th, 1852* (Toronto: Brown's Printing Establishment, King Street East, 1852). Accessed via Barker, "Anti-Slavery Society of Canada,"; "CANADA ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY," *FDP*, Jun. 30, 2854 (quote). For more articles on the ASSC, its agents and meetings, see "UPPER CANADA – ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY," *ASR*, May 1, 1852; "Anti-Slavery Anniversary," *Globe*, reprinted in *FDP*, Apr. 8, 1853; "SAMUEL R. WARD, OF CANADA," *ASR*, Jun. 1, 1853; "FUGITIVE SLAVES IN CANADA," *ASR*, Jul. 1, 1853; "FUGITIVE SLAVES IN CANADA," *British Banner*, reprinted in *FDP*, Apr. 21, 1854; Barker, "Anti-Slavery Society of Canada"; For more on Samuel Ringgold Ward and the ASSC, see Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 59-60.

[724] Brown, George. The American war and slavery: speech of the Hon. George Brown at the anniversary meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada: held at Toronto on Wednesday, February 3, 1863, 4. Manchester [England], 1863. Slavery and Anti-Slavery. Gale. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC. 8 June 2020.

[725] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 222-223; Stouffer, *Light of Nature*, 122-123; Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, 64; Tarah Brookfield, *Our Voices Must Be Heard: Women and the Vote in Ontario* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 29-31.

'Box' Brown, and William Grimes all published popular memoirs. "By the late 1840s," notes Ezra Greenspan, "fugitive-slave narratives were so numerous that they were becoming identifiable as a common body of writing[.]" White abolitionists understood that the testimonies of formerly enslaved people would benefit the anti-slavery cause and quickly published their stories.[726] Freedom narratives were the most important forms of abolitionist literature. "Presenting improbable and daring stories of escape," writes Sinha, "they captured the public imagination and showcased both the ingenuity of self-emancipated slaves… and the abolitionist underground."[727]

Other slave refugees published novels to convert northern and Canadian whites to the abolitionist cause. William Wells Brown published *Clotel* in 1853, which told the story of two fictional enslaved daughters of Thomas Jefferson (which undoubtedly drew inspiration from the life of Sally Hemmings). Frederick Douglass published *The Heroic Slave*, a fictional work based on Madison Washington and the *Creole* revolt. Through these writings, black authors transformed popular perceptions of freedom seekers. "The heroes and heroines of these books," notes Manisha Sinha, "were rebels and fugitives, characters who challenged the military might and political power of the slaveholding republic."[728]

Slave refugees were also instrumental in the formation of an independent African American and African Canadian press. Founded in 1827, the New York City *Freedom's Journal* was the first black newspaper in North America. John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish set out the newspaper's purpose in its first issue: "The civil rights of a people being of the greatest value, it shall ever be our duty to vindicate our brethren, (who are qualified by the laws of the different states) the expediency of using their elective franchise; and of making an independent use of the same." For its brief two-year history, the newspaper informed readers on social and political developments. As Timothy Patrick McCarthy argues, the *Freedom's Journal* "continued the trend among African Americans of moving away from explicitly oral

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[726] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 423; Ezra Greenspan, *William Wells Brown: An African American Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 150. Numerous works have examined the impact of freedom narratives and autobiographies from formerly enslaved African Americans. See Jeannine Marie DeLombard, *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); James Olney, "'I was Born': Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and Literature," *Callaloo* 20 (1984), 46-73; Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates (eds.), *The Slave's Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Michael A. Chaney, *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise (eds.) *The Long Walk to Freedom: Runaway Slave Narratives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013). In recent years, historians and literary scholars have directed greater attention to the transnational and transatlantic impact of freedom narratives, autobiographies, and memoirs in British Canada. See Nancy Kang, "'As if I had entered a Paradise': Fugitive Slave Narratives and Cross-Border Literary History," *African American Review* 39, no. 3 (2005), 431-457; Nelle Sawallisch, *Fugitive Borders: Black Canadian Cross-Border Literature at Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2019).

[727] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 423, 436 (quote).

[728] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 441-451 (quote on 450).

modes of expression toward a growing reliance on print culture as a site of political discourse." Over time, black activists founded other black newspapers across the North. Frederick Douglass founded several newspapers, such as the *Frederick Douglass Paper* and *North Star*.[729]

In Canada, slave refugees were instrumental in the formation of an independent African Canadian press. In 1851, Henry Bibb founded the *Voice of the Fugitive* in Sandwich. "We need a press," he asserted, "that we may be independent of those who have always oppressed us – we need a press that we may hang our banners on the outer wall, that all who pass by may read why we struggle, and what we struggle for."[730] Bibb quickly established close relationships with African American leaders and white abolitionists in the Detroit River borderland and beyond, including Frederick Douglass, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and William Still. Isaac Henson, the presumed son of Josiah Henson, declared, "Let the *Voice* speak as a mighty trumpet – let the sound reach across the Atlantic Ocean that Britain may hear the wrongs of those refugees who have nobly pledged their all to the support of the Government." Black activists saw the value of an African Canadian press to the abolitionist movement. "What we do here," wrote Samuel Ringgold Ward, "must exert a most powerful influence upon our cause in the United States."[731]

Two years later, Mary Ann Shadd Cary founded the *Provincial Freeman*. Based in Windsor, Shadd's newspaper supported the immediate abolition of slavery, promoted racial equality and black elevation, advocated immigration to Canada, and staunchly opposed the ACS. In March 1853, she claimed that some whites in Upper Canada "look upon it [colonization] with considerable favor. Such do not know how much is done to promote colonization by the disparagement of the black man, and by a denial of his rights[.]" While the *Voice* dedicated much of its attention to land-ownership schemes and the condition of black refugees, the *Provincial Freeman*,

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[729] "To Our Patriots," *Freedom's Journal*, Mar. 16, 1827 (first quote); Jacqueline Bacon, *Freedom's Journal: The First African-American Newspaper* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 13, 37; Timothy Patrick McCarthy, "'To Plead Our Own Cause': Black Print Culture and the Origins of American Abolitionism," in McCarthy and Stauffer (eds.), *Prophets of Protest*, 117 (second quote); Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827-1860* (Westport, BT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 4-9; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1848-1846*, 216. For more on the *Freedom's Journal*, see Jacqueline Bacon, "The History of Freedom's Journal: A Study in Empowerment and Community," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (2003), 163-181; Jacqueline Bacon, "'Acting as Freemen': Rhetoric, Race, and Reform in the Debate over Colonization in *Freedom's Journal*, 1827-1828," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93, no. 1 (2007), 58-83.

[730] Afua Cooper, "The *Voice of the Fugitive*: A Transnational Abolitionist Organ," in Smardz Frost and Tucker (eds.), *A Fluid Frontier*, 135-152 (*Voice* quoted on 135). For more on Henry Bibb and *Voice of the Fugitive*, see Afua A. P. Cooper, "'Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause': Henry Bibb, Abolitionism, Race Uplift, and Black Manhood, 1842-1854," (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2000); Susan M. Stanton, "*Voice of the Fugitive*: Henry Bibb and 'Racial Uplift' in Canada West, 1851-1852," (MA thesis: University of Victoria, 2001).

[731] Isaac Henson quoted in Cooper, "*Voice of the Fugitive*," 140-141; Ripley et al. (eds..), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 182.

argues Jason Silverman, "focused especially on problems of racial discrimination and segregation." Ultimately, Shadd was unable to raise sufficient funds to sustain the *Provincial Freeman*. She closed the newspaper in 1857, only four years after it was founded. Yet its legacy endured for much longer.[732]

Black newspapers challenged the racial stereotypes that were pervasive in the white Canadian press. In 1856, the *London Free Press* claimed that "a fugitive from slavery, named Henry DeVault, is at present confined in the City prison on suspicion of having murdered one of his children, a lad of six years of age… it is feared that one of the most cold blooded murders which has ever been committed in Western Canada will be brought to light." The *Free Press* directly attributed DeVault's supposedly violent conduct to his own experiences with slavery. The newspaper alleged that "the child was lashed, face downwards, to a bench and flogged severely whilst in that position, and on several occasions the lad was observed with his hands encased in an apparatus which is termed in the Southern States a "Yoke," and is used there to prevent slaves from running away."[733]

Similarly, the *British Whig* reprinted a report which detailed the assault of an eighteen-year-old white woman by a black man in Colchester, "a few miles from Malden, and close to the negro town of New Canaan[.]" It alleged that the unnamed women "was knocked down in the woods by the negro, and when found, after he had left with her, was insensible and hardly possessed of life." An armed mob was raised to pursue Williams, who allegedly fled to Belle River on a stolen horse where he secured passage aboard the Great Western Railway. The *Whig* closed with a warning: "These outrages now so frequent in Western Canada, are the natural results of the encouragement given to the escaped slaves. Slavery is a great social evil, but there is no reason why Canada should suffer."[734]

Similar reports of black criminality in Canada trickled down to US newspapers, especially in the southern states. In 1859, the Baltimore *Daily Exchange* reported on the hanging of two alleged self-emancipators in Brantford. The two men were "convicted of murder" and reportedly admitted to committing the crime. The *Exchange* added that the sympathy of white Canadians to slave refugees was "fast

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[732] Cooper, "*Voice of the Fugitive*," 143-145; Jason H. Silverman, "Mary Ann Shadd and the Search for Equality," in Litwack and Meier (eds.), *Black Leaders*, 94; "Colonization," *PF*, Mar. 24, 1853; Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*; Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1997), 87-100. For more on Mary Ann Shadd Cary, see Erica Armstrong Dunbar, "Writing for True Womanhood: African-American Women's Writings and the Antislavery Struggle," in Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart (eds.), *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 308-310; Jane Rhodes, "At the Boundaries of Abolitionism, Feminism, and Black Nationalism: The Activism of Mary Ann Shadd Cary," in Sklar and Stewart (eds), *Women's Rights*, Ch. 17.

[733] "Supposed Murder – Inhuman Conduct of a Negro," *London Free Press*, reprinted in *St. Catharines Constitutional*, May 19, 1856.

[734] "DIABOLICAL OUTRAGE BY A NEGRO ON A YOUNG WHITE GIRL," *Detroit Free Press*, reprinted in *British Whig*, Apr. 2, 1860.

wearing out." Similarly, the *Wyandot Pioneer* claimed that blacks in Upper Canada were "very insolent and overbearing to the White Canadians[.]" It cited a reported stabbing in Windsor as evidence of local unrest caused by black refugees in the province.[735]

Henry Bibb, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and Mary Ann Shadd Cary challenged anti-black prejudice and racism in mainstream Canadian newspapers. In 1851, Bibb called anti-black prejudice "The most obnoxious and fatal disease has made its way into this province… Its allies are mostly among the lowest class of white people, who are used as mere stepping stones or political hobbies for the most refined and enlightened to ride into office upon." Similarly, Samuel Ringgold Ward wrote that 'Canadian Negro Hate' was "a poor, pitiable, brainless, long eared [sic] imitation of Yankeeism[.]" In 1856, Shadd rebuked the claims of the *Western Planet* that people of African descent were inherently predisposed to drunkenness and misbehavior. "The colored people, she wrote, "are not *wild* Indians, neither do they drink more whiskey than their white friends hereabouts."[736]

Furthermore, slave refugees became renowned orators in the northern US and Canada. Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, James W. C. Pennington, Lewis Hayden, Henry Bibb, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and Ellen and William Craft engaged in speaking tours throughout the northern US, Canada, and the British Isles. Frederick Douglass was one of the most recognizable black figures in North America in large part due to his oratory.[737] Freedom seekers addressed anti-slavery societies, churches, and festivals. They spoke on a wide range of topics, including slavery, colonization and emigration, racial prejudice and discrimination, UGRR, vigilance committee, and the FSA. Frederick Douglass' first address in New Bedford was on colonization and citizenship. "We are *American citizens*," he declared, "born with natural inherent, just and inalienable rights." Douglass and his fellow self-emancipated abolitionist orators would deliver countless speeches, remarks, and addresses. Seeing Douglass speak, writes David Blight, became "an American cultural phenomenon."[738]

In February 1844, the *Herald of Freedom* reported on a lecture delivered by Frederick Douglass before "a crowded court-house" in Concord, New Hampshire. Douglass lambasted Christian churches and other sources for upholding US slavery. "Your religion," he declared, "justifies our tyrants, and you are yourselves our enslavers. I see my enslavers here in Concord, and before my eyes, if any are here who countenance the church and the religion of your country." Later that evening, he

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[735] "HANGING OF TWO FUGITIVE SLAVES IN CANADA," *Daily Exchange* (Baltimore, MD), Jun. 13, 1859; "The negroes over in Canada…" *Wyandot Pioneer* (Sandusky, OH), Feb. 11, 1859.
[736] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 136-137 (Bibb quotes), 224-226 (Ward quotes), 343 (Shadd quote).
[737] For more slave refugee orators, see Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, Ch. 13.
[738] Blight, *Frederick Douglass*, 97-98, 102 (Douglass quote on pg. 98).

delivered another well-attended speech in the area. The *Herald* wrote "There was great oratory in his speech, but more of dignity and earnestness than what we call eloquence. He was not up as a speaker, performing. He was an insurgent slave, taking hold on the right of speech, and charging on his tyrants the bondage of his race." [739] Douglass fully understood the power of his oratory. In October 1850, he wrote to Amy Kirby Post of Rochester, "I spoke in this city [Worcester, Massachusetts] last night at Brinley Hall, before the audience assembled at [the] antislavery fair… The audience was large – and listened with earnest attention." He added that the FSA 1850 "has made a deep sensation here – and it is universally determined that no slave shall be taken from Worcester."[740]

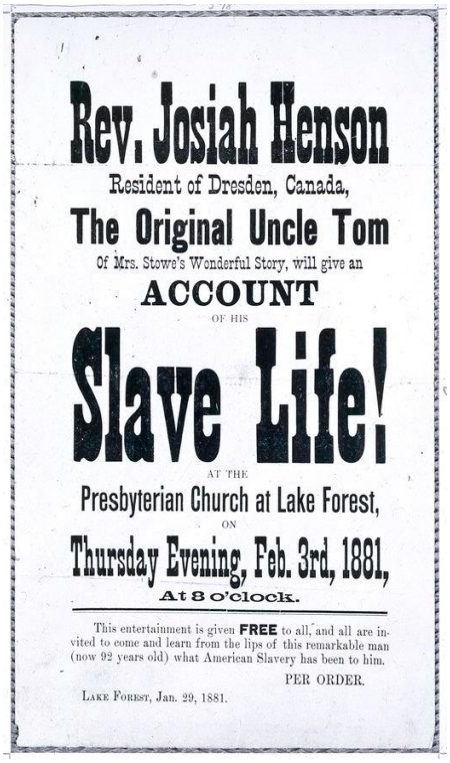

Figure 19: Poster for Josiah Henson lecture in Lake Forest

Source: "Josiah Henson speaking engagement." Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division. NYPL Digital Collections, accessed January 21, 2020. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-bbfe-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

Slave refugees regularly addressed black conventions and meetings staged across the North. Conventions were held in New York, Philadelphia, New Haven, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and elsewhere. Furthermore, black conventions acquired a transnational character, as meetings were held in towns and cities in Upper Canada, including Toronto, Chatham, Drummondville, and Amherstburg. Stephen Kantrowitz notes that these conventions "sought to foster understanding, trust, and collective action among the nation's free black communities." Slave refugee orators tackled various subjects, including slavery, racial discrimination, equal citizenship, and the FSA. In July 1851, at the

[739] "Frederick Douglass in Concord, N. H.," *Herald of Freedom*, reprinted in *Liberator*, Feb. 23, 1844.
[740] Douglass, Frederick. "Douglass, Frederick. Letter to Amy Kirby Post," *RBSCP Exhibits*, accessed Jun. 15, 2020, https://rbscpexhibits.lib.rochester.edu/viewer/3153.

national convention in Rochester, Douglass proclaimed, "We ask that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, that legislative monster of modern times, by whose atrocious provisions the writ of "habeas corpus," "the right of trial by jury," have been virtually abolished, shall be repealed."[741]

Slave refugees were leading speakers at black Canadian conventions. On August 2, 1847, Josiah Henson and Thomas Smallwood attended the black convention in Drummondville. Members of the convention reaffirmed "their belief that frauds have been practised [sic] upon the People of Colour [sic] in Canada, in regard to monies, clothing, and other articles given by friends in the United States and elsewhere for our benefit."[742] In the Detroit and Niagara River borderlands, anti-slavery meetings were transnational affairs. African American, African Canadian, and white abolitionists from either side of the international boundaries addressed these meetings. On March 13, 1846, an anti-slavery meeting took place at the Union Chapel in Amherstburg. Attendees included Henry Bibb and Lewis Richardson, a fellow self-emancipator from Kentucky. Richardson stated, "It has been said by some, that Clay's slaves had rather live with him than be free, but I had rather this day, have a millstone tied to my neck, and be sunk to the bottom of [the] Detroit [R]iver, than go back to Ashland and be his slave for life" Richardson demonstrated his gratitude and loyalty to Great Britain and the Crown. He told his audience, "on yonder side of [the] Detroit [R]iver, I was recognized as property; but on this side I am on free soil. Hail, Britannia! Shame, America!"[743]

In 1851, the North American Convention of Colored People was staged at St. Lawrence Hall in Toronto. Henry Bibb, Josiah Henson, Hiram Wilson, Thomas Smallwood, Israel Campbell, J. C. Brown, and Martin R. Delaney were among those in attendance. Delegates expressed their gratitude to the British government "for the protection afforded us; and are fully persuaded from the known fertility of the soil, and salubrity of climate of the milder regions of Canada West, that this is, by far, the most desirable place of resort for colored people, to be found on the American continent." The North American Convention was widely publicized in black and white abolitionist newspapers. In *Voice of the Fugitive*, for instance, Henry Bibb, John T. Fisher, and James D. Tinsley declared, "let it be borne in mind that we are an oppressed and much degraded people; not in Canada, thank Heaven! Nor by the laws

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[741] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 300; Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom*, 142-143; John Ernest, *A Nation Within a Nation: Organizing African-American Communities Before the Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 107-108; "Proceedings of the Colored national convention, held in Rochester, July 6th, 7th, and 8th, 1853." *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed Aug. 28, 2018, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/458; Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom*. 143. For a list of black conventions, visit *ColoredConventions.org*, *http://coloredconventions.org/conventions*.

[742] Convention of the Colored Population (1847: Drummondville, QC), "Reports of the Convention of the Colored Population, Held at Drummondville, Aug., 1847.," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed Aug. 29, 2018, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/451.

[743] Ripley, et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 101-103, 223.

of Great Britain, for under this government we have no reason to complain, as here, and here only, we participate in all the rights and privileges which other men enjoy.[744]

Additionally, slave refugees and legally free black activists organized various festivals and celebrations to fully illustrate their claims to British subjecthood. On May 13, 1854, the *Provincial Freeman* reported on preparations "to celebrate Her Majesty's birthday in a manner more in keeping with the growing greatness of the Province… We hope the colored citizens of Toronto and other places, will give evidence of their respect for the great occasion[.]" In 1856, the *Provincial Freeman* declared that Queen Victoria's birthday "embodies the idea of the broad and generous measure of freedom, guaranteed to every class of persons, who desire to take up residence on British ground, colored Americans included, who were made to bend to the force of superior numbers, only in the land of their birth."[745]

Emancipation Day (or August First) was the most important celebration of black freedom in North America. Following the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies, commemorations and festivals were staged every year in early August across the northern US and Canadian provinces. Initially, however, Emancipation Day celebrations were not embraced immediately by black activists. African American and African Canadian leaders recognized that the Slavery Abolition Act initially freed few enslaved people. Nevertheless, the public celebration gained support among African American and African Canadian communities over time. Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie argues that Emancipation Day festivals "illustrated how people of African descent constructed popular meanings of cultural identity around liberty and selfhood in opposition to prevalent structures of racial domination and subordination."[746]

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[744] North American Convention (1851: Toronto, Canada), "Proceedings for the North American Convention held in Toronto, Canada, 1851," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed Aug. 29, 2018, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/324; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 170-173.

[745] "The Queen's Birthday," *PF*, May 13, 1854; "The Twenty-fourth of May," *PF*, May 17, 1856.

[746] Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Meaning and Memory in African American Emancipation Celebrations* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 54-55; Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First: Emancipation Day in the Black Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 6, 49-50, 120. Today, there is a rich and varied library on nineteenth-century Emancipation Day celebrations in the northern US and Canada. See Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 116-142; Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 54-96; Mitch Kachun, "Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution: A Problem of Historical Mythmaking," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26, no. 2 (2006), 249-273; Shane White, "'It was a proud day': African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741-1834," *Journal of American History* 81 (1994), 13-50; John T. McKivigan and Jason H. Silverman, "Monarchical Liberty and Republican Slavery: West Indies Emancipation Celebrations in Upstate New York and Canada West," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 10 (1986), 7-18; Rael, *Black Identity*, 54-81.; Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First*, 49-145; W. Caleb McDaniel, "The Fourth and the First: Abolitionist Holidays, Respectability, and Radical Interracial Reform," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005), 129-151; Edward B. Rugemer, "The Problem of Emancipation: The United States and Britain's Abolition of Slavery," (PhD diss: Boston College, 2005), Ch. 8; Julie Roy Jeffrey, "'No Occurrence in Human History is More Deserving of Commemoration than This': Abolitionist Celebrations of Freedom," in McCarthy and Stauffer (eds.),

The nature of these festivals changed significantly over the antebellum period. Emancipation Day celebrations evolved "from a politics of controlled respectability in black churches to more militant spectacles of public politics exemplified by outdoor parades, street marches, fiery speeches, and the rise of armed militias," writes Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie. Early celebrations were often small-scale events organized by local black communities. Over time, however, Emancipation Day gatherings were well-attended by African Americans, African Canadians, and white abolitionists. In 1838, for example, between 100 and 150 people attended the annual commemoration in Deerfield, Massachusetts.[747]

In Canada, Emancipation Day was an opportunity for African American refugees to demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown and reaffirm their claims to British subjecthood. Moreover, it served as an opportunity to contrast the virtues of British liberty with American slavery. In August 1842, blacks in Chatham-Kent assembled at the Militia Parade Grounds in Chatham. Josiah Jones, a Tennessee-born farmer, stated, "I am very much gratified to see so many of our friends assembled together, to celebrate this great, and glorious days of liberty on which the shackles of slavery fell from so many of our Brethren… the British Government emptied their Coffers of Twenty millions of Pounds, of her precious gold and silver, to redeem them from their distressed condition." He added that enslaved people "are not asleep, they are known by all there to be true British subjects and all of the most loyal kind."[748]

Newspaper accounts emphasized the festive yet respectable nature of Emancipation Day celebrations, with particular attention given to speeches, sermons, music, and dancing. In 1839, Jehu Jones attended Toronto's annual celebration alongside other prominent abolitionists. Religious sermons were delivered on the morning of August First. Rev. William Miller of Philadelphia "addressed the Throne of Grace, in behalf of Victoria, her Britannic Majesty, the Royal family and the British nation; his subject was sublime, full of thrilling interest, not only to the loyal subjects of Toronto, but to Britons every where[.]" After the service, Jones and the others "marched to the Commercial [H]otel, Front Street, where the rooms were handsomely decorated, with evergreens and the British flag, beautifully unfurled, in token of the protection to the oppressed." Jones also attended "a tea party" with a women's group on Elizabeth Street.[749] Overall, Jones was struck by the sheer abundance of opportunities to participate in civic, political, and military life. He

200-219; Natasha Henry, *Emancipation Day: Celebrating Freedom in Canada* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2010); Amber Bailey, "Days of Jubilee: Emancipation Day Celebrations in Chicago, 1853 to 1877," *Journal of Illinois States Historical Society* 109, no. 4 (2016), 353-373; Dann J. Broyld, "'A Success in Every Particular': British August First Celebrations in Canada and America and the Black Quest for Unblemished Commemorations, While Critiquing July Fourth, 1834-1861," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 47, no. 4 (2017), 335-356.

[747] Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First*, 8 (quote), 55-58.

[748] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 95.

[749] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 76-77.

recounted, "There is a regiment composed entirely of colored men – the commissioned officers are white. I have seen several of the members in this city… [and] Great confidence is reposed in this regiment, and they have the most important post, in consequence of their acknowledged loyalty to the British Crown.… here every social and domestic comfort can be enjoyed irrespective of complexion."[750]

Other black activists and white abolitionists described joyful but reverential Emancipation Day festivals. In 1851, the *Voice of the Fugitive* described the various activities and events at Sandwich's Emancipation Day celebrations. It reported, "a splendid dinner was served up at half-past one o'clock, to which the meeting adjourned for refreshments… A very long procession was formed and marched through the streets, with appropriate banners, after a delightful brass band to the steamboat Alliance, which was literally crowded with passengers to and from Detroit, who attended the celebration." In 1857, the *Provincial Freeman* reported that Emancipation Day in Chatham "was celebrated… with great spirit." Martin R. Delaney and William H. Day delivered speeches "after which the Bazaar held by the Victoria Society in the Town Hall and the Fair of Donation for the B.M.E. Church held in the basement of the Baptist Church were well patronized."[751]

Queen Victoria and the British government were regularly the subjects of praise at August First celebrations. During the 1854 celebrations at Toronto's Government Grounds, white attorney George Dupont (on behalf of the city's black leaders) delivered an "Address to the Queen." He proclaimed, "Our hearts are wholly your Majesty's; and if the time should ever come when your Majesty might need our aid, our lives would be as they are, *at your service*." Dupont added that it must be "a proud reflection… to your Majesty, to know that the moment the poor crushed slave sets foot upon any part of your *mighty* dominions, his chains fall from him – he feels himself a man, and can look up." Black leaders in Toronto also voiced their support for the British in the Crimean War. They wrote, "we beg your Gracious Majesty to believe we yet thank the Most High that he has granted us the privilege of teaching our little ones to join us in praying that the God of battle may give victory to your Majesty's arms."[752]

In the Canadian Maritimes, black activists staged public celebrations to demonstrate their fidelity to the Crown. In 1838, members of the African Friendly Society (AFS) marched alongside whites in Halifax to celebrate Queen Victoria's coronation. "In celebrating the coronation of Queen Victoria," writes Whitfield, "the Refugees tied themselves closely to Britain and in the process sharply demarcated the border between free Nova Scotia and the slaveholding United States."[753] The African

[750] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 77-83. Jones discusses the 'Coloured Corps' in his letter (discussed later in this chapter).
[751] "Another Glorious Anniversary," *VF*, Aug. 13, 1851; "The First of August…," *PF*, Aug. 15, 1857.
[752] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 295-296.
[753] Sutherland, "Race Relations in Halifax," 38; Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 101-102.

Abolition Society (AAS) was primarily responsible for organizing Halifax's Emancipation Day celebrations. Harvey Amani Whitfield writes that the festivities "provided an outlet for cultural expressions that formed the bedrock of the Refugees' identity." Emancipation Day helped black Nova Scotians to strengthen social bonds, criticize racial discrimination, and assert their demands for unqualified subjecthood. August First rituals, argues Natasha Henry, became "a way for new arrivals to establish a connection with other people of African origin across the British Empire and to see themselves as subjects of the Crown and free people."[754]

In 1847, the AAS August First celebrations included "a military band, [while] those assembled paraded through the streets of Halifax carrying banners praising 'freedom and British liberty.'" They marched to Government House, home of Lieutenant-Governor John Wentworth, where several speakers addressed the crowd. Everyone subsequently headed to a "festive grove" at the North Farm (which belonged to the lieutenant-governor).[755] Five years later, celebrants marched to the African Baptist Church where they attended a religious service. "The band of the 97th regiment," notes Natasha Henry, "led the large numbers of gatherers through the main streets of Halifax, and then continued onward to the Belmont estate for various festivities." In 1855, the *British Colonist* reported on an 'Abolitionist Celebration' in Halifax. Those in attendance toasted Africa ("the land of our Fathers"), Queen Victoria ("Long may she reign over a free and generous nation") and British soldiers involved in the Crimean War ("May the strong hand of kind Providence assist them to subdue their enemy, and speedily restore peace to the nations").[756]

Across the northern US, orators used their Emancipation Day speeches to challenge the belief that the United States was founded on the principles of liberty and equality for all. In 1851, Wendell Phillips addressed the Emancipation Day gathering in Worcester, Massachusetts. "It is astonishing," he proclaimed, "that an American should have the face to celebrate the 4th of July… we have so forgotten the lessons of that day."[757] For African Americans and white abolitionists, August First served as an important counterpoint to July Fourth, the traditional national holiday in the United States. Frederick Douglass' 'What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?' speech at Corinthian Hall, Rochester in 1852 is the most well-known critique of the July Fourth holiday. Douglass proclaimed, "This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, I must mourn." In the words of Benjamin Quarles, "having no fourth of July the black man did the next best thing – he celebrated August 1."[758]

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[754] Henry, *Emancipation Day*, 173-174; Whitfield, "The Development of Black Refugee Identity in Nova Scotia," 22-23.
[755] Henry, *Emancipation Day*, 176-177 (quote).
[756] Henry, *Emancipation Day*, 178; "Abolitionist Celebration," *British Colonist*, Aug. 4, 1855.
[757] "WENDELL PHILLIPS," *VF*, Aug. 27, 1851.
[758] Broyld, "'A Success in Every Particular,'" 338 (Douglass quote); Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 123. For more on the relationship between African Americans and the Fourth of July, see Quarles, *Black*

In 1849, the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* reported that African American residents planned to celebrate August First, which "has been sneeringly termed by some as the 'negro fourth of July.' It brought some of them liberty, and we are rejoiced to see them celebrate the day." Five years later, at the Emancipation Day celebrations in Columbus, Ohio, the *Columbus Elevator* claimed that a choir "composed about equally of both sexes" performed a song which "purported to be an invitation from Queen Victoria to the colored people of the United States, to fly from servitude into Canada."[759]

Far from strictly social, cultural, and religious celebrations, August First festivals were unmistakeably political. "West Indian Emancipation celebrations," argues Kerr-Ritchie, "served as a nexus for both the self-defense of fugitive slaves as well as physical resistance against the institution of American slavery." During the 1851 and 1853 August First festivals in New Bedford, Massachusetts, speakers and attendees debated the aforementioned Shadrach Minkins case with intense interest. Abolitionists delivered impassioned speeches about slavery, inequality, and racial prejudice in the United States. At the 1849 Worcester, Massachusetts commemoration, Theodore Parker proclaimed, "Slavery, then, is the national sin… Here let us all repent us of slavery. Let us repent of our coldness in this anti-slavery enterprise."[760]

Furthermore, some slave refugees endorsed violence and participated in armed insurrections to eradicate the institution of slavery. The most notable of these revolutionaries were Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner who planned three separate uprisings in Virginia and Charleston, South Carolina respectively.[761] These early insurrections inspired the growth of militant abolitionism over the antebellum period. Few people symbolized this radicalization more than John Brown. Originally from Connecticut, he moved to the Kansas Territory with his family, where he became involved in a conflict between free-soilers and pro-slavery sympathizers (commonly referred to as 'Bleeding Kansas'). In May 1856, Brown

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Abolitionists, 119-121; see Leonard I. Sweet, "The Fourth of July and African Americans in the Nineteenth Century: Northern Leadership Opinion Within the Context of the Black Experience," *Journal of Negro History* 61, no. 3 (1976), 256-275; McDaniel, "The Fourth and the First."

[759] "Celebration," *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, Aug. 1, 1849; "Emancipation Celebration," *Columbus Elevator*, reprinted in *FDP*, Aug. 18, 1854.

[760] Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First*, 91, 112 (first quote) – 113; Theodore Parker, "Speech of Theodore Parker," *Liberator*, Aug. 17, 1849 (second quote).

[761] For more on the Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner rebellions, see Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943); Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Conspiracies of 1800 and 1822* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Douglas R. Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

participated in the Pottawatomie massacre, which resulted in the deaths of five pro-slavery men. Over the next three years, Brown made plans for an armed rebellion.[762]

Brown traveled across the northern states and Canada to gain support for his uprising. Abolitionists were rather divided over Brown. William Lloyd Garrison criticized the violent actions in Kansas. Thomas Wentworth Higginson supported Brown's defense against "the armed aggressions of the Missourians." African Americans and African Canadians were generally more receptive to Brown's message of violent rebellion. Douglass, Tubman, and other black abolitionists refused to participate in Brown's insurrection but they offered him funds. John Anthony Copeland, an African American resident of Oberlin, is the most well-known of Brown's black followers. Lewis Sheridan Leary and Shields Green, both refugees from enslavement, also joined Brown.[763]

In May 1858, Brown arrived in Chatham to solicit support for his planned rebellion. Osborne Perry Anderson, an Oberlin College graduate, later recalled, "Wherever [Brown] went around, although an entire stranger, he made a profound impression upon those who saw or became acquainted with him." Moreover, he recalled that Brown "realized and enforced the doctrine of destroying the tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit. Slavery was to him the corrupt tree, and the duty of every Christian man was to strike down slavery, and to commit its fragments to the flames." A small number of Chatham residents, including Anderson, signed up for the insurrection.[764] Over the coming year, the abolitionist planned his uprising.

On October 16, 1859, Brown and his twenty-one followers attacked the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. However, the insurrection was swiftly quelled by US Marines and most of the rebels were arrested, charged with treason, and hanged.

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[762] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 543-549. For more on John Brown, the Harpers Ferry Insurrection, and the rise of militant abolitionism, see John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

[763] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 548-552 (Wentworth quote on 548). For more on Brown's insurrection and African American involvement, see Daina Raimey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2017), 119-121; Hannah Geffert (with Jean Libby), "Regional Black Involvement in John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry," in McCarthy and Stauffer (eds.), *Prophets of Protest*, 165-182; Steven Lubet, *The "Colored Hero" of Harpers Ferry: John Anthony Copeland and the War Against Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Eugene L. Meyer, *Five for Freedom: The African American Soldiers in John Brown's Army* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2018).

[764] The Convention (1858: Chatham, ON), "Minutes from the Harpers Ferry Convention at Chatham, Canada West, 1858, p. 10," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed Aug. 31, 2018, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/427; Fred Landon, "Canadian Negroes and the John Brown Raid," *Journal of Negro History* 6, no. 2 (1921), 174; Osborne P. Anderson, *A Narrative of Events at Harpers Ferry; with Incidents Prior and Subsequent to its Capture by Captain Brown and His Men* (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1861), 9 (first quote), 10 (second quote); Ariana Westbrook, "Anderson, Osborne P. (1830-1872)," *BlackPast.org*, accessed Aug. 31, 2018, http://blackpast.org/aah/anderson-osborne-p-1830-1872.

John A. Copeland wrote to family and friends in Oberlin from his prison cell over the weeks before his execution. Copeland urged his parents to remember that he fought "for a holy cause[.]"[765]

John Brown's rebellion exacerbated sectional tensions between the northern and southern states and strained diplomatic tensions between the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. Southern whites were outraged by the events at Harpers Ferry and tied the insurrection to the Canadian and British governments. In particular, they blamed both governments for shielding those involved with the uprising. The North Carolina *Western Democrat* declared, "We have a right to demand of the British government that the good neighborhood of her Canadian provinces shall be maintained. We should demand that it should cease to be the hot-bed of conspiracies against the Constitution and Union of the States, and the refuge of stolen negroes and of traitors and murderers of the people of the States." Moreover, it acknowledged that Brown "held his treasonable convention at Chatham" and that the "most active agents in forming the plan for the late invasion of Virginia were English abolitionists[.]" The *Democrat* also criticized the Canadian and British governments for reportedly harboring individuals implicated in the insurrection. It closed with one clear demand: "All this should be stopped."[766]

African Americans, African Canadians, and white abolitionists voiced their support for Brown and the other insurrectionists. In November 1859, African Americans and white abolitionists met in Natick, Massachusetts and adopted the following resolution: "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God; therefore… it is the right and duty of the slaves to resist their masters, and the right and duty of the people of the North [t]o incite them to resistance, and to aid them in it." Henry Clarke Wright called Brown, "the defender of liberty, the assailant of slavery, and the friend of the slave, [who] will live and be with us, to inspire us, to incite us, to spur us up and lead us on to a still closer and more resolute and deadly assault upon slaveholding." In the US-Canadian border zones, black and white abolitionists praised Brown for his moral courage. In 1859, William Lambert declared at a meeting in the Detroit Second Baptist Church, "we hold the name of the Old Capt. John Brown in the most sacred remembrance as the first disinterested martyr for our liberty[.]" Speaking in Toronto, Osborne Anderson called Brown an "apostle of liberty."[767]

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[765] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 5: The United States*, 1859-1865, 45.
[766] "CANADA," *Western Democrat*, Dec. 24, 1859.
[767] Henry Clarke Wright, *The Natick Resolution; or, Resistance to Slaveholders: The Right and Duty of Southern Slaves and Northern Freemen* (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1859), 2, 5; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 5: The United States*, 1859-1865, 53; "Chatham Convention," *buxtonmuseum.com*, accessed Aug. 31, 2018, http://buxtonmuseum.com/history/EVENTS/1-set-CHATHAM-convention.html; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 552-561; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 425-427; For more on the Chatham convention, John Brown, Osborne P. Anderson, and the Chatham convention, see Steven Lubet, *The 'Colored Hero' of Harpers Ferry: John Anthony Copeland and the War Against Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 125-143.

Slave Refugees and Electoral Politics

Slave refugees in the North and Canada were highly engaged in other political campaigns. Across each region, they campaigned against segregation, racial prejudice, and discrimination. Slave refugees spoke of extending the right to vote to black people (including women), challenged racial prejudice and segregation, and campaigned for the abolition of discriminatory state laws. While blacks in Canada generally exercised more rights than their northern counterparts, they still routinely faced racial prejudice and discrimination. Consequently, slave refugees spearheaded campaigns for civil rights and equal citizenship in both the northern US and Canada. Across the North, African Americans were systematically stripped of the electoral franchise. In 1821, New York's new state constitution effectively restricted suffrage to white men by introducing a property qualification that most African Americans could not meet. Sixteen years later, Pennsylvania amended its constitution to strip African Americans of the right to vote. Black activists throughout the state campaigned against disfranchisement. Charles W. Gardner and Frederick A. Hinton submitted a petition on behalf of Philadelphia's African American population which stated that the move "would be a violation of the immutable principles of right, and justice, written on the hearts of all men; and at a war with the living, and revolution principle, 'that all men are created equal.'" In 1838, Robert Purvis published his *Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens*, which argued against stripping black men of the right to vote. Nevertheless, the constitutional amendment was soon ratified by the white Pennsylvania voters.[768]

In 1837, black New Yorkers petitioned the state legislature for equal suffrage. They claimed that the restriction of voting rights to white men was morally wrong "because it deprives men of prerogatives to which they are justly entitled" and against the nation's founding principles. The New York voting rights petition was introduced alongside calls for the right to a jury trial for alleged freedom seekers, as well as demands "for the more *effectual abolition of slavery* in this State."[769] In various speeches and writings, slave refugees called for state governments to abolish

[768] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 252-253; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 167-169; Paul J. Polgar, "'Whenever They Judge It Expedient': The Politics of Partisanship and Free Black Voting Rights in Early National New York," *American Nineteenth Century History* 12, no. 1 (2011), 1-23; "EQUAL RIGHTS," *Liberator*, Jul. 28, 1837; David Reader, "Appeal of Forty Thousand Citizens," *EncyclopediaofGreaterPhiladelphia*, accessed Oct. 3, 2019. https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/appeal-of-forty-thousand-citizens/. For more on black disfranchisement in Pennsylvania, see Eric Ledell Smith, "The End of Black Voting Rights in Pennsylvania: African Americans and the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention 1837-1838," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 65, no. 3 (1988), 279-299.

[769] "PETITION FOR EQUAL SUFFRAGE," *Friend of Man*, Jan. 26, 1837; "RECEPTION OF OUR PETITIONS," *Albany Daily Advertiser*, reprinted in *CA*, Mar. 11, 1837 (quote); "LEGISLATURE OF NEW-YORK," *New York Evangelist*, Mar. 25, 1837.

discriminatory legislation and extend the franchise to African Americans. Furthermore, Frederick Douglass' various newspapers published editorials and articles on the campaigns for universal suffrage in New York and elsewhere. In November 1849, the *North Star* published an editorial from 'J. C' in Brooklyn (likely J. W. C. Pennington), who called for the abolition of the $250 property qualification. "The odious clause," he wrote, "… degrades our manhood and belittles our more favored fellow citizens… Proscribed New Yorkers arise from your slumber!"[770]

Furthermore, slave refugees joined campaigns for women's suffrage. In July 1848, Frederick Douglass and others attended the Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, where he was among the signatories to the Declaration of Sentiments, which promoted full equality for women. Douglass subsequently wrote in the *North Star*, "All that distinguishes man as an intelligent and accountable being, is equally true of woman; and if that government only is just which governs by free consent of the governed, there can be no reason in the world for denying to woman the exercise of the elective franchise, or a hand in making and administering the laws of the land. Our doctrine is that 'right is of no sex.'"[771]

Aside from equal voting rights, slave refugees and free blacks campaigned against segregation and discrimination. In 1838, Samuel Cornish wrote, "Now is the time for abolitionists to gird up the loins of their minds for a conflict with prejudice against color… the real battleground between liberty and slavery is prejudice against color." Self-emancipators and free African Americans even criticized white abolitionists for not doing enough to promote racial equality. Samuel Ringgold Ward claimed, "Abolitionists have not so much regard for the rights of colored men as they think they have. When the press, speech, and others of *their own rights* were jeopardized by the spirit of slaveocracy, they raised their united voice, as men should, in self-defence [sic]. But now, when their own rights are somewhat secure, they appear to cease to feel identified with us."[772]

Slave refugees and free blacks challenged segregation through acts of civil disobedience. Activists focused on discriminatory laws that prohibited African Americans from using public transportation, dining in restaurants and taverns, and sharing public spaces. In Boston, Frederick Douglass and others openly defied state laws against riding in streetcars. He recalled, "The custom of providing separate cars for the accommodation of colored travelers, was established on nearly all the railroads of New England, a dozen years ago… I made it a rule to seat myself in the cars for the accommodation of passengers generally… I was often dragged out of my seat,

[770] "Away with the $250 Suffrage! – Equal Rights, and Nothing Less!" *NS*, Nov. 2, 1849.
[771] "The Rights of Women," *NS*, Jul. 28, 1848; For more on the relationship between slave refugee abolitionists and women's rights activists, see Jones, *All Bound Up Together*, 59-85.
[772] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 265-266 (Cornish quote), 341 (Ward quote).

beaten, and severely bruised, by conductors and brakemen." Over the next two decades, the resistance of African Americans and white abolitionists led to the desegregation of the state's streetcars.[773]

Nothing provoked more fury from northern blacks than the FSA 1850, the Kansas Nebraska-Act of 1854, and the Dred Scott decision. On March 25, 1850, African Americans and white abolitionists in Boston gathered at Faneuil Hall to demonstrate their resistance. Samuel Ringgold Ward claimed that Senator Daniel Webster, who supported the FSA, had "deserted the cause of freedom[.]" In October, Philadelphia blacks claimed that the federal statute was "so wicked, so atrocious, so utterly at variance with the principles of the Constitution; so subversive of the objects of all law, the protection of the lives, liberty, and property of the governed; so repugnant to the highest attributes of God, justice and mercy; and so horribly cruel in its clearly expressed mode of operation[.]" In January 1851, African Americans met in Columbus, Ohio to protest the FSA.[774]

Figure 20: Fugitive Slave Law Convention, Cazenovia, New York. Frederick Douglass is seated on the right-hand side of the table.

Source: "Fugitive Slave Law Convention, Cazenovia, New York," *Online Exhibitions*, accessed Jan. 31. 2020, http://www.virginiamemory.com/online-exhibitions/items/show/366.

One of the most famous anti-FSA meetings took place at Cazenovia, New York (roughly 20 miles southeast of Syracuse), when black and white abolitionists met on August 21-22, before the bill officially became law. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* reported, "It seems to have been well attended, chiefly by the Gerrit Smith class of Abolitionists[.]" Slave

[773] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 399. For more on African American protests against streetcar segregation, see Blair L. M. Kelley, *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
[774] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 4: The United States, 1847-1858*, 48-41 (Ward quotes), 68-69 (Philadelphia resolutions), 73.

refugee activists were among the convention's most prominent delegates. Frederick Douglass acted as president, while Samuel Ringgold Ward was nominated as one of the meeting's vice-presidents. The *Standard* reported that one of the addresses adopted by the convention was "to the Slaves of the South from the fugitives at the North." It claimed that the Cazenovia convention was (at least in part) "a meeting of Runaway Slaves," which offered its support to enslaved African Americans. Furthermore, they issued their support for freedom seekers in their efforts to reach the northern US and Canada by any means necessary. "We cannot furnish you with weapons," stated the address, "… but if you can get them, take them, and, before you go back into bondage, use them, if you are obliged to take life." At the same time, the conventioneers admitted that some parts of the North, such as Justice McLean's district in Cincinnati, were not safe for freedom seekers. They recommended heading for New York as, in their view, it was "the safest place[.]"[775]

Four years later, the Kansas-Nebraska Act effectively nullified the Missouri Compromise and threatened the expansion of black enslavement into the western territories. Black activists immediately set about discrediting the new law. In 1854, William J. Watkins wrote in the *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, "This Nebraska swindle has set the mind of the North at work, and judging from the accounts of meetings held throughout the free States, denouncing the Bill and its advocates…we rather think, that, upon the whole, God is making the wrath of man to praise him[.]"[776]

Slave refugees and free blacks also mobilized quickly against the Dred Scott ruling. In May 1857, approximately 2,000 African Americans and white abolitionists attended the annual AASS meeting, where they displayed their opposition to the Dred Scott decision. Robert Purvis told his audience, "the Government of the United States… is one of the basest, meanest, most atrocious despotisms that ever saw the face of the sun." In February 1858, abolitionists in Boston held a meeting at the Joy Street Church. Lewis Hayden, William Cooper Nell, and Samuel J. May condemned the ruling. In June, activists in New Bedford condemned the Supreme Court's decision urged supporters to "use all honorable means to induce that interchange of harmonious action which is so indispensable to the promotion and establishment of our national rights as natives of the United States of America."[777] By contrast, Canada's legal systems were officially 'color-blind.' In 1838, leading figures of Toronto's black community, including Stephen Dutton, William Augustus, George Brown, Richard Burke, Matthew B. Truss, George Williams, George Wilkinson,

[775] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 501-502; "Fugitive Slave Convention at Cazenovia," *NASS*, Aug. 29, 1850.
[776] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 4: The United States, 1847-1858*, 207-208. For more on the Kansas-Nebraska Act, see McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Ch. 4.
[777] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 4: The United States, 1847-1858*, 362-364 (Purvis quote), 391-393 (New Bedford resolution); "MEETING OF THE COLORED CITIZENS OF BOSTON," *Liberator*, Feb. 26, 1858.

William Hickman, and Samuel Thompson met at the home of abolitionist William Osborn. They resolved:

> we express the universal feeling of our coloured [sic] brethren throughout this Province when we state our perfect contentment with our political condition, living, as we do, under the influence of free and equal laws, which recognize no distinction of colour in the protection which they afford and the privileges which they confer; and that we distinctly contradict all statements to the contrary which have been industriously circulated in the States, by slaveholders and others of a kindred spirit, for the purpose of creating a belief that a coloured people are unprepared for freedom, and that our emigration to this country has effected no real improvement in our circumstances.[778]

In 1858, Joseph Williams wrote that Upper Canada was "the land of the free" and claimed that freedom seekers "have found an asylum in Canada. The land is consecrated to freedom; here all, no matter from whence they come, no matter what the color of their skin, are free, and fully protected in all the rights and privileges of freemen." The intentions of these authors were clear; they wished to shine a light on slavery and racial discrimination in the United States and promote Canada as an alternative space of refuge for people of African descent. Furthermore, Williams added that, in Canada, black men possess "all the rights of citizenship, and [are] respected just in proportion to the amount of intelligence and moral worthy [they] may possess." By contrast, racism in the United States "must forever keep them [African Americans] down."[779]

In reality, segregation and racial prejudice were facts of life in Canada. Blacks were routinely prohibited from sharing public spaces with whites, from staying in hotels, or from using public transportation. Peter Gallego, a black theology student in Toronto, recounted his experiences with racial discrimination following a tour of Upper Canada. "The steam-boat, the stage-coach, and the inn," stated Gallego,

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[778] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 68-73 (quote on 69). More details on the listed member of Toronto's black community can be found on pp.70-73. Needless to say, Toronto's black community contained free-born, freed, and illegally self-emancipated people from the United States and British Canada. Hickman, a black barber in Toronto, was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 respectively. Truss was a bootmaker from Staunton, Virginia, while George Williams was born enslaved in Fairfax County, Virginia. After purchasing his freedom, Williams became a farmer in Ohio before immigrating to Upper Canada in response to the state's rejuvenation of the notorious Black Laws.

[779] Joseph J.E. Williams, *The Principles of American Slavery: An Interesting and Authentic Pamphlet, Giving a Full and Satisfactory Description of the Principles of the Slave Code of the South, with the Morals and Improvements of the Colored People of Canada, of the Elgin Association* (Hamilton, ON: Printed at the Christian Advocate Office. 1858), 17-18, accessed May 28, 2020. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.63245/1?r=0&s=1.

"deny to us the freedom of British subjects, and dedicate themselves as the sanctuaries of American prejudice." Aboard the steamboat *Britannia,* Gallego was requested by a waiter to leave his dinner table. Gallego insisted that he would not move "but upon violence being used" and was promptly allowed to remain seated. In Hamilton, Gallego sought passage aboard a coach to Brantford but was informed that the white passengers "had clubbed together and refused to ride with me in the stage[.]"[780]

While waiting for his breakfast one morning at the Mansion House Hotel in London, a "ruffianly, blustering-looking fellow" approached him. The man pulled Gallego's chair from under him and threw him to the floor. The man stated "that he did not allow "niggers" any such privilege in his house[.]" Gallego was "seized by the bar-keeper and some of the boarders, and dragged out into the street." He was convicted of assault and "sentenced to pay a fine of five pounds, or be imprisoned for a month." Unable to pay, Gallego "was cast into jail," for over a week before another judge ordered his release "American prejudice" he declared, "had arrived at such a pitch in this country, that we cannot but avail ourselves of every possible means for its suppression." At the same time, he reaffirmed his preference for British liberty to American servitude.[781]

Other slave refugees in Canada described their encounters with racial prejudice and discrimination. Horace Hawkins claimed that black people "cannot get accommodated at any of the hotels in Canada or any line of railroad or public travel... the root of the prejudice is to be found in the fact that the colored people came here very rapidly, & the whites got the impression that the colored people would become a majority in the Western county." In 1836, the *Canadian Emigrant* reported, "It seems that two Negroes entered a tavern and without permission began playing dominoes… [the tavernkeeper] ordered them instantly to leave the room which they did but at the same time threatening revenge." After the black men returned, the tavern owner brought out a "*strong horsewhip*" and forced them out.[782]

Likewise, black Canadian and white anti-slavery newspapers documented cases of racial discrimination. In August 1855, the *Globe* reported that a black Toronto minister and his family were denied equal treatment aboard a steamboat. "[H]aving paid the full fare between Chatham and Toronto," it stated, "they were about to enter the Saloons to which they supposed they were entitled; when to their surprise, they were told 'the colored persons were not allowed to enter there.'" Similarly, Samuel Ringgold Ward recalled in *Voice of the Fugitive*: "As an instance

[780] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 87-88
[781] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 88-91.
[782] Blassingame (ed.), *Slave Testimony*, 443-444 (Hawkins quote); (Sandwich) *Canadian Emigrant* quoted in Julia Roberts, *In Mixed Company: Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 109. For more on race relations and segregation in Upper Canadian taverns and other public spaces, see Julia Roberts, "'A Mixed Assemblage of Persons': Race and Tavern Space in Upper Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (1996), 267-283.

of Canadian Negro hate, I took passage to-day, at Lachine, for Kingston. I could get a cabin passage, on the steamer *St. Lawrence*… Mr. Kelly, the Purser, declared that there was no room for me. There were half-a-dozen state-room keys, uncalled for, in the office at the time."[783]

Racial prejudice occasionally boiled over into anti-black violence. On June 28, 1852, members of the 'Coloured Company' in St. Catharines were jeered and assaulted by local whites. A black man named Harris was also assaulted by local whites close to parade grounds. Friends and acquaintances of Harris tracked the supposed attacker to a tavern, where a brawl broke out between the various groups. Following false reports that some unknown black men had killed two firefighters, members of the fire brigade attacked black homes and businesses. Samuel Ringgold Ward set about correcting false reporting on the violence in St. Catharines. He claimed in the *Globe* that the white soldiers started the incidents by throwing "the most disgusting and filthy substances upon the blacks," and that Harris had been attacked "without provocation[.]" Ward claimed that the tavern fighters "gave up the clubs with which they were defending themselves against superior number of whites, while the latter continued their assault upon the former."[784]

Black Canadian activists utilized several strategies to combat racial prejudice n. First, they petitioned city and provincial governments to tackle cases of discrimination. In July 1840, Wilson Ruffin Abbot and others submitted a petition to Toronto Mayor John Powell regarding blackface minstrelsy in the city. It stated that they "have remarked with sorrow that the American Actors whom from time to time visit this City, invariably select for performance plays and characters which by turning into ridicule and holding up to contempt the coloured population cause them much heart-burning and lead occasionally to violence[.]" The following year, twenty-nine black petitioners appealed to the mayor's office to prohibit blackface minstrels from performing in the city. They objected that white performers "endeavour [sic] to make the Coloured man appear ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of their audience." In July 1843, Toronto's city council banned entertainers from performing "acts that would be insulting to 'the gentlemen of colour' of the city."[785]

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[783] "The Rights of Coloured People," *Globe*, reprinted in *PF*, Sep. 29, 1855; Ripley et al. (eds..), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 177-179 (Ward quote).

[784] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 215; "A correspondent of the Tribune…," *NASS*, reprinted in *VF*, Jul. 29, 1852; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 215- 216 (Ward quotes).

[785] Karolyn Smardz Frost, "Resisting Stereotypes: African Torontonians Protest Minstrelsy," in Holly Martelle, Michael McClelland, Tatum Taylor, and John Lorinc (eds.), *The Ward Uncovered: The Archaeology of Everyday Life* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2018), 152-153; Petition from people of colour residing in the City of Toronto to His Worship the Mayor of Toronto, October 14, 1841. City of Toronto Archives. Series 1081, Item 785. Via: "Black History in Toronto," *Toronto.ca*, accessed Jul. 3, 2019. https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/access-city-information-or-records/city-of-toronto-archives/using-the-archives/research-by-topic/black-history-in-toronto/.

Blackface minstrelsy remained popular throughout British North America, however. In 1846, the *Pennsylvania Freeman* claimed, "In one of the towns of Canada, the civil authorities forbade the Ethiopian Minstrels to hold their concerts, assigning as a reason, that such exhibitions tended to degrade the colored population…Such exhibitions may be "sport" to the audiences of white people, but they are 'death" to a sensitive colored man." The prohibition on blackface minstrelsy was soon overturned, however, and racist acts continued to perform across the provinces. In 1856, black Torontonians submitted another petition to outlaw blackface minstrelsy. Although the city council accepted the petition once again, it ultimately failed to outlaw blackface minstrelsy. Over subsequent decades, minstrel shows were performed and elsewhere in British Canada.[786]

Figure 21: Poster for a blackface minstrel show at the Adelaide Street theater in Toronto, 1858

Source: "Fun for the Millions," *TPL Virtual Exhibits,* accessed January 22, 2020, http://omeka.tplcs.ca/virtual-exhibits/exhibits/show/freedom-city/item/160.

On other occasions, slave refugees and free blacks staged strikes and protests. In 1854, black waiters at two hotels in St. Catharines (the American Hotel and the St. Catharines House) protested the prohibition of black travelers aboard both hotel's stagecoaches. On August 12, they held a meeting at the Methodist Chapel on North Street "to take action against the cruel prejudices which deny to coloured persons, however respectable, the use of public conveyances to and from the Railroad station and the steamboat." Several waiters spoke out against the managers of both hotels. 'Mr. Morris' of the St. Catharines House proclaimed that he "could endure such outrages no longer; and

[786] "Caricatures," *Pennsylvania Freeman*, Feb. 19, 1846; Smardz Frost, "Resisting Stereotypes," 153.

made a stirring appeal to all present to respect themselves, and their rights as a people, and submit no longer to such degrading treatment." Eventually, both hotels bowed to the pressure and reversed their policies.[787] For southern whites, this episode was a demonstration of black unrest in British Canada. The *Thibodaux Minerva* chastised the black protestors in St. Catharines, declaring, "Sensible negroes do not expect to be treated by *white* men as equals. They know that God has established a radical difference between the two races – that he has erected an insurmountable barrier to divide and keep them distinct."[788]

Aside from petitions and protests, slave refugees and free blacks were also deeply involved with electoral party politics. In the northern US, this meant throwing their weight behind abolitionist and anti-slavery parties. Founded in 1839, the Liberty Party was the first abolitionist political party. At its first national convention, delegates nominated James G. Birney as their candidate for the upcoming presidential election. Initially, the Liberty Party did not advocate the immediate abolition of black enslavement. Rather, most members merely sought to prevent the expansion of slavery into the western territories. Birney received just over 6,000 votes in the 1840 election but stood again four years later when he received roughly 62,000.[789]

Slave refugees and free blacks threw their weight behind the Liberty Party and its candidates. In 1843, Henry Johnson of New Bedford wrote to *Liberty Standard* editor Austin Wiley, "I have been, and still remain, an uncompromising advocate of the Liberty [P]arty principles, believing it the duty of every true friend of liberty, and particularly every man of color, to do the same." That same year, the black convention in Buffalo endorsed a resolution which read, "the two great political parties, must of course be pro slavery [sic], while they rule, and slavery exists; and therefore we recommend our brethren, who are qualified to vote, to give their suffrage to the Liberty Party, which has the abolition of slavery for its main object." Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown asserted "that they were opposed to that party – some of them said that they were opposed to all parties, believed them verily and necessarily corrupt[.]"[790]

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[787] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 297-299.
[788] "DARKIES IN THE CANADAS," *Thibodaux Minerva* (Thibodaux, LA), Sep. 2, 1854.
[789] "Liberty Party," *EncyclopaediaBritannica*, accessed Jun. 23, 2019. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Liberty-Party; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 463-466. For more on the Liberty Party, see Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840-1848: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); James B. Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976); 95-118; Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), Ch. 1; Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots of Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), Ch. 1; Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery*, 154-159; Omar H. Ali, *In the Balance of Power: Independent Black Politics and Third Party Movements in the United States* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008), 27-44.
[790] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 413 (Johnson quote); National Convention of Colored Citizens (1843: Buffalo, NY), "Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens; Held at Buffalo; on the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August, 1843; for the purpose of

White abolitionists, such as Gerrit Smith, feared that African Americans in New York would support the Whigs over the Liberty Party. In response, black leaders in New York City wrote to Smith in 1845, "the alterations which are popular with the parties, do not include the removal of the property qualification now required of colored citizens to enable them to vote… if a direct use of the Liberty vote in this State in the manner herein proposed can be secured… most of the opposition to an extension of the suffrage will be broken down[.]" In 1848, Samuel Ringgold Ward "was nominated for a seat in the New York legislature by a Liberty [P]arty convention at Cortland, New York[.]" He stressed his support for the immediate abolition of slavery, the establishment of good foreign relations with Haiti, and "the restoration of [voting rights] to the 40,000 citizens now unjustly deprived of it, at the earliest practical period."[791]

Geopolitical upheavals (most notably the US-Mexican War) contributed to the collapse of the 'second party system' and the rise of new anti-slavery parties. In August 1848, the Free Soil Party was established by a coalition of Whigs, Democrats, and abolitionists in Buffalo, New York. In 1846, US Congressman David Wilmot introduced a proviso that aimed to prohibit black enslavement in the western territories. After the New York Democratic Party refused to endorse Wilmot's proviso, anti-slavery Democrats joined anti-slavery Whigs to form the new party. The 1848 party convention in Buffalo established its platform, "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labour [sic], and Free Men."[792]

The Free Soil Party stood on a moderate anti-slavery platform. By confining slavery to the South, Free Soil representatives believed that it would lead to the institution's inevitable decline. Furthermore, while some leaders campaigned for racial equality, the Free Soil Party did not officially sanction equal rights or black citizenship. This was largely due to the diverse background and beliefs of its founding members and an attempt to maintain a broad coalition of northern white voters, most of whom supported the proposed ban on black enslavement in the territories but opposed equal citizenship. "Free soil," argues Sinha, "was the lowest common denominator of antislavery, designed to appeal to the widest constituency."[793]

The Free Soil Party platform divided black activists. On the one hand, it represented another realistic effort to confine slavery to the South. Yet its platform stopped short of calling for immediate abolitionism and many of its members held

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considering their moral and political condition as American citizens," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed July 10, 2019, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/278; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 467-468.

[791] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 3: The United States, 1830-1846*, 468-469 (letter to Smith); Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 4: The United States, 1847-1858*, 27-30 (Ward quote).

[792] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 478-483; Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 119-123; Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery*, 123-143, 159-163; "The Convention at Buffalo," *NASS*, Aug. 17, 1848. For more on the Free Soil Party, see Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, Ch. 2; Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom*, Chs. 7 & 8.

[793] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 482-484 (quote on 483).

anti-black prejudices. Frederick Douglass was perhaps the most prominent black delegate of the 1848 Buffalo convention. In August 1848, his *North Star* newspaper stated, "We may stand off and act the part of fault-finders – pick flaws in the Free Soil platform… Or we may consign ourselves to oblivion… remain silent as if we were speechless, and let things take their own course, and thus morally to commit suicide." However, Samuel Ringgold Ward declared, "the Platform of the Buffalo Convention does NOT include the Equal and Inalienable Rights of ALL MEN." Ward asserted that many of its members were "as ready to rob black men of their rights now as ever they were."[794]

In September 1848, some African Americans at the national convention in Cleveland signaled their support for the Free Soil Party, while others steadfastly refused to throw their weight behind it. After some time, supporters of the Free Soil movement passed the following resolution: "That while we heartily engage in recommending to our people the Free Soil movement, and the support of the Buffalo convention, nevertheless we claim and are determined to maintain the higher standard and more liberal views which have heretofore characterized us as abolitionists." The resolution's phrasing highlights the rifts within the black abolitionist movement, as well as the reluctance of black supporters to embrace the Free Soil platform.[795]

The Republican Party was the most significant anti-slavery political party to emerge in the antebellum North. Founded in 1854, the new organization arose in response to the Kansas-Nebraska controversy and the impending threat of slavery's extension into the western territories. Whigs, anti-slavery Democrats, and other free-soilers come together to establish the party. The new organization did not formally support immediate emancipation, however; but it quickly gained support from political abolitionists. Within a couple of years, the Republican Party had become the dominant force in northern politics.[796]

African American leaders were divided over whether to support the Republicans. At the 1858 Suffrage Convention in Troy, delegates recommended that "the eleven thousand colored voters of this State to concentrate their strength upon the Republican ticket for Governor[.]" Garnet and his supporters denounced this resolution. Garrison's *Liberator* reported, "we have known him for a long time, and

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[794] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 484-486; Ali, *In the Balance of Power*, 44-47 Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 119-121, 145-146; "Free Soil Movement," *NS*, Aug. 18, 1848; S. R. Ward, "ADDRESS," *NS*, Sep. 1, 1848.
[795] Colored National Convention (1848: Cleveland, OH), "Report of the proceedings of the Colored National Convention held at Cleveland, Ohio, on Wednesday, September 6, 1848.," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed Jun. 24, 2019. http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/280.
[796] Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 497-499. For key readings on the Republican Party, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, esp. Ch. 5. For more on the collapse of the Whigs and end of the Second Party System, see Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

know that he has no confidence in the Republican party – that he has no sympathy with their principles, politics or actions." At the 1858 Cincinnati convention, William Watkins declared that "the Democratic party was the great foe to the colored man; the Republicans of New York had done something for the colored man, and he verily believed, would do more." By contrast, Peter H. Clark "did not consider his rights any safer with the Republicans than with the Democrats."[797]

In Canada, meanwhile, slave refugees were also actively engaged in electoral politics. Many spoke highly of possessing the franchise and linked it directly to their claims for equal subjecthood. William Grose claimed, "I am a true British subject, and I have a vote every year as much as any other man." Samuel Ringgold Ward called the electoral franchise "most sacred" of rights. Henry Bibb cited the ability to vote as symbolic of Canadian liberty: "There the elective franchise is theirs and they may in a few years, if industrious and persevering in the acquisition of knowledge, send one of their own number to represent them in the Provincial Parliament." Most Canadian blacks supported the Conservatives, the traditional party of Empire. William P. Newman wrote, "the Conservative party is the *Constitutional* party of our much envied country – it is *true* to the general interest, and *loyal* to the Crown." Support for Tory candidates remained a potent symbol of African American refugee commitment to the British Crown. Over time, black voters demonstrated a willingness to support alternative parties, so long as they remained loyal to Great Britain. One unnamed author wrote in the *Provincial Freeman*, "the colored people should not hesitate a moment in their choice but take side with that party which is most steadfast in British principles[.]"[798]

Several restrictions constrained the black Canadian electorate, however. First, black women were excluded from the franchise. Moreover, the right to vote was limited to naturalized subjects who owned taxable property. As Natasha L. Henry notes, "most colonies or provinces required eligible voters to own property or have a taxable net worth – a practice that excluded poor people, the working class and many racialized minorities." Furthermore, Canadian whites made numerous efforts to stymie the black vote. In 1848, whites in Colchester attempted to prevent local black male voters from participating in the election of parish and township officers. Three years later, Gosfield whites attempted to prevent black voters from entering local

[797] Suffrage Convention of the Colored Citizens of New York (1858: Troy, NY), "Suffrage Convention of the Colored Citizens of New York, Troy, September 14, 1858.," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed June 25, 2019, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/239; Convention of the Colored Men of Ohio (1858: Cincinnati, OH), "Proceedings of a Convention of the Colored Men of Ohio, Held in the City of Cincinnati, on the 23d, 24th, 25th, an 26th days of November, 1858.," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed June 25th, 2019, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/254.

[798] Drew, *North-Side View of Slavery*, 86 (Grose quote); Henry, "Black Voting Rights in Canada" (Ward quote); "Advice," *VF*, Mar. 12, 1851 (Bibb quote); Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 322-324 (Newman quote); "No. III," *PF*, Apr. 21, 1855.

polling stations. They were later admitted after a local judge upheld their right to vote.[799]

On several occasions, black voters in Canada used the franchise to effect real change. In 1854, Edwin Larwill was elected to the Legislative Assembly as the Conservative candidate for Kent County. Back leaders campaigned heavily against Larwill and urged voters to vote for his opponent, Archibald McKellar. In May, the *Provincial Freeman* warned readers, "Do not vote for Larwill! Vote for no man opposed to you! – Persuade your neighbors to vote for a gentleman, a man who does not hate colored people, not your enemy." Two months later, the newspaper added, "Who has done more to poison the minds of the people of Kent against you than the same Mr. Larwill? Who has counselled [sic] ignorant black men in school matters, and aided stupidity to fetter the minds of your children for the last eight years equal to this would-be member?" Yet his strategy worked and Larwill was elected.[800]

Black activists vowed to remove Larwill from office. In May 1856, the *Provincial Freeman* claimed that Larwill delivered speeches in the Legislative Assembly regarding persistent racial inequality in the province. He called upon the Governor-General to approve to compile returns of black people "in the Penitentiary, Lunatic Asylum, or other Public Institutions," as well as those in "Military or Civil employment[.]" He implored the provincial government to examine "their continued absence from the Jury Lists' and why, and wherefore, with equal property and intelligence, they are debarred from the exercise of those Civil Rights which their pale brethren possess." Larwill likely understood that black voters posed a threat to his re-election bid and sought to placate their interests. In 1857, Larwill lost his seat to Reform Party candidate Archibald McKellar.[801]

Black voters were also instrumental in removing Colonel John Prince from office. In 1856, Prince contended that blacks were "extremely demoralized, repaying with ingratitude, with pilfering, theft, and other vices and crimes," and suggested that they be sent to "some sort of Liberia or Botany Bay to live in a colony by themselves." Black leaders denounced "the foul imputations contained in his speech, as a base slander of our character as citizens, calculated to foster prejudices against us and to degrade us," and pledged to "resist by every means in our power, any invasion of our

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[799] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*, 22-23, 57; Natasha L. Henry, "Black Voting Rights in Canada," *TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca*, accessed Sep. 11, 2019, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/black-voting-rights.

[800] "The Representation of Kent," *PF*, May 6, 1854; "The Coming Elections," *PF*, Jul. 8, 1854; Henry, *Emancipation Day*, 80; Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*, 22; *Look to the North Star*, 85. The *Western Planet* covered the electoral race between Edwin Larwill and Archibald McKellar over several issues. For examples, see "Mr. McKellar, a Candidate for Kent," *Western Planet*, Jul. 12, 1854; "Mr. Larwill's Manifesto," *Western Planet*, Jul. 12, 1854; "The Election," *Western Planet*, Jul. 26, 1854. The *Western Planet* signaled its preference for McKellar over Larwill, and noted that it would have formally supported him had he entered the race sooner.

[801] "Mr. Larwill in the Assembly," *PF*, May 24, 1856.

rights as citizens."[802] In 1857, Prince claimed that black refugees in Canada were "rogues and thieves, and a graceless, worthless, thriftless, lying set of vagabonds." That same year, the *Preble County Democrat* reprinted one of his speeches in which he recommended sending refugees to "one of the Manitoulin Islands, or somewhere else, where the whites would not suffer from contact with them."[803] Prince promoted policies that were designed to reduce the number of African American refugee settlers in the province. In 1858, the *St. Catharines Journal* reported that he proposed introducing a new tax on blacks in the province. He claimed that the "black people who infested the land were the greatest curse to the Province," and claimed that whites in Kent County were "compelled to leave their beautiful farms, because of the pestilential, swarthy swarms." Prince was removed from office a few years later.[804] In 1859, Abraham D. Shadd (Mary Ann Shadd Cary's father) became the first black man to hold public office in Upper Canada. One newspaper noted that he was "triumphantly elected, beating his opponent, a white man, by a handsome majority."[805]

As they became a more significant force in Upper Canadian politics, black refugees displayed a greater willingness to stray from the Tories and support Reform Party candidates. Speaking in Toronto, William J. Watkins told his audience, "we earnestly recommend our brethren throughout the Province to give the Reform party, in the present contest, and in all future contests, which they believe to be right, their united votes and their active co-operation." The *Globe* added that Watkins "went on to refer to the many acts of corruption of the present Government in Canada," such as the Anderson extradition case. When Watkins called for them to vote for Reform candidates, the crowd chanted, "We will; we will." Calls for black voters to make their voices heard at the ballot box continued into the following decade and beyond. In 1861, the *True Royalist*, a Windsor-based pro-British, abolitionist newspaper, proclaimed, "Our colored voters have a great work to perform, and if they will only

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[802] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 174, 214; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 382-385.

[803] "RE-OPENING OF THE SLAVE TRADE. &c.," *Richmond Enquirer*, Jul. 28, 1857 (first quote); "Unpopularity of Fugitive Slaves in Canada," *Preble County Democrat* (Eaton, OH), Jun. 25, 1857.

[804] "LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. THE PEOPLE OF COLOUR," *St. Catharine's Journal*, Jun. 10, 1858; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 174, 214.

[805] "The Detroit Tribune says…" *Marshall County Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), Jan. 27, 1859; Henry, "Black Voting in Canada,"; Gail Arlene Ito, "Abraham Doras Shadd (1801-1882)," *BlackPast.org*, Feb. 24, 2009. https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/shadd-abraham-doras-1801-1882/. Accessed Jun. 20, 2019. For more newspaper coverage on the controversy surrounding Col. John Prince, see "THE NEGROES IN CANADA INDIGNANT AGAINST COL. PRINCE – THAT GENTLEMAN'S OPINION OF THE AFRICAN RACE," *Detroit Free Press*, reprinted in *Washington Union* (Washington, DC), Jul. 9, 1857; and "Colored Citizens in Canada," *Weekly Portage Sentinel* (Ravenna, OH), Jul. 16, 1857; "COMMOTION AMONG THE COLORED PEOPLE OF CANADA," *Montreal Gazette*, reprinted in *Preble County Democrat* (Eaton, OH), Jul. 30, 1857.

be true to the British Government, they will be true to themselves and posterity… Support no party that will not do their duty to all men."[806]

In the Maritimes, black voters "waged several campaigns to claim contested public space and make a push for equal citizenship through political involvement." As Upper Canadian counterparts, blacks in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were inclined to support the Tories. Yet, they were also increasingly willing to throw their support behind other candidates if it served their interests. In May 1847, Reformers and Tories staged rallies to gain the support of black voters. At the Reformers' meeting, black farmers declared that they "value too highly our rights as British subjects, and particularly the Elective franchise, to barter away our independence, believing that those who would buy a Constituency would sell a Country." Tories and Reformers sought to outbid each other to convince black voters. According to Whitfield, "The choice between the two parties was particularly difficult for the local black community because each party made a strong case for the black vote."[807]

Devotion, Loyalty, and Military Service

Military service was another form of illustrating claims to citizenship or subjecthood. Across the North and Canada, slave refugees and free blacks established militia companies as a means of defending their communities and symbolizing their devotion to the United States and Great Britain respectively. In 1848, black Brooklynites founded the Hannibal Guards, a "group of young men training as a military unit." According to the *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, they took part in the 1851 Emancipation Day celebrations "between the villages of Weeksville and Corsville." "It was a fine morning," claimed the report. As the Rev. Peter Garder rose to speak, "the noise of the drum, and the shrill sound of music announced the approach of Capt. Hackins, at the head of the Hannibal Guards. The company was taken by surprise. They marched up directly opposite the speaker's stand, and there rested for orders, which were soon given, to march round the ground."[808]

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[806] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 443-444; "POLITICAL PROVINCIAL," *True Royalist*, Jun. 21, 1861.

[807] Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 100-108 (quote); Henry, "Black Voting Rights in Canada"; J. Murray Beck, "Joseph Howe," *TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca*, Mar. 4, 2015; https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/joseph-howe. Accessed Sep. 12 2018, Daniel Sutherland, "Race Relations in Halifax, Nova Scotia, During the Mid-Victorian Quest for Reform," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7, no. 1 (1996), 35-54. For more on Black Refugee citizenship, see Harvey Amani Whitfield, "The Development of Black Refugee Identity in Nova Scotia, 1813-1850," *Left History* 10, no. 2 (2005), 9-30.

[808] Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War: Black Militias in the Atlantic World," *Slavery & Abolition* 26, no. 1 (2005) 10-12 (list of black militia companies on pg. 12), Wellman, *Brooklyn's Promised Land*, 74 (first quote); George W. Clark, "LETTER FROM OBSERVER," *FDP*, Sep. 4, 1851.

Other black militia companies soon followed. Led by Charles Lennox Remond and Robert Morris, sixty-two African Americans in Boston petitioned the state legislature for the creation of an independent black militia in 1852. Massachusetts lawmakers rejected the petition, however, but this did not deter black activists in Boston. In early 1853, they appealed once more to the state legislature. William Watkins insisted that the petitioners were "law-abiding, tax-paying, liberty-loving, NATIVE-BORN, AMERICAN CITIZENS[.]" Yet the petition was denied once again.[809] In 1855, Boston blacks founded the Massasoit Guard. Robert Morris wrote in the *Boston Evening Telegraph*, "All the members of this corps are young men of respectability, and law-abiding citizens." Two years later, the Liberty Guards were established in the city. At the 1858 New Bedford celebrations, the Guards "turned out twenty-five muskets, and were accompanied by the Malden Brass Band[.]" In 1855, the *Frederick Douglass' Paper* reported that "a company of colored men organized as a militia in Providence, [Rhode Island], and the Legislature has granted them the use of the State arms." Meanwhile, African Americans established the "Attucks Blues" and "made their first parade in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Wednesday of last week. They are said to be well drilled, well uniformed, and well officered." By the end of the Civil War, more than two dozen black militia companies existed throughout the northern states.[810]

Militia companies became a permanent fixture of Emancipation Day celebrations. In 1856, William Cooper Nell took notes on the various August First festivities. "Passing through Pittsburgh," he recalled, "I became acquainted with several intelligent and enterprising colored citizens. They, also, were expecting a grand celebration on the 1st, in which the parade of a newly-organized colored military company was to be a leading feature." In 1855, Frederick Douglass wrote of the Emancipation Day celebration in New Bedford, "I never saw colored soldier[s] before, and before I saw them I had serious doubts of the wisdom of their coming out

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[809] "BREVITIES," *ASB*, May 22, 1852; Watkins quoted in Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War," 10. Original quotation from William J. Watkins, *Our Rights as Men: An Address Delivered in Boston, before the Legislative Committee on the Militia, February 24, 1853* (Boston: Benjamin R. Roberts, 1853). Also see Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 22-23.

[810] "COLORED MILITIA," *FDP*, Aug. 3, 1855 (third quote); "NEW COLORED MILITIA COMPANY," *Boston Evening Telegraph*, reprinted in *Liberator*, Aug. 17, 1855; Robert Morris, "THE MASSOIT GUARDS," *Boston Evening Telegraph*, reprinted in *Liberator*, Sep. 14, 1855 (Morris quote); "FIRST PUBLIC PARADE OF THE LIBERTY GUARD," *Boston Herald*, reprinted in *Liberator*, Nov. 27, 1857; "ANNIVERSARY OF BRITISH WEST INDIA EMANCIPATION," *Liberator*, Aug. 13, 1858 (second quote); Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War," 11; Horton and Horton, *Black Bostonians*, 91, 120-121; Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom*, 215-219; James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston," in Donald M. Jacobs (ed.), *Courage and Conscience: Black & White Abolitionists in Boston* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 149-150.

on that day… But the companies quite surpassed me by their soldierly bearing, and compelled my admiration[.]"[811]

Slave refugees also demonstrated their claims to equal subjecthood through military service. Adrienne Shadd writes that "allegiance to the British government was about much more than preventing a rebel takeover… It was also about proving their bravery and worth to their fellow citizens, who did not always regard them as equal."[812] In 1837, the Scottish-born journalist and reformer William Lyon Mackenzie spearheaded a rebellion against the Upper Canadian government. Self-emancipators were wary of this uprising. They feared that it would undermine their perceived fidelity to the British Crown and, in the words of abolitionist Harriet Martineau, they dreaded "the barest mention of the annexation of Canada to the United States."[813] For slave refugees, a successful rebellion against the Tory dominance and British influence in Canada symbolized a significant threat to their interests. Over the 1830s, there was a noticeable rise in anti-monarchical, pro-republican sentiment across the Canadian provinces. The *Newfoundland Patriot*, for instance, published an article in 1836 which explained their long-term desire to "shake off the cursed incubus of Tory domination[.]"[814] Reformers favored a more democratic, republican model (similar to the US) for Canadian governance. The annexation of Canada by the United States was not an outlandish prospect for black refugees. They fought to preserve British laws and interests in North America, which they knew was crucial to defending their formal liberty.

Hundreds of black men (African Canadians and African American refugees) enlisted to quell the rebellion. In his autobiography, Jermain Wesley Loguen wrote that self-emancipators could not stand by "when the success of the invaders would break the only arm interposed for their security, and destroy the only asylum for African freedom in North America." Loguen added that these "able-bodied and daring refugees are the most reliable fortress of national strength on the Canadian frontiers; and ere [sic] it is scaled by slave-holders or their abettors[.]"[815] Canadian officials praised the contribution of black servicemen to their military cause. Lieutenant-Governor Sir Francis Bond Head noted that black soldiers fought to "defend the glorious institutions of Great Britain." Mackenzie bemoaned that "nearly all of them are opposed to every species of reform in the civil institutions of the colony – they are so extravagantly loyal to the Executive that to the utmost of their

[811] "FIRST OF AUGUST IN SALEM, OHIO," *Liberator*, Aug. 15, 1856; Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War," 17-18; Kachun, *First Martyr of Liberty*, 55.
[812] Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway*, 104- 106 (quote on 106).
[813] Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume 1* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 244.
[814] "*From the Newfoundland Patriot*," *Newfoundland Patriot*, reprinted in *Correspondent and Advocate* (Toronto, ON), Nov. 9, 1836.
[815] Loguen, *The Rev. J.W. Loguen*, 344.

power they uphold all abuses of the government and support those who profit by them."[816]

Black servicemen also assumed leadership positions within military companies. Josiah Henson recalled, "I was appointed a captain of the 2nd Essex Company of Coloured Volunteers… My company held Fort Maldon [sic] from Christmas till the following May, and also took the schooner Ann [sic] and captured all it carried, which were three hundred arms, two cannons, musketry, and provisions for the rebel troops." These military companies were a tremendous source of pride for African Canadians. Austin Steward later recalled, "It was common, in passing through the streets of Hamilton, to meet every few rods, a colored man in uniform, with a sword at his side, marching about in all the military pomp allowed only to white men in this *free republic*." Under the leadership of William Allen, the Hamilton corps became highly distinguished among the city's black community. In the coming decades, orators and writers sought to preserve the legacy of black participation during the rebellion. In 1851, Paola Brown wrote in an address intended for the people of Hamilton, "I shall never forget 1836 and 1837: every colored man, as soon as he heard the Canadas were to be invaded, fled to arms… I say to our Canadian friends, fear not, we can work and make good soldiers too, in times of troubles or war."[817]

Black militiamen cleared the wilderness to make way for the 'Cuyoga Road' between Drummondville and Simcoe. Shadd wrote that they "had to fashion their own living accommodations alongside the construction route, since they were so far from any settlements." The harsh conditions were understandably difficult and took an enormous toll on the black corps. African Americans and African Canadians increasingly linked military service with claims to equal subjecthood. In 1855 or 1856, Philadelphia-born Robert Jones founded the Queen's Victoria Rifle Guards, a black militia company in Hamilton. He wrote to William Still, "I thought I would try to do something for their elevation as a nation, to place them in the proper position to stand where they ought to stand. In order to do this, I have undertaken to get up a

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[816] Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War," 9-10. For more on black participation in the Upper Canadian Rebellion, see Fred Landon, "Canadian Negroes and the Rebellion of 1837," *Journal of Negro History* 7, no. 4 (1922), 377-379; Wayne Edward Kelly, "Race and Segregation in the Upper Canada Militia," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 78, no. 316 (2000), 264-277.

[817] Natasha L. Henry, *Talking About Freedom: Celebrating Emancipation Day in Canada* (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2012), 53-54; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 151; "Rebellions of 1837," *TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca*, accessed Sep. 3, 2018, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rebellions-of-1837; Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway*, 107-108; Josiah Henson, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life. An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom"). From 1789 to 1876. With a Preface by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, and an Introductory Note by George Sturge, and S. Morley, Esq., M. P.* (London: Christian Age Office, 1876), 176, accessed Mar. 20, 2019. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/henson/henson.html; Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave*, 300; Paola Brown, *Address Intended to be Delivered in the City Hall, Hamilton, February 7, 1851, on the Subject of Slavery* (Hamilton, ON Printed for the Author, 1851), 28, accessed Jun. 15, 2020. https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.49632/1?r=0&s=1.

military company amongst them." Hezekiah Hill, a self-emancipator from Virginia, became Ensign of the company.[818]

The Crimean War provided another opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the British Empire. On June 16, 1855, the *Provincial Freeman* stated, "The colored people of Canada are right on the war question. Their experience of tyrants is too thorough, not to feel, that with a power so determined to disregard the rights of other sovereignties, and people, as Russia, there must be prompt and decisive action… no men are more willing to do their mite [sic] for the discomfiture of the common enemy… than the colored men of Canada." One week later, a meeting of blacks in Chatham resolved:

> we, the Colored people of Kent County… feeling indebted to Her Most Gracious Majesty, and Her Government, make known our willingness and determination to assist in arresting the usurpations of Russia or any other power… [and] after having been subjected to the iniquitous system of Yankee oppression, and having the privilege of a home on British Territory extended to us, in common with all others of Her adopted subjects, the duty devolves upon us to aid in any and every case where we would be in any way serviceable.[819]

Alternative Beacons of Freedom: Black Emigration from North America

The status of African Americans and African Canadians was not fully settled by the Civil War Era. In the late 1840s and 1850s, the ACS experienced a resurgence. This led to the forced removal of thousands of black people from the United States. Between 1848 and 1854, over 4,000 African Americans were deported to Liberia. William Lloyd Garrison asserted that the organization "vilifies and persecutes the free people of color, and prevents as far as possible their moral and social elevation in the United States." In 1851, blacks in Albany met to protest the "two great questions": the FSA and "the coercive and barbarous Colonization Scheme." The following year, African Americans in New Bedford, Massachusetts resolved, "in

[818] Shadd, *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway*, 109 (quote) -111; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 345.
[819] "The Colored Men of Canada and the Eastern War," *PF*, Jun. 16, 1855; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 321.

whatever light we view the Colonization Society, we discover nothing in it but terror, prejudice and oppression[.]"[820]

Around this time, slave refugees and free black leaders launched new emigration schemes to the Caribbean, Central and South America, and West Africa. Disillusioned with the rising tide of anti-black racism, some concluded that black people could never be truly free in North America. For many, mass emigration from the United States risked bolstering colonization. Even Frederick Douglass refused to endorse the mass migration of African Americans to Canada.[821] Yet African Americans and African Canadians were willing to consider emigration schemes. In August 1851, African Americans in Indianapolis resolved "should the laws of the state become so oppressive as to be intolerable, they would recommend their people to emigrate to Canada, Jamaica, or elsewhere, in preference to Liberia[.]" Other possible destinations included "Mexico, New Granada, and Central America: but Canada is generally regarded as the most eligible, on account of its accessibility." The Indianapolis delegates also reaffirmed African Americans "have a right to remain, if they choose, in the United States, the land of their nativity; and it accordingly recommends them to stay here, and strive for their moral, social, political, and intellectual elevation."[822]

From the early national period, emigrationists established organizations to promote various schemes that encouraged black migration to Haiti, the British West Indies, and West Africa. In 1818, African Americans in New York City founded the Haytian [sic] Emigration Society. It attracted many prominent supporters, including Samuel Cornish. Thousands of African Americans left North America. According to Ousmane Power-Greene, Haiti "continued to inspire black Americans, encouraging some free blacks in the North to join Haitian emigration societies as a sign of solidarity, while others went ahead and packed up their belongings and emigrated there." By the 1830s, the Haitian emigration movement, and similar schemes to the

[820] Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 96-98, 119; William Lloyd Garrison, "The Colonization Conspiracy," *Liberator*, Jun. 18, 1847; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 4: The United States, 1847-1858*, 113-115.

[821] Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 129-130; Shirly J. Yee, "Finding a Place: Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the Dilemma of Black Migration to Canada, 1850-1870," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 18, no. 3 (1997), 3. For more on black emigration schemes from North America to Haiti, the British West Indies, and West Africa, see Power-Greene, *Against the Wind and Tides*, 17-45; Sara C. Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 1 (2007), 61-85; Chris Dixon, "An Ambivalent Black Nationalism: Haiti, Africa, and Antebellum African-American Emigrations," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 10, no. 2 (1991), 10-25; Abbot, "Beacons of Liberty."

[822] "Convention at Indianapolis," *VF*, Aug. 27, 1851. The Republic of New Granada comprised present-day Colombia and Panama, and parts of Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. It was formally established in 1831.

West Indies and West Africa, soon fell out of favor.[823] However, this would not spell the end of black emigration from North American to the Caribbean.

Over the antebellum period, Upper Canada was the preferred destination outside the United States among black activists and white abolitionists. In her circular *A Plea for Emigration* (1852), Mary Ann Shadd Cary praised the province's "salubrious and eminently healthy climate." As Ikuko Asaka notes, Shadd rebuked popular claims that African-descended people "were more productive workers in the tropics than they were in cold climates." Jobs in the province were supposedly more abundant; "there is much to do," Shadd insisted, "and comparatively few for the work. The numerous towns and villages springing up, and the great demand for timber and agricultural products, make labor of every kind plenty." Furthermore, Shadd argued that Canada's place in the British Empire was crucial. Shadd wrote in the *Provincial Freeman*, "You *cannot* be a whole African Nation here brethren, but you can be *part* of the Colored British nation. This nation knows no one color above another, but being composed of all colors, is evidently a *colored* nation."[824]

Shadd was less optimistic about other potential sites of black liberty. She acknowledged that "agents have been sent particularly from Jamaica and Trinidad, from time to time, to confer with [African Americans] on the subject." Her primary concern that the proposed schemes would solely benefit white planters (by supplying them with cheap black labor). Yet black migrants in the British West Indies would still be eligible for subjecthood.[825] Mexico was a less appealing option, however. Despite its geographical proximity and "the known hostility of Mexicans to the institution of slavery," Shadd claimed that Mexico did not offer "the features, in the main, that the States of South America do." She added that "the spirit of democracy has never so thoroughly pervaded that country." Furthermore, Shadd argued that "the Roman Catholic church is in undisputed supremacy, and the Pope is to them the ultimatum." Shadd concluded, "Let Mexico, at present, take care of herself… and let our emigrants so *abolitionize* and strengthen neighboring positions as to promote the prosperity and harmony of the whole."[826]

Initially, Martin R. Delany championed Upper Canada as a destination for black refugees. He argued that it was "equal to any portion of the Northern States. The climate being milder than that of the Northern portions of New York, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, or any of the States bordering on the lakes, [and] the soil

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[823] Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 17-18, 130; Leslie M. Alexander, *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784-1861* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 40, 43; Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 191-196.

[824] Mary Ann Shadd Cary, *A Plea for Emigration; or, Notes of Canada West, in its Moral, Social, and Political Aspect: with Suggestions Respecting Mexico, W. Indies and Vancouver Island, for the Information of Colored Emigrants* (Detroit: Published by George W. Pattison, 1852), 6, 15-16, 30-31; Asaka, *Tropical Freedom*, 1; "A Word about, and to Emigrationists," *PF*, Apr. 15, 1854.

[825] Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration*, 36-37.

[826] Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration*, 40-42.

is prolific in productions of every description." Unlike Shadd, however, Delaney believed that the United States would eventually annex Canada. "The odious infamous fugitive slave law," he wrote, "will then be in full force with all its terrors[.]" Delany encouraged African Americans to seek refuge in Canada for the time being; "we say, until we have a more preferable place – go on to Canada. Freedom, always; liberty any place and ever – before slavery."[827]

Delaney came to favor emigration schemes to Latin America. He wrote, "In the productions of grains, fruits, and vegetables, Central and South America are also prolific; and the best herds are here raised." Delany asserted that the independent nations of Central and South America had never institutionalized "an inequality on account of race or color, and any prohibition of rights, has generally been to the white, and not to the colored races." He pointed to Nicaragua and New Grenada as possible spaces of liberty beyond the continent. "To remain here in North America," he wrote, "and be crushed to the earth in vassalage and degradation, we never will."[828] Meanwhile, black abolitionist James T. Holly argued that other destinations were less suitable because "the distance of these locations from our enslaved brethren still clanking their chains, and their topical latitudes, are insurmountable objections to the free colored people of the United States." At the 1851 North American Convention, delegates recommended that African Americans, "emigrate to the Canadas instead of going to Africa or the West India Islands, that they, by doing so, may be better able to assist their brethren who are daily dying from American slavery." The delegates declared that the British government was "the most favorable in the civilized world to the people of color, and is therefore entitled to our entire confidence."[829]

Legally free black men and women are most often associated with voluntary emigration schemes from North America. Yet slave refugees were also intricately involved in emigration schemes. Henry Bibb contended, "We say Canada first because it is the most convenient refuge for the American slave." Yet Bibb also examined potential sites outside North America. For instance, he briefly considered emigration schemes to Jamaica. Bibb claimed that it was "owned and governed chiefly by the colored population, many of whom were held and worked there not longer than 14 years ago as slaves," and insisted that it was "a great commercial and agricultural enterprize [sic], possessing, in itself the elements for breaking down the system of American slavery."[830]

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[827] Martin Robinson Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (Philadelphia: Published by the Author, 1852), 173-177.
[828] Delany, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration*, 178-181, 188-189.
[829] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 138-139 (Holly quote); North American Convention (1851: Toronto, Canada), "Proceedings for the North American Convention held in Toronto, Canada, 1851," *ColoredConventions.org*, accessed June 27th, 2019, http://coloredconventions.org/items/show/324.
[830] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 200-201.

On June 17, 1853, black men and women met at the First Baptist Church in Amherstburg. Canada, claimed the meeting's Committee on Emigration, was the first "Asylum of the Refugees from American Slavery." After Canada, the committee resolved that the British West Indies was a suitable destination for African-descended people. "Jamaica, is probably the most important of all the Islands," stated the report. Furthermore, the committee noted that there was already "an Agent in New York City setting before our people the advantages of that Island." It added that an African American agent from South Carolina named J. Wesley Harrison "has been there for two years, and has made himself acquainted with the advantages and resources of the Island; and from his knowledge of his own people in the States he knows Jamaica is a good place for their development."[831]

The rise in emigration sentiment culminated in the August 1854 National Emigration Convention of Colored People. Held in Cleveland, Ohio, it attracted emigrationists from across the northern US and Canada, including James T. Holly and Martin R. Delaney. Other black abolitionists, such as William M. Lambert, John Malvin, and Mary Bibb, also attended the convention. For three days, delegates discussed the prospects of black emigration. During the proceedings, Delaney presented a report titled 'Political Destines of the Colored Race,' which was passed unanimously by the convention. Delaney challenged the "false impression" that black people could secure equal citizenship in North America. He insisted that African-descended people could never be part of the "ruling element," even if they possessed the right to vote. "The liberty of no man is secure," Delaney proclaimed, "who controls not his political destiny." He believed that emigration was the only "remedy" for black people. Delaney stated his belief that Canada offered a satisfactory "temporary relief, especially to the fleeing fugitive," but reiterated that it was not a "permanent" refuge. He resolved, "The West Indies, Central and South America, are the countries of choice[.]"[832]

Four years later, Henry Highland Garnet founded the African Civilization Society (AfCS) to promote emigration from North America to Liberia, which he claimed was "admirably situated in the highway trade for Central Africa, and can produce cotton, indigo, rice, sugar… [and] the introduction of civilization and lawful commerce, will elevate the nations of Africa[.]"[833] James T. Holly came to embrace

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[831] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 270-274.

[832] National Emigration Convention of Colored People (1854: Cleveland, OH), "Proceedings of the National Emigration Convention of Colored People Held at Cleveland, Ohio, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, The 24th, 25th, and 26th of August, 1854," 33-43. *Colored Conventions Project Digital Records*, accessed Oct. 20, 2020. https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/items/show/314. Delaney viewed Canada as a temporary destination due primarily to his belief that it would eventually be annexed by the United States. Meanwhile, Central and South America (with the exception of Brazil) were countries that had either abolished black enslavement or did not hold strong anti-black sentiments.

[833] Duane, *Educated for Freedom*, 160-162; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 5: The United States, 1859-1865*, 3-14; "African Civilization Society of Canada," *PF*, Jan. 29, 1859.

Haiti as a site for African American and African Canadian resettlement. In his essay *Thoughts on Hayti*, he claimed, "whatsoever is to be the future of the descendants of Africa, Hayti certainly holds the most important relation to that destiny." Around the same time, Martin Delaney switched his focus from Latin America to the Niger Valley.[834]

During a fundraising tour of the British Isles, Delany addressed an audience at Glasgow City Hall in October 1860. He praised the Niger Valley's climate, soil, and people, and argued that the new settlers would create an alternative cotton market. "Supposing a war was to break out between this country and America, which was not improbable," he asked rhetorically, "or supposing a movement like that of John Brown's to be successful, what was to become of three-fourths of the British people depending on cotton manufacturers?" In 1861, Delany wrote to James T. Holly, "My duty and destiny are in Africa, the great and glorious (even with its defects) land of your and my ancestry. I cannot, I *will not* desert her for all things else in this world[.]"[835]

Black residents in Chatham-Kent explored the possibility of emigrating from Upper Canada to West Africa. In October 1860, William King wrote to Scottish abolitionist David Livingstone, "a number of the adult population who have been accustomed to raise cotton and sugar in the states, and who are well acquainted with the cultivation of those products, would like to go to Africa to raise cotton provided a suitable place could be obtained for that purpose[.]" Livingstone replied, "I cannot give you the encouragement you desire in reference to coloured people coming from Canada to Africa to cultivate cotton and sugar. Some of them carry a prejudice against colour wherever they go and although many are no doubt superior to that silly nonsense I would prevent that cordial intercourse with their less enlightened African brethren[.]" Livingstone believed that black refugee settlers from North America's "healthy climate" were liable to become sick in West Africa and thus held "serious doubts as to the propriety of recommending those who have escaped from slavery trying to emigrate to Africa."[836]

White abolitionist James Redpath founded the Haytian Emigration Bureau. His book *A Guide To Hayti* presented the black republic as a viable site for African

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[834] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 1: The British Isles*, 1830-1865, 477. For more on Garner, Holly, and Delany's emigration schemes to the Niger Valley, see Miller, *Search for Black Nationality*; Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 167-168; R. J. M Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 175-178.
[835] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 1: The British Isles*, 1830-1865, 488-490; Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 437-438.
[836] Stouffer, *Light of Nature*, 97; William King to David Livingston, Sep. 17, 1860. Rev. William King Correspondence, R4402-4-9-E, 562-565. LAC. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice. Adam Matthew Digital. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC; David Livingston to William King, Feb. 16, 1861. Rev. William King Correspondence, R4402-4-9-E, 566-569. LAC. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice. Adam Matthew Digital. Universiteit Leiden/LUMC.

American and African Canadian resettlement. Haitian emigration societies were soon established in Toronto, Chatham, and St. Catharines. George Cary (Mary Ann Shadd Cary's brother-in-law) stated, "Most of us have comfortable homes in [Canada], where the laws are equal; but we have a damning prejudice to contend against… It is preventative to a just and equal administration of the British Constitution… many are talking about leaving[.]" Cary was optimistic about the prospects of Haitian emigration schemes, writing, "I think there will be quite an emigration from this Western section of Canada[.]"[837]

William Wells Brown was also a prominent spokesman for the Bureau. He met with audiences across the Western District eager to learn more about Haiti. Some Colchester farmers, for instance, were "anxious to make their homes in Hayti [sic], for the benefit of their children." In Toronto, he met "seventy-five in number, and I must confess that a nobler looking set of men and women I never beheld – all going to Hayti with the determination to commence the culture of cotton." Brown's visit to the province reaffirmed his emigrationist stance. "The more I see of Canada," he wrote, "the more I am convinced of the deep-rooted hatred to the negro, here." Mary Ann Shadd Cary claimed that Haiti was "unhealthy and unchristian, that it did not compare with the Canadas[.]" She wrote in the *Weekly Anglo-African*, "A few have gone to Hayti [sic], a few more will go; a few will go to Jamaica; already some have written back from Hayti who are who are not too well pleased; some more await further advice."[838]

The US Civil War dampened enthusiasm for emigration schemes. Slave refugees and free blacks returned from Canada to enlist in the Union Army. Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Martin Delaney, Osborne P. Anderson, and other black leaders recruited black soldiers. After President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, black residents in Toronto resolved: "Our hearts hail with pleasure and delight… and although that edict does not at present break the clamps of every fetter in that land, still we ardently hope that ere the conflict is ended, its effects will give liberty to every slave." At the same time, the delegates affirmed, "We rejoice that we are subjects of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, and that we live under a flag that has 'braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze.'"[839]

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[837] James Redpath (ed.), *A Guide to Hayti* (Boston: Haytian Bureau of Emigration, 221 Washington Street, 1861); Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 449-451.
[838] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 438, 452-457, 458-459, 479-482; Mary Ann Shadd Cary, "HAYTIAN EMIGRATION," *Weekly Anglo-African*, Sep. 28, 1861.
[839] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 513-514, 520. For more on African Canadian involvement in the US Civil War, see Gosse, "As a Nation, the English Are Our Friends," 1023; Bryan Prince, *My Brother's Keeper: African Canadians and the American Civil War* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2015); Richard M. Reid, *African Canadians in Union Blue: Volunteering for the Cause in the Civil War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015). Gosse, Prince, and Reid estimate that over 1,000 black enlistees in the Union Army were either born in British North America, or had escaped to Canada before the Civil War.

Other free blacks and slave refugees in Canada expressed similar support for the Union cause, even if they recognized that it was far from perfect. In a letter to William Still, Sarah A. Lester of Victoria, Vancouver Island noted acknowledged President Lincoln was inspired to issue the Proclamation by "motives of policy rather than conviction of duty," and that "the faults of the North are glaring." Nevertheless, She declared, "Take up arms for the North and sustain the President… I certainly think we will be fools if we do not use every means to secure a more auspicious future."[840]

Conclusion

Across the North and Canada, slave refugees were instrumental in campaigns for abolitionism and equal citizenship. Individuals like Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and Henry Bibb breathed new life into the transnational movement through their unique stain of 'fugitive slave abolitionism.' Indeed, the involvement of black refugees was the main highlight of antebellum campaigns against slavery. As displayed by the response to John Brown's failed insurrection, slave refugees and free blacks were also more willing than most white abolitionists to accept armed uprisings to bring about the end of slavery.

Furthermore, self-emancipated refugees collaborated with free blacks to challenge racial discrimination and pushed the abolitionist movement into local and national politics. Slave refugees and free African Americans were among the most vocal proponents of northern abolitionist and anti-slavery parties. That being said, black abolitionists continued to hold reservations over national politics. Meanwhile, slave refugees became a political force in parts of Upper Canada and the Canadian Maritimes. Initially, they threw their support behind Conservative candidates as a sign of allegiance and loyalty to the British Crown. Over time, however, they were increasingly willing to support Reform candidates who were more sympathetic to their aims and objectives. In particular, black voters were influential in ousting racist Tory candidates from office.

Several prominent slave refugee activists, alongside free African Americans and African Canadians, also promoted emigration from North America to West Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Liberia, Haiti, Jamaica, and the Bahamas, Mexico, and other landscapes were promoted by African American and African Canadian activists, and slave refugees across the North and Canada displayed at least some interest in emigration schemes. Yet most self-liberated people preferred to remain in North America and continue the fight for abolitionism and equal citizenship.

[840] Ripley et al. (eds.), *BAP: vol. 2: Canada, 1830-1865*, 516-517.