Chapter VII

CIVIL WAR AND EMANCIPATION
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The election of 1860 confronted blacks with a dilemma. For the first time, a Party was arrayed against the South which had some measure of antislavery commitment, at least insofar as the extension of slavery was concerned. A black endorsement of Lincoln was next to impossible considering his own often expressed views that he did not favour black equality, much less, equal black franchise. Frederick Douglass emphatically declared he could not back Lincoln, and hoped to see a Radical Abolitionist nominated by the Republicans instead.

Yet, blacks were not blind to the fact that within the Republican Party there were elements like Thaddeus Stevens, Owen Lovejoy, John A. Andrew, Charles Sumner and others. Sumner's speech on the "Barbarism of Slavery" in the summer of 1860 was termed as the most antislavery speech ever made in the U.S. Senate. John S. Rock felt that his speech was more than enough to balance those Republicans who were "determined to treat us in the spirit of the Dred Scott decision." Expressions of gratitude and solidarity were forthcoming from Robert Purvis, H. O. Wagoner, and William Still. There were, however, many disparate elements within

1 Frederick Douglass to Gerrit Smith, 2 July 1860, Philip S. Foner, ed., The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass (New York, 1950-1975), 5 vols., vol. II, pp. 483-90; see also Douglass' address on "The Presidential Campaign of 1860" delivered on 1 August 1860, pp. 502-18.
the Party, from those described above, to men like Lincoln who believed blacks to be innately inferior and, William H. Seward, who at the point of crisis in 1860 proposed the passage of a Constitutional amendment to protect slavery.

While a significant section of the black leadership was involved in emigrationist endeavours that indicated their alienation from the political mainstream, most of the blacks were indifferent to the campaign. The entire election campaign did not witness any significant upsurge of black support around the Republicans and much less Lincoln. Most black leaders who commented on the campaign did not seem particularly enthusiastic about Lincoln's candidacy. H. Ford Douglass, now living in Illinois, Lincoln's home state, noted, for example, that Lincoln had refused to sign a petition requesting repeal of an Illinois law preventing blacks from testifying against whites in law courts.

There was, however, general relief among blacks when


3 Cited in James M. McPherson, ed., The Negro's Civil War, How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union (New York, 1965), pp. 5-6.
Lincoln did win the Presidential election. This was, as Douglass noted, because the election represented at least a severe setback to the South. Besides, the election of a man who had at least an antislavery reputation was not all that bad. In Philadelphia, a debate on the issue of support to Lincoln, indicated that blacks perceived the Republicans as the only major Party to have taken a stand, however, diffused, which could be considered antislavery.

The Threat of Permanent Enslavement

Through the winter of 1860-1861, as the secession crisis developed, many blacks adopted a stand advocated by Garrisonian abolitionists, around the idea that the slave states should be allowed to secede. There were several reasons for this, but the most significant was the Crittenden compromise measures which seemed at one time to gain some measure of support. The Crittenden measures, as described earlier consisted of a series of constitutional amendments which could never be repealed, and be perpetually binding. The measures would restrict slavery along the lines of the Missouri Compromise—below 36° 30' of latitude. Further new measures were proposed to see that all blacks were disfranchised and colonized abroad. We have shown in the previous chapter that the Republican compromise proposal mooted by Seward

and approved by Lincoln, too accepted the necessity of providing Constitutional guarantees to perpetuate slavery in the South in exchange for an undertaking that the institution would not be allowed to expand into new areas. The entire tenor of the election and the campaign preceding it had not been too heartening for blacks. On one hand they viewed the increasing hysteria in the South against the possibility of a "black" Republican president. On the other, they saw the spectacle of the Republican Party, in the search for a compromise, moving away from any stance that could be called antislavery.

In this context, given the threat of disunion and the actual secession of the Southern states, blacks felt that they would have to pay the costs of any political compromise. When the peace proposals started floating around, it was apparent that there were elements in the Republican Party that were not averse to letting the blacks remain in bondage. The Crittenden and other "peace" measures may have sounded sensible to those seeking to reunite the sections. For the blacks, however, they were a most pernicious and dangerous set of proposals. Blacks, therefore, reacted sharply and bitterly to these developments.

A meeting of blacks in Boston on the 14th of February 1861, protested, in the most vehement terms, an invitation from Virginia to Massachusetts for a Peace Convention based on the Crittenden plan. Blacks saw in this plan, and the others outlined in the previous chapter, the most serious danger to their very existence in American society. For the first time in the United States,
measures to introduce slavery into the Constitution were being brought forward, along with Congressional plans to deport free blacks. With a ruling party which was only lukewarm to their cause, blacks had reason to be worried. In the most plainative terms, surcharged with emotion, George T. Downing appealed to the white citizens of Massachusetts: "...we appeal to you to stand by us, and see that we are not unjustly punished.... We are weak you are strong ... -- in the name of the great God, before whom we must all appear, hear us!"

Frederick Douglass argued that if emancipation was not the logical solution, then the breaking up of the Union was acceptable. In disunion, Douglass saw the seeds of a slave insurrection which, in the new circumstances, even had a chance of success. Nevertheless, as Douglass firmly asserted, it was neither state rights, nor tariff, nor the question of secession which was the root of the crisis. It was the question of slavery and in that, "compromises ... [were] new wine to old bottles". The crisis was a manifestation of the "irrepressible conflict" between slavery and freedom.

At this time, the Rev. J. T. Holly was on the verge of departing for Haiti. Henry Highland Garnet had announced his

6 "Dissolution of the American Union", Frederick Douglass' Monthly, January 1861, pp. 38-18.
7 "The Union and How to Save the Union", Frederick Douglass' Monthly, February 1861, pp. 401-2.
intention of resigning from his pastorate at Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York and leave for Yoruba in West Africa. Delany having made plans to leave for Africa that summer, busied himself in the winter of the crisis gathering potential emigrants from the Chatham free black community.

Throughout the crisis, the *Christian Recorder*, the organ of the largest black church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, maintained a cautious attitude. The editor of this Philadelphia paper, Rev. Elisha Weaver, cautioned Pennsylvania blacks that under the circumstances, they should consider themselves duty bound to Pennsylvania alone as a state which had granted them "qualified" citizenship. Blacks should view the struggle "as interested, yet impartial witnesses". The cautious appeal noted: "With the Union, as it is, we enter no claim, nor have we any special pleadings for its preservation." To get the gist of its meaning, one has to read between the lines, Weaver argued against a Union "as it is". Like many other black leaders, he chose to back a disunionist sentiment. That Weaver was not arguing for an ostrich like policy is clear from the fact that in a subsequent issue, he called on clergymen to ignore

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appeals to abstain from politics. If by politics such men meant "the principles of civil government and the duties thus resulting," noted Weaver, it would be a travesty to abstain from this higher call of duty. Weaver saw disunion as the fulfilment of the Scriptures and noted that unity could only be acceptable if it came with "equity and justice" for all.

The Outbreak of War

The 20 April issue of the paper had its fullest discussion on the issue of the war. Weaver sought to disabuse the ideas of those who thought blacks were the cause of the conflict. The Crittenden Compromise proposals had made blacks painfully aware of the fact that an anti-black backlash could easily emerge from the crisis. Far from a fight over the status of blacks, Weaver saw the crisis as a fight over the Territories between Northern and Southern whites. Secondly, the conflict was a struggle for power between the Republicans and Democrats. In these issues, blacks, disfranchised, and excluded from Territories, were a marginal issue and should maintain a neutral stance and call for peace.

With the outbreak of the war after the firing on Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861, Weaver showed the cutting edge of his criticism of the crisis, and the depth of bitterness which the blacks felt. His editorial under the title "The Star Spangled

10 Ibid., 13 April 1861.
11 Ibid., 20 April 1861.
Banner and the Duty of Colored Americans to that Flag" noted how blacks had stood with the whites in the wars of 1775 and 1812. Now, there was another call, echoed by some blacks, to stand with the Union. Weaver argued that: "While time cannot change our moral obligations, it most certainly alters our circumstances." In 1775 and 1812 free black citizenship at least was not in doubt. But in 1861 when "not only our citizenship but our common humanity is denied", the situation called for an appropriate response. Under these circumstances, for blacks to offer themselves for military service would be "to abandon self-respect and invite insult". Instead Weaver called on blacks to "boycott" the Union until the whites "should be so pressed by war as to have ... their hearts harmonized towards you ... and call upon you for martial aid...." Then, and then only, should blacks fight.
This was undoubtedly a signal of the black community of the awareness that they, under the circumstances of war, could alter the balance of forces in America.

There were however, some blacks who, overwhelmed by the dramatic events in the land showed an eagerness to offer their services in response to Lincoln's call. A correspondent to the Recorder criticized black Baltimorians for offering their services to crush the rebellion. "Argo" felt that times were indeed extremely critical for blacks and they ought to handle the situation with "great care and caution", and not get involved in a sectional

12 Ibid., 27 April 1861.
quarrel.

Undoubtedly most blacks felt bitter about the way they had been treated in the Northern free states in the decades before the Civil War. Nevertheless, when war came, all of them did not accept Weaver's passive or cautious policy. These men by agitating for the right to fight, attempted to outflank white public opinion by proving their patriotism. Undoubtedly this gesture was not just a tame gesture of "loyalty". The black community had, in the previous decade, gained tremendous experience in analyzing and reacting to the various issues which affected them. Blacks clamoured to fight; acceptance of blacks as soldiers would entail acceptance by the whites of their capacity to perform the highest duty of citizenship.

Within a few days of the outbreak of war blacks began to respond with offers to enlist or to raise troops. Jacob Dodson, employed in the Senate Chamber, wrote to Simon Cameron, the Secretary of War, that he had some "three hundred ... reliable colored free citizens" to defend Washington D.C. G.P. Miller, writing from Michigan in October 1861 offered to raise "five to ten thousand free men" for any duty, even under white officers. If this proposition was not acceptable, Michigan blacks were willing, he asserted "if armed and equipped by the government, to fight as guerrillas."

In Pittsburgh, a black militia group called "Hannibal

13 Ibid., 4 May 1861.
Guards" offered their services. In spite of the fact that they were "deprived of all their political rights", they wanted to strengthen the hand of the Lincoln Administration. Blacks were not, as an anonymous writer noted, unaware of the reason why they wanted to fight. In a letter to the Daily Atlas and Bee of Boston, a writer declared that the black would participate in the war "not as a tool, but as an American patriot. He will fight most desperately, because he will be fighting against his enemy, slavery ..." The white perception of the war was as we have shown radically different. The Lincoln Administration viewed the war as a constitutional exercise of powers to restore recalcitrant states to the Federal compact.

There was an anti-black backlash during the winter of 1860-1861. This was due to the feeling that slavery and, by implication blacks, were responsible for the crisis of the Union. This backlash affected both abolitionists and blacks who were mobbed

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when they tried to organize meetings condemning the South.

With the firing on Fort Sumter in April, the abolitionists became heroes, but the blacks remained lepers. The decades old anti-black sentiment had so hardened the white community, that they were unwilling and often unable to see the fact that in blacks they had a potential weapon which could humble the South. In April 1861 on the very outbreak of war, as we have pointed out earlier, Benjamin E. Butler even offered his Massachusetts troops to the Maryland Governor to suppress a rumoured slave revolt. Lincoln, still afraid that the Border States may secede, left no opportunity to declare that the war would not touch Southern "institutions" but only operate to bring back the Confederacy into the Union. In this sentiment, Lincoln had the support of the entire North, including his old opponents like Stephen A. Douglas and the Democrats.

In this light, black offered of aid were ignored and rejected with some asperity. Secretary of war, Cameron informed


18 For Lincoln's Proclamation following Fort Sumter see G.W., vol. IV, pp. 331-3.

19 For a sampling of the public opinion see Horace Greeley, The American Conflict, a History of the Great Rebellion, in the United States of America, 1860-64, its Causes, Incidents, and Results: Intended to Exhibit Especially its Moral and Political Phases with the Drift and Progress of American Opinion Respecting Human Slavery: From 1776 to the Close of the War for the Union (Hartford: O.C. Chase and Co., 1864), 2 vols., vol. 1, pp. 454-530. See also reprints of editorials from other Northern newspapers in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, 4 May 1861, 13 May 1861 and 10 August 1861.
Jacob Noyes that his department had "no intention to at that
time...to call into the service of the Government any colored
soldiers." In similar line, the War Department replied to Dr
Miller that there was no reason for it to change its existing
policy of not raising black units.

Blacks in Cincinnati and New York were ordered by the
decision by blacks of Massachusetts to be allowed to participate in the
State militia. A black man writing under the somewhat sar-
cratic pseudonym of "Immortal" to the *Douglass Monthly* from
New York put the black case for participation more forthrightly.
He argued that it would only be "proper" for "the descendants of
Africans to take prominent part in a war which will even-
tually lead to a general emancipation of the race."

"Immortal" outlined the contribution of blacks in the
American Revolution and in the War of 1812. He cogently argued
that the value of a black regiment would be beyond numbers, in
its "moral effect" on the South. He proposed a plan for raising
a regiment, like the ones the French had effectively used against
Austria, to be called the African Zouaves. "Immortal" con-
cluded with another prophesy that before the war was over, "every


21 McPherson, n. 9, pp. 21-23; Peter F. Clark, *The Black
Brigade of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: J.B. Boyd, 1864),

pp. 4-5.
man black or white... will be wanted... This will be a frightfully bloody war; but if a race is to be redeemed by it, it will be." Douglass, commenting on the letter, cautiously agreed with the writer's assessment that at some point black troops would "in all probability... become absolutely necessary."

Those sentiments were shared by Philadelphia blacks who felt that while "formidable difficulties" seemed to intervene in the blacks desire to take up arms, they should be ready for the time when their services will be "officially solicited."

The blacks of Massachusetts had been in the forefront of the struggle to organize black militias in the years following the Fugitive Slave Act. They had during the 1850s, repeatedly tried to win state support for a militia company. Failing in that bid they had organized their own company. As late as 1859, Governor W.P. Banks had vetoed a bill authorizing black participation in the State Militia. 24 With the outbreak of war, blacks in Boston once again began to resume their efforts. In May 1861, blacks presented yet another petition to the Massachusetts legislature signed by the Rev. J. Jella Martin and twenty-five other blacks asking for the removal of "the word white from... the statutes of the Commonwealth." This petition, too, was rejected.

As a meeting of Boston blacks held on the 20th of May

22 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, May 1861, p. 452.
23 Christian Recorder, 4 May 1861.
At a meeting of Boston blacks held on the 20th of May 1861, the resolutions adopted recognized the conflict as a struggle between "liberty and despotism." The resolutions declared that black soldiers would be of inestimable value in the South "knowing its geography and being acquainted with the character of the natives." In any case a resolution noted, blacks would go ahead by organizing "drilling companies to be ready, when called upon by the country."  

In spite of the fact that all these efforts proved abortive, blacks were not discouraged as they felt with Robert Purvis that "the time will come...when they [the whites] will be glad to avail themselves of the assistance which they now so contemptuously reject."

Frederick Douglass warned that the government would have to pay a heavy price for its short-sighted policy. The only way to win the war was by "carrying the war into Africa"—the Deep South in the U.S. Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service, and forced into a liberating army to march into the South, Douglass suggested. Till then the Union did not "deserve the support of a single sable arm" and nor would it succeed in crushing the South.

25 National Anti-Slavery Standard, 1 June 1861; McPherson, n. 3, pp. 20-21; see also reports of "secret" drilling in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, 11 May 1861, 31 August 1861.


Through 1861, and most of 1862, Lincoln's actions were out of tune with the aspirations of the black people. Blacks were, however prematurely jubilant when Lincoln put forward a programme for compensated emancipation in his Annual Message to Congress in December 1861. He had followed this up by a special message to Congress asking for a joint resolution to fulfil his scheme. In April 1862, he even went beyond the expectations of the blacks by signing a bill for the gradual compensated abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. But blacks remained cognizant of Lincoln's persistent revocations of local army commanders' moves for unconditional emancipation.

Evolving Black Attitudes to the War

Blacks were thus faced with a situation where the Administration insisted on prosecuting the war without touching slavery. Black leaders pointed out to persisting news reports that the Confederacy was not bound by such scruples.

Douglass pointed out that whether blacks were used as labour or in the military by the Confederacy, it represented "a grand element of strength." The only way by which the Union could weaken this element would be by a call for the abolition of slavery. J.H.C. Pennington petitioned Congress that the Union could not be restored without removing the cause of the rebel war---"African slavery." James McCune Smith wrote to Gerrit

28 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, July 1861, pp. 481-2; Weekly Anglo-Africain, 17 August 1861. Charles H. Wesley has argued that though there were blacks organized for military use by Confederates, few were actually used.

(footnote contd.)
Smith that "Immediate Emancipation" was the only solution to the situation. He called on Smith to lead a campaign to convince the North of its necessity and to allay fears over the safety of this policy.

The Northern defeat at Bull Run, in July 1861, vindicated the stand the black leaders were taking. Douglass hoped that the defeat would have salutary effect on the Lincoln Administration. The Administration remained unmoved. The Rev. J.P. Campbell, later a Bishop of the A.M.E. Church, noted that: "The President is not now, and never was, either an abolitionist or an antislavery man.... He has no quarrel whatever with the south, upon the slavery question." Further, Campbell noted, Lincoln believed that the Constitution was a compromise between slavery and freedom, and had every intention of upholding the Dred Scott decision, which says that: "Black men have no rights that white men are bound to respect." Campbell wrote this letter in response to Lincoln's Proclamation declaring 12 August 1861 as a day of humiliation and prayer. Blacks, Campbell noted, were clearly not addressed to in this proclamation. They could thus not pray for the policy which Lincoln represented.


Frederick Douglass' Monthly, August 1861, p. 498.

Christian Recorder, 24 August 1861.
"A.F.", in the same issue, caustically asked whether blacks should pray for the "rebels" or the National Government. For him, there did not appear to be too much divergence of aims between them as far as the blacks were concerned. Henry K. Turner, disapproved of Campbell's categorization of Lincoln, and his call for boycotting the "national fast." Within a month, however, he felt a "disappointing blight...sweeping over the sky," and called blacks to show fortitude in the "face of continuing vicissitudes." In spite of discouragements, blacks took these exhortations to heart.

There were many blacks like H. Ford Douglass, who because of their lighter skin, crossed the colour line and joined the army shortly after the outbreak of the war. He enlisted in the 95th Illinois Regiment and was later commissioned as a captain of the Independent Kansas Battery. James Lynch writing from Washington, D.C. referred to many other such blacks and noted that he would later chronicle the valour of these heroes.

Joseph T. Wilson, managed to enlist for three days before he was inadvertently recognized by a black cook, and honourably

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 12 October 1861 and 30 November 1861.
35 Christian Recorder, 7 September 1861.
discharged. Wilson also wrote of a number of light-skinned blacks who enlisted, but noted that it was difficult to cite any figures of the number of blacks who had done so. The U.S. Navy had however always enlisted blacks, though not as officers. Many blacks served on the navy from the outset. More important were two deeds of valour by blacks which served to highlight the courage and the effectiveness of blacks.

The first instance was that of the Haring incident which was widely reported in the Northern press. William Tillmann, was a black steward who was captured along with his ship Haring by a Confederate privateer. A prize crew of five started the Haring towards Charleston where Tillmann anticipated being sold into slavery. Just outside Charleston on the night of 16 July 1861, Tillmann killed three of the members of the prize crew and took over command of the ship and brought it to New York.

The second instance, almost a year later was the hijacking of a Confederate steamer, the Planter, from Charleston harbour. Robert Smalls who masterminded the escape, had worked in the Charleston waterfront. His escape was widely applauded in the North and the Congress approved a measure giving Smalls and his men one half of the appraised value of the Planter. The


37 Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Civil War (New York, 1969), pp. 32-33. See also Douglass' account of the incident in Frederick Douglass Monthly, August 1861, p. 499.

38 Quarles, ibid., pp. 73-74.
fact that Smalls, a slave had carried out this audacious hijack-
ing was widely publicized and made an impact in changing public opinion in mid-1862. Smalls was subsequently, enlisted as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army, but he served as a river pilot in the navy in seventeen battles of the war.

Black efforts for the right to fight even after the specific debarral, was continued as part propaganda and part perception of the changing public opinion in the North. As the war dragged on longer than anticipated, inverted racism suggested to some whites that blacks should fight in a war of which they were the cause. Behind this twisted logic lay the fact that when the demands of the draft and casualties began mounting, continued opposition to some measure of black participation began to weaken.

Besides, the abolitionists both black and white, insisted that Confederates were employing black labour and indeed even black troops. The Weekly Anglo-African warned that to view the war as a white man's war as some blacks were doing, was dangerous and fallacious. It pointed out that even the limited rights they had in the North would be snuffed out in case the South won the war. Arguing that a situation of the type permitted little choice, the paper declared:


The South must be subjugated, or we shall be enslaved.... We do not affirm that the North is fighting on behalf of the black man's rights... but circumstances have been so arranged that in struggling for their own nationality they are forced to defend our rights....

Blacks must, then, be alert to the situation and be ready to offer their services when the government wanted. Douglass put this in another way. He argued that slavery had been the cause of enormous tension in the United States, and could only survive as a dominant element. Since there was an "irrepressible conflict" between two systems in America, he appealed to white Northerners to bring about the complete destruction of the institution "from no other motive than that of the preservation of their own liberty...." Alfred E. Green, a Philadelphia teacher, advocated the policy of continued vigilance and preparation. It would be foolish, he declared, to nurse past grievances and remain inactive. This was the historical opportunity to advance the cause of black liberty and civil rights. Blacks had to "secure" for themselves by their actions "the primary interest... in the great and moving cause of the great American Rebellion."

41 Weekly Anglo-African, 24 August and 14 September 1861; this paper was revived in August from the older Weekly Anglo-African by James McCune Smith; "Shall Slavery Survive the War," Frederick Douglass' Monthly, September 1861, p. 515.

42 Weekly Anglo-African, 12 October 1861.
From the very beginning Frederick Douglass had urged the government to act against slavery. Douglass felt that if the government must lead public opinion, the people would "follow it" in any just and necessary path.43 A year before Lincoln was to write his Emancipation Proclamation, just after the Union setback in the battle of Bull Run in August 1861, Douglass declared that the government should contemplate a call to slaves in the South to rally around the Union. The defeat at Bull's Run, he noted, was an indication of the Lincoln Administration's lack of earnestness in prosecuting the war.44 From this, Douglass could not rule out the possibility of a compromise, a danger he candidly admitted which could not be ruled out unless "slavery is openly attacked."45

The consistent theme of black leaders, was to be "alert for providential openings and indications," and then, use them to promote the destruction of slavery. Through the autumn of 1861, Douglass ceaselessly harangued away at his theme that the North was "fighting rebels with only one hand." He repeatedly pointed to the Southern use of free blacks in the war. He argued that the power to abolish slavery lay, according to the

43 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, July 1861, p. 451.
44 Ibid., August 1861, p. 498.
Constitution, with the Congress, contrary to what Lincoln maintained. Besides, he declared, the exigencies of war were sufficient ground for an emancipation proclamation.

Writing to Samuel J. May, at the end of August 1861, Douglass gloomily noted: "It seems to me that our government has resolved that no good shall come to the Negro from this war...." Nevertheless, at least publicly, Douglass maintained a hopeful front. Addressing his readers for aid to help continue the Monthly, Douglass declared: "That great event \[emancipation\] unless all signs fail, is near at hand, even at the door."

This immediately brought a sarcastic current from one of his readers to "give us some of the signs." The writer, one S. Dutton, stated that he felt "sick and disheartened" and that he expected the war to end in compromise with "slavery to guide its way as usual."

Privately, Douglass was less than confident. Writing to Gerrit Smith he said, "I shudder with a feeling of something like despair." Of the Lincoln Administration, he noted, "I am bewildered by the spectacle of moral blindness, infatuation and helpless irremediability which the Government of Lincoln presents."

46 See the various articles in the August and September 1861 issues of Douglass' Monthly.
48 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, October 1861, p. 532.
49 Ibid., November 1861, p. 547.
50 Frederick Douglass to Gerrit Smith, 22 December 1861, in Foner, n. 10, vol. III, p. 184.
In a speech on the war delivered at Philadelphia in January 1862, Douglass maintained his withering fire on the Lincoln administration's "weakness and imbecility." He noted that Lincoln, by being "ashamed to tell the world what he was fighting against viz slavery and slave power," was indulging in escapism. However, cautioned Douglass, the Union was "all we have to save us from anarchy and ruin." He took comfort in the fact that events of such magnitude would not allow such questions to remain dormant for long.

Douglass, also minimized any probability of black deportation. A long and tried warrior against colonization and emigration, he was perhaps keenly aware of the proclivities of American blacks to stay where they were. A shrewd politician, he concentrated his fire on the moral and political aspects of the personality of Abraham Lincoln.

In a bitter oration on the 4th of July, he assailed the foot-dragging General McClellan as a traitor and "military Imposter." Then, he went on to Lincoln's policies on slavery: "I do not hesitate to say, that whatever may have been his intentions, the action of President Lincoln has been calculated in a marked and decided way to shield and protect [slavery]. . . ." Lincoln still entertained hopes of reconstructing the Union "on the old and corrupting basis of compromise." Such a policy, Douglass declared had no hope of success.

51 "Frederick Douglass on the War," Christian Recorder, 18 January 1862.

52 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, August 1862, pp. 692-3.
Douglass had equally harsh words for the Colonization Society. He assailed them for giving "a sanctimonious endorsement" to all types of anti-black phobia, including the anti-black riots occurring with alarming frequency in the North at the end of 1862. He pointed out that the idea of colonization was just a more sophisticated expression of racial prejudice. Douglass was keenly aware that his opposition to colonization must be accompanied by initiating a debate on proposing alternatives before black people with regard to the future of the blacks in America. Speaking on the "Future of the Negro People of the Slave States," Douglass predicted that all measures of deportation would become a dead letter like the Fugitive Slave Law. He termed such measures "unworthy of any man not dead to the claims of every sentiment of honor and humanity." He reiterated the argument that black labour was vital to southern economy. As an example he pointed to the large free black population of Maryland—a slave state.

Besides, he noted, in the Americas, North and South, twenty million blacks existed making their deportation as vain as an attempt "to bail out the ocean." He declared:

...[Blacks are] a permanent element of the American people...[unlike the American Indian] there is a vitality about him that seems alike invincible...work him, whip him, sell him, torment him, and he still lives, and clings to the American civilization.... (54)

The black man, in the conclusion, would stay in the

53 Ibid., September 1862, pp. 705-6.
54 Ibid., March 1862, p. 616.
land in the building of which he had given so much toil and his blood.

The dilemma of supporting an administration that chose to ignore them, was keenly felt by all the blacks. However, most leaders were reconciled to the fact that they had to support the Union in spite of its professions, since its victory would mean that "slavery would be crippled beyond recovery." In that situation "hope for a change existed."

The Port Royal Expedition: The Seeds of Reconstruction

As the war moved on, the black question kept on recurr- ing. This time, it thrust itself forward as a consequence of a military operation to blockade Charleston and Savannah. In November 1861, the Union war plans envisaged the capture of the Sea Islands, off the coast of South Carolina. The Islands controlled Port Royal and were very close to the major Confe- derate ports of Charleston and Savannah. The Sea Islands were slave territory growing some of the finest cotton in the South and hence they possessed a sizable population of slaves. The military commanders of the expedition were ordered that if special circumstances warranted, they could "avail...of the service of any persons, whether fugitives or not." Of course, they were asked to assure all "loyal masters" that they would

be compensated for any "loss of services" arising from the use of their slaves. The slave owners, however, not reassured and when they fled at the sight of the Union blockading force, they left some 10,000 slaves and their standing cotton crop. This circumstance compelled the Federal Government to act once again on the black situation.

The Commanding General, T.L. Sherman requested the War Department for trained personnel to take up the work of rehabilitating the blacks of the islands. This request was forwarded to Salmon P. Chase, the Secretary of Treasury. Using the abandoned property as a pretext, the abolition-minded Secretary, who was also in charge of the abandoned lands, launched the "Port Royal Experiment."

Chase commissioned Edward L. Pierce, a young Boston attorney, also of abolitionist sympathies, to develop a scheme for the blacks "for self-support by their own industry." Pierce had earlier supervised the work of the contrabands at Fort Monroe. That experience had convinced him that blacks had the ability to contribute to the war effort. He noted their desire for learning and hard work if provided the incentive of wages.  

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The Port Royal Experiment organized by him has rightly been termed as a rehearsal for Reconstruction. This was the first attempt by the Union to cope with the black man's transition from slavery to freedom. The entire gamut of social, religious, and economic issues involved became the focus of Northern reformers.

The experiment was launched in February 1862. Pierce was named general superintendent of the Port Royal Freedman, while sub-superintendents were appointed for each plantation. A general appeal was issued for teachers and missionaries to help with the work. The abolitionists immediately organized relief societies to fund the work of these missionaries who undertook to educate and feed many of the newly freed slaves. The Boston Educational Commission, the National Freedmen's Relief Association of New York and the Philadelphia Port Royal Relief Association were organized in the spring of 1862. For the abolitionists the experiment represented a serious effort at integrating the former slaves into the American mainstream, at a time when the white leadership still hoped to convince a significant number of free and recently freed blacks to leave the U.S. We will discuss black relief efforts later in this chapter.

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Experiments in Arming the Blacks

Out of the orders issued to General T. W. Sherman commanding the Port Royal expedition, another experiment ensued. This was the first attempt to raise a regiment of blacks who had been freed by the war.

General Sherman had been, at the outset of the expedition, empowered to employ fugitive slaves as Union soldiers in South Carolina in October 1861. These instructions, issued by the War Department, were specific to the expedition, directed as it was to an objective deep in hostile territory. At that time, however, Sherman had not felt the need to employ blacks. David Hunter who succeeded Sherman in March 1862, used the latter, if not the spirit, of the order to request the War Department for authority to arm the blacks at Port Royal.

General O. R. Mitchell in Alabama wrote to the new Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton: "The negroes are our only friends and in two instances I owe my own safety to their faithfulness." Stanton's encouragement was evident in his reply that "under proper regulations you are fully justified in employing blacks for your security and the success of your operations." He noted that as the Confederates were widely using blacks in their army, 64 it would be less than fair for the Union not to use them in turn.

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62 Cornish, n. 56, pp. 18-20.
General Hunter's action in issuing a proclamation emancipating slaves has already been described in the last chapter. It may be argued that the General was less interested in freeing the slaves than in using them for bolstering up the forces in his Department. Indeed, three days before issuing his proclamation, which was swiftly revoked by Lincoln, Hunter had begun to implement a plan to arm the slaves that had become free in the Sea Islands. However, the insensitive manner in which these poor free blacks were dragooned to form the first regiment of the South Carolina Volunteers, had a negative impact. Reports that blacks had been forcibly dragged from their homes created considerable resentment among black and sympathetic white observers.

The controversy over Hunter's arming the blacks brought the issue once more to the fore. This time, however, public opinion had changed owing to the war situation. The earlier euphoria of a short war which would leave the "black question" untouched was gone.

Section 1 of the Second Confiscation Act that was passed in July 1862, authorized the President to "employ as many persons of African descent as he may deem necessary for the suppression of the...rebellion." Similarly, Section 12 of the Militia Act of 17 July 1862, authorized employment of blacks as

65 Cornish, n. 56, pp. 34, 35; Lincoln's revocation was not a purely administrative order but took the form of an open proclamation. See C.I., vol. IV, pp. 222-4.

66 See the New York Times, 23 August 1862.
soldiers, but once again, the authority to do so was vested on Lincoln. Lincoln, however, was even at this point unconvinced of the necessity of employing black troops. Lincoln declared that he was prepared to employ blacks "as laborers, but would not promise to make soldiers out of them." Lincoln did not actually order the disbandment of the unit but the War Department simply refused to provide financial allocation for the troops. Hunter was thus forced by lack of official sanction to disband his South Carolina Volunteers. Hunter, was not without support in the North. An editorial in the New York Times called for support for Hunter's programme, and an end to the "rose-water sentimentalism towards the South." This reflected the hardening stand towards the war as it stretched into its second year.

Simultaneously another experiment in arming blacks for combat had begun at about the same time. This was in New Orleans which had been captured in April 1862 by a Union operation similar to the one that captured the Sea Islands. In command of the operation was Major-General Benjamin Butler who had earlier been commander of Fort Monroe. Butler had no intention of employing black troops, he was confident that he could recruit enough loyal whites. As a matter of fact, he explicitly believed as late as May 1862, that the war would see no need for

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the employment of black troops. However a situation similar to that had happened in Fort Monroe, soon confronted him. Abandoning plantations, blacks flocked to the Union lines, compelling Butler to take some measures to deal with the problem. Meanwhile, Brigadier-General John H. Phelps, commanding Camp Parapet outside New Orleans, under Butler's command, did all he could to encourage the recruitment of blacks. The resulting controversy between Butler's reticence and Phelps' advocacy of the use of blacks as soldiers led to the latter's resignation in August 1862.

Ironically enough, Butler himself changed his stand and, on 22 August, he invited the existing black militia in Louisiana, originally enrolled by the Confederacy, into the Union military service.

At the outbreak of the war, several organizations of free blacks had offered their services to the Confederacy. Unlike the North, the Confederates accepted the free blacks' offer and organized them into militias. The most important of

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these militias was the one in New Orleans which was organized into a "Native Guard." This "Native Guard" did not, however, retreat along with the Confederate army from New Orleans at the approach of General Butler’s expedition. The Louisiana militia consisted of an elite of free blacks. The free community of mulattoes joined the Confederacy out of mixed motives of protecting their property and personal advantage. They were in many instances, themselves slave-holding plantation owners.

When General Butler asked the leaders of the free black community as to why they had accepted service in the Confederate army, they claimed that they had done so out of fear for their status and well-being. In April 1862 however, they offered their services whole-heartedly for the Union. General Butler used this offer to frame his General Order calling the militiamen to enroll in the Union forces. Whatever the motivation, the free black community in the South clearly sought in the war an opportunity for their racial betterment. However cynical their methods might appear they were to have important consequences in the policy of arming blacks to fight for the Union.


74 Messner has argued cogently that Butler's policies vis-a-vis the blacks were directed specifically towards ensuring social stability in a period following the emancipation of blacks in New Orleans. Thus, Butler did arm blacks but black regiments were never used in combat and, after a brief period, the original contingent of black officers were removed. See Messner, n. 69, pp. 30-31.
Butler used the latitude provided to him by the old order to General T. U. Sherman, and organized three black regiments of the Native Guards. The regiments were commanded by whites, but black officers were enrolled in a junior capacity. In the 2nd Louisiana Native Guards' Regiment mustered in on 12 October 1862, was Captain P. B. S. Pinchback, who was later to serve as Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana during Reconstruction.

In October the public opinion against the employment of black troops had changed even more. By that time, Lincoln had already issued notice that the Emancipation Proclamation would be forthcoming. These two episodes of black recruitment of soldiers were indicative of the changes occurring in 1862. The Union army had suffered one setback after another. The drain on blood and treasure began to have its effect. In the case of Butler's raising of the Louisiana Native Guards, there was no objection from the War Department. Badly pressed, the Union could spare no reinforcements for Butler. In such circumstances, there was no comment from Washington. The New York Times correspondent saw in Butler's calling up of the black militia as the

75 See James Haskins, Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback (New York, 1973), The use of black officers in the Louisiana Native Guards proved to be an abortive experiment. By September 1863, all these officers resigned in disgust at the humiliations heaped on them by their white superiors. See for example, P. B. S. Pinchback to Major General W. F. Banks, 13 July 1863 and 10 September 1863, (Compiled Service Record, R.G. 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

"mysterious way" in which Providence operated. Not man, but Providence alone could come up with a solution to the "negro question" he concluded.

The Demise of National Emigrationism

It may be appropriate at this point to examine what had happened to those black personalities who were committed to the cause of emigrationism. Even though the outbreak of war and its intensification were seen by some like Frederick Douglass as likely to result in the extinction of slavery, the policies of the Lincoln Administration offered no hope that the black question might be given primary consideration. In such a situation of frustration the emigrationists continued to look for a black future outside the United States. But the transformation that the war had initiated within the U.S. was to be of such magnitude that the antebellum emigration movement came to be deflected and eventually died out.

Two years before the war, the black emigrationists and the Republican colonizationists arrived at a curious coincidence of views. We have described in the previous chapter the presentation of the Republican position on emigration by Rep. Francis P. Blair Jr. of Missouri and Senator James R. Poolittle of Wisconsin. The ideas evolved by Francis P. Blair Jr. were presented in the House of Representatives where the Congressman had called for appropriation to colonize the blacks abroad.

Speaking to the Mercantile Library Association of Boston in January 1859, Blair had put forward his master plan for a white America. Arguing that since racial differences had led to enslavement of blacks, the only way to prevent the growth of "caste" based on colour was to separate the races. Since races were made for or made by the climate in which they dwell, Blair pointed out, the logical place for American blacks was Central America. Here, he felt, if the U.S. government were to provide the infrastructure, a black nationality allied to or subordinate to the U.S. could flourish. In the published version of the Address, Blair attached an appendix, to show the response he had from leading white and black men.

The response from blacks was quite heartening. The major leaders of the emigration movement, the Rev. J.T. Holly, Delany and Whitfield responded positively to his plan. The basic idea of races occupying distinct geographical areas had been espoused by the emigrationists since 1862. In the intervening years the emigration movement had been stalled by a lack of resources. A plan with the possibility of government aid was therefore, more than welcome.

Holly, in a lengthy letter to Blair, pointed out the development of emigrationist sympathies among the black Americans. He cautioned Blair not to take the failure of the Liberian colonization movement as typical. American blacks may not like

Francis P. Blair Jr., The Destiny of the Races of this Continent, An Address Delivered Before the Mercantile Library Association of Boston, Massachusetts on the 26th of January 1859 (Washington, D.C.: Buell and Blanchard, 1859).
Africa, he pointed out, but "they can and will easily reconcile themselves to the irresistible fate of local separation from the whites of this country, when they can locate on the same continent, within a few days sail of their nativity." He sent Blair the proceedings of the Emigration Convention and the pamphlet on the arguments for and against emigration between Whitfield, Douglass and Watkins. Concluding with a description of his efforts to begin Haitian emigration Holly stated that success would eventually make his scheme acceptable to the government, which could then provide the impetus to make "it a national movement."

James H. Whitfield, one of the theorists of the emigration movement came to a natural congruency of ideas with Blair. He agreed with Blair that climatically, blacks and whites were destined to occupy the tropical and temperate zones respectively. Wishing him well for success of the plan, Whitfield noted that the failures of black emigration schemes were due to the inability of blacks to mobilize resources. If resources such as Blair wanted Congress to appropriate were available, Whitfield was sure that it would serve "the true interest of both the white and black races."

It were perhaps similar feelings which prompted Delany to send a copy of the proceedings of the first National Emigration Convention to Blair, requesting him to pursue his report

F.P.


on the "Political Destiny of the Colored Race." In the years following the Emigration Convention, the problem of resources had been as galling to the black emigrationists as the differences of opinion amongst themselves. The possibility of Congress appropriating resources for a colonization scheme to Central America thus found definite favour among the emigrationists, if only as a practical consideration.

Frederick Douglass was perhaps the only black leader to see through Blair's race strategy. He pointed out that Blair's colonization policy was an attempt by Republicans to provide an answer to "the great negro question" before the 1860 election. The balance of electoral forces in the North was such that Republicans had to rely on antislavery votes as well, but at the same time deny a pro-black bias.

He made short work of Blair's reasoning that the temperate climate in the U.S. was deleterious to the black physique. Comparing Jamaica which was in the tropical zone and the U.S., Douglass showed figures to prove that in the period 1799-1821, the American black slave population had grown faster. To drive the final punch home, he cited U.S. census figures to show how the black population had grown 1½ times more than that of whites in North and South Carolina and Kentucky in spite of the fact that most blacks lived there as slaves. Subsequently Douglass

81 Ibid.; C.R. Delany to F.P. Blair, Jr., 24 February 1858, p. 34.

82 "F.P. Blair's Lecture in Boston," Frederick Douglass' Monthly, March 1859, p. 34.
made those points again in 1862. He insisted that blacks should be left within the U.S. to work out their own destiny. He maintained that he did not oppose individual migration "self-moved, self-sustained" but was vehemently against any notion that the blacks were racially destined to leave the United States. Writing to Montgomery Blair, Francis Jr.'s brother in 1862, Douglass noted "the idea of confining different variety of men to different belts of the earth's surface" with a view to keeping these separate was not acceptable to him.

While Frederick Douglass had abandoned his projected visit to Haiti on the outbreak of war, J.T. Holly and 111 emigrants left for Haiti on schedule, along with the family of William C. Monroe. Not many were to return from this group. But Haitian emigration remained as a persistent point in the debate on black destiny in the first two years of war.

Haiti continued to occupy the mind of many blacks through 1861. In April an anonymous emigrationist noted in the Weekly Anglo-African, that blacks would have to perform "seize" their rights and to do this they needed a strong nationality "respected and feared." He pointed to Haiti as "the nucleus of a power that shall be to the black what England has been to the white races." The wife of one of the settlers, Sarah Crawford,

83 Frederick Douglass to Montgomery Blair, 16 September 1862, in Frederick Douglass' Monthly, October 1862, p. 725.

84 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, May 1861, pp. 449-50; and Fuller, n. 8, pp. 241-3.

85 Weekly Anglo-African, 13 April 1861.
wrote to Mrs F.C. Revels, the wife of the A.M.E. pastor of her church, that Haiti was indeed a paradise. Transmitting the letter to the Christian Recorder, the Rev. F.C. Revels complained that the false rumours against Haiti had cost the black community a lot.

This was challenged by the redoubtable George T. Downing who along with the Rev. J. Sella Martin and Robert Morris, organized an anti-Haitian emigration meeting and requested black papers to publicize their resolutions. Hitting at the role of the white American, James Redpath's Haitian Emigration Bureau, the resolutions noted that "efforts are being made to get us away from this country by parties who are paid for so doing." They dismissed the efforts of these "paid agents" as futile against the black community's resolve to remain in the U.S. Referring to the war, a resolution declared that "the cause of freedom now in battle array against slavery... would soon require service here at home...." The duty of blacks was then, to "stand and fight, rather than flee from evil."

Frederick Douglass justified his own change of mind on the Haitian scheme on ground that it had become perverted in its motives. From a "simple overture of benevolence," he stated, "the scheme has hardened into a grand scheme of public policy.... It has become ethnological, philosophical, political and commercial. It has doctrines of races, of climates, of

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86 Christian Recorder, 13 April 1861.
87 Ibid., 25 May 1861.
nationalities, and destinies..." What Douglass meant was that while he viewed Haitian emigration as a possible tactic in the continuing fight against repression, Redpath's Bureau presented the scheme at the level of a racial destiny. Douglass had always vehemently opposed schemes based on racial theory, he chose, on the other hand, to reiterate his stand on a world of "Human Brotherhood; in the union of mankind, not in exclusive nationalities."

Garnet's acceptance of the post of an agent in Redpath's Bureau sparked off a debate between him and James McCune Smith. Smith accused Garnet of capitulation in the struggle for black equality just as the goal seemed within reach. He insisted that Haitian emigration would mean a lower standard of living for blacks rather than higher. Garnet replied that the anti-emigrationists "seem to desire" that black skilled workers remain "vassals of white men." He pointed out that black skilled labour was finding it increasingly difficult to get employment. Emigration, he argued, was the one and only choice left for blacks.

Douglass was not far from wrong in assuming that the Haitian movement had become more than just a movement of uplift of blacks. While Garnet seems to have viewed it so, others saw it differently. A meeting of "The Haitian Emigration Society of Toledo," in Ohio, resolved to "view in Haiti the chief cornerstone of an Ethiopic empire...which will ere long...balt

88 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, June 1861, p. 494.
the tropical regions of the globe." Inextricably mixed in the Haitian movement were the motives and ideology of black emigrationism and the pragmatic desire to use the skilled labour of American blacks by the Haitian Government. Besides, J.T. Holly the most active ideologue of the Haitian emigration movement, saw Haiti as a field of missionary labour. This motive was not far from the minds of the leaders of the A.M.E. Church either. Commenting on a letter praising conditions in Haiti, the Rev. Elisha Weaver pointed to the need for the Church to send a mission to Africa and Haiti. Henry L. Turner, then a young pastor in Baltimore expressed a similar feeling, along with his own personal "proclivity" for Haiti. Delany, however, criticized the Haitian scheme on grounds that in placing Redpath as the head of the Bureau of Emigration, the Haitian Government had violated the principle of black leadership for a black venture. Holly defended Redpath's appointment, claiming Redpath served a black government thus making Delany's criticism untenable.

One of the most active defendants of the Haitian scheme was the neophyte emigrationist William Wells Brown. In June 1861 he argued that there was no basis in arguing that blacks

90 Ibid., 16 February 1861.
92 Weekly Anglo-African, 16 March 1861; and Frederick Douglass' Monthly, May 1869, p. 70.
should not quit the land of their birth. He pointed out that the black community did not, and could never hope to exert any influence in the American body politic. This was due to their inferior social status. To transform their status, blacks needed an opportunity like the one provided by Haiti to "demonstrate the genius and capabilities of the Negro." But Brown and his associates were already faltering under the combined attack of their adversaries as well as stories of death and difficulties emanating from Haiti. Thus, when Brown went to speak to the black community in Canada West, which had long supported the emigrationists, he often found hostile audiences. In Dresden, Canada West, he spoke just a week after the Rev. William P. Newman, an old Haiti hand himself, had denounced Haiti in the most vituperative terms. Newman declared that the Haitian peasantry were no better than slaves and that political freedom was non-existent in that country. Brown found Newman's propaganda impossible to surmount, especially as blacks settled in Canada saw in that country itself, economic opportunity, social equality and political freedom unmatched even in the United States.

The Rev. Thomas Strother, an A.M.E. clergyman in Terre Haute, Indiana, repeated the usual argument that the Haitian emigration movement was another version of colonization. He also saw evil arising from the way the enterprise was conducted.

93 Cited in McPherson, n. 3, pp. 85-86.
94 Christian Recorder, 7 September 1861; and 26 October 1861.
as a business venture. He developed his argument against Haiti by pointing towards the small size of that country. He could not see, he declared, how, assuming the logical consequence of the success of the scheme, all the American blacks could be accommodated in the limited geographical expanse of the isle.

Quick to respond to Strother's criticism was Henry H. Turner. Without giving any unqualified approval to emigration, Turner turned the argument towards justifying even white-sponsored colonization schemes declaring "God has often made use of the devil and his instrumentalities to work for his people ineffable blessings." Turner followed Peter Lester in arguing that Haitian emigrants must not expect any miracles. They would have to put in a lot of hard work to show tangible gains. In 1862, Turner seemed to be the only defendant of Haitian emigration on the pages of the Recorder. Lincoln's colonization plans scared the established black leadership who could not rule out the possibility of even forced deportation.

Henry H. Turner, then a young pastor, was to emerge as one of the outstanding leaders of the emigrationist movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By that time, Turner was to gain eminence as a Bishop of the A.M.E. Church. Turner's ambivalence towards colonization rested partially on his admiration for Liberia, which in his opinion had done more "to abolitionize North than all the other means put together." Others

95 Ibid., 30 November 1861 and 7 December 1861.
96 Ibid., 14 December 1861.
97 Ibid., 13 July 1861.
were however not sanguine about the activities of Liberians in the U.S. in the spring of 1862. "Sacer" cautioned Alexander Crummell, the Liberian-American clergyman not to praise Liberia too much and lend "aid to the scheme of sending the colored people out of the country."

"Sacer," probably James Lynch writing from Washington, D.C. noted the activities of the Liberian Commissioners Johnson and Turpin in trying to gain recognition for Liberia. While praising their work, Lynch warned that "an entire African nationality may be an auxiliary to our elevation, but indispensably necessary to it, never." Like many other integrationist leaders, Lynch welcomed the "reflex influence" of Liberia and Haiti as independent black republics, but refused to accept emigration as the only hope of black elevation.

The activities of Liberian agents in the U.S. took a more serious turn when ex-President Roberts of Liberia met Lincoln and proposed to take black "contrabands" into Haiti or Liberia. Blacks were so incensed at the activity of the Liberian officials that they mobbed one set of officials rumoured to be promoting a Liberian colonization scheme.

News of sickness and death in Haiti began pouring in at the end of 1861. For were they just fabrications of anti-

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99 Christian Recorder, 15 February 1862.

emigrationists. The Rev. William C. Monroe's widow who had
gone in the first load of emigrants in April 1861, returned
disillusioned in the autumn of that year with her two sons.
One Ben Bacon inserted a notice in the Christian Recorder
which stated: "This is to certify that HAYTI is a place not
for any person to live in for who has been accustomed to a
residence in the north." Others informed the Recorder that
most of their fellow emigrants were dead. In Holly's for-
mer home-town, New Haven, a meeting criticizing the Haitian
emigration movement took the occasion of blaming Holly for
indifference towards the suffering of his fellow emigrants.
Holly had opened himself to this attack by seeing in the death
of his own mother and infant daughter in Haiti "a triumphant
witness on behalf of the noble cause of Haitian emigration."

T.A. Revels objected to Haiti on more fundamental
grounds arguing that it was dividing the black community in a
period when it was beginning "to assume permanent form." The
signs of times, he noted, promised great good for blacks within
the U.S. He saw "an evidence of vitality, of self-appreciation
among blacks and of progress in all the elements of American
civilization." Summing up the argument against Haiti, he noted
that climate, limited land, religious and linguistic differences
which were combined with a political situation where a mulatto
minority ruled a black populace and monopolized all the land.

101 Weekly Anglo-African, 5 October 1861; and Christian
Recorder, 3 March 1862.

102 Weekly Anglo-African, 25 January 1862; 31 August 1861
and 5 October 1861.
In contrast, America, with all its prejudice, offered better prospects.

Redpath tried to fight back. In July 1862, a large number of Haitian emigrants issued a public letter defending Redpath's Bureau and the conduct of the Haitian Government toward the emigrants. They admitted to difficulties but did not think of them as insuperable. Significantly, a number of signatories were blacks from Canada West. But all this did not stem the tide. Desertions from the ranks of potential emigrants mounted as blacks saw a changing political climate in the United States.

By mid 1862, the Haitian emigration movement had come to a virtual full stop. Redpath's agents especially E.P. Walker and, a surprising new convert, William J. Watkins, continued their activities on behalf of the Bureau. Walker succeeded in emigrating that year. Watkins continued to work around Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, urging blacks to emigrate. Around July 1862, Watkins even managed to take a party of 120 contrabands to Haiti. But he himself was back by November 1862. The number of recruits who deserted the emigrationist cause was alarming to the promoters. In spite of growing anti-black tensions and Lincoln's colonization schemes, blacks had a growing feeling that the prospects for the future may be better for them in the United States than in some new place. Haiti was tainted.

104 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, July 1862, p. 677.
by failure and death. When Redpath closed his Bureau in the autumn of 1862, E.G. Carey celebrated the occasion. He wrote to the Recorder that he had lost a son in Haiti, victim, as he put it, of Redpath's false promises to emigrants.

Delany and the African Civilization Society

Delany had arrived back to the United States by the end of 1860. Based on his treaties with the Egba of Yoruba, Delany planned the establishment of a semi-independent colony in Abeokuta. There is no indication that Delany perceived in the outbreak of the Civil War, the prospects of any fundamental change for American blacks. An indication of this was in the conclusion of his Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploration Party, published in 1861, where he declared that he was ready to return to leave for Africa with his family.

The African Aid Society in England was to be Delany's link with his dream of establishing a black nationality in Africa. But, in spite of its support as well as that of the Chatham black community, Delany's plans began to falter. Firstly, his allies like Mary Ann Shadd Cary, began to express doubts about the African venture. Many Canadian blacks, unlike Delany were probably more hopeful about the events unleashed in the United States. The numbers of blacks willing to emigrate to

105 Miller, n. 8, pp. 246-7; Christian Recorder, 18 October 1861. On Watkins activities see Christian Recorder, 28 June 1862 and 15 November 1862.

Africa dropped sharply. More important, in Yoruba itself, and in England, doubts were expressed about the validity of his treaty with the Egba. The African Aid Society, too, expressed its inability to provide for the passage of the emigrants. These and other factors made Delany's departure to Africa impossible in 1861.

Failure drew Garnet and Delany even closer together. Delany joined Garnet's African Civilization Society after some amendments he suggested were incorporated into the Constitution of the Society. Delany's objection to the original society had been its white antecedents and its white leadership. Delany proposed to put the whites in their place as "aiders and assistants" to the Society and not have them as leaders.

A meeting on the 4th November 1861 set up a committee to draft the Delany-inspired supplement. Among others, the Committee comprised of A.A. Constantine, the white Secretary of the Society, the Rev. R.H. Cain, an A.M.E. clergyman, Robert Hamilton, editor of the Weekly Anglo-African.

The first article clearly outlined the scaling down of Delany's grand aims of mass emigration. The article specified that the society would not encourage mass emigration but only selective emigration of "practically qualified" and upright Christian blacks. The second article was more explicit. The aims of the Society in encouraging black emigration, it declared, were to promote: "...self-reliance and self-government,

107 Miller, n. 8, pp. 250-3.
108 Ibid., p. 260.
on the principle of an African Nationality, the African race being the ruling element of the nation, controlling and directing their own affairs." Delany's stamp on the Civilization Society was clear, but the question of the feasibility of emigration scheme remained far from resolved.

The strength of this new combination appeared formidable, at least on paper. Among its members were, the Rev. J.W.C. Pennington, and Bishop Daniel A. Payne of the A.M.E. Church along with a number of other black clergymen of New York. The white members included Joshua R. Giddings, the abolitionist and Congressman, Benjamin Coates, Issac T. Smith, a New York banker. It was a remarkable consummation, white colonizationists albeit of antislavery antecedents, and black nationalists. Undoubtedly the motivations of the members were varied. Bishop Payne though no emigrationist was, like all A.M.E. Church leaders, ever conscious of the possibility of extending the missionary labours of his Church abroad, especially to Haiti and Africa. Delany's vision of a black nationality on one hand, and Garnet's missionary commitments as well as his black nationalism on the other, had found a common platform.

Through 1862, Delany lectured on Africa across the North, in January 1862 he still maintained that he would leave soon for Africa. In August he was in Rochester where Frederick Douglass remarked that Delany gave them, as blacks, an

109 Christian Recorder, 7 December 1861.
"inside view" of Africa. Douglass could not resist from remark-
ing that Delany's Americanness came through in spite of his
African commitment. More generously, he praised Delany as "a
brave self-conscious black man." In Rochester again, Delany
indicated that he would leave some time at the end of 1862, with
his chosen band of emigrants. Obviously Delany was, even at
this time, more or less unconcerned about the great events
transpiring in his native country.

Relations between Douglass and Delany seem to be cordial
at this point. Apparently, the two great antagonists of pre-war
black debate, called a truce, realizing and respecting the un-
shakable opinions of each other.

In a letter to Douglass printed in the latter's journal,
Delany prefaced his communication by calling Douglass' Monthly
as the best "political repository" of events among the Anglo-
Africans in America. Delany perhaps consciously used "Anglo-
African," as he had, increasingly, since his African tour, tried
to project his pan-African identity. At the Rochester meeting,
dressed in African robes, he had even insisted that he spoke
only on behalf of the "pure African race."

Delany was doubtless keenly observing the consequences
of Lincoln's call of recognizing Liberia and Haiti. He kept
track of the activities of the Liberian commissioners in the
U.S. In his September letter to Douglass he quoted from a press

111 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, August 1862, p. 695.
112 Ibid., September 1862, p. 719 and August 1862, p. 695.
report as to how Lincoln had rebuffed Bedpath’s overtures for gaining the Haitian ambassadorship. Lincoln, it was reported, had no objections towards accepting a black representative from Haiti. The moral of the story, Delany pointed out, was that even white governments preferred to deal with blacks directly rather than with "any second or third rate white man...."

The Rev. Henry Highland Garnet and the War

In April 1861, the Rev. Henry Highland Garnet had announced his intention resigning as pastor of the Shiloh Presbyterian Church and to emigrate to Yoruba with a party of ten or twelve families. Garnet was soon to realize however, that constraints as powerful as those that thwarted Delany would prevent his mission as well. Garnet found that raising resources was the most insuperable obstacle to his path. Unable to raise the $10,000 he required in the U.S., Garnet spent three futile months in England, returning at the end of December 1861.

Through 1862, Henry Highland Garnet remained active in the black movement. In the early part of the year he was active on behalf of the contrabands. The events of the spring, when Congress took a sharp antislavery turn in emancipating the slaves in the District of Columbia, gladdened Garnet. To celebrate the event, he held a meeting at his Shiloh Church. In his

113 Ibid., September 1862, p. 719.
114 *Christian Recorder*, 6 April 1861.
115 Miller, n. 8, pp. 259-60.
address at the meeting, he held out the prospect of a steadily 116
abolitionizing tendency of the war.

Garnet's advocacy of emigration did not, however, spill over to supporting Lincoln's colonization plans. Garnet was quick to criticize the provisions of the District of Columbia Emancipation Act which called for colonization of newly freed slaves and contrabands. Unlike Delany, Garnet realized the impact the Civil War was having on the black community. The abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, Congressional action against the return of contrabands, were after all, the first positive steps that Congress had ever taken towards ameliorating the problem of blacks. However faulty and from whatever motives they emerged, blacks assessed them as harbingers of hope.

On this issue, Garnet fell in with the majority of the black community. In May 1862, he shared a platform with his bitter opponents, George I. Downing and James McCune Smith, to put forward emancipation as the principal demand of the black community. Garnet declared: "All the negro asks is freedom, and then we will go to Hayti, Africa, or Central America, without 118 the aid of the Government." Another area of concern for Garnet was the growing threat of violence against Northern blacks. As the prospect of emancipation grew, it caught up with a white backlash in the North. Living in New York, Garnet was aware of

117 Ibid.
118 Cited in Miller, n. 3, p. 262.
Part of the tension had its roots in the decade-old trend by which unskilled immigrant labour came into competition with blacks. The poor whites were receptive to the propaganda that blacks were responsible for their poverty and unemployment. With the war, an added item of propaganda was that the blacks were the cause of the war. As the prospect of a short war receded and losses mounted, blacks became target of increasing mob violence. New York saw one of the worst anti-black riots in its history in 1863.

From the very beginning, Garnet saw the danger of this development. Speaking in New York, Garnet assailed Northern whites for fanning the flames of hatred. He found this development surprising, considering the loyalty blacks had given to the Northern cause. Loyalty, he pointed out, instead of being reciprocated was being answered by abuse and insult to blacks. He counselled blacks to show patience, convinced now that emancipation was around the corner.

Black Reaction to Lincoln's Policies

Lincoln's Annual Message to Congress in December 1861 contained his cautious attempts at tackling the black "problem." Lincoln held out the hope that some states may take up the question of gradual and compensated emancipation. Besides, he noted


the success in curbing the African slave trade and hinted that if Congress was willing, Liberia and Haiti could be recognized. To the problem of "contrabands" Lincoln could only find one long term solution—colonization. He requested Congress to explore the possibility of funding the colonization of contrabands and individual free blacks to "some place or places in a climate congenial to them." Lincoln however, threw the burden of gradual emancipation on states themselves, negating what most abolitionists and blacks felt—the right of Congress to abolish slavery. Lincoln pressed the various states to take up this scheme as "expediency amounting to absolute necessity."

The Weekly Anglo-African saw Lincoln's Annual Message as calculated to give "aid and comfort" to the Confederacy. Instead, the paper sarcastically proposed, Congress should have thought up of a scheme to colonize the slaveholders! Douglass reprinted the Message in full without comment in the Monthly.

The Christian Recorder too reprinted it. Its Washington correspondent "Sacer," had some definite views on it. He saw in the Message a "ring of liberty," even though as he admitted, it was "the liberty expediency demands." He detected more optimistic measures emerging in Washington such as the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, an amendment to the Fugitive Slave Law, and the freeing of slaves used by the rebels. He noted in Lincoln's references to the recognition of Haiti and

122 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, December 1861, pp. 570-1; Weekly Anglo-African, 7 December 1861.
Liberia "the key to his whole character." Lincoln, he declared: "...generally thinks right, reasons from sure premises...[but] he stops for the breath of popular opinion to waft him over." "Jecer" would not consent however, if Lincoln's policy was that of a "master mind" or, "that order of intellect that is well calculated to execute the plans of others [...]." that he could clearly see, was that expediency seemed to be Lincoln's watchword.

Henry K. Turner, now pastor of the Israel Bethel A.M.E. Church in Washington, D.C. was not so sanguine. He was appalled by Lincoln's scheme. He noted that Lincoln had cleverly obfuscated every issue and couched it in words which "benumb the most active intellect." For Turner, the message contained "the most ingenious subterfuges," to pacify abolitionists and antislavery men. He noted that Lincoln first recommended gradual emancipation, and then denied Congress the power to carry it out. Under the circumstances, he could not see what the blacks were to be elated about.

At the beginning of 1862 Douglass still saw "Slave Power" entrenched in Washington, D.C. and Lincoln himself "destitute of any antislavery principle." He expressed the fear that if the North lost, slavery would emerge stronger. The future was unclear and "a single event may change the whole prospect."

The most militant and brilliant denunciation of Lincoln's

123 Christian Recorder, 14 December 1861.
124 Ibid., 22 March 1862.
125 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, January 1862, p. 577.
colonization proposals came from Dr John S. Rock at a meeting of the Massachusetts Antislavery Society on 23 January 1862. In a bitter-funny speech he told the abolitionist gathering: "You [whites] are the only people, claiming to be civilized, who take away the rights of those whose color differs from yours. If you cannot rob the negro of his labor...you will banish him!" He noted that various arguments were adduced to justify deportation: the inability of blacks and whites to live together, the effect of cold climate on blacks etc. Rock mock-seriously insisted that the black was perhaps superior to whites in that he could live both in hot and cold climates. As for Liberia and Haiti, and other tropical countries, he maintained that their tropical location made them unsuitable for "activity and enterprise" for blacks as well since "idleness [was] the child of the tropics."

As for American blacks, Rock was convinced that they would remain in the United States: ...

...not because we prefer being oppressed here...but we will remain here because our future prospects are better here than elsewhere...here, where...we have withstood everything.

Rock did not criticize Lincoln personally for these policies though he agreed that the President was "more conservative" than he would have wished for. The war in mid 1862 was more antislavery than at the beginning because the government, fighting for "its own existence...[had been forced] to take slavery by the throat." As for blacks, they were not despondent, Rock maintained, as they had been fighting a defensive war for
over two centuries and were now at last in a position to "attack the enemy."

Lincoln's recommendation to the states for gradual and compensated emancipation, unleashed a minor debate in the North. White newspapers and the Congress took up the issue. Combined with this were the stories of contrabands streaming into Federal lines. The question of what to do with blacks was constantly rooted and the incipient conflict between immigrant and black labour provided the argument against emancipation. The idea of colonizing the blacks seemed by far the most attractive. Lincoln signed the bill emancipating slaves in the District of Columbia, assured that his two cardinal principles "compensation, and colonization" were both recognized.

Through 1862, colonization as a long term measure for "solving" the free black problem, occupied the centre of the stage, increasing the insecurity and anger of the free blacks. Blacks too, were caught up in the throes of this debate. The Rev. Elisha Weaver, outlined the objections to emancipation in an editorial. He noted that opponents of emancipation felt that blacks would swamp the North, and increase the risk of miscegenation. Weaver's answer was that he was convinced that "ninety-nine out of hundred "emancipated blacks would stay where they

126 Speech before the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Convention, 23 January 1862. The text of the speech appeared originally in the Liberator and was reprinted in the Christian Recorder, 22 February 1862.

were—in the South. Emancipation, he assured the North, was precisely the measure which would prevent misconceptions which arose mainly from the exploitation of black slave women. More ingeniously, he noted that all talk of the incompatibility of the two races was ridiculous considering they had "been living together for more than a century." 128

There were, however, several developments which kept up the morale of blacks. The emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia was one such measure, "a political wonder of the year," according to Bishop Daniel A. Payne. After the passage of the bill by Congress, Lincoln kept it for two days before signing it. Bishop Payne went to Lincoln to ask him whether he intended to sign it or not. He did not get a direct reply.

Nevertheless, when Lincoln did sign it, the black community was overjoyed. A meeting in Terre Haute, Indiana, to celebrate the event passed a resolution noting that Lincoln was "a man acting with discretion, and aiming to do what is just and right to all men." Resolutions of an African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church meeting in Philadelphia, while not praising Lincoln personally, called the measure a "just and humane policy" 130 denoting the government's "earnestness."

128 Christian Recorder, 26 March 1862.

129 Daniel A. Payne, Recollections of Seventy Years (New York, 1969), pp. 146-7; and see also Christian Recorder, 26 April 1862.

130 Christian Recorder, 17 May 1862.
Douglass more aware of the political forces behind the bill, thanked Charles Sumner after its passage in Congress. He exulted, "I trust I am not dreaming but the events taking place seem like a dream." He nevertheless expressed public joy at this progress. He noted that "after a long interval of darkness and doubt" an "anti-slavery policy has now been partially inaugurated." Douglass did not have any words of praise for Lincoln.

More important Douglass addressed himself to the problem of the place of the newly freed slaves in American society. This was in contrast the absence of any similar concern in Administration circles. Douglass maintained that the blacks when freed ought to be left to the working of necessity and economic laws. Blacks would work to support themselves. Besides, Douglass pointed out that black labour, free or slave, would be vital for the South. Freed blacks working for wages would not have any desire to move North as apprehended by popular fears. As for racial mixing, he repeated Weaver's comment that blacks and whites, had after all, lived together without any mutual abhorrence for about two hundred years.

Rejection of Lincoln's Colonization Schemes

In the summer of 1862, Lincoln began thinking seriously

131 Frederick Douglass to Charles Sumner, 8 April 1862, in Fonor, n. 1, vol. III, pp. 233-4; and Frederick Douglass' Monthly, May 1862, pp. 643-4.

132 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, January 1862, pp. 579-80.
in terms of issuing an Emancipation Proclamation. We have seen how, coincidentally, his activities increased on the colonization front. Lincoln was now clearly on the defensive vis-à-vis the black question. The failure of the Union armies in the summer campaigns emboldened the antislavery men to heighten their campaign for emancipation.

To convince the blacks of his scheme, on 14 August 1862, Lincoln "interviewed" a delegation of five blacks from the District of Columbia. Lincoln chided the blacks for having been the cause of the war. Informing them that racial differences forever precluded blacks and whites from living together as equals, Lincoln pressed blacks to leave for Central America. 133 The Government, he noted, would finance them.

The interview was widely published and read by blacks. A debate of major proportions erupted in the black community. Undoubtedly, the opponents of the measure outnumbered its supporters. The entire organized sections of the black community—churches, societies and associations—ensured that their indignation was expressed in the form of memorials and resolutions.

The delegation which met the President was assailed by the Washington, D.C. black community and its members felt it prudent to stay away from a meeting called ostensibly to hear a report of their deliberations with the President. 134

133 Christian Recorder, 23 August 1862; see also C.W., vol. V, pp. 370-5.
134 Christian Recorder, 30 August 1862.
Frederick Douglass accused Lincoln of adopting the tone "of an itinerant colonization lecturer" and declared that there was no spark of humanity left in him. A.P. Smith from New Jersey, bitterly rebuked Lincoln for using the racial determinant for deporting blacks. He declared that American blacks would "spurn all absurd, meddlesome, impudent propositions" for colonization just as whites who were American would do.

Isaiah Sears, President of the Social, Civil and Statistical Association of Philadelphia and a prominent man in the Philadelphia black community, put across the black view in a sober and saddened tone:

To be asked, after so many years of oppression and wrong have been inflicted in a land and by a people who have been so largely enriched by the black man's toil, to pull up stakes in a civilized and Christian nation, and to go to an uncivilized and barbarous nation...is unreasonable and un-Christian in the extreme.... If black men are here in the way of white men, they did not come here of their own accord.

He too warned that the President's endorsement of the scheme would inevitably lead to increasing racial prejudice against blacks in an already hostile racial environment.

A mass meeting in Newtown, Long Island, was equally forthright in rejecting Lincoln's proposal. It noted:

This is our country of birth.... This is our native country, we have as strong attachment to it...as any other people.... We love

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135 Frederick Douglass' Monthly, September 1862, pp. 707-8; National Anti-Slavery Standard, 6 September 1862.

this land, and have contributed our share to its prosperity and wealth. We refuse the offers of the President since the call of our suffering country is too loud and imperative to be unheeded. (137)

Like Douglass and Wears, Long Island blacks pointed out that "the speech of the President has only served the cause of our enemies who wish to insult and mob us." A meeting in Brooklyn under the leadership of the Rev. James E. Gloucester, a friend of John Brown, denounced the scheme as an ill-conceived attack on the black community and on the contrabands who had worked so much towards the war effort.

Other individual denunciations were reported also in the Christian Recorder. Frances Ellen Watkins refused to be perturbed by Lincoln's new "fashion." She told the black community to answer the President:

...firmly and respectfully, not in the tones of supplication and entreaty, but of earnestness and decision...that we neither see the wisdom nor expediency of our self-exportation from a land which has been in a measure enriched by our toil for generations... (139)

The Rev. T. Strother's denunciation of Lincoln for his colonization plan was so severe that the editor published the article disclaiming all editorial responsibility. Lincoln, noted Strother, arrived at his "honest" convictions through a "dishonest" process. He called Lincoln's charge that blacks were responsible for the war "a slander" and "an outrage." He

137 Ibid., 13 September 1862.
138 Ibid., 11 October 1862.
139 Christian Recorder, 27 September 1862.
denounced Lincoln's Central American proposals as ill-conceived for they did not reflect the opinion of countries to where he proposed black colonization, this amounted, he noted, to adding "insult to injury."

George B. Vashon in an open letter to Lincoln indicated that he was not an anti-emigrationist. He believed that individual and mass emigration of blacks to Haiti [where he had lived for 30 months] and Liberia was definitely possible. He pointed out to Lincoln that blacks were fully aware of prejudice against them and wondered if Lincoln was not fanning those flames of hatred. Further, he lectured Lincoln, that it was not enough for his policy to be expedient, "It must also be feasible." He felt that Lincoln was far too sanguine about the possibility of a mass deportation of blacks. Lincoln, he declared, was in error in assuming blacks were the cause of the war. The black may "have been the occasion...of the war; but he has not been its cause." Lincoln, he implied, was only displaying his own prejudices in averring so.

Henry M. Turner found himself involved in the controversy. It was claimed that he was "a prime mover" in the whole affair. Turner denied the allegations noting his hatred for "compulsory colonization." Turner's response arose out of the report on the event by "Cerebus" to the Christian Recorder which implied that Turner had masterminded the Lincoln meeting. "Cerebus"

140 Ibid., 27 September 1862 and 4 October 1862.

141 George B. Vashon to the President of the United States, Frederick Douglass' Monthly, October 1862, p. 727.
declared that: "The great portion of the most intelligent and influential men of the city are highly incensed and greatly exasperated with the pastors and the delegations...." He declared that this "bogus" committee acted in an underhand manner by presuming to speak for Washington, D.C. blacks. Without naming him, "Cerebus" accused Turner of organizing the abortive meeting to report the "interview" to the black community in the Union Bethel Church in collusion with Lincoln's Commissioner for Emigration, James Mitchell.

Turner, in turn, denied all involvement with the affair but maintained that as there was no formal black leadership, any group of blacks had the right to meet Lincoln on any issue. Turner was perhaps less than forthright when he put up this defence. With his stated "proclivity" for Haiti he probably misjudged the nature of the black reaction to Lincoln's scheme.

Criticism of the scheme kept pouring in through the autumn of 1862. The Indiana Conference of the A.M.E. Church declared "We are now, as ever, unalterably, inflexibly, and determinedly opposed to all and every plan and scheme of colonization...." The A.M.E. Church leader Bishop Daniel Payne, in an open letter in the Christian Recorder, called it the greatest crisis of blacks in the United States. He noted the long efforts

142 Christian Recorder, 6 September 1862. There were blacks like John Willis Menard, who were active on behalf of the government in promoting emigration. Menard, a clerk in the Bureau of Emigration did not, however, have much influence over the black community. See Edith Menard, "John Willis Menard," Negro History Bulletin, vol. 31, no. 7, November 1968, p. 11.

143 Ibid.
of "associations of whites" in trying to colonize blacks, but now, he noted: "the American Government has assumed the work and responsibility of colonizing us in some foreign land.... But, let us never forget that there is a vast difference between voluntary associations of men and the legally constituted authority in a country; while the former can be held in utter contempt, the latter must always be respected...." Payne's agonized solution to this terrible dilemma was for blacks to appeal to God to deliver them from this threat.

The Committee on Slavery in the African Methodist Episcopal Church's Genesee Conference reacted sharply to Lincoln's Colonization plan. The Conference resolved to "discourage all attempts at colonization" from the land which blacks had "bought with their blood and fertilized with their tears."

The preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation did not mean a change in Lincoln's colonization schemes. It was perhaps the very necessity of the Proclamation that spurred Lincoln to greater efforts on this sphere. Paradoxically, however, the Proclamation only served to convince blacks that there was hope in America. The Indiana Conference of the A.M.E. Church had seen in the situation in August 1862, two possibilities for blacks in the future. One was that of increasing acceptance of equality for blacks, and the other, the possibility of forced migration of blacks to avoid greater repression. In announcing the Proclamation, Lincoln heightened the first possibility, thus

144 Ibid., 20 September 1862. Emphasis added.
145 Reported in Christian Recorder, 11 October 1862.
making acceptance of colonization increasingly improbable.

We have outlined earlier Lincoln's vain attempts at promoting schemes to arrange for the "voluntary" deportation of blacks. His persistent interest in these schemes which were often ill-founded and, as in the case of the Ile A'Vache project, downright fraudulent, was galling to blacks. Robert Purvis chose to take up the issue with Senator S.C. Pomeroy in the middle of 1862. Appointed special agent for emigration by Lincoln, Pomeroy had, earlier, issued a notice in Philadelphia calling on free blacks to emigrate. Purvis recalled to Pomeroy the great meeting of blacks as early as 1817 organized by Richard Allen and James Forten which had rejected the aims and objects of the colonization movement. Purvis informed Pomeroy that the black sentiment had not changed since then. Discoursing on the political economy of the country, Purvis noted that black deportation would be disastrous to America in that it would dry up the already labour-short American economy.

Purvis pointed to Pomeroy that the United States was not a white man's country. It was the American Indianas' "by natural rights and, and the black man's, by virtue of his sufferings and toil." He rejected the argument of racial antagonism outright, noting that if there was any antagonism it was that of whites directed towards the blacks and not vice versa. In concluding, he asserted: "I say that your project of colonizing...[black] in Central America or anywhere else, with or

146 Ibid., 6 September 1862.
without their consent, will never succeed."

Lincoln's colonization schemes as we have seen, met with limited success. Frederick Douglass however, caused a flutter in the colonization camp when he gave his son a letter of introduction to Senator Pomeroy indicating that his son was interested in the colonization scheme. Montgomery Blair took it as an indication of Douglass' own support for the enterprise. Writing to Douglass on this presumption, he noted, that colonization was based on "the diversity not the inferiority" of the whites and blacks. Since the relation of the two had been "unfortunate" felt Blair, they obviously ought to separate. Since whites as rulers were not likely to go, blacks were the ones who ought to emigrate to Central America, he argued. With its wealth and potential would be an ideal base for a black Empire which would have world-wide repercussions. Douglass' support, Blair declared, would be powerful aid indeed.

Douglass' aid would have been powerful but, he had not intended the letter to be taken as his personal endorsement of emigration schemes. Douglass reprinted Blair's letter in the Monthly and issued a sharp reply alongside. The letter of introduction for his son, he pointed out, was just that—a letter of introduction for one individual. His son, he declared, was of age and made his own decisions. Douglass reiterated his

147 Robert Purvis to S.C. Pomeroy, 28 August 1862, in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, 13 September 1862.

148 Montgomery Blair to Frederick Douglass, 10 September 1862, reprinted in Frederick Douglass' Monthly, October 1862, p. 724.
own long-held position that he did not oppose "natural, self-moved, spontaneous emigration, where no pressure of legislation is exerted to compel it...." Like other men, a black would migrate to improve his lot, but the destination and the decision would be of the individual's choice.

Douglass rejected Blair's climatic and racial argument as fallacious in its conception. His opposition to colonization was in his belief that it was an extension of "African slavery." That had been his belief in the previous two decades, and that would continue to be so.

Black rejection of the colonization scheme went hand-in-hand with an increasing awareness of their potential in tilting the balance of forces in the favour of the Union. Black non-combatants were already on the field providing much needed muscle to the Union supply systems. The increasing casualties brought the possibility of black recruitment as combatants nearer. By the end of 1862, a few black combat regiments were already in service in the Sea Islands, Louisiana and Kansas.

The black leadership, aware of this changing balance of forces, advised blacks not to go overboard in expressing their loyalty to the Union. The Rev. Elisha Weaver, in an editorial on the Second Confiscation Bill, noted that the President had been given the discretionary authority to raise black troops. Where, he asked, were the provisions empowering the President "in relation to guaranteeing to the colored people of this

149 Frederick Douglass to Montgomery Blair, 16 September 1862, Frederick Douglass' Monthly, October 1862, pp. 724-6.
country full protection of her laws, and privilege of enjoying all the rights accorded to other human beings in the United States of America?"

The A.M.E. Church implicitly discouraged its members from supporting the government too zealously. The call to let the white man fight his own war was thus a constant theme of the Church. The A.M.E. Zion Church, too, advised blacks "to take no part in this war on either side until they can do it as men, as free men and citizens."

In Philadelphia, a meeting presided by the Rev. Jabez Campbell assured the whites that "the better class of colored people have too much self-respect to intrude themselves where they are not wanted." The meeting asked all the city newspapers that blacks who were clamouring to be recruited where the "mischievous" and "restless" dregs of their community.

Douglass expressed similar sentiments a year earlier. Though Douglass had been demanding the use of black troops, it was not an unconditional offer of black support. In a letter to Samuel J. May he expressed his views forthrightly. He was unwilling to participate in a guerrilla war even if the Government backed it quietly. "Nothing short of an open recognition of the Negro's manhood, his rights as such to have a country, to bear arms...would induce me to join the army in any capacity,"

150 Christian Recorder, 19 July 1862.
151 Ibid., 16 August 1862 and 4 October 1862.
152 Ibid., 6 September 1862.
he declared.

The Rev. Henry ::. Turner was quick to deny a report that he had called for raising black troops. Somewhat ingenuously, he noted that he had just given a call to blacks to pray for the nation. A huge meeting of blacks had, indeed offered a regiment to the President; but, Turner said, its organizers were unknown, and the A.M.E. Church refused permission for such a meeting to be held in its premises.

Part of this attitude arose out of caution. In an April 1862 issue of the Recorder, Weaver endorsed an article from the New York Independent praising the black community for its quiescence. Weaver pointed out that there was probably no parallel to the attitude of blacks as "\[no\] other class of people under the heavens would have been as quiet under the past and present circumstances." The microscopic free black community was all too aware of the prejudice against them. The riots and physical attacks on blacks that began from mid 1862 onwards were an indication of the fragile position free blacks occupied in the North during that period of the war.

In his Annual Message to Congress on 1 December 1862, Lincoln noted the unwillingness of blacks to migrate but still claimed to see an improvement of opinion amongst them which

154 Christian Recorder, 19 July 1862 and 9 August 1862.
155 Ibid., 12 April 1862.
would lead eventually to "a considerable migration." The impulse of colonization was already dead by 1864. Lincoln, too, gave it up as the question of prosecuting the war and arming blacks began to gather greater momentum. In July 1864 Congress repealed all the provisions of the legislation of 1862 appropriating funds for colonization.

The Black War Relief Effort

In the spring of 1862 blacks, though concerned about the resistance of the Lincoln Administration towards emancipation, did not stand still. Contraband relief became an issue in which the Northern free black community began to take an active interest. Black efforts towards aiding their kin, predated the formation of white Relief Societies. Mary Chase, a free black of Virginia opened several schools in the Alexandria area. Mrs Mary Peake, a black woman from Massachusetts started the first school for the freedmen at Fort Monroe in the autumn of 1861 as well. The Rev. Elisha Weaver called upon the black community to support whole-heartedly the efforts to provide


relief and aid for these refugees. He acknowledged that the
A.M.E. Church had been tardy in taking up the issue but claimed
that until the Administration's policy towards the contrabands
became clear the Church did not want to "uphold and encourage
slavery by contributing to their [the contrabands'] support
in the event of their being reenslaved." He also argued that a
too active black interest would have actually retarded the
efforts of the relief agencies.

The A.M.E. Church swung into action by forming church
based relief associations for collecting funds and making cloth-
ing for the newly freed men. For the A.M.E. Church, the "contra-
bands" were, besides indigent fellow blacks, a field for mis-
sionary labour. The churches in Washington, D.C., besides pro-
viding relief, baptized and married former slaves.

At the centre of black relief efforts in Philadelphia was
the Social, Civil and Statistical Association of the Colored
People of Pennsylvania. William Still organized the relief work
through this Association which called on all "colored churches
and societies to co-operate with the Freedmen's Associations and
other enterprises." Similar sentiments were expressed in a
resolutions of the Executive Committee of the Association. The
resolution called for all aid to the contrabands, and noted that
"the government has not more fully defined the status of these

159 Christian Recorder, 22 March 1862.
160 Ibid., 22 March 1862; 5 April 1862; 12 April 1862
and 24 May 1862.
161 Ibid., 5 April 1862.
poor creatures...

A Contraband Relief Association was organized in Washington, D.C. by Elizabeth Keckley, Mrs Lincoln's seamstress. She noted that if whites could organize for the relief of blacks, it was more the duty of "well-to-do colored people to do something for the benefit of the suffering blacks..." She travelled to Boston, where, with the help of Revs. William Grimes and J. Sella Martin, she collected 80 boxes of clothes. Frederick Douglass contributed $200 towards her work and spoke at the Relief Association meetings. In New York, she was helped by Henry Highland Garnet and other blacks who too aided her efforts.

Susie King Taylor was a slave when the Union army captured Port Royal. She had, however, learned to read and write secretly while living in Savannah, Ga. In the autumn of 1862, she married a fellow "contraband" Edward King and went to Port Royal where he joined the First South Carolina Volunteers. She taught School at first in St. Simon's Island and later at Port Royal where she helped black soldiers to learn to read and write.

Similar sentiments motivated young Charlotte Forten,

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162 Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Association of the Colored People. Ibid., 5 April 1862.

163 Elizabeth Keckley, Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years A Slave and Four Years in the White House (New York, Arno, 1969 /1869/), pp. 111-6. See also Christian Recorder, 1 November 1862.

grand-daughter of James Forten to volunteer as an agent of the Philadelphia Port Royal Relief Association. Charlotte Forten was to stay in Port Royal till 1864, teaching children in a freedmen's school.

Nevertheless, in 1862, black efforts to help their brethren were overshadowed by other issues. Blacks were, as we have shown, in 1862, still extremely insecure with the repeated attempts of the Lincoln Administration to deport them "voluntarily." There is no doubt that the major relief effort was mounted by whites and white associations. The black contribution must be viewed in the light of their extreme poverty as a community as well as in their numbers. Free blacks in the North numbered some 250,000 before the war. What they tried to do must be viewed in the light of the developing sense of racial solidarity that had marked the black movement in the antebellum decades.

Black efforts towards the war in 1862 were still very muted. In part this was due to the normally introverted nature of the black society, driven to further insecurity by the colonization plans. Secondly, black leaders were in no mood to commit black efforts after their initial rejection of their offers of aid. Blacks had been told that it was not their war and, till the Emancipation Proclamation, the black community remained more or less passive with regard to the war. There was

yet another reason for the lowkey black response. This was the growing racial tension in the North in which blacks were as usual victimized for the social unrest arising out of the economic dislocation of the war.

The Emancipation of the Blacks

We have shown in the previous chapter the manner in which the Emancipation Proclamation came about. We have outlined the severe limitations of the Proclamation as well as its revolutionary nature in transforming the war to end secession, into a war to win freedom for the blacks, since in reality the Proclamation only freed those blacks still held by the Confederacy. There was considerable pressure on Lincoln to modify if not withdraw the Proclamation before it became effective on 1 January 1863. Blacks were rightly apprehensive. We have described in the previous chapter as to how Lincoln tried in the eleventh hour to undermine the Proclamation. This was by a proposal incorporated in his Annual Message to Congress in December 1862, calling for the compensation of those states which accepted the gradual emancipation of slavery by 1 January 1863, just one month away. This programme, unlike the Proclamation of Emancipation would have freed blacks in a gradual process till the beginning of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, when the Proclamation became operative, blacks were overjoyed. Meetings were held in probably all the free black communities across the land. In New York, the meeting was held in the Shiloh Presbyterian Church with the Rev.
Henry Highland Garnet presiding. In Washington, D.C., meetings were held in contraband camps as well as in the city. One of the biggest meetings of the city, the one in the Israel Bethel Church, was presided over by the Rev. Henry E. Turner. Perhaps the biggest meetings were held in Boston graced by a galaxy of abolitionists like Garrison, Phillips and black leaders like Frederick Douglass, John S. Rock, Leonard Grimes, J. Sella Martin, and William Wells Brown. Meetings were held through the entire first week of January 1863, in the North and in all those areas under the control of the Union in the South.

The Proclamation officially launched the policy of recruiting blacks for the combat units of the army. Though the President had been authorized by the Second Confiscation Act to use blacks in whatever capacity he deemed necessary, it was only after the Emancipation Proclamation that the policy got underway. The Union effort was now provided with a moral and humanitarian aspect that had long been lacking. The great debate about the place of blacks in American society seemed to have come to a close. It is true that the Proclamation did not see the end of racism or exploitation of the blacks. A period of struggle spanning a century elapsed before complete political equality of blacks was accepted by all Americans. Nevertheless, a period came to a close. The emigration movement became completely moribund. Though it was to revive again in the late nineteenth century, and again in the twentieth century, it did not have a

similar ideological thrust. Delany became active in the recruiting of black troops and Garnet busied himself with providing relief to the newly freed slaves through the offices of the African Civilization Society. The Lincoln Administration gave up all interest in colonization, though the Congress moved to cancel the funds appropriated for the purpose only by 1864.

We have outlined in this concluding chapter as to how the debate on the place of the blacks in American society came to a close. We have noted the early perception of the blacks, excepting a small section of emigrationists, that the war was the harbinger of better things. With great fortitude, the blacks had come through the decade of the 1850s. The reaction of the blacks to the war, Lincoln's policies, and the problems of freedom indicates a remarkable sophistication. This was tested in the ensuing years in the great political struggle that ended in the virtual re-enslavement of blacks.