SAMUEL RINGGOLD WARD'S EXAMINATION DAY: THE EDUCATION OF A BLACK ABOLITIONIST

by

Raymond Moylan

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The writing of history which does indeed come to conclusions and reach ends. but actually, moves forward through the implicit understanding that things are not over, that the story isn't finished, can't ever be completed for some new item of information may alter the accounts as it has been given. In this way the writing of history represents as a distinct cognitive process precisely because it is constructed around the understanding at things are not over, that the story isn't finished: that there is no end.

- Carolyn Steadman, "Dust (2001),"*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the life of Samuel Ringgold Ward, one of the greatest orators and spokesmen for abolition in the nineteenth century. This work specifically examines how Ward's early life and education at the New York African Free School shaped his career. Ward's career began and advanced it through the connections he made in the African American diaspora community in New York and through the classmates he had at school. The school's curriculum combined with the lessons imparted by his teachers had a strong influence on Ward's work in the abolitionist movement. Ward was recognized as one of the most articulate and powerful speakers of the time. This well known elocution and skill as a speaker was taught at the school. The school's emphasis on strict moralism and control in making African Black students 'useful' and 'respectable' is reflected in Ward's body of work.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Samuel Ringgold Ward was championed by Frederick Douglass as "the ablest black man this country has ever produced."[1] Ward possessed a sharp mind as well as an imposing presence. He was described as "quite heavily built, six feet tall, of the blackest skin."[2] He was a man that was intelligent, eloquent, and an extraordinary figure in the abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century. Ward's abilities were crafted and refined at the New York African Free School, which he attended from 1826 to 1833. Ward's education prepared him for his service to the cause of abolition and the fight for Black freedom. His skills in writing and speaking passionately and persuasively about issues related to emancipation, religion, and temperance, among other issues, allowed him to gain prominence in the mid-century reform movement. He led services and delivered thoughtful sermons to worshippers as a Congregationalist minister, including an all-white congregation in South Butler, New York. While a member of the Liberty Party in 1848, he became the first Black person to be nominated for national office in the history of the United States. Early in his career Ward worked with many anti-slavery organizations, talking to crowds in villages, towns, and cities

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[1] L. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Willey & Co., Publishers, 1891), 72.
[2] Rev. George F. Bragg, *Men of Maryland.* (Baltimore, Maryland: Church Advocate Press, 1914), 114.

across the northeastern United States, garnering support for abolition. Ward often spoke of the hypocrisy and duplicity of the laws enacted in the United States that denied and stripped rights away from Black people, like the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. He was willing to back up his words with actions too. In open defiance of the 1850 Act, Ward helped to obtain the freedom of a formerly enslaved man, Jerry McHenry. Ward's robust speech outside McHenry's jail cell rallied a crowd of supporters that helped secure McHenry's freedom. Subsequently, Ward fled with his family to Canada to avoid arrest and prosecution. He advocated for many causes he believed in, engaged in debates, wrote numerous articles, founded newspapers, and penned a popular autobiography. Ward advocated for Black freedom across the Atlantic world, in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Jamaica. He worked alongside some of the great figures of the age, like James McCune Smith and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Samuel Ringgold Ward's power of persuasion, his keen intellect, and his articulate defiance in the face of tyranny were first seeded at the New York African Free School no. 2 on Mulberry Street in Lower Manhattan.

This thesis will examine how the education of Samuel Ringgold Ward at the New York African Free School (NYAFS) shaped his public career. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the United States the NYAFS was one of the largest institutions at the time responsible for educating free and recently emancipated Black children. Ward was born into slavery but went on to serve as a teacher, preacher, pastor, publisher, author, and spokesman for temperance, the abolishment of slavery, and the promotion of civil rights for

Black people. Samuel Ward was a significant part of a pivotal generation of Black men and women that fought for emancipation and equal rights, but his particular story has not been a primary focus of scholars to this date. This thesis will explore how Ward's work and beliefs were shaped during his years in New York and his time at the NYAFS. Some of the questions to be addressed are: What impact did the curriculum and education system have on Ward? How did the debate around African Americans' place in society influence Ward's own beliefs? How did Ward's relationship with his contemporaries, including his fellow students and his teachers and other people in positions of authority, affect his development? This research will delve into a number of different issues related to Ward. The curriculum and educational methodology utilized by the NYAFS will be examined. The vast collection of source material from the time period connected to abolitionism will also be analyzed, including letters, newspaper articles, speeches, books, and the minutes of meetings and conventions. The figures of the age, including Ward, waged ideological battles over issues and ideas related to history, science, religion, and economics in regard to emancipation. This seminal time period is substantiated by an abundance of historical documentation.

The antebellum era was a time of dramatic transformation for Black people in the Atlantic World. Debate and controversy swirled around the appropriate level of Black participation in the social, political, and economic realms in an unequal American society. Due to gradual emancipation laws and the work of enslaved people to make themselves free, Black institutions arose throughout the Northern United States. These Black institutions were

complemented by organizations formed by white abolitionists. In the Northern United States churches and schools sprang up throughout towns and cities to preach to the faithful and teach the influx of young Black children. Groups and organizations were also formed to promote literature, temperance, and colonization among other causes. Numerous newspapers and magazines were launched to compete with the already established news sources and supply the growing literate population with news and information.

It was not just the written word that mattered, speeches, sermons and public addresses were utilized to educate, persuade, and enlighten the expanding free Black population. The ability to speak well with vigor and eloquence was a skill that was taught and nurtured in school and practiced at the pulpit, the podium, and the stage. And this oratory was not practiced merely for the edification of Black peoples, but to convince those white citizens not already committed to support abolition and the advancement of Black people in American society. All the institutions being built, newspapers and magazines being published as well as the speeches and sermons were in service to this end. This goal of Black advancement was a goal that went beyond just the confines of the United States. These institutions were built across the Atlantic world creating a network of free Black people that connected the United States with Canada, Great Britain, and the Caribbean. Samuel Ward grew up, was educated and worked within this network throughout his entire life. What Ward and others strived to do was to promote and establish institutions that would further the

cause not just of abolition but of prosperity and freedom for Black people all across the Atlantic.

This thesis is divided into several chapters. The subsequent chapter is a literature review providing an overview of the scholarship and historiography related to the areas researched. The following chapter examines New York City before and during the emancipation era in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Next will be a chapter on the history of the New York African Free School, with a focus on its curriculum, the major figures associated with it, and the issues faced by the school and the Black community. The individuals who founded the school, administered it, and taught at it are considered in the context of the issues that were prevalent at the time. The penultimate chapter delves into the life and work of Samuel Ringgold Ward and the ways in which his education in New York shaped the work and principles of his career. The final chapter is a conclusion which provides a summary of the main arguments and implications of this research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The early histories of the New York African Free School, like the one written by Charles Andrews, posit a history of altruism, progress, and magnanimity. According to his early history, some founding fathers of the American Republic sought to aid those lesser off, the descendants of enslaved people and they established a school to relieve the wretched condition of these children. Andrew's volume tells a story of benevolent white men helping members of an unfortunate race .[3] In Andrew's telling, the Black students at the school are not even the main characters in their own story. Who were these students at the New York African Free School, the young scholars, just ascendant from chattel slavery? Many writers of the time and beyond have sought to answer that question.

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[3] Language matters, this essay will utilize the language and terms of the era that were in common use for Ward and his contemporaries, especially in direct quotations; terms like 'slave', 'negro', 'black', 'colored', were in regular usage, along with more pejorative terminology. Language also evolves, and so words like 'Black' and 'White' will be capitalized when they denote a person's race or ethnicity. Terms like 'enslaved person' or 'enslavement' will also be used instead of 'slave', as they provide more agency to the people thus being described. For more on this issue surrounding terminology and language see Katy Waldman's May 19, 2015 essay at Slate.com, "Slave or Enslaved Person?". https://slate.com/human-interest/2015/05/historians-debate-whether-to-use-the-term-slave-or-enslaved-person.html

Beyond the confines of the New York African Free School, scholars have long debated and studied Black identity in a North American context. Black writers of the time, like Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, and Samuel Ringgold Ward, wrote of the struggle to find a place within or outside of the American experience. As Jane H. Pease and William F. Pease state in their analysis of the pre-Civil War activists, the question for Black abolitionists was: "Should they strive for acceptance in White America or struggle to achieve a distinctive and separate culture?"[4] This remained a fundamental question for Black thinkers in that era and beyond.

W.E.B. DuBois, in *The Souls of Black Folk* wrote not of a separation but a merger of the two identities to a "double self into a better and truer self", or what his biographer David Levering Lewis later called "a proud enduring hyphenation."[5] Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness,* further explored this duality, considering the larger world on both sides of the Atlantic. What both DuBois and Gilroy utilized in their analyses was the work produced and the actions undertaken by Black people in the antebellum period, especially the Black writers and intellectuals. For Ward and his contemporaries to build an identity, in an age with evolving definitions of terms

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[4] Jane H. Pease and William F. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 144.; George A. Levesque, "Interpreting Early Black Ideology: A Reappraisal of Historical Consensus," *Journal of the Early Republic* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1981), 270.
[5] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1996, 2, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/408; David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993), 217.

such as ‘race’ in a country with both free and unfree people, new immigrants and old nativists, was a challenging task. Gilroy made an important point when he noted that, “It is significant that prior to the consolidation of scientific racism in the nineteenth century, the term ‘race’ was very much used in the way that the word ‘culture’ is used today.”[6] The idea of improving the ‘race’ as it was seen in the antebellum world, often concerned culture, not biology.

Samuel Ward, and his contemporaries such as Henry Highland Garnet, James McCune Smith, and others were born in the United States, but viewed by many as free Africans, not Americans. Jane Rhodes argued in ”The Contestation Over National Identity: Nineteenth Century Black Americans in Canada”, that Ward and other Black abolitionists were at the forefront of creating a new range of identities. In a society changing rapidly Rhodes observed that,

> Indeed, the particulars of black American, nationalist movements and black American national identities can be traced directly to nineteenth-century migrants like Martin Delany, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Henry Gibb, and Samuel Ringgold Ward.[7]

However, the question remains: Who did *they* think they were? The answer or answers to that question will be explored.

Samuel ward’s identity as a free, educated Black man was built at the New York African Free School. While in operation from the end of the eighteenth

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[6] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 8.
[7] Jane Rhodes, “The Contestation over National Identity: Nineteenth Century Black Americans in Canada.,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 30, no. 2 (2000), 175.

century to the first half of the nineteenth century the NYAFS was written about in newspapers and personal accounts. However, only starting in the last decades of the 20th century did scholars start to turn serious consideration to the school and its place in history. Few, if any, scholars gave any serious attention to the institution in the first half of the 20th century. One of the few who was James Weldon Johnson, who wrote about the New York African Free School in his book *Black Manhattan.* Johnson served as the first Black diplomat in the United States and was also the first Black professor at New York University.[8] Johnson, as a successful, educated Black man in America was only too aware of the struggles and barriers that were faced by those who came before him. Johnson, a Harlem resident in the midst of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's, recognized the New York African Free School as one of the institutions that helped establish a thriving Black community in the larger New York society. The success and ultimate failure of the NYAFS was something Johnson was cognizant of when *Black Manhattan* was published in 1930. The Black cultural and political enclave established in upper Manhattan's Harlem neighborhood was in many ways what the Black community around the NYAFS had created for themselves in Lower Manhattan a century before.

Beginning in the 1980's scholars increasingly turned their attention to the school and its impact on Black history in New York and the larger world. Modern

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[8] George P. Cunningham, "James Welden Johnson (1871-1938)," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 1459-61.

scholars have largely focused on Black agency and the struggle for a semblance of opportunity and equality in education. Robert J. Swan wrote about John Teasman, the African American educator, who served as headmaster of the original African Free School from 1799 to 1815. Swan noted how remarkable Teasman's appointment was in a school previously staffed exclusively by white teachers. Many members of the Manumission Society, the organization that advocated for the gradual abolition of slavery in the state and created the school, often took a hostile stance towards Black people and some even owned enslaved people. Swan argued that Teasman's appointment and his efforts were significant for two primary reasons. The first reason was because Teasman introduced the Lancasterian system, which allowed for the education of many more Black students. Secondly Teasman's role as the head of school as well as the administrator of moral and social control for Black children established a model of self-reliance in the growing Black community in New York.[9] Scholars such as John L. Rury wrote about the growth and success of the African Free School being incumbent upon the community's support. Rury also noted the growing importance to Black New Yorkers of African-centered educational practices, and described how they in later years pushed the Manumission Society to hire more Black teachers and replace one teacher in particular, Charles Andrews. Andrews pro-colonization views were not popular in the community despite the meteoric

[9] Robert J. Swan, "John Teasman: African-American Educator and the Emergence of Community in Early Black New York City, 1787-1815," *Journal of the Early Republic* 12, no. 3 (Autumn 1992), 332.

success of the African Free Schools of New York under his earlier leadership. [10] Anna Mae Duane in the article, "'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African Free School and in My Bondage and My Freedom," argued Black students demonstrated resistance through their academic achievements in the school, overcoming the often oppressive, paternalistic nature of the school leaders. The students' abilities to perform the often scripted melodramatic performances during public examination days and go 'off script' so to speak and ignore the whispered directions of their white teachers demonstrated their "strength and resilience."[11] These examinations were events where the public, and often illustrious figures of society, were invited to witness the students answer exam questions, complete math problems, and recite poems, passages of scripture or literature. The students would recite their own poems and stories, and often those written for them by teachers at the school. Historian Shane White remarked that these public examination day performances were just part of a larger display that was fundamentally altering Black representation and reception in a changing society. According to Shane White, the increasing visibility of Black people on the streets of New York, and in the courts fighting for their rights, "…created a vibrant culture, one that not only reflected their new and exhilarating

[10] John L. Rury, "The New York African Free School 1827-1836: Conflict over Community Control of Black Education", *Phylon* 44, no. 3. (Qtr. 1983):193-96.
[11] Anna Mae Duane, "'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African Free School and in My Bondage and My Freedom," *American Literature* 82, no. 3 (2010): 465-77.

status as free people, but that also fascinated and not infrequently horrified White onlookers."[12]

A specter that terrified many white people in the United States of the era was the Republic of Haiti. In "The Light of Knowledge Follows the Impulse of Revolutions': Prince Saunders, Baron de Vastey and the Haitian Influence on Antebellum Black Ideas of Elevation and Education", Peter Wirzbicki examined how the example of the Haitian Revolution and its leaders, who transformed Haiti into a republic, influenced Black thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic. According to Wirzbicki:

> Haiti's success [as a self-governing Black republic] did demonstrate the possibility of an egalitarian universalism…even if most Americans and conservative Europeans dared not face this prospect openly, instead repressing the history of slave revolt under ever-more fantastic narratives of barbarism and massacre.[13]

The idea of the Haitian Republic served as a warning for many white people about what could occur if the institution of chattel slavery collapsed. For Black people in the United States however, the Haitian Revolution and subsequent republic demonstrated what was possible. Black abolitionists of the time, such as Alexander Crummell and Samuel Ringgold Ward himself wrote of the progress made in Haiti in regard to education and development as a nation following the

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[12] Shane White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 5.
[13] Peter Wirzbicki, "The Light of Knowledge Follows the Impulse of Revolutions': Prince Saunders, Baron de Vastey and the Haitian Influence on Antebellum Black Ideas of Elevation and Education," *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 2 (2015), 292.

destruction of the French slave colony. Haiti, like Jamaica, or Canada also offered an alternate place for African Americans to build a more just society, if that became impossible to do in the United States. This question as to whether the United States could be a nation where equality and liberty could be shared by all, was one the contemporaries and classmates of Samuel Ward had to wrestle.

In a book length treatment Anna Mae Duane studied the life and career of two of Samuel Ward's classmates at the NYAFS, James McCune Smith, and Henry Highland Garnet. In *Educated For Freedom: The Incredible Story of Two Fugitive Schoolboys Who Grew Up to Change a Nation*, Duane contrasted the two men and the ways in which they navigated the world of Black emancipation, colonization, and resistance. Duane, in this dual biography set out to demonstrate how Smith and Garnet rejected "false choices they had been taught at school", in their lessons, and from their white teachers to believe "Black people must either embrace a cheerful exile abroad or accept living death in the United States."[14] Duane wrote of how the lessons the students were taught at the school, and their lived experience shaped their beliefs and career trajectories in the United States and abroad. Both Smith, who became the first African American with a medical degree, and Garnet, an eloquent speaker and minister, exhibited a belief in the power of Black progress and advancement in the antebellum United States.

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[14] Duane, *Educated for Freedom: The Incredible Story of Two Fugitive Schoolboys Who Grew Up to Change A Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 3.

Leslie M. Alexander in *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861* scrutinized how engaging in public events, advocating for rights, and excelling in school were all predicated on "the belief that Black People could secure an elevated status in American society by convincing white people of their humanity, morality, and worthiness."[15] Alexander charted the schools, along with the relief agencies, churches, conventions, and newspapers that were part of the growing Black community in New York and outlined the ideological battles that occupied these spaces. For Alexander, the struggle for Black leaders in the community was the choice between attempting to assimilate into the wider majority (white) society or upholding a distinct Black heritage and separation. The formation of Black identity was never as simple, as binary, as a choice between two options. Alexander described debates held during the 1834 Colored Convention in New York where two diametrically opposed ideas were hotly contested: this was whether to support either an African colonization scheme versus a proposal that all Black institutions remove the term 'Black' or 'African' from their name to fit in better with the dominant European-American society.[16] Alexander asked the same questions about Black identity in her book as Jane H. and William F. Pease asked in their work landmark 1974 book *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks'*

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[15] Leslie M. Alexander, *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2.
[16] Alexander, 79-83.

Search for Freedom, 1830-1861, although the latter had a narrower timeframe and a less specific focus on New York City.

Reams of books and scholarly articles discuss the history of New York City in the nineteenth century. However fewer works cover the lives of Black people in New York in that period. Charles H. Wesley's article, "The Negroes of New York and the Emancipation Movement" published in *The Journal of Negro History* in 1939 provides useful information of the era.[17] Though the article is dated, first published in 1939, it provides detail of the demographic and economic conditions in which Black people lived in a changing New York City. More recently scholars have turned their attention to the experience of Black New Yorkers in the antebellum era. In *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth Century New York City,* Carla Peterson offered a social history of African American life in antebellum New York. Jonathan Daniel Wells in *The Kidnapping Club: Wall Street, Slavery, and Resistance on the Eve of the Civil War*, recounted the terror faced by many Black people in the city prior to the Civil War when bounty hunters, often with the active support of the police and governing officials, would abduct Black people off the streets and sell them into bondage. Wells provided detailed accounts of the men, women, and children who were captured; the children in many cases taken on their way to, or actually while in school. Wells highlighted the collective resolve of the Black community in the struggle against these nefarious schemes. In *Gotham: History of New York City to*

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[17] *The Journal of Negro History* became *The Journal of African American History* in 2001.

1898, Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace presented a rich and detailed survey of New York City from its foundation to the year 1898. Burrows and Wallace placed Black history and education in the context of the economic, political, and social change occurring at that time in New York City. By contrast, Leslie M. Harris in *The Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*, provided a narrower focus on slavery and its legacy and explored how Black people responded, resisted, and tolerated life in New York through the Dutch, English, and early American eras.

The issues of race and class were very much at the forefront of the antebellum era. In *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*, Thomas C. Holt argued that:

> The reality that abolitionists and the men who fashioned and implemented emancipation policies were prepared to accept determined by their adherence to liberal democratic ideology in which humans' behavior was relieved to reflect primarily their acquisitive materialist appetites.[18]

This liberal democratic ideology, with progress and self improvement at its core was directly connected to the rise of capitalism in the era. Holt asserted that when slavery was displaced by free labor a problem arose. This was what Holt termed "the problem of freedom", which was preparing formerly enslaved people by "thoroughly reforming the ex-slaves' culture as to make them receptive to the discipline of free labor."[19] While the focus of Holt's work was on Jamaica and

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[18] Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), xxii.
[19] Holt, xxii.

Britain, his analysis can be tied to the United States of the era, especially to the work of abolitionists like Samuel Ringgold Ward and the institutions preparing formerly enslaved people to engage in free labor, such as the New York African Free School. Caitlin Rosenthal in the article "Capitalism when Labor was Capital: Slavery, Power, and Price in Antebellum America", examined how slavery fit into the capitalist economic system of the United States. For Rosenthal, both free wage labor and slave labor were capitalistic enterprises entailing the commodification, the sale or trade, of labor. Rosenthal wrote, "In the study of antebellum slavery, where humans were capital, the relationship between power and price is hard to miss."[20] Enslaved people could not only be exploited for labor, but also bought and sold at market, and at times purchase their own or their families' freedom at an exorbitant cost. Enslaved people and their labor were assets, which further entrenched those opposed to abolition, for slaveholders stood to lose both.

Patrick Rael contended in *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North* published in 2002 that African American progress in civil rights and education, as demonstrated both by the success of the African Free School and their collective resistance to white oppression, was driven by the Black elite who strove for middle class "respectability." Rael wrote that "Black resistance grew more from leaders' pragmatic responses to their situation than

[20] Caitlin Rosenthal, "Capitalism When Labor Was Capital: Slavery, Power, and Price in Antebellum America," *Capitalism, A Journal of History and Economics* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2020), 331.

from their assertion of a distinct cultural 'genius' of African-descended people."[21] According to Rael this notion of "respectability" was a "master value" for those speaking on behalf of the whole of the Northern Black community and was no different than the aspirations of the increasing numbers of white Americans. Black people, by taking this middle-class worldview, gained a type of historical agency.[22] Erica L. Ball in her 2012 volume further elaborated on this movement in *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politics and the Antebellum Black Middle Class*. In this book she argued this "respectability" was constructed from a process that "fused advice on personal and domestic conduct with antislavery and revolutionary themes" and further that this formation of a burgeoning Black middle class was "simultaneously respectable and subversive."[23] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, in their book *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860,* asserted that it was education, such as what the students received at the New York African Free School that prepared their students for their role in the abolitionist movement and their place in a expanding Black middle class. The Hortons wrote of how those that could utilize and benefit from the prospects available were the students of the NYAFS who, "… came well prepared. From its earliest years, students at the school were encouraged to express antislavery ideas, and public oratory at special

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[21] Patrick Rael, *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 48-49.
[22] Rael, 48–49, 201.; George M. Fredrickson, "Black Hearts and Monsters of the Mind: Race and Identity in Antebellum America," *Modern Intellectual History* 1, no. 1 (2004), 127-28.
[23] Erica L. Ball. *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politics and the Antebellum Black Middle Class* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 2.

events was filled with abolitionism."[24] This preparation for both oration and abolitionism was certainly the case in regard to Samuel Ringgold Ward, who served the abolitionist movement for his entire career and was considered by many of his contemporaries to be the greatest Black orator of the time.[25]

Ronald E. Butchart's book*, Schooling the Free People: Teaching, Learning, and The Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876,* offered further insight into the experiences of Black teachers and students and the results of their work. Butchart utilized a treasure trove of primary source documents on the subject of Black education and employed a quantified analysis to describe the types of institutions, teachers, lessons, and outcomes associated with it.[26] Butchart highlighted the role that African Americans in the establishment of schools and the teaching of children. He argued the role of Black people in pedagogy had been frequently ignored by scholars who focused on the predominately white men and women in the North who were involved with promoting Black education.[27] Although covering a period after the New York African Free School was in existence, Butchart's work provided an example of an innovative research methodology that also placed the progress of Black education in an historical context. Samuel Ward, first as a student, and later as a Black teacher of Black

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[24] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture. Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 216.
[25] William Wells Brown, *The Rising Son* (Boston: A.G. Brown and Co., Publishers, 1874), 95.
[26] Thomas V. O'Brien, "Book Review: Schooling the Free People: Teaching, Learning, and The Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876," *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society* 40, no. 5 (2011), 680.
[27] Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Free People: Teaching, Learning, and The Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), xvi.

students was part of this struggle on the part of African American intellectuals and particularly educators to become established in a changing world.

Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie considered the life and work of Samuel Ward in respect to his connection to the British Empire, in parts of which Ward lived for about a third of his life. Kerr-Ritchie argued that Ward changed from a citizen of the American Republic to a subject of the British Crown in four transformative ways. Kerr-Ritchie wrote:

> ...physical relocation from unfree to free soil; his advocacy of legal equality for all people regardless of racial origin; his calls for emigration to the British Empire; and his commitment to the spread of pan-African evangelical Christianity.[28]

This transformation, for Kerr-Ritchie, made Ward a man, "who laboured to make imperialism subject to alternative understandings of liberty and freedom in the modern world."[29] While Kerr-Ritchie emphasized Ward's relationship with imperialism, other scholars have explored Ward's career through its connection to ethnic identity. Ikuko Asaka also assessed Ward, among others, as an Imperial figure, but from the perspective of the Caribbean. In the article, "'Our Brethren in the West Indies': Self-Emancipated People in Canada and the Antebellum Politics of Diaspora and Empire", Asaka examined how Ward portrayed Black people in the West Indies and Canada in his writing and how it compared to his

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[28] Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, "Samuel Ward and the Making of an Imperial Subject," *Slavery & Abolition: African Americans and Transatlantic Abolition (1845-1865)* 33, no. 2 (June 1, 2012), 206.
[29] Kerr-Ritchie, 216.

depictions of the lives of Black people in the United States. Asaka wrote, "Samuel Ward constructed an idealized black West Indian figure by articulating visions of freedom and belonging for his oppressed people. He built a common black British identity upon both differences and commonalities."[30] According to Asaka, Ward did this through the newspaper, the *Provincial Freemen*, which he co-founded alongside Mary Ann Shad, and the speeches and addresses he gave in his travels in Canada and later Great Britain. Ward spoke of Black people and their integral place in the growth and success of the British Empire. For Asaka, the work done in Canada and Great Britain was significant as, "Ward's definition of black belonging can be seen as a radical act in its disruption of the racialized structures of the free labor empire."[31]

For Ronald K. Burke, Ward's impetus for his work was not imperialism or identity, but religious faith. The only full book length treatment of the life of Samuel Ringgold Ward to date is entitled *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist.* The text was Burke's 1975 PhD thesis at Syracuse University and was published as a stand alone biography in 1995. His focus was considering Ward's life and work through the lens of his religious faith. Burke contended that "Ward's fervent admiration for Jesus created the motivation which involved him in social, moral, and political reform".[32] Burke stressed that Ward's religious

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[30] Ikuko Asaka, "'Our Brethren in the West Indies': Self-Emancipated People in Canada and the Antebellum Politics of Diaspora and Empire," *The Journal of African American History* 97, no. 3 (Summer 2012), 229.
[31] Asaka, 230.
[32] Ronald K. Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1995), 5.

faith, his "Doctrine of Christology" which was developed in childhood, served as the keystone to his later work. Burke cited Ward's mention of his father teaching him the Bible, specifically the *Gospel of John*, and its focus on the teachings and life of Jesus as a foundational moment for shaping his beliefs and principles.[33] Ward learned to read from the only book his family owned. He then went on to attend a school where religious instruction and the reading of scripture were integral. Ward sought ordination and served as a Congregationalist pastor and preacher during his career. Furthermore he was part of the establishment of Black enterprises like newspapers, societies, and political parties; and the Black churches which were key institutions for supporting a free people. Certainly, abolitionism was a Christian imperative for a vast majority of both Black and white abolitionists.

Overall the scope and depth of academic literature about the lives of Black people in the antebellum era, both free and enslaved, has increased over time. An early primary source of this period is the self aggrandizing account of white benevolence by Charles Alexander, but later there are the memoirs and biographies of Douglass, Ward and many others. This era was mined and studied later by Black thinkers such as W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson in search of the lessons to learn in their own inequitable era. In contemporary times as academia has diversified and expanded, more scholars have examined the period and looked at it anew and in different ways. More recognition and

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[33] Burke, 11-12.

attention has been paid by scholars not only to the contributions made by and for Black people in a changing society, but also serious scholarship has examined the many facets of life and society of the time; the issues of race, class, and gender in the antebellum have come under the scope of scholars today. Many questions remain and many regions of the Black antebellum world still need to be explored. This thesis is an attempt to answer questions regarding the impact of a NYAFS education for a particular former student, one Samuel Ringgold Ward.

Chapter Three: New York in the Era of Emancipation

3.1 The Toppling of a Tyrant: King George III and New York City in Revolt

In Lower Manhattan, across from the former Customs House, now the National Archives, sits Bowling Green, the oldest park in New York City and one of the oldest in the United States. Today, at the center of this small green space there is a large fountain surrounded by flowers and plants. In 1770 a statue of British King George III was erected where that fountain now sits. On July 9th of the year 1776, about one kilometer north of Bowling Green, the Declaration of Independence was read out on the steps of New York's City Hall.[34] A Continental soldier loudly proclaimed the equality of all men on the site where, for over a hundred years, enslaved people had been tortured, hanged, and burnt at the stake for alleged crimes ranging from insurrection to minor theft. After the reading of the Declaration, a mob formed and left the City Hall and former execution grounds and marched south down Broadway towards Bowling Green.[35]

The throng marched through a city undergoing immense change and growth. New York was a city of commerce, with mercantile exchanges arising

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[34] Two blocks to he north of New York's City Hall is the African Burial Ground. The burial ground was established in the 1600's as the final resting place for thousands of free and enslaved Black people. Under the Dutch and later the English, Black people, even those converted to or baptized in the Christian faith were usually barred from receiving a Christian burial in a church ground. The African Burial Ground closed in 1794 and today it is the site of a memorial and a museum.
[35] Edward G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: History of New York City to 1898* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 232.

near the docks, and large residences for the prosperous merchants naturally following. The building of tenements was increasing as well to house the rising number of laborers working on the docks and in the warehouses built to store the sugar produced by enslaved people in the West Indies. The mob advanced towards Wall Street, named for the rampart built under the Dutch by enslaved African people to keep the English out of New Amsterdam. The street, no longer walled, started at the bustling East River docks adjacent to the Slave Market, which had until very recently been in operation, at the corner of Wall and Pearl Street. Wall Street traversed the width of the narrow peninsula that was Lower Manhattan and ended at Trinity Church and its towering spire on Broadway. Trinity Church was where George Washington would attend service after being inaugurated as the first President of the United States in 1789. The landmarks that formed the history of the United States, the Dutch wall, the English docks, and the Anglican church, were built by the descendants of Africa.

The mob, now numbered in the hundreds, marched down Broadway and finally reached their destination, Bowling Green. They sought to remove the king, or at the very least his likeness, and after some difficulty, sailors affixed ropes and pulled down the statue of King George III. According to an account published in 1882, the statue was pulled down exclusively by Continental soldiers, led by their commanding officer, Captain Oliver Brown.[36] However, an etching created and

[36] Rev. Horace Edwin Hayden, "A Biographical Sketch of Captain Oliver Brown An Officer of the Revolutionary Army Who Commanded the Party Which Destroyed the Statue of George the Third in New York City" (Wilkes-Barre, PA., 1882), 10.

widely published around that seminal year 1776, portrayed the scene a little differently. In the etching, rendered by German artist, Franz Xavier Haberman, who did not witness the event, there are some discrepancies when compared to the later published account. One discrepancy is that in the etching there is no green space where Bowling Green is depicted and another is that, along with the soldiers, the etching depicts Black people, either free or enslaved, helping to tear down the king's statue (see fig. 1).[37] Did Black people take part in the tearing down of King George III's statue, either willingly as patriots or unwillingly as enslaved people? The true answer to this question is unknown. This divergence between the later written account of the event, versus the contemporaneous visualization of it, speaks to the conflicting position Americans of African descent had and have in the history of the United States.

[37] Bowling Green was where lawn bowling was played in New York, and thus the "green "referred to grass.

Fig. 1. Franz Xavier Haberman, *La Destruction De La Statue Royale A Nouvelle Yorck (The Destruction of the Royal Statue at New York)* (ca. 1776). Etching and engraving, 27.9 × 41 cm. Copyright The British Museum, (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0), accessed February 17, 2021. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/189827001

Black people had lived in New York before it was New York, and before any Englishmen had ever seen it. People of African descent had gazed and trod upon the land of what would be the United States as free people. The second non-indigenous person to sail into what would later be called New York Harbor was Estêvão Gomes, a Portuguese explorer of African descent. The first non-indigenous person to set foot on the island of Manhattan was Jan Rodrigues,

born of an African mother and a European father.[38] No statue, no bridge, or leafy city park commemorates these figures in today's New York. In Bowling Green today there is a small plaque celebrating Evacuation Day, the day the British Army departed from New York, and no mention is made of those who left with them. This small green space, where King George III's statue stood in 1776, where Black people did or did not take part in its toppling, is less than two hundred meters away from the docks where thousands of African Americans boarded ships to leave New York with the British in 1783 at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Both Black Loyalists freed for their service to the Crown, and those still enslaved to Loyalist slaveholders who were permitted to take their "movable property" with them to other parts of the British Empire, would go on to settle in Canada, Britain, and the Caribbean and would eventually be replaced by thousands and thousands more people of African descent, who would play their part in American history and face their own choice between exile and subservience.

3.2 A New World: Emancipation, Immigration, and Commerce

New York City underwent a profound demographic and social change in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. One of the major changes included an

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[38] Alan J. Singer, *New York and Slavery: Time to Teach the Truth* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 42-43.

increased access to education for the children of African New Yorkers. During the colonial era, schooling for enslaved or free Black children in the city was provided by the Church's of England's missionary arm, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). The SPG school began in 1703 and continued in association with Trinity Church until it burnt during the rise of the Revolution in 1776.[39]

On the eve of the American Revolution it was estimated that about fourteen percent of New York's population of 25,000 people was made up of enslaved people.[40] The growth of the free Black population in New York was driven in part by a gradual emancipation law enacted by New York state in 1799 and an increase in escaped enslaved people finding safety and freedom in New York. The 1799 law stated that, "every Negro, mulatto or mustee within this state, born before the fourth of July, 1790, be free," and also that "all Negroes, mulattoes and mustees born after July 4, 1790, shall be free-males at the age of 28 years and females at the age of 25 years." [41] In 1827 another law was passed by the state legislature providing that every person born in the state, was free and that those transported into the state as enslaved persons were also to be freed.

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[39] Travis S. Glasson, "Missionaries, Slavery, and Race: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Foreign Parts in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World," unpub. PhD. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2005, 59-60.
[40] Jane Dabel, "Education's Unfulfilled Promise: The Politics of Schooling For African American Children in Nineteenth Century New York City," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2012), 197.
[41] Rury, "The New York African Free School 1827-1836", 187; Charles C. Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools, From Their Establishment, In 1787 To The Present Time: Embracing A Period Of More Than 40 Years: Also A Brief Account Of The Successful Labours, Of The New York Manumission Society*. (New York: Mahlon Day, 1830): 16.

New York, like its neighboring states, due predominately to the economic and environmental nature, was what Ira Berlin described as a "society with slaves." In this type of society where slavery was profitable and prestigious, but not necessary for the society's financial stability, versus a "slave society" where it was foundational to the entire economic infrastructure such as the one that existed in the American South, slavery was integral in commerce, but enslaved persons could have some rights and privileges. In many cases Black people who were formerly enslaved in New York already owned land, had a household income, and independent employment.[42]

The 1820 New York state census counted almost 30,000 free Black people, and New York City had the largest concentration in the United States. The sight of free Black people was increasingly common on the city streets.[43] This public presence is evident in Francis Guy's 1797 painting *The Tontine Coffee House*, which is the first oil painting to depict free Black people in New York (see fig. 2). The Tontine Coffee House was at the center of life in the city. Coffee houses were places where talk about commerce, gossip, politics and anything else could take place in the growing metropolis.[44] This African American population boom was part of a larger boom occurring in New York in which the state population grew

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[42] John C. Hurd, *The Law of Freedom and Bondage in the United States*, D. Van Nostrand, vol. II (Massachusetts, Little Brown & Company, 1862), 54-55.; Charles H. Wesley, "The Negroes of New York and the Emancipation Movement," *The Journal of Negro History* 24, no. 1 (January 1939), 68.; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 8.
[43] Wesley, "The Negroes of New York and the Emancipation Movement", 69.
[44] Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists In The Revolutionary World* (New York: Random House, 2011), 318.

from just under 34,000 in 1790 to over 200,000 by 1830. People ranging from formerly enslaved fugitives from Southern states to Black refugees from the Haitian Revolution were settling in New York. The city provided a refuge of sorts, with a great deal more support for free and fugitive Black people, but also a much economic competition. New York was not only a target destination for Black people but also for the thousands of immigrants from Europe pouring into the city from ships docked on New York Harbor.[45]

Fig. 2. Francis Guy, *The Tontine Coffee House* (1797). Oil on Linen, 23 x 30 cm. Copyright New-York Historical Society (CC BY SA 2.5), accessed February 17, 2021. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=francis+guy+the+tontine+coffee+house&title=Special:Search&go=Go&ns0=1&ns6=1&ns12=1&ns14=1&ns100=1&ns106=1#/media/File:WLA_nyhistorical_Francis_Guy_Tontine_Coffee_House.jpg

[45] Burrows, and Wallace, *Gotham*, 576.

The completion of the Erie Canal in 1823 signified New York's rise as the economic hub of the United States. Along with the opening of the canal, New York was experiencing the further concentration of financial capital, and the increase in immigration from Europe. Despite financial panics that struck the young republic, like the Panic of 1792, the city was at the center of the growing American capitalist enterprise. An integral piece of this enterprise was centered on a crop that had become cheaper and more efficient to produce and supply and a key commodity in domestic production and international trade. That crop was cotton, and it was King in the South and the number one cash crop.[46] Cotton was the key to New York's growth, as the city was the main hub for export to Europe. The financial and merchant firms of New York were essential in the success of the American cotton business. New York banks provided finance to the cotton planters and New York insurance firms provided the planters their insurance policies. Even New York clothier, Brooks Brothers, provided uniforms for enslaved people working the cotton fields.[47] New York was awash with Southerners who often stayed in fancy New York hotels, many of the city's daily newspapers, especially the ones of the pro-business variety, found the plantations and Southern way of life extremely praiseworthy. The planters and their vast plantations represented for many what the United States lacked, a landed gentry,

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[46] James Henry Hammond, *Selections from the Letters and Speeches of the Hon. James H. Hammond, of South* (New York: John F. Trow & Co., 1866), 317.
[47] Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of American Fugitive Slaves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 45.

an aristocracy of refinement and propriety that stood against radical change, whether it be democratic or economic.[48]

In 1792 The New York Stock Exchange opened on Wall Street alongside the offices of merchants, banks, and mercantile exchanges. The East River docks handled sugar, tobacco, cotton, and other cash crops produced by enslaved labor in the Southern states and the Caribbean.[49] There was a lot of money to be made in New York through investing in any number of business ventures or through the recently opened Stock Exchange. Some Black people like Thomas Downing, who opened a popular restaurant in the New York Financial District near the Stock Exchange, were able to take advantage of this new prosperity and acquire wealth.[50] However, most Black New Yorkers did not have the chance to take advantage of this commercial development through investment or exchange, lacking the capital (e.g. assets and property) and connections available to many white people in the city. Black people usually could only find employment through hourly wage labor, and were in competition with the boatloads of European immigrants arriving in the growing metropolis for such employment. As New York City's population expanded, the disparity between a burgeoning

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[48] William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee : The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18.

[49] The Slave Market, which had been on Wall Street, closed in 1762, but enslaved people were still bought, sold, and traded throughout the city. For more on this location and others throughout the United States see Anne C. Bailey's February 12, 2020 article in New York Times Magazine, *They Sold Humans Here*. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/02/12/magazine/1619-project-slave-auction-sites.html

[50] James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), 45.

Black middle class and a Black working class widened. By 1819, there were one hundred Black families in New York City with a reported income of at least $10,000. This was at a time when a common laborer in the Northeastern United States might earn about $1.00 a day. People like Thomas Downing and the wealthier Black families were decidedly in the minority as a vast majority of Black families were poor, with no property or secure capital. Even those families with wealth faced barriers to becoming part of the growing civic society. The male heads of these one hundred Black families could vote, but only if they paid the tax of $250 to be listed on the rolls. This tax, of course, was a burden to which white voters were not subject to. In 1821 the new state constitution put in place a new law mandating a property requirement for Black voters and later in 1846 there was a referendum to expand suffrage to all Black men. The referendum failed by a 2 to 1 majority in the state.[51]

3.3 Catching Up: Building Black Institutions Amidst White Resentment

New York's economic expansion and growth in the first half of the nineteenth century brought great wealth to many of its citizens. However, for

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[51] White, *Stories of Freedom,* 12.; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham,* 308-48.; Wesley, "The Negroes of New York and the Emancipation Movement,", 66.; *Comparative Wages, Prices, and Cost of Living :(From the Sixteenth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, for 1885)*, Reprint ed. (Boston :, 1889), 22.; Phyllis F. Field, *The Politics of Race: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 41-61.

many Black people, especially those who had been freed under gradual emancipation laws, the economic picture was not so rosy. With the end of slavery a number of formerly enslaved people lost their only employment and were often left with no savings or wages and ended up homeless or in debtor prisons. [52] The 1827 law that went into effect freed all enslaved people who had been alive at the time of the Gradual Emancipation Act of 1799 and so on July 4, 1827, the last remaining enslaved people in New York, of which there was almost 3,000, became free. This freedom was often a problem, as many of the freed people were not only old, but lacked the resources to be truly free. Poor Black children were also at an extreme disadvantage. Poor white children in New York, either without parents, or with parents that could not take care of them, would typically be placed in private orphanages, where they would have the chance to gain at least a rudimentary education. Black children without parental support did not have this chance and were generally abandoned in adult alms houses with no access to education or any other resources.[53] Without access to any kind of education, many poor Black children had little chance to secure stable employment and were left to compete with white European immigrants for low paying, short term wage labor. Black people in New York, of whatever age or class faced systemic barriers to advancing socially and economically.[54]

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[52] White, 15.
[53] Duane, *Educated for Freedom*, 10.
[54] Leslie M. Harris, *In The Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 128-35.

Racial discrimination and segregation existed in all aspects of New York society, from the horse-drawn omnibuses and lunch counters to the workplaces, and the houses of worship. Black people were restricted to where they could sit, where they could eat, where they could work. and where they could kneel and pray.[55] Along with unjust laws and policies, city and state agencies and organizations were rife with racists and active supporters of slavery. Historian Jonathan Daniel Wells has written about a group nicknamed "The Kidnapping Club." The club included a network of judges, lawyers, and city policemen that attacked and kidnapped alleged runaway enslaved people and profited from their sale to plantation owners in the South and the Caribbean. Richard Riker, the attorney who led the Court of Special Sessions, which was New York City's criminal court, was considered a member of the club.[56]

The same law that had officially ended slavery in the state in 1827 also allowed Southerners to bring the enslaved people they possessed into the city, creating an even more tumultuous environment. New York was often a hostile environment for Black people, and the overt, obvious racism endured on the streets was frequently matched by the less obvious, but just as insidious, denial of opportunities for Blacks to join societies, schools, churches, and other civic

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[55] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham,* 547.
[56] Jonathan Daniel Wells, "The Black New Yorker Who Led the Charge Against Police Violence in the 1830's," *Time Magazine*, June 17, 2020, https://time.com/5855044/19th-century-police-violence/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=editorial&utm_term=history_opinion&linkId=91172741; Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of American Fugitive Slaves*, 52.; Edward Pressen, *Riches, Class, And Power: America Before the Civil War*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 98. New York City's largest prison today is located on Richard Riker's family's former land, Riker's Island.

institutions. What was crucial for Black people in New York was to use their earned power to improve the condition of free and formerly enslaved people. For many Black New Yorkers of the time, rather than looking for employment in white owned businesses and institutions, the best opportunities came from within their own communities. Black New Yorkers established churches and societies to consolidate and utilize their growing power. Independent churches, along with relief and literary societies and even the first Black theatre, The Africa Grove Theatre, which was constructed in 1821, were tangible signs of that development.[57] Black institutions were thriving, and were even able to mock the discrimination they constantly faced. A Black newspaper, the *National Advocate* in an article about a new play opening at the Africa Grove Theater, dryly reported "The gentlemen of color announce another play at their Pantheon, corner of Bleecker and Mercer Streets, on Monday evening …They have graciously made a partition for the back of the house, for the accommodation of the whites."[58] These institutions, along with the expanding number of schools for Black children provided a foundation for a growing Black New York community following emancipation. Black-owned businesses were expanding and there were more opportunities to develop them and hire workers from the expanding Black neighborhoods in Manhattan.[59] In upper Manhattan, three lots purchased by Black shoeshine, Andrew Williams, became Seneca Village, which until its

[57] Wesley, "The Negroes of New York and the Emancipation Movement", 66.
[58] *National Advocate*, October 27, 1821; Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 78.
[59] Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of American Fugitive Slaves*, 44.

destruction to make way for Central Park in the 1850's was, as described by Jonathan Daniel Wells, as "one of the most vigorous working-class Black neighborhoods in the country."[60] A key aspect of this increase in Black-owned businesses and institutions was an increased access to education.

[60] Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Kidnapping Club: Wall Street, Slavery, and Resistance on the Eve of the Civil War* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2020), 33–34; Harris, *In The Shadow of Slavery*, 128.

Chapter Four: The New York African Free School

4.1 The Radical Difference: Education Before and After the Nineteenth Century

The educational opportunity that Samuel Ringgold Ward had and took advantage of was the product of a growing and changing North American world. The highly organized, systemic nature of education, as practiced at the NYAFS was a response to increasing urban growth and the need for specialized labor. According to historian Bernard Bailyn. "By 1800 education in America was a radically different process from what anyone in the early seventeenth century would have expected."[61] In the small, often isolated worlds of villages and rural farming communities, any kind of schooling largely was centered on the community, the church, and most especially the family:

> The forms of education assumed by the first generations of settlers in America were a direct inheritance from the family. Serving the needs of homogenous, slowly changing rural society, they were largely instinctive and traditional, little articulated and little formalized.[62]

Beyond the family, often members of the community or the local church would bear some responsibility for the informal education available to children. These

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[61] Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities For Study* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1960), 15.
[62] Bailyn, 15-18.

children were usually of European descent and were brought up in the faith, habits, and mores of their kin, whether French, English, German, or otherwise.

Enslaved people in the North and the South did received schooling in some communities, especially in the period of the late 1600 and early 1700's when more enslaved Africans were arriving. These people, in most cases as ignorant of Christianity as the harsh life of chattel slavery they were to endure, were usually taught Biblical verses by clergy attempting to convert them to Anglicanism or Catholicism.[63] In the few truly urbanized centers that existed in North America, like Boston, "free" schools were in existence in the late 1600's and early 1700's. These schools taught penmanship and bookkeeping to young white men, providing trained employees for the merchant firms that were operating on the busiest port on the east coast. By the late seventeenth century North America was changing dramatically with increases in immigration, urbanization, and the development of factories, mills, and canals. A world where the family household, the community, and the church were responsible for education was no longer adequate. The sheer number of people and the growth and expansion of settlements in the United States and Canada would inextricably change what education was and what purpose it served. In terms of childhood education, family still mattered of course, along with the community and the

[63] Annette Laing, "'Heathens and Infidels'? African Christianization and Anglicanism in the South Carolina Low Country, 1700–1750," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 197.; Herbert S. Klein, "Anglicanism, Catholicism and the Negro Slave," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 8, no. 3 (April 1966): 296-97.

church, but education would be formalized to train a growing population, both in the interests of commerce and the state.

4.2 Good and Useful Citizens of the State: The Foundation of the NYAFS

The New York African Free School was established in the wake of the American Revolution in 1787 by the New York Manumission Society and was modeled after the Quaker free schools that operated in Philadelphia.[64] The New York chapter was itself an outgrowth of the previously established Philadelphia Manumission Society. Philadelphia had served as the center of education for free Black people in the North with Quaker and Evangelical schools being formed as early as the 1750's. Philadelphia, with its proximity to the slave-holding states was a natural base for free and previously enslaved Black people to settle. The local Society of Friends also known as the Quakers, of Pennsylvania and neighboring New Jersey were generally opposed to slavery and were known to threaten expulsion to any member of their sect who owned a slave.[65] The movement of Black people to Philadelphia was also aided by the passage of a gradual emancipation act passed by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1780, making Pennsylvania the first state to pass such a law in the nation. The movement by

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[64] Manisha Sinha. *The Slave Catcher's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2016), 117.
[65] Frank R. Stockton, *Stories of New Jersey* (New York: American Book Company, 1896), 67.

Northern state legislatures to gradually emancipate enslaved people would gain momentum through the 1780's and 1790's.[66] With Pennsylvania being the first state with gradual emancipation, more and more free Black people settled there with their families. By the 1790's schools like Clarkson Hall, named after Thomas Clarkson, a British abolitionist, were holding classes for Black people twice a day; in the morning for children and in the evening for adults. [67] According to Harry Morgan, a noted historian of African American education, these early Black schools established in Northern cities like Philadelphia and New York provided children with, "a remarkable interplay between self-help, perseverance, Black and White philanthropy, and religious zealousness."[68] Abolitionist organizations along with schools and churches affiliated with the movement, grew throughout the North. Often connected to some of these abolitionist organizations were men renowned for their service in the American Revolution and the building of a new nation.

Some of the New York Manumission Society members were the most notable men in the burgeoning American Republic, figures such as Alexander Hamilton, George Clinton, and John Jay. In 1787, four years after the end of the American Revolution, and the same year as the Constitutional Convention, the New York African Free School was founded. The school was established to make

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[66] Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 68-69.
[67] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty,* 150.
[68] Harry Morgan, *Historical Perspectives on the Education of Black Children* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1995), 59.

the children of enslaved or previously enslaved people "useful members of the community."[69] Among the first nondenominational charity schools in the United States, the New York African Free School set out to make New York's Black children "useful" by instilling industry, sobriety, and freedom from vice.[70] The leaders and founders of the school believed that education was the foremost prerequisite for "chang(ing) the whole moral and intellectual character of the race."[71]

The founders of the New York Manumission Society shared many commonalities. These founders were men, they were white, and they were figures of respectability and property-based wealth; in some cases this property included enslaved people. Some of these founders, who were also trustees on the board governing the school, never emancipated their slaves before, during, or after their tenure with the society. Men like John Jay, Founding Father and first Chief Justice of the United States, a founder and trustee of the school, exemplified the paradoxical nature of the time. John Jay was born into a wealthy, New York merchant family that owned and accumulated wealth through slave holding and trading. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Jay's father was one of the largest owners of enslaved people in the state of New York. Yet, Jay went on to be a founding member of the Manumission Society and was the governor who signed the Gradual Emancipation Act in 1799 that would eventually end slavery

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[69] Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools,* 9-11.
[70] Rury, "The New York African Free School 1827-1836", 183.
[71] Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools* , 57.

in New York many years later. Jay, at the time of the 1799 Act, owned at least five enslaved persons and continued to own enslaved people until at least 1810.[72] His father, Peter Jay, had been a major landowner in nearby Westchester County, where he had one of the largest local slaveholdings. John Jay owed his wealth, privilege, and power to the institution of slavery; and he used part of his wealth, privilege, and power to emancipate enslaved people, just not his own or all of them right away. This apparent contradiction was not exclusive to John Jay of course. As Samuel Ward and many others later pointed out, men like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington who fought for the ideal of freedom in the American Revolution, also denied it to the enslaved people they owned. Men like Jay may or may not have had a moral interest in eradicating slavery, but they certainly had an economic interest in utilizing labor, whether free or enslaved.[73]

A large majority of the Black New Yorkers at this time were a people without property or wealth, the benefit they held for the economic elite of New York was as a source of low cost labor. This Black population could serve the economic interests of the merchant class of New York, whether they were free or enslaved. An institution like the NYAFS was there to, in the words of historian David Brion Davis, "inculcate the lower classes with various moral and economic

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[72] Ned Benton and Judy Lynne Peters, "Slavery and the Extended Family of John Jay," *New York Slavery Records Index Records of Enslaved Persons and Slave Holders in New York from 1525 Though the Civil War*, accessed September 21, 2020, https://nyslavery.commons.gc.cuny.edu/slavery-and-the-extended-family-of-john-jay/of-john-jay/.

[73] Daniel C. Littlefield, "John Jay, the Revolutionary Generation, and Slavery," *New York History* 81, no. 1 (January 2000): 91-132, 95.

virtues, so that workers would want to do what the emerging economy required."[74] If the labor itself could not be commodified completely, perhaps there was an advantage still to be gained by those with capital. This sentiment was one shared by many who profited off the backs of enslaved people in the Americas. As a French planter put it in 1790, "It is perhaps not impossible to civilize the Negro, to bring him to principles and make a man out of him: there would be more to gain than to buy and sell him."[75] The wealth and privilege acquired by many wealthy people came from the exploitation of enslaved labor; for Jay and others that wealth and privilege could or would have to be maintained in another way, from free labor.

4.3 To Ensure Order and Discipline: Lessons at the NYAFS

Students at the New York African Free School were taught subjects like reading, arithmetic, grammar, and geography, as well as lessons in morality.[76] The first school opened in 1788 with forty pupils and in 1791 added a girls' class

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[74] Duane, "'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African FreeSchool and in My Bondage and My Freedom,", 466.; Singer, *New York and Slavery,* 70.; Kevin Brady, "Abolitionists Among New York's 'Founding Fathers,'" *Social Science Dockett* 1, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2001), 23.; Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*: *His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England*. (Paternoster Row, London: John Snow, 1855). 41.; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 242.
[75] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past, Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 80.
[76] Dabel, "Education's Unfulfilled Promise", 198.

with a female head teacher.[77] The words that follow are taken from the 1794 land deed for the location of the original New York African Free School in Lower Manhattan:

> Whereas many respectable and benevolent Persons in the City of New York have associated under the denomination of 'the Society for promoting the manumission of Slaves and protecting such of them as have been or may be Liberated,' and have Instituted a School in said City, called the African Free School for the humane and charitable purpose of Educating negro Children to the end that they may become good and useful Citizens of the State.[78]

In February 2020, An anonymous figure offered this document for auction at Sotheby's in New York City. If and when the deed goes on the auction block, it is expected to go for a bid between $250,000 and $350,000. This particular land deed is unique in that it contains more than just the necessary particulars, but also a detailed account that a specialist at Sotheby's called "the inspirational language" of for whom and what purposes the land would be used.[79] The benefactors of the school, among them founding fathers like John Jay and Alexander Hamilton are described as "respectable" and "benevolent", the services provided "humane" and "charitable", and the goal to make negro children "good" and "useful". The patronizing language used on the deed, and how the school's significance is

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[77] Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools,* 6-17.
[78] Olivia B. Waxman, "Land Deed for Pioneering School Sheds Light on an Early American Anti-Slavery Effort," *Time Magazine*, February 26, 2020, https://time.com/5790341/alexander-hamilton-african-free-school/.
[79] Waxman, "Land Deed."

viewed and valued today by media and the public, should not take away from what those that attended the school were able to achieve.

The New York African Free School was open for almost fifty years and in that time educated thousands of African American children, many of them formerly enslaved or the children of formerly enslaved people. The students overcame great difficulties in order to attend the school, not to mention the obstacles that they faced after their education was completed there. Henry Highland Garnett, a graduate of the school wrote of those who attended the institution:

> Among the students who were able to take advantage of the greater opportunities for African Americans in higher education were many alumni of the African Free School in New York City, and they came well prepared. From its earliest years, students at the school were encouraged to express antislavery ideas, and public oratory at special events was filled with abolitionism.[80]

The African Free School was responsible for producing some of the most illustrious, elite members of Black society of the nineteenth century; people such as actor and playwright Ira Aldridge, physician and abolitionist James McCune Smith, and publisher and clergymen Alexander Crummell were educated there.[81] The school was able to help these young people excel in their chosen fields and it provided examples of leadership for them to emulate.

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[80] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty,* 216.
[81] Morgan, *Historical Perspectives on the Education of Black Children,* 59.

Much of the credit for the success and growth of the NYAFS must go to one man in particular, John Teasman. Teasman was the first Black teacher and only Black headmaster of the school. John Teasman defied some of the underlying logic of the school, being an independent, strong Black leader who could achieve success. Teasman helped introduce a system to the school that allowed it to educate more Black children and provide them some leadership opportunities. In 1809 Teasman hired an Englishmen, Charles Andrews as the head teacher tasked with implementing the Lancasterian, or Monitorial, system of education for the pupils at the school. This system allowed one teacher, with the assistance of older students to supervise and teach large groups of students efficiently and inexpensively. With this new system in place the school could enroll and educate more students. The original school on Cliff Street in Lower Manhattan burned down in 1814 and a new larger building was constructed on Williams Street in 1815. In 1820, the school opened a second branch on Mulberry Street, several blocks north of the Williams Street school.[82] The new school on Mulberry Street, which had two floors and could hold almost five hundred students, was the school that Samuel Ringgold Ward attended from 1826 to 1833 (see fig. 3).

[82] Rury, "The New York African Free Schools, 1827-1836": 188-89.

Fig. 3. New York African Free School Number 2. Reproduction of student's drawing from Charles C. Andrew's book, *The History of the New York African Free Schools, From Their Establishment, In 1787 To The Present Time: Embracing A Period Of More Than 40 Years: Also A Brief Account Of The Successful Labours, Of The New York Manumission Society*. New York: Mahlon Day, 1830.

Englishmen Joseph Lancaster claimed credit for developing the Lancasterian, or Monitorial system in response to the needs of the masses of urban poor in his native London. One of the innovative features of this system was the use of older students to assist the teacher in school lessons. These students, known as monitors, were judged to have attained the most knowledge and could support the head teacher, or master, in providing instruction and ensuring students behaved properly. Senior students could also be dictators, if they could read and speak well they would have the chance to recite passages from literature and scripture out loud to the class. This education model created

an opportunity for students to gain a certain stature and respect among their peers, as well as provide more reinforcement for the instructors in regard to maintaining discipline and order in the classroom.

The educational model created by Lancaster emphasized order and structure in everything from the schoolhouse and school rooms to the details of the daily lessons. According to Peter E. Kurtze:

> Lancaster would not tolerate idleness and inattention, which he felt competing pedagogical systems encouraged. His plan was calculated to foster what he once referred to as "the loveliness of order;" with hundreds of pupils in a single room, this was as much a practical necessity as a philosophical goal. Both classroom routine and architectural space were consciously arranged to help control.[83]

A manual prepared by the New York African Free School, which was adapted from an earlier English version, laid out very specific instructions on how to create the best monitorial school. The *Manual of the Lancasterian System, of Teaching Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Needle-Work, as Practised in the Schools of the Free-Society, of New York* is very detailed, going so far as to provide guidelines for the appropriate dimensions of a classroom. According to the manual the length of the school room should be “about twice as great as its breadth. The height of the walls should be proportioned to the length of the

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[83] Peter E. Kurtze, “‘A School House Well Arranged’: Baltimore Public School Buildings on the Lancasterian Plan, 1829-1839,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 5 (1995): 70–77.

room."[84] The manual offered details for every aspect of the school room and included helpful illustrations. Even the dimensions of the desk size for each classroom were provided. The manual also emphasized the number and type of resources, like inkstands, alphabet boards, and writing slates, that should be used in each classroom and where they should be placed. Seemingly no detail was overlooked, every object in relation to the space around it was measured to the inch, even students. According to the manual, "every child being seated upon his form, occupies a space of 18 inches in the length of the desk."[85] Maintaining the appropriate space and distance were crucial in the Lancasterian system to ensure order and discipline.

Hierarchy was also important for this system to run effectively. A chain of command from the headmaster descending to the head teachers, dictators, and monitors to the students, or scholars as they were referred to in the manual, was established and a thorough disciplinary code was utilized. A system of punishment and reward was wielded in an attempt to instill proper conduct in the student body. Students were issued tickets of pasteboard, worth about one eighth of a cent, for following rules, being promoted to a higher class, engaging in proper conduct, or exemplifying academic success. At the end of every month, the students could cash in the tickets they possessed for minor prizes, such as books or small toys. Of course, these tickets would be forfeited if students were caught

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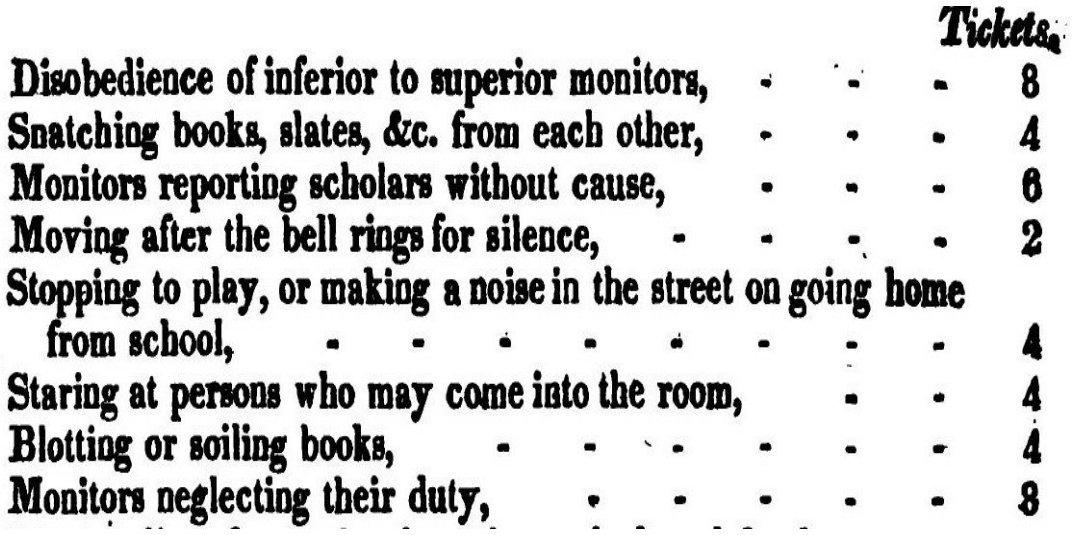
[84] Public School Society of New-York, British and Foreign School Society, *Manual of the Lancasterian System, of Teaching Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Needle-Work, as Practised in the Schools of the Free-Society, of New York* (New York, The Society, 1820), 5.
[85] Public School Society of New-York and British and Foreign School Society, 15.

misbehaving (see fig. 4). In addition to the seizing of tickets, other punishments, like after-school detention could be implemented for a variety of offenses like throwing stones, calling out, or "being disobedient or saucy to a monitor." Students who were late to school often would even have their names posted in public places as a measure to induce shame and ensure compliance. [86]



	Tickets.
Disobedience of inferior to superior monitors,	8
Snatching books, slates, &c. from each other,	4
Monitors reporting scholars without cause,	6
Moving after the bell rings for silence,	2
Stopping to play, or making a noise in the street on going home from school,	4
Staring at persons who may come into the room,	4
Blotting or soiling books,	4
Monitors neglecting their duty,	8

Fig. 4. List of Fines. From the *Manual of the Lancasterian System, of Teaching Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Needle-Work, as Practised in the Schools of the Free-Society, of New York* (New York, The Society, 1820), 63.

What is striking about the student disciplinary system used at the NYAFS is how very modern it appears. The behaviors that are monitored, punished, and rewarded are essentially the same in many primary and secondary education settings today, though not always listed and delineated in such an explicit

[86] Public School Society of New-York and British and Foreign School Society, 61-63.; Duane, " 'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African Free School and in My Bondage and My Freedom,", 471.

manner. In mainstream education in the contemporary world, teachers are still typically seen not only as instructors but as the enforcer of rules and the arbiters of reward. Discipline as a central tenet, perhaps *the* central tenet in an educational system is still a key aspect of education in many parts of the world today.[87]

Order and control were not only paramount in the physical spaces of a Lancasterian school, but also in the way the system managed time. School was held six days a week, with half days every Wednesday and Saturday.[88] The day began at 9:00 am each morning with monitors required to be there ten minutes prior and prepared to keep track of student arrivals. Any student that arrived thirty minutes late to school would have their name taken by a monitor and would have to have a note from a parent explaining the tardiness. Students with no note would be "dealt with according to the lateness of the hour at which they may have come in." The first half of the school day ended at 12:00 pm, and similar procedures were in place for the afternoon session of school, which started at 2:00 pm and concluded at 4:45 pm. Upon arrival at school, students were expected to have a clean face, hands, and be dressed neatly. If not, they would be cleaned and straightened out at school, presumably with the help of the monitors. Students were expected to be quiet and orderly during ingress and

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[87] I have served as high school teacher for fifteen years and has worked with a variety of discipline codes, point systems, and student behavior plans in classrooms. These various systems were both school imposed and teacher created. What stands out about the disciplinary code for the NYAFS is not how modern it appears, but that present-day education has not changed very much.
[88] Joel Schor, *Henry Highland Garnett: A Voice of Black Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), 6.

egress.[89] Each school day would commence with the reading of scripture by the teacher. This was the same for each grade, or class, of students. An excerpt from what a student might have memorized and recited during a public examination demonstrates a sample of what students would learn and how they were expected to behave at the school:

> When we in spelling, well succeed
> We do appointed lessons read.
> The Holy Bible is the source
> Of each gradationary course.
> A semicircle draught of six,
> Whose eyes must on the lesson fix;
> With hands behind, attentive stand,
> Read—till they hear a fresh command:
>
> Our places, then, at desks, we take,
> (For standing long, our legs would ache;)
> Rehearse the Tables, Grammar too,
> And many more things have to do.
> Our monitor demands a "Look,"
> "Clean slates," "Prepare," then takes his book,
> Gives out a word, when all in class
> Write, one each other to surpass.[90]

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[89] "An Address to the Parents and Guardians of the Children Belonging to the New York African Free School" (Samuel Wood and Sons, 1818), 20-21.
[90] Andrews, "Lines on the Manner of Conducting a Monitorial School, Spoken at a Public Examination," in *The History of the New-York African Free-Schools*, 139-43.

As the enforcers of laws and the arbiters of punishment and reward, teachers like Charles Andrews or John Teasman, had to be above reproach. For the school, it was imperative that the right people be in charge in the classroom. As it stated in the manual:

> …that the habits and characters of children are formed upon the model of those to whom they look up for support and protection. If *these* indulge in angry passions, show a disregard to truth and sincerity, and are otherwise immoral in their conduct, can it be a matter of surprise that the children should be depraved![91]

Head teachers and headmasters had to embody proper behavior, but they were not alone. The New York African Free School also emphasized the important role of parents in forming a decorous attitude in youth. Without respectable and proper parents, children would not only be depraved but would "have fallen into criminal practices in consequence of evil example of their parents and the neglect of a proper education."[92] For school leaders, students needed suitable parents to keep them free from vice and wickedness. If the parents were not willing or capable of providing, what was deemed to be correct child-rearing, the Manumission Society would do it for them. In a pamphlet published in 1818, the society outlines steps that would be taken if necessary:

> It has been deemed proper by the Manumission Society (that society which has labored with so much zeal for a long course of years, to meliorate the condition of the coloured people in the United States) that the power of putting out to trades or service, those children who may have received their education at the school, shall be left with the trustees, and a

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[91] Public School Society of New-York and British and Foreign School Society, 63.
[92] Public School Society of New-York and British and Foreign School Society, 59.

> committee appointed by the society: it being understood that the parents, shall, in every case, if they desire it, be previously consulted. It has been a subject of much regret to the Manumission Society, that many of the children who have been educated in their school, have, after leaving it, been suffered to waste their time in idleness, to mingle in bad company, and to contract those vicious habits, which are calculated to render them subjects of pests to society.[93]

Charles Andrews in his book reported that no one who was educated at the NYAFS was ever convicted of a crime, evidencing the effectiveness of the system and the school.[94] For him at least, this was proof that the school was bettering the young Black children in its charge.

In total there were eight grades at the NYAFS. Instruction, of course, would differ depending on the class in which students were enrolled, and would range from learning the alphabet in the first year to studying arithmetic or reading the Bible or other books for the senior students. Every student in the school was taught reading, writing, and math. Girls would study these subjects along with needlework, while boys had the opportunity to study other subjects like navigation, astronomy, and, most importantly, rhetoric. A key focus of the curriculum of the school was preparing the students, not only to be learned, but also eloquent and articulate. The study of poetry, scripture, and literature was stressed not only to ensure students understood the text, but were also able to utilize it in public addresses. Gifted students would serve as dictators, reading the

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[93] "An Address to the Parents and Guardians of the Children Belonging to the New York African Free School", 20-21.
[94] Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools*, 47.

works aloud, and other students would work to memorize and emulate the performances. The poem “Emblem of Education”, is an example of what a student might recite:

> Thus prudent care must rear the youthful mind,
> By love supported, and with toil refin'd
> 'Tis this alone the human plant can rise;
> Unprop'd, it droops, and unsupported dies.[95]

Everything the students read, recited, or listened to was centered around common themes: that learning, hard work, and discipline could save them from their condition. For the teachers and trustees the NYAFS was the vehicle to save the students from the inevitable life of ignorance and poverty they would otherwise face. This meant Black children had to be utterly transformed. According to this philosophical standpoint, the suffering and damage caused to Black people under slavery resulted in their dilapidation and utter inferiority to white people in all aspects, which needed to be rectified.

The pervading view of the trustees and teachers at the New York African Free School was that the condition, or original condition, of the students was one of despair, degradation, and hopelessness. The students not only carried the burden of slavery but the stain of their unremembered past across the ocean. A poem “Slavery”, penned by white British abolitionist Hannah Moore and recited

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[95] “African Free School Collection,” New York Historical Society, accessed June 19, 2020, http://digitalcollections.nyhistory.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A139593#page/10/mode/2up.

at a public examination by a NYAFS student Joe Anthony in 1815 at exemplifies this view:

> When'er to Afric's shores I turn my eyes,
> Horrors of deepest, deadliest guilt arise,
> I see by more than Fancy's mirror shown,
> The burning village, and the blazing town
> See the dire victim torn from social life,
> The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife—
> The weak forlorn is dragg'd by hostile hands,
> . . . The sole sad heritage her child obtains;
> Ev'n this last wretched boon their foes deny,
> To weep together or to die[96]

This often patronizing and condescending nature of the works memorized and recited was combined with instruction that was meant to help elevate Black children, despite their circumstance, into the higher echelons of society. This higher echelon was still not easy to reach, as secondary school could be the last rung of the ladder for Black students. Even as schools that accepted Black children arose in Northern cities, universities continued to discriminate and would not accept Black students. James McCune Smith, the first African American to earn a medical degree, could not get it in the US, and instead

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[96] Hannah Moore, "Slavery (1788)," in *Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1997): 43–49, lines 95-106.; Duane, " 'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African FreeSchool and in My Bondage and My Freedom,", 461.

attained his degree in Scotland at the University of Glasgow.[97] Historian Anna Mae Duane highlighted this particular incongruity at the NYAFS. According to Duane, students at the school had a similar education to white students in private schools but "the lessons the students were given reveal the discomfort many instructors and administrators felt about encountering Black children on the verge of a potentially empowered adulthood."[98] Students at the NYAFS would practice the recitation of despairing slave narratives, often written by Charles Andrews himself, in combination with receiving the same classical education as white students. The students of the NYAFS read the ancient Hebrew scriptures, the Greek poets, and the Roman historians. The tales of the Greek gods and the Roman emperors were as much a part of their history as the despairing slave narratives penned by Charles Andrews. The young American Republic, and its young citizens, were the heirs of the west, and Western Civilization. Ward, referred to this inheritance while debating a white supremacist in 1850:

> We derive our knowledge from the Romans, they from the Greeks, they from the Jews, and lastly, they from the Egyptians. Now the Egyptians were blacks. Herodotus, the father of history, says so, and he would not lie, and he resided for years among them, and surely he knew black from white.[99]

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[97] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 216.
[98] Anna Mae Duane, "'Like a Motherless Child': Racial Education at the New York African Free School and in My Bondage and My Freedom,", 465.
[99] Samuel Ward, *Pennsylvania Freeman*, May 16, 1850.

Despite this belief, and despite the very slow progression that seemed to be happening, acute obstacles remained in the fight to gain acceptance fully into American society.

The students at the New York African Free School were not just educated to become suitable members of civil society, or serve as exemplars for their peers, but to add their efforts in the struggle for Black liberation and equality. The trustees established the school to make Black children useful, but the pupils often had larger ambitions. Most of the students at the NYAFS and other Black schools were amongst the first in their families to have any formal education. The students were representative of a new generation that, under the right circumstances, had the opportunity to emerge from the depravity of slavery and take advantage of an education that was denied to enslaved people. These students' eloquent voices would join the chorus of Black speakers, newspapers, pamphlets, and treatises in proclaiming the rights and dignities of their people. And, as racialized violence, restrictive state laws regarding voting, and freedom of speech in "free" states demonstrated, the struggle to gain basic civil rights was a persistent reality. As Frederick Douglass observed, Americans "turned a deaf ear, and refused to listen to the friends of freedom. They turned a deaf ear to the groans of the oppressed slave."[100] The students at the NYAFS were too young to

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[100] Alex W. Black, "Abolitionism's Resonant Bodies: The Realization of African American Performance," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2011), 619.; *Liberator*, May 29, 1846.

preach from the pulpit, or persuade with the printed word, but they did have a platform in which to share their voices.

The public examination days in which NYAFS students were assessed on their academic merits were tangible symbols to the wider community of the prospect and progress of abolitionism. The "deaf ears" that Douglass wrote of it was thought could be made to hear the truth. Oratory brilliance could perhaps persuade those who were convinced of Black inferiority to change their minds, to accept what was in fact, self-evident. Students at the NYAFS had the chance to demonstrate their oratory talents and their knowledge to audiences in their public examination days. James McCune Smith wrote about these days at the NYAFS In *Frederick Douglass' Paper*:

> When examination day came in Mr. Andrew's school, the boot-black was always there; . . . and when he saw little boys, with tight heads and dark complexions, stand upon a platform, before a multitude of white people, and read out loud in books, and spell out loud, with closed books, and say geography, and cipher on the black-board, and more than all, "speak pieces" about liberty, and never seem afraid—why, then his eye would glisten and his soul struggle with the past wrong done him in slavery, and the coming glory.[101]

These performative exercises were mirrored by the other public displays of Black distinction and eloquence, like those exhibited through the speeches of Black abolitionists and in the theatrical work of Ira Aldridge on the stages of Europe and the United States. The key purpose of these displays were to uphold and

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[101] James McCune Smith, "Communipaw," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, April 15, 1852.

buttress the reputation of respectability and sophistication among Blacks in the Northern United States.[102]

The public examination was both a testament to a student's intelligence and ability, as well as a sophisticated marketing tool for the school and its administrators. The public examinations were opportunities for the school to exhibit the impressive work they had done with children that many in society were convinced were inferior. The examinations were truly open, and they were often attended by parents, teachers, school trustees, students, and members of the public. Hero of the American Revolution, the Marquis de Lafayette, a friend of trustee John Jay, even attended an examination in 1824 during a trip around the United States. Reporters for the various New York papers would attend the examinations as well, ready to report on the successes or failures of the students in their performances.[103] The idea of young Black children standing before an audience, usually a majority white audience and demonstrating their talent and eloquence may have been an inspiration to many, but certainly it was a threat to others, who would rather view a Black person as a "irresponsible, happy go lucky, wide grinning, loud laughing, shuffling, banjo playing, singing, dancing sort of being."[104]

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[102] Rael, *Black Identity & Black Protest,* 190. Duane, "'Like a Motherless Child':Racial Education at the New York African Free School and in My Bondage and My Freedom,", 464.
[103] Carla L. Peterson, *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 83.
[104] Johnson, *Black Manhattan,* 93.

Respectable public Black expression displaying normative behavior was deemed vital to Black liberation, especially in comparison to the alternative forms of Black expression that were widely popular for many in the United States. Blackface minstrelsy was one of the most popular forms of theater at the time. The antebellum era saw the rise of theaters and theatrical spectacles that were inexpensive and therefore, accessible for most members of the public. Samuel Cornish, a Black religious leader and editor in New York, weighed in against the minstrelsy plays, he wrote they, "hold up to ridicule the foibles or peculiarities of an already too much oppressed people." Cornish also called out white actor J.D. Rice in particular; Rice known as "Jim Crow", darkened his skin with cork in his efforts to create of a lampoonist caricature of a Black person (see fig. 5). Cornish wrote of how Rice's portrayals of Black people prompted laughter and disgust in white audiences.[105] These routines were popular throughout the United States and continued to grow with the surge of inexpensive theatres across the country. Frederick Douglass observed that these insidious blackface minstrelsy acts, "cater to the lower elements of the baser sort… the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens."[106] It was believed that for Black people to avoid exploitation and ridicule in the public

[105] *Colored American*, December 9, 1837.
[106] *North Star*, June 29, 1849.

sphere they had to appear above approach and appeal to a more refined strata of white society.[107]

Fig. 5. Clay, Edward Williams. *The Original Jim Crow*, 1832, Lithograph, 26 cm x 18 cm,. Robert Cushman Butler Collection of Theatrical Illustrations, (PD-US), Washington State University Libraries, Pullman, WA., accessed June 4, 2020. http://digitalexhibits.wsulibs.wsu.edu/exhibits/show/reconstruction-416/item/5490

Black students in their public examinations could offer a counter-example of the racist and vulgar stereotype promulgated by J.D. Rice and others. Respectable and sober Black churchmen, teachers, and journalists could serve

[107] Rael, *Black Identity & Black Protest,* 172-73.

not only as true exemplars of strong, free Black people but role models for those in their communities. A belief existed among the rising Black elite that the key to be respected and respectable, not only for their local neighborhood but for the larger society, was through education. *The New-York Spectator* reported in 1815 on Black parents and education, "Many blacks and people of color were desirous of availing themselves of the opportunity now afforded, to give their children some education."[108] Black parents were largely willing to sacrifice to send their children to school and provide them the resources they needed. Many Black New Yorkers had no savings, no property, no family or friends that had the capital or the resources to assist them financially. The survival of the family was directly connected to finding and maintaining gainful employment however possible. To send a child to school was simply to sacrifice another source of income. This was a sacrifice many families were willing to make. And this sacrifice extended to the wider Black community, who were willing to give whatever they could to support children going to school. The Dorcas Society was established and while led by Samuel Cornish, it chiefly was sustained by the work of Black women, who spent long hours sewing clothes to keep children well dressed and attending school. The newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* , published The constitution of the Dorcas Society which stated, in part that it was "a great blessing for our children… to enjoy the advantages of a good education."[109]

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[108] Dabel, "Education's Unfulfilled Promise", 198.; *The New-York Spectator*, March 11, 1815.
[109] *Freedom's Journal*, February 1, 1828; Alexander, *African or American?,* 68.; Wells, *The Kidnapping Club*, 35.

4.4 Fractious Flashpoints: Paternalism, Expansion, and Change

Much of what is known about the history of the New York African Free School comes from Charles Andrew's aptly and lengthily titled work *The History of the New York African Free Schools, From Their Establishment, In 1787 To The Present Time: Embracing A Period Of More Than 40 Years: Also A Brief Account Of The Successful Labours, Of The New York Manumission Society*. Andrews' narrative presents the school and its efforts in a very positive manner, portraying the trustees and teachers as largely responsible for salvaging an ignominious people. Notably, Andrews ignores the accomplishments of the man who hired him, the first and only Black headmaster John Teasman. Andrews doesn't mention Teasman and essentially wrote him out of the history of the school.[110] Charles Andrews was described by former students as compassionate, conscientious, and a stern disciplinarian. He also introduced special classes to the school like Navigation and astronomy and helped create a school library and museum of natural history.[111] Despite his reputed compassion and conscientiousness, Andrews held the conviction that Black children were predisposed to sloth and criminality and the school was their only hope of possibly being relieved of that conditions. Andrews was a paternalist to the extreme, but he did believe that Black people had the potential to achieve parity

[110] Swan, "John Teasman, African-American Educator", 333.
[111] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 152-53; Andrews, *The History of the New York African Free Schools,* 74-87, 106-09.

to white people in regard to intelligence. Andrews, however, was pessimistic in his outlook for Black success in New York and the wider republic.[112]

However, Charles Andrews did not have the full support of the Black community and the families of students because of his strong support for Black colonization. In his history of the school he recounted the story of one student who did well at the school and worked as an apprentice butcher but could not find regular employment because of his race, and without prospects, eventually left the United States for Liberia. In this anecdote, Andrews acknowledged the racism that was predominant in society and his belief that education might not be enough to overcome it, but perhaps colonization could.[113] His faith in the colonization movement was one shared by many in the abolitionist movement. The New York Manumission Society itself was strongly in favor of colonization as well. In 1826 delegates from the Manumission Society put forth resolutions that the American Anti-Slavery Society should abolish slavery and work to transport the people currently enslaved in the United States to Africa or the island of St. Domingo. The Manumission Society and the administrators of the NYAFS were also eager to take their educational model to Africa and offered to train two Black teachers in the pedagogical methods of the Lancasterian system if they promised to implement it at schools in Liberia. Charles Andrews even offered to train John B. Russwurm, co-editor of the Black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in school

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[112] Andrews, 15-20.
[113] Andrews, 18-19.

administration before his trip to Liberia in 1829. This active push to support the colonization effort led to a backlash against the NYAFS and Charles Andrews from many parents, community members, and even some teachers.[114] The issue for many was not the exportation of the Lancastrian model of course, but its use in a scheme to export American born Black people from their home to another place. The Lancasterian system, however, was already expanding to other regions around the world.

The Lancasterian model was popular in Europe and the Americas due of the growing population of children that needed schooling in urban areas. The increased industrialization and the consequent urbanization that brought more workers, and thus more families and children into the cities led to a need for a system where a growing number of students could be taught. Not only was the Lancasterian model brought to the Americas, but Joseph Lancaster himself was brought to the United States when he was invited by a mill owner to establish a school in Lowell, Massachusetts for the children of textile mill workers in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1818.[115] Throughout parts of the Americas many recently freed Black people were also searching for work in population centers. The Lancasterian model presented a practical approach to teach a growing mass of students without exceeding the resources that might be available. During the

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[114] Duane, *Educated for Freedom*, 19-20.
[115] G.F. Bartle, "Lancaster, Joseph (1778–1838) Educationist," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, September 23, 2004. https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-15963.

antebellum period, many schools using the Lancasterian model were established throughout cities in Great Britain, the United States and across the Western hemisphere. The model proved effective due to its emphasis on utilizing older students to support larger class sizes, something that was becoming increasingly necessary in growing cities. The Lancasterian model was deemed an especially useful teaching model in places where chattel slavery had ended, resulting in a sudden need to educate a recently freed, and formerly under- or uneducated, population. This was the case in Haiti where Prince Saunders, an African American abolitionist, was appointed by the leader of Haiti, King Henry Christophe to construct British Lancasterian schools in the northern part of the island. In 1823 Joseph Lancaster was invited to Venezuela by Simón Bolívar to establish schools in the newly liberated country.[116]

The Lancasterian model proved successful for the Manumission Society and it continued to add more schools and enroll more students in the growing free school network in New York. However, by the early 1830's many prominent Black abolitionists, like Thomas Downing, William Hamilton, and Henry Sipkins, became vocal in their displeasure with Charles Andrews, the leader of NYAFS no. 2. Andrews still had a great deal of support from former students, but many parents began to boycott the school and send their children to other schools for Black children that were established in Manhattan. This hostility towards

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[116] William Harvey, *Sketches of Hayti; from the Expulsion of the French to the Death of Christophe. (*London: L.B. Seeley, 1827*), 202.* (London: L.B. Seeley, 1827), 202.; Wirzbicki, "The Light of Knowledge", 280.

Andrews grew as a story emerged regarding his violent behavior towards a student. According to the account, Andrews took issue with a student for referring to a Black visitor to the school as a "gentleman", in response Andrews caned the student so violently it "echoed the punishment of slaves."[117] The anti-Andrews movement grew and in 1832 the Manumission Society was forced to accept Charles Andrews' resignation as headmaster and teacher at the school.

Andrew's replacement was James Adams, a Black Quaker who helped revitalize the school. The resignation of Andrews and the appointment of Adams revealed the influence the Black community could have in New York. Under Adams there was an increase in student enrollment continued and the hiring of more Black teachers. However, this increase in enrollment was short lived as a continued distrust of the Manumission society, combined with an increase in anti-abolitionist violence and riots in New York, caused many Black parents to keep their children out of the network of New York African Free Schools. It was not just violence in the schools that terrified Black families in New York, but the growing fear of their children being kidnapped, which was a phenomenon increasing in New York. Among the growing number of missing children was twelve year old Frances Shields, a young Black girl who was taken on her way to a NYAFS school in 1833. Frances was never seen again, it is assumed she was a victim of the notorious "Kidnapping Club" and ended up as slave in the Southern United States, as many of the men, women, and children that were abducted from

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[117] Harris, *The Shadow of Slavery,* 134-35.

the streets of New York did in this time period.[118] Ultimately, the Manumission Society discontinued their work and pulled all the funding from the schools. Education was becoming more of a public than private venture in New York, with government funding replacing charity and donation. This seemingly positive development would have adverse consequences for Black students and their families.[119]

In 1834, the Public School Society took over the New York African Free Schools, as it did to hundreds of schools throughout the city and dismissed all the Black teachers and administrators. Since the Public School Society received a substantial amount of its funding from public sources, it was less reliant on the local Black community than the Manumission Society had been. The dismissal of all Black teachers caused a public outcry. In response, the Public School Society hired back many Black teachers but refused to provide adequate support and resources for the schools to function. Unfortunately, public funding was not distributed equally among all schools in New York. The poor funding of the former New York African Free Schools ultimately caused the quality of education to drop precipitously, eventually resulting in their closure. As public education expanded over the years, there was an increased indifference and outright prejudice towards Black students and families regarding access to and the quality of education in New York. Black students also faced discrimination and violence

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[118] Wells, *The Kidnapping Club*, 23.
[119] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty,* 52-53.

in the public schools. More and more Black families looked for alternatives to public education, which were increasingly rare and often only accessible to the small minority who possessed the economic means to pursue them. By the eve of the American Civil War, despite the dramatic expansion of public schools, attendance by Black children actually fell significantly as compared to how many had attended in the 1830's and 1840's. In the end, the solidarity and commitment of the Black community to lead the way in the education of their children was undermined and undone by a hostile public and civic society.[120]

Although the Black population of New York continued to grow it was dwarfed by the continued wave of immigrants from Europe. These new immigrants from Europe, often adapted quite well to their new environs, adopting the racism of many Native born white people. The strong Black enclave, and its societies, churches, and schools like the New York African Free School, that existed in Lower Manhattan would largely disappear in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many families moved north to Harlem, where Black culture and institutions would flourish once again in the years to come. [121]

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[120] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 1827-1836": 191-97.; Duane, *Educated for Freedom*, 21-22.
[121] Johnson, *Black Manhattan,* 137-47.

Chapter 5: The Life and Work of Samuel Ringgold Ward

5.1 Born A Slave: The Childhood of Samuel Ringgold Ward

"My parents were slaves. I was born a slave. They escaped, and took their then only child with them."[122]

Samuel Ringgold Ward was born an enslaved person on Maryland's Eastern Shore in 1817. In his book, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England*, Ward described his family history. Ward's father William and his mother Anne were born enslaved as were their ancestors going back several generations. Of his father, Ward wrote:

> My father, from what I can gather, was descended from an African prince. I ask no attention to this, as it comes to me simply from tradition-such tradition as poor slaves may maintain. Like the sources of the Nile, my ancestry, I am free to admit, is rather difficult of tracing. My father was a pure-blooded negro, perfectly black, with woolly hair; but, as is frequently true of the purest negroes, of small, handsome features.[123]

Ward's focus on his father's and his own lineage highlights an issue that would arise often for Black abolitionists: the relationship between Africa and their native born country, the United States. This connection between Africa and the US was also something that was emphasised at the New York African Free

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[122] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 6.
[123] Ward, 5

School, especially in the passages memorized and recited by the student that often concerned their own apparent origins as African, and as enslaved people. However, Ward's attention to his lineage was also a reminder of the oral tradition that existed among enslaved people linking their African past to their contemporary American experience.[124] Ward's assertion that his father was a "pure-blooded negro" contrasted with his description of his mother. As the notion of race science became further ingrained in society in the antebellum period, the issue of color, or purity, would impact both free and enslaved persons alike. Here again, Ward utilized oral tradition to describe his mother's lineage. Of his mother, he wrote, "her mother, however, was a woman of light complexion; her grandmother, a mulattress; her great-grandmother, the daughter of an Irishman, named Martin, one of the largest slaveholders in Maryland."[125] Ward's descriptions of his ancestry encapsulates the African-American experience of the nineteenth century; the maintenance of generational memory, miscegenation, and the importance of appearance and skin tone.

In 1820, at the age of three, Ward was taken from slavery in Maryland by his parents to freedom in New Jersey. Ward and his parents would never be enslaved again but would be fugitives from the law for the rest of their lives, having never been legally manumitted. The family settled in Cumberland County, in the southern part of the state, which along with neighboring Pennsylvania had

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[124] Darwin T. Turner, "African-American History and the Oral Tradition," *Books at Iowa* 53 (November 1990): 9. Accessed November 18, 2019.
[125] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 6.

a large population of Quakers, and was regarded as a relatively safe location for formerly enslaved people escaping north.[126] Writing of his time in Cumberland County, Ward recounted how his first schooling really began with lessons from his father, "There he first taught me some valuable lessons--the use of the hoe, to spell in three syllables, and to read the first chapter of John's Gospel, and my figures; then, having exhausted his literary stock upon me, he sent me to school."[127] The Ward family was free, and young Samuel attended school in the town of Greenwich for a brief time. Life in the North could be precarious as fugitive enslaved people were not protected from slave laws and slave catchers. In his autobiography, Ward relayed the story of how one of his father's relatives was recaptured in New Jersey and taken back into bondage. It was the continued threat of capture and re-enslavement that led his parents to move further north to New York City with Samuel, then aged nine and his younger brother, Isaiah in 1826.[128]

Upon arriving in New York, Ward and his family first stayed with their relatives the Garnets on Leonard Street in Lower Manhattan.[129] By the time of Ward's arrival, there were many newly free Black people in New York who had escaped from the northernmost of the slave holding states. Ward's cousin, Henry Highland Garnet, and Frederick Douglass, had also escaped from Maryland,

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[126] Today in the region are many surviving Quaker meeting houses, cemeteries and private homes that were used as safe houses on the Underground Railroad. The school in Greenwich that Samuel Ward attended still stands today.
[127] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 17.
[128] Ward, 16-17.
[129] Duane, *Educated for Freedom*, 105.

which is less than one hundred and sixty kilometers from New York City. The 'new' New Yorkers, and those who had been gradually emancipated, established the schools, societies and churches that would be at the center of Black life there. Ward wrote of the new world his family saw, "…we found some 20,000 coloured people. The State had just emancipated all its slaves…and it was deemed safer to live in such a city than in a more open country place, such as we had just left."[130]

New York may have been safer than the countryside, but it was not safe, and it was rife with racial discrimination that impacted the newly freed and often destitute people coming into the city. In the 1820's and 1830's there were frequent reports of Black people kidnapped on the streets and the fear was evident in New York's Black community. The Ward family had already been impacted directly by a kidnapping of a relative in New Jersey. This fear of capture was a constant danger for Black people in the North. Ward detailed the story of two of his father's nephews, who after escaping from slavery, made their way to New York, but "were taken back in the most summary manner, in 1828. I never saw a family thrown into such deep distress by the death of any two of its members, as were our family by the re-enslavement of these two young men." No one in the Ward family ever saw those young men again, their fate was most likely, "the living death, the temporal hell, of American slavery."[131]

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[130] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 17.
[131] Ward, 10.

A life of poverty in New York, was certainly better than what the alternative could be. But to be free, to be poor, and to be Black was to carry a monumental burden. For Ward, the biggest problem for the average Black person in New York wasn't living in poverty but "the ever-present, ever-crushing Negro-hate, which hedges up his path, discourages his efforts, damps his ardour, blasts his hopes, and embitters his spirit". Samuel Ward was fortunate to live with both of his parents, however Ward's family struggled with gaining and holding employment. Samuel Ward and his brother, both too young to work, went to school and his parents took what work they could. As the center of the African-American diaspora, New York would be the testing ground for establishing a new free society from the ashes of the old "society with slaves." A pillar of this new society would be the education of Black children.[132]

5.2 An Educated Negro: Student, Teacher, Preacher, Pastor

"One of great discredit to Americans--that an educated Negro, as a rule, is treated no better than one uneducated."[133]

In his autobiography, Ward wrote, "among the heaviest maledictions against slavery is that which it deserves for keeping my poor father -and millions

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[132] Ward, 26-28.; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 8.
[133] Ward, 135.

like him- in the midnight and dungeon of the grossest ignorance."[134] Ward was part of the first generation of African Americans to break free of this so-called ignorance. With minimal savings, Ward's parents were willing to endure poverty and sacrifice the potential earnings of their children by sending them to school instead of sending them to work. Unfortunately, there are no surviving records directly related to Ward's school work at the NYAFS. Clearly, Ward honed his rhetorical skills and talent while at the school, but it is not certain if he served as a monitor or dictator or in any leadership capacity at the school. Since, as an adult Ward was known for his great oratory skills along with his imposing height and presence, it is likely he served in at least one of those capacities during his time at the school between 1826 and 1833. Ward's articulate writing style and frequent reference to history, politics, and philosophy in his writings and speeches also reinforce the notion that Ward was a studious pupil who took his lessons seriously at the school.

While attending the NYAFS, Ward had several different teachers and in his autobiography, he mentioned a few by name. Charles Andrews was Ward's teacher for a majority of his time at the school. Following Andrews' forced resignation, Ward was taught by James Adams, whom he described as a "Quaker gentleman…of whom I received great kindness."[135] Ward did not comment on the fact that Adams was Black, thus it is unknown if ,or how this may have impacted

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[134] Ward, 6.
[135] Ward, 19.

Ward's impressions of him or the circumstances surrounding his appointment. Nevertheless, it should be considered significant that Ward attended the school during a time when a white headmaster was forced out by the Black community and a new leader, more representative of the community, was put in charge. Ward graduated from the New York African Free School in 1833, a year before the Public School Society took over the school and fired James Adams, and all the other Black teachers and administrators.[136]

After his time at the New York African Free School, Ward took advantage of the network that existed in New York for Black people. At sixteen years old, Samuel Ward found employment as a clerk in the office of Thomas L. Jennings. Jennings, a pillar of the rising Black establishment, served as a first officer in the Phoenix Society, a group with a mission to "promote the improvement of the coloured people in morals, literature, and the mechanical arts."[137] He was one of the first African Americans to be awarded a patent for inventing a new dry-cleaning method he used for his successful dry cleaning and tailoring business. Jennings was able to use money made in his business to buy his family out of slavery and bring them north.[138] After his wife and daughter were established in New York, Jennings coordinated a successful lawsuit against a railway company that had expelled his daughter from a car on a train because of the color of her skin. The suit brought by Jennings' legal team, led by future president Chester A.

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[136] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 1827-1836": 194-96.
[137] Dorothy B. Porter, "The Organized Educational Activities of Negro Literary Societies, 1828-1846," *The Journal of Negro Education*, October 1936: 555-76.
[138] Alexander, *African or American?,* 192.

Arthur, led to several railway companies changing and softening their segregationist policies.[139] Ward described Jennings as ”one of the most worthy of the coloured race; subsequently my brother.”[140] Although Jennings overcame terrific obstacles and fought to achieve the position he was in, he had two advantages over many other Black people in New York: he had been born free, and he had been taught a trade from an early age.[141]

Another figure who was important to Ward at this time was David Ruggles. Ruggles was able to offer Ward some part time work as a clerk as well. Ruggles had been a grocer but closed his business to devote his time to the antislavery cause. Ruggles joined the New York Vigilance Committee, worked as an agent for abolitionist newspapers, and was a member of the New York Antislavery Society.[142] As leaders in the establishment and growth of Black institutions in New York, Jennings and Ruggles were examples of what was possible to achieve in New York, and of the extraordinary obstacles that had to be overcome in order for Black people to reach a level of achievement and success.

In 1830 the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro, New York decided to accept Black students. The Oneida Institute, under the direction of abolitionist, Reverend Beriah Green, had students learn half the day and do farm labor the

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[139] Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist,* 17.; Wesley, “The Negroes of New York and the Emancipation Movement”, 80.
[140] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 20.
[141] John H. Hewitt, "The Search for Elizabeth Jennings, Heroine of a Sunday Afternoon in New York City," *New York History*, 71, no. 4 (October 1990): 386-415.

[142] Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist,* 17-18.

other half to pay for their board. Green, a strict Calvinist, and frequent author, was described by historian Joel Schor, as a "pious and prolific exponent of reform."[143] Many of the young Black men who graduated from schools in the city took advantage of the chance to travel over four hundred kilometers to the north and study there. Noted historian Paul Finkleman stated that Samuel Ward studied and attained a degree from the Oneida Institute, but it is far from certain.[144] While it is clear Ward's cousin Henry Highland Garnet, and their NYAFS classmate, Alexander Crummell studied there, the evidence for Ward is a little murky. Ward may have studied Theology and Classics at the school for some time. Ward's only mention of the school in his autobiography is aptly described by historian Milton C. Sernett as "ambiguous."[145] Ward wrote of how he knew "The Rev. Beriah Green, President of Oneida Institute (the alma mater of several of my dear schoolfellows, among them Henry Highland Garnet and Alexander Crummell)."[146] Ward inclusion or exclusion at Oneida is not mentioned by any of his contemporaries in the written sources that are currently available. Regardless, the Oneida Institute, was viewed by many in New York as radical because of its support for abolitionism and it became a frequent target of attacks by violent mobs and hostile politicians opposed to its existence. Eventually this culminated in its funding being severely slashed, and it eventually ceased operation in

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[143] Schor, *Henry Highland Garnett*, 16.
[144] Paul Finkleman, "Ward, Samuel Ringgold," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1865: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 314.
[145] Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 62.
[146] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 32.

1843.[147] For Black people and their allies throughout the Northern states, it was a constant battle to create and sustain institutions and practices that would help them advance in society.

An issue constantly faced by Black people in looking to build institutions was the reliance on public funds, which could be problematic as many white citizens, along with their elected officials were often hostile to any institutional advancement regarding Black people. Where success could be found was in institutions that were largely, exclusively reliant on the Black community. Black-owned businesses, societies, and churches were all growing in the boroughs of New York and the surrounding region. Besides worship, the churches often offered schooling to the growing population of Black children in the city. These growing Black schools also sought to hire qualified Black teachers, and this presented an opportunity for a young Samuel Ward. Ward wrote:

> In 1833 it pleased God to answer the prayers of my parents, in my conversion. My attention being turned to the ministry, I was advised and recommended by the late Rev. G. Hogarth, of Brooklyn, to the teachership (sic) of a school for coloured children.[148]

Ward's first job in education was in New Town, New York where he replaced Reverend James W.C. Pennington, as the teacher in an African American school. Pennington was a renowned leader for Black people in the United States. He was born into slavery but managed to escape and received attained an education.

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[147] Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism*, Contributions in American History 11 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971), 54.
[148] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro* 11.

After being denied admission to the Yale School of Divinity because of his race, Pennington traveled to Europe and earned a Doctorate in Divinity from Heidelberg University in Germany.[149] He later served as pastor of the Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York City, and wrote a popular narrative of his life titled *The Fugitive Blacksmith.* The careers of the two men have striking parallels; Pennington, and later Ward would have time at the teacher's lectern, the preacher's pulpit, and of course the publishing house. Samuel Ward and James W.C. Pennington even had the opportunity to share the same stages while presenting at various society meetings and conventions.[150] Like Thomas L. Jennings and David Ruggles, Reverend Pennington provided Ward with crucial support and offered a model of Black respectability and leadership. The key to unlocking all these opportunities for Ward was the education he gained at the NYAFS which gave him the stature and knowledge necessary to gain positions of responsibility.

While beginning his professional career, Ward was also looking to get involved in the anti-slavery cause. On July 4, 1834 Ward attended an anti-slavery meeting with his boss, Thomas Jennings, during which they were attacked by a mob of angry white people. As bricks were hurled at them, Jennings picked them up and threw them right back. Eventually, the police showed up and arrested Ward, Jennings, and several other Black people, but not any of the white

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[149] Ball, Newman, and Rael, *Living An Antislavery Life,* 176.
[150] Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist,* 15.

perpetrators of the attack. While spending the night of July 7th in jail, Ward wrote that he took an “"oath of allegiance to the anti-slavery cause."[151]

Ward’s education had prepared him for a professional career, and despite his time behind bars he was becoming an educated, respectable gentleman (see fig. 6). *The New-York Spectator* years before had commented on what graduates of the NYAFS had accomplished, noting, “It is highly gratifying to know, that a number of the boys progressed so far in their education as to qualify them for teachers, or the pursuit of most branches of ordinary business.”[152] Ward, who would later be renowned for his oratorical skills, certainly applied them in his role as an educator. Ward worked as a teacher for several years before he moved into the ministry. Ward’s cousin, Henry Highland Garnett was also a minister and both men benefited from the connections made within the Black church community in New York. For many Black men in New York, with a certain talent and education, the school and the church were the pathways with the most opportunities.[153]

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[151] *The Liberator*, July 4, 1835; Ward, *Autobiography Of*, 1855, 46.
[152] *New-York Spectator*, March 11, 1815.
[153] Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist*, 13.

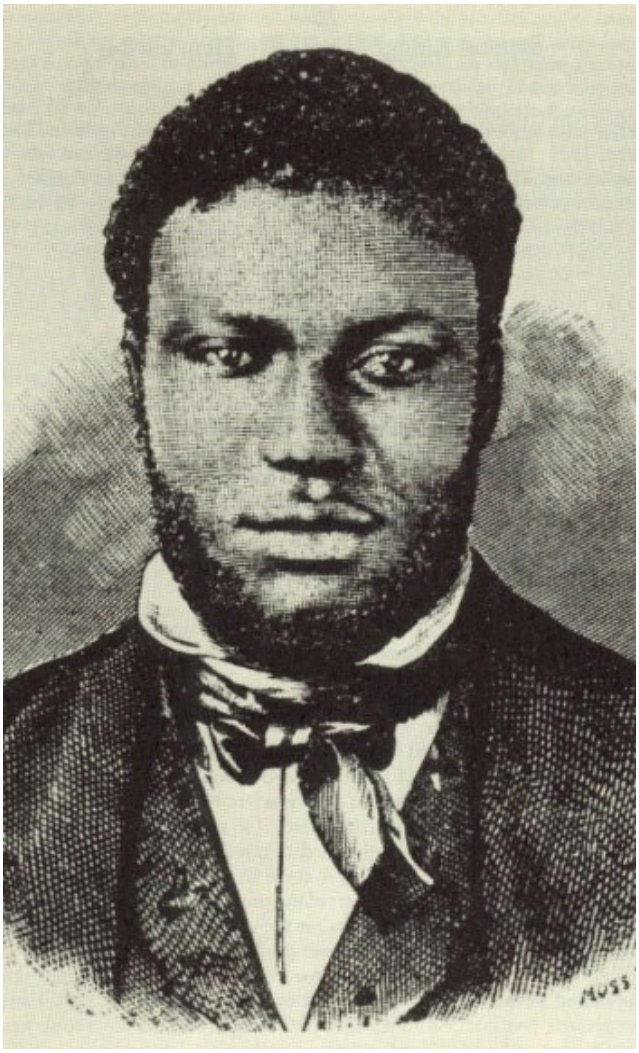

Fig. 6. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "Samuel Ringgold Ward." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed February 18, 2021. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-e96c-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

In 1836 after two years teaching in New Town Ward took a position teaching in Newark, New Jersey. The city of Newark was closer to his family, being just across the Hudson River from New York City. Two years later in 1838 Samuel Ward married Emily E. Reynolds, of a Black New York family. Little is known of Emily or the courtship between the two. Subsequently they had a child named Samuel. In his autobiography, Ward does not go into great detail about

his wife and his child, but did observe that he became, "to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever, a family man, aged twenty-one years and twelve days."[154] Ward, already a teacher, a husband, and a father, was soon to take on a new role.

In 1839 Ward was hired to teach at a Lancasterian school for Black children in Poughkeepsie, New York. Soon after that he was licensed by the New York Congregational Society as an ordained preacher. While there is no reason to question Ward's sincerity and purpose for taking up the ministry, Ward's transition from the lectern to the pulpit was a pragmatic decision. Teaching was a job with low pay from often unreliable private sources and required a lot of time and effort. A job in the church could offer Ward more stability, possibly more income, and the opportunity to rise in the ranks. In 1841 Samuel Ward took a position as the pastor of the Congregational Church in South Butler, a village in upstate New York. What was remarkable about this appointment was that Ward was to be a Black pastor to an all white congregation. Ward credited this first flock he pastored for the:

> "manly courage they showed, in calling and sustaining and honouring as their pastor a black man… in spite of the too general Negro-hate everywhere rife…around them, exposing them as it did to the taunts, scoffs, jeers, and abuse".[155]

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[154] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 32.
[155] Ward, 20.

Around this time Ward also joined the American and New York State Anti-Slavery Society, an organization that would have a great influence on his life and work going forward. This was a busy time for Ward, along with his pastorate in South Butler he found time to preach to remote communities of Black people in the surrounding areas. He was also commissioned as a traveling agent for the anti-slavery organization, which meant he served as a spokesman who addressed crowds at functions and events. Ward wrote in his autobiography, referencing his time on the speaking circuit, "if their characters cannot bear the truth, it is no fault of mine".[156] His learned ability to speak with verve and power, made him an ideal speaker for his congregants and the public audiences he met.

Public audiences were becoming increasingly important as more societies were being formed and more conventions were being held. The American Antislavery Society was formed in 1833, the brainchild of William Lloyd Garrison, the fiery antislavery lecturer, author Theodore Dwight Weld, and two very wealthy New York merchants, Arthur and Lewis Tappan. Also the New York State Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1835 with support from Lewis Tappan. In fact, the first convention that established that organization in Utica, New York called by Reverend Beriah Greene and abolitionist attorney Alvan Stewart was attacked by a large mob opposed to the society's purpose. This was the event that Gerrit Smith, a man who had inherited vast wealth and a great deal of property in upstate New York, said turned him into an abolitionist on the spot when he

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[156] Ward, 48.

invited the entire convention back to his own home to continue proceedings.[157] This attack and the many that Ward had witnessed and endured himself illustrated how strong opposition to abolitionism was in New York at the time. Despite the constant antagonism, the abolitionist movement was generally strong and even growing in New York state. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were over five hundred anti-slavery chapters in the United States and more than one-fifth of them were in New York.[158] For the next ten years, Ward preached, lectured and argued across New York State for Black rights and the abolition of slavery. In fact he spoke so much that he resigned his pastorate in South Butler in 1843 and received medical treatment in Geneva, New York. Ward lost his voice from the constant preaching, sermonizing, and debating over the contentious question as to what role, if any, Black people were to have in an American society.

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[157] Milton C. Sernett, *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 41, 52-3.
[158] Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of American Fugitive Slaves*, 44-55.

5.3 Rights and Privileges They Can Never Attain: The Issue of Colonization

"…that most unscrupulous band of organized, systematic, practical promulgators of Negro-hate, the Colonization Society."[159]

The issue of African American colonization roiled the abolitionist community. While seemingly all were part of a common cause, there was a lack of agreement concerning the motivation and the ultimate ends to be achieved. As Samuel Ward served as a teacher, pastor, and traveling agent in the 1830's the issue of colonization was a key part of the larger debate among abolitionists. An earned mistrust existed in the Black abolitionist community towards many of their white allies. For Black people and their white supporters one thing was very clear; the ultimate goal of the movement was to abolish slavery in the United States. Where conflict and controversy arose was with the methods of achieving abolition and the question of what was to come after liberation was achieved for the masses of formerly enslaved people. For some abolitionists, the only hope for freed Black people to succeed, was to leave the United States and establish colonies elsewhere. These colonization schemes were viewed by many white abolitionists, like the former headmaster and head teacher of the NYAFS Charles Andrews, as the only option to achieve true freedom for Black people, while others saw them merely as a mechanism to exile Black people from their own soil. Groups like the American Colonization Society (ACS), were formed in the 1817

[159] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 31.

to push and promote this plan of emigration. Black leaders, among them David Walker and Martin Delany, attacked the ACS as a racist organization attempting to rid the United States of Black people. However, early members of the ACS included famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and Samuel Ward's future ally, Gerrit Smith. The formation of the American Colonization Society created a schism in the growing abolitionist movement. Antagonism to the ACS and its aims served as a unifying element for arranging conventions and establishing groups dedicated to supporting free Black people and opposing colonization schemes. [160]

One of the major contentions of the ACS , which was shared by many abolitionist leaders, and largely shared by a proportion of the population of the US, was that Black people could never achieve any form of social or political equality with white people in the United States. The conundrum for many Black Americans was, according to historian Andrew Delbanco, the fight for equality and freedom could only "excite hopes in their minds never to be realized…for the rights and privileges in this land which they can never attain." [161] This pessimism was shared by many people in the abolitionist movement and was at the foundation of other colonization schemes involving Black emigration to Upper Canada, the Caribbean, and Africa. Places like Jamaica, where slavery had been

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[160] Andrew Delbanco, *The Abolitionist Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 116; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 22.; Wesley, "The Negroes of New York and the Emancipation Movement", 73.; Dick, *Black Protest,* 10-11.
[161] "The Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society" (James C. Dunn, 1832), xii.

abolished in 1833, and Haiti, which had abolished it years earlier, were seen as attractive options for some African Americans.

Ward had been heavily involved in the debates within abolitionist circles as to what course was best for Black people in the United States. Was the fate of Black people to be part of the US polity or was it to be as pioneering settlers in a new land? This was a point of which Samuel Ward and Frederick Douglass were on opposite sides. Douglass firmly believed that Black people belonged in the United States and any colonization scheme was simply designed to get rid of them. Ward, a former student of Charles Andrews, the staunch supporter of Black colonization, was somewhat in favour of the idea, but remained suspicious of the motives of many colonization supporters. In his preaching to congregations, Ward was not afraid to call out societies and organizations that either tacitly or indirectly supported pro-slavery positions concerning colonization. He called out groups like the American Colonization Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He theorized their fear of race mixing motivated their objectives.[162] However, he was not necessarily opposed to Black colonization. As early as 1839, Ward contemplated emigrating to Jamaica.[163]

Like Ward, many Black people were not against colonization per se, they were opposed to the rationalization for it used by supporters of the ACS. A main

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[162] Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist*, 28.
[163] Rhodes, "The Contestation over National Identity: Nineteenth Century Black Americans in Canada.," 176-77.; R.J.M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 174.

source of animosity towards the ACS was the contention that they were white supremacists. An article titled "Amalgamation of Races", published in *The Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom,* a mouthpiece of the ACS, articulated this central tenet quite clearly. According to the article, no change to laws or public opinion could overcome the natural hierarchy that was established by mother nature. The article stated that Black people were inferior to white people simply due to the "silent though powerful voice of nature" and even free Northern Blacks were "… neither possess power nor the elements of future improvement."[164] Colonization advocate Andrew Judson was particularly aghast at the idea of schools being established for Black students, and argued it was a direct threat to the republic. Judson contended that the schools would render "insecure the persons, property, and reputation of our citizens."[165] According to Unitarian minister and ardent abolitionist Samuel May, Judson's justification was simple. Judson believed:

> The colored people never can rise from their menial condition in our country; they ought not to be permitted to rise here. They are an inferior race of beings, and never call or ought to be recognized as the equals of the whites. Africa is the place for them. I am in favor of the Colonization scheme. Let the niggers and their descendants be sent back to their fatherland; and there improve themselves as much as they may, and civilize and Christianize the natives, if they can. I am a Colonizationist.[166]

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[164] "Amalgamation of Races, "in *The Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom Apr. 1833-Apr. 1834,* (Boston: G.W. Light, 1834), 101-07.
[165] Duane, *Educated for Freedom: The Incredible Story of Two Fugitive Schoolboys Who Grew Up to Change A Nation*, 52.
[166] Samuel May, *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict. Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1869.* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1869), 48-49.

For many this conviction and belief in white supremacy was enough to explain and justify the degradation and oppression heaped upon Black people, both free Northerners and enslaved Southerners. This belief in white supremacy and Black inferiority has reverberated through the ages.[167]

5.4 Radicalism and Respectability: How to Bring About Change

"I never so compromised my own self-respect, nor ever consented to so deep a degradation of my people, as to condescend to ask pity for them at the hands of their oppressors."[168]

For those who were for abolition but against any colonization schemes, there was still a major question that had to be answered: how could a change to American society be achieved to ameliorate conditions for African Americans? Essentially, this question could be answered in two ways: by working within the US legal and political system to enact change, or through radical protest and, possibly violence to force change to occur. David Walker was the most vocal and fervent proponent of the latter strategy. Walker was a free Black man who served as a member of the Massachusetts General Colored Association, and also an agent for the New York abolitionist newspaper *Freedom's Journal.* David Walker argued that pro-slavery advocates were not only the enemy of Black people, but

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[167] Many "science" texts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century would reiterate and reinforce this view of black inferiority; for example books like Frederick Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, published the same year as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) .
[168] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 46.

the enemy of an even greater force, he wrote "Are they not the Lord's enemies? Ought they not to be destroyed? They want us for their slaves, and think nothing of murdering us…therefore if there is an attempt made by us, kill or be killed."[169] In 1829 Walker published his incendiary *Appeal in Four Articles; Together With a Preamble, To the Colored of the World, but in Particular , and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America.* Walker's appeal was, in part, a call to arms for African Americans and a riposte to Jefferson's *Notes On the State of Virginia*.[170] Walker's fiery tract was surreptitiously disseminated throughout the South and became so infamous that those states jailed or fined anyone in possession of it. A year later, Nat Turner, an enslaved preacher in Virginia, led an uprising that was put down violently after four days. Walker's *Appeal,* along with Turner's rebellion, led several Southern states to make it illegal to teach any Black person to read.[171] These incidents also further inflamed the divisions between defenders of slavery and those who sought to abolish the institution. Walker's rhetoric and the threat of mass violence that could ensue, did not appeal to most abolitionists, especially white abolitionists of the "respectable class" in the North. While Walker emphasized violent force in his petition, other abolitionists and the churches that supported them stressed using a different form of force to bring about change.

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[169] Henry Highland Garnet, "Walker's Appeal , With A Brief Sketch of His Life. And Also Garnett's Address to the Slaves of the United States of America." (J.H. Tobitt, 1848).
[170] Scott Malcolmson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 2000), 195.
[171] David F. Allmendinger Jr. *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County.* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), 199-207.

For many abolitionists, both Black and white, violence was not the way to change American society. The change had to come about from utilizing moral force and the way to achieve that was through the "respectability" of Black people.[172] The learning of this respectable, well mannered, disciplined behavior was a cornerstone of the NYAFS curriculum. As Ronald K. Burke noted, many of the speeches given and editorials written by Ward demonstrated the influence of his education on his public work. In an 1849 editorial Ward wrote:

> We shall cultivate self-respect, dignity of demeanor, refinement of manners, intelligence, morality, and religion; if we shall be industrial, frugal, temperate, chaste, we shall be an elevated people, in spite of all the pro-slavery negro-hate this boasted, lying republic is disgraced and degraded with.[173]

In this passage Ward addressed not the degradation of the slave, the "condition" that Charles Andrews highlighted so dramatically at the NYAFS, the issue was the country itself. For Black people, their elevation might have to come from within themselves and their own community.

The goal of achieving respectability and some form of equality for Black people in the North was not a quixotic quest or some plan to gradually assimilate into an already established, monolithic civic society. Despite facing the ire of working class white people and the indifference or outright malevolence of a large

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[172] Haroon Kharem and Eileen M. Hayes, "Chapter Three: Separation or Integration: Early Black Nationalism and the Education Critique," *Counterpoints* 88 vol. 237 (2005): 73.; Delbanco, *The Abolitionist Imagination*, 117-118.
[173] *Impartial Citizen*, March 14, 1849; Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist*, 16-17.

proportion of the political and economic elite, many Black people in the North sought to achieve social and economic success in order to serve as examples to their people and to take their places in an emerging new world. Throughout the North more Black communities were growing, establishing institutions like churches, businesses, and schools. Ward wrote of these emerging communities in the free North:

> The coloured people of New York, Philadelphia, Boston--and, I may as well add, all other cities and towns in the American Union--bear themselves as respectably, support themselves as comfortably, maintain as good and true allegiance to the laws, make as rapid improvement in all that signifies real, moral, social progress, as any class of citizens whatever. They do not so rapidly acquire wealth, but it must be remembered that the avenues to wealth are not open to them.[174]

Ward himself was a testament to this idea of progress, as he was the offspring of poor, fugitive parents who had no formal education. For Ward, and many others, education was incumbent towards continuing this progress.

This faith in progress was tangible for Black people, more enslaved people were making themselves free, more children were being educated, and more communities were being established. Progress was also a concept pushed by the leaders of the Black communities and was connected to a larger purpose. According to Patrick Rael, "In addition to instilling moral and historical lessons, leaders evinced their faith in progress, God's predestined role for them, and the Enlightenment principle of the universal brotherhood of man, which had

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[174] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 47.

animated the Founding Fathers."[175] In his autobiography, Frederick Douglass noted the power of an education, and stated that he had "a new and special revelation… I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty--to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man."[176] With education this power could perhaps be erased, and Black elevation could result. Education was a necessity for empowerment in American society. The purpose of education, according to a letter in *Freedom's Journal* by a writer, only named by the initials F.A., was, "the prime object (of education) is to give elevation and happiness to our coloured population."[177] The only way to achieve this objective was through the collective effort of Black families and communities.

Prince Saunders, a Black educator who formed the Pennsylvania Augustine Society for the Education of People of Colour, asserted in a sermon in 1818 that if Blacks were to advance in American society, it was up to parents to ensure their children were educated, "we… are convinced that it is an unquestionable duty which we owe to ourselves, to our posterity, and to our God, who has endowed us with intellectual powers."[178] For many Black leaders, like Alexander Crummell and David Walker, education, whether decreed by a deity or not, was also a weapon to be wielded in the fight to aid Black people in the North

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[175] Rael, *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North*, 79.
[176] Frederick Douglass, *An American Slave: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2009).* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2009), 44.
[177] F.A., "African Education," *Freedom's Journal*, February 15, 1828.
[178] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks,1700-1860*, 151.

and the South.[179] A writer for *The Colored American*, a newspaper started by New York African Free School graduates, argued that educating Black children would result in more rights for all, "It is the schools for our children which will abolish slavery. It is the schools, which will procure our enfranchisement. It is the schools which will put off and break down prejudice."[180] This belief in the power of education in changing the United States was shared by many, among them Horace Mann. Mann, who was white, was a legislator and later the Secretary of Education in Massachusetts. Mann pushed for universal education and believed, "Education . . . is the great equalizer of the conditions of men— balance-wheel of the social machinery."[181] Part of this social machinery was to be the grinding, laborious machinery of mass political mobilization. Samuel Ringgold Ward with his intelligence and the oratorical skills he learned and honed at the NYAFS was a figure that could advance in this social machinery.

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[179] Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 49.
[180] Dabel, "Education's Unfulfilled Promise", 73.; *The Colored American*, January 30, 1841.
[181] Horace Mann, ", Twelfth Annual Report of the Secretary" (Boston: Massachusetts Board of Education, 1848); "Education Reform in Antebellum America," July 29, 2012, https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/education-reform-antebellum-america.

5.5 Progress, Race, Class, and Protest: Ward in Upstate New York

"On the other hand, in the midst of our present depressions and discouragements, we shall cultivate self-respect, dignity of demeanor, refinement of manners, intelligence, morality and religion; if we shall be industrious, frugal, temperate, chaste, we shall be an elevated people."[182]

The notion of progress in the antebellum era was not only part of the African-American story but connected to the larger theme of mass party politics and expanding political representation across the United States. There was also a clear class contingent to that progress. Black people in the North, devoid of the inherited wealth, land, and position of privileged white people, still had perceptions of class and status in society. For many Black people, societal status was there to be earned, not given. In New York, there was an emerging Black elite, which was made up of persons and families that were literate, had some wealth, and had forged some connections with white political and economic heavyweights. Besides being able to pay the poll tax imposed on Black voters, this group represented those that had occupations that required an education, owned their own businesses, and held land and other assets. Some Black people even developed a similar attitude that was held by white elites towards poorer, working class white people. Ward wrote of these poorer, white people of "low origin in his autobiography:

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[182] *Impartial Citizen,* March 14, 1849.

> My opinion is, that much of this difference between the Anglo-Saxon on the one and his brother Anglo-Saxon on the other side of the Atlantic is to be accounted for in the very low origin of early American settlers…The early settlers in many parts of America were the very lowest of the English population: the same class will abuse a Negro in England or Ireland now.[183]

Samuel Ward and some of his Black abolitionist contemporaries believed that to advance in the United States Black people had to overcome the prejudice of the lower class white people and build status, and wealth to be on a higher footing with "respectable" white society. Of course, it was not the lower-class people denying Black people admittance to universities, or writing discriminatory laws, or plotting speculative real estate schemes to rob them of affordable housing; those racist acts were committed by the high echelons of white society. The people of the high echelons could afford to ignore Black people in public and within their own institutions. As Ward observed:

> How piously the proslavery whites . . . rush away from their own Literary Hall, or Meeting House, rather than pollute their sanctified ears, or un-starch a little of their would-be dignity, by listening to a black man! 'He is out of his place!' . . . 'Niggers can't rise here': say the learned, the religious, the refined. 'Go to Hell, you nigger!' say the less refined, less religious, and less learned, in the very same spirit.[184]

The less refined did not respond to Black elevation with the dry, bloodless phrases of a new law or the unspoken agreement among oligarchs, but through the visceral and immediate threat of the fist and the cudgel. It was the lower

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[183] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 23.
[184] *Impartial Citizen*, March 14, 1849.

classes who took part in mob violence against Black people and attacked them on the streets. Throughout the antebellum period there were mob attacks on Black neighborhoods and institutions across Northern cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati, among many others. This violence was extreme and often required a substantial armed response from the federal government, most notoriously with the New York City draft riots of 1863.[185] This racism experienced firsthand on the streets though was more than matched by the racism in the corridors of power.

Ward knew that Black people were not held to the same standards as white people in Canada, the United States, or Great Britain. Ward had witnessed pastors at the pulpit and journalists in the broadsheets castigate Black people and proclaimed their inferiority to white people. Ward commented on the poverty and squalor of many white people in Ireland and Great Britain about which he had read:

> When I complain of the beggary, the want of self-respect, which show themselves… and express my disgust at what I find…Englishmen point to the inadequate education of these people, their deep poverty, their degrading and constant toil, the long neglect of them by better classes, and the very many gin shops to be found in their midst. Now, the reasonableness and the force of all this I most freely and cheerfully admit; but why does it not apply with equal force and reasonableness to the case of the formerly, lately, enslaved Negro? I hear him censured as if he and his ancestors had been civilized, evangelized, highly educated, and especially favoured, for the past fifty generations. His faults are set down to the viciousness of his nature.[186]

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[185] Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States*, 136.
[186] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro,* 189-90.

In his speeches, articles, and correspondence, Ward defended the equality of Black people and articulated a clear vision of how they could prosper. Ward's education at the NYAFS had given him a deep knowledge of classical texts and literature. As was common in the era, Ward wrote and spoke using the categories of race and class when speaking of people. In his autobiography he wrote of the "Negro race" and "lower classes", or "better classes", and "It is not to be denied that a history of the Negro race is unwritten; no, it is written in characters of blood!"[187] When writing Ward often combined notions of class with a racial type: "The middling and better classes of all Europe treat a black gentleman as a gentleman."[188] As mentioned above, Ward's utilization of these terms was conventional and mirrored that of the writers of the time. However, Ward differed from many of his white contemporaries in the conclusions he drew about these different races and classes.

Samuel Ward had championed the Declaration of Independence and its stirring words about the equality of men, which were in direct contradiction to the reality of the United States.[189] Thomas Jefferson, who authored the Declaration of Independence, was the author of other works, such as *Notes on the State of Virginia,* published in 1785. In this text were many observations on crops, lands, animals, weather, and people, including Black people. Jefferson

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[187] Ward, 101.
[188] Ward, 23.
[189] Ward, 140.

wrote "The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by everyone, and proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life."[190] Thomas Jefferson was not the first, nor the last, influential writer to disseminate the theory of white supremacy. Long after Thomas Jefferson died and Samuel Ward spoke and preached, works were still being published in which Black racial inferiority was the central theme. Samuel Ward often wrote and spoke against the many people who supported and disseminated the theory of white supremacy. The idea of white supremacy was not just a tool of the "lower classes" either. Many prominent scholars of the era were anxious to have their say in the debate over race. Thomas Carlyle, the acclaimed Scottish historian, anonymously published an essay in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* in 1849 titled, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question." The essay was part of a long running debate with John Stuart Mill related to the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies. The essay called for the re-installment of slavery and was full of racist slurs and stereotypes about Black people.[191] The anonymous publication of this essay made sense in the context of its vitriolic sentiment and language. However, four years later in 1853, it was published as *Occasional Discourse of the Nigger Question* with Thomas Carlyle named as its author. However, even

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[190] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 85.
[191] Thomas Carlyle, "Discourse on the Negro Question," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, vol. 40 (1849): 670–76.

those allied with the cause of abolitionism harbored views often not very dissimilar to Carlyle.

5.6 The Rights of the People: The Blacks Press and Party Politics

"IN like manner, the abolitionists, such as those with whom it was my honour to be associated, inquired how far they could wield their political powers, with the parties of the day."[192]

A belief persisted that for real change to occur, abolitionists and their allies of every type, and every color, had to work together. For Ward and other Black abolitionists, the opposition they faced to their aims was not just the violence and ignorance of white supremacists, but the condescending manner of, "abolitionists in profession", who still held a low opinion of Black people and "best loved the colored man at a distance." In a letter to Nathaniel P. Rogers, the editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Ward described the behavior of these professionals. For Ward the distance these white men kept from their fellow Black abolitionists was antithetical to the cause they espoused. Ward observed, "In the polls they sustain the pro-slavery laws which disfranchise us….in the social circle, in company with white persons, they find it difficult to see us…in the church, they refuse to remonstrate against negro-pewism." In the same letter, Ward recounts a story of his "brother", William Gardner, a white friend of his from New Jersey who worked on the campaign for Black suffrage in that state.

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[192] Ward, *Autobiography Of*, 1855, 40.

Gardener was criticized heavily by white abolitionists for sitting with a leading Black pastor, a Rev. Mr. Williams, at a service in Newark. Charles Andrews, and many of the teachers and trustees of Ward's alma mater, the NYAFS would fit into this category of abolitionist Ward described; they were patronizing, condescending, and uncomfortable with the true notion of Black equality and self advancement. Ward would move in this circle of "professional abolitionists" and try to enact change through their own institutions. He believed the only path was to expose the hypocrisy of those in the movement and speak truth to power, and this truth could be spoken to a large crowd, but it also could be delivered in written form to an even wider audience.[193]

In Samuel Ward's time, the written word was becoming another effective way to convey information. The spoken word was still crucial, with speakers addressing crowds at conventions, theatres, churches, and street corners. Public events and addresses mattered a great deal, of course. Events like public examination days that Samuel Ringgold Ward experienced in his youth at the NYAFS where Black students would recite poetry, scripture and verse to audiences were important. But even events like examination days would be

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[193] Ward, 31.; Wirzbicki, "The Light of Knowledge Follows the Impulse of Revolutions': Prince Saunders, Baron de Vastey and the Haitian Influence on Antebellum Black Ideas of Elevation and Education," 288.; John L. Myers, "The Beginning of Anti-Slavery Agencies in New York State, 1833-1836," *New York History; Cooperstown, N.Y., Etc.* 43, no. 2 (April 1, 1962): 149.; Myers, 151; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 2, 1840; Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism*, 87-88. Samuel Ringgold Ward to Nathaniel P. Rogers, 27 June 1840. C. Peter Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, vol. II (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 29.; "negro-pewism", refers to the practice of seating Black congregants, separately from Whites during a religious service, typically in the back of the church.

covered by newspapers and that's where a majority of people would find out what happened. Increasingly outlets like newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets were the main source of news. Two combatants could engage in a vocal debate in person, but also continue their contest in the press with the cut and thrust of response and riposte in daily and weekly newspapers. An increasingly literate population provided a growing readership for more and more print publications.[194]

With the increasing enrollment of children in schools in the antebellum more people in the United States could read. Language was everywhere, especially in urban areas. Advertising placards were plastered on buildings and on the back of omnibuses, and newspaper stands, and book shops proliferated in every city and decently sized municipality. The antebellum age was the era of newspapers, and increasingly the era of the Black newspaper.[195] Ward founded, and partly owned and edited, several reform newspapers in his career. Among them were the *Northern Star,* the *Impartial Citizen,* the *True American,* and the *Provincial Freeman*.[196] Ward was a student at the NYAFS when the first newspaper written and published by Black people in the U.S., *Freedom's Journal,* was printed in New York. These newspapers were a central vehicle for spreading

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[194] Thomas D. Snyder, ed., "120 Years of American Education; A Statistical Portrait" (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), 6.
[195] V.P. Franklin, "Introduction-To Be Heard In Black And White: Historical Perspectives On Black Print Culture," *Journal of African American History; Silver Spring* 95, no. 3/4 (Summer 2010): 291-92.
[196] Bonny Ryan, "Black Abolitionists of Central New York: An Intimate Circle of Activism," *Courier*, Syracuse University Library Associates, XXXIII (2001 1998): 107-09.

the message of abolition and reform through the Black community, and the wider community as well. These publications also offered essays, stories, poems, advice columns, and opinions from writers, ministers, and editors across society, both Black and white.[197]

Ward was co-founder of The *Provincial Freemen*, the second Black newspaper in Canada, which was devoted to anti-slavery, temperance, and general literature. Its mission was to, "open its columns to the views of men of different political opinions" and it further stressed that, "Self-reliance is the true road to independence."[198] The reference to the "view of men", is interesting, as the main progenitor behind the newspaper was a woman, Mary Ann Shadd. Shadd, originally from the United States, was the first Black female publisher and newspaper editor in North America and worked alongside many leading abolitionists of the time. Shadd was following in the footsteps of Mary Bibb who co-founded Canada's first Black newspaper, *Voice of the Fugitive* with her husband Henry Bibb two years before the *Provincial Freemen.*[199] Establishing and publishing a newspaper could be a significant way to shape public opinion towards political or social causes, but it was not at all a stable or sustainable business for many.

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[197] Ball, Newman, and Rael, *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politics and the Antebellum Middle Class*, 26.
[198] *Provincial Freeman*, March 24, 1853.
[199] Afua Cooper, ", 'The Voice of the Fugitive: A Transnational Abolitionist Organ,'" in *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Freedom and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderlands*, ed. Karolyn Smardz Frost and Veta Smith Tucker (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 2016), 135-53.

Freedom's Journal, the first Black-owned newspaper in New York, collapsed in 1829 after two years in business. The three newspapers founded in part by Ward lasted a total of six years cumulatively. Hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of newspapers rose and rapidly fell across North America in this era. The instability and, often, unsustainability of publishing newspapers and magazines was not exclusive to Black publications, but Black-owned publications had some major barriers to growing and staying viable. During the antebellum era there was a surge of newspapers and magazines related to abolition and moral reform published. The market to which they were appealing was already quite targeted: which was the small minority of literate Northern Black and white people who were sympathetic to abolition and moral reform. These publications were also facing stark competition from an already established press with a large readership that was skeptical, if not outright hostile, to abolition and its supporters. Without the legacy capital many Black newspapers had to rely on subscriptions, which could be difficult to collect as there was really no recourse to collect payment besides shaming readers to pay what they owed; Ward experienced this situation with his own newspapers. In 1850 Ward addressed the "Esteemed Readers" of his newspaper, the *Impartial Citizen*:

> It is not yet my privilege to report myself well. I am yet an invalid. The restoration of my health will depend upon whether I can have sufficient rest to recruit my exhausted and over-taxed energies. If I continue to travel 225 miles a day, as I did last Saturday and last Monday, I shall not get well very soon. I can be very greatly relieved from *some of the things* (author's

> italics) that sicken me, by my subscribers who owe me paying me, *forthwith*. Enough of personal matters.[200]

Ward's readers ignored his pleas to a large enough extent that the *Impartial Citizen* soon ceased publication later that same year.

There were numerous abolitionist publications in the antebellum era with a variety of views regarding the best path forward for abolition and reform. All of these newspapers, books, pamphlets, and magazines were full differing perspectives on current events and contrasting opinions. What united the abolitionist press, besides the cause of abolition itself, was the common theme of being a part of the US polity in every sense. The name of the publications reverberated with the ideals of the American Republic. The *Mirror of Liberty, Impartial Citizen, The American Citizen, The Rights of All, Freedom's Journal, Genius of Freedom* – these were only some of the names that spoke not only to the idea of liberty from slavery, but liberty in the sense of being a citizen with rights. One newspaper, the *Colored American,* proclaimed in an 1840 editorial, "This Country is Our Only Home," and "It is our duty and privilege to claim an equal place among the American people."[201] Samuel Ward was born in the United States, was well aware of its faults but still tried to yield his power as a citizen to better the republic.

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[200] *Impartial Citizen*, September 14, 1850.
[201] Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of American Fugitive Slaves*, 54.

For Ward and others the anti-slavery cause was the American cause. Ending slavery in the United States was simply following through on the ideals that were there at the genesis of the American Republic. Ward and the students at the NYAFS were cognizant of history and how the United States was the culmination of the values and principles developed by the ancient Greeks and Romans and the founders of the United States like Washington and Jefferson had said and written as much. The school Ward had attended for seven years as a young man was founded and patronized by the heroes of the Revolution, from Alexander Hamilton to the Marquis de Lafayette. As Ward wrote in a letter to a newspaper, referring to the stirring words of equality that were written in the summer of 1776, "All I ask of America is, that they should stick to their own doctrine."[202]

By preaching and speaking against slavery in New York Ward gained prominence and a strong reputation as a leader in the abolitionist movement. Along with other leading Black abolitionists, Ward decided to take part in party politics. In 1844 he joined the Liberty Party, a recently formed political party that advocated for ending slavery immediately in the United States. For Ward, joining the party was a moral choice and he believed furthermore that Black people had a moral obligation to support it, as the Liberty Party was the only party that supported the abolition of slavery in the United States.[203] Other well-known

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[202] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Pennsylvania Freeman*, May 16, 1850.
[203] Ward, May 16, 1850.

Black abolitionists, like J. W. Loguen and William Wells Brown, also joined the party, along with Henry Highland Garnett, who declared himself "a Liberty Party man". The Liberty Party was largely made up of disaffected Democratic Party members and independents angry about the 1844 war with Mexico and its implication for the expansion of slavery in the American southwest.[204] Both Black and white abolitionists viewed the Liberty Party as the only political vehicle then available achieve their goal of abolishing slavery in the United States.[205] Ward's foray into party politics came about at a time when his family faced both personal and financial troubles, which made his involvement in politics even more remarkable.

In 1846 Ward accepted the role of pastor at a Congregationalist Church in Cortland Village, a small unincorporated community in New York. Ward, by this point had recovered from the illness to his throat he had suffered in South Butler and could speak without pain. Ward also had the opportunity in this time to travel to Toronto and establish a connection with Black churchmen through his work with the New York Antislavery society. While living in Cortland Village his

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[204] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro: His Antislavery Labors in The United States, Canada, & England*, Ebony Classics (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1970). Texas being admitted as the 28th state of the union in 1845 as a slave state, certainly gives credence to those fears.

[205] Ward, " Samuel Ringgold Ward to Joseph Hathaway, 15 September 1851 in *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, vol. IV. Ripley et al., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, II:93.; Charles H. Wesley, "The Participation of Negroes in Anti-Slavery Political Parties," *The Journal of Negro History* 29, no. 1 (1944): 39-40., https://doi.org/10.2307/2714753; Carter G. Woodson, *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800-1860* (Washington: District of Colombia: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), 194-95.; Richard H. Sewell, "John P. Hale and the Liberty Party, 1847-1848," *New England Quarterly; Brunswick, Me., Etc.* 37, no. 2 (June 1, 1964): 202-04.

wife Emily gave birth to their two daughters, Emily and Alice. But it was also a difficult time for the Ward family. Ward wrote of the "severe pecuniary troubles" the family faced there, and he describes the village as a place where he, " ...saw more of the foolishness, wickedness, and at the same time the invincibility, of American Negro-hate, than I ever saw elsewhere."[206] During this time, the Ward family's youngest son William passed away. Despite the financial distress, the death of a child, and the racism his family faced, Samuel Ward continued his work with his congregants and with the Liberty Party.

Ward worked to shape the platform of the Liberty Party and became such a leading figure that by the 1848 national convention, he received the second highest number of votes for the vice-presidential nomination. Ward was also nominated at the same convention for a seat in the New York State Legislature.[207] Following his nomination to the legislative seat, Ward wrote a letter to Liberty Party officials John H. Thomas, Ebenezer F. Simons, and Hiram Gillet, in which he laid out several legislative priorities he wanted to achieve if the party were elected to government. The first was prohibiting the sale of alcohol and forcing any sellers to pay the costs of any damages that resulted from its use.

A core aspect of Ward's identity was the morality instilled by his parents and his teachers at the NYAFS. Alcohol consumption was antithetical to his

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[206] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 21.
[207] Beriah Green Beriah and Smith Gerrit, *Proceedings of the National Liberty Convention, Held at Buffalo, N.Y., June 14th & 15th, 1848: Including the Resolution and Addresses Adopted by the Body: And Speeches of Beriah Green and Gerrit Smith on That Occasion.* (Utica, New York: S.W. Green, 1848), 8.

principles as Ward was a lifelong advocate for temperance. [208] Second, he wanted to expand the right of suffrage to Black male citizens who were denied the right to vote in New York State. Third, Ward next wanted to pass a law prohibiting imprisonment for debt and putting homesteaders beyond the reach of predatory creditors. Finally, Ward wanted to introduce a bill prohibiting land speculation and establish regulations so land couldn't be monopolized.[209] These legislative priorities were in reaction to the rapacious real estate speculation rampant in New York during Ward's time there. It is important to note that, other than the second goal of expanding voting rights, Ward's legislative agenda was not explicitly about improving life for Black people. Of course, Black people in New York and other Northern states were disproportionately poorer than their white neighbors, and Ward's proposed platform would provide more economic protection for the poorest members of society.[210] Ultimately, in the 1848 election the Whigs won the governorship, and control of the legislature with the Democrats second and the Liberty Party a very distant third.[211]

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[208] Ward's opposition to alcohol evolved over time from. In a footnote in his autobiography he wrote, "That some should abstain, for the sake of example to others, is most praiseworthy self-denial: all I claim is, that so to do so is not, as I once believed, the demand of the Bible, in which case of all persons. I do not feel at liberty to write as if I were a total abstainer, now that I am not; yet would not on my account withhold my humble tribute of praise from those who are, nor say a word to injure the temperance ". Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 243.
[209] Samuel Ringgold Ward to John H. Thomas, Ebenezer F. Simons, and Hiram Gillet, 16 September 1848. Ripley et al., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, II:29.
[210] Ward lived in New York State during a time when the Locofocos, a radical wing of the Democratic Party, were gaining traction in their opposition to banks, corporations, monopolies, tariffs, usury laws, and debt imprisonment. The Locofocos were also hostile towards slavery but had no political position on the issue.
[211] Sewell, "John P. Hale and the Liberty Party, 1847-1848," 207.;William Trimble, "Diverging Tendencies in New York Democracy in the Period of the Locofocos," *The American Historical Review* 24, no. 3 (April 1919): 414-415.

Ward did not write about his prominence in the Liberty Party in his autobiography; in fact, after he mentioned that he joined the Liberty Party, it is never brought up again. It is uncertain why Ward did not elaborate further on his participation. The idea of African Americans not only voting, but taking an active role in electoral politics, was extremely uncommon at the time, even in free, Northern states. Perhaps Ward, when he penned his autobiography did not want to dwell on the ultimate failure that the Liberty Party, and the overall American democratic system was, in regard to achieving their objectives of ending slavery. Another explanation for Ward's lack of detail regarding his work with the party is that the policy positions eventually put forward by the Liberty Party were at odds with the positions taken by figures such as William Lloyd Garrison, the national leader of the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS). Garrison was the most widely recognized abolitionist in the United States at the time, and a patron of Frederick Douglass and other luminaries in the movement. The fundamental difference between the Liberty Party platform and the American Anti-Slavery Society was their perspective on the United States Constitution. The Liberty Party held that the Constitution was an anti-slavery document and the best way to end slavery was to work with and within the government to take away support for the institution of slavery so gradually, it would wither away.[212] Garrison and his supporters, on the other hand, vehemently opposed this strategy. They even went so far as to oppose voting altogether on the grounds that the Constitution

[212] Sewell, "John P. Hale and the Liberty Party, 1847-1848," 207.

supported slavery, and, therefore, needed to be replaced with a new government framework. Garrison was so antagonistic towards the Constitution and its support of slavery that he once publicly burnt a copy of it on the Fourth of July, and proclaimed the document was a "Covenant with Death, an Agreement with Hell."[213] Soon, a law passed by Congress and signed into law by the president would provide justification for Garrison's position on the Constitution and undermine the Liberty Party's moderate approach.

5.7 Our Unprotected State: The Fugitive Slave Act

"I know not their route; but in those days the track of the fugitive was neither so accurately scented nor so hotly pursued by human sagacity, or the scent of kindred bloodhounds, as now, nor was slave-catching so complete and regular a system as it is now."[214]

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act went into effect in the United States. The 1850 act was the latest iteration of federal laws concerning escaped enslaved persons. In fact, the 1850 law was essentially an expansion of the very first act that was signed into law by President George Washington in 1793.[215] The Fugitive Slave Act was in response to Southern complaints of an increase in enslaved persons fleeing from bondage with the help of Northerners. And in a

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[213] Paul Finkleman, "Garrison's Constitution," National Archives, August 15, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2000/winter/garrisons-constitution-1.html.
[214] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro.*
[215] Anthony J. Sebol, "Judging the Fugitive Slave Acts," *The Yale Law Journal* 100, no. 6 (April 1991), 1835.

sense their complaints were justified, as vigilance committees and other organizations within many Northern communities were progressively more effective in aiding people escaping enslavement. Ward noted that in many places the abolitionist organizations were successful and fugitives from slavery found refuge. He wrote:

> Such was the state of public feeling, generated by the abolitionists, that a slave could escape, go into an adjoining State, tell his story publicly, state who his master was, where he lived, how his escape was effected, through what places he passed, who aided him; and all about it; and the whole community would say to him, "Remain here; you are safe.[216]

The successful escape of a person from slavery, and ultimately the success of abolitionism itself, was dependent upon the stories they told. As more and more enslaved people escaped to freedom, their stories could be told more often and to an increasingly wider, and more literate audience. The narratives disseminated through the press and word of mouth helped individuals and anti-slavery institutions gain sympathy and support from both Black and white allies.

Abolitionists had long established groups called Vigilance Committees in different towns and cities throughout the North. These committees were made up of church officials, local abolitionists, and community members sympathetic to the abolitionist cause. Vigilance committees were usually made up of a small number of volunteers and received most of their financial support from donations from their local Black communities. Their main work was to help

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[216] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 103.

people who escaped from slavery find a safe refuge and to protect those escapees from law enforcement or private citizens who sought their recapture. The vigilance committees utilized the well-known routes that existed for people escaping slavery to find safe passage in Northern towns and cities. The towns and cities along this route would have committees to aid people on their way to safety in the United States or Canada. Frederick Douglass upon his arrival in New York City in 1838 received aid from David Ruggles and the local vigilance committee.[217]

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, the vigilance committees became even more vital to the anti-slavery cause. One of the most dangerous provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act was that it allowed slaveowners to simply supply an affidavit stating that one or more people they considered to be their property had escaped, and Federal Marshalls and any other law enforcement official were obligated to assist in the apprehension of said people. The Act also made it a Federal crime for any citizen to aid a fugitive and obligated them to instead help recapture those they may have wished to help. This law led to a dramatic increase in the number of bounty hunters and slave catchers, and consequently of formerly enslaved people and free people being kidnapped and delivered into slavery.[218] In effect, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act meant that no enslaved African American that escaped from bondage could be free

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[217] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham,* 561.
[218] Milton Meltzer, *Slavery: A World History* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 225.

anywhere in the United States. For fugitives, the only possible chance of refuge was to continue further north, to Canada. Great Britain's abolition of slavery in 1833 made Canada the destination for many Black people in the United States. According to scholar, Afua Cooper Canada was generally sympathetic or at the very least indifferent towards formerly enslaved people arriving there. This meant in real terms that, "Canada had become the promised land…a refuge and haven for American slaves."[219]

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act caused Ward to question his belief in the American Republic. From his perspective, the law grossly violated the Constitution. In his autobiography, Ward wrote the following about the Fugitive Slave Act:

> Most contrary to all the old law standards and maxims of the last five centuries. Its provisions abolished the inviolability of a man's house, person, and papers-the right to life, liberty, and property, without due process of law…the writ of habeas corpus-the necessity of a particular description of the place to be searched and the person to be seized-the right of trial by jury, and the right of appeal: each of which is solemnly and emphatically guaranteed by the constitution. It was a most despotic law, passed by despots and their tools, for the most despotic of purposes.[220]

Samuel Ward had championed the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as anti-slavery texts, but with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, he could no longer do so.[221] It was clear to Ward that, in the eyes of the law, Black

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[219] Afua A.P. Cooper, "Black Teachers in Canada West, 1850-1870: A History" (Toronto, University of Toronto, 1991), 4.
[220] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 56.
[221] Ward, 75-76.

people would always be below white people in the United States. In an address at the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in Boston in 1851, Ward spoke of a famous painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill he recently saw. He described how in the actual battle, "a Negro (who) mounted the ramparts and discharged his musket at the enemy no less than fourteen times, and yet in the celebrated picture of that battle, he is represented skulking behind a white man." Indeed, in the bottom right of the painting, a Black man can be seen behind a white soldier in a cockade hat (see fig. 7). For Ward this was further evidence of how Black people were maligned and ignored in the United States from the very beginning. In the same fiery speech, Ward who had constantly stressed restraint, temperance, and patience in the anti-slavery cause proclaimed, to the accompaniment of boisterous cheers, "If anyone came to take him, he better perform two acts for the benefit of himself and his family. He should first make his will and then make peace with his maker."[222] Ward was incensed by the hypocrisy of those leading the American government. Here he was able to utilize both the elocution practiced at the NYAFS as well and the deep knowledge of history he had learned there. Ward harshly criticized US President Fillmore and noted that he signed the Fugitive Slave Act six hundred and twenty-four years and three months after the signing of the Magna Carta. In noting this, Ward highlighted the law's violation not only of the U.S. Constitution but of English common law as well. For Ward, it was American despots who created the laws

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[222] *Annual Report of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1850* (New York: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1850), 23..

that governed the land. He remarked, "Were not the Supreme Court judges appointed by a President and a senate always subservient to slavery…This the South, who are the real rulers of the nation, very well knew."[223]

Fig.7. John Trumbull, *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, 17 June, 1775*. Oil on Canvas, 50.16 x 75.56 cm., Copyright Museum of Fine Arts Boston, (PD-US), accessed July 4, 2020. https://collections.mfa.org/objects/34260/the-death-of-general-warren-at-the-battle-of-bunkers-hill?ctx=c34ec0c7-8761-4812-832e-fe42ea5b049c&idx=0

Obviously, the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act was a major setback for the abolitionist movement and a sign that the approach taken to work within the

[223] *Annual Report of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*, 23.

law was ineffective.[224] According to the research of historian Stanley L. Campbell, over eighty-two percent of accused fugitive slaves were apprehended and returned to their owners throughout the 1850's.[225] As Black people were being rounded up and brought South into slavery, Ward and his family traveled throughout the Northern states, speaking out against the Fugitive Slave Act. One story that Samuel Ward read in a local newspaper in Ohio, reported the tale of several free Black people who were arrested and charged because they defended a suspected fugitive from an armed attack by his alleged former owner. Ward records in his autobiography that this news story is what finally broke his resolve to continue fighting slavery from within the United States and led him and his wife to make the decision to settle in Canada.[226] Ward and his family, however, did not emigrate immediately after this decision, but instead returned to Syracuse, New York, where a Liberty Party Convention was to be held in October, 1851.

Syracuse was one of many Northern communities that strongly opposed and openly defied the Fugitive Slave Act. Prior to the 1851 Liberty Party Convention, Ward passionately condemned the law before an audience estimated

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[224] Jayme A. Sokolow, "The Jerry McHenry Rescue and the Growth of Northern Antislavery Sentiment during the 1850s," *Journal of American Studies* 16, no. 3 (December 1982): 427-28.: The idea of working within the legal system had already been demonstrated to be problematic earlier when in 1842 in the *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* decision the Supreme Court nullified northern personal liberty laws and subsequently made it possible for free and fugitive blacks to be abducted by slave catchers.
[225] Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 207.
[226] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 117.

at five hundred people at a public meeting at Syracuse City Hall.[227] Ward's passionate oration was followed by an equally intense speech from another preacher and escaped formerly enslaved person, Jermaine W. Loguen. Several other emotional speeches followed, including one by the Democratic mayor of Syracuse. Eventually, the lively meeting concluded with several resolutions, including ones that denounced the Fugitive Slave Act and the President of the United States, Millard Fillmore. The meeting also led to the establishment of a new biracial Syracuse Vigilance Committee to support any person in there who had escaped from slavery. Jermaine Loguen and Samuel Ward both became members of this committee.[228] Around this time, William Lloyd Garrison and other renowned abolitionists traveled to Syracuse and spoke out against the Act. Opposed to them were politicians like New York Senator Daniel Webster, who had supported the passage of the Act and sought to have it enforced throughout the North.[229] The arrest of a man named Jerry McHenry in Syracuse would provide the testing ground for the efficacy of the Fugitive Slave Act.

Jerry McHenry was born an enslaved person in North Carolina around 1815. Along with his mother, Jerry McHenry lived and worked for his owner in various slave-holding states throughout the South. He was taught to read and became a skilled farmer, carpenter, and mechanic. While living in Marion County, Missouri in 1843, he escaped from slavery, eluded capture, and

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[227] *New York Tribune*, October 12, 1852.
[228] Jermain W. Loguen, *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman* (Syracuse, New York: J. G. K. Truair & Co., 1859), 368-69.
[229] Sokolow, "The Jerry McHenry Rescue", 431.

eventually settled in Syracuse where he became a successful cabinet maker. McHenry was described as a responsible and likable member of the community.[230] Though living in freedom, he had been sold in absentia to a Missouri man who eventually tracked him down and persuaded law enforcement agents in New York to issue an arrest warrant for him. On October 1, 1851 Jerry McHenry was arrested on fabricated theft charges by three United States Marshalls at the cabinet shop where he worked. Only after he was jailed was the real reason for his arrest revealed to him.[231]

News of the arrest spread quickly around Syracuse. The Liberty Party Convention, at which Samuel Ward was in attendance, was interrupted by the news. Samuel Ward, along with abolitionist Samuel May, visited the jail and talked to the prisoner. Ward described McHenry thus:

> A poor Mulatto man named Jerry, at the suit of his own father had been arrested under the Fugitive Law…He had fetters on his ankles and manacles on his wrist. I had never before, since my recollection, seen a chained slave. He was a short, thick-set, strongly built man, half white though slave born.[232]

Ward was incorrect about who issued the suit against Jerry McHenry; the man who brought it was not McHenry's father or even actually related to McHenry.[233] It is notable, however, that Ward, who had encountered many fugitives from

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[230] Samuel Joseph May, *The Fugitive Slave Law, and Its Victims* (American Anti-Slavery Society, 1861), 20.
[231] Anne Kathleen Baker, *A History of Old Syracuse, 1864-1899* (Fayetteville, New York: Manilus Publishing Company, 1941), 109.
[232] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 117-18.
[233] Sokolow, "The Jerry McHenry Rescue", 433.

slavery throughout his life and was one himself, had never before encountered a man who had gained his freedom, only to be chained again. Ward wrote from memory what McHenry had told him in his cell. According to Ward, McHenry addressed Samuel Ward and Samuel May with a fervent, eloquent speech that cited the Declaration of Independence, several passages from the Bible, and referred to McHenry's father's service in the American Revolution; these statements were all to buttress his defense of his rights as an American citizen worthy of equality before the law.[234] Unfortunately, Samuel May did not share any account of this meeting in detail in any of his published work. How much of this passionate appeal was from the lips of Jerry McHenry, and how much was from Samuel Ward's own mind is impossible to conclude at this point, but ultimately immaterial. Though McHenry may not have spoken the exact words Ward later wrote, the sentiments Ward recorded were valid and applicable to McHenry's plight, as well as the plight of others arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act. Ward, May, and many others in the abolitionist cause set to work to help Jerry McHenry regain his freedom.

As this meeting of the three men occurred, a large mob gathered outside in support of the imprisoned man. Logically, Ward, who was famed far and wide for his oratory skills, was called upon to speak. Ward addressed the crowd and used his well-known oratorial skills to vociferously denounce the Fugitive Slave Act and those that supported it. After Ward left the scene, a mob, estimated at

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[234] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 118-19.

between five hundred and six hundred people, attacked the prison, and with little resistance from the prison guards, freed Jerry McHenry.[235] The attack on the prison by a large, armed mob of anti-slavery people in open defiance of the law was an extremely uncommon occurrence in this era. Generally in the antebellum era with a few major exception, violent acts or threats of violence were carried out *against* anti-slavery protestors, not by them.[236]

After the mob helped him escape, Jerry McHenry's chains were filed off by Ward. He was then hidden away and eventually made his escape to Canada and freedom. The government responded to this blatant violation of a federal law by indicting several of the leading abolitionists involved in the escape, including Samuel Ward. The government was often willing to levy extreme charges for aiding and abetting fugitive enslaved people and was willing to use their full prosecutorial force.[237] At this point, Ward and his wife Emily decided it was time to move to Canada in order to avoid his indictment. Jermain Loguen, who had also aided McHenry in his escape, moved to Canada as well.[238] Ward wrote later that only one of the indicted fugitives was convicted, but he died before he was

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[235] Ward, 125.
[236] Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 200. John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859 is a good example of an exception.
[237] In 1851, the same year as the Jerry McHenry rescue, a White Pennsylvanian, Castner Hanway and others were charged with treason for helping protect fugitive enslaved people being from being recaptured. During the attempted recapture, the former owner of the enslaved people and his accomplices were killed. Ultimately Castner Hanway and the others were acquitted and Castner wrote an account of their trial in 1852. Caster, Hanway. *A history of the trial of Castner Hanway, and others, for treason: at Philadelphia in November 1851, with an introduction upon the history of the slave question.* (Philadelphia: Uriah Hunt & Sons, 1852).
[238] Sokolow, 440.

sentenced. The abolitionists connected to the McHenry case cheekily gave the prosecuting attorney thirty pieces of silver and mailed McHenry's filed chains to President Fillmore in a good, mahogany box.[239]

5.8 Resident and Fugitive: A Life in Exile

"I MADE my entrée into Canada, as a resident and a fugitive, in October, 1851, at Montreal."[240]

In the United, States Samuel Ward was born a slave, became a free citizen and ended up a fugitive. He was a fugitive in search of a home and a place of refuge. As he wrote to fellow US-born, Canadian resident Henry Bibb, "I am, like yourself, a refugee.[241] After the events surrounding the McHenry affair, Ward never lived in the United States again. He also never saw his parents again; his father died in 1851 and his mother in 1853 in New York. Ward, wrote of them:

> Slavery had denied them education, property, caste, rights, liberty…They could not be buried in the same part of a common graveyard, with whites, in their native country; but they can rise at the sound of the first trump, in the day of resurrection. Yes, reader: we who are slave-born derive a comfort and solace from the death of those dearest to us, if they have the sad misfortune to be BLACKS and AMERICANS…[242]

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[239] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 128.
[240] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro,* 66.
[241] *Voice of The Fugitive*, November 5, 1851.
[242] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 9-10.

With his move to Canada, Ward joined many other renowned abolitionists like MaryAnn Shadd and formerly enslaved people like Henry Bibb and Martin Delany who left the United States for the British Empire. All these individuals had unique experiences and their own individual motivations for leaving the United States, but the common denominator was that they were leaving behind a racialized struggle with enormous legal, political, and social obstacles that perhaps could not be overcome. Alexander Crummell described the despair faced despite the progress and the institution building. He wrote, "You negroes may get learning; you may get property, you may have churches and religion; but this is your limit! This is a white man's government. No matter how many millions you may number We Anglo-Saxons are here to rule".[243] Regardless of their differences many African Americans like Ward and Crummell ended up coming to the same conclusion as the American Colonization Society: Black people did not belong in the United States.

The debate in the abolitionist community still centered on the idea of where formerly enslaved people should go. Should people freed from bondage stay in the United States, or should they leave to establish colonies, or be part of an established colony elsewhere? Ward had chosen to leave and become part of a growing diaspora community outside the United States. His life and circumstances epitomized the central question of this debate; could Black people

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[243] Alexander Crummell, *Africa and America: Addresses and Discourses* (Springfield, Mass.: Willey & Co., Publishers, 1891), 55.; Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist,* 28-29.

succeed in the United States and be accepted as equals? Ward was born in the United States and became established there as a respected preacher and publisher but had been forced to flee with his family and try to live as a subject of the British crown. Though before 1850 Ward had contemplated moving abroad, he had been against any colonization schemes and those organizations that supported them, like the American Colonization Society. Ward called the ACS, "the most unscrupulous band of organized, systematic, practical promulgators of Negro-hate."[244] Even before the Fugitive Slave Act was passed in 1850 a rupture over colonization had occurred in the abolitionist movement. Increasingly more and more Black people born in the United States were willing to leave their native born land in hope of a better life elsewhere. Henry Highland Garnett addressed this rupture directly in response to Frederick Douglass, who was against Black emigration. In *The North Star* Garnett wrote, "that my mind in part has greatly changed in regard to the American Colonization scheme…I would rather see a man free in Liberia, than a slave in the United States."[245] Garnett voiced an increasingly common opinion among many Black abolitionists.

The departure of so many important allies from the United States left many Black abolitionists bereft. Frederick Douglass wrote, "we protest all this-and especially the despair in which it has plunged our people."[246] The question is, what were Ward and others who chose a similar path looking to find? Historian

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[244] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 31.
[245] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 121.
[246] *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, November 27, 1851.

Floyd Miller argued that Ward and others like him left the US for Great Britain and Canada searching for a "black nationality."[247] If the US could not, or would not be their nation then another would have to be. Ward, wrote of how he stood on the bank of the St. Lawrence, looked back at the United States, and contemplated his choice:

> I was preferring the right hand-the British-side of the St. Lawrence, and concluding that on the right side-the British side things were most inviting, and trying to reason myself into the belief of this with a sort of patriotic feeling to which all my life before I had been a stranger, and concerning which I had been a sceptic. Why had I interest in the British side of the noble St. Lawrence? What gave me a fellow feeling with those inhabitants? Simply the fact, that that country had become to me, in a sense in which no country ever was before, my own, and those people my fellow citizens.[248]

After Montreal, Ward and his family made their way to Toronto where he met with the contacts he had made on his previous visit to the city. It was through this network that Ward found employment as an agent of the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society. He traveled around Canada and gave lectures about American slavery to garner support, not only for the abolition of slavery, but for the fugitives streaming across the border. Despite his initial feelings of belonging, Ward soon observed that many of his new "fellow citizens" often mirrored the pro-slavery attitudes and practices of those south of the border. Ward had written of Canada

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[247] Rhodes, "The Contestation Over National Identity", 175.
[248] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 135.

as the great "moral lighthouse" but there he was to witness events and scenes very reminiscent of what he left behind in the United States.[249]

Ward believed that Canada's proximity to the United States was what led to the strong pro-slavery sentiment in much of the population. The immigration of many Americans who had owned slaves, and were thus hostile to abolition, along with the commercial ties between Canada and the United States and the implicit connection of economics and slavery, caused many Canadians to be sympathetic to the pro-slavery position. In this group of pro-slavery sympathizers Ward included former planters in the West Indies who lost possession of enslaved people and their property due to the passing of Emancipation Act of 1834 in Great Britain. Also in this group were Canadians who had taken part in the slave holding economy through work as traders and merchants, or had worked directly on Southern plantations themselves. According to Ward other Canadians that exhibited pro-slavery sentiment were those who married into or associated with slave owning families in the Southern United States. But much like the Northern states in the US, the most obvious and impactful examples of racism were in public life. Ward and his family were discriminated against at several points on their journey north. In Kingston, they were denied a cabin on the steamer, *St. Lawrence,* which was bound for Toronto (see fig. 8). In both the United States and Canada, Ward experienced racism most often in public spaces,

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[249] Samuel Ringgold Ward to Henry Bibb and Theodore Holly, October 1852, in Ripley et al., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, IV.:224-28.

like the boats, trains, and streets of everyday life, not in the ornate private drawing rooms of the middle and upper classes.

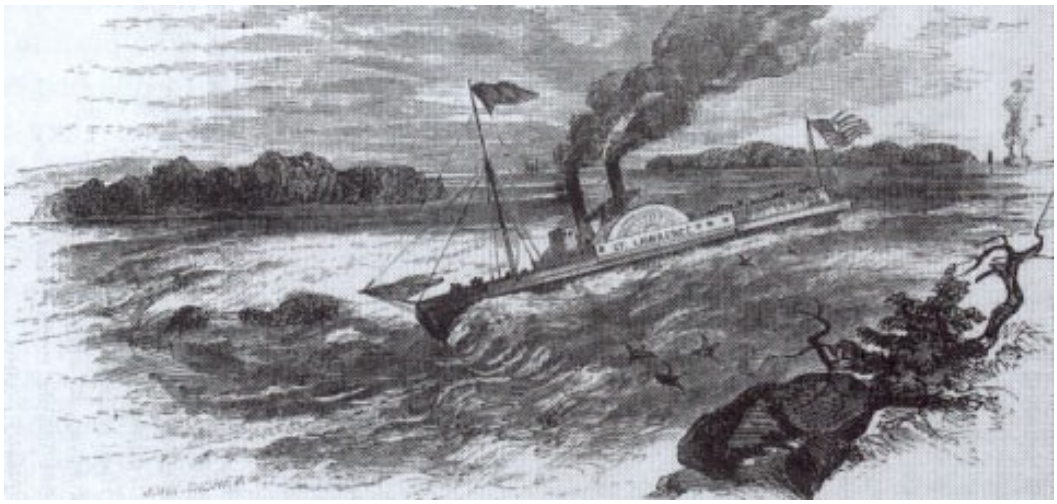

Fig. 8. Image of the *St. Lawrence* from W.S. Hunter *Panoramic Guide from Niagara Falls to Québec* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Company, 1857), 34.

What seemed to affect Ward most about racism in Canada was how overt it was compared to racism in the Northern states of the US. In his autobiography, Ward made a clear distinction between public and private discrimination. He wrote, “now, far be it from me to complain of any white man's denying any Negro a seat at his table, or the association of his family.” For Ward, a man’s home was his castle, and he was free to discriminate in his private life based on his inclinations. The racism and civically supported discrimination that was seen on the streets of New York and elsewhere was a surprise for him to encounter in Canada. Ward wrote of several examples of Black people in Canada being discriminated against; he witnessed or heard reports of Black people being

denied cabins on steamers, rooms in tavern lodges, places in schools, and in other instances because of their skin color. Although they held positions of modest power, such as steamer captain, tavern keeper, or head of school, the white men who practiced this "negro hate" were not considered gentlemen. To Ward, this was very significant because for Black Canadians, as he came to call himself, the judges and politicians who upheld the law *were* gentlemen. The issue was of course, that the racism and discrimination present in everyday, public life could only be adjudicated by the gentlemen of the law if a suit were brought forth by the offended party. Ward wrote how British law was a great levelling factor that could cancel out discrimination, "Happily for us, we have equal laws in our adopted country; and I know of no judge who would sully the British ermine by swerving from duty at the bidding of prejudice, in a case coming before him as betwixt a Negro and a white man."[250] Ward had been an advocate of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution in the United States, and now placed his faith in and loyalty in British justice.

In Canada, fugitives from slavery, who bore both physical and mental burdens, had the opportunity to explore and capitalize on the vast reaches of the frontier. Ward saw the archetypal fugitive as the best equipped to settle the land of abundance and beauty with its pleasant climate, "as if Providence designed it."[251] To Ward, those formerly enslaved, then fugitive, and finally free men were

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[250] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro,* 138-50.
[251] Ward, 155.

the best of the African American people. Communities like the one established at Elgin in Buxton, Ontario served as refuges for formerly enslaved African Americans and also provided opportunities for them to prosper as free people. Ward wrote of the advantage these people could provide to Canada, when he asserted:

> We can but see them as among the most admirable of any race. The fugitive exercises patience, fortitude, and perseverance, connected with and fed by an ardent and unrestrained and resistless love of liberty, such as cause men to be admired everywhere.[252]

Here one must consider Ward's audience and who these words were written for. Was Ward writing to the people of this "admirable Race" and encouraging those in the United States to seek their own prosperity? Or perhaps Ward was writing to persuade British officials in London and Toronto that formerly enslaved fugitives encompassed the best and noble traits of a loyal, and patriotic citizenry.

An example for Ward of what a pioneering Black citizenry could do in Canada was found at Buxton. The Buxton settlement was established by Rev. William King, a Scot and a former slaveholder who worked to settle formerly enslaved people in free communities. Ward noted the success of the school not only in educating the Black children but the children of white Canadians.

> ...the whites of the vicinity gladly avail themselves of the superior advantages this school offers them. Hence, white children and black children sit, recite, and play together, without distinction. Hence, also, in the Sunday-school, are some white and some coloured teachers; and some

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[252] Ward, 165.

> of the one race are teaching those of the other, and vice versâ, in the different classes… also the Negro and the white man worship and commune together, a coloured lad setting the tunes.[253]

The Buxton settlement was a model of what was possible in Canada for Black people. A rising people could establish institutions that could both support Black families and attract the patronage of the larger white Canadian population. To Ward these institutions like churches and schools could help alleviate the burdens that formerly enslaved people had to carry.

One reason Samuel Ward may have supported emigration and colonization was the impact slavery had on the formerly enslaved. For Ward enslaved people could be freed from bondage but never truly free. Ward wrote, "…too many bear with them the indelible marks of the accursed lot to which they have been doomed, in early life. It is almost impossible to spend youth, manhood, and the greater part of life, in such a condition as that of the American slave."[254] Even Ward, whose parents took him away from slavery at the age of three, reckoned he could feel its effects:

> I am every day showing something of my slave origin. It is among my thoughts, my superstitions, my narrow views, my awkwardness of manners. Ah, the infernal impress is upon me, and I fear I shall transmit it to my children, and they to theirs! How deeply seated, how far reaching, a curse it is![255]

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[253] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England* (John Snow, 1855), 104.
[254] Ward, 169.
[255] Ward, 170.

This belief in the degraded condition of the slave, and even in their descendants, was instilled in Ward while a student at the NYAFS years before. Teachers like Charles Andrews believed and taught that for Black students to rise they had to be transformed utterly, and even then the stain of slavery would remain. The NYAFS had been the imperfect vehicle for that transformation. Ward ultimately came to the same conclusion that Charles Andrews and other trustees at the school had; perhaps the only avenue to be free of the conditions caused by the legacy of slavery was to emigrate to a new land, and to find a place free of the perpetual stigma that was slavery.

Thousands of African Americans had settled in Canada over the years, especially after the American Revolution and the War of 1812. However, many were not equipped with the resources they needed to succeed, such as property and education, and were not given any such assistance by the British government. Most Black Canadian men, unlike Samuel Ward or Henry Bibb, would not be considered gentlemen due to their lack of resources and education. In his autobiography, Ward estimated that there were about 40,000 formerly enslaved people in Canada in 1851.[256] Over the years, Ward traveled to many communities in central Canada and encountered many Black Canadians who struggled with their new lives. One such community was Chatham, in southwestern Ontario. Chatham was one of the original stops on the Underground Railroad and became one of the main settlements for formerly enslaved people in Canada. In fact, it

[256] Ward, 199.

was referred to as the "Black Mecca" due to its significance to the runaways as a place to be safe and free.[257] Chatham was the destination point for many that set out on the long and arduous road that started in the American South.

In Chatham, Ward met many men and women who worked in skilled positions, went to church, raised their children, and were fine, upstanding members of society. The next generation, however, was a different story. Ward wrote, "to see the sons and daughters of fathers and mothers who dared the perils of flight…partaking so little of the traits of their parents' character."[258] What Ward was referring to was drinking, idleness, and a lack of commitment to education or the church. In writing this, Ward comes close to echoing the language of his former teacher, Charles Andrews, and his paternalistic attitude towards many young Black people in New York years before. Unlike Andrews, however, Ward was cognizant of the double standard. Black people, even in Chatham, did not have the same privileges and opportunities as white Canadians of a similar class. Ward also noted the degree of hostility between lower class Black and white people. Ward wrote, "Most of the white settlers in Chatham were low, degraded persons, in early and former life. They are the Negro-haters." He felt these lower-class white people were no different than the lower-class Black people, "There are some excessively lazy, idle black persons in Chatham-they are a positive disgrace to the class; but they have their equals among the whites."[259]

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[257] " Welcome to the Chatham-Kent Historical Society", Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society, accessed November 17, 2019, https://ckbhs.org/.
[258] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 197.
[259] Ward, 201- 03.

From Ward's perspective Black people had to try harder, had to be a credit to their race and class, to have any chance of receiving something close to equality or opportunity in British society. Ward soon had an opportunity to continue his work for the abolitionist cause in Britain itself.

5.9 A Fortunate Time: Ward in Great Britain

"I had arrived in England at a fortunate time--not merely because of the May meetings, but because of the twofold fact that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was in every body's hands and heart, and its gifted authoress was the English people's guest. For anti-slavery purposes, a more favourable time could not have been chosen for visiting England."[260]

On April 18, 1853 in Halifax, Nova Scotia Samuel Ward boarded the steamer *Europa* bound for Liverpool, England. Ward traveled as an agent of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada who, in his words, "desired to take advantage of the well-known anti-slavery feeling of Great Britain", which had grown larger due to the "unprecedented influence of Mrs. Stowe's masterpiece, 'UNCLE TOM's CABIN.'" Even before his first journey across the Atlantic Ocean, Samuel Ward faced a problem. Despite having a first-class ticket, he was denied the right to dine with the other first-class passengers because he was Black. Ward was informed about his exclusion by Edward Cunard the son of Samuel Cunard,

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[260] Ward, 119.

founder of the Cunard line and an upstanding British gentleman. In his autobiography, Ward detailed a conversation that he held with Edward Cunard and how he was forced to eat his meals in his state room away from the other passengers. While it is difficult to rely on the complete veracity of this dialogue presented by Ward, the message was clear. While Cunard himself professed that he had no problem with someone like Ward dining with the first-class passengers, it was believed that some of the other passengers might have a problem with it, especially those from the United States. The Cunard Line relied on passengers from the United States, so the American prejudice, however flawed, was accommodated in this circumstance. Ward was forced to accede to this demand and commented on the self-importance of the Americans and concluded, "worse, however, than Yankee arrogance, is the easy accommodating virtue of a Yankeefied Englishman." This experience demonstrated one of Ward's main reasons for leaving North America, which was to seek an environment free of Yankee prejudice and its enablers.[261]

Ward's visit to Great Britain as an agent of an anti-slavery group was not a unique occurrence for the time. More African American abolitionists traveled to Britain between the years 1848 and 1854 than during any other time.[262] This surge in visits advocating for abolition was due to the growth and establishment of anti-slavery societies in North America and the boom in anti-slavery literature,

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[261] Ward, 227-30.
[262] Blackett, *Building An Antislavery Wall,* 145. *Quoted in National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 1, 1847.

in the form of memoirs, autobiographies, and fictional stories, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Ward was on the same lecture circuit as Stowe on his visit.[263] The anti-slavery movement had already achieved great success in Britain, which was viewed as a sympathetic place in which to pursue support for anti-slavery measures in the United States. The movement to abolish slavery in Great Britain and most of its colonies culminated in the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.[264] Anti-slavery sentiment was still high in Great Britain and American abolitionists sought to garner that support for their cause.

Black abolitionists often addressed large, enthusiastic, receptive audiences in Britain, much to the chagrin of many from the United States. This reception in Great Britain contrasted with the violence and threats of violence carried out by mobs against Black people in the United States. A writer for the *New York Observer* posited that Black people were welcomed in Great Britain because of the exoticism of their skin tone and their marketing potential. He wrote, "nothing goes down with her (Great Britain) as genuine black" and "demand for the 'article' of Ethiopian lions in the London market increases."[265] While this article cannot be taken too seriously, and the writer's mocking tone is evident of this, the writer was speaking around a basic truth. Black people were still a rarity to see on

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[263] Nina Reid-Maroney, "History , Historiography, and the Promised Land Project", in *The Promised Land: History and Historiography of the Black Experience in Chatham-Kent's Settlements and Beyond* , Boulou Ebanda De B'beri, Nina Reid-Maroney, and Handel Kashope Wright, eds (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 63.
[264]Seymour Drescher, "The Historical Context of British Abolition," in *Abolition and its Aftermath: The Historical Context, 1790-1916,* David Richardson, ed., (New York: Frank Cass & Co.), 14.
[265] Blackett, *Building An Antislavery Wall,* 39-40.

the streets of Britain and large crowds of white Britons did turn out for their appearances. Frederick Douglass described his time in England and Ireland, where his public speeches were met with large, adoring crowds hanging on his every word, as "some of the happiest moments" in his life. [266]

The voyage across the Atlantic for Ward was pleasant and he did not suffer any sea-sickness. He traveled alone while his wife Emily remained in Canada with their children. While at sea, Ward had the opportunity to engage in long conversations with many noteworthy passengers like English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray and the Lord Bishop of Montreal, the Right Rev. Dr. George Mountain.[267] After ten days at sea Samuel Ward started his tour of Great Britain in Liverpool. Besides being the British hub for passengers traveling to and from North America, the city was where the vast majority of US cotton, produced by enslaved persons, entered Britain. Ward was not greeted by a large adoring crowd when he disembarked from the *Europa*; before he could give an eloquent speech, he had to find transportation to his lodgings. "My first experience of English dealing was in being charged treble fare by a Liverpool cabman, a race with which I have had much to do since".[268] So began Samuel Ward's time in England.

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[266] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, vol. I (New York: International Publishing, 1950), 125-29.
[267] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 113-15.
[268] Ward, 237.

Ward's experience in being cheated by a cabman did not seem to negatively effect his mindset as he began his tour of the British Isles. After starting in Liverpool, Ward moved on to London, where he lost his way and wandered the labyrinthian streets for many hours looking for his accommodations, a common experience for many first time visitors to the sprawling metropolis.[269] Ward was awed by many of his experiences in Britain. When he was introduced to one man quite casually, he was shocked to learn he was a marquis. Ward wrote, "I had seen a nobleman, a lord-for the first time!"[270] Ward's mission in Great Britain was to persuade English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh people to support the cause of the abolition of slavery in the United States. With his powerful voice, his height, and his color, Ward was a hard man to miss and with his eloquent orations hard to ignore. William G. Allen, an African American teacher who fled to England after marrying one of his white students from Oneida Institute, wrote of Ward:

> Whom it is hardly possible to be blacker, and who is an honor to the race in intellectual ability,...and can amply testify to the fact that his skin, though 'deepest dyed', has been no barrier to the best society in the kingdom.[271]

Samuel Ward stood out in a crowd, even among the often crowded field of Black abolitionist figures all with their often analogous addresses concerning

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[269] Ward, 243.
[270] Ward, 244.
[271] William G. Allen to William Lloyd Garrison, June 20, 1853. Woodson, *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800-1860*, 285-86.

abolitionism. William Wells Brown, described Ward as "the black Daniel Webster" and as "possessing a strong voice and energetic in his gestures. Mr. Ward always impressed his…speeches upon his hearers."[272] Ward in his speeches and writing though, addressed more than just the issue of abolishing slavery. Ward and his allies represented one side of a larger debate in the abolitionist world, about what would happen after the first goal of abolitionism was achieved.

Samuel Ward like many Black people who were enslaved and became free, made his choice to leave the United States, as had many figures like Henry Bibb, and Martin Delany, who had worked in Liberia trying to establish a colony. On the other side were men like William Lloyd Garrison, who was a polarizing figure in the abolitionist world. As leader of the American Anti-Slavery Society he offered a very strident path forward for the abolition of slavery and the construction of the world anew. On the issue of the colonization of free Black people, Garrison had switched sides, an original member of the American Colonization Society, by the 1850's Garrison was vehemently opposed to their mission. Garrison spoke out and wrote a pamphlet that laid out his opposition, titled *Thoughts on African Colonization.* Garrison had a great deal of support in Great Britain and there were many 'Garrisonians' there to defend his positions. British Garrisonians were wary of people like Samuel Ward and Henry Highland Garnett, whom they referred to as the "coloured ministers." [273] Garrison, and

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[272] William Wells Brown, *The Rising Son* (Boston: A.G. Brown and Co., Publishers, 1874), 284-85.
[273] Blackett, *Building An Antislavery Wall,* 51.

many of his supporters were also very critical of any church, or ecclesiastical connection with the abolitionist movement.[274] Ward, and many of his allies were churchmen and supporters of Black emigration. At the time of Ward's visit to Great Britain, there were many Black abolitionists speaking there on both sides of the debate, but they did not attack each other. According to R. J. M. Blackett, they were "independent but pragmatic men and women who refused to bow to others when they believed that to do so would be against the interest of their cause but…carefully avoided public discussion of differences between them."[275] Samuel Ward behaved according to this convention, but was not afraid to express his views on colonization and other topics, no matter who might be opposed.

Among Ward's targets in his speeches on the tour of Great Britain were church and state; specifically, the US church and the British state. Ward was very critical of many American religious institutions and their defense of, or indifference to, the institution of slavery. William Wells Brown, a strong Garrisonian, described a speech given by Ward at Exeter Hall in London. Ward spoke so forcefully and persuasively about the duplicity of the churches that it "caused Professor Stowe to turn more than once upon his seat", Brown continued, "I believe Ward to be not only one of the most honest, but an uncompromising and faithful advocate of his countrymen. [276] He is certainly the best colored minister that has ever visited the country."[277] Ward's position in

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[274] Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist*, 24-26.
[275] Blackett, *Building An Antislavery Wall,* 44.
[276] This was Reverend Calvin Ellis Stowe, husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe.
[277] *Liberator*, June 3, 1853.

Great Britain as an American Congregationalist minister criticizing US churches was not overly fraught or dangerous; as the defenders of American Christianity and slavery were few and far between in Great Britain.[278] Ward, however, was also unafraid of attacking British policy while in Britain.

Ward openly criticized British policy in a way that no other Black abolitionist had attempted. He spoke out strongly and repeatedly against the Seamen's Acts, also known as the Negro Seamen's Acts, which were a series of laws related to the Atlantic ports that were passed by Southern US states in the 1820's. The laws called for the imprisonment of coloured sailors from any foreign vessel that called at a Southern port. Great Britain protested these actions, but not too strongly due to the fear of losing access to the ports in question.[279] Many in the abolitionist community felt that the British government's failure to strongly oppose the acts made them complicit, but Ward was the only one to say it publicly and plainly. At a speech in Manchester Ward stated that the government was, "culpably negligent of their duty" and "when the wrongs of the British negro demanded redress, the same lion became a very harmless creature and suddenly became destitute of every particle of power, without either teeth, or claw."[280] In his autobiography Ward wrote of the hypocrisy of many US churches but did not recount his righteous anger at the British government's policy concerning the

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[278] Blackett, *Building An Antislavery Wall,* 203.
[279] Philip H. Hamer, "Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seaman's Act, 1822-1848," *The Journal of Southern History* 1, no. 1 (February 1935): 3-8.; Blackett, *Building An Antislavery Wall,* 204.
[280] *Anti Slavery Reporter*, June 1, 1854; *British Banner*, May 24, 1854; *Manchester Examiner and Times*, August 2, 1854.

Seamen's Acts. Perhaps since many of his British supporters were of the governing class, he left this out in an attempt to avoid offense.

Ward spoke and traveled widely in Great Britain. Though his patrons were members of the upper classes, he spoke to crowds of many different backgrounds and classes. When in Scotland, Ward reported, "many donations were made by poor persons, widows and others," who to Ward seemed to, "generally do more in proportion to their means, than the rich do."[281] Ward's remarks about and friendliness with the lower classes became pronounced when he asked a crowd in Glasgow to identify with the poor. This was no surprise, as his success previously as a pastor of an all white congregation in South Butler and the party policies he favored as a Liberty Party candidate, demonstrated Ward's apparent sympathy for, and success with white audiences. *The Glasgow Examiner* was worried enough that they cautioned Ward in an editorial, to be careful "of the paupers and vagabonds which crowd our great city. Any approach to them is found to be sufficiently dangerous both to the person and property of those who befriended them."[282] It seemed Ward's methods were not quite as gentlemanly as the *Examiner* would have preferred. Ward spoke to people from nearly every strata of society, and addressed groups allied with the abolitionist cause, like Sunday schools, missionary societies, and groups dedicated to promoting peace and temperance.[283] Ward's verbosity and his ability to connect with audiences made

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[281] *British Banner*, September 28, 1853.
[282] *The Glasgow Examiner*, November 12, 1853.
[283] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), 76-77.

him a popular and important figure not only with many of the poorer, working classes but also in the rarified realm of the British upper classes.

A great deal of Ward's autobiography covering his time in England described occasions when he met earls, lords, and viscounts of the British aristocracy. In one such example, Ward wrote:

> I was invited by Lady Dover to see from her drawing-room window a review of the troops, it being the Queen's birthday...There I had the honour of being introduced to the Earl of Carlisle, at his Lordship's request, by the Rev. C. Beecher. Mentioning the object of my visit to his Lordship, he readily replied, "Nothing can be more interesting.[284]

At this juncture it is impossible to state whether the Lordship's remark was truly authentic, or simply patronizing. Many of the lords and ladies of the aristocracy, of landed wealth and increasingly industrial fortune, were often sympathetic to the cause of abolition. Their wealth, when not gained from enslaved labor on the sugar and cotton plantations in the Southern United States, or the West Indies, came frequently from the exploitation of the "free" British lower classes.[285] Despite all that. Ward's very existence as an eloquent, educated, African American was certainly intriguing to many members of the upper classes who supported abolitionism with their time and money. To British supporters, Ward and others, like Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnett, represented the potentiality of emancipation. William Lloyd Garrison could shout, and Harriet

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[284] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 308.
[285] Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 32.

Beecher Stowe could write, but only people like Ward stood testament to the fact that an enslaved person, once unshackled, could be a strong, educated free citizen of means and self-determination. At that time, one of the most effective means to convey and spread this message of abolition, freedom, and self determination was through the medium of biography or autobiography.

The front piece of Samuel Ward's autobiography depicts him in daguerreotype, well dressed, abstemious, and non-threatening, with a slight upcurve of his lips, suggesting a gentle smile, a par exemplar figure of progress (see fig. 9). Ward's autobiography must be understood in the context of the place and time in which it was written. The idea for the autobiography was suggested to Ward by an English clergyman and once completed, it was dedicated to an English aristocrat, the Duchess of Sutherland.[286] The autobiography was one of many that described the experiences of formerly enslaved people who had gained their freedom. London, the capital of Great Britain, was also the capital of book publishing and the Samuel Ward's story was to be published there.

Samuel Ward's autobiography was published in London by John Snow of Paternoster Row. This publishing house specialized in slave narratives along with tales of missionaries and preachers and their time working in different parts of the world.[287] This was an age of books and the publishing of the slave narrative

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[286] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, v.
[287] *Publishers' Circular and General Record of British and Foreign Literature; Containing A Complete Alphabetical List Of All New Works Published In Great Britain, And Every Work Of Interest Published Abroad*, vol. XVIII (London: Sampson Low, Son & Co., 1855).

was at its height. Ward's *The Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro* was published in 1855, ten years after Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, and just two years after Harriet Beecher Stowe's, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. William Wells Brown, Henry Highland Garnett, Jermain W. Loguen and many other Black abolitionists also wrote books about their lives. Along with these books, a multitude of pamphlets and weekly newspapers were published. In conjunction with the many speeches and conventions that took place, the abolitionist cause was provided with a powerful chorus. Samuel Ward's commanding voice was part of this chorus and his book became part of it as well. The autobiography ends with Ward still in England, but his last chapter of his life would not be there, it would be in a corner of the British Empire that had direct experience with slavery and the society that emerges after it departs. After two years in England Samuel Ward departed for Jamaica. There he was met by his family who journeyed from Canada to begin their new lives.

Fig. 9. Samuel Ringgold Ward, Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, and England. (Paternoster Row, London: John Snow, 1855), Front piece.

5.10 Service To His People: Ward in Jamaica

"It may be, that our Heavenly Father will permit me to be of some service to my people in that island."[288]

From 1853 to 1855 Samuel Ward spoke and traveled to all the regions of Great Britain. During this time he was separated from his family and began to think about what the future held for him, his wife, and his children. While still in England, Ward gave a talk to the Society of Friends in Chelmsford, a small town northwest of London. After his talk Ward met with Mr. John Chandler, Esq., a well-traveled gentleman who owned land in Jamaica. Chandler and Ward had known of each other but had never met prior to this encounter. In his autobiography, Ward wrote of how Chandler, aware of his idea to emigrate, offered to sell him a parcel of land in St. George's Parish, Jamaica, "at a price so nominal as to make it equivalent to a gift." Ward accepted the offer, and this action was essentially the coda of his autobiography.[289]

As early as 1839 Ward had considered emigrating to Jamaica and had followed through with his move to Canada after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. The movement for black emigration only increased in the 1850's. Liberian colonization was even endorsed by Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* For Ward, emigration schemes were not just a means to escape the inherent

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[288] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 194.
[289] Ward, *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro*, 405.

unjustness of the United States, but part of a strategy to build an alternative economic model that could destroy the economic justification for slavery. Ward had come to believe that Black people had to create an alternative agricultural market to the slave-based one in the US. Ward, like his cousin Henry Highland Garnett, supported the "free-produce Movement." This movement was a chance to create an alternative to the slave economy and buttress the economic self sufficiency of formerly enslaved people.[290] The idea was to employ free people to produce sugar, cotton, and other goods for export in such a way as to undermine or possibly destroy the slave-based market of the US. The movement originated in the British abolition campaign in the early 1790's, when hundreds of thousands of citizens boycotted slave-produced sugar. This movement in the United States first caught on with the Quakers and gained prominent supporters like Henry Ward Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, and Gerrit Smith. While in England, Ward was presented with a chance to pursue this opportunity and contribute to the free-produce movement.[291]

In the late autumn of 1855 Samuel Ward and his son journeyed to Jamaica where Ward spread the word of God as a preacher before he became a planter. Ward established a pastorate in the capital Kingston for a congregation of

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[290] Duane, *Educated for Freedom: The Incredible Story of Two Fugitive Schoolboys Who Grew Up to Change A Nation*, 154.; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 121.
[291] Blackett, 173.; Richard MacMaster, "Henry Highland Garnett and the African Civilization Society," *Journal of Presbyterian Church History* 48 (Summer 1970): 99-100.; Schor, *Henry Highland Garnett,* 154.; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 120.

dissident Baptists and served as their political advisor. After some disagreements with his congregants Ward resigned his position and moved out of Kingston in 1860. The nature of the disagreement, unfortunately, is not evidently clear. [292] Ward and his family settled in Saint Thomas-in-the-East, a rural community outside of the capital, in hopes of starting a farm. The population of this rural parish was largely made up of formerly enslaved people. Ward as a farmer would have had the chance to assess the progress of the free-produce movement.

For Ward, Jamaica was a test case for the success of emancipation. The many letters to friends and editorials he wrote over the years espoused the notion he had that Jamaica was the right place for Black people to emigrate to, with the appropriate climate and soil to grow crops and prosper as farmers. He even conferred with British abolitionists about growing free cotton and sugar in Jamaica, but this never came to fruition. Ward admired what Black people had been able to accomplish in the Caribbean and had written in the *Provincial Freemen*, "the blacks in the West Indies, now among the wealthiest, most learned and most influential of Her Majesty's colonial subjects, were, a century ago, poor and as illiterate as we are now [due to what] Slavery did to them."[293] Ward, by taking to the land, hoped to be part of the process of turning Jamaica,

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[292] Robin W. Winks, "'Ward, Samuel Ringgold,' ," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003). http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ward_samuel_ringgold_9E.html.
[293] *Provincial Freeman*, March 24, 1853.

once a bastion of chattel slavery, into an island of prosperous enterprise gained through free Black labor.

Ward however did not find success in farming and lived the last years of his life in relative poverty. Ward, who had written glowingly of the success of Black people in the West Indies and Jamaica specifically, was unable to achieve his own success there. [294] Ward's lack of success cannot be too remarkable, as he had no experience in farming, having been city-raised and spending his adult life working with ink and verse and not hoe and till. To Ward this failure, and the failure of many formerly enslaved Black people to become successful was not theirs alone. The abolitionist movement did not falter because Black people were incapable of freedom, but because white planters were. In a letter to G.W. Reynolds in 1859 Ward stated that proslavery forces could point to the decline in profitability and the rise in poverty as signs of the movement's failure, but he declared, "Now the plain truth is, our Jamaica planters were utterly disqualified to endure the shock of freedom."[295] The provisions arranged by the colonial government provided virtually nothing for the emancipated people and lacked the initiative or wherewithal to bring actual change. The failure to transform a slave society into a free society was a political as well as economic problem in Jamaica. The economic predicament was illustrated quite clearly in the rates of

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[294] Carol Faulkner, "The Root of Evil: Free Produce and Radical Antislavery, 1820-1860," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 401.; Burke, *Samuel Ringgold Ward: Christian Abolitionist* , 89.
[295] Samuel Ringgold Ward to G. W. Reynolds, 7 May 1859. C. Peter Ripley et al., eds., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1859-1865*, vol. III (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 20.

sugar production, which fell, by the mid-1860's, to about thirty-eight percent below pre-emancipation levels. The precarious condition of the sugar trade negatively impacted Jamaica's economy, and disproportionately damaged the less well off Black population .[296] To address the turmoil that resulted from trying to remake Jamaican society, Ward advocated for Black Jamaicans not to resort to violence or the threat of violence, but to remain respectable, loyal, and hardworking in the face of their immense problems.

The last work published by Ward, "Reflections Upon the Gordon Rebellion", was written following the Morant Rebellion of 1865. A protest of Black Jamaicans over severe restrictions of their civil rights, and poor living and working conditions, spiraled into an armed uprising that lasted for days. After the militia was called out, and martial law declared the uprising was put down with hundreds killed and arrested. Ward did not support the rebellion and blamed the uprising and its violence on its leader George William Gordon. Gordon, who was biracial, and a representative in the colonial government, was for Ward a dishonest, treasonous, rabble rousing mulatto who manipulated the "lower classes" of the island to rebel.[297] The rebellion, for Ward, was unnecessary, disproportionately violent to the oppression being faced, and only supported by a small minority of Black Jamaicans, many of which according to Ward, did not live near Morant Bay, where the rebellion occurred. But for Ward, the biggest

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[296] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*, 119.
[297] Ward, "Reflections upon the Gordon Rebellion," 4. National Library of Jamaica Digital Collection, accessed July 15, 2020, https://nljdigital.nlj.gov.jm/items/show/2588.

problem with the rebellion was the effect it would have on how Black Jamaicans were viewed by their white neighbors and the governing officials in Kingston and London. Samuel Ward wrote of the double standard that existed for Black people, "Everybody knows that the negro is not judged of by the same rule that is applied to other men. Nobody stigmatises all Irish men because of the Fenian scheme. Nobody blames all Americans because of the Southern rebellion."[298] For Ward, Black people had to be respectable, loyal, and present a public face that would hopefully garner the respect they deserved.

Ward completed his largely gloomy essay on the rebellion with an optimistic flourish. He believed the great rift that existed in Jamaica, between Black and white, and rich and poor could be closed; and stability, peace, and a more equitable society would be possible to create. Ward concluded his essay with what he thought could help Jamaica heal and prosper. Jamaica was shattered and he had an idea of what was needed. Ward concluded, "A completeness would be given to the picture, if a good compulsory educational law were imposed, which would dispel the gloomy prospect of ignorance which now darkens our horizon." Ward had been part of a generation of Black men and women that were born into slavery but were able to establish and work with institutions to turn enslaved people into educated free citizens.[299] For Ward, the solution to racial injustice was not the radicalism of David Walker or George

[298] Ward, "Reflections upon the Gordon Rebellion," 6.
[299] Ward, "Reflections upon the Gordon Rebellion," 6-8.

William Gordon, but the building of institutions and respectability. Of course these institutions were flawed, the barriers arrayed against insurmountable, and the ends were not achieved. Despite all that Ward still hoped, still believed that education and institutions could make all the difference. .

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Samuel Ward died at the age of 49 in 1866, which was a year after the conclusion of the American Civil War. Unfortunately, he died young and did not live to see what became of his restive Jamaica or the newly emancipated United States. His words and deeds were not forgotten but were overshadowed by the optimism of the reconstruction of the American South and the subsequent cataclysm of its redemption by white supremacists.[300] Although chattel slavery was abolished in the United States, new causes emerged and towering figures like Frederick Douglass took them up and were succeeded by others like Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois. Samuel Ward was a significant figure however, and was an exemplar of the abolitionist movement in the antebellum world.

Ward spent his formative years in the churning tumult of New York City at the dawn of a new age. He grew up in a time and place where education was possible for someone who was born enslaved, considered more as property than a person. He was born to parents who made great sacrifices for their children and worked to overcome great barriers and the threat of recapture to ensure their freedom. Samuel Ward's fortune was all based on contingency: a contingency that could have shifted at any time. If one thing had changed, if perhaps his parents

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[300] Redeemers were Democrats who were opposed to Black suffrage and the progress in acquiring civil rights during Reconstruction, They were largely successful in regaining power and re-establishing white state governments in the South that were as draconian and hostile to Black people as the ones that had existed prior to the Civil War. An excellent analysis of this can be found in Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*.

had not been able to stay together, or he had been born in Mississippi instead of Maryland, his escape and success likely would not have happened, and he would have died unknown and forgotten, like millions of other enslaved people. No one could claim that any person born into slavery was fortunate. The small minority of enslaved people who were able to, by effort or circumstance, escape bondage, were vastly outnumbered by those who suffered and died, known only to those around them and largely unknown to history. The odds of success were long for enslaved Black people. Thousands upon thousands of enslaved people sought freedom and often earned nothing but torture and death. Being born free or escaping to freedom was no guarantee of anything but a different kind of burden, inflicted not by the lash but by the unjust laws created by a hostile state and the racist attitudes of an often ignorant, and at best, indifferent public. Ward used the education he earned at the NYAFS to combat the laws and attitudes which were aligned against Black people. Despite the almost insurmountable barriers that existed Samuel Ward achieved great things.

Ward taught and preached throughout the Northeastern United States before he took his family and his fate to Canada, England, and eventually to Jamaica. Ward belonged to anti-slavery societies, joined the Liberty Party, and worked within the rules to make the United States a more perfect Union. He joined vigilance committee to aid formerly enslaved people and followed a higher moral law that superseded the discriminatory laws of the United States. His allegiance ultimately moved to the British Empire and its colonies, Canada and then Jamaica. He believed in institutions like abolitionist and literary societies,

political parties, the church, and schools. However, he was never a revolutionary; he always believed that change and racial justice could be achieved within pre-existing hierarchical structures. Just as he was taught at the NYAFS, he believed Black people could be free and succeed by being educated, respectable citizens.

Much has been written here and elsewhere about the written words of the abolitionists and how their movement was promoted by pamphlets, newspapers, and biographies. Scholars of the period have sifted through this evidence to draw conclusions, as the abolitionists of the nineteenth century left a plenitude of written evidence behind. Samuel Ward wrote speeches, letters, newspaper articles, and a biography but what we do not have is a record of his powerful voice and expression, his clamorous calls for freedom, dignity, and equality for his people. Ward's powerful oratory was learned and crafted at the New York African Free School and tested on his examination days there. This oratory practice has been understudied; what was the predominant means of inspiration of the day has been largely neglected in scholarship. The voice that called for freedom is lost, but its timbre still reverberates.

Samuel Ward's career began in the classroom and later took him to the pulpit and the speaker's podium, but ultimately the work was the same: standing before a gathering to teach and inform, whether they were students, congregants, or members of the general public. At heart, Ward was a teacher, and as a teacher he provided support and protection, spoke with truth and sincerity, and provided a moral example for those taking in his words. Ward spoke to crowds all over the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Jamaica. He corresponded with and

was admired by some of the great figures of the nineteenth century, such as Frederick Douglass and James McCune Smith. Ward was the first Black person to be nominated for national office in the history of the United States. He founded newspapers, wrote innumerable articles, and published a popular autobiography. He moved in circles that included some of the most prominent writers, politicians, and aristocrats of the era. When he spoke and wrote, people paid attention, and what he said and wrote mattered.

Ward was the greatest Black orator of his time, and a monumental man, but one whose story has largely been lost amongst the other pivotal events and figures of the time. We are left with the words, but not the emotion and tone of his orations. His eloquent expressions, first voiced at his school in New York and later to the wider Atlantic world are lost to us now and can only reside in an imagined memory. Ward, the man highly regarded by many figures of the age, died in relative obscurity. Historian Nina Reid-Maroney described him as an "unforgettable figure whose own place in the history he both lived and wrote has been all but forgotten."[301] Historian and civil rights activist Vincent Harding, in a foreword to the 1970 edition of Ward's autobiography wrote, "Samuel Ringgold Ward…is at once enigmatic and elusive…no full speech of his can be found, and the remaining fragments evoke no significant echoes his contemporaries ascribed

[301] Nina Reid-Maroney, "History , Historiography, and the Promised Land Project", in *The Promised Land: History and Historiography of the Black Experience in Chatham-Kent's Settlements and Beyond*, 63.

to him."[302] Now, more than fifty years after Vincent Harding wrote those words, a fuller picture of Ward and his deeds has emerged. However, some details about Ward's life are still elusive. No records survive of Samuel Ward's time at the New York African Free School or the Oneida Institute, and few if any records survive of the various schools at which he taught. It is always possible more documents could emerge, but we are lucky to have what is available: Ward's journalism, his autobiography, and the recollections of his peers.

Samuel Ringgold Ward was taught to read, write, and speak well during his years at NYAFS no. 2. Furthermore, he was instructed in how to use his words and his voice to combat slavery. The institution of slavery in the United States was not going to be eliminated through fighting in the streets or on distant battlefields but through changing hearts and minds and building institutions. The mob and state violence endured by Black Americans and their supporters was not to be met with counter violence, but with moral suasion and civic engagement. According to the New York African Free School, the key to this was for Black men, women, and children to be respectable and disciplined. These virtues were achieved through following rules and avoiding sin. As such, the curriculum of the NYAFS stressed these ideas above all others. The NYAFS taught students to be passive, grateful, and respectful, but not necessarily assertive, proud, or strong. Samuel Ward, however, was all of these things; thankful for support and

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[302] Vincent Harding., Foreword to the 1970 Edition to *Autobiography of A Fugitive Negro: His Antislavery Labors in The United States, Canada, & England*, by Samuel Ringgold Ward. Ebony Classics (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1970), v.

deferential to those he considered of a higher station, but aggressive and determined to speak and act at times, with disregard for law or custom. Ward devoted his life to the cause of Black freedom and his life and work are testament to this. He believed the cause of Black freedom would expand and endure through the work and words of an educated Black citizenry. The lessons of his schooling shaped the man he would become.

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