

*“Migration or revolution is the only way of redemption . . .”*

*“Our claims are on America; it is the land that gave us birth.”*

## EMIGRATION & COLONIZATION

### THE DEBATE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS, 1780s-1860s

From the earliest years of the independent American republic to its final years of civil war, the issues of emigration and colonization bred vehement debate among African Americans. Should freemen stay in the United States to promote abolition — or head west to settle in California and other territories — or north to join the communities of fugitive slaves in Canada — or east across the Atlantic to support the colonies for freed slaves established in west Africa? Should black activists align with white abolitionists to support colonization — or create their own organizations to advocate for the enslaved? The multi-faceted debate is captured in these excerpts from thirty documents including speeches, essays, letters, and newspaper editorials. How did the founding of the American Colonization Society in 1817 affect the debate? the creation of Liberia in 1822? the independence of Liberia in 1847? the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850? the approach of civil war in the late 1850s? the prospect of general emancipation in the early 1860s?

**1787** \_\_\_\_\_ ANTHONY TAYLOR, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, FUNDRAISING LETTER, JANUARY 1787.

As president of the Free African Union Society, a mutual benefit organization of free blacks in Newport, Anthony Taylor sends this letter to potential white supporters of an African colony for free blacks.

Sir:

Our earnest desire of returning to Africa and settling there has induced us further to trouble you in order to convey a more particular idea of our proposal.

That a number of men from among ourselves shall be sent to Africa to see if they can obtain, by gift or purchase, lands sufficient to settle upon. And if such land can be obtained, then some of these men shall return and bring information. The company then shall go without their wives and children, to make preparation for their families.

This plan is agreeable to us. But as we are unable to prosecute it for want of money, this is the only reason of our troubling our superiors for assistance.

We want to know by what right we shall possess said lands when we settle upon them, for we think it unwise to settle in Africa unless the right and feel of the land is first made over to us and our heirs.

Anthony Taylor, in the name of the Union Society

## 1816 \_\_\_\_\_ PAUL CUFFE, LETTER TO WILLIAM ALLEN, 1 APRIL 1816, Excerpts.

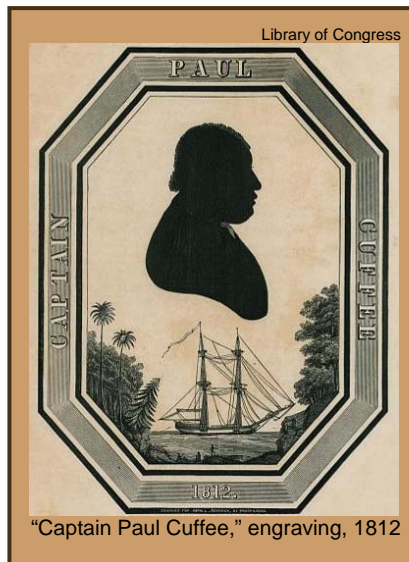
Paul Cuffe, a free African American businessman in Massachusetts who built a successful shipbuilding firm, supported the British colony for freed slaves in the west African region of Sierra Leone. In this letter to a white British abolitionist in London, he reports on his trip to Sierra Leone with 38 other African American adults and children. Cuffe returned to Massachusetts and died a year later.

Dear Friend William Allen:

The people I took over were all common laborers. They are inclined to cultivate the land, to make trial with tobacco for the present year. Five of them has about 10 acres of ground cut away. One has undertaken to work the governor's plantation, the seventh to farm for one of the citizens, the eighth to farm with the Congo people, as he is one of the nation, a little out of Sierra Leone. He intends to go to Congo. The ninth is a native of Senegal and thinks of getting to Senegal. . . .

As to my opinion in rendering the chiefs friendly toward civilization, I recommend opening roads from tribe to tribe, with their consent and establish[ing] factories. Making presents to the chiefs only helps to whet their appetite for more. If these factories were in different places with such articles as they needed, it would help to make them more industrious.

Paul Cuffe



"Captain Paul Cuffe," engraving, 1812

## 1817 \_\_\_\_\_ JAMES FORTEN, LETTER TO PAUL CUFFE, 25 JANUARY 1817, Excerpts.

James Forten, a free black businessman in Pennsylvania and a supporter of Cuffe's plans, describes a meeting of black leaders opposed to colonization. Later that year a group of white abolitionists formed the American Colonization Society with the goal of creating a West African colony for free blacks, realized with the founding of Liberia in 1822. (See Forten's 1831 letter below.)

Esteemed friend: . . .

. . . I must now mention to you that the whole continent seems to be agitated concerning Colonizing the people of color. . .

Indeed, the people of color here was very much frightened. At first they were afraid that all the free people would be compelled to go, particularly in the southern states. We had a large meeting of males at the Rev. R. Allen's church the other evening. Three thousand at least attended, and there was not one soul that was in favor of going to Africa. They think that the slaveholders wants to get rid of them so as to make their property more secure.

However, it appears to me that if the Father of all Mercies is in this interesting subject (for it appeared that they all think that something must and ought to be done, but do not know where nor how to begin), the way will be made straight and clear. We, however, have agreed to remain silent, as the people here, both white and color, are decided against the measure. My opinion is that they will never become a people until they come out from amongst the white people. But as the majority is decidedly against me, I am determined to remain silent, except as to my opinion which I freely give when asked. . . .

James Forten

## 1818 \_\_\_\_\_ ABRAHAM CAMP, LETTER TO ELIAS B. CALDWELL, 13 JULY 1818.

Where the idea of colonization did appeal to black Americans, it did so on the basis of possibly offering a practical alternative to a life of continual humiliations. Indicative of this minority sentiment is the letter written by Abraham Camp, an Illinois free black, on July 13, 1838, to Elias B. Caldwell, Secretary of the Colonization Society.

Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, 1951

I am a free man of color, have a family and a large connection of free people of color residing on the Wabash [River], who are all willing to leave America whenever the way shall be opened. We love this country and its liberties, if we could share an equal right in them; but our freedom is partial, and we have no hope that it ever will be otherwise here; therefore we had rather be gone, though we should suffer hunger and nakedness for years. Your honor may be assured that nothing shall be lacking on our part in complying with whatever provision shall be made by the United States, whether it be to go to Africa or some other place; we shall hold ourselves in readiness, praying that God (who made man free in the beginning, and who by his kind providence has broken the yoke from every white American) would inspire the heart of every true son of liberty with zeal and pity, to open the door of freedom for us also. I am, &c.

Abraham Camp

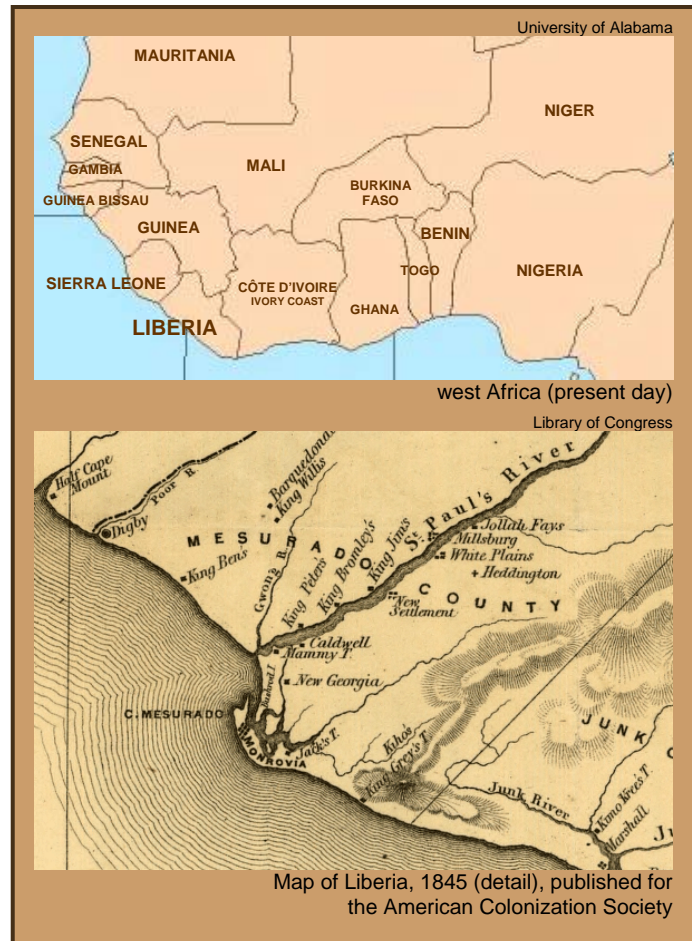
**1820** \_\_\_\_\_ DANIEL COKER, LETTER TO JEREMIAH WATTS, 3 APRIL 1820, Excerpts.

Funded by the American Colonization Society, Daniel Coker and 84 other free African Americans emigrated to the British colony Sierra Leone in 1820, where Coker served as a Methodist missionary. Writing to his brother in Baltimore, he describes his arrival and encourages his brother to join him in Africa.

Dear brother, — This comes to inform you of my good health, and safe arrival in Africa. When I wrote to my wife, I did not expect to get time to write to you; and so I gave my love to you in her letter. But having just returned from a visit to one of the kings, with the agent, and finding the ship not gone, I snatch this passing moment to inform you that I have seen and passed through strange things since I last saw you. Oh! my brother, and sister, how great a work is this! The millions in this land, are the thousands in America, and the thousands unborn are deeply interested in it. . . I can say, that my soul cleaves to Africa in such a manner as to reconcile me to the idea of being separated from my dear friends and the comforts of a christian land. But I confess, when I think of you all, it is as much as I can bear. But, my brother and sister, if we don't meet soon in this life, we may soon meet in heaven. I expect to give my life to bleeding, groaning, dark, benighted Africa. I expect to pass through much, if I should live. I should rejoice to see you in this land; it is a good land, it is a rich land, and I do believe it will be a great nation, and a powerful and worthy nation; but those who break the way will suffer much.

If you ask my opinion as to coming out; — I say, let all that can, sell out and come; come, and bring ventures, to trade, &c. and you may do much better than you can possibly do in America, and not work half so hard. I wish that thousands were here, and had goods to trade with. — Bring about two hogsheads of good leaf tobacco, cheap calico, and cheap handkerchiefs, pins, knives and forks, pocket knives, &c.; with these you may buy land, hire hands, or buy provisions, I say, come — the land is good.

D. Coker





**1826** \_\_\_\_\_ NEWPORT GARDNER (OCCRAMAR MARYCOO), STATEMENT ON EMIGRATING TO LIBERIA, 1826.

Captured in Ghana as a teenager, Newport Gardner eventually gained his freedom and co-founded the Free African Union Society in Newport, Rhode Island (see 1787). In 1826 he returned to Africa with other free blacks, settling in the new colony of Liberia. His response on boarding the ship was described in *Memoir of the Life and Character of Samuel Hopkins*, 1830.

One aged black was among the number, who seemed to be filled with almost youthful enthusiasm for the cause. "I go," he exclaimed, "to set an example to the youth of my race. I go to encourage the young. They can never be elevated here. I have tried it sixty years; it is in vain. Could I by my example lead them to set sail, and I die the next day, I should be satisfied."

**1828** \_\_\_\_\_ THOMAS L. JENNINGS, ADDRESS TO THE NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR MUTUAL RELIEF, 1828, Excerpt.

Thomas Jennings, a free black businessman in New York City and an abolition activist, expresses the widespread anti-colonization sentiment of many African Americans: we are Americans, not Africans.

Our claims are on America; it is the land that gave us birth; it is the land of our nativity, we know no other country, it is a land in which our fathers have suffered and toiled; they have watered it with their tears, and fanned it with sighs.

Our relation with Africa is the same as the white man's is with Europe, only with this difference, the one emigrated voluntarily, the other was forced from home and all its pleasures. We have passed through several generations in this country, and consequently we have become naturalized, our habits, our manners, our passions, our dispositions have become the same . . . I might as well tell the white man about England, France or Spain, the country from whence his forefathers emigrated, and call him a European, as for him to call us Africans; the argument will hold as good in the one case as the other. Africa is as foreign to us as Europe is to them.

**1829** \_\_\_\_\_ DAVID WALKER, *WALKER'S APPEAL*, SEPTEMBER 1829, Excerpt.

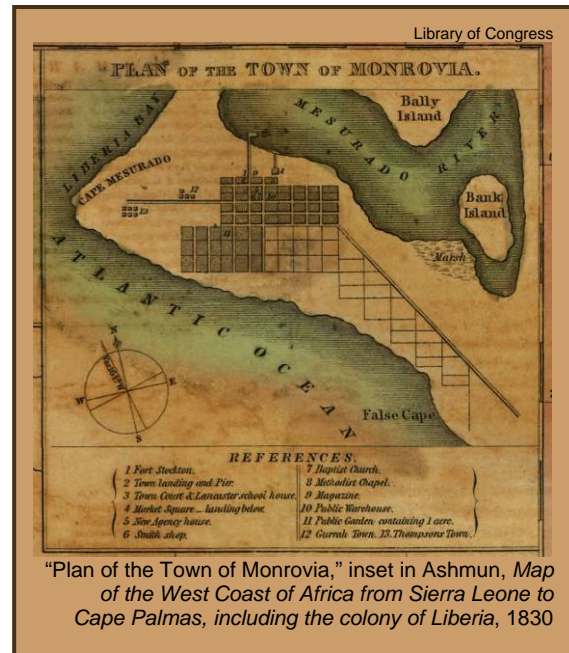
In his well-known appeal for emancipation and, if necessary, mass slave rebellion, David Walker, a freeborn southern African American, rejects the "colonizing trick" of white abolitionists.

But to return to the colonizing trick. . . Our friends who have been imperceptibly drawn into this plot I view with tenderness, and would not for the world injure their feelings, and I have only to hope for the future, that they will withdraw themselves from it; — for I declare to them, that the plot is not for the glory of God, but on the contrary the perpetuation of slavery in this country, which will ruin them and the country forever, unless something is immediately done. . .

**1830** \_\_\_\_\_ REV. PETER WILLIAMS, ADDRESS, NEW YORK CITY, 4 JULY 1830, Excerpts.

In his Fourth-of-July address in St. Philip's A. M. E. Zion Church, delivered for the benefit of the "colored community" of fugitive slaves in Wilberforce, Canada, Rev. Peter Williams disputes the notion that colonization in Africa offers a better future for African Americans than in America.

Much has also been said by Colonizationists about improving the character and condition of the people of color of this country by sending them to Africa. This is more inconsistent still. We are to be improved by being sent far from civilized society. This is a novel mode of improvement. What is there in the burning sun, the arid plains, and barbarous customs of Africa, that is so peculiarly favorable to



"Plan of the Town of Monrovia," inset in Ashmun, *Map of the West Coast of Africa from Sierra Leone to Cape Palmas, including the colony of Liberia*, 1830

our improvement? What hinders our improving here, where schools and colleges abound, where the gospel is preached at every corner, and where all the arts and sciences are verging fast to perfection? Nothing, nothing but prejudice. It requires no large expenditures, no hazardous enterprises to raise the people of color in the United States to as highly improved a state as any class of the community. All that is necessary is that those who profess to be anxious for it should lay aside their prejudices and act towards them as they do by others.

We are NATIVES of this country, we ask only to be treated as well as FOREIGNERS. Not a few of our fathers suffered and bled to purchase its independence; we ask only to be treated as well as those who fought against it. We have toiled to cultivate it, and to raise it to its present prosperous condition; we ask only to share equal privileges with those who come from distant lands, to enjoy the fruits of our labor.

Let these moderate requests be granted, and we need not go to Africa nor anywhere else to be improved and happy. We cannot but doubt the purity of the motives of those persons who deny us these requests, and would send us to Africa to gain what they might give us at home.

But they say the prejudices of the country against us are invincible; and as they cannot be conquered, it is better that we should be removed beyond their influence. This plea should never proceed from the lips of any man who professes to believe that a just God rules in the heavens.

## **1831** \_\_\_\_\_ JAMES FORTEN, LETTER TO WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, 23 FEBRUARY 1831, Excerpts.

By 1831 James Forten had become an opponent of “re-Africanization,” distrusting the motives of the American Colonization Society. In this letter to the white abolitionist and anti-colonizationist Garrison, Forten reviews the growing opposition.

I am greatly astonished that the ministers of the gospel should take so active a part in endeavoring to convey freemen of color to Africa. Instead of doing this, they should endeavor to remove prejudice, improve the condition of the colored people by education and by having their children placed in a situation to learn a trade.

I have never conversed with an intelligent man of color (not swayed by sinister motives) who was not decidedly opposed to leaving his home for the fatal clime [climate] of Africa. I am well acquainted with all the masters of vessels belonging to this port [Philadelphia] who have been to the coast of Africa. They all agree in representing it as one of the most unhealthy countries. . . .

I well remember that when the New England Regiment marched through this city on their way to attack the English Army under Lord Cornwallis, there were several companies of colored people, as brave men as ever fought. I saw those brave soldiers who fought at the Battle of Red Bank where the Hessians [were] defeated. Now the descendants of these men are to be removed to a distant country while emigrants from every other country are permitted to seek an asylum here, and to enjoy the blessings of civil and religious liberty.

## **1831** \_\_\_\_\_ RESOLUTIONS OF “COLORED CITIZENS OF BOSTON,” 12 MARCH 1831, Excerpt.

A group of free African Americans in Boston composed an address to white citizens who had formed a state chapter of the American Colonization Society, listing specific objections to an African colony for freed slaves.

We further object [to the American Colonization Society] because its members admit slavery to be an evil and use no means to destroy it; but are exerting all their influence to urge every free person of color to Africa (whose right to this soil holds good with any other citizen) thereby riveting the chains of slavery stronger than ever upon their oppressed brethren.

Again, we object, because the whole spring of action seems to originate in the fear lest the free colored people may whisper liberty in the ears of the oppressed. We would suggest, however, that they who are fond of liberty should not be annoyed at its sound, from whatever source it may come.

Again, we object, on the ground of there being sufficient land in the United States on which a colony might be established that would better meet the wishes of the colored people, and at a much

cheaper rate than could possibly be done by sending them to a howling wilderness far away, and to them unknown.

**1832** \_\_\_\_\_ PETER OSBORNE, FIFTH-OF-JULY ADDRESS, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT, 5 JULY 1832, Excerpts.

Before the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, many free blacks held July Fifth events to promote abolition and equality instead of celebrating Independence Day on the Fourth. In this address to the African Church of New Haven, Peter Osborne rallies his listeners to unite for emancipation and reject the prospect of colonization.

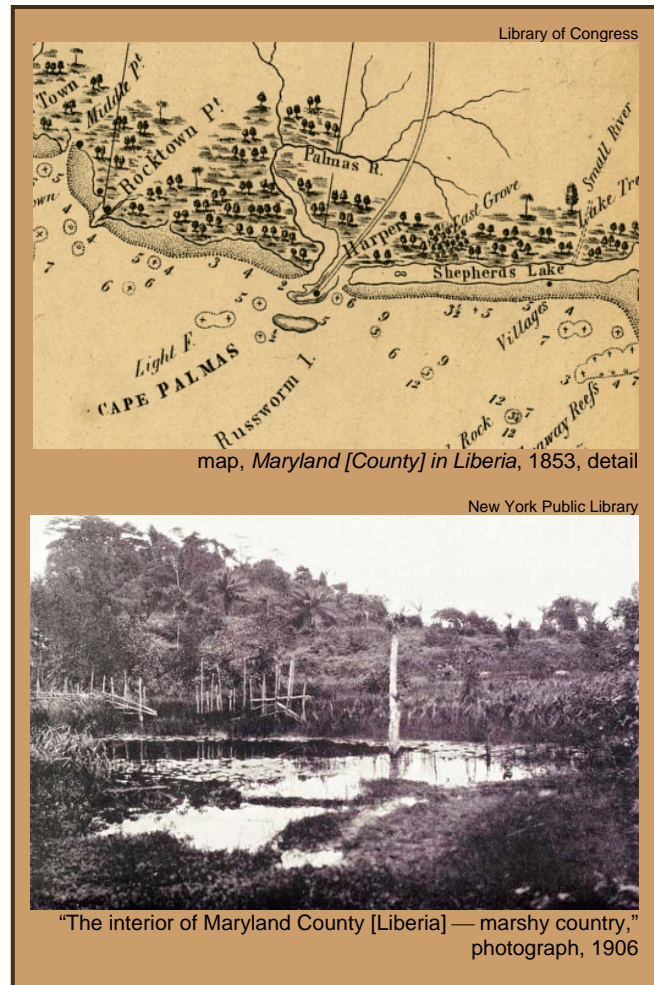
Fellow-Citizens — On account of the misfortunes of our color, our fourth of July comes on the fifth; but I hope and trust that when the Declaration of Independence is fully executed, which declares that all men, without respect to person, were born free and equal, we may then have our fourth of July on the fourth. It is thought by many that this is as impossible to take place, as it is for the leopard to change his spots; but I anticipate that the time is approaching very fast. . . .

. . . Let us all unite, and with one accord declare that we will not leave our own country to emigrate to Liberia, nor elsewhere, to be civilized nor christianized. Let us make it known to America that we are not barbarians; that we are not inhuman beings; that this is our native country; that our forefathers have planted trees in America for us, and we intend to stay and eat the fruit. Our forefathers fought, bled and died to achieve the independence of the United States. Why should we forbear contending for the prize? It becomes every colored citizen in the United States to step forward boldly, and gallantly defend his rights. What has there been done within a few years, since the union of the colored people? Are not the times more favorable to us now, than they were ten years ago? Are we not gaining ground? Yes — and had we begun this work forty years ago, I do not hesitate to say that there would not have been, at this day, a slave in the United States. Take courage, then, ye Afric-Americans! Don't give up the conflict, for the glorious prize can be won.

**1833** \_\_\_\_\_ MARIA STEWART, ADDRESS, AFRICAN MASONIC HALL, BOSTON, 27 FEBRUARY 1833, Excerpt.

Maria Stewart, an African American abolitionist, challenges white colonizationists to direct their efforts at African Americans' needs rather than their own.

I am informed that the agent of the Colonization Society has recently formed an association of young men, for the purpose of influencing those of us to go to Liberia who may feel disposed. The colonizationists are blind to their own interest, for should the nations of the earth make war with America, they would find their forces much weakened by our absence; or should we remain here, can our "brave soldiers," and "fellow-citizens," as they were termed in time of calamity, condescend to defend the rights of the whites, and be again deprived of their own, or sent to Liberia in return? Or, if the colonizationists are real friends to Africa, let them expend the money which they collect, in erecting a college to educate her injured sons in this land of gospel light and liberty; for it would be



most thankfully received on our part, and convince us of the truth of their professions, and save time, expense and anxiety. Let them place before us noble objects, worthy of pursuit, and see if we prove ourselves to be those unambitious negroes they term us. But ah! methinks their hearts are so frozen towards us, they had rather their money should be sunk in the ocean than to administer it to our relief; and I fear, if they dared, like Pharaoh, king of Egypt, they would order every male child among us to be drowned. But the most high God is still as able to subdue the lofty pride of these white Americans, as He was the heart of that ancient rebel.

## 1833 \_\_\_\_\_ REV. NATHANIEL PAUL, ADDRESS, LONDON, ENGLAND, 11 JUNE 1833, Excerpts.

Rev. Nathaniel Paul, an African American Baptist minister, travelled in Great Britain for four years to raise funds for the community of fugitive slaves in Wilberforce, Ontario, Canada. In this address, reported in the *Patriot* (10 July 1833), Paul refutes the colonizationists' claim that Africa is the only home of the black man.

. . . This [American Colonization] Society has been in existence, I believe, for about seventeen years; and at the moment it was organized, the colored people came forward in a body and said to the Society, — “We do not wish to go to Africa; we consider this as our home, as the land of our nativity.” But it has been objected, that it was not the home of colored man; on the contrary, that Africa was his home, and America is the home of the white man. But we have asked our opponents, those who have thought fit to make the assertion, What is it that has given to the white man a prior claim to the soil? (Cheers.) Was it because they went to the United States of America and, instead of inculcating the pure principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they exerted their influence and the physical power in destroying the original inhabitants of the country? Was it because they found that they could not reduce the Indians to a state of servile bondage, and therefore almost exterminated them, and reduced them to a mere remnant? Has this given them prior claim? If it has, we submit to them, and we say that they are entitled to credit for what they have done, and for what they are still striving to do, namely, to persecute and to drive them beyond the Mississippi (Hear, hear, and cries of shame!) . . .

I care not about their declarations to the contrary, it is my country; it is the land that gave me birth; and I have as good a right to it as any other individual. In saying this, I only speak the sentiments of the people of color generally, throughout that country. They all imbibe the same sentiments, and they say to their white brethren, “Why is it that you wish to expel us, while you throw open the door to European emigrants? You say to the English, the Scotch, the Irish, and the French, ‘Come here; here is liberty; here you may enjoy all the blessings which we, as a nation, enjoy.’” But the colored people must be expelled . . . What can we think, when statesmen, and even ministers of the Gospel (and which I have heard myself), in pleading on behalf of the Colonization Society, say, — “The free people of color are a curse in this country, and if you do not expel them, the time will come when they will associate with the slaves — will rise *en masse*, and cut the throats of all the white inhabitants of this country.”

## 1837 \_\_\_\_\_ CHARLES RAY, EDITORIAL, *THE COLORED AMERICAN*, 18 NOVEMBER 1837, Excerpts.

Charles Ray, co-founder and editor of the New York City newspaper *The Colored American*, encourages African Americans to consider establishing farmsteads in Wisconsin Territory instead of emigrating to Canada or Liberia.

In most cases, when there has been any decision to emigrate, the attention of the persons has most been turned to Canada; nothing short of entirely leaving the States would answer. . . The attention of colored persons to Canada, as the place of their destination, has been because of the equal laws existing there. . . .

. . . If we would run away from prejudice, it is not necessary that we should run out of the U. States; but scatter thousands of us all over the country, and buy up the soil, and become cultivators of it. In this way, better than any other, can we get rid of prejudice. . . .

The Territory of Wisconsin, in my view, holds out greater inducements to colored men to emigrate to, than any spot on earth. It is an immense tract of country, west of the State of Michigan, one inch of

which has not yet been sold, nor has it been brought into the market for sale. Yet it is fast being peopled, by honest and industrious farmers. . . .

I travelled on the canal [most likely the Erie Canal in upstate New York], a short distance, some weeks since, with men and their families bound for Wisconsin. The men had been there, selected their plots of ground, got in their crop, prepared for their families, returned for them, and were then going back, to take up their permanent residence.

Men of color, with a very small amount of money, can do the same, and in a few years be independent men — for who is so independent as the farmer?

## 1837 \_\_\_\_\_ MARTIN CROSS, POEM, *THE COLORED AMERICAN*, 7 OCTOBER 1837.

In a letter to *The Colored American*, Martin Cross of Catskill, New York, offers the “fruits of my first idle hour’s attempt at rhyming.”

Talk not to me of “Colonization”—  
For I’m a freeman of this nation;  
Then why forsake my native land  
For Afric’s burning sun and sand?  
We hereby make our proclamation,  
That we’re opposed to emigration.—  
This is the land which gave us birth,  
Our fathers’ graves are freedom’s earth;  
They won the freedom we enjoy—  
How can you freemen’s rights destroy?  
For we’re determin’d, to a man,  
Not to forsake our native land!  
Where bright Emancipation gleams,  
Where Freedom’s banner o’er us streams!  
We’ve borne its stripes of crimson hue—  
We’ll share its stars’ proud glory too!

## 1839 \_\_\_\_\_ CHARLES RAY, “EMIGRATION VS. COLONIZATION,” *THE COLORED AMERICAN*, 16 NOV. 1839, Excerpts.

In one of many editorials on the issue, editor Charles Ray defines the difference between two options facing free African Americans.

We have heretofore expressed our views on the above subjects, and it is well known that while we wage unceasing, uncompromising war against Colonization as it is understood among us, and promulgated by the great Africo-American Colonization Society, we are not so hostile to voluntary emigration. . . .

Colonization would prove the bane of the people of color, emigration would improve the condition of those who go and establish a character for our whole people abroad. But to make emigration beneficial, as great care should be taken in the selection of the emigrants as in selecting trees or shrubs for transplanting.

## 1839 \_\_\_\_\_ PEYTON SKIPWITH, LETTER TO HIS FORMER SLAVEHOLDER, 10 FEBRUARY 1834.

Peyton Skipwith, a freed slave in Liberia, writes to his former slaveholder in Virginia, John Hopewell Cocke, who had freed a number of his slaves to emigrate to the colony.

Dear Sir

I embrace this opportunity to inform you that we are all in moderate health at this time hoping that these few lines may find you and yours enjoying good health after fifty Six days on the ocean we all landed Safe on new years day and hav all had the fever and I hav lost Felicia but I thank god that our loss is hur gain as Job Sais the lord gave and he taketh I thank god that he has mad it possible that



we may meet to part no more I thank  
 god that we are all on the mend I can  
 not tell you much about Liberia I hav  
 not been from monrovia [capital city of  
 Liberia] yet as it respects my Self  
 and wife we are dissatisfide in this  
 place their is Some that hav come to  
 this place that hav got rich and anumber  
 that are Sufering those that are well  
 off do hav the natives as Slavs and poor  
 people that come from america hav no  
 chance to make aliving for the natives do  
 all the work as it respects farming  
 their is no Chance for it unless we  
 would get the natives to work for us and  
 then you must be wit them and at the  
 Same time when we ought to put in our  
 grain it rains So hard that we dare not  
 be out unless exposing our health  
 their is no chance for farming in  
 monrovia for it is a Solid body of  
 Stones . . . I want you if you please to  
 write to me by the first oppertunity and  
 let me no on what terms I can come  
 back for I intend coming back as Soon  
 as I can

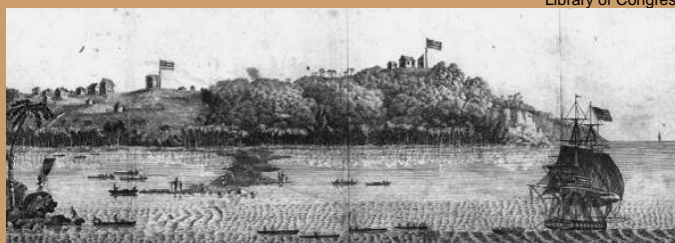
Peyton Skipwith

**1844** \_\_\_\_\_ EDITOR, *PALLADIUM OF  
 LIBERTY*, 28 AUGUST 1844, Excerpt.

The editor of this New Jersey black newspaper adds  
 another argument against colonization — that free  
 black emigrants will be separated from their enslaved  
 relatives in America.

We say to those that advocate  
 colonization to give to us our slave  
 mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters,  
 husbands, wives, children and relatives,  
 and we are willing to go some place  
 where the climate is more salubrious  
 and congenial to our health. But must  
 we go to Africa and leave all those that  
 we have mentioned; as they [white  
 abolitionists] may become content with  
 these conclusions, no never, no never,  
 who under heavens has placed us in our  
 condition, who has torn us from our  
 original homes, and now with a live branch of slavery, as this is the best name we can give it, reaching  
 across the Atlantic ocean, bidding us welcome to a land that flows with milk and honey.

Library of Congress



*View of the Colonial Settlement at Cape Monserado,*  
 illustration in *The African Repository and Colonial Journal*,  
 American Colonization Society, June 1825

## THINGS WHICH EVERY EMIGRANT TO LIBERIA OUGHT TO KNOW.

It is of vast importance, that who-  
 ever contemplates going to Liberia,  
 should be fully and correctly inform-  
 ed in regard to their prospects.

1. *They should understand that they are going to a new country.*—  
 They will not there see houses built  
 in the same style that they are here,  
 and filled with all the comforts and  
 conveniences that time and wealth  
 have so lavishly provided here. It  
 is little more than twenty years since  
 the first colonists landed on that  
 coast. They have, during all this  
 time, had to struggle through almost  
 unparalleled obstacles. Of course,  
 we must not expect to find them as  
 far advanced in the refinements of ci-  
 vilization as we are. It is yet a new  
 country, and those who go there  
 must carry with them the courage  
 and the energy to bear the dangers  
 and surmount the obstacles naturally  
 belonging to such a state of things.

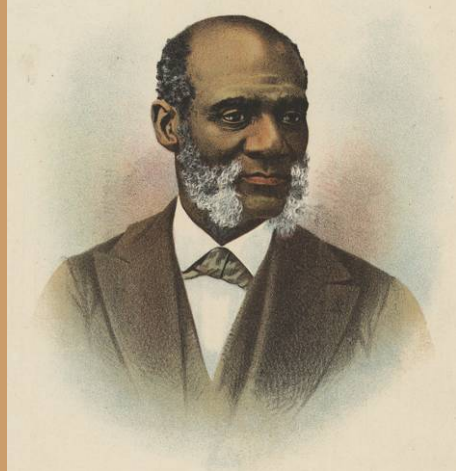
2. *They must expect to begin life for themselves.* They will not have  
 any friends there who will think and  
 act and contrive and plan for them.  
 They must rely on themselves.—  
 They receive a tract of land, in its  
 wild and uncultivated state, and if it  
 is ever cleared and planted, they must  
 do it. They must build a house for  
 themselves, and begin to keep house  
 And if they have but few of the ne-

cessaries, and none of the conven-  
 ences and luxuries of house-keeping,  
 still they must not be discouraged,  
 but "struggle on and struggle ever." Brighter days will come. Every  
 brilliant noon must be preceded by  
 its morning. They must not despise  
 the day of small things, but cheered  
 and sustained by the example of  
 many around them, who commenced  
 life just as they are doing, and are  
 now comfortable and happy, they  
 must press their way onward, and  
 they will find that industry and per-  
 severance will secure to them plenty  
 and happiness.

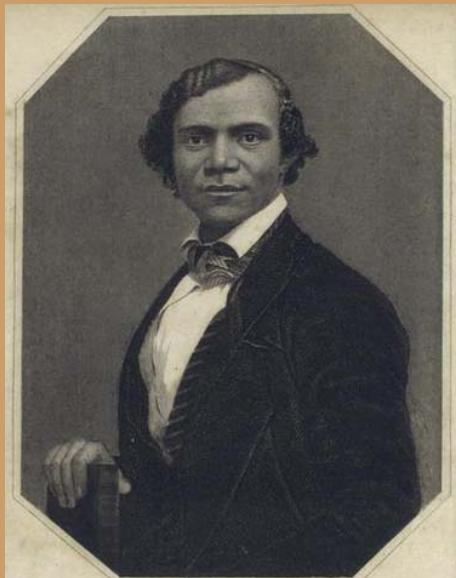
3. *They must not depend upon the Colonization Society.* The business  
 of the Society is to help them to get  
 to that country, where they can  
 thenceforward help themselves. Many  
 persons have supposed that the So-  
 ciety would do every thing for them;  
 pay their passage, furnish them eve-  
 ry thing to eat and drink after they  
 get to Liberia, and let them live in  
 ease. But the truth is far other-  
 wise. And hence, when they reach  
 Liberia, and begin to find provisions  
 running low, and are made to under-  
 stand that the time has arrived when  
 they must support themselves, they  
 become offended, abuse the colony  
 and the Society, and pretty near-  
 ly everybody and every thing else,

American Colonization Society, *Things Which Every Emigrant  
 to Liberia Ought to Know*, p. 1 of four-page pamphlet,  
 n.d. [ca. 1852, after independence in 1847]

full text in digital images in American Memory, The Library of Congress  
 at [hdl.loc.gov/loc/rbc/rbpe.21001300](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/rbc/rbpe.21001300)



Henry Highland Garnet



Henry Bibb

**1848** \_\_\_\_\_ REV. HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET, ADDRESS TO THE FEMALE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY OF TROY, NEW YORK, 14 FEBRUARY 1848, Excerpts.

In his address Rev. Garnet emphasizes the multiracial identity of America. Later that year his address was published as *The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny, of the Colored Race*.

There are those who, either from good or evil motives, plead for the utopian plan of the Colonization of a whole race to the shores of Africa. We are now colonized. We are planted here; and we cannot as a whole people, be re-colonized back to our fatherland. It is too late to make a successful attempt to separate the black and white people in the New World. They love one another too much to endure a separation. Where one is, there will the other be also. . . .

We must also cherish and maintain a national and patriotic sentiment and attachment. Some people of color say that they have no home, no country. I am not among that number. It is empty declamation. It is unwise. It is not logical — it is false. Of all the people in this wide earth, among the countless hordes of misery, there is not one so poor as to be without a home and a country. America is my home, my country, and I have no other. I love whatever of good there may be in her institutions. I hate her sins. I loathe her slavery, and I pray Heaven that ere long she may wash away her guilt in tears of repentance. I love the green-hills which my eyes first beheld in my infancy. I love every inch of soil which my feet pressed in my youth, and I mourn because the accursed shade of slavery rests upon it. I love my country's flag, and I hope that soon it will be cleansed of its stains, and be hailed by all nations as the emblem of freedom and independence.

**1849** \_\_\_\_\_ REV. HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET, ON INDEPENDENT LIBERIA, *NORTH STAR*, 2 MARCH 1849, Excerpt.

Garnet changed his position on emigration when Liberia was granted independence in 1848.

You demand an explanation of the change which has taken place in my mind in reference to the American Colonization scheme. My opinion of the Colonizationists has undergone no change. But new developments have been in relation to the descendants of once glorious but now fallen Africa and these have changed my mind.

1. I believe that the Republic of Liberia will be highly beneficial to Africa.
2. I believe that the new Republic will succeed — and that its success will curtail the slave trade on the coast.
3. I believe that every political and commercial relationship which President Roberts negotiates with European powers goes far to create respect for our race throughout the civilized world.
4. I believe that every colored man who believes that he can never grow to the stature of a man in this country ought to go there immediately, if he desires. I am in favor of colonization in any part of the United States, Mexico or California, or in the West Indies or Africa, wherever it promises freedom and enfranchisement. In a word, we ought to go anywhere where we can better our condition.

## 1849 \_\_\_\_\_ HENRY BIBB, ADDRESS, ANTI-COLONIZATION MEETING, NEW YORK CITY, 22 APRIL 1849, Excerpts.

Having fled slavery several times, Henry Bibb became an active abolitionist and lecturer throughout the northern states. With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law the year after this address, Bibb and many other African Americans felt compelled to leave their native country for Canada to avoid being captured and returned to slavery in the South.

There is a kind of colonization that I am in favor of. There is a colony just across our northern boundary, a colony more congenial to our health and prosperity than that of Liberia. It is just beyond the borders of Michigan in the British possessions: a colony where colored people, slaves more especially, may go without the large expenditure required to colonize them in Africa. But go to those men who are so benevolent . . . and ask them to give a dollar to help a poor fugitive slave who has escaped to go into Canada, where he may enjoy the privileges of the gospel and have his liberty, and you will find them clinching a sixpence till it would almost scream murder, before they will help you. (Applause.) . . .

For one I am disposed to love and die in the land that gave me birth; and although the laws of my country have taken away my rights, although they have enslaved and scourged me, although they have deprived me of my dearest friends, many of whom are now toiling on Southern plantations, notwithstanding all this, I am disposed to make America my home and my final resting place. No inducement, no force will compel me to leave this my native country. If they carry me to the shores of Africa they carry my lifeless body.

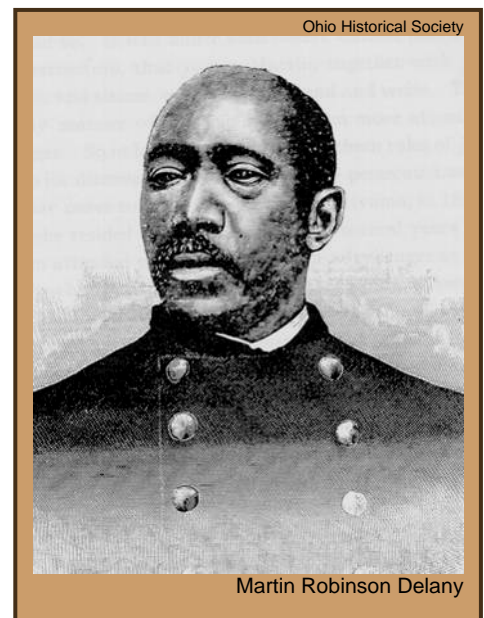
## 1852 \_\_\_\_\_ MARTIN ROBINSON DELANY, *THE CONDITION, ELEVATION, EMIGRATION, AND DESTINY OF THE COLORED PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES*, 1852, Excerpts.

An abolitionist leader born free in Virginia, Martin Delany became convinced that black Americans could not receive equal treatment in the United States, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Delany joined the call for blacks to emigrate, first within the western hemisphere, as in this address, and later to west Africa, where he led an exploring venture in 1858 to negotiate with tribal leaders for land on which to found a second nation for free black Americans.

But to return to emigration: Where shall we go? We must not leave this continent; America is our destination and our home. . . The advantages to the colored people of the United States, to be derived from emigration to Central, South America, and the West Indies, are incomparably greater than that of any other parts of the world at present.

. . . The population of Central and South America, consist of fifteen millions two hundred and forty thousand, adding the ten millions of Mexico; twenty-five millions two hundred and forty thousand, of which vast population, but *one-seventh* are whites, or the pure European race. Allowing a deduction of one-seventh of this population for the European race that may chance to be in those countries, and we have in South and Central America alone, the vast colored population of *thirteen millions one hundred and seventy-seven thousand*; and including Mexico, a colored population on this glorious continent of *twenty-one millions, six hundred and forty thousand*.

This vast number of people, our brethren — because they are precisely the same people as ourselves and share the same fate with us, as the case of numbers of them have proven, who have been adventitiously thrown among us — stand ready and willing to take us by the hand — nay, are anxiously waiting, and earnestly importuning us to come, that they may make common cause with us, and we all share the same fate. There is nothing under heaven in our way — the people stand with open arms ready to receive us. The climate, soil, and productions — the vast rivers and beautiful sea-coast — the scenery of the landscape, and beauty of the starry heavens above — the song of the birds





— the voice of the people say come — and God our Father bids us go. — Will we go? Go we must, and go we will, as there is no alternative. To remain here in North America, and be crushed to the earth in vassalage and degradation, we never will.

Talk not about religious biases — we have but one reply to make. We had rather be a Heathen *freeman*, than a Christian *slave*.

**1852** \_\_\_\_\_ HENRY BIBB, "THE COLORED CITIZENS OF OHIO," *VOICE OF THE FUGITIVE*, 12 FEBRUARY 1852, Excerpts.

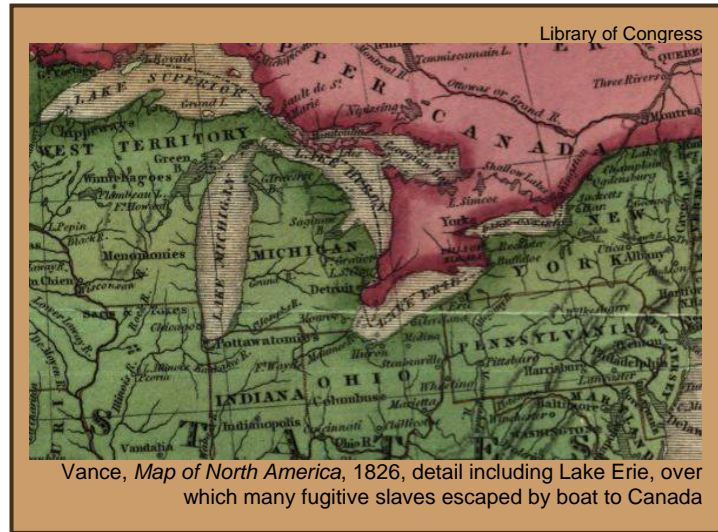
After Henry Bibb fled to Canada following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 (see 1848 entry, above), he founded the newspaper *Voice of the Fugitive*. Here he criticizes the decision of Ohio freemen to stay in the United States rather than emigrate to Canada.

They met in a state convention in Cincinnati last month to deliberate on their condition, and we are sorry to see that they concluded to stay in the States to be spit upon, as well as disenfranchised and oppressed.

When we see so large a majority of our people as there was in that convention, choosing to stay in the States to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the white man sooner than cross the lake [Lake Erie to Canada] where they can be men and citizens under an anti-slavery government, we are almost led to adopt the sentiments of our oppressors that we are an inferior race of men. . . .

Migration or revolution is the only way of redemption for an oppressed people. It was the plan suggested by the Almighty to ancient of Israel, and it was the course pursued by our pilgrim fathers, whose untiring perseverance has led to the development of this mighty continent.

As a people we are not prepared to go to battle with our oppressors, therefore we had better follow in the footsteps of our predecessors.



**1854** \_\_\_\_\_ HEZEKIAH FORD DOUGLASS, ADDRESS, EMIGRATION CONVENTION, CLEVELAND, OHIO, 27 AUGUST 1854, Excerpt.

Hezekiah Ford Douglass, a free African American from New Orleans, delivered a lengthy address in response to an anti-emigration speech at the convention.

When I remember the many wrongs that have been inflicted upon my unfortunate race, I can scarcely realize the fact that this is my country. I owe it no allegiance because it refuses to protect me. It is a maxim in Governments, "That each individual owes allegiance in proportion to the protection given." I can hate this Government without being disloyal, because it has stricken down my manhood and treated me as a saleable commodity. I can join a foreign enemy and fight against it, without being a traitor, because it treats me as an ALIEN and a STRANGER, and I am free to avow that should such a contingency arise I should not hesitate to take any advantage in order to procure indemnity for the future. I can feel no pride in the glory, growth, greatness or grandeur, of this nation. . . .

. . . When I remember that from Maine to Georgia, from the Atlantic waves to the Pacific shore, I am an alien and an outcast, unprotected by law, proscribed and persecuted by cruel prejudice, I am willing to forget the endearing name of home and country, and an unwilling exile seek on other shores that freedom which has been denied me in the land of my birth.



## 1858 \_\_\_\_\_ MARTIN HENRY FREEMAN, LETTER TO MARTIN ROBINSON DELANY, 14 APRIL 1858, Excerpt.

Born free in Vermont and one of the first African American college presidents, Freeman shared Delany's conviction that black Americans must seek a homeland outside the United States, which he accomplished for himself and his family by emigrating to Liberia in 1864.

I am more and more convinced that Africa is the country to which all colored men who wish to attain the full stature of manhood, and bring up their children to be men and not creeping things, should turn their steps; and I feel more and more every day, that I made a great mistake in not going there, when I was untrammelled by family ties, and had the opportunity.

## 1861 \_\_\_\_\_ "EMIGRATION TO HAYTI,"

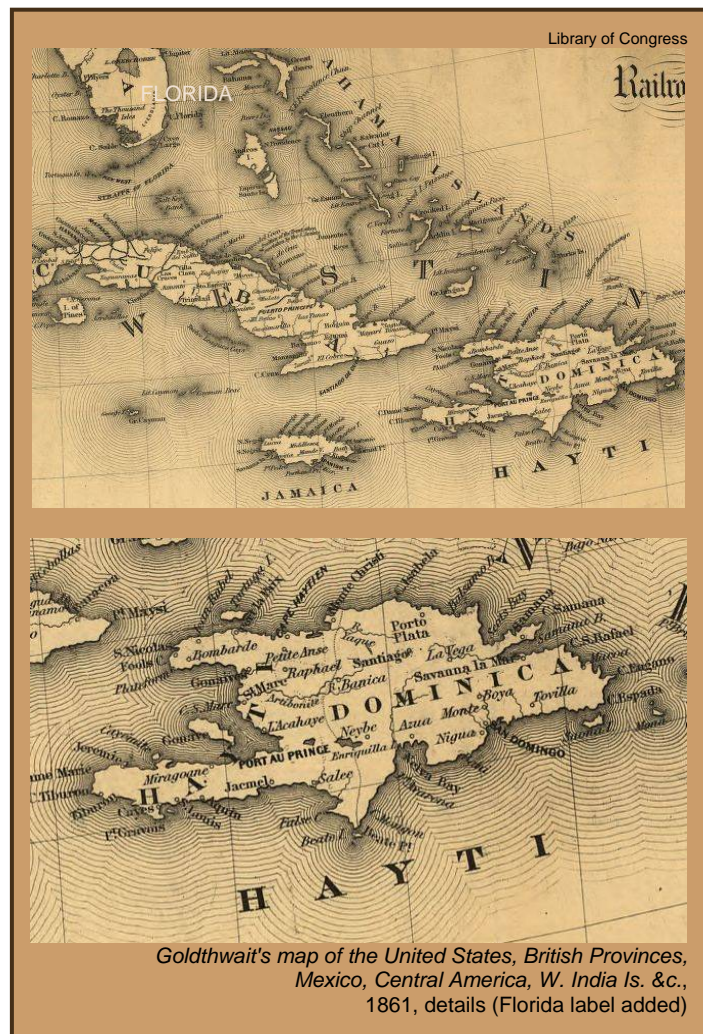
THE WEEKLY ANGLO-AFRICAN, 16 MARCH 1861, Excerpts.

This piece was likely written by the editor Thomas Hamilton, who was born into a free black family in New York City and eventually founded three African American newspapers in the city.

We are not in favor of an indiscriminate emigration anywhere — to Canada, the Far West, Africa, Central America, or Hayti. Those of us who are content with our present condition and prospects, who feel that *here* we can work the most efficiently for the Anti-Slavery cause, will not and ought not to emigrate anywhere, for to leave what we believe to be our post of duty would be criminal and cowardly. But neither do we hold, on the other hand, that it is our duty *because* we are colored men, to remain in the United States; and we have no sympathy with the theory occasionally advanced that to leave this country is in all cases a desertion of our brethren in bonds. . . Events are progressing now, which, while they inevitably tend to abolish slavery, will probably also increase the prejudices which now render our lives in the Free States so unenviable. Those who are already discontented, who see no prospect of advancing their children in position here, shall *they* be held derelict to their duty if, gathering up their all, they leave a land that, alone among Christian countries, so cruelly and causelessly ostracizes them? Surely it would be the height of fanatical bigotry to so brand them. . .

Should anyone, having determined to emigrate, ask our advice in seeking a location, we should recommend him, without hesitation, to select the dominions of the Queen of the Antilles as his future home. Hayti possesses various advantages over every other field that has opened for exiles of our race from the United States.

To Hayti we can go in less time than it requires to travel from New York to Minnesota, and the facilities for returning are equally easy. It is inhabited by men exclusively of our race, who are there



demonstrating our capacity for self-government. Those who ostracize us here, themselves are pariahs there. It is a country of surpassing fertility, unquestionably the most fertile island in the New World. It is capable of supporting ten millions of inhabitants; it has the best harbors, richest mines, most valuable forests in the West Indies. It is a natural paradise, requiring only intelligent labor to develop its exhaustless resources. It has a government enlightened, liberal, and generous, whose grand ambition is to create a colored England in America. . . .

Hayti cannot but command the most lively sympathies of all men of African descent. It is the only nationality of our race in the Western Continent; it is the only land in which we have conquered our liberty by the sword against the bravest white warriors of the world. It has a history of extraordinary interest, abounding in incidents that none of us can read without a glow of pride of race.

Library of Congress



Unidentified woman and man, Liberia, daguerreotypes by Augustus Washington, African American photographer, between 1854 and 1860



**1862** \_\_\_\_\_ EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN, ADDRESS, MAINE  
STATE COLONIZATION SOCIETY, 26 JUNE 1862, Excerpts.

Born free in the Virgin Islands, Edward Wilmot Blyden came to the United States in 1850 to be educated as a minister. Denied admission to Rutgers University due to his race, Blyden emigrated to Liberia the next year, soon travelling widely as a proponent for black emigration to Liberia.

. . . As soon as the black man of soul lands in Liberia, and finds himself surrounded by his own people, taking the lead in every social, political educational, and industrial enterprise, he feels himself a different man. He feels that he is placed in the high attitude of an actor, that his words and deeds will now be felt by those around him. A consciousness of individual importance, which he never experienced before, comes over him. The share which he is obliged to take in the affairs of the country brings him information of various kinds, and has an expanding effect on his mind. His soul grows lustier. He becomes a more cultivated and intellectual being than formerly. His character receives a higher tone. Every sentiment which his new position inspires is on the side of independence and manliness. In a word, he becomes a full man — a distinction to which he can never arrive in this country. . . .

I can see, Mr. Chairman, no other solution of the Negro question in the United States than that proposed by the Colonization Society — viz., that of transferring these people back to Africa, and building up an African empire of respectability and power. . . I feel persuaded, then, that no expedient, whether of Haytian, Central or South American emigration — separate from the elevation and civilization of Africa — can counteract the general prejudice with regard to the inferiority of the Negro. If no Negro state of respectability be erected in Africa — no Negro government permanently established in that land — then the prejudice in question will make its obstinate stand against all the wealth and genius and skill that may be exhibited by Negroes in North or South America. The work is to be done in Africa.



## 1862 \_\_\_\_\_ HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET, LETTER TO THE *PACIFIC APPEAL*, 11 OCTOBER 1862, Excerpt.

In 1862 while planning the general emancipation of southern slaves, President Lincoln considered founding a colony in Central America or a Caribbean island for the freed slaves and for freemen who opted to join them. Black leaders strongly disagreed on the merits of Lincoln's plan; Henry Highland Garnet (see 1848 & 1849 ) supported it.

In regard to the Central American plan, as proposed by the President for *the purpose of saving our emancipated brethren from being returned to slavery* — of that I do most sincerely approve.

Where are the freed people of the South to seek a refuge? Neither the North, the West, nor the East will receive them. Nay — even colored people do not want them here. They all say, white and black — “these Southern Negroes if they come here *will reduce the price of labor and take the bread out of our mouths.*”

Let the government give them a territory and arm and defend them until they can fully defend themselves, and thus hundred of thousands of men will be saved.

## 1864 \_\_\_\_\_ “THE WHOLE NORTH ABOLITIONIZED,” *PACIFIC APPEAL*, 16 JANUARY 1864, Excerpts.

Noting the support for abolition among northern Congressmen and Senators in early 1864, the editor of *Pacific Appeal* applauds one Senator's proposing a territory for freed slaves and freemen in Texas. Perhaps the territory would become a black-governed state, the editor predicts, “which the American people could look upon with pride.”

. . . Mr. Lane [Senator from Kansas] advocates setting apart a portion of Texas for persons of African descent, and that they may have the right of the homestead law, &c. Of this latter bill we cannot speak advisedly, until we are in possession of its details. But we might venture a speculative view at this time in stating that, if it means that the colored people will be given a Territory to govern, which will be hereafter admitted as a State, when sufficiently populated, and enabling acts passed by Congress, as in all other cases where Territorial Governments have been given to other Americans, we shall advocate the plan as one of great feasibility and prospective good. The capacity of the colored man has been tried in the field, as a soldier, with favorable results; but he has not had a sphere in this country wherein to exhibit his capacity as a civilian or statesman. . . The masses of loyal freedmen, too, would, by their marked industry, make Texas or the part assigned to them a state which the American people could look upon with pride, and boast of to all Europe.

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  - 1817: in Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism* (New York University Press, 1996), pp. 50-51; permission pending.
  - 1818: in Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951), pp. 70, 72. Copyright © 1969 by Herbert Aptheker. Reproduced by permission of Dr. Bettina Aptheker. Word *Negro* in 1951 introductory note modernized by permission.
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  - 1826: footnote in Edgar A. Park, ed., *Memoir of the Character and Life of Samuel Hopkins*, 1830; online in Internet Archive at [www.archive.org/stream/memlifecharsam00parkrich/memlifecharsam00parkrich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/memlifecharsam00parkrich/memlifecharsam00parkrich_djvu.txt).
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  - 1832, 1833 (Paul), 1837 (*Colored American*), 1839 (*Colored American*), 1844, 1849, 1852 (Bibb), 1854, 1861, 1862 (Blyden), and 1864: courtesy of the University of Detroit–Mercy, online collection Black Abolitionist Archive, at [www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/gsd/cgi-bin/library?p=about&c=baa](http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/gsd/cgi-bin/library?p=about&c=baa).
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  - 1839 (Skipwith): in John Hartwell Cocke Papers, Albert & Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library; reproduced by permission; published in Randall M. Miller, ed., *“Dear Master”: Letters of a Slave Family* (Cornell University Press, 1978).
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  - 1852 (Delany): in Martin R. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, 1852; courtesy of Jim Surkamp and West Virginia University Libraries at [www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/intro.htm](http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/intro.htm).
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