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Benevolence and Bitterness:

the African-American Experience in 19th Century Connecticut

Ph.D. 2012

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Benevolence and Bitterness: the African-American Experience in 19th Century Connecticut

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Abstract

This study examines the African-American experience in 19th century Connecticut through the writing of its eminent resident authors, ordinary people, and journalists. In every racial incident that occurred during this period, white citizens were torn between profoundly emotional racist ideologies and a more humanitarian, Christian benevolence rooted in Connecticut's Congregational history. Even allies of the African-American cause, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark Twain, set clear limits on their support, perhaps to maximize the appeal of their work to the broadest readership. Newspaper editors, too, seemed to ensure that views within their newspapers expressed community standards. As a consequence, even the most forward-looking papers tended to preserve the balance of white power by perpetrating images of African-Americans as a servile and subservient caste; condoning and advancing colonization efforts; and portraying white people as the victims of "levelling principles." State legislation regarding voting rights, property ownership and interracial marriage was more generous than that of most Northern states, and allowed some African-Americans to succeed. Yet they were working against a tremendous weight of white bigotry that was so entrenched in custom and habit that no "black" laws were deemed necessary, and black civil rights were advocated *because* they could not possibly affect white social associations. Furthermore, mainstream Connecticut newspapers were unique in that they saw fit to publish only what reinforced the state's most optimistic self-image as a civilized, tolerant and Christian community. This required a seemingly universal journalistic amnesia about white violence against African-Americans and their allies, along with the projection of southern guilt in cases of blatant discrimination in the state, and the thorough condemnation of "extremists" like John Brown. The daily bigotry suffered by African-Americans, along with the hope of better economic prospects, led many to flee Connecticut's rural areas and group together for mutual help, support and comfort, in major cities. Consequentially, even today, the state is deeply residentially and economically segregated, resulting in physical, economic, social and psychological costs to all Americans.

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCHING RACE AND REGION

This work examines and analyzes the African-American experience in Connecticut and responses to it as it was portrayed through a selection of archival nineteenth century writings, both public and private, published and hand-written, by both African- and European-Americans. Since Connecticut was a Northern state, the locus of much abolitionist¹ activity and important sections of the Underground Railroad, some early historians categorized it as, at the very worst, largely apathetic toward both enslaved and free African-Americans², but this study complicates, illuminates and oftentimes directly contradicts the complacency of those assumptions.

Community conversations about racial issues determine and reveal the dynamics of attitude change, the paradigms erected and exploited to maintain the status quo, and the revelatory nuances of discourse that open the door to nineteenth century thinking. Since much of the textual evidence derives from newspapers and books, a publishing world largely inaccessible to the average African-American (and probably to the average European-American as well), the white upper-middle class voices heard here will seldom be balanced by African-American voices of any class. While Connecticut anti-slavery newspapers did exist for a short period, there were no Connecticut papers controlled by African-Americans in the nineteenth century³.

¹ The terms abolitionist and anti-slavery will be used frequently in this thesis. The best definition I have found of the distinction between the two is from the Oxford University Press' online African-American National Biography: "Most historians use the term *abolitionism* to refer to antislavery activism between the early 1830s, when William Lloyd Garrison began publishing *The Liberator*, and the Civil War. Historians also commonly distinguish abolitionism, a morally grounded and uncompromising social reform movement, from political antislavery—represented, for example, by the Free Soil or Republican parties—which advocated more limited political solutions, such as keeping slavery out of the Western territories, and was more amenable to compromise." See <http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0002/e0020?from=browse&hi=1&pos=13&pos2=2>, Accessed 4/22/2012.

² See Bernard Steiner, *The History of Slavery in Connecticut*. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1893.)

³ The *Hartford Herald* (1918) is the earliest African-American newspaper recorded as being published in Connecticut, but no issues have been found. African-American newspaper production exploded nationwide in the 1970s. *The Charter Oak* was an anti slavery monthly newspaper published from 1838 through 1849. The weekly edition was called the *Christian Freeman*. <www.cslib.org/newspaper/ethnic.htm>, Accessed 6/14/12.

In some cases, African-Americans are given voice through white voices, in indirect discourse, as Mark Twain does when telling the story of "Aunt Rachel" (see Chapter III), which he claims to have recorded word for word. Nonetheless, even if he did record her story verbatim, she is still lost to history, known only as Aunt Rachel, embodying a Mammy stereotype beloved by many Americans of both races, but essentially invisible as an individual herself. Twain speaks for the subaltern, but she is not allowed to speak for herself. That is not to say that she could not speak for herself, but that without the megaphone provided by Twain's public renown, her voice might well have been lost. When African-Americans wrote for themselves as did William Williams or Selah Africanus, they were sending missives out into the white world that conducted both journalistic, public and private conversations about them and for them, but markedly, largely without them. Their attempts to enter that conversation manifested personal courage, and a commitment to hope and justice. African-American responses, by figures such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, to the tidal wave of white discourse, had to stimulate the thoughts of at least some whites; in any case, as writers and protesters, their efforts no doubt dignified and inspired the black community to believe in itself.

If trying to locate and identify the contents of an African-American voice is difficult, then problems of a different order are raised by the regional approach attempted in this study of Connecticut. While Connecticut enjoyed increasing access to many newspapers and periodicals during the nineteenth century, the periodicals were national in source and distribution. When it is possible to identify a Connecticut "voice" from these sources, commentary and analysis of this writing would have to be grounded in the understanding that such writing was perhaps produced, intended for and tailored to the wider national audience. In addition, while nationally-distributed

periodicals sometimes touched upon issues of local flavor and import, news and commentary of a local nature were generally channeled into newspapers, to which readers would have been accustomed to turn. Therefore this analysis uses Connecticut newspapers most frequently as the source of public discussion of racial issues and events.

One nineteenth century journalistic practice that served Americans well was the frequent "syndication," whether formal or informal, of articles from other parts of the country. News stories were simply copied and reprinted from newspaper to newspaper, with appropriate crediting below the headline, over the course of weeks or even months; this served to benefit journalists in myriad ways, by providing ample material for publication, filling local papers with news of far-off and more exciting locales, and offering journalists opportunities to print the pieces without comment, or to print them, and then use them as the focus of editorial comment, notably without headlines distinguishing between news reporting and opinion. For the purposes of this analysis, these non-Connecticut sourced articles only came under scrutiny when they were used as the foundation of a Connecticut editorial or commentary.

Additionally, this thesis does not purport to be a comprehensive study of all nineteenth century Connecticut writing regarding the African-American experience. Texts were selected based upon their fair representation of the writing that typified the era; for every article cited, probably ten or fifteen more of a similar nature could be unearthed from the archives. Furthermore, many nineteenth century newspapers, especially those of short duration published by African-Americans,

may still exist somewhere, but are not yet accessible to scholars. Certainly, if these ever are found in legible condition, scholars of future generations will have ample fields in which to work.⁴

In addition, given the plethora of nineteenth century publications in New England, it is not surprising that scholars have thoroughly expounded upon the writings of Ann Plato, Jeffrey Brace, Addie Brown, and Rebecca Primus, and James Mars.⁵ Here, I have attempted to highlight and study, firstly, the attitudes of of other, hitherto unknown and ordinary people whose voices emerged through their daily newspapers, either as editorialists, journalists, correspondents or interviewees, and secondly, those of the Connecticut-associated literary figures whose voices were heard around the world. The meshing of these voices regarding their race-related experiences provides a more nuanced account of a long-gone past, but also reminds us painfully of our twenty-

⁴ According to the Connecticut State Library, "(T)he Hartford Herald (1918) is the earliest African-American newspaper recorded as being published in Connecticut, but no issues have been found." "Ethnic Newspapers" on the Connecticut State Library website, www.cslib.org/newspaper/ethnic.htm. Also, "(T)he region's first black paper outside Boston apparently was in Hartford, Connecticut. A Presbyterian minister named James William Charles Pennington owned and edited an anti-slavery paper, The Clarksonian, whose brief run began in 1843." Cooper, Kenneth J. "A History of African-American Newspapers in New England," *New England Ethnic News*, Jan. 17, 2007.

⁵ See Arna Bontemps, Ed. *Five Black Lives: The Autobiographies of Venture Smith, James Mars, William Grimes, The Rev. G. W. Offley and James L. Smith*. (Middletown, Ct: Wesleyan University Press, 1971); Farah Jasmine Griffin, *Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends: Letters from Rebecca Primus of Royal Oak, Maryland and Addie Brown of Hartford, Connecticut, 1854-1868*. (New York: One World Books, 1999); Barbara W. Brown and James M. Rose, *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut 1650-1900*. (New London, CT: The New London Historical Society, 2001); Ann Allen Shockley. *Afro-American Women Writers 1746-1933: An Anthology and Critical Guide*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Meridian Books, 1989); Joan R. Sherman, *Invisible Poets: Afro-Americans of the Nineteenth Century*. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1974); Kari J. Winter, *The Blind African Slave: or, Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nick-named Jeffrey Brace*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.)

first century Connecticut, which leads the nation in the educational and economic gap between our urban and non-urban citizens.⁶

One final caveat remains. The following work hinges, ironically, on the use and abuse of certain terms regarding race and racial origins. It is urgent that the reader recognize that any and all racial terms used are understood to be scientifically specious, and often insulting, but that for ease and consistency of reference, the terms used by nineteenth century authors—whether these be “colored,” “Indian,” “negro,” etc. -- will be used; the exact language used serves as the body that must be dissected. The inhumane nature of the racial stereotyping rampant at the time gives us a sense of the reality faced by nineteenth century African-Americans. At the same time, I have chosen to quote some passages at length to give the reader a sense of the tone and tenor of the debate, in addition to a view into how each argument was developed. In these instances, it seemed that the rhetoric and language used could only be fully appreciated in context, rather than in extracts.

⁶ “... Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the country..This means that there’s a huge difference between the way our low-income and non-low-income students perform academically. In addition to the obvious moral issues this raises, the economic implications are huge. According to the former CEO of New Alliance Bank, Peyton Patterson, the achievement gap “could have a crippling financial impact on Connecticut’s economy.” ...our low-income students perform among the lowest in the nation in both 4th and 8th grade math. This means that our low-income students are performing on par with low-income students from Mississippi and Alabama.” “The Achievement Gap -- Economic Implications.” *The Connecticut Council for Education Reform Blog*, Nov. 3, 2011.

Additionally, “Connecticut received its report card... on how well its students are learning science, and it's not a pretty picture. Scores from the U.S. Department of Education show that on national science tests, the achievement gap between low-income Connecticut students and their more affluent peers continues to be the largest in the nation. The gap between black and Hispanic students and their white peers is also one of the worst in the country. ‘Our gaps have not closed. We are the worst in the country,’ said Renée Savoie, an official at the State Department of Education, which oversees these tests known as the ‘nation’s report card.’ ...In November, the same gap was reflected for Connecticut students on national math and reading tests...State Rep. Gary Holder-Winfield, the leader of the state’s Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, has called this difference in student achievement in Connecticut a longstanding ‘national embarrassment,’ while Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, on numerous occasions, has referred to it as ‘civil rights issues of our time.’” Jacqueline Rabe Thomas, “Education Report Card: Achievement Gap Lingers.” *The Connecticut Mirror*, May 10, 2012.

The Regional Focus

Several advantages accrue from the regional focus in the study of history. Firstly, for the average pre-twentieth century citizen, life was generally local, and limited to the distances that one could easily reach. Thus, the attitudes, opinions, and political inclinations of the "common man" developed in response to, and within the context of local events, publications and community. While some early Americans certainly conducted business across state and sometimes international boundaries, the number of such broadly travelled Americans was limited until a national communication and transportation network linked disparate parts of the country, creating modern American culture. Scholar Robert Wiebe has postulated that locality is the preeminent factor to consider in attempting to understand the course of this country's evolution.⁷ In light of these facts, the study of the textual environment surrounding the issues of race may help us to address the intellectual metamorphosis of the common citizen, and offer insights into intangible aspects of history that are not often told.

In addition, while the broad sweep of national history and thought rightly has a central place in our academic curriculums and research, the necessity of generalizing and synthesizing vast amounts of data into a coherent story without many exceptionalities naturally must omit substantial truths. Only by studying regional trends can a more precise picture emerge. So, while some generalizing to convey national history must be done, the truer picture emerges with the contrast and comparison of regional and national culture and events.

Furthermore, such complex issues as race and class, ever changing over the course of a century, can and should be evaluated broadly, but a regional approach supplies a nuanced look

⁷ Robert Wiebe, *The Segmented Society: An Introduction to the Meaning of America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.)

from a rooftop, rather than from an airplane. We can see individuals who are touched by their world, rather than groups who remain anonymous. Also, while national events reverberate on a state and town level in almost every society, the reverse may also be true. The events in a small state like Connecticut offered a view into the future for nineteenth century Americans, in a way they may not have been able to understand. The Prudence Crandall attempt to desegregate a small school, followed by an effort at segregated education, foreshadowed the eventual attempts at desegregation and resegregation that would take place almost nationwide when African-Americans were legally allowed to be educated. Her effort to educate black children apart also presaged the attacks and threats that arose in Reconstruction schools across the nation. Similarly, the discrimination faced by Frederick Douglass in Meriden, Connecticut by a displaced "Southerner," detailed in Chapter II, greeted by great public outcry, anticipated the future tensions that arose when Northerners were made aware of how black people were treated in the South.

Even more interesting is the study of personal racial attitudes generated by discussion of interracial marriage. As many Connecticut African-Americans expressed in writing, the state's citizens tolerated people they saw as "other," but in no way should that be construed as acceptance of equality. Indeed, the endemic bigotry of a state like Connecticut, which began liberating its slaves in 1784, (the first effort at emancipation in the nation), sheds light on why it took a century after the Emancipation Proclamation to *begin* the end of a segregated America. It may also partially explain why Connecticut in 2012, along with many other New England states, has a highly educated population, a generally liberal political outlook, and one of the most segregated school systems and residential patterns in the nation.⁸

⁸ Clyde McKee. "Connecticut's Hybrid Culture: Its Politics, Issues and Future." *New England State Reports*, (August 2011).

As a Northern state, Connecticut was, of course, part of the wider debate about racial issues, which began to come to the fore during the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s. It was during this decade that preachers like Lyman Beecher and activists like Lewis and Arthur Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison were inspired to take up their mission, inciting both support and backlash by pursuing their many causes in what they viewed as a relatively tolerant, "Christian" Connecticut. But several salient points distinguish the Connecticut debates in the larger national discussion about slavery and race.

While Connecticut made up just one state of the New England region, it differed significantly from contiguous states like Rhode Island and New York, which continued to profit significantly from the system of slavery well into the nineteenth century. While some have argued that Hartford's insurance industry also profited, the vast majority of Connecticut white citizens were rural, having no dealings with that business, and could consider themselves innocent of the blood trade for at least several generations by the dawning of the nineteenth century. This, combined with the second highest black population in New England, mostly spread out and "integrated" in small agricultural communities by 1800, created a uniquely unthreatening racial climate for *white* residents. Unlike nearby Massachusetts, so similar historically and geographically, a state frequently in the forefront of change (and not accidentally the birthplace of the Revolution), time seemed to move more slowly in Connecticut, the state already known as the land of steady habits. While both states shared the same Puritan religious traditions, Boston's great hub of activity attracted many foreigners and newcomers with new ideas, which percolated throughout the state. New Haven's harbor, small, shallow and inconvenient, was bypassed by ships traveling up or down the coast, and with little agricultural produce to trade, Connecticut neither exported much,

nor imported many foreign people or ideas. Inasmuch as it remained less exposed to change, the faith of Connecticut residents arguably retained more of its potency as it was passed from generation to generation. This profound sincerity of faith, best illustrated by Harriet Beecher Stowe and her family, undergirds some of Connecticut's distinctive history.

It is this faith that grounded so many of the race-related events that occurred here. For example, had the *Amistad* foundered off the coast of Rhode Island or New York, active slave-trading states, it would be hard to imagine the Mendis eventually being treated with compassion in the homes of white Americans. The captives fit the familiar Connecticut narrative that the best fate for all blacks would be their return to Africa, so in feeding and clothing these unfortunates temporarily, Connecticut Christians felt their duty was easily done, and that the issue was perfectly solved until they learned otherwise.

At the same time, the fact that Connecticut *believed* itself to be a Christian state, made it more likely that in order to preserve that self-image and that public image, some information would simply have to be suppressed: the actual fate of the Mendi returnees; the violence toward blacks in the streets of New Haven and Hartford; the cruelty toward a young principled teacher in Canterbury; the mistreatment of Frederick Douglass by Connecticut natives. Ironically, after the brutal loss of life in the Civil War, even the state's advocacy of civil rights was rooted as much in saving face as in the certainty that such rights could not loosen the chains of caste.

As far as the New Haven College and the Crandall school, both were experiments proposed by well-meaning activists expecting a more tolerant reception, in part because of the state's religious foundation. Both schools, though, were also viewed as stepping stones to transcending class status,

and in a small, largely homogenous state in which residents had the luxury to worry about status rather than survival, these were exceptional threats to the status quo, and therefore bound to have lasting social repercussions.

Additionally, by the 1860s, Hartford had developed into a hub for the intellectual elite of the time, drawing in luminaries like Stowe and Mark Twain. This hive of journalists, spiritualists, feminists, and painters, many interrelated, naturally attracted the interaction of political, religious and literary debates, making it the think tank of the state. So it is not surprising that two of the era's most eminent writers with ties in Connecticut would come to Hartford, and in while there, feel its influence and spread their own. In this way, the circle of Connecticut's influence on the events, the people and the evolving thought of the era was unique and especially potent because it was undergirded by a profound investment in the need to maintain its self-image and its public face.

African-Americans in Connecticut

Without the advantages of vast, fertile properties, Connecticut farmers never experienced the need for the expansion of slavery, as did the South. In fact, agriculture developed on a small-scale, on stony subsistence family farms, and the struggle to survive caused many Connecticut natives to seek better land elsewhere in western states, creating an exodus, especially after the War of 1812. Thus, the importation of Africans as slaves was brief and early, mostly in the seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century, before it was generally recognized that agricultural prospects in the state would remain poor. With little labor needed in the fields, the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation in 1774 to fine anyone importing a mulatto, Indian or black slave into the state.

Although the intent to limit slave importation benefitted the cause of freedom, the underlying motivation reveals a desire to limit the non-white population, and thus protect poor whites from competition in the job market.⁹

As a consequence, the native black population was small (3% of the population, but still the second highest in New England, following Rhode Island), largely free by the dawn of the nineteenth century, and in rural areas, well-integrated into the community. Eighteenth century black codes restricting the free movement of all blacks, free and enslaved, eventually fell into disuse, and blacks had the right to sue their masters in cases of fraud or mistreatment.¹⁰ Nonetheless, wherever larger black populations settled, they were segregated, on stagecoaches and even in the graveyards, where they were often buried in the graveyard road, and on the hilly periphery.¹¹ During the Revolution, when each village was required to send soldiers, slave-owners could send slaves to fight in their stead, to be rewarded with freedom, if they should survive the war. Between three and four hundred Connecticut enslaved men fought, some in integrated units.¹²

In addition to achieving freedom through military service, another legal route to emancipation was enacted in 1784. The Legislature passed a gradual emancipation law allowing slaves born after March 1, 1784 to become free upon reaching age 25; slaves born before that date would be freed only at their deaths, ostensibly in order to protect elderly slaves from being emancipated only

⁹ Ibid. 16. See also Arthur Silversmith. *The First Emancipation: the Abolition of Slavery in the North*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 4-5.

¹⁰ Ibid. 12-13, 17.

¹¹ Ibid, 20, and *Southbury Church Records*, Volume 2, unpaginated. See also Robert A. Warner, *New Haven Negroes*. (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), 11.

¹² David O. White, *Connecticut's Black Soldiers 1775-1783*. (Chester, Connecticut, Pequot Press, 1973), 8.

when they were too old to work.¹³ The age of legal emancipation was lowered to 21 in 1797. But in some ways, it seemed that the racial environment worsened in the nineteenth century; although some free black men voted in the early years of the republic, the Connecticut Legislature explicitly barred blacks from voting in 1814. This was reinforced by 1818 legislation specifically limiting suffrage only to white males.¹⁴ Moreover, black families living in rural areas were made to feel the “inferiority” of their color even in venues like the village churches, where “nigger” pews were maintained as late as 1865, as William Williams makes clear in Chapter II. Such open signals of bigotry, along with the paucity of opportunities on the farm after the War of 1812, led to massive outmigration from the state among all Connecticut residents, black and white. While many white families uprooted and headed west to Ohio, called “New Connecticut” due to the seemingly complete relocation of the population, African-Americans, for the most part, made their way into cities where industrialization offered them the hope of work and the promise of community. In urban areas like Hartford and New Haven, larger populations tended to cluster together, and greater numbers of African-American children seemed, to the white community, to warrant the expense of segregated schools. By comparison to Southern and Mid-Atlantic states, Connecticut seemed to be more just in its treatment of blacks; there were no Connecticut laws restricting the right to own property; to be educated, albeit in sometimes segregated circumstances; or to marry the person of one’s choosing, regardless of race. These last two issues will be discussed in further

¹³ This also minimized the number of dependent elderly former slaves in the poorhouses to be supported by tax payers.

¹⁴ Summarized from William Fowler. *The Historical Status of the Negro in Connecticut*. (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor, 1875.) Previous to this law, all freeholders, that is, men who held a certain amount of property called a freehold, could vote, no matter what race they were. “Citizens All: African-Americans in Connecticut, 1700-1850,” Gilder-Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance & Abolition, (2007), 8-9.

depth in Chapters V and VI. Nevertheless, to African-Americans themselves, we may presume, far more justice was wanted.

As the awareness of the “negro problem” grew in the 1830s, Connecticut witnessed its many contradictions firsthand. The Prudence Crandall and New Haven Negro College cases, both attempts at setting up schools for blacks, discussed in Chapter V, highlighted the threat posed to some white residents by African-American efforts to “uplift” the race. The street violence precipitated by the threat of education served to intimidate African-Americans and their allies for the remaining century. Surprisingly, in 1839, the *Amistad* affair, discussed in depth in Chapter I, brought the bloody reality of slavery to the forefront of white consciousness with its dramatic narrative and local appeal. This began a wave of new thinking about an issue to which many whites had seemed, up until that moment, somewhat apathetic. But the *Amistad* case focused on the return of kidnapped blacks to Africa, a laudable goal to many whites, and so their sympathies with the Africans could be both geographically and time-limited.

By 1848, slavery in Connecticut was both legally and practically abolished, but this progress was quickly undermined on a Federal level by the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, requiring all citizens to turn in fugitive slaves to the authorities. Some anti-slavery and abolitionist activity began in local churches, further instigated by the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. The novel, and author Harriet Beecher Stowe's Connecticut origins and connections, are fully examined in Chapter IV. From this point on, Connecticut's African-Americans, like Americans of every other state, were drawn into the maelstrom of the national drama of the Civil War, with the news of the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), the Federal Civil Rights Act (1866); the Fourteenth Amendment granting American citizenship to every person born in the country (1868); and the

Fifteenth Amendment granting the right to vote to all male citizens regardless of race (1870). Yet, ironically, African-American economic prosperity in the state reached its pinnacle in 1865, and declined for the rest of the century as urbanized blacks found themselves in cities competing for work with massive waves of white European immigrants.¹⁵

The Reconstruction years in Connecticut passed peacefully, on the surface, mainly because African-Americans in the state were shrinking as a fraction of the larger population, due to the aforementioned European immigrant influx. Census records indicate that in 1840, the black population made up 2.6% of the whole; by 1860, it was 1.9%, and by 1890, 1.6%. In real numbers, Connecticut white population went from 301,000 in 1840 to 733,000 in 1890, while the black population of 8,000 in 1840 only increased to 12,000 after fifty years.¹⁶ Those statistics represent only part of the picture though. The movement of African-Americans from poor rural farms to the few major cities (Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, New London) continued apace, leaving many rural villages with no African-Americans for the first time since their founding. As mentioned

¹⁵ "Blacks were not the only people in Connecticut who moved to cities during this period. The high birth rate in Connecticut coupled with continuous immigration from Northern Europe meant that virtually all good farmland in Connecticut was claimed by 1800. Children of farmers either moved west to farm or abandoned farming and moved into the cities. This population shift effectively prevented Blacks from working in the early water-powered factories in Connecticut. White workers were nearly always given preference...The coming of steam-powered factories in the 1830s boosted Connecticut's industrial growth, but this coincided with the mass immigration in 1845-1846 of the Irish following the potato famine. The immigrants served to push the Blacks one notch lower on the social scale by competing directly for those few jobs above the menial level that Blacks had been able to hold. Blacks were squeezed out of municipal and construction jobs they had held earlier in the century." David L. Parsons, "Slavery in Connecticut 1640-1848." *Yale New Haven Teacher's Institute*, <http://www.yale.edu/vnhti/curriculum/units/1980/6/80.06.09.x.html>, accessed July 8, 2012. "For African Americans, finding employment in Northern cities was no easy task. Their job possibilities were limited by discriminatory labor practices demanded by European immigrants competing with blacks for skilled jobs. Racial limitations imposed on jobs in the North differed from those in the South, where enslaved people were forced to perform all types of labor." "The African-American Migration Experience" The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. <http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/topic.cfm?migration=7&topic=4>, accessed July 7, 2012. See also "Occupation of Philadelphia Negroes" from *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* by W. E. B. Du Bois and *Statistical view of the United States, embracing its territory, population*, United States Census Office

¹⁶ Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung. *US Census Bureau: Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, and States*. (September 2002), Working Paper Series No. 56.

earlier, most left seeking factory employment, but no doubt, they also sought out the company of others with whom they could live without shame or fear, attending their own churches, schools and social clubs. The unintended consequences of that migration haunt the state today in its extreme social, economic and cultural segregation, leading to seemingly intractable social challenges that the children of the twenty-first century must face.

While there is a growing field of scholarship on African-Americans in Connecticut, most of it relies on either a purely historical approach or perspective. Some pertinent books¹⁷ listed below are dated, but are still valuable as the best available scholarship on their subjects. While there are myriad scholarly books on African-American history in general, some New England-focused books have been especially helpful in this study. Benjamin Quarles' *Black Abolitionists*¹⁸ offers an excellent look at the efforts of African-Americans to achieve their own freedom, and the problems and leadership issues they faced, but the focus is not on Connecticut. Lorenzo J. Greene's *The Negro in Colonial New England*¹⁹, is a well-documented, well-written book which gives the best general presentation of the African-American role in Puritan society. *Black Bondage in the North*²⁰ is a good overview of Northern slavery, but it is difficult to pick out Connecticut-specific information. In much the same way, Leon Litwack's account of suffrage efforts after emancipation in his book, *North of Slavery*²¹, is its most valuable aspect; it is not Connecticut-specific.

¹⁷ I am indebted to David L. Parsons of Yale University for the following list.

¹⁸ Benjamin Quarles. *Black Abolitionists*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.)

¹⁹ Lorenzo J. Greene. *The Negro in Colonial New England*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942.)

²⁰ Edgar J. MacManus. *Black Bondage in the North*. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1973.)

²¹ Leon Litwack. *North of Slavery*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961.)

Although *Black Slave Narratives*²² by John F. Bayliss deals primarily with non-Connecticut sources, he discusses J.W.C. Pennington's story and recounts his escape from slavery in the South and his rise to leadership and ministry in Connecticut. Similarly, in his 1977 book, *Slave Testimony*, John W. Blessingame²³ has amassed an important compilation of letters, speeches, interviews and autobiographies of slaves and former slaves, but mostly, naturally, from the South. Nonetheless, it also includes primary documents relative to the *Amistad* incident. Mary Cable²⁴ has also written a fine account of the *Amistad* incident in her book *Black Odyssey*. A much more recent article, "La Amistad" de Cuba: Ramón Ferrer, contrabando de esclavos, captividad y modernidad atlántica,"²⁵ addresses the full range of slaving activities of the *Amistad*'s Captain Ferrer, based on new archival documents; while important, the scholarship focuses on the historical facts of the *Amistad* case, and not written reactions to it in Connecticut.

Helen T. Catterall's *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*²⁶ is another valuable source containing information on Connecticut²⁷, starting with a brief summary of Connecticut slavery and detailing a number of important judicial cases regarding Connecticut slavery. Catterall's work reveals copious and detailed information about the quotidian lives of African-Americans gleaned from evidence taken and submitted in legal cases.

²² John F. Bayliss, ed. *Black Slave Narratives*. (New York: Macmillan, 1970.) See pages 196-221 for James Pennington's story.

²³ John W. Blessingame, ed. *Slave Testimony*. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: LSU Press, 1977.)

²⁴ Mary Cable. *Black Odyssey*. (New York: Viking, 1971.)

²⁵ Michael Zeuske and Orlando García Martínez. "La Amistad" de Cuba: Ramón Ferrer, contrabando de esclavos, captividad y modernidad atlántica." *Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Jan. - Jun., 2009), 119-187

²⁶ Helen T. Catterall, ed. *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*. Volume IV: *Cases from the Courts of New England, the Middle States and the District of Columbia*. (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Institution, 1936).

²⁷ Catterall 413-447.

Some canonical books of Connecticut history have not aged well; Mary H. Mitchell's *Slavery in Connecticut and Especially in New Haven*²⁸ now seems a mild, somewhat apologetic assessment of wealthy New Haven slave owners and how they treated their slaves. Likewise, Bernard C. Steiner's *History of Slavery in Connecticut*²⁹, which was once considered an important contribution to the field, but by current standards, clearly functions as an apologia for Connecticut's treatment of African-Americans. One salient example of Steiner's attitude summarizes the book: "In general, Connecticut has little to be ashamed of in her treatment of the negroes. She treated them kindly as slaves and freed them gradually, thus avoiding any violent convulsion."³⁰

Several other scholarly works take individual Connecticut cities as their subject. Robert A. Warner, in his book *New Haven Negroes: A Social History*³¹, details the economic, geographic and social aspects of one African-American community in an old Connecticut city. Similarly, a more recent article, "Social, Economic, and Residential Diversity within Hartford's African American Community at the Beginning of the Great Migration"³² addresses twentieth century events from a sociological point of view, and while it is Connecticut-based, it reveals information about the descendants of the subjects of my study, since it is twentieth century based.

²⁸ Mary H. Mitchell. *Slavery in Connecticut and Especially in New Haven*. *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* Volume X (1951), 286-312.

²⁹ Bernard C. Steiner. *History of Slavery in Connecticut*. Herbert B. Adams, Ed. *Johns Hopkins University Studies: History and Political Science*. Eleventh Series, Volumes IX-X. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1893.)

³⁰ Bernard C. Steiner. *History of Slavery in Connecticut*. Herbert B. Adams, Ed. *Johns Hopkins University Studies: History and Political Science*. Eleventh Series, Volumes IX-X. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1893), 451.

³¹ Robert A. Warner. *New Haven Negroes: A Social History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 194.

³² Peter Tuckel; Kurt Schlichting; Richard Maisel. "Social, Economic, and Residential Diversity within Hartford's African American Community at the Beginning of the Great Migration." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (May., 2007), 710-736.

As far as the role of Connecticut African-Americans in military history, David O. White's *Connecticut's Black Soldiers 1775-1783*³³ is an accessible discussion of the impact of the Revolution on Connecticut African-Americans, as is Gwendolyn E. Logan's "The Slave in Connecticut During the American Revolution,"³⁴ which is most valuable for its view of how African-Americans gradually were drawn into the Revolution. Related, but not exactly on point, is "From Mashantucket to Appomattox: The Native American Veterans of Connecticut's Volunteer Regiments and the Union Navy,"³⁵ which reveals the identities and documented events of the lives of some Connecticut Native-American soldiers.

James Mars' autobiography³⁶, although the editor's heavy hand is discernible, remains one of the few, invaluable first-person accounts of slavery in Connecticut. More recent books on the subject of Connecticut history tend to target one individual or one incident; a good example of this is *Venture Smith and the Business of Slavery and Freedom* by James Brewer Stewart (ed.). Based on archeological, autobiographical and other primary historical documentation, the author has "reconstructed" Venture Smith's life and times, from his captivity through his death. Other examples are *The Underground Railroad in Connecticut* by Horatio T. Strother; *Charles Ethan Porter: African-American Master of Still Life* by Hildegard Cummings; *A Century in Captivity: The Life and Trials of Prince Mortimer, a Connecticut Slave* by Denis R. Caron.

³³ David O. White. *Connecticut's Black Soldiers 1775-1783*. (Chester, Connecticut: Pequot, 1973).

³⁴ Gwendolyn E. Logan. "The Slave in Connecticut During the American Revolution." *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 30:3 (July, 1965), 73-80.

³⁵ David J. Naumec. "From Mashantucket to Appomattox: The Native American Veterans of Connecticut's Volunteer Regiments and the Union Navy." *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Dec., 2008), 596-635.

³⁶ James Mars. *Life of James Mars, a Slave Born and Sold in Connecticut*. (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Co., 1865.)

Finally, “‘Cast down on every side:’ The Ill-Fated Campaign to Found an ‘African College’ in New Haven”³⁷ presents a comprehensive narrative of the attempt to found a New Haven College for African American Men in the nineteenth century from a historical perspective. This account shares the more literary/historical perspective of my research; because this conflict generated much “excitement,” manifest in print, some of the same resources I used are cited here, but in less detail.

As opposed to the works mentioned above, my thesis is neither pure history, nor is it pure literary analysis. I have taken a literary approach in analyzing the language of real nineteenth century Americans expressing the complexity of their thoughts and feelings about the racial issues of their times in a small state with very small communities of people of color. But such an analysis cannot be conducted out of its dominant cultural context, as Edward Said suggested, and I have tried to provide as full an account as possible of that wider world.³⁸ While some literary traditions, such as the nineteenth century American novel, form the foundation of some sections, much of the language analyzed springs from the hearts and minds of people breathing in the very air of racial conflict, which, of course, they could not see. This work attempts to make visible what Raymond Williams called “the structure of feeling,” a phrase which “suggests a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation...most clearly articulated in particular in artistic forms and conventions.”³⁹ While the structure of feeling may be best articulated in fiction, which is

³⁷ Hilary Moss. “‘Cast down on every side’: The Ill-Fated Campaign to Found an ‘African College’ in New Haven” *Hog River Journal* (Summer 2007.)

³⁸ “Still, I have deliberately abstained from advancing a completely worked out theory of the connection between literature and culture on the one hand, and imperialism on the other.” Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 14.

³⁹ Jenny Bourne Taylor, “Structure of Feeling” in *The Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* edited by Michael Payne (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.)

considered in the Stowe and Twain chapters of this paper, it is arguable that in the journalistic discourse examined here, produced by the generations that lived the issues discussed, we can better understand the ramifications of speech, whether private or public, in the evolution of personal, political and public sentiment and change. Moreover, such analysis complicates and completes our understandings of the historical events and issues, and gives us greater insight as to how events rolled out as they did, given the structure of feeling of that era.

In discussing Williams' work in greater depth, David Simpson points out that

art records something "actually lived through" and able to produce "an actual living change." The structure of feeling is now glossed as something at once "firm and definite" yet operative in 'the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity' ...and it is at the heart of communication itself, and thus is a "very deep and very wide possession."⁴⁰

Given this elaboration, the structure of feeling may be discernible in some of the writing considered here, particularly that of African-Americans protesting the bigotry aimed at them; these letters record anguish "actually lived through" in a way that fiction can only approximate, even when it is autobiographically sourced. Furthermore, whether the letters created "an actual living change" in their contemporary readers may be unknowable now, but the empowering expression of protest no doubt created some change – if only a growing sense of injustice – in the writers themselves, particularly because the only sound the dominant culture expects from oppressed peoples is silence.⁴¹

⁴⁰ David Simpson, "Raymond Williams: Feelings for Structures, Voicing "History" in *Cultural Materialism: On Raymond Williams*, Christopher Prendergast, Ed. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 37-38.

⁴¹ Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 50.

Historical Memory and Silence

That silence of an oppressed people is abundantly heard as one studies the archive of writing about race in nineteenth century Connecticut. All publications for public consumption were run by white men, printing the work of almost all white men, with the intended audience audience being white men. Of course, since the political, legal and journalistic power resided entirely with only white men, their conversations continue to command attention, even centuries after they too have been silenced by the grave. Impossible as it is to avoid this domination of the discussion, I have unearthed a few black voices, all male, to counter the overwhelming roar of white men. What these voices lack in numbers, they compensate for in eloquence and passion, but no doubt an injustice is perpetuated by this necessary concession to their scarcity.

Unfortunately, the few letters extant of African-American women (between Rebecca Primus and Addie Brown) concern domestic matters or events in other states, so their voices, too, are absent from this study. This being the case, it is challenging to remember those whose words do not survive them; those whose missives were never thought worth keeping; or those who lived such lives of duty and labor that they never put pen to paper. Certainly there is much loss in their absence, one that I hope will be someday undone by the revelation of a trove of diaries or letters found somewhere.

While Stowe's voluminous writings compensate somewhat for a white female perspective, she is but one woman; the fact that so many white, educated, financially comfortable Connecticut women left so few writings underscores the absence of black female voices. With so many more resources than African-American women, white women might have been heard more, but perhaps

so tight were the strictures of the domestic sphere that very few wrote out of them, or when they did, these writings were not cherished as being worth the keeping.

And so, while this study may prove that Connecticut history sustained the memories and narratives that citizens approved of, erasing those unpleasant or inconvenient or too revealing, it is also true that its history has heretofore heard only silence from its black women, and mostly silence from its black men and white women. We may read into the voice of the subaltern, as channeled by journalists or Mark Twain, but the channeler is again a white male, hearing and relating what *he* recalls, no matter how good his intentions. Given the archival materials now available, perhaps this is all we *can* remember, record and discuss; the rest is silence.

Additionally, the disenfranchisement of black voices is augmented by other silences, most notably that of the media when uncomfortable truths are unintentionally revealed; the clear Christian superiority of the Uncle Tom character to the white characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is one that popular culture of the time effectively gutted and converted into the familiar caricature of the kindly elderly slave. When Frederick Douglass is publicly humiliated in Connecticut, the newspapers turn their spotlight on another newspaper editor, rather than the rights of African-Americans. When violence in the streets of Hartford and New Haven leave black people homeless, the entire state pretends it didn't happen. How we remember these events -- or cannot remember them because they are nowhere recorded, or twisted into more palatable forms -- is again controlled by those with all the power.

But we cannot forget that even those white males with power, like Mark Twain, were sometimes so intimidated that even they silenced themselves until after their deaths in order to escape criticism, which has belatedly come to him here in any case.

Gender

Undertaking a study on any aspect of history, one sadly expects that women will be largely excluded from political discourse and marginalized into the realms of their homes. As a rule, with the salient exception of Harriet Beecher Stowe, that was largely true for this work. A few scraps of Prudence Crandall's writing survive, along with a few personal letters from Connecticut African-American women, but by and large, journalistic discourse was generated by white men, while some protest literature survives from African-American men. Nonetheless, as I proceeded through my research, I was again and again struck by the *actions* of Connecticut women fighting for justice with the small tools at hand.

Stowe took up her pen in a most courageous step to reveal what she felt was God's view of slavery; she risked and suffered mockery, recrimination and scandal in becoming a voice for justice in print at a time when women writers were called scribblers, and much worse, even by men as respected as Nathaniel Hawthorne. The impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, almost inconceivable in its time, no doubt changed hearts and changed history.

In much the same way, though probably with even more modest expectations, Prudence Crandall *and her female students* stood up, alone, to a most violent and gendered assault upon them by powerful men in the community and state. Not only was legislation written to criminalize

their activities, but they were subjected to arson, well-poisoning, stoning, public verbal invective, social isolation from all (males) sources of sustenance: church, food supply, medical help and neighborly support. Notably, throughout her persecution and prosecution, her African-American students stood by her, refusing to testify against her though they were threatened by an all-male force of lawyers, judges and legislators with imminent imprisonment.

In the *Amistad* case, while women were, of course, excluded from all legal or political discussions, once the Mendis were freed, they were clothed, educated and supported by the efforts of church women in New Haven and Farmington. The hyper-sexualized, dangerously savage, naked African murderers of the first newspaper accounts had been transformed by anti-slavery advocates and some Connecticut journalists, into future Christian missionaries to Africa, worthy of the innocent fundraising bake sales and quilting bees organized by well-meaning women. Additionally, the association of the Mendis with the churches and their fairs, both offered women a domestic and socially acceptable outlet for their sympathies, and homogenized, churched and "cleansed" the men of their imputed savagery and fascinating sexuality, all the while contributing enough money to send them back to their homeland. This was activism under the cover of church and home, but activism nonetheless.

Similarly, the first Connecticut white women to cross the racial line to marry were pioneers of a different sort; their acts were presumably personal, not political, but in the extremely status-conscious social climate in which they lived, such rebellious choices must be considered political. Again, like Crandall and Stowe, they risked their own "wage" of whiteness, for the duration of their lives, to marry outside their caste, and expected to produce children who would assume their

father's lower caste (because these were all white women and African-American men), and in doing so, often alienated their birth families. Such personal acts of courage eventually seemed to change the community views of such choices -- from revulsion and horror early on -- to a bemused tolerance. Again, white women were at the forefront of these changes; while black women may also have been willing to marry into white families, it seems clear that white men chose not to cross this line for marriage, although they occasionally did so for extramarital relationships.

Given the legal, social and political restrictions within which nineteenth century women lived, their activism in the many-faceted causes of justice was surprising, heartening and inspiring. But these women acted upon their principles during an era in which the forum of the racial debate saw multiple manipulations of gendered fear-mongering, centering around interracial sexual relations. Considering this consistent source of disquiet, especially during the Civil War period, the courage of intermarrying Connecticut women is especially impressive.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter I, *The Limits of White Memory: Slavery, Violence and the Amistad Incident in the Press and in History*, I will be discussing the Amistad incident, and the evolving way this event was viewed by Connecticut journalists and residents. The *Amistad* incident put on display the nation's most racist beliefs, along with its worst fears, accounting for the discomfort with which Southerners in particular regarded the case. The rebellious African kidnap victims were exotic visitors to Connecticut, eliciting much commentary about the "ignoble savages" who might be cannibals, but most certainly seemed to be murderers with insight and intellect; more troubling, they were men -- this seemed indisputable -- and they were fighting courageously and against the

odds for their own freedom, *the* pivotal American value. In a culture that evaluated savagery visually, there was much to identify as “savage,” but, nonetheless, as the Africans came to reside in Connecticut awaiting their trial, they became human beings, with their own voices, recorded in newspaper accounts. They acquired names, translators, western clothing, English and Bible lessons, transforming their threatening black masculinity into the only image acceptable to white America, “the suffering servant;” in spite of the pro-slavery newspaper portrayal of the Africans of being lazy, inarticulate in English, mendacious slave-traders, a deliberate process of “heroification” of Cinque was occurring. These competing stereotypes of black man as supplicating victim vs. black man as intelligent, violently forceful agent of his own fate, were difficult for Lewis Tappan and his fellow abolitionist team to navigate. The images also brought into question the value of “moral suasion” as a tool, especially when white Americans were faced with the reality of a strong, potentially violent African man. The Supreme Court decision freed the Mendis, but set no precedent for future cases, and it did not improve the lot of even one other enslaved soul; worse yet, the returned captives found no peace after their hard-won return to Africa, nor did they choose to maintain their Christianity, much to the disappointment of their American hosts.

So it is not entirely surprising that the *Amistad* story was largely forgotten in popular imagination in the United States until the 1980s, and completely forgotten in Sierra Leone, the homeland of the captives; it took that long to see the rebellious slaves as noble defenders of their freedom. But in spite of their self-confessed dangerousness, Connecticut citizens took up their cause. Furthermore, the unhappy postscript of the Africans’ resettlement called into question the value of the colonization plans so beloved by activists.

In Chapter II, *Letters of Protest: Responding to Racial Prejudice against Frederick Douglass and Others in Connecticut*, surviving texts written by Connecticut African-Americans, either for private or public readership, are examined and analyzed. Each text protests racial injustice in some form, and each foreshadows national discrimination cases by more than a century. William Saunders, a prominent Hartford shop-owner, writes about his humiliating treatment on a train; similarly, William H. Williams, a laborer, writes to the Deacon of his church, vehemently protesting the racist habit of seating African-Americans in the "negro pews." Selah M. Africanus distributes a broadside in Hartford, warning Americans, but especially blacks, about the threats posed by the Fugitive Slave Law, and exhorts all citizens to civil disobedience; whether Africanus originated the idea or not, his idea was certainly at least contemporaneous with Thoreau, who wrote "Civil Disobedience" in 1849. Although these protests were written from 1831 through 1864, they reveal the tragic epiphany that these men seem to arrive at: that no matter how respectable, hard-working, religious and law-abiding they are, their "uplift" can never override their skin color and earn them the respect of "the beasts of prey" among whom they live.

The final section of Chapter II presents a study in contradictions and a focus on the most famous of African-American abolitionists, Frederick Douglass. Even while defending Douglass, accounts note Douglass's exceptionality as an orator and a classic American self-made gentleman; at the same time, his giftedness seems to confer upon him rights that the journalists do not believe are warranted for ordinary African-Americans. Furthermore, when Douglass is barred from the public dining room of an inn in Meriden, Connecticut, leading to the condemnation of the "Southern" innkeeper in local papers, his image is carefully managed by journalists. He is portrayed as a Christ-like victim of discrimination, forgiving his enemies and avoiding scenes,

allowing a white readership to feel comfortable in viewing him as another subservient black man who posed no threat of violence or embarrassment. Nonetheless, as much as evidence of bigotry is discernible in the Connecticut press, underlying the coverage is a fundamental respectful deference to an exceptional man, and occasionally enthusiastic support of his cause, along with the reassurance to white readers that such treatment would be confined to Douglass, and not other blacks. Douglass's treatment in Meriden also evokes a strong response from journalists, who refrained from public support of African-American protesters of injustice. In 1868, after the bloody Civil War, it is likely that sectarian pride in Northern virtue and patriotism was wounded by the public mockery that the Douglass incident called down upon the state; the costs of the war made such revelation of New England hypocrisy particularly shameful.

In Chapter III, *Mark Twain, Race and Connecticut*, Mark Twain's writing is examined to attempt to reconstruct his racial attitudes, especially as influenced by his Connecticut residence and experiences. In the course of reading Twain's various texts, a nuanced picture of Twain's perspective emerges. Although he was born to a slave-owning family, his fictional black characters (like Jim of *Huck Finn*) often achieve greater insight and wisdom than do his white characters, and surpass them in virtue. At the same time, Twain's commentary on the various real African-American people he knew (Mary Ann Cord; George Griffin; the ten-year-old slave, Jimmy) raises them to a caste superior to whites. Nonetheless, his reputation as a humorist, his friendships with Southerners, and his financial interest in continuing to sell his work in the South overshadowed his desire for justice when he wrote about lynching; he made sure that the piece would only be published posthumously.

Twain's experiences -- marrying into an Underground Railroad family, socializing among an antislavery set in Hartford, and interacting with African-Americans, including Douglass and his "butler" George Griffin, in Connecticut -- seem to inform Twain's writing, and emerge most saliently in *The Adventures of Huck Finn*, subversively questioning the status quo, while his reputation as a humorist provided deep cover for his more generous feelings. While Shelley Fisher Fishkin's work informs this study, my focus is on Twain's views and development based on his experiences in Connecticut.

Chapter IV, *Harriet Beecher Stowe and Abolition in Connecticut Newspapers*, examines the Connecticut sources of Stowe's activism, the impact of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and her return to the state in 1863, as reflected in Connecticut newspapers. Stowe's book seemed to receive mostly tacit support from Connecticut journalists, with an occasional Southern anti-Stowe diatribe reproduced in local papers. But evidence remains that the complexity of her Uncle Tom character was reduced, in popular culture, to that of an asexual, subservient and ragged man speaking plantation dialect, a familiar and comforting stereotype.

The recurring image of an elderly, impoverished and uneducated African-American male servant seemed to reach its epitome in Uncle Tom, and received more affectionate press over the years than did Stowe herself. The flat character derived from Uncle Tom was far more acceptable than Stowe, a "scribbling" woman supporting her husband and family, who otherwise could have served as the paragon of true womanhood. Much the way Uncle Tom was emasculated and de-canonicalized, Connecticut newspapers transformed Stowe into an unthreatening old lady as she slipped into dementia and death. Without her conviction, her voice and her political influence, she could be appreciated as everyone's kindly, but doddering, grandmother.

Nonetheless, having gutted the character of Uncle Tom of his moral superiority, and Stowe of her impassioned, intellectual and political power, without Stowe's multi-faceted Connecticut origins, it is quite likely that there would have been no *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Chapter V, *Uplift through Education: The Dream of a "Negro College" in New Haven, Connecticut and Prudence Crandall's School for Little Colored Misses*, explicates the journalistic furor that greeted the idealistic proposal for an African-American college in New Haven and a private black girls' academy. Although the controversy about the New Haven proposal lasted for only three days in newspapers in 1831, it resulted in longer-term unrest, ending with white riots, the stoning of blacks in the streets, and the destruction of at least one home. Many obstacles reduced the likelihood that the school would be approved: Yale College had more Southern alumni and students than either Harvard or Brown, and fund-raising activities in the South would have been seriously impacted, so Yale opposed the college. White working class inhabitants were likely to see the establishment of a manual school as a vehicle to inject skilled black competitors into their limited job market, as well as an "invasion" into their white town, expanding the "Liberia" community to discomfiting size. But most importantly, the public conversation about the issue is fraught with references to the "catastrophic" possibility of the sexual mingling of blacks and whites, should such an idea ever achieve reality.

Prudence Crandall's school ignited a legal and social backlash to the modest beginning of an academy to teach African-American girls in rural Connecticut. Again, Connecticut journalists seem to supplant logic with the suspicion that, given the opportunity to "rise," black Americans, especially those of lighter complexion, could *pass* and surpass poorer whites socially and move beyond what had earlier been the insurmountable caste status conferred by color. This problem

may have seemed particularly salient in Connecticut because the few African-Americans in small towns had been free for generations, and some had achieved economic parity with whites. The Prudence Crandall backlash to this sudden vehicle of upward mobility whipped up white support for anti-black laws, again invoking white terror of interracial sexual relations and marriage.

Another familiar motif in this story is the heavy-handed violence against women, which occurred after Harriet Gold's marriage to a Cherokee in Cornwall, and against Crandall herself and her young students, intending to intimidate women to stifle social change. Interestingly, in both cases, perpetrators used fire (burning Gold in effigy, and attempting to set Crandall's house on fire, while she and her students were inside), and stoning, a biblical punishment for sexual sin. One may speculate about whether the intensity of the reaction was deepened by rage against female agency in questioning the status quo. The misogyny perpetrated upon women abolitionists -- often accompanied by gross sexual innuendo -- is foreshadowed in the verbal or symbolic assaults launched upon Crandall and Gold.

Chapter VI, *Marrying Up? Interracial Marriages in 19th Century Connecticut*, analyzes the changing journalistic response to the idea and reality of interracial marriage, rooted as it seemed to be in the white belief in class immobility for people of color. In nineteenth century Connecticut newspapers, from the Cornwall cases to the final commentary on the Hinckman case, several trends emerge. Firstly, ambitious white families had few opportunities to improve their social standing, and attractive daughters offered a rare chance, but they also presented a serious risk of loss if they chose to marry "down" racially. Secondly, given a daughter's power to influence family status, and the higher status white male's reluctance to "marry down," the small social change represented by interracial marriages was effected by those few white women who chose

relationships with African-American men, but insisted that the relationships be legal marriages. Thirdly, racial mixture would result in a supposedly “mongrelized” progeny, impoverished and degraded. Fourthly, other poor whites would lose the opportunity of improving their family status if pretty white women choose black men, thus lowering the social status of all whites by their private act. Fifthly, poor whites had nothing except white privilege and a segregated social world; racial mixing would take this small advantage away, perhaps inspiring blacks to see themselves as potential spouses of whites, their social equals, a terrifying prospect especially for those who had little else.

Finally, despite all these overt and covert messages, the writers in Connecticut newspapers evinced some ambivalence—the outrage at news of an interracial union is frequently followed by a mellow, more measured response. In the end, journalistic second thoughts often carried the day, but only after racist and often sexist seeds -- many germinated in an inchoate fear of African-American male sexuality, and the possibility of white female responsiveness -- had been cast upon fertile ground. Connecticut’s unusual history of legislative tolerance toward interracial marriage, combined with the state’s Christian self-image (especially when foiled with Southern states after the Civil War), enabled the voicing of public begrudging befuddlement rather than outraged violence.

In sum, this thesis examines the currents of public thought, as evidenced by journalistic conversation, literature and protest in nineteenth century Connecticut. The regional approach here allows a closer look at a state that looked nominally and legislatively somewhat generous on racial issues, compared to others at the time. Revealed here, though, is a nuanced and evolving expression of white ambivalence, a faith-mandated benevolence wrestling with a profound and

bitter fear of black competence, competition and companionship. At times one can also hear black voices, claiming American citizenship with all its rights and duties, lifted against the power of people who would have the African-American experience diminished, marginalized, mocked or silenced. In the end, one must conclude that, at its best, Connecticut offered an ambivalent benevolence to people of color, and at its worst, a cup of bitterness. Connecticut proved the truth of T. S. Eliot's contention: "There is no greater heresy than to do right for the wrong reasons."

Chapter I

The Limits of White Memory: Slavery, Violence and the Amistad Incident

THE SUSPICIOUS LOOKING SCHOONER CAPTURED AND BROUGHT INTO PORT

From the New London Gazette

Much excitement has been created in New York for the past week, from the report of several Pilot boats having seen a clipper built schooner off the Hook, full of negroes, and in such condition as to lead to the suspicion that she was a pirate. Several cutters and naval vessels are said to have been dispatched in pursuit of her, but she has been most providentially captured in the Sound, by Capt. Gedney of the surveying Brig Washington.⁴²

So began the first journalistic notice of the drifting ghost ship, the *Amistad*, in the Long Island Sound in 1839. The *Amistad* case raises an important issue from a contemporary perspective: why was this story virtually forgotten⁴³ in the popular imagination both as national and Connecticut history until the 1980s⁴⁴, when historians returned to the story and Steven Spielberg's film gave it a new life in the 1990s? The ambivalence of newspaper accounts of the case as it unfolded gives us a sense of the multiple complex answers and the conflicting thoughts and feelings that troubled Americans and abolitionists then, and might have led to the omission of

⁴² *Columbian Register*, August 31, 1839, 3.

⁴⁴ There is no mention of it in the following Connecticut history books: *History of Connecticut* by Theodore Dwight (1859); *The History of Connecticut* by William Henry Carpenter, Timothy Shay Arthur (1872); *A History of Connecticut* by George Larkin Clark (1914); *A History of Connecticut* by Elias Benjamin Sanford (1905); *History of New London, Connecticut* by Frances Manwaring Caulkins, Cecelia Griswold (1895). The first mention of the incident is a paragraph on pages 88-89 in *The Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1633-1884* by James Hammond Trumbull (1886).

the *Amistad* from the vast majority of our school history books for the next century and a half.⁴⁵ In addition to the general absence of African-Americans from our national historical consciousness until the twentieth century, and the discomfort of most Americans when confronting the historical realities of slavery⁴⁶, there were frightening ideas and images raised by the *Amistad* case that white Americans of all political persuasions wanted to forget.

The story of the *Amistad* is now a familiar one in Connecticut. A group of Africans was kidnapped from Sierra Leone, illegally imported into Cuba and sold into slavery in 1839; while being transported to another part of the island, on board the schooner *Amistad*, fifty-three of the newly purchased captives staged a mutiny, killing most of the crew, but not the two slave purchasers. The Africans then attempted to force the navigator to sail them back to Africa, but unbeknownst to the Africans, he turned the ship back toward the United States every night. Eventually, the ship, in obvious distress, drifted into the Long Island Sound, where the Africans could be seen from the shore. A Lieutenant Gedney aboard the USS *Washington* seized the ship and took it back to New London, Connecticut. Shortly thereafter, when the two Spaniards, José Ruiz and Pedro Montes, told their stories, the Africans were charged with murder in Connecticut courts. Sengbe Pieh, called Cinqué in America, emerged as the leader of the rebellion and the voice of the Mende survivors.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ A study of the five most frequently used American history textbooks published from 1950 through 1998 (some of which are still in use today), was undertaken by Joseph Czerniak in 2006, and the *Amistad* Rebellion was not mentioned in any of those books. His article confirms that the text is the primary and usually the only source of history for most American elementary and high school students. Joseph Czerniak, "Black Slave Revolt Depiction and Minority Representation in U.S. History Textbooks from 1950-2005." University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse Journal of Undergraduate Research IX (2006).

⁴⁶ See James Oliver Horton, "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue" in his and Lois E. Horton's *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 35-55.

⁴⁷ Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 28-29.

U.S. Marshall Norris Willcox took Gedney's report and immediately notified the Federal District Court Judge of Connecticut, Andrew T. Judson, who conducted an inquiry on the American brig in the New London harbor. (Judson had earlier proven himself an enemy to African-Americans by being the legislative force behind the prosecution of Prudence Crandall, to whom I shall return in Chapter V. He was also her next-door neighbor.) The *Amistad's* paperwork supported the Spaniards' story that the slaves were the property of Ruiz and Montes, and that the slave ship *Amistad* was authorized to move the fifty-three blacks from one Cuban port to another. During this short trip, the Spaniards claimed, the slaves rebelled and killed the crew.⁴⁸

Judson decided to confine the black adults until September 1839, when the U.S. Circuit Court was scheduled to meet in Hartford. That court would adjudicate the property claims and the possible prosecution of murder and mutiny charges against the blacks. Antonio, a slave belonging to the owner of the *Amistad* and four black children on board would be held as witnesses with the adults at a New Haven jail.

The legal arguments of the various parties posed every kind of difficulty. The Spanish government took the part of its citizen slave owners; the American Attorney General represented the interests of the politically wary President Martin Van Buren; fervent abolitionists argued on behalf of the Africans, seeing in the *Amistad* case the opportunity to present the American public with the image of blacks as men acting heroically in their own self-defense.

On September 6, 1839, Angel Calderón de la Barca, the Spanish minister, confronted Secretary of State John Forsyth, calling for the "slaves" to be turned over to Spain. Calderón cited Article 8 of Pinckney's Treaty of 1795, which stated that if a ship belonging to a signatory nation

⁴⁸ Ibid.

should seek shelter in the port of another signatory nation due to “any...urgent necessity,” that ship should be offered refuge and sustenance, and under Article 9, its “merchandise” should be “restored entire” to the owners.⁴⁹

In addition, the Spanish contended, American courts would have no jurisdiction over Spanish subjects or events that occurred in Spanish waters on Spanish vessels. The law of nations, Pinckney’s Treaty and the Adams-Onés Treaty of 1819 supported this position, according to the Spanish minister.⁵⁰

President Martin Van Buren’s political instincts and pro-slavery inclinations persuaded him that the Spanish minister had presented arguments that would simplify and expedite the conclusion of the case. Avoiding the political spectacle of a circuit court trial would be critical, and so on September 11th, 1859, Secretary of State Forsyth instructed U.S. District Attorney William S. Holabird to be sure that the “slaves” did not go “beyond the control of the Federal Executive.”⁵¹

Attorney General Felix Grundy, writing his legal opinion at the behest of President Van Buren, concluded that Calderón was correct in insisting that Pinckney’s Treaty required the United States to return the ship and its “cargo” to Spain. The titles to the “cargo” were held by Ruiz and Montes and were not subject to American scrutiny. Grundy asserted that the United States must give “due faith and credit” to the official acts of “public functionaries” of other nations or risk disrespect for international law and fractious relations between nations.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid. 50-51.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 50-51.

⁵¹ Ibid., 57. See also Merton L. Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974) and Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁵² Ibid. 58.

Grundy also claimed that the uprising on the *Amistad* was not a case of piracy, since the ship was operated under the Spanish flag, by Spaniards, and in Spanish waters, while pirates were “free-booters” operating under the flag of no nation. Furthermore, while slavery might be undesirable, Grundy (who was a slave owner from Tennessee) noted, it was legal in “almost all civilized nations.”⁵³

On the other hand, arguments in the *Emancipator*, a publication of the American Anti-Slavery Society, made clear that a ship engaged in the slave trade was subject to the law of the nation under whose flag it sailed; in this case, slave-trading was prohibited by Spanish law. The Africans were “stolen,” kidnapped by slavers, and thus their actions constituted self-defense, not piracy, since their intent was not to acquire property, but to achieve their own rightful freedom.⁵⁴

Ruiz and Montes had claimed that their cargo consisted of Spanish-speaking slaves called *ladinos*, who were already Spanish subjects; further investigation would reveal that, as newly-captured Africans, the *Amistad* blacks were *bozales*, having never been domiciled in a Spanish country, and knowing no Spanish. Acquiring specious paperwork for new captives was apparently easy and Spain did nothing to discourage this common business practice. So, argued Theodore Sedgwick on behalf of the captives, because the *Amistad* men were not slaves, Ruiz and Montes had no legal claim on them.⁵⁵ Moreover, according to Sedgwick, the illegal kidnapping of the Africans changed the nature of American cooperation with the Spanish. To return the Africans to the Spanish would make the United States an accessory to a crime perpetrated by a foreign government.

⁵³ Ibid. 59.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 57-60.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 68.

When John Quincy Adams studied the case, he was beset by thorny questions, described by Howard Jones as follows:

What was Gedney's authority for seizing the vessel, cargo and passengers and for taking them to New London? How could American officials justify holding the blacks for piracy and murder? What were the legal grounds of holding the children as witnesses? Were they too young to offer testimony? If the youths were slaves, were they competent to testify in matters relating to piracy and murder? By what authority did the court hold the blacks at the same time on criminal charges and as claimed property? If they belonged to Ruiz and Montes, did not the laws of slavery require forfeiture of property when slaves committed piracy and murder?

If the judge had no right to commit the blacks to prison, were they not by writ of habeas corpus returnable before a judge of the state of Connecticut?⁵⁶

Ultimately, with the active intervention of abolitionists and evangelicals⁵⁷ and their lawyers, including former President John Quincy Adams, the United States Supreme Court decided the case on the narrowest of grounds: the *Amistad* blacks were illegally taken from Africa, and therefore they could not be the property of Ruiz and Montes. Justice Joseph Story did not push the case as far as the abolitionists would have liked; in fact, by Story's decision, Antonio, a surviving *ladino*, was acknowledged to be legally enslaved and so had to be returned to his rightful owner. (Antonio shortly thereafter escaped to Montreal with the help of the leading abolitionist Lewis Tappan.) Eventually the *Amistad* captives were freed; well-wishers raised funds to return them to

⁵⁶ Ibid. 82.

⁵⁷ Frank G. Kirkpatrick, "Religious Abolitionists in the *Amistad* Era: Diversity in Moral Discourse," *The Connecticut Scholar: The Amistad Incident: Four Perspectives*, No. 10, (1992), 50. See also, James D. Essig, *The Bonds of Wickedness: American Evangelicals Against Slavery 1770-1808* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

Sierra Leone.⁵⁸ Since the *Amistad* captives were held in New Haven and Westville and the trials took place in Hartford, Connecticut newspapers thoroughly covered this local story.

At first, the *New London Gazette*, edited then by the fairly open-minded John J. Hyde, was especially unfriendly to the *Amistad* Africans. Hyde apparently authored the initial *Amistad* account that appeared in that paper because he was one of the first New Londoners to board the ship.⁵⁹ He later became an advocate for the Africans, but in his first story, he portrayed the slavers sympathetically.

The situation of the two whites was all this time truly deplorable, being treated with the greatest severity, and Pedro Montes, who had charge of the navigation, was suffering from two severe wounds, one in the head and one in the arm, their lives threatened every instant. He was ordered to change the course again for the coast of Africa, ... (attempting) to run into some port, when they would be relieved from their horrid situation.⁶⁰

Perhaps it is not surprising that the Spaniards were viewed as victims rather than victimizers, especially since they appeared to be survivors of brutal violence. Another passage in the same article captures the depth of one journalist's appreciative, if condescending, bias.

One of them, Jose Rues, is very gentlemanly and intelligent young man, and speaks English fluently. He was the owner of most of the slaves and cargo, which he was conveying to his estate on the Island of Cuba.

The other, Pedro Montes, is about fifty years of age, and is the owner of three slaves. He was formerly a ship-master, and has navigated the vessel since her seizure by the blacks. Both of them, as may be naturally supposed are

⁵⁸ Arthur Abraham, *An Historical Legacy of Sierra Leone and the United States*. <http://www.amistadamerica.org/content/blogcategory/177/201/>, Accessed 8/04/08.

⁵⁹ <http://www.amistadresearchcenter.org/amessays1.htm>, Accessed 6/25/09.

⁶⁰ *New London Gazette*, August 26, 1839.

most unfeignedly thankful for their deliverance. Signor Pedro is the most striking instance of complacency and unalloyed delight we ever have seen, and it is not strange, since only yesterday his sentence was pronounced by the chief of the buccaniers, and his death song chanted by the grim crew, who gathered with uplifted sabres around his devoted head, which, as well as his arms, bear the scars of several wounds inflicted at the time of the murder of the ill-fated captain and crew.

He sat smoking his Havana on the deck, and, to junge [sic] from the martyr-like serenity of his countenance, his emotions are such as rarely stir the heart of man. When Mr. Porter, the prize-master, assured him of his safety, he threw his arms around his neck, while gushing tears coursing down his furrowed cheek, bespoke the overflowing transport of his soul. Every now and then he clasps his hands, and with uplifted eyes gives thanks to "the Holy Virgin" who had led him out of all his troubles.⁶¹

So Rues (or Ruiz), "owner" of most of the slaves, is "very gentlemanly and intelligent," while Montes is grateful to Mr. Porter and the Holy Virgin for his survival; his "martyr-like serenity" and "the overflowing transport of his soul" are evident in his countenance and his "uplifted eyes." The slavers are "canonized" in this account, and contrasted powerfully with the Africans. The diction referring to the Africans is notably hostile: "buccaniers," "death song," "grim crew," "uplifted sabres," "scars," "wounds" "inflicted murder." Premesh Lalu, in discussing the flavor of language used for Africans, Native Americans and Aboriginal people, points out that the repetition of the idea of native "savagery" suggested that dominant, violent responses of English-speaking colonists was not only advisable, but required.

In the colonial context, these terms—which were reserved for the colonized—were neither unusual nor surprising. They suited and indeed qualified the object nouns of colonial rule—also known by the names "primitive," "uncivilized," "savage," and "Caffre."

⁶¹ *New London Gazette*, August 26, 1839.

...It is striking that the deployment of these verbs and nouns, however, was neither random nor arbitrary. In fact, active verbs and object nouns were always organized and perhaps ordered within an accepted system of reportage common to colonial circuits of information and in relation to specific events...which threatened the entire colonial psyche and its moralizing and civilizing claims.⁶²

The *Amistad* qualified as one of those cases: the idea that Africans could turn the tables on white Europeans, chaining up or killing their would-be enslavers, had to strike terror in the hearts of slavery supporters everywhere. In fact, abolitionists recognized the depth of Southern fear; in the *Emancipator*, William Lloyd Garrison suggested that the Southern press was playing down *Amistad* case for fear of inspiring similar slave rebellions, one reason that Southerners would have preferred to bury the incident in oblivion.⁶³

The *New London Gazette* article continues:

...we also saw Cingues, the master-spirit and hero of this bloody tragedy, in irons. He is about five feet eight inches in height, 25 or 26 years of age, of erect figure, well built, and very active. He is said to be a match for any two men on board the schooner. His countenance, for a native African, is unusually intelligent, evincing uncommon decision and coolness, with a composure characteristic of true courage and nothing to mark him as a malicious man. He is a negro who would command, in New Orleans, under the hammer, at least \$1,500.

He is said to have killed the captain and crew with his own hand, by cutting their throats. He also has several times attempted to take the life of Senor Montes, and the backs of several poor negroes are scored with the scars of blows inflicted by his lash to keep them in submission. He expects to be executed, but nevertheless manifests a sang froid worthy of a Sto[ne] under similar circumstances.

⁶² Premesh Lalu, "The Grammar of Domination and the Subjection of Agency: Colonial Texts and Modes of Evidence," *History & Theory*, Vol. 39, Issue 4, (Dec. 2000), 53.

⁶³ Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 195.

Cinqué, called “the hero of this bloody tragedy,” is described as “a match for any two men;” this amazing power (the “master-spirit”) is more intimidating because it is paired with a countenance “unusually intelligent” for a native African, but in a final clause, the author confesses that there is “nothing to mark him as a malicious man.” This admission of his humanity, (he is, after all, a *man*) is then tempered by the extreme violence of his coup, during which he cut the throats of the captain and crew with his own hand, and whipped the other blacks. The image raised here would terrorize most white Americans; this is the stereotype of the violent, “superman” African, what Wilson Moses would call an “avenging Messiah,”⁶⁴ one who *appears* not to be malicious, but could outwit and overpower a white crew with courage and sang froid. To set Cinqué in a familiar American frame of reference, the author notes that, “(H)e is a negro who would command, in New Orleans, under the hammer, at least \$1,500.” Placing Cinqué back in the context of slavery, even after noting his evident humanity, his strength and his intelligence, “puts him back in his place,” a reminder that ultimately, even someone like him can be reduced to the status of chattel. The staggered nature of the author’s assessments of Cinqué — manly and strong in one breath, a slave in the next — gives us some sense of the psychological whiplash Cinqué inspired.

In this account, Cinqué is “credited” with agency, the ability to act on his own thoughts and plans, evil though they might be. Prelesh Lalu notes, “There was, however, a certain paradox in the configuration of colonized people as both capable of acts of intrigue and as objects of colonial rule. If the first conferred the possibility of agency on the Africans, the second denied them any

⁶⁴ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, rev. ed. 1993) 54-55.

semblance of identity or agency of their own.”⁶⁵ This agency implies free will on the part of Cinqué and the Africans, and far more troubling than the humanity this implies is the clear role reversal played out in the *Amistad* story. Similarly, in the 1835 killing of a Xhosa chief, Hintsá, by British forces in South Africa,

{T}he reversal whereby colonial officials represented themselves as victims rather than perpetrators was achieved through two key mechanisms. First, by reversing the order of subject and object...the (conquered) were guaranteed a certain agency...Second, the need to confer on the colonized subject an agency without denying the British the belief in their superiority⁶⁶

The Spaniards Ruiz and Montes were in this same position in 1839. Having purchased people whom they knew to be recently taken from Africa, they were acting to illegally enslave them. After the uprising, however, they had to impute to the Africans the capability of intelligence and intrigue, while maintaining their superiority (evident in their gentlemanliness, their fine manners and their Christianity), and portraying themselves as the victims of the uncivilized Africans.

Hyde’s account continues:

With Capt. Gedney, the surgeon of the port, and others, we visited the schooner, ...and there we saw such a sight as we never saw before, and never wish to see again...

On her deck were grouped, amid various goods and arms, the remnant of her Ethiop crew, some decked in the most fantastic manner in the silks and finery pilfered from the cargo while others, in a state of nudity, emaciated to mere skeletons, lay coiled upon the decks. Here could be seen a negro with white pantaloons and the sable shirt which nature gave him, and a planter’s broad-brimmed hat upon his head, with a string of gewgaws around his neck ;

⁶⁵ Lalu 53.

⁶⁶ Lalu 53.

and another with a linen cambric shirt, whose bosom was worked by the hand of some dark-eyed daughter of Spain, while his nether proportions were enveloped in a shawl of gauze and Canton crape. Around the windlass were gathered the three little girls, from eight to thirteen years of age, the very images of health and gladness.

Over the deck were scattered, in the most wanton and disorderly profusion, raisins, vermicelli, bread, rice, silk, and cotton goods. In the cabin and hold were the marks of the same wasteful destruction --Her cargo appears to consist of silks, crapes, calicoes, cotton and fancy goods of various descriptions, glass and hardware, bridles, saddles, holsters, pictures, looking-glasses, books, fruits, olives, and olive oil, and "other things too numerous to mention," which are now all mixed up in a strange and fantastic meddly [sic].⁶⁷

The rest of the Africans are depicted as less threatening than Cinqué since some are mere emaciated skeletons (barely human) and others are rendered as absurd as clowns or children in a costume shop. The cargo of the boat is carelessly and wastefully strewn about, indicating that the Africans have no notion of its value and are ignorantly playing in it and squandering it.

And yet, even among these apparently less threatening Africans, the disgust the journalist feels is almost palpable. Another scholar Norbert Finzsch has suggested that prior to 1860, racism thrived

based on the body, aesthetic categories and culture. This visual ideology constructed a racialized and gendered abject Other on the basis of aesthetics and an assessment of the Other's economic, societal and linguistic achievements. By placing the indigenous Other at the very bottom of humanity, this discourse justified the Other's expulsion from native lands, economic exploitation, destruction of the indigenous ecosphere and even eventual genocide...Two basic models for describing the indigenous had been developed during the seventeenth century: the Ignoble or

⁶⁷ *New London Gazette*, August 26, 1839.

Primitive Savage, and the Noble Savage. The concept of the Noble Savage had been discarded by the end of the eighteenth century.⁶⁸

The dominant culture evaluated savagery visually, “that is the European gaze directed at the indigenous body.”⁶⁹ The author of this article wields the weapon of the European (or Euro-American) gaze carefully in the second paragraph of the *New London Gazette* article quoted above.

The “silks and finery” and “white pantaloons” worn by some blacks serve as a foil to the nakedness or partial nakedness of others. The “state of nudity;” the “sable shirt which nature gave;” the “emaciated...skeletons,” stripped even of flesh, encompass the worst of both the western world and the African world. The indignity of the Africans in this partial state of dress arises from the juxtaposition of the most expensive fabrics and white pantaloons with the state of near starvation and desperation of the African men. As “bodies,” the exposure of so much skin would resonate as primitive and shocking, suggesting what George L. Mosse labeled as “a visual ideology based on stereotypes,”⁷⁰ “meaning that the appearance, the looks of indigenous peoples, carried a specific meaning...Beauty meant virtue, and hideousness meant sin. For the European gaze directed at the indigenous body, it meant that the inner morality and ethics of the indigene could be measured by its external beauty or ugliness...”⁷¹

This cultural “ugliness” might be evident to the white Connecticut reader imagining a bare-chested tattooed African, with a planter’s hat upon his head (here assuming the clothing of the

⁶⁸ Norbert Finzsch, “‘It is scarcely possible to conceive that human beings could be so hideous and loathsome’: discourses of genocide in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America and Australia,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (2005), 99-100.

⁶⁹ Finzsch 104.

⁷⁰ George L. Mosse, *Toward a Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), xii.

⁷¹ Finzsch 105.

dominant race); a linen shirt embroidered by a dark-eyed Spaniard (evoking European beauty and civilized skill), above gauzily swaddled “nether proportions.” Concomitant with this “ugliness” is the tacit threat of Africans taking on the property and power of Europeans, while barely concealing the exotic nudity and sexuality under that gauze, combined with the proximity of “white” trappings to naked or near naked black skin. Yet implicit in this description is the curious interest in, if not attraction to, the exoticism, the primitive sexuality, and the “otherness” of the Africans under duress.

Hyde’s article goes on:

On the forward hatch we unconsciously rested our hand on a cold object, which we soon discovered to be a naked corpse enveloped in a pall of black bombazine. On removing its folds we beheld the rigid countenance and glazed eye of a poor negro who died last night. His mouth was unclosed, and still wore the ghastly expression of his last struggle... We were glad to leave this vessel, as the exhalations from her hold and deck were like anything but “gales wafted over the gardens of Gul.”⁷²

In addition to evoking the miserable stench from a ship carrying the unwashed, food remnants and corpses, the final paragraph, mentioning the dead and nude African, contains a passage reminiscent of the fearful letters written by missionaries and explorers about Africans:

Near by him, like some watching fiend, sat the most horrible creature we ever saw in human shape, an object of terror to the very blacks, who said that he was a cannibal. His teeth projected at almost right angles from his mouth, while his eyes had a most savage and demoniac expression.⁷³

⁷² *New London Gazette*, August 26, 1839.

⁷³ *New London Gazette*, August 26, 1839

The portrayal of the “cannibal” with his right angle teeth raises another nightmare specter before the fascinated and terrified eyes of white Americans. One of the messages conveyed is that the savagery of some Africans inspires fear even in other blacks. Here is a “creature” sitting vulture-like, a “watching fiend” with “savage and demoniac” eyes, a black Gargoyle. Yet, Hyde probably relied on Antonio, an African-born, Spanish-speaking slave belonging to the *Amistad*'s owners for this mendacious information.⁷⁴ It would be weeks before a translator could be found to translate the Mende⁷⁵ spoken by the Africans, so it would be hard to imagine the other captives being able to communicate the cannibalistic tendencies of one of their number. (The filed-teeth captives, likely from West African tribes, were named Nazha-U-Lu and Pu-gnwaw-ni; recent research has revealed that tooth filing had nothing to do with cannibalistic tendencies and everything to do with aesthetics.⁷⁶)

Yet, the accusation of cannibalism (if not scavenging) suggests other contemporaneous European accounts of African cannibalism. John Ludwig Krapf, an explorer-missionary of the 1830s in Africa claimed cannibalism was but one of the sins of pagan Africans. His biographer recounts:

The strange religion of Africa has given rise to a number of horrible practices. It has undoubtedly led to human sacrifices...It has even resulted in cannibalism, of which it

⁷⁴ “The other two he said had escaped in the canoe--a small boat. The cabin boy is an African by birth, but has lived a long time in Cuba. His name is Antonio, and belonged to the Captain. From this time we were compelled to steer east in the day: but sometimes the wind would not allow us to steer east, then they would threaten us with death. In the night we steered west, and kept to the northward as much as possible. We were six or seven leagues from land when the outbreak took place. Antonio is yet alive. They would have killed him, but he acted as interpreter between us, as he understood both languages.” John Warner Barber, *A History of the Amistad Captives*. New Haven, Connecticut: E.L. and J.W.Barber, 1840, reprinted from the New London Gazette, account of the judicial record.

⁷⁵ Mende is spoken in what is now present-day Sierra Leone and in parts of Liberia. <http://www.panafri10n.org/pmwiki.php/PanAfrLoc/MendeBandiLoko>, Accessed 8/3/09.

⁷⁶ http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/02/0203_060203_viking_teeth_2.html, Accessed 6/25/09.

is believed that the practice originated as a sacrificial feast...One careful observer...makes the following summary concerning religious conditions in Africa: "Delicacy permits but the most guarded references to the revolting brutality and nauseating licentiousness which are the legitimate offspring of Pagan gods and religion...the religion of the African is a religion of terror and hate. In the things which pertain to God he lives in abysmal darkness. When most religious, he is most fiendish."⁷⁷

Notwithstanding such alarming colonial accounts of barbarism among Africans, it was the *Amistad* Africans who feared the cannibalistic urges of their European captors.

The men bought by Ruiz were taken on foot through Havana in the night, and put on board a vessel. During the night they were kept in irons, placed about the hands, feet and neck. They were treated during the day in a somewhat milder manner, though all the irons were never taken off at once. Their allowance of food was very scant, and of water still more so. They were very hungry, and suffered much in the hot days and nights from thirst. In addition to this there was much whipping and the cook told them that when they reached land they would all be eaten. This "made their hearts burn." To avoid being eaten, and to escape the bad treatment they experienced, they rose upon the crew with the design of returning to Africa.⁷⁸

Furthermore, one of the Africans, Fuliwa, testified that the cook told the captives that all their heads would be cut off and that they would be eaten. Not surprisingly, when they attacked their *Amistad* crew, the Africans killed the cook first.

Nor was the myth of European cannibalism entirely fabricated:

That cannibalism was present on these phantasmagoric sailing machines off the coast of Africa is a matter of written record. John Atkins, a Royal Navy

⁷⁷ Paul E. Kretzmann, *John Ludwig Krapf: The Explorer-Missionary of Northeastern Africa*. (Columbus, OH: The Book Concern, 1909), 14-15.

⁷⁸ <http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/library/misc/barber.1840.amis.capt.html>, Accessed 6/25/09.

surgeon, reports how as punishment for the unsuccessful revolt on the *Robert of Bristol* in 1721, African captors were made into cannibals: 'Three others, Abettors, but not Actors, nor of strength for it, he sentenced to cruel Deaths; making them first eat the Heart and Liver of one of them killed...(quoted in Kaplan, 1969:295) The incident showed that rumors of cannibalistic practices were, to an extent, justified and exemplified a slave system which literally ate up Africans. Such barbarous episodes and their retelling throughout the African continent were crucial to the development of definitive myths, which sprang up to explicate aspects of European cultural praxis that according to legend were reliant on the use of African bodies taken away from the continent. ...⁷⁹

Ironically, then, the attack on the *Amistad* crew was precipitated by the Africans' fear of being eaten, while the Europeans concluded that the Africans, or at least some of them, harbored cannibalistic tastes. The publication of this accusation, along with the pathos with which the slavers were portrayed, would taint the feelings of Americans about this case, and serve to alienate the Africans from any sympathy that might have flowed toward them in their dire circumstances. This reminder of the primitive "nature" of the Africans, coupled with the implicit knowledge of their suffering (in the starving near naked bodies) and their foreign exoticism with its perceived ugliness, creates a story that might cause Americans to turn away, and to prefer ignorance.

Later in the same *New London Gazette* article, John J. Hyde opines that "the negroes...cost \$20 to \$30,000,"⁸⁰ reiterating their status as slaves. It is understandable that the editor would take the word of the slavers, with whom he could communicate, that the blacks *were* slaves, rather than the word of the Africans, with whom he could not communicate; however, the pandering of the

⁷⁹ Alan J. Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), 130.

⁸⁰ *New London Gazette*, August 26, 1839.

Spanish slavers clearly impressed Mr. Hyde. In his final paragraph, he records the letter sent by them:

The subscribers, Don Jose Ruiz and Don Pedro Montes, in gratitude for their most unhoped for and most providential rescue from the hands of a ruthless gang of African buccaneers, and an awful death, would take this means of expressing, in some slight degree, their thankfulness and obligations to Lieutenant Commander T.R. Gedney, and the officers and crew of the U.S. surveying brig Washington, for their decision in seizing the Amistad, and their unremitting kindness and hospitality in providing for their comfort on board their vessel, as well as the means they have taken for the protection of their property.

We also must express our indebtedness to that nation whose flag they so worthily bear, with an assurance that this act will be duly appreciated by our most gracious sovereign, Her Majesty the Queen of Spain.⁸¹

After the court decision, the *New-Haven Herald* also printed some hostile commentary about the Amistad Africans, which was reprinted in the *Hartford Daily Courant*.

"Amistad Negroes,"
Hartford Daily Courant, March 18, 1841.

NEGROES OF THE AMISTAD.--These gentlemen were immediately informed yesterday, of the decision of the "Great Court" - as they understand it - and were given to understand that they were to be set at liberty. They received the information with great complacency, exhibiting no strong demonstration of joy, as they are still incapable of "defining their position." On being asked what they would do, it left to their own volition, their answer was, "don't know." Will you go to work and get a living? "O no: work no good." Will you go back to Africa? "No tell. You go away till we talk with Cinquez." What measures will be taken in their behalf is of course still undetermined, and those who have them in custody are awaiting the instructions of the government. What course the

⁸¹ *New London Gazette*, August 26, 1839.

government will pursue it is impossible at present to divine. If the unfortunate blacks are sent back to Africa, and placed under the protection of the British commission at Sierra Leone, their condition will be no better than that of Cuban Slavery. If left otherwise on the coast, they will become the immediate subjects of renewed cupidity, and all the efforts in their behalf will have been unavailing. If they are set at liberty to provide for themselves, philanthropy may have its perfect work, and some of them may be saved. We should think it a great misfortune to have them cast loose upon society, for there can hardly be a doubt that most of them are so divested of any moral principle that if not sustained by private charities, our almshouses or prisons must soon receive them.⁸²

In this account, the Africans' display of "great complacency," rather than celebratory gratitude, was coupled with their "Work no good" response to condemn them to "private charities, our almshouses or prisons." The uncertainty of their future gives the writer cause to wonder if their struggle for freedom has been worthwhile, since they will end badly in almost any case, because they are "so divested of any moral principle." Furthermore, the recording of their responses in broken English, especially juxtaposed with the author's elegant prose, seems to mock the Africans, for their lack of language skills, direction and ambition.

Yet the accusations against the Africans were immediately refuted in the *Observer* and reprinted intact in the *Hartford Daily Courant*.

What then is the state of their morals? 1st. They never get drunk, nor even drink that which will intoxicate them. 2nd. They never use profane language. 3rd. They never lie, nor prevaricate. 4th. They are great disbelievers in common fame, or to use their own language, "we always say this man, Kinna or Banna or Mulu—we never say some people say so! Some people are liars—we never believe what some people say." Thus in "four particulars, they "are found wanting." A lack of morals truly! But this is not all;

⁸² "Amistad Negroes," *Hartford Daily Courant*, March 18, 1841.

for they have a perfect abhorrence of drunkenness, lying and profanity. I have never known one of them to tell a lie. They take great delight in reading the Bible, and have a strong desire to understand what they read...Now I would like to ask the Editor of the Herald, if in this delineation he can see no more proof of moral principle, what his ideas of morality are....⁸³

This passionate defense of the Mendi men implies some African cultural superiority: the Africans abhor drunkenness, a major social problem in the United States; they also abhor lying and profanity, unlike some Americans. To refute the charge of laziness, the author cites Sokomah's refusal to work on the Sabbath; in this one incident, the African is shown to obey the commandments, while the "Christian" white does not. The *Hartford Daily Courant* insists on the morality of the Africans, making it clear that they are being transformed into the non-threatening, virtuous Christians, whose conversions will work to breed more support for abolition.

Another piece published by the *New-Haven Herald*, and republished in the *Hartford Daily Courant*, after the conclusion of the *Amistad* trials is entitled "Memorandum of a Loco Foco." The Loco Foco party, considered a radical branch of the Democrat party, was also called the Equal-Rights Party, and though the party was focused on the rights of the working class, its sentiments appeared to be anti-slavery.⁸⁴ In the *New-Haven Herald*, however, the author of the "Memorandum" seems to be in sympathy with the white crew who enslaved the Africans.

We glanced at the schooner *Amistad*...thinking at the same time of the black, atrocious deeds which had been committed on board of her—also the money that had been expended on the perpetrators—and what is likely to

⁸³ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Mar. 27, 1841, 2.

⁸⁴ The publisher of the *Evening Post* of New York was a leader in the Loco Foco movement excoriated by the Republican Party because "(H)is journal now openly and systematically encourages the Abolitionists." F. Byrdsall. *History of the Loco-Foco or Equal Rights Party: Its Movements, Conventions and Proceedings*. (New York: Clement & Packard, 1842), 19.

follow...and then arrived safe at home, with hearts full of sorrow for the now and little hope for the future.⁸⁵

The author's sorrow that the African captives, who committed "*black, atrocious deeds*," (a deliberate choice of adjectives, no doubt) would now go free, after much money had been spent on their defense, hardly comports with the supposed spirit of the Loco-Foco party, defender of the weak against the mighty forces of big business and monopolies. However, this passage reflects some of the fear and repugnance felt at the thought of whites being murdered by blacks, and *exonerated*, no matter what the context. Clearly, in the minds of such people, this episode, which stirs sorrow in the present and despair for the future, has left this writer profoundly disappointed.

Notably, these last two articles, which evinced little sympathy for the *Amistad* captives, were *New-Haven Herald* pieces, but not all New Haven newspaper pieces were unsympathetic. The authors of the following articles in the *New Haven Record* refer to the *Herald's* "marvelous fabrications," and they refuse to dignify those fabrications with a response. However, when the ostensibly more objective *Hartford Courant* disseminates misinformation, that must be addressed:

From the *New Haven Record*.
THE AFRICANS.

We have witnessed with regret the eagerness with which reports have been caught up and published, unfavorable to the Africans confined in this city, and the disposition manifested to alienate from them the sympathy of the public, and even to enlist it in favor of Ruiz and Montez. We refer to not the marvelous fabrications, which have filled the columns of Bennett's Herald, but to papers, which are accounted respectable. A paragraph cited by the editor of the *Hartford Courant* has had considerable circulation, in which it is stated that the business of Cinquez was to conduct slaves from the interior to the coast, to supply the slave ships: and the authorities given

⁸⁵ *Hartford Daily Courant*, September 10, 1842, 2.

are the boy Antonio, who understands no African language, and the editor of the *New Haven Herald*, who, the day after the interpreters Pratt and Covey arrived was "informed that Cinquez acknowledged that he had sold slaves."

We are now able to state on good authority, that the three interpreters, Ferry, Pratt and Covey, each of them, affirm positively that Cinquez has told them no such thing, nor any thing like it: nor do the gentlemen who conducted the examinations with the two latter, and took minutes of all the answers...Cinquez then said, as he says now, that he was the son of a chief, or head man and that he sometimes trafficked in merchandise. Pains have been taken again to examine Cinquez and several of the other prisoners in reference to this particular point. Cinquez denies ever having been engaged in the slave traffic, and the others deny any knowledge of his having been so engaged.⁸⁶

Here is one of the earliest allegations that Cinqué was himself a slave-trader. The *New Haven Record* takes pains to assert that Cinqué *could not* have communicated this information to Antonio and *did* communicate an absolute denial to his translators. (Howard Jones has thoroughly investigated the rumors, reprinted in the twentieth century in otherwise respectable texts, and he has found no proof that Cinqué engaged in the slave trade either before or after the *Amistad* incident.⁸⁷) The *New Haven Record* continues:

But suppose all that has been said to be true. Are not slavery and the slave trade the "peculiar institutions" of Africa, as well as of Cuba and a part of the United States? Is it a less crime for a poor benighted African to sell those who are slaves according to the laws and customs of the country, than for a high-born Spaniard, educated, as Ruiz had been, in Connecticut, to purchase men, just from the slave ship, knowing them to be the victims of that

⁸⁶ *Emancipator*, Nov. 7, 1839.

⁸⁷ Howard Jones, "Cinqué of the *Amistad* a Slave Trader? Perpetuating a Myth." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (Dec. 2000), 923-939.

abominable traffic which the laws of his own and every civilized country denounced as the vilest of crimes?⁸⁸

Here, the authors switch back to the possibility that the accusation against Cinqué is true, comparing the "poor benighted African" with the Connecticut-educated "high-born Spaniard;" presumably, in the eyes of Connecticut readers, no social disparity could be greater. This point creates a moral equivalency between the Ruiz and Cinqué, excusing Cinqué somewhat because slavery exists in Africa "according to the laws and customs of the country," where no one questions its morality. In contrast, Ruiz knows better; as a Connecticut-educated European, he knows he has victimized the Africans in "that abominable traffic which the laws of his own and every civilized country denounced as the vilest of crimes." If Cinqué is guilty, he is certainly less guilty than Ruiz. This rather quick acceptance of Cinqué's slave trading, after citing the exculpatory testimony of Cinqué and his translators, speaks volumes about the writer's uncertainty with regard to Cinqué's innocence. He continues his argument assuming Cinqué's guilt.

Further: Can men who are not willing to speak at all severely of the slavery and the slave trade which are legalized in this country, say, as the above mentioned editors do, that an African slave dealer can have no claim upon our human sympathies: Really, we think there is "something morbid in the conduct of certain gentlemen."⁸⁹

If the accusation of slave trading is to have any teeth, the authors say, it must come from people who recognize the evil of slavery; the *New-Haven Herald* does not oppose slavery, and thus, cannot condemn the behavior of an alleged African slave-trader.

Must the little children and boys, who compose a large part of the whole, be cut off from the sympathy of the

⁸⁸ *Emancipator*, Nov. 7, 1839.

⁸⁹ *Emancipator*, Nov. 7, 1839.

public, for the supposed crime of one of the number? There is no evidence that any of the number even possessed a slave in Africa. Mr. Tappan's supposed information to the contrary was obtained hastily, when the means of communication were very imperfect. If it were true, with what face can these editors impute slave holding, or slave dealing, even as a crime--unless they have recently become abolitionists? At any rate, they ought not to be ignorant that the claim of these Africans on our interest and our efforts in their behalf, does not rest at all on their personal character, but on the fact that they are victims of the accursed slave trade, and as such cast in the providence of God upon us for protection.

What is most alarming here is how easily the authors concede the high ground to the critics of Cinqué; they defend him in a cursory way, but then continue their argument granting his guilt, moving on to defend the children, while allowing that Mr. Tappan's exoneration of Cinqué was "supposed," "hastily obtained" and "imperfect." Ultimately, it's the Africans' status as victims that earns them concern, not their character, which the authors cannot or will not vouch for.

While Howard Jones traces the accusation against Cinqué only as far back as a 1953 novel,⁹⁰ as we have seen, this charge was made immediately upon his arrival in Connecticut, perhaps based on the assumption that all Africans of power and high birth engaged in the slave trade. Jones considers the motivations of those who made the twentieth century claim, and some of these could

⁹⁰ Howard Jones, "Cinqué of the Amistad a Slave Trader? Perpetuating a Myth." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (Dec. 2000), 924. The fact that such a novel appeared on the subject in 1953 does not detract from the fact that the *Amistad* was unknown to the vast majority of Americans until it reached the popular imagination with the Spielberg movie in 1997. Its absence from American history textbooks, along with the absence of most other slave rebellions, was documented by Joseph Czerniak in his article "Black Slave Revolt Depiction and Minority Representation in U.S. History Textbooks from 1950-2005." *University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse Journal of Undergraduate Research* IX (2006.) Jesse Lemisch disputes the statement of DreamWorks Coproducer of the *Amistad* film, Debbie Allen, when she says the *Amistad* story was "unknown" until she discovered it. Lemisch asserts that the story was known to political activists in the sixties, and was certainly known to scholars. While this is indisputable, I would argue that both groups of people combined would make up a tiny fraction of the American population who, through no fault of their own, through all their American history classes, were never alerted that such an event transpired. Jesse Lemisch, "Black Agency in the *Amistad* Uprising: Or You've Taken our Cinque and Gone: Schindler, Morphed into John Quincy Adams, Rescues Africans -- A Retrograde Film Denies Black Agency and Intelligence, Misses What Really Happened, and Returns to Conservative Themes of the Fifties; With an Account of What Really Happened, and A Few Words About Abolitionists as Fanatics." *Souls*. (Winter 1999), 57-70.

apply to the Cinqué of 1839: "...historians might cite the charge against Cinqué to help absolve the guilt of white practitioners of slavery."⁹¹ This is clearly plausible, as is the second reason, "the seductive appeal of irony."⁹²

While nineteenth century newspapers used irony as a cudgel at times, the *New-Haven Herald* would see it only in the rumor that Cinqué was a slave trader, but would, of course, fail to see it in Ruiz and Montes' claim to be crime victims. Simply printing the charge raises questions about Cinqué's standing as a victim of the slave trade, which is probably exactly the impression desired by the *New-Haven Herald*. While this allegation was forcefully refuted by the *Hartford Daily Courant*, we all know that once circulated, such statements begin to assume a life of their own, apart from truth; in that new, second life, they emerged in a novel in 1953. Beyond granting absolution to white slave traders and sharing a bit of irony with readers, it does seem that this early, unfounded charge was calculated to undermine the character of Cinqué in the public mind and poison any burgeoning fascination with him. The authors of the *Hartford Daily Courant* article suggest as much:

Advantage has been taken of the prosecution of Montez and Ruiz, to make an impression unfavorable to the Africans, and favorable to their oppressors. The act of instituting the suit has been eagerly and without waiting for inquiry, imputed to bad motives. Odium has been cast upon it as a measure of the abolitionists. Strange, that justice cannot be sought in a court of law for oppressed and imprisoned strangers among us, without incurring censure!

⁹¹ Howard Jones, "Cinqué of the Amistad a Slave Trader? Perpetuating a Myth." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (Dec. 2000), 936.

⁹² Howard Jones, "Cinqué of the Amistad a Slave Trader? Perpetuating a Myth." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (Dec. 2000), 936. To get a sense of the full story, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown's "Mea Culpa," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (Dec. 2000), 947-948 and William S. McFeely, "Cinque, Tall and Strong," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (Dec. 2000), 949-950; Paul Finkelman, "On Cinque and the Historians," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (Dec. 2000), 940-946.

Justly as these Spaniards deserve to suffer, the real object of the prosecution was not to recover damages, but to bring before a jury the question of the right of these Africans to liberty.

The attempt has been made to discredit the testimony of the Africans. That their testimony is admissible in court has been decided by Judge Inglis. That the main facts of their story are true, no one can doubt who is acquainted with the nature of the testimony and the manner in which it was taken. Not only are these facts altogether credible in themselves, but the Africans were examined separately, and cross-examined, and some of the examined not only through the interpreters, Pratt and Covey, but through Ferry, who used a different language from them; and they all agree in testifying positively to these facts, and with every appearance of honesty and truth. It is the perfect coincidence of their separate testimony, which gives it its strength.

The "dangerous weapons" which it was said in a way to excite alarm and suspicion, the prisoners had obtained were nothing but common jack knives, some of which were brought them by the interpreters, inconsiderately, and without the knowledge of any one else, and others by boys who went in as visitors. It was very proper that the knives should be taken from them; but no one acquainted with the circumstances can suppose for a moment that they wanted them for any other purpose than their own amusement and convenience.

Those editors who do not choose to manifest any interest in favor of the Africans, ought at least to be careful not to mislead the public respecting the case.

This point-by-point refutation of charges against Cinqué and the Africans is more than an attempt at fairness; the Africans are portrayed here with some respect. Even if the worst is true, the other captives are guilty of nothing but wanting their freedom. But the authors note that there has been an attempt "to make an impression unfavorable to the Africans, and favorable to their

oppressors,” “to discredit the testimony of the Africans,” and to portray them as threatening, possessing dangerous weapons. Though they say, gamely, that these (hostile) “editors... do not choose to manifest any interest in favor of the Africans,” they imply, of course, that these editors do intend to stir up animosity toward the Africans. The article avers that pro-slavery editors of the *New-Haven Herald* have every motive to demonize Cinqué and his crew and cut short any public support toward them. In order to counter those false impressions, the writer reports progress in the “civilizing” process of the Africans:

The Africans are making encouraging progress in acquiring the English language under their instructors, and their interest in the matter continues unabated.⁹³

By ending the article with the English lessons the Africans are taking, the author paints a picture of people trying to better themselves; the Africans are hard-working, interested students. The English lessons suggest their attempts to improve in the eyes of American readers since their foreign tongue remains one of the distinct signs of their original savagery. Still, the value of the Mendi men as abolitionist symbols has been tainted by this slave-trading accusation and the passionate, defensive and somewhat convoluted arguments necessary thereafter.

In an editorial printed in January 1840, the *Courant* editors described the ordeal of kidnapped Africans with sensitivity and empathy. They asserted that they were “much gratified at the decision of the United States District Court” because

...the efforts that the Africans made on board...for recovery of their freedom, were not only justifiable, but praiseworthy. The men who for the sake of gain, will go to a distant corner of the globe, steal the poor, ignorant, degraded inhabitants, force them from their homes,

⁹³ *Emancipator*, Nov. 7, 1839.

transport them, under circumstances of extreme suffering and cruelty, to a far distant region, and consign them to hopeless bondage, ought to be considered as outlaws, and enemies to their fellow-men, and can never complain of being treated as such. We always rejoice when we hear of an insurrection of Africans on board a slave ship, even when it terminates in the destruction of these cruel, desperate, and blood thirsty pirates. If self-defense is justifiable in any species of hostilities against human rights, this is the case.⁹⁴

The last statement about human rights sounds amazingly contemporary, but the picture painted of the Africans as “poor, ignorant, degraded inhabitants” exhibits the lack of cultural understanding typical of the nineteenth century western world. The inherent racism of even the good-hearted abolitionists is evident again. Nonetheless, the *Courant* defense could not be stronger or more radical, since the author endorses, encourages and even celebrates slave insurrections aboard slave ships, one of the rare written endorsements of the efficacy of “action” over moralistic appeals in a mainstream (rather than overtly abolitionist) newspaper.

In a similarly strong tone, on February 10, 1840, the *Hartford Daily Courant* questioned the actions of President Martin Van Buren on the *Amistad* case.

We are informed by a gentleman from New Haven that a short time previous to the trial of the Africans of the *Amistad*, before the U.S. District Court at New Haven, Judge Judson presiding, Martin Van Buren addressed a letter to the Judge recommending and urging him to order the Africans to be taken back to Havana in a government vessel, to be sold there as slaves - and that about the same time the U.S. schooner *Grampus* was ordered to New Haven for the purpose of receiving them. The schooner, we learned from several sources, arrived at New Haven about the time of the trial under "sealed orders" and, after learning the decision of the court again, "made off." The letter of the President, recommending that these poor

⁹⁴ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Jan. 18, 1840, 2.

unfortunate Africans be sent into perpetual bondage, is said to contain statements disgraceful to the high station of its author, and which, were they published, would excite the indignation of every Republican freeman in the land. What will the friends of liberty say to this? Surely Martin Van Buren is playing the part of a tyrant with a high hand - else why this tampering with our courts of justice, this Executive usurpation, and this heartless violation of the inalienable rights of man? Of the truth of the above there is no doubt, and we leave the unprincipled author of such a proceeding in the hands of a just and high-minded People.⁹⁵

The sympathy here for the Africans is clear, as is the accusation that Van Buren was attempting to exercise his presidential power to influence the judge at the U.S. District Court.⁹⁶ The *Hartford Daily Courant* suggests that the “just and high-minded People” of the nation will have their say about the “tyrant” Van Buren in the election, and clearly lays out the President’s attempt as an effort to subvert the “inalienable rights” of the Africans to their liberty. Given the state of African-Americans in 1840, this was forward-looking human-rights speech.

⁹⁵ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, February 10, 1840. Ironically, about eighteen months later, when the *Amistad* Africans were set free, their friends, the “Mendian Committee” requested the President’s help in returning the group to Africa and freedom, but the ship available to send them to Havana and enslavement was no longer available to carry them home to liberty. The response from the President was printed in full:

Department of State
Washington. 6th October, 1841

Sir,-I am instructed by the President to inform you, that he knows of no provision of Law to cover the case presented in your letter to the Secretary of State, of the 23d ultimo, and farther that there is no ship of War destined to the coast of Africa.

The President regrets this state of things, as it deprives him of the pleasure which he would otherwise have in aiding the unfortunate Africans to return to their native country.

I have the honor of being your ob’t serv’t,

FLETCHER WEBSTER

Acting Sec’y

The Hartford Daily Courant, Aug.. 28, 1840, 2.

Knowing President Van Buren’s stance on slavery, it is hard to read the second paragraph without perceiving intentional irony.

⁹⁶ The irony here cannot be overstated. President Van Buren was attempting to influence Judge Andrew T. Judson, Prudence Crandall’s angry neighbor; it was Judson who spear-headed the legal, legislative and popular assault on Crandall’s school for young women of color in 1832, just seven years before the *Amistad* case. Although he must have struggled mightily, Judson, the author of Connecticut’s “Black Laws,” did in fact rule according to the law rather than his prejudices, to his credit.

Another article favorable to the Africans was picked up by the *Hartford Daily Courant* from the *Connecticut Observer*.

They are now at Westville, two or three miles from New Haven, where they have the benefit of the open air. Perfect health prevails among them. Thirty-six of them are yet alive, and a more cheerful, healthy set of men can no where be found. In learning to read, they exhibit indefatigable perseverance. Study is the main business of the majority of them. The more advanced are able to read the New Testament intelligibly. They are rapidly learning to speak our language and some of them have recently commenced writing. Their mental powers are fully equal to those of our own race. With one or two exceptions, they all have active minds, and are quick, shrewd and intelligent. They possess deep and warm affections. Their love of Africa and home is very strong; in reply to a question put to two of the most intelligent of their number, the instant and deep feeling answer was "Tell the American people that we very, very much want to go home." Poor fellows! Who can doubt it? They are also uncommonly susceptible of religious impressions. The truths of the Bible they have already learned, exert a greater or less influence on all of them. To a great extent they are in the habit of daily social prayer, and over some of them, a sense of right exerts a controlling influence. They come here savages; but by the Divine blessing on the labors used with them they are now becoming civilized, and it is hoped, Christian, men...Who knows but God in his wise and holy Providence has thrown them upon our hands, for the very purpose of making them his most honored ambassadors to the dark continent of Africa! Present indications certainly encourage such an expectation.⁹⁷

This article conveys much the same condescending, but well-meaning, attitude of the earlier *New-Haven Record* article. Here again, the Africans are commended for their studiousness, their perseverance, their incipient Christian conversion, their implicit loyalty in their love of home. Every effort is made to see Christian virtues in the former "savages;" indeed, God has probably put

⁹⁷ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, February 10, 1840.

them into the hands of American Christians to create native missionaries to “dark Africa.” In one piece, then, the Africans go from being “savages” at their arrival to “becoming civilized, and it is hoped, Christian men...” These two stereotypes represent the “ideological constructions”⁹⁸ of black masculinity in a linear storyline; the violent, rebellious Africans are tamed and Christianized into becoming the only form of black manhood acceptable to white society, the “suffering servant,” to use C. Peter Ripley’s phrase.⁹⁹ In this version of events, their experience in America, and specifically in Connecticut, has created an army of missionary “servants” who can please all Americans: colonizationists, firstly, by returning to Africa; abolitionists, secondly, by allowing themselves to be “civilized” and proving their worth by their submissive behavior (then living up to the tenets of moral suasion to be discussed later in this chapter); and Americans in general, lastly, by their Christian example and possible proselytizing in Africa. This transformation, however, robs the Africans of what James Jasinski calls “the second archetypal ‘face’ of Christianity: the virile, militant Christian soldier and holy warrior personified in such slave rebellions as Nat Turner.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, the image of the Africans as “suffering servants” and missionaries was much more palatable, and one more likely to garner support than the truer image of the Africans as “avenging Messiahs.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ James Jasinski, “Constituting Antebellum African American Identity: Resistance, Violence, and Masculinity in Henry Highland Garnet’s (1843) ‘Address to the Slaves.’” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 93, No. 1, (February 2007), 28-29.

⁹⁹ C. Peter Ripley, “Introduction to the American Series: Black Abolitionists in the United States, 1830-1865,” in *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. C. Peter Ripley. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), III, 16.

¹⁰⁰ James Jasinski, “Constituting Antebellum African American Identity: Resistance, Violence, and Masculinity in Henry Highland Garnet’s (1843) ‘Address to the Slaves.’” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 93, No. 1, (February 2007), 30.

¹⁰¹ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, rev. ed. 1993), 54-55.

Of course, for all the progressive, good wishes expressed by the author, other racist assumptions also permeate the article. The statement that the mental powers of the Africans “fully equal those of our own race,” expresses the surprise of the author, and presumably his readership, in this discovery. The mention of the thriving good health of the would-be slaves may have been calculated to allay fears of exotic disease. The references to the “savages” of “dark Africa” reinforce the “otherness” of the men, so it may have seemed wise to balance this foreignness with their growing piety. All told, though, the account is intended to be kind, and it includes a call for donations from Christians for the further support of these new converts.

A few months later, another small article picked up by the *Hartford Daily Courant* from the *New York Evening Post* refers to those slavery proponents who would like to turn the *Amistad* case into a dispute about slavery. The author asserts that this construction of the case must not be allowed:

A morbid fear is shown in certain quarters, lest by restoring to liberty a set of men notoriously kidnapped and forcibly carried into bondage, we may, in some distant manner or other, graze the question of slavery in our country. The people of this part of the country will not endure such a view of the question. If the people of the South have their jealousies, so have the people of the North.¹⁰²

This display of Northern “jealousies” seems to suggest that Northerners want the case settled on its merits, without the discussion of the national slavery issue, but also want to claim the case as their own, free of Southern efforts to reframe it. However, the commitment expressed here is the very one that Southerners would choose: the author determines NOT to allow this case to “graze the

¹⁰² *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Feb. 3, 1841, 2.

question of slavery in our country.” Though conceding that the *Amistad* Africans deserved liberty, this refusal to expand the significance of the case tells us a great deal about the fears aroused here. Again, the desire, on the part of the Africans’ most faithful defenders, to limit the consequences of the *Amistad*, in thought, feeling and action, becomes clear, even as the North *ostensibly* stands up to the South in this article. The author simply avoids the issue of answering how is it that the Mendis deserve to be free simply because *they* were kidnapped instead of their parents. Raising the issue is dangerous in that it calls up Southern white rage; in leaving the question unsaid, “{T}he people of this part of the country will not endure” Southern wrath since they have decided to take a more cowardly route. Better to protest even a decoy issue in a whisper.

The next day, the sectionalism concern arose again in an otherwise dry factual account of the case. Again, in an article copied from the *New York Evening Post*, in the *Courant*, the author rails against Southern domination of the discussion.

...they cannot shut their eyes to the fact that the majority of the bench of the Supreme Court are from the slaveholding States, nor to the still more alarming fact that the whole Southern voice is raised in one naked appeal to the passions, the prejudices, the fears, the interests of these magistrates as slaveholders. “The interests of the South are involved.” The interests of the South! In the name of Heaven, can no decision ever be made in the entire of liberty without per long Southern interests? Can no slave ever be discharged, no matter wherever declared, no imprisoned freeman ever liberated, without awakening the whole fury of the South?

It is this which is intolerable to the North.¹⁰³

In this paragraph, Northern resentment of the Southern control of these issues seems greater than the disagreement about slavery-related issues. Moreover, in the author’s attempt to

¹⁰³ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Feb. 4, 1841, 2.

disentangle the *Amistad* case from “the interests of the South,” there seems to be some fear of “awakening the whole fury of the South.” James Brewer Stewart recalls how the abolitionists were crushed by public antipathy as the 1830s wore on. The abolitionist movement

...generated enormous opposition from nearly all sectors of white society. The dismal results were measured in the 1830s by the gag rules passed, mailbags ransacked, printing presses vandalized, suspected slave rebels executed, “colored schools” mobbed, northern black neighborhoods reduced to ashes, and abolitionists denounced from pulpits.¹⁰⁴

Given this recent history, newspapers like the *Hartford Daily Courant* would be careful to frame the *Amistad* issue as neutrally as possible, especially given the Southern “howling” that Southern white blood was being shed in slave insurrections and crimes with abolitionist support and instigation. Eventually, this dismay verbalized by Northerners about the Southern attempt to control the issues would culminate in Wendall Phillips’ demand that Northerners be free to disobey the dictates of Southern slaveholders searching for runaways (as required by the 1793 Fugitive Slave Law),¹⁰⁵ but in 1841, this kind of direct defiance of the South was avoided in continuing hope of compromise.

If, during this era, editors felt it was wisest to avoid the full implications of the *Amistad* case, complete with the imagery of Africans so motivated to be free that they risk their lives to fight for that freedom—countering the stereotypical passivity and simplicity attributed to blacks by

¹⁰⁴ James Brewer Stewart, “Reconsidering the Abolitionists in an Age of Fundamentalist Politics,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 26, (Spring 2006), 8.

¹⁰⁵ James Brewer Stewart, “From Moral Suasion to Political Confrontation: American Abolitionists and the Problem of Resistance, 1831-1861.” In *Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in History and Memory*, ed. David W. Blight. (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 88.

American racists—then, news stories should be focused on the facts, and limited in scope. This is journalism careful not to incite the greatly feared white mobs so active in the 1830s.

In spite of this evident defensiveness about the Southerners' interests, consistent with most of its news and opinion up to that point, the *Hartford Daily Courant's* position was reiterated at the end of the *Amistad* case:

Supreme Court Decision

The decision of the Supreme Court... in the case of the *Amistad*... will afford the most sincere gratification to every friend of human freedom and rights and especially to every person who abhors slavery and the slave trade. And it is creditable to those members of that tribunal who live in those parts of our country where slavery exists, that in the determination of this important case, they did not suffer their minds to be biassed (sic)... but with integrity and independence they decided it according to law.

The principles settled in this case inform... all... concerned in the execrable traffic in human beings, what they may expect then they come before our courts... establish(ing) something in the formation of rights in the iniquitous traffic.

Great credit is due to the persons in the city of New York, and elsewhere, who engaged at once, and with great zeal, in securing to the *Amistad* Africans, a fair trial, and the full benefit of the laws...¹⁰⁶

This article mentions the apparent objectivity the *Amistad* judges exercised in spite of their personal bias in favor of slavery; this is a strand of the story that could be a classic American point of pride. However, the triumph-of-unbiased-justice story was later swallowed up by the multiple other vexatious issues raised by the *Amistad*.¹⁰⁷ In the “forgetting” of the *Amistad* for over one

¹⁰⁶ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, March 3, 1841.

¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, the author focuses on the lesson that our Supreme Court taught Spain, and the exertions of the good-hearted people who fought for the Mendis.

hundred years, not even this unambiguous virtue could redeem the story buried under the other fraught issues.

But none of this yet stopped the church women of Connecticut from lending the "strangers" a hand. On March 12, 1841, a Hartford fair to support the Africans was advertised. The announcement is as cheery as that of a church fair. The Mendis themselves, described as "these strangers in our midst from a benighted land," would attend in person to sell their handiwork, and would attract the curious from across the state.

THE AFRICANS AND THE FAIR.

The Africans of the *Amistad* are now all comfortably located at Farmington, and industriously and usefully employed in studies and labors. Funds are wanted for the support of their teachers and the supply of books, c., while they are preparing to return to Mendi, their native country in the interior of Africa.

As a token of interest in the mothers, wives, and daughters, of these strangers in our midst from a benighted land, the Ladies have determined that in addition to the original object of the Anti-Slavery Fair, a part of its proceeds shall be appropriated to their benefit.¹⁰⁸

The Africans have achieved a new status in this article; no longer are they prisoners, or pawns in a legal battle. Instead, they are students, and beneficiaries of ladies' fund-raising efforts. To further cement this new status, on October 28, 1841, the *Courant* printed a letter from Cinqué, expressing his gratitude toward his American friends and asking to be returned to Sierra Leone soon. While

¹⁰⁸ The article continues: The Fair will be held at Hartford, on the 19th and 20th of May. It is expected that some of these Mendi-Africans will be in the city, and that articles of their own manufacture will be offered for sale on the occasion. In their Circular the Ladies say, "Fancy and useful articles of every description will be appropriate and saleable. Let the farmers send us nice butter, cheese, eggs, c.c... Will not the Ladies in the country supply our table with those knick knacks they know so well how to prepare?" N. B.--The place for holding the Fair will be Gilman's Hall, on Main street, but any articles intended for it, may be left at the A.S. Rooms, No. 7 Asylum Street. *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Mar. 12, 1841, 2.

Cinqué's letter may have been sincere, he appears to have learned American culture thoroughly. After expressing his gratitude, he requests cloth-

For men's clothes—for pantaloons, coats and vests—not cut. For we think we wear 'Merica dress as long as we live, and we want our friends who come to live with us to wear 'Merica dress too.¹⁰⁹

Cinqué understands the anxiety with which Americans would picture the Africans “going native” again, and he takes care to mention that he and his men have resolved to wear clothing, American style. In addition, Cinqué is providing evidence of his missionary zeal, in clothing, at the very least, in saying that these newly “Americanized” Africans will want their friends, too, dressing in “pantaloons, coats and vests” when they return to hot Africa.

After assuring Americans that they will take care of the American missionaries accompanying them back to Sierra Leone, Cinqué raises the image of their Christian conversion and their determination to share the Gospel with their people back home.

The first thing we tell them will be that the great God bring us back. We tell them all about 'Merica. We tell them about God and how Jesus Christ, his only beloved Son, came down to die for us, and we tell them to believe...¹¹⁰

Knowing that Christians would be most likely to be responsive to religiosity, Cinqué had mastered this language, although this is not to say that his words were insincere. He simply seemed to know what Americans would appreciate hearing and he was building his new identity to suit the stereotype he knew to be the least threatening.

Yet, one year later, a disappointing report was published in the *Hartford Daily Courant*.

¹⁰⁹ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct. 28, 1841, 2.

¹¹⁰ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct. 28, 1841, 2.

The Amistad Captives—The missionaries who returned to Africa with these liberated captives report unfavorably of their moral character since their arrival in their native country. The conduct of several who in this country professed a conversion to the Christian religion, furnishes an illustration of the truth that little reliance can be placed on a Christian profession that is not preceded by civilization. From the narrative of the missionaries, we extract the following:

Of Cinque...he is both dishonest and licentious-has told him plainly of his wickedness...Ban-na always said that he had no wife. Instead of that he had seven, and several children. He passed through this way...almost destitute of clothing...¹¹¹

The worst fears of the Americans who assisted the *Amistad* captives come true in this article. The conversion was a sham; the men had fulfilled the worst stereotypes of the sexually insatiable, naked black man. The letter from Mr. Raymond undermines all the hard work, fundraising and commitment of Americans who worked to free these men, who have seemed to have returned happily to their African ways. Opponents of the *Amistad* Africans must have gloated over these revelations, whether they were true or not. This epilogue, merely a year after Cinqué's return, may also explain some of the silence of historians about this case. While Southern slavery proponents may have not wanted to dwell on the success of this particular slave rebellion, abolitionists who invested great effort and tremendous resources in the Africans were now embarrassed by its ultimate "failure," the Africans' swift literal and figurative shedding of Christian garb.

To add further insult to *Amistad* supporters, in 1847, the Senate quietly passed an appropriation bill to compensate the *Amistad* owners for the slaves they lost in the incident. The

¹¹¹ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Aug. 30, 1842, 2.

Hartford Daily Courant notes that this appropriations bill was not mentioned in other newspapers, and that

...we hope there is some mistake about it...the Supreme Court of the United States has solemnly declared that the Africans on board of the *Amistad* were not slaves, and at every session since the decision, an appropriation for the benefit of the Spanish kidnappers has been brought up in one house or the other.¹¹²

Again, here was evidence that the Southerners and slavers always seemed to triumph in the end. The dispirited tone of this epilogue also reflects the growing tensions over slavery, an issue that seemed to fracture the country more and more each day. (Ultimately, though, the Spanish were not compensated, although every president until Abraham Lincoln advocated for compensation to be paid by the American government.)¹¹³

While American newspapers eventually refocused on newer events, two physical souvenirs of the *Amistad* incident remained here in the United States. One was painting by John Warner Barber depicting the takeover of the ship by the Africans, *The Death of Captain Ferrer, the Captain of the Amistad, July, 1839*.¹¹⁴ This was a smaller version of a 135 foot painting by Amasa Hewins that was exhibited all over New England in the spring of 1840, reminding us that the American entrepreneurial impulse has long roots, and also perhaps suggesting how central and symbolic the *Amistad* drama was. Benjamin Griswold, a friend of Lewis Tappan's, expressed concern that these portrayals would have a "bad...moral effect."¹¹⁵ Certainly the painter meant

¹¹² *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Mar. 3, 1847, 2.

¹¹³ http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/amistad/AMI_ACT.HTM, accessed 8/05/08.

¹¹⁴ From *A History of the Amistad Captives...* (New Haven: Hitchcock and Stafford, Printers, 1840.)

¹¹⁵ Richard J. Powell, "Cinqué: Antislavery Portraiture and Patronage in Jacksonian America" *American Art*, Vol.11, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), 56. The original 135-foot long painting has since disappeared.

well, Griswold avers, suggesting that Cinqué and his men were understood to be fighting for their freedom like our Revolutionary forefathers. However, sensitive to the public mood at the time, Griswold, a professor of religion at Yale Theological Seminary, expressed belief that “American audiences would interpret the painting’s drama, and thus the Africans in lurid, negative terms was not without a basic understanding of the American populace.”¹¹⁶ Griswold’s perception reflects one of the great challenges of the *Amistad* incident: how did Americans define this man Cinqué?

Frederick Dalzell confronts this issue, saying,

He (Cinqué) claimed to have been a peaceful rice farmer before being captured and sold into slavery; his enemies hinted darkly that he had been a slaver himself. In any event, he clearly had the heart of a warrior and a charisma that struck everyone who saw him. In the area of American public opinion, he took on a complex, multifaceted persona. To slaveowners he became a bloodthirsty bogeyman. To Euroamericans persuading themselves that blacks were racially inferior, he became a bestial jungle creature. To romantics he seemed a noble savage. Abolitionists held him up as an icon of freedom. And for African-American abolitionists in particular, he became a symbol of black manhood and African heritage.¹¹⁷

These contradictory images made it impossible to view Cinqué dispassionately, without evoking fear, revulsion, or recognition—another reason to try to forget him all together.

Less controversial, but also troubling, was a portrait (followed by an engraving) of Cinqué commissioned by Robert Purvis, a Philadelphia anti-slavery reformer and a man of color. Purvis paid Nathaniel Jocelyn, the New Haven born brother of *Amistad* Committee member, Simeon S. Jocelyn, to work on the portrait.

¹¹⁶ Powell 56.

¹¹⁷ Frederick Dalzell, “Dreamworking *Amistad*: Representing Slavery, Revolt, and Freedom in America, 1839,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 1, (March 1998), 129.

Because it is clear that the portrait was painted between late 1840 and early 1841, before the Supreme Court decision was rendered in March 1841, Purvis's commission and engraving were probably ordered to achieve a certain purpose. Given the pro-slavery sentiments of the majority of the nation, there was good reason to be doubtful of a good outcome for the *Amistad* captives. Correspondence between the Tappan brothers suggests that the commission and mass distribution of the engravings were part of a careful strategy to move public opinion in the weeks before the Supreme Court decision.¹¹⁸

The portrait reflects an African image new to America of 1840; dressed in a toga-like robe, with dignity, sobriety and intelligence expressed in his posture and countenance, "Cinqué's portrait presented him as an embodiment of republican (read abolitionist) ideal, an allegorical representation of Christian proselytizing and missionary work in Africa, and a symbol of black resistance and activism in the face of increasing white-on-black violence and sociopolitical unrest."¹¹⁹ Cinqué's portrait would remain in the Robert Purvis's private collection until it was bequeathed in his estate to the New Haven Historical Society; many copies of it were sold to raise money for the abolitionist cause, while abolitionists endeavored to change perceptions of Africans and African-Americans.

Yet, there is no doubt that such a dignified portrait of Cinqué would arouse almost as much discomfort as his exoneration did. Paul Baepler reminds us that Barbary captivity narratives, in which white Europeans were enslaved by swarthy "savages," were popular reading entertainment for Americans and Europeans of all ages. Although the *Amistad* rebellion took place off the coast

¹¹⁸ Powell 62-63.

¹¹⁹ Powell 54. See also Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art, vol. 4, From the American Revolution to World War I*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.)

of Cuba, Africans turned the table on Europeans and held them in thrall, raising several unsettling issues:

In general, although the Barbary captivity narrative most frequently invokes the barbarity of Africans, casting them as demonic, amoral, and bestial, the figure of the white slave in Africa proved a rhetorically supple and enduring image that inherently questioned the institution of slavery in the colonies and in the new republic. The figure posed a perplexing question: How could a supposedly civilized country that was economically dependent on black slave labor deride as immoral and “barbaric” those countries that had simply turned the tables and enslaved white Americans?¹²⁰

The reversal of fortunes on the *Amistad* raised the specter of what Paul Baepler calls the “African master;” a suddenly empowered African male with a taste for vengeance, Wilson Moses’ “avenging Messiah.” According to John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, beginning in 1801 with the Haitian revolution through the end of the Civil War, slave rebellions occurred all through the South, precipitating “a constant source of fear and anxiety for whites.”¹²¹

White anxiety would be deepened by the portrayal of Cinqué as a hero of dignity and natural leadership, especially given the earlier stereotypical descriptions of the Africans as sharp-toothed, half-naked, throat-slashing savages. Those suspecting that abolitionists’ goals were not only to dismantle slavery, but to bring about the eventual equality of blacks and whites would be especially troubled by the “heroification” process the Jocelyn portrait exemplified.

Cinqué (the portrait)—regal, introspective, and rebellious—embodied an entirely different image of what might constitute the democratic ideal for Americans. Rather than

¹²⁰ Paul Baepler, “The Barbary Captivity Narrative in American Culture,” *Early American Literature*, Vol. 39, Issue 2, (June 2004), 231.

¹²¹ See John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.)

a story of upward mobility, individual enterprise, and commercial success, *Cinqué* bespoke an American caste system based on race, freedom achieved through violent assault on unjust laws, and a socially contentious counterculture of abolitionism and reform that vindicated seditious acts. This alternative narrative was one that few in Jacksonian era America wanted to hear.¹²²

Just as “Cinqué as a hero” was not a narrative Jacksonian Americans wanted to hear, the other emerging truths about the *Amistad* were unnerving as well. From an evangelical abolitionist perspective, the way to change American attitudes about slavery was through Christian empathy. In order to spread their message, they chose an engraving of a slave reaching up piteously for help, asking, “Am I not a man and a brother?” However, Cinqué symbolized dignity, manhood, courage, intelligence, agency and rebellion against personal tyranny. The question raised in the engraving is carefully phrased: he does not ask to be recognized as a man and a brother, but insists by his syntax that he is; in fact, he challenges the listener to deny it. Yet that message is tempered with a servile posture, clearly ceding dominance to a presumably white listener. If Americans came to see Cinqué through John Warner Barber’s painting, as an actor rather than a victim, taking charge of circumstances outside the parameters of accepted black behavior, Southern and Northern fear of black-on-white violence and vengeance would grow into an insurmountable obstacle to the abolitionist movement.

Over a decade later, sensitive to her audience, Harriet Beecher Stowe created two vibrant black characters in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. George, an intelligent, articulate man of action might earn respect, but not sympathy; a direct threat to white hegemony, he expatriates himself, probably to relieve the anxieties of nineteenth century American readers, who would not want a George here.

¹²² Powell 69.

asserting his equality and brandishing his European education. Uncle Tom, on the other hand, is uneducated, submissive and pious to the point of martyrdom; he elicited only a condescending sympathy. This Uncle Tom "type" predated the novel by decades, as is suggested by Stanley Harrold who reflected the common American assumption, particularly in the early 1840s, in describing black men as less masculine and active than white men, and more apt to forgive and model Christian virtue, with the caveat that beneath these virtues lurked a capacity for great violence, springing from an essentially bestial nature.¹²³

For the African-American free community, this dichotomy of African-American masculinity — the feminized passive "boy" vs. the savage adult male — posed a major challenge of identity. James and Lois Horton noted that the Christian forbearance advocated by the Garrisonians led to black behavior that appeared to condone the slave owner's authority, while acting aggressively to assert one's manhood and independence, as Cinqué did, would "reinforce white stereotypes of the 'brutish African nature' restrained only by slavery."¹²⁴

The struggle over the terrible choice between these debilitating stereotypes reflected the burgeoning debate among abolitionists about the efficacy of moral suasion¹²⁵ versus aggressive action. Moral suasion had two complementary belief systems: first, that the virtuous, hard-working, pious behavior of the free black man would naturally earn the respect of white people,

¹²³ Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004). 36.

¹²⁴ James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, "The Affirmation of Manhood: Black Garrisonians in Antebellum Boston," in *Courage and Conscience: Black and White Abolitionists in Boston*, ed. Daniel Jacobs. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 137.

¹²⁵ Moral suasion has been defined as the attempt to coerce virtuous behavior in a political or economic sphere; it was used by William Lloyd Garrison in the cause of abolitionism. Tunde Adeleke, "Afro-Americans and moral suasion: the debate in the 1830's," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 83, No. 2, (Spring 1998): 127-142.

and thus win them over to the anti-slavery cause¹²⁶; second, that the route to emancipation was “to persuade the nation to live up to its conscience.”¹²⁷ By 1840, however, this philosophy of uplift and nonviolence was beginning to fray. As mentioned earlier, the 1830s saw anti-black riots in New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Ohio,¹²⁸ and in most incidents, only blacks were arrested. Under these circumstances, moral suasion would seem to emasculate black men who wanted to defend their homes, their families and their freedom.¹²⁹ Bernard Boxill contends that Frederick Douglass saw violence in the name of justice as an extension of moral suasion,¹³⁰ but only after his British sojourn in the mid-1840s, when he recognized that slave holders had no conscience to which one could appeal.¹³¹

The *Amistad* case would certainly have tested the limits of some abolitionists’ commitment to moral suasion, since Cinqué’s actions accomplished what no amount of good behavior or non-violence could have: he had forced Americans to examine the Africans’ humanity, intelligence and

¹²⁶ “Many (black abolitionists) were imbued with a deep sense of responsibility, and believed strongly that the fate of those in bondage depended very much on how the freed ones utilized their freedom...Their economic success induced and strengthened faith in Jacksonian society—believing earnestly that whites would welcome and embrace a morally upright, industrious, intelligent and economically elevated black man.” Tunde Adeleke, “Afro-Americans and Moral Suasion: The Debate in the 1830’s,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 83, No. 2, (Spring 1998), 129.

¹²⁷ Bernard R. Boxill, “Fear and Shame as Forms of Moral Suasion in the Thought of Frederick Douglass.” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, (Fall 1995), 714.

¹²⁸ Tunde Adeleke, “Afro-Americans and Moral Suasion: The Debate in the 1830’s,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 83, No. 2, (Spring 1998), 135.

¹²⁹ 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, 1997), 244-247; Tunde Adeleke, “Afro-Americans and Moral Suasion: The Debate in the 1830’s,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 83, No. 2, (Spring 1998), 135. Also, see the August 13, 1841 letter of David Ruggles in *The Liberator*, in which he commands blacks to rise up and take action or die slaves.

¹³⁰ Bernard R. Boxill, “Fear and Shame as Forms of Moral Suasion in the Thought of Frederick Douglass.” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, (Fall 1995), 713-744.

¹³¹ Bernard R. Boxill, “Fear and Shame as Forms of Moral Suasion in the Thought of Frederick Douglass.” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Fall 1995, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, 720. In his essay, “Enslavement, Moral Suasion and Struggles,” in *Frederick Douglass* by Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland, Frank M. Kirkland argues that Douglass’s thought “has to make room for the moral relevance of political abolitionism,” in order to see action as an extension of moral suasion. Bill E. Lawson, Frank M. Kirkland, *Frederick Douglass*. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999). 247.

agency, an issue that Milton C. Sernett asserts was “sidestepped” until then by “political stratagems such as the Missouri Compromise and moral palliatives like the American Colonization Society” until the 1830s.¹³²

Furthermore, while it was clear from the start that the fate of the *Amistad* Africans would have little impact on the daily lives of American slaves, Cinqué incarnated the newly surfacing debate about the value of moral suasion versus violent resistance.¹³³ Abolitionists of all stripes recognized that without the violence aboard this ship, the captive Africans would have become illegal but de facto slaves in Cuba for the rest of their lives. To the extent that abolitionists fought for the Africans’ freedom, they were condoning action, and even violence and murder, in defense of freedom. This recognition sat uncomfortably in the minds and hearts of white abolitionists, while it reinforced the conclusions of many black abolitionists like James Forten, Hosea Easton, Henry Highland Garnet and William Watkins. These men had responded strongly to David Walker’s Appeal of 1829, and “(T)heir long and bitter trials with racial tyranny hardly fostered such optimism”¹³⁴ that moral suasion alone could lead to progress.

Whatever their brand of abolitionism, these men and others, most importantly James W. C. Pennington, were mobilized by the *Amistad* case. Richard Blackett has noted that “in a decade when blacks were coming of age politically, the case became a rallying point for black communities in the Northeast, particularly those in Hartford and New Haven...[B]lacks in

¹³² Milton C. Sernett, “The Efficacy of Religious Participation in the National Debates over Abolitionism and Abortion,” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 1984), 216.

¹³³ Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 9.

¹³⁴ James Brewer Stewart, “From Moral Suasion to Political Confrontation: American Abolitionists and the Problem of Resistance, 1831-1861.” In *Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in History and Memory*, ed. David W. Blight. (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 82.

Hartford, led by J. W. C. Pennington, were busy making plans for the day the captives would be free.”¹³⁵

Inspirational though it may have been for African-Americans, there seem to have been myriad reasons to consign the *Amistad* to the American history attic; in Iyunolu Osagie’s essay, the nature of historical memory suggests other reasons for the century-long “forgetting.” In addition to the dearth of attention given to the role of African-Americans in our history by white historians until recently, there is the issue of which historical “stories” fulfill our present values and understandings. As Osagie reminds us, the scholars George Herbert Mead and Maurice Halbwachs both “believe that the past is... ‘a social construction shaped by the concerns and needs of the present.’”¹³⁶ In other words, we recall certain incidents of the past when we need them to interpret our current reality. It became acceptable in the late twentieth century to see the struggles of marginalized peoples as noble and courageous; until that time, the actions of black rebels like Cinqué were subject to censure and fear. Recognizing the harsh repression of black non-violent dissent in the 1960s, it is hardly surprising that *that* America would choose to forget the *Amistad*.

Regarding the *Amistad* incident specifically, Osagie asserts that while books were written about the incident, “the *Amistad* incident has never been studied as part of the official history of Sierra Leone, and it has never been studied in the school system...it is an event that Sierra Leoneans...never identified with as part of their national history,”¹³⁷ just as it was largely unknown by Americans before the 1980s, omitted from school history books. In Sierra Leone, Osagie

¹³⁵ Richard Blackett, “Mutiny on the *Amistad*,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, Issue 1, (February 1988), 234.

¹³⁶ Iyunolu Osagie, “Historical Memory and a New National Consciousness: The *Amistad* Revolt Revisited in Sierra Leone,” *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, (Spring 1997), 64.

¹³⁷ Iyunolu Osagie, “Historical Memory and a New National Consciousness: The *Amistad* Revolt Revisited in Sierra Leone,” *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1, (Spring 1997), 65.

claims, the sad ending of Cinqué (called Sengbe Pieh) made it likely to be left out of the history books.

From Pieh's tragic experience, we can surmise that his memorable loss of land and family symbolizes a loss of memory in the psyche of the nation. Having fought for his freedom in the United States, Pieh returned not to his wife and two children who were, perhaps, captured into slavery, or killed, but to the reality of territorial wars instigated by the still thriving slave trade. Under the conditions of their return to their native land, the Amistad group had little basis on which to hand down the beautiful story of victory in the U. S. With the ever-present danger of being recaptured into slavery, the issue of their survival remained unresolved. This reality...slowly but surely chipped away at the profound nature of their victorious experiences in America. It should not be surprising to us, therefore, that Pieh and the other freed captives chose, in neglecting to perform the story's continuity through the oral tradition, to forget their own story.¹³⁸

Similarly, the epilogue of the *Amistad* story in the United States was hardly uniformly victorious. Allegations of slave-trading, polygamy, nakedness and heathenish behaviors embarrassed the Africans' supporters into silence and undermined their attempts to move Americans with moral suasion. The rumors would also have raised important issues about whether they had been duped by the Africans' "piety" and gloss of "civilization," while underneath it all still lurked the stereotypical African brute of racist ideology. If the legal victory and repatriation, which had used so much abolitionist money, time and effort ended in the resumption of an uncivilized life in Africa, then perhaps it was best forgotten here too. Recalling the "victory" of the Mendis' freedom to return home would simply elicit the mockery of those who would choose to see them as murderers exculpated and rewarded by abolitionists.

¹³⁸ Iyunolu Osagie, "Historical Memory and a New National Consciousness: The Amistad Revolt Revisited in Sierra Leone," *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 1997), 69.

The final chapters of the *Amistad* story, as they were recorded in a few missionary letters, called into question the whole colonization scheme as an ideal solution to a vexatious issue; since colonizationists felt they were forging a midway course that provided political shelter from the criticisms on all sides — and this was a favorite hiding place for clergymen — the *Amistad* case made their efforts look foolish. Not only were such missions unlikely to succeed, but once returned to Africa, the blacks had lost whatever “Christianity” they had acquired. For men supposedly concerned about the welfare of black souls, this was hardly a propitious sign, even if one could assume the best about fund-raising, safe voyages and disease-free survival. This was never mentioned in Connecticut newspapers.

All in all, while Connecticut “media”¹³⁹ coverage of the *Amistad* incident was largely favorable to the would-be slaves, even though they had washed up on shore with the blood of white men on their hands, it was also clear that within that coverage was evidence of the many anxieties and contradictions that made it inexpedient to write the *Amistad* story into the history books. While racist assumptions permeate almost every article, a sense of justice ultimately prevailed in the writings of Connecticut journalists, perhaps reflecting and influencing public opinion. But Eric Foner has made several important points about the *Amistad* case, prompted by the release of Steven Spielberg’s movie of the same name.

Most seriously, *Amistad* (the film) presents a highly misleading account of the case’s historical significance, in the process sugarcoating the relationship between the American judiciary and slavery. The film gives the distinct impression that the Supreme Court was convinced by Adams’ plea to repudiate slavery in favor of the natural

¹³⁹ “Media” includes newspaper coverage and the publicity efforts of the *Amistad* Committee in the forms of pamphlets, art and Cinqué posters for sale.

rights of man, thus taking a major step on the road to abolition.

In fact, the *Amistad* case revolved around the Atlantic slave trade — by 1840 outlawed by international treaty — and had nothing whatever to do with slavery as a domestic institution. Incongruous as it may seem, it was perfectly possible in the nineteenth century to condemn the importation of slaves from Africa while simultaneously defending slavery and the flourishing slave trade within the United States.

Jesse Lemisch makes another point about the film. He contends that this film subtracts black agency from the story, making John Quincy Adams the “Schindler” savior of the Africans; this changes the narrative from one of black rebellion and self-determination to one of white heroism on behalf of black victims.¹⁴⁰ According to Lemisch, this film version plays to familiar American themes of the heroic individual (Cinqué), the altruistic white savior/patriot (Adams) and the reliability of the American justice system. This, of course, is the kind of “history” white Americans can be presumed to be most comfortable with.

A truer reading of the times can be gleaned by an incident occurring only a short time after the *Amistad*, in 1841. American slaves on a ship called the *Creole* revolted, killing some sailors and directing the ship to the Bahamas. The American government insisted for fifteen years that those slaves were criminals and property of American citizens that must be returned. Notably, the majority of the *Amistad* justices were still serving on the Supreme Court for the Dred Scott

¹⁴⁰ Jesse Lemisch, “Black Agency in the *Amistad* Uprising: Or You’ve Taken our Cinque and Gone: Schindler, Morphed into John Quincy Adams, Rescues Africans — A Retrograde Film Denies Black Agency and Intelligence, Misses What Really Happened, and Returns to Conservative Themes of the Fifties; With an Account of What Really Happened, and A Few Words About Abolitionists as Fanatics.” *Souls*. (Winter 1999), 57-70.

decision in 1857 when the court declared that African-Americans had “no rights which a white man is bound to respect.”¹⁴¹

The narrow decision of the Supreme Court, in effect, gave abolitionists one desired outcome, the freedom of the Africans, but made no significant impact on American slavery or law. B. Holden Smith agrees, claiming that there is not “any word in the opinion about the immorality of either slavery or the slave trade.”¹⁴² Frederick Dalzell contends that “{A}s a moral victory, the *Amistad* case was muted at best.”¹⁴³ For abolitionists, knowing that only a rare American would read the legal opinion, it was best to publicize only the happy outcome of freedom, and get to work raising money for the trip to Africa. It would not have served their purposes to go too deeply into the bloody details of the case or the case law, or to attempt to keep the public up to date on the mixed results of the *Amistad* aftermath. These would be best forgotten.

Yet, by the 1990s, Americans were ready for the DreamWorks version of the *Amistad*. As Dalzell notes,

With its story of revolt, it fulfills our need, still deeply felt, to witness and vicariously participate in the overthrow of slavery. With its subsequent trial, we watch ourselves ceremoniously, legally affirming and upholding that right to revolt. Freedom comes from the Africans themselves—appropriate given the politics of slavery and race in the twentieth century—but receives the imprimatur of the

¹⁴¹ Eric Foner, “The *Amistad* Case in Fact and Film,” *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, posted March 1998. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/74/>. Accessed 6/25/09.

¹⁴² Holden-Smith, B. “Lords of lash, loom and law: Justice Story, Slavery and *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*.” *Cornell Law Review* (1993), 78, 1113.

¹⁴³ Frederick Dalzell, “Dreamworking *Amistad*: Representing Slavery, Revolt, and Freedom in America, 1839,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 1, (March 1998), 132.

nation and a ghostly nod of approbation from the founding fathers.¹⁴⁴

The publicity generated by the case, however, may have begun a metamorphosis in the way contemporary readers of Connecticut newspapers “saw” the victims of the slave trade, as individuals, as human and possibly even heroic. Nonetheless, as here discussed, a plethora of obstacles stood in the way of this story sharing the iconic place of other historical vignettes in our shared memory. (Think, for example, of Paul Revere’s ride; Betsy Ross and the flag.) The general unwillingness of earlier historians to confront slavery; the Southern desire to keep slave revolts quiet; the Northern desire not to incite mob violence; American discomfort with a black “Avenging Messiah;” conflicts among abolitionists as to the proper “packaging” of Cinqué; the growing consciousness of the failure of moral suasion versus the immediate consequences of aggressive action; the alleged embarrassing return of the Mendis to their native ways; slave trading charges which undermined the heroism of Cinqué; the narrow legal decision: all these issues posed challenges for Americans that clouded the triumph of freedom. With what seemed to be tacit and universal consent, the *Amistad* incident was ignored in our history books and in our national consciousness until the Civil Rights Era prepared us to understand the incident and ourselves better.

Lastly, it must be remembered that the Africans were requesting what Connecticut citizens were only too happy to give, that is, a return to Africa. While it is impossible to estimate the percentage of white Connecticut or New England citizens who considered themselves colonizationists, some scholars believe that almost all of them saw blacks as “a degraded group

¹⁴⁴ Frederick Dalzell, “Dreamworking Amistad: Representing Slavery, Revolt, and Freedom in America, 1839,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 1, (March 1998), 133.

that threatened the stability of society (who) could not hope to improve their condition in America.”¹⁴⁵ Given this American mindset, white Connecticut residents could espouse the freeing of the Mendis, their education and kind treatment, reinforcing their own Christian image of themselves in a fashion that cost them nothing, since ultimately these people would return to their homeland. The *Amistad* posed no dilemma to those who wanted to return American-born blacks to a continent they had not seen in ten generations; such Christian generosity came easily.

¹⁴⁵ Hugh Davis. “Northern Colonizationists and Free Blacks, 1823-1837: A Case Study of Leonard Bacon.” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Winter 1997), 653.

Chapter II

Letters of Protest: Responding to Racial Prejudice against Frederick Douglass and Others in Connecticut

Frederick Douglass, runaway slave turned brilliant orator, had stepped into the heat of the American spotlight by January 1842, when he addressed an audience in Boston's Faneuil Hall, electrifying his listeners with his growing eloquence on the matter of slavery.¹⁴⁶ Having recently arrived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, he was beginning to spread the word in his abolitionist speeches throughout New England and New York about his enslavement and his escape northward. In May 1845, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, was published, advertised and extracted by *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper. Yet, in nearby Connecticut, his appearance went largely unnoticed in local papers. Whether Douglass seemed less newsworthy because he addressed issues perceived to be of less concern to Connecticut than to the slave-rich South or whether Connecticut editors simply missed the significance of this rising phenomenon is open to debate, but Douglass began to attract attention only in 1845, when an "incident" transpired on a transatlantic crossing involving a Connecticut native. Connecticut journalistic reactions to Douglass's public humiliations reflect both a sense of shame for the barbarity of certain Connecticut individuals, and an attempt to create an image of civility against a foil of Southern coarseness, motivated by growing sectionalism. The first noteworthy recognition of Douglass, in a lengthy article on September 29, 1845 in the *Hartford Daily Courant*, reveals the underlying sentiments regarding Douglass. The article follows:

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.- A letter from one of the Hutchinson "Family," now in England, to the editor of the *Lynn Pioneer*, gives us some interesting particulars

¹⁴⁶ William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 100.

respecting the voyage of this American Slave across the Atlantic. He went out in one of the Cunard steamers - we forget which - and was compelled in deference to American prejudices to take passage in steerage. Among the passengers were many slaveholders and a few "dough-faces," who were very much offended with the Captain for allowing the self-emancipated Slave free access to all parts of the vessel, except the saloon. - Frederick is said to have behaved with great propriety, modesty and dignity, and to have won the admiration of a large portion of the passengers. Being an intimate friend of the Hutchinson family, he frequently walked with them and others on the quarter deck, and participated with as much freedom as his position would allow in the social intercourse of the passengers generally. Mr. Hutchinson thus describes a scene which occurred on the last day of the voyage:

-*Tribune*.

The Captain, with many other gentleman, (and some ladies) learning that Douglass was a good speaker, were excited to hear him. He was accordingly invited to speak on the promenade deck and consented. Due notice was given, and lo! when the time came, the "American Slave" came forward, and after making a few introductory remarks, opened a small book and began to read the code of the slave-laws of South Carolina. This was more than the Americans could bear. The disturbance was commenced by a *Connecticut Yankee*-A MEMBER OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, and who meant, as he said, to carry out his Christian principles! He interrupted by disputing every sentence which was read. Frederick stopped, after a while, and asked the audience whether he should go on. Then came "the tug of war." The Yankee Baptist was backed up by the slave mongers, while Douglass was sustained by the Englishmen. And all that cool heads could do was hardly sufficient to prevent a scene of bloodshed. The Captain was very cool at first, but finding himself grossly insulted by a slave-holder from New Orleans (who made his boast that he "owned a hundred and thirty niggers" he (the captain) ordered the boatswain to "call the watch," and *have three pairs of irons ready at a moment's warning*. He then expressed himself to the audience about as follows:

"Gentlemen, I was once the owner of two hundred slaves. If I had them now I should not be obliged to follow

the sea. But they were liberated, *and it was right*. Frederick Douglass may speak. I am Captain of this ship.”

Frederick, however, saw fit not to go on, but retired in the steerage; for there was a terrible commotion among the passengers, some crying “throw the d-----d nigger overboard,” one saying, “I wish I has that nigger in Cuba, I’d show him what belongs to niggers,” and the man from New Orleans about ready to go into fits. And I think he would have done something of the kind had not the command from the Captain “*have the irons ready*,” cooled him off some. We thus had, what some of us never had before, a fair “development” of Southern blood when stirred up by the sword of truth.¹⁴⁷ (All italics and capitalization as in article.)

In this piece, Douglass is referred to as “this American slave,” or the “self-emancipated slave,” suggesting that the anonymous author believed Douglass could not shake his slave status. “Self-emancipated” may be interpreted as a reminder that Douglass took his fate into his own hands, without a legal right to do so. Yet, Douglass was described as behaving with “great propriety, modesty and dignity,” beginning a pattern of polite journalistic awareness of his effort to be inoffensive and gentlemanly. The use of the word, “modesty,” assures readers that Douglass maintains a sense of deference to the white people around him.

In this same vein, the author notes that Douglass “was compelled in deference to American prejudices to take passage in steerage” and that others were offended by the Captain’s decision “allowing the self-emancipated Slave free access to all parts of the vessel, except the saloon.” The fact of “American prejudices” is stated without commentary, as if expected, as is the prohibiting of Douglass from the saloon, even by a relatively liberal Captain.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Sept. 29, 1845, 2.

¹⁴⁸ One might argue that limiting Douglass’s access to the saloon was one way of appeasing the men on board, who, presumably, would be the only passengers in the saloon. This suggests that perhaps women were understood to be more tolerant than white men en masse, or perhaps that Douglass, like the women also customarily excluded, would have dampened the men’s freedom of conversation, and therefore their enjoyment, if allowed to mingle with them.

The incident probably made it into *The Hartford Daily Courant* because it was a matter of local interest. "A *Connecticut Yankee*- A MEMBER OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH," was the rabble-rouser on board; the capitalization of this last descriptor reminds the reader that this Connecticut Yankee has joined a Southern church, one known for its support of slavery. In this way, readers are reminded that this Yankee has betrayed his Connecticut roots.

Further evidence of growing regional separatism is the identification of the pro-slavery protesters as "slave mongers" and "a New Orleans" slaveholder, who are pitted against the "Englishmen" who stood up for Douglass. Interestingly, the Captain, who gains stature as he takes charge of the situation, is not explicitly identified as British, although subsequent articles make clear that he is. It is possible that the author was attempting to avoid the old sore point of the British moral superiority in the slavery question, as British abolitionists had already triumphed in achieving abolition¹⁴⁹, while Americans were just beginning to engage in the great struggle.

The Captain assumes the role of the good "father," keeping the slave mongers in check with his threat of "irons," treating Douglass with some fairness, and defending him in a speech in which the Captain characterizes himself as basically "a sinner redeemed;" he acknowledges his sin and his penance for it (having to work for a living, like Adam). Indeed, he seems to represent the best of what America ideally stands for -- free speech, hard work, humility, redemption, self-improvement, honesty and justice -- all the more reason to keep his British citizenship under wraps here.

Also remarkable is the Captain's order "*to have the irons ready;*" in doing so, he menaces "the slave mongers" with temporary slavery; that subdues them and hints that perhaps the wrong

¹⁴⁹ Great Britain banned the slave trade in 1807, and manumitted all British slaves in 1833; the Emancipation Proclamation would not be issued until 1865.

people are in irons, and that the prospect of being in irons is enough to silence even the most rabid slaver. The slave owners do not care for this taste of their own medicine; the "Christian" defender of slavery is willing to shackle others, but is also willing to stifle his anger if his liberty is at risk. His clear violation of Christ's most important rule, to love others as much as oneself is revealed, along with his cowardice.

That brand of "Christianity" is skewered by the exclamatory irony in these words:

The disturbance was commenced by a *Connecticut Yankee*-A MEMBER OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, and who meant, as he said, to carry out his Christian principles! He interrupted by disputing every sentence which was read.

The Hutchinson correspondent not only suggests that there are no Christian principles valued by this Baptist, but that the Baptist is disputing the indisputable: the slave code of South Carolina. In two lines, the author has undermined this Connecticut Yankee's credibility.

Most interesting are the final lines of the article: "We thus had, what some of us never had before, a fair 'development' of Southern blood when stirred up by the sword of truth." Here, the author stakes his claim, making it clear that this is a sectional issue. Truth is the enemy of the "slave mongers," men who are foul-mouthed, threatening and violent; opposed to them are men like the "modest" Douglass (who assumes his place in steerage quietly; who defers to the wishes of his audience as to continuing his speech; who represents no threat to the gentlemen and ladies on board) and the heroic Captain.

About a month later, *The Morning News* of New London, Connecticut, reported on the same incident, picking up the story intact from a newspaper in Utica, New York:

From the Utica Daily Gazette.

— Frederick Douglass, the negro orator, who passed through this city some months since, has gone to Europe. Upon his arrival in Dublin, he wrote a letter to the Boston Liberator giving the particulars of his voyage. Among other things, he mentioned that he made a speech on slavery, by and with the consent of the Captain. There were men, according to his own story, of every nation, creed and practice on board the steamship, and yet he was allowed to insult the feelings of his fellow passengers by the English Lieutenant who had charge of her majesty's vessel. We do not know with what terms to characterize such conduct. If Mr. Douglass had not enough of the gentleman about him to appreciate what was due to those in whose company he had fallen, most assuredly a man holding office in the royal navy should have treated with more regard the national and personal feelings of those who placed themselves under his guidance and protection. Men of every nation, kindred and creed contribute to the support of his English owners, and shall they have their bigoted prejudices, if you will, trampled underfoot? Shall their characters be maligned, their actions held up to scorn, by one who has no more rights on board than any one of them all, and shall the man to whose guidance they entrust themselves, and to whom they must necessarily look for protection of person and feeling, sanction and promote the outrage? The slaveholders on board that disgraced steamship were as much entitled as other men to honorable treatment and yet John Bull who governed it allowed them to be publicly insulted.¹⁵⁰

This little report demonstrates the sensitivity Americans felt about English abolitionists taking the moral high ground. The Captain here is called the "English Lieutenant," stressing his foreignness and demoting him simultaneously. The John Bull reference also emphasizes that passengers' "national and personal" feelings, that is their American and pro-slavery sentiments, were due protection from the Captain, based on a tradition of free speech rooted in England.

Douglass himself addressed the discomfort Americans felt at being criticized abroad:

¹⁵⁰ *Morning News*, Oct. 27, 1845, 3. (New London, CT)

Again, let it also be remembered - for it is the simple truth - that neither in this speech, nor in any other which I delivered in England, did I ever allow myself to address Englishmen as against Americans. I took my stand on the high ground of human brotherhood, and spoke to Englishmen as men, in behalf of men. Slavery is a crime, not against Englishmen, but against God, and all the members of the human family; and it belongs to the whole human family to seek its suppression.¹⁵¹

Douglass attempts to minimize American embarrassment by stressing that he left nationality out of the discussion. But the Utica article raises another issue: the Captain's paternal role is delineated as "protecting and guiding" his passengers, shielding those who "entrust(ed) themselves (to him) and to whom they must necessarily look for protection of person and feeling." But of course, in this account, the "father" figure has failed abominably; in fact, he has sanctioned and promoted this outrage. He has failed as a Captain, a "father" and a gentleman.

Yet, in the middle of this article, the author asserts in risible terms that "men of every nation, kindred and creed" pay good money to the ship's owners, and in return, they have this right: their "bigoted prejudices" shall not be "trampled underfoot." In this case, Frederick Douglass was violating their right to bigotry, a right that has yet to be constitutionally enshrined. It is clear, too, that the author of this piece believed that the First Amendment applied only when speech was seen to be inoffensive to others, especially American slave owners.

The New London paper only reprinted an Albany, New York article, and with it, a rebuttal to that article that same day, on the same page.

From the *Albany Evening Journal*.

It required a second look to assure our eyes that this paragraph really appeared in a Utica instead of a South

¹⁵¹ Frederick Douglass. *Autobiographies* (New York: The Library of America, 1994), 379.

Carolina paper. And though actually written and printed in a Free State, it fails to persuade us that it is either wrong or impertinent to discuss the question of Slavery anywhere and everywhere. Frederick Douglass, as it appears, was solicited by a number of Passengers on board the Steamer, to speak of Slavery, the horrors of which he had endured. He declined until the permission of the Captain of the vessel was obtained; and then very properly acquiesced. It was, therefore, his right to speak and their privilege to hear. And it was equally the privilege of those who did not want to hear, to keep away. - The passengers who asked Douglass to speak showed good sense and good taste, for this stigmatized 'Negro Orator' is a man of high intellect, moral and social worth. We hazard little in assuming that in all the qualities which become a man, he is the superior of those by whom he was rudely insulted on the Steamer.

Slavery claims to enjoy the sanction of Divine as well as human Laws. With such high pretensions, it may not shrink from discussion. Nor would it do so if it had any confidence in the strength or justice of its cause. Patrick Henry, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson freely discussed the evils, and publicly deplored the existence of slavery. May not a 'Frederick Douglass,' a gifted and eloquent man who has escaped from stripes, manacles, and dungeons, hold up his voice against Slavery? Yes! He may, and he will, in defiance of all who threaten and rail at the North or the South-'*in spite of the lamentations here or elsewhere.*'¹⁵²

The author reassures his readers that Frederick Douglass, declared undoubtedly the better of his tormentors, is courteous, and almost passive in this incident. He does not choose to speak; instead he is "solicited" to speak by fellow passengers, all white, of course. He is careful not to take upon himself the right to speak. "He declined until the permission of the Captain of the vessel was obtained; and then very properly acquiesced."

¹⁵² *Morning News*, Oct. 27, 1845, 3. (New London, CT)

Here, the words, "solicited," "declined until the permission...was obtained;" "very properly acquiesced," paint the portrait of an obedient and unthreatening man of "high intellect, moral and social worth," in short, a gentle man and a gentleman, albeit a submissive one.

The writer of this rebuttal makes the point that through his slave experience, Douglass has earned his right to speak and that he will defy his naysayers' lamentations. Douglass takes his place among some of the founding fathers of the country in speaking out against slavery; it is remarkable, also, that the men mentioned -- Washington, Jefferson and Henry -- all spoke out against the evil while enriching themselves on the labors of their own slaves, though no irony seems to have been intended.

These articles, early in Connecticut's journalistic notice of Frederick Douglass, set the tone for much of the newspaper coverage in the years that followed. Many of these accounts suggest an acceptance of contemporary bigotry and racially-based social ostracism, while praising Douglass as an orator and gentleman. Other early journalists approached the Douglass story with barely disguised cynicism or attempts at mockery.

Interestingly, when Douglass himself described this incident, he makes mention only of the inebriated American Southerners:

In two days after leaving Boston, one part of the ship was about as free to me as another. My fellow-passengers not only visited me, but invited me to visit them, on the saloon deck. My visits there, however, were but seldom. I preferred to live within my privileges, and keep on my own premises...

The effect was, that with the majority of passengers, all color distinctions were flung to the winds, and I found myself treated with every mark of respect, from the beginning to the end of the voyage, except in a single instance; and in that, I came near to being mobbed, for complying with an invitation given me by the passengers,

and the captain of the "Cambria," to deliver a lecture on slavery. Our New Orleans and Georgia passengers were pleased to regard my lecture as an insult offered to them, and swore that I should not speak. They went so far as to threaten to throw me overboard, and but for the firmness of Captain Judkins, probably would have (under the inspiration of *slavery* and *brandy*) attempted to put their threats into execution...An end was put to the *melee*, by the captain's calling the ship's company to put the salt water mobocrats in irons.¹⁵³

Douglass expresses here how modestly he used his freedom, and serves as a foil for violent and drunken Southern "mobocrats" who desire to silence and rule others, even those who are not slaves. Such a pairing drives home the criminal nature of pro-slavery Americans, and Douglass clinches it with the image of the righteous Captain shackling the Southerners, rather than the former slave himself.

Frederick Douglass had left the United States in August 1845 to travel to England, not only to raise awareness of the American anti-slavery cause abroad, but also to escape the threat of recapture. He was welcomed with enthusiasm by British abolitionists and eventually, one of these patrons raised the money to purchase his freedom. Douglass himself clarified his British experience in one of his autobiographies, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, giving this account of the World Temperance Convention on August 4, 1846:

Next comes the Evangelical Alliance. This was an attempt to form a union of all evangelical christians throughout the world.

Sixty or seventy American divines attended, and some of them went there merely to weave a world-wide garment with which to clothe evangelical slaveholders. Foremost among these divines, was the Rev. Samuel Hanson Cox, moderator of the New School Presbyterian

¹⁵³ Frederick Douglass. *Autobiographies* (New York: The Library of America, 1994), 371.

General Assembly. He and his friends spared no pains to secure a platform broad enough to hold American slaveholders, and in this they partly succeeded. But the question of slavery is too large a question to be finally disposed of, even by the Evangelical Alliance...this effort to shield the Christian character of slaveholders greatly served to open a way to the British ear for anti-slavery discussion, and that it was well improved.

The fourth and last circumstance that assisted me in getting before the British public, was the attempt on the part of certain doctors of divinity to silence me on the platform of the World's Temperance Convention. Here I was brought into point blank collision with Rev. Dr. Cox, who made me the subject not only of bitter remark in the convention, but also of a long denunciatory letter published in the New York Evangelist and other American papers. I replied to the doctor as well as I could, and was successful in getting a respectful hearing before the British public, who are by nature and practice ardent lovers of fair play, especially in the conflict between weak and strong."¹⁵⁴

One Connecticut story about Douglass at the London World Convention is indicative of the suspicion with which many people regarded abolitionists. The *Hartford Daily Courant* of September 17, 1846 covered delegates representing the temperance and anti-slavery movements with little editorializing until this passage on Douglass:

The proceedings of the Convention were conducted with great harmony until an attempt was made near the close of its deliberations to force a discussion of the anti-slavery question. Frederick Douglass, formerly a slave, was put forward to utter against the American delegates -- such men as Dr. Cox, Dr. Kirk, Mr. Moran, editor of the New York Observer, c. -- the most outrageous sneers and sarcastic insults, because they were not like the Garrisons, Wrights and Fosters, roaring abolitionists, as well as friends of the temperance cause. Dr. Cox, in a letter to the *Evangelist*, says that Douglass was obviously put forward by men who would not themselves venture forward to

¹⁵⁴ Frederick Douglass. *Autobiographies* (New York: The Library of America, 1994), 385-6.

perpetrate it, and suggests that the fellow was well paid for the abomination. The Rev. Dr. says- "Mr. Douglass allowed himself to denounce America and all its temperance societies together as a grinding community of enemies of his people; said evil, with no alloy of good, concerning the whole of us; was perfectly indiscriminate in his severities; talked of the American delegates, and to us, as if he had been our schoolmaster and we, his docile and devoted pupils; and launched his revengeful missiles at our country, without one palliative word, and as if not a Christian or a true anti-slavery man lived in the whole of the United States." This course of conduct wounded and roused the indignation of all the delegates from this country save one and raised a tremendous excitement. The delegates desired to reply, but the assembly was so boisterous, that it was with difficulty that Mr. Kirk could obtain a moment to say, that the cause of temperance was not at all responsible for slavery and had no connection with it.¹⁵⁵

Clearly, the author of this account is furious about a number of issues. The Convention in London was "harmonious" until Frederick Douglass, "formerly a slave, was put forward to utter against the American delegates... the most outrageous sneers and sarcastic insults, because they were not like the Garrisons, Wrights and Fosters, roaring abolitionists..." This line highlights the disruption that Douglass caused in an otherwise peaceful event, but also the perceived arrogance of his speech, "the most outrageous sneers and sarcastic insults." The offense taken at Douglass's presuming to lecture the delegates is obvious in the Rev. Dr. Cox's horrified words: Douglass "talked of the American delegates, and to us, as if he had been our schoolmaster and we, his docile and devoted pupils..." Here, the Rev. Dr. Cox verbalizes the discomfort of being lectured to by an insulting, sneering former slave, reversing the "normal" power relationship between blacks and whites and raising the fearful specter of what the rise of slaves might mean for white America.

¹⁵⁵ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Sept. 17, 1846, 2.



Saying that Douglass was “put forward” implies that he is being used as a pawn, by men (presumably William Lloyd Garrison, who is certainly the “one” not wounded by this speech), “who would not themselves venture forward to perpetrate it,” who lacked the courage to speak out this way themselves. The statement that “the fellow was well paid for the abomination” attempts to discredit Douglass as simply a paid mouthpiece, orating not from experience or principle, but merely for gain.

Furthermore, the injured patriotism and embarrassment of these Americans abroad comes out in the language of the article. Douglass “utter(ed) against the American delegates;” “allowed himself to denounce America and all its temperance societies together as a grinding community of enemies of his people; said evil, with no alloy of good, concerning the whole of us; was perfectly indiscriminate in his severities;... launched his revengeful missiles at our country, without one palliative word, and as if not a Christian or a true anti-slavery man lived in the whole of the United States.” Over and over, the article’s author and the Rev. Dr. Cox make their injury clear. While they were abroad, before the Convention’s British delegates, they were excoriated by a former slave, who dared to lecture them mercilessly about their failures to move decisively to end slavery.

The authors suggest also that one may be “an anti-slavery man,” but not be a “roaring” abolitionist like Garrison. This extremism is reviled again in the indignation of the audience; indeed, in an example of the consequences of such rabidity, the author remarks that the crowd was so boisterous and uncivil that Mr. Kirk could barely seize a moment to assert that temperance had nothing to do with slavery. The disapproval of Douglass, the un-American paid pawn of Garrison, is palpable.

Of course, Douglass's experiences in his travels abroad had their echo in the lives of less renowned African-Americans at home; in examining the protest letters of some Connecticut African-Americans, we can place Douglass's experiences in a new context of racial discourse. Douglass makes clear in his writing that while he could *speak* boldly, he must *act* cautiously, refusing to take liberties without the explicit consent of his white companions. That same fear of violent white retribution is clarified in the following protests of some of his Connecticut contemporaries.

William Saunders

Frederick Douglass may have been the most prominent black man in the nation, but he was not the only "respectable" African-American voice heard to express his fury at the uncivil and uncivilized behavior of bigoted whites. The reactions of Douglass, and to a lesser extent, William Saunders, a successful African-American store-owner in Hartford¹⁵⁶, may have been sharpened by, to paraphrase Raymond Williams, "...a structure of feeling which has one of its origins in the very distinctive physical character" of Connecticut's industrial areas, and "beyond that in the very distinctive physical character" of Connecticut as a whole.¹⁵⁷

Speaking of his native Wales, Williams described the "immediately accessible landscape" of open hills and wide sky, along with the Welsh mining valleys and the industrial centers as shaping the Welsh "consciousness of aspirations and possibilities."¹⁵⁸ For a new generation of

¹⁵⁶ Vajid Pathan, African American National biography entry Oxford African American Studies Center.

¹⁵⁷ Josh Dickins, "Unarticulated Pre-emergence: Raymond Williams' 'Structures of Feeling,' *Constellations*, (November 28, 2011), 1.

¹⁵⁸ Josh Dickins, "Unarticulated Pre-emergence: Raymond Williams' 'Structures of Feeling,' *Constellations*, (November 28, 2011), p.2. Williams also highlighted the real and metaphorical descent into subterranean darkness that Welsh miners experienced in their daily work, contrasted with their return to the broad sky of daylight as their workday ended. This additional layer of experience would seem to mediate the structure of feeling with a uniquely powerful range of associations with burrowing into the earth, grave-digging, etc.

entrepreneurs like William Saunders and other modestly-born African-American strivers, the Connecticut landscape had to provide a similar contrast and an awareness of "choice." While New England cities like Hartford were industrializing throughout the nineteenth century, both the hazards and advantages of industry were accumulating in the cities, dividing the wealthy and the poor more decisively than ever. Surrounding these small cities, within walking distance of the city bounds, were pastoral landscapes of rolling hills and peaceful, if not highly profitable, farms. For those African-Americans "uplifting" themselves by thrift and business acumen, there was social space for economic progress in Connecticut, even in 1843, but their structure of feeling would likely include a sense that the opportunity they sought was seen by the larger society as not belonging to the likes of black men like William Saunders.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, the presence of natural beauty, so close to urban industry and factory tenements full of exhausted laborers, might also suggest a choice, as Williams suggests, but like Welsh coal miners, African-Americans might well feel that choice was circumscribed by forces beyond their control. Saunders' letter, discussed below, reflects that consciousness of choice, aspiration and achievement in tension with restriction, subjugation and humiliation, and ultimately, his frustration with the paradoxical proximity and distance of promise. Additionally, Edward Aaby, an English writer who traveled around Connecticut in the mid-1830s described Hartford's atmosphere as consistently brutal toward African-Americans: "(T)hroughout the Union, there is, perhaps, no city... where blacks meet with more contumely and unkindness than at this place. Some of them told me it was hardly safe

¹⁵⁹ A middle class black community was burgeoning in Hartford, reaching its social and economic culmination about 1860, but William Saunders would never live to enjoy it. "Great Expectations: Family and Community in Nineteenth Century Black Hartford," unpublished dissertation by Barbara Jean Beeching, University of Connecticut, (2010). 3464378.

for them to be in the streets alone at night...To pelt them with stones, and cry out nigger! nigger! as they seems to be the pastime of the place.”¹⁶⁰

So it was in this bitter climate, in July 1843, Saunders wrote his impassioned letter to the *Christian Freeman*¹⁶¹ decrying his treatment, which he termed “a brutal outrage,” on a local train. Accustomed to traveling unaccosted, Saunders and his family took their seats as usual, but at the behest of a white woman, the conductor ordered them to move to a “forward” car. The conductor left and the family did not comply, but when he returned to repeat his command, the Saunders family obeyed, “feeling that there was “no course for us to pursue except to leave the car.” While such an incident is not surprising to a twenty-first century reader, and harkens forward to the Rosa Parks incident, it clearly came as a shocking insult to Saunders, who had achieved some wealth and respectability in Hartford.

Saunders’ letter states the facts, and then requests only that a railroad representative stand by the ticket office to warn people of color to “save them from the insults of their menials,” a modest request couching a direct insult to the bigoted passenger and the overzealous conductor. So here, his apparent willingness to comply with segregated seating reveals his attitude towards those “menials” below him who seemed anxious for the public humiliation of black people.

His defiance rises again in the final paragraph of his letter, when he urges that “the public (be) left to form their own opinion of all concerned. We cannot say that we are surprised at this treatment, for we remember that we are in a wilderness, surrounded by all manner of beasts of prey, who are constantly seeking to devour us; therefore these things do not take us by surprise.”

¹⁶⁰George R. Price and James Brewer Stewart, Editors. *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice: The Life and Writings of Hosea Easton*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 22.

¹⁶¹ *Christian Freeman*, William Saunders, *Hartford Daily Courant* Jul. 26, 1843, 2.

Of course, the letter itself provides evidence that this discrimination was not an everyday occurrence, so Saunders must “remember” that he lives “in a wilderness.” His true feelings that white bigots are menials and beasts of prey seeking to devour African-Americans turns the familiar stereotypes used in the press for blacks (particularly in the *Amistad* case in the 1830s) back upon whites. Saunders suggests that such uncivilized behavior clarifies that it is not blacks who belong to the menial class, who represent savagery and viciousness and who prey upon innocent families. Thus, while Saunders seemed to accept that he must abide by the strictures placed upon him by bigots, at the very least, he could defy and castigate them in print and maintain some dignity. Saunders behaves similarly to Douglass in not openly defying these arbitrary “white” rules, presumably to avoid further embarrassment or worse, violence. But his characterization of the perpetrators as brutish menials signals to his white readership that they must not misconstrue black compliance for surrender. Underlying his closing thought about living in a wilderness, Saunders posits the possibility that predators in the wild might just as easily find themselves outnumbered prey, as Saunders did.

Selah M. Africanus

Another well-respected Hartford African-American, Selah M. Africanus, made his voice heard both in speech and in print from the start of the 1840s through 1880. Although little is known about him,¹⁶² records indicate he was a teacher in Hartford’s first schools for African-Americans in the 1840s, along with poet Ann Plato, and activist minister Rev. J. W. Pennington. Africanus, whose very name suggests a deliberate political choice, addressed the Colored Men’s Convention in New

¹⁶² John Marinelli, Selah M. Africanus biographical entry, African-American National Biography, Oxford African American Center.

Haven in 1849 on the topic of voting rights,¹⁶³ in a legalistic and reasoned manner. According to the *Liberator*, he argued that the Constitution admits that blacks are citizens because it specifies that “every white male citizen” under certain circumstances might be an elector; therefore, there are citizens who are non-white. He protested the property requirements attached to suffrage in some states, but ended hopefully by stating that blacks would eventually be restored their rights if “colored men would show those who truly love republican principles that they could appreciate a freeman’s privileges and exercise a freeman’s franchise with reference to the best interests of our common country.”¹⁶⁴ This argument combines several important elements: firstly, it manifests a love of and respect for the Constitution, while interpreting its language as presuming black citizenship; secondly, it credits white Americans with the belief that they withhold suffrage from blacks for the most patriotic of reasons, the best interests of the country; lastly, it places on “colored men” the burden of proving that they can appreciate the franchise and exercise it responsibly. This is a racial uplift philosophy, one that may be criticized today as placing one more burden on a burdened people, to please an implacably racist white majority, but at the time, might have been palatable to blacks and whites in his audience. Additionally, this speech, along with Africanus’ other writing, can be seen as part of the foundational thinking that undergirded growing and rising black communities in the Northeast.¹⁶⁵ As Kevin Gaines has asserted, in spite of “ambivalence and dissension,” “black opinion leaders deemed the promotion of bourgeois

¹⁶³ The resolutions of this meeting were: “That we regard the rights of elective franchise as one of the most invaluable and sacred rights of man, and at once the glory and shield of civil government; that to deprive any class of men of this invaluable and inalienable right, and for a pretence release their property from a State tax, when at the same time they must bear their part of the expenses of the General Government, is not to be considered a favor, but is rather a measure calculated to fix upon them more deeply the invidious mark of political degradation.” “Colored Convention” *Hartford Daily Courant*, September 15, 1849, 2.

¹⁶⁴ “S.M. Africanus,” *The Liberator*, October 5, 1849.

¹⁶⁵ See Richard S. Newman’s “‘A Chosen Generation:’ *Black Founders and Early America in Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*. edited by Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer. (New York: The New Press, 2006).

morality, patriarchal authority, and a culture of self-improvement...as necessary to their recognition, enfranchisement, and survival as a class.”¹⁶⁶

In addition, sometime in 1850, Africanus published a broadside,¹⁶⁷ copying the text of the Fugitive Slave Law, and adding his notes and objections, along with a poem, at the bottom. Again, Africanus discusses the legal implications of the law: allowing ordinary people to clothe themselves with judicial and magisterial authority as slave-hunters; authorizing the arrest of people of color without due process; violating the protections of Habeas Corpus; and denying captured persons a jury trial.

Clearly, Africanus believed that exposing the legal bones of the Act would outrage right-thinking citizens. But in his discussion of the Act, he refers to would-be slave catchers as “ruffians,” “kidnappers.” and “rascals.” The law would bring about a “heartless and brutal business, imposing the work of bloodhounds” on good citizens. This imagery suggests the same conception of whites (at least those who would mistreat their black neighbors) expressed by William Saunders in his letter of protest. The word “brutal” is used by both men, with all of its animalistic and predatory connotations. The addition of the bloodhound image, of course, particularly apt in discussing the slave-catching trade, also serves to “animalize” those man-hunters. Notably, too, Africanus reinforces a point Douglass makes in his narratives; slavery, and here specifically, the Fugitive Slave Acts, damage *white* people. When Africanus reminds white Connecticut citizens that the law imposes upon them a duty to act as “bloodhounds,” he appeals to

¹⁶⁶ Kevin K. Gaines. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1996), 3.

¹⁶⁷ Library of Congress, “The Fugitive Slave Law, [Hartford, Ct.?: s.n., 185?] Printed Ephemera Collection; Portfolio 337, Folder 2.

the presumably deep self-interest of would-be slave-hunters, challenging their present self-image as “good citizens.”

Furthermore, Africanus also echoes William Saunders in his perception of class; regardless of the social caste system in place, both men delineate class based upon behavior, not upon race or wealth or education. Those who would hunt down and capture their fellow humans are ruffians, kidnappers, rascals and brutes, or as Saunders called them, his “menials.” These assertions of a system of social hierarchy based on morality rather than class reveals the amorality of the dominant society against which they are rebelling.

Africanus ends his commentary with the assertion that on the face of it, such a law violates the laws of nature, God’s law, which takes precedence over all others. His short poem ends with this verse:

Though we break our fathers’ promise, we have nobler duties
first,
The traitor to humanity is the traitor most accursed:--
Man is more than Constitutions; better rot beneath the sod,
Than be true to Church and State, while we’re doubly false to
God.

The poem makes clear why Africanus urges defiance of the law, but also underscores the problem faced here by all good citizens, but especially African-Americans who have espoused the philosophy of racial uplift. Part of the “uplift” is the promise made to one’s fathers to be law-abiding, upstanding citizens. This becomes impossible and undesirable when obedience to the law means becoming a “traitor to humanity” or when one’s own freedom and life could be forfeited at any moment. At that moment, the Constitution, whether or not it endorses such a law, becomes irrelevant, and even Africanus’ well-grounded legal arguments seem to be beside the point. One

must simply be faithful to God's law, which means one must love his neighbor, and act humanely, but unlawfully.¹⁶⁸

William H. Williams' Letter to the Deacon

The principles of Christianity that Selah M. Africanus relied upon for his arguments against the Fugitive Slave Act also form the foundation of William H. Williams' letter, which was found in the archives of the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford, Connecticut.¹⁶⁹ Punctuation has been regularized in the transcription of this letter, while original spelling has been left intact.

Letter, 1860 May 20, Southford, Conn., to Henry B. Stiles, Southbury, Conn

Southford, May 20, 1860

Mr. Henry Stiles

Dear Brother

I appreciate the opportunity of transmitting a few lines to you. I am well at present hope these may find you the same enjoying the blessings of God.

While taking a retrospective view of what transpired on the Sabbath, the 13th instant, I feel that I am under the necessity of communicating to you the result of my thoughts in regard to the way you assailed me when in the act of taking a seat, after Brothers Herman Wellman had showed me where to sit. But on the account of my being one of the proscribed sons of Ham so unfortunate to be born with an ebony colored skin, you very hastily escorted me as the name implies to the nigger pew corner of God's house at the same time I being a member of the M. E. Church¹⁷⁰ had come to hear Brother Ayres preach so I came to the conclusion that I would not bring the cause of Christ very

¹⁶⁸ This was not Africanus' final statement in print. In 1880, he wrote a letter to the Hartford Courant excoriating Democrats who attempted to belittle the efforts of the part of the Republican party to assist "the African race." He also mentions that he will not call himself or his people "colored" because they were born the color they are; the only people who are colored are those whites "who black up as variety performers, minstrels or characters in theatrical plays." In this piece, Africanus' resentment of those who "black up" to imitate or mock "the African race" then take on the caste of the "colored," again asserting the role reversal discussed earlier.

¹⁶⁹ Call number 91132, Manuscript Stacks, The Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

¹⁷⁰ The Southbury Methodist Episcopal Church Records, Southbury, CT.

great Harm by staying through the morning services. Dear Brother i Don't wish to be understood that i prefer the cheif seats in the synagogue. Nor the uppermost rooms at the feasts. Only i Want to see men measured according to their Moral intellectual worth not by the Color of their skin Espeacially in the House of god.

(Colorphobia) that abomnable Element of the american character is to prevelent in Our Churches. In these latter days, in the Times of such ignorance, god winked at, but Now He commandeth all men everywhere to Repent, i think that the name Prejudice Against Color is Hardly Appropriate, for it is not the color but the condition that is Hated there is no Prejudice in the Human Heart against Black as a color of things in general. There is just as much Black worn for Clothing, as any other Color. But when the Black is a Human Being, A man endowed with intelegence reason possessing an immortal Soul-Oh, Horrors! Black then is dreatful; i do not believe that the Prejudice is against the Color, for there are some of us so white that the affrican Tinge is allmost impreceptable they are met with the same Prejudice even some who are entirely white are spurned Because identified with us in a good work via the antislavery cause. Thus does american Prejudice Brand with the curse of inferiority, not only the affricans themselves, but any that will identify themselves with them. It is natural for an individual to Hate anyone whom he has wronged, and as with individuals, so with Nations. The american people have wronged, outraged crushed us Degraded us to such an extent that they are actuly afraid of us. This is in my estimation the cause of this unjust prejudice with wich the land is Deluged. It is a feeling of concious guilt.

The american people are guilty of not only Bringing us into slavery, the sum of all villainys as the father of Methodism has expressed it, the american people are not only guilty of that God-accursed Evil via Slavery, but of Willfully keeping us in that Degraded condition Do you wonder that they are afraid of us? Methinks Demons would blush could they Behold the Every Day Practices of this so-called free country.

Prejudice against Color is Fostered in the american churches, showing itself in negro pews, closed doors, Dumb Ministers yet the church is said to Follow out the teachings of Jesus of Nazereth shame upon such Hypocracy Hollow Heartedness. It only goes to prove that the church is not following in the

footsteps of Her Divine Master, who came to raise up the
Down trodden who saw in the Poorest of his creatures the
image of the Deity; thus saith the scriptures. If a man prefers
to love god and hate His Brother, He is a liar for if He love not
His Brother whom He Hath seen, How can He love god whom
He Hath Not seen. The whipped seared millions now groaning
in the Prison House of Southern Bondage will never be free
while there is so much Prejudice in the land, i confidently
believe.

Had the American Churches Done Right By the subject, Had
acknowledged the african as a man brother allowed Him the
Right of speech in their synagogues, public opinion would
have been on the side of the oppressed, instead of the
oppressor. The Rev. Albert Barnes Declared that there is no
Power outside of the church that could sustain slavery a single
Hour if it were not sustained in it i believe Prejudice against
Color is sustained supported by American Christianity.

Now i Beseech the american churches to Put away the
unclean thing; let them have no fellowship with american
slavery; let not their support be drawn from the Throne of
iniquity above all let them use their mighty influence on the
side of Justice Humanity-then the Demon Prejudice will Hide
its Deformed Head Behind some Huge Cotton Bail there
give up the Ghost, Killed by the unerring Sword of Truth and
Justice.

No more at Present.

Your Sincere Brother Friend,
William H. Williams

This letter from William H. Williams to Henry Stiles is notable on several counts. First,

Williams begins and ends his letter with the routine courtesies one might expect in a nineteenth
century personal letter. After reading the mild opening lines wishing him God's blessings, Mr.
Stiles had to be surprised by Williams' passionate cry against the public insult he had suffered. Mr.
Williams framed his message of protest between the polite salutation and close, the conventional
bookends of nineteenth century correspondence.

Labeling Henry B. Stiles as “Brother,” along with the ushers, “Brothers Herman Wellman”, and the supply preacher, “Brother Ayres,”¹⁷¹ may have been also have been a courteous convention within some church communities, but in this letter, Williams repeats the word “brother” with seemingly intentional emphasis. Not only does Williams here establish his ethos as one Christian appealing to the better instincts of another, but he also reinforces the values he and Brother Stiles presumably share as church members. Of course, he soon turns this ethos against Stiles; if Christians are supposed to be “Brothers,” but one deliberately “(B)rand(s) (another) with the curse of inferiority,” “especially in the house of God,” he is not a Christian; “he is a liar.”

Like much autobiographical writing of nineteenth century African-Americans, William H. Williams has described one “small” incident, one of the countless daily humiliations then suffered by Americans of color to illuminate the weight of injustice borne by African-Americans. In his account, upon entering the tiny Southbury Methodist Episcopal Church, William Williams was apparently ushered to a seat in the white section by two other church members. However, Mr. Williams was then “assailed” by Henry B. Stiles, a member of the wealthy Stiles family (and cousin once removed of the famed Ezra Stiles, first President of Yale College), who “very Hastely escorted me as the name implies to the nigger pew corner of gods House.” Williams suggests that since he had been moved there, he had the choice to remain to “hear Brother Ayres preach,” or to leave in protest; “so i came to the conclusion that i would not bring the cause of christ very great Harm by staying through the morning services.”

Prejudice against Color is Fostered in the american churches, showing itself in negro pews, closed doors,

¹⁷¹ Rev James R. Ayres was a Methodist circuit preacher. *The Town and City of Waterbury, Connecticut, From the Aboriginal Period To the Year Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-Five, Vol. III*. Edited by Joseph Anderson, Sarah Johnson Prichard, Anna Lydia Ward. (New Haven, CT: The Price & Lee Company, 1896), 718.

Dumb Ministers yet the church is said to Follow out the teachings of Jesus of Nazereth shame upon such Hypocrisy Hollow Heartedness. It only goes to prove that the church is not following in the footsteps of Her Divine Master, who came to rase up the Down trodden who saw in the Poorest of his creatures the image of the Deity; thus saith the scriptures. If a man prefers to love god and hate His Brother, He is a liar for if He love not His Brother whom He Hath seen, How can He love god whom He Hath Not seen.

Here, Williams takes the powerful words of Jesus,¹⁷² and accuses the church of Henry Stiles of “hypocrisy and hollow-heartedness;” yet while Williams imputes the hypocrisy to “the American church,” for its “negro pews, closed doors and dumbness,” there is no doubt that Henry Stiles’ integrity as a Christian and a gentleman is under attack as well.

Yet this is an emotional reaction, and perhaps Williams senses this might not be persuasive enough. He begins the logos of his argument, a psychological analysis of “Colorphobia,” on the second page. Here he lays out the facts: it is not the color black that is hated, because even whites associated with African-Americans are reviled; it is the “condition” of African-Americans that white people hate. And, he asserts, they hate this condition because they have created it: “It is natural for an individual to Hate anyone whom he has wronged, and as with individuals, so with Nations. The american people have wronged, outraged crushed us Degraded us to such an extent that they are actuly afraid of us.” The guilt of having crushed African-Americans leaves white Americans terrified, awaiting the African-Americans’ revenge.

Williams goes on to define the sins of white America: enslavement and continued oppression and degradation. Here Williams’ outrage bursts through: “Methinks Demons would blush could they Behold the Every Day Practices of this so-called free country.” Williams here

¹⁷² The New Testament, 1 John 4:20.

challenges the very definition of America as a free Christian nation; American culpability should create shame greater than even demons could bear in this “so-called” free country.

If these truths are not enough in themselves to convince Stiles, Williams marshals support from established theologians. The father of Methodism, John Wesley, called slavery “the sum of all villainys.” Again, as a Methodist, Henry Stiles should respect Wesley’s opinion. Should that allusion not be enough, Williams paraphrases Rev. Albert Barnes,¹⁷³ a renowned Biblical scholar of the era, in chastising American churches for condoning the abomination of slavery. Stiles might choose to ignore William Williams, but if he claims to be a true Christian, Williams suggests, he cannot ignore these eminent men of God.

In his allusions to these ministers, Williams reflects the Evangelical thinking of the 19th century; in his view, sin may be individual (as Henry B. Stiles’ sin is), but it is also a broader social sin requiring atonement in immediate social action and redress. Williams calls for this atonement and this action from all American churches and from church leaders in small villages, like Henry B. Stiles.

Yet, Williams own words are most powerful, ringing familiarly like those of Dr. Martin Luther King, written more than a century later. “Only i Want to see men measured according to their Moral intellectual worth not by the Color of their skin Espeacially in the House of god.” These words could be no clearer. He ends his letter with an impressive anaphora:

Now i Beseech the american churches to Put away the unclean thing; let them have no fellowship with american slavery; let not their support be drawn from the Throne of iniquity above all let them use their mighty influence on the side of Justice Humanity-then the Demon

¹⁷³ “Adam Clarke & Albert Barnes: Scholars from the Past” By Wayne Jackson. Christian Courier, April 1, 2002. <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/495-adam-clarke-albert-barnes-scholars-from-the-past>, Accessed 7/9/08.

Prejudice will Hide its Deformed Head Behind some Huge
Cotton Bail theare give up the Ghost, Killed by the
unerring Sword of Truth and Justice.

Williams beseeches American churches, through Stiles, "to put away the unclean thing," drawing a clear line of guilt from the complicity of the church to the "unclean" sin of slavery and prejudice. In a series of three imperatives, "let them have no fellowship with american slavery; let not their support be drawn from the Throne of iniquity above all let them use their mighty influence on the side of Justice Humanity," Williams impressively argues that the churches must stand for justice and humanity, or stand fully with the demon of prejudice. He creates a stark choice for Stiles, and for all Christians, and he reinforces it with his personification of "Prejudice" as a skulking, deformed demonic spirit that must be slain "by the unerring Sword of Truth and Justice."

Written in May 1860, before the start of the Civil War, four days after the start of the Republican Convention during which two anti-slavery candidates, Abraham Lincoln and William H. Seward, competed for the nomination, William Williams, like many Americans, seemed to recognize that the issue of slavery was so divisive that only a bloody war would settle it. In retrospect, it seems fitting that Williams is using the imagery of Christ's sword of truth, but he writes his letter a year before *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* appears. His words prefigure the metaphor of that haunting first verse:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" words by Mrs. Dr. S.G. [Julia Ward] Howe, (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., 1862).

In spite of his simple eloquence, his letter appears to be insignificant from a broad historical viewpoint; yet Williams represents an early example of protest in writing, an act that by itself is subversive in its nurture and permanence.¹⁷⁵ Discussing the encouragement of black literacy and literary societies, Elizabeth McHenry posits that an early goal of African-American writers in Northern communities

was to foster the development of what one early contributor to the black press called "a literary character." As Henry Louis Gates Jr., and others have persuasively argued, since the Enlightenment, "the index of any race's 'humanity' was its possession of reason, which was to be known through its representation in writing." Particularly admired was writing "in its more exalted or 'literary' forms," but all association with literature, as readers or writers, was seen by free black Americans living in the urban North as a means to becoming exemplary citizens who could participate in the civic life of the community.¹⁷⁶

The public records reveal William H. Williams as an ordinary man. His place of birth is uncertain: in 1850, living in New Haven, Connecticut, he claimed to be born in Connecticut. By 1870 and 1880, he claimed New York as his birthplace.

His letter, while both literate and even literary in style ("Methinks..."), may contain some indications of a rudimentary education. While much nineteenth century spelling is "irregular," as Williams' is, he uses equal signs, double commas, single sets of quotation marks arbitrarily; his salutation to the letter begins at the right margin of the letter. These clues suggest the writer has

¹⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that Henry Stiles preserved this letter until his death, among a batch of otherwise mundane business and personal correspondence.

¹⁷⁶ Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press: 2002), 85.

been largely self-taught, but in spite of that disadvantage, his is an articulate and powerful personal voice.¹⁷⁷

Earlier statements of protest, like those of William Saunders and Selah M. Africanus, were intended to be read by the public. Writing a letter to a newspaper may be a more effective form of protest, but a personal letter of protest and outrage to a powerful and wealthy neighbor, whom he must actually face, and perhaps defy, in town and in church, might take more courage. William Williams lived for at least another decade in Southbury, and while we will never know whether he sat where he wanted in church after this letter, his impassioned challenge must have at least given Stiles pause, since it is one of only a handful that Stiles held onto until the end of his life.

The effort on the part of African-Americans to have their voices heard emerged after the American Revolution. Lemuel Haynes, a biracial Connecticut-born minister, issued various pamphlets promulgating abolitionism, beginning with an essay in 1776. Examples of printed protest abound, the most famous of them being David Walker's Appeal. Patrick Rael has suggested

¹⁷⁷ As far as can be determined through the Federal Census records of 1850, 1860 and 1870, William H. Williams was born in 1824. By 1850, he was living with his wife Eliza and baby daughter Henrietta in New Haven and his occupation was listed as "Waiter." He may have served in the Civil War, since there are Connecticut black soldiers listed with this name, but because there are many William Williams, it is difficult to tell. At least according to public records, the remainder of his life was uneventful. By 1860, he and Eliza were living in the Southbury, Connecticut household of a moderately well-to-do 80-year old white, Irish-born farmer, Japhat Curtiss, along with a relative of his, Louisa Curtiss, age 52. (There is no mention of the child Henrietta.) No occupation or personal estate value is listed for him.

In 1862, when African-American men were allowed to enlist as Union soldiers in the U.S. Colored Troops, it is possible that Williams signed up. At age 37, he wouldn't have been the oldest soldier to fight and military records show several African-American Connecticut residents about his age who bore the name William H. Williams.

By 1870, Williams is living in his own household; his occupation is listed as farmer, with a personal estate valued at \$800; now in addition to his Eliza, he lives with a nine year-old Georgiana Williams, whose birthplace is listed as Georgia, and Louisa Curtiss, now age 63 and "Insane."

One might suppose that based on this sequence of living arrangements, that Japhat Curtiss had died by 1870, and that perhaps, in addition or connected with any property bequests, the elderly farmer also left his troubled relative Louisa, in the custody of William and Eliza Williams.

Since both William and Eliza lived with the Curtiss family for at least a decade, presumably in the elderly man's home since Curtiss was listed as head in 1860, it's likely that Japhat Curtiss hired William to do farm work and Eliza to care for the home and for Louisa.¹⁴⁶

By 1880, Williams has moved back to New Haven with his wife and twenty year-old daughter, and a young black male boarder has taken the place of the "insane" Louisa.

that after the Revolution, African-Americans recognized that the world had changed and that nineteenth century America had a public sphere into which they could often enter.¹⁷⁸ Their voices countered what Joseph Ellis called “the silence,”¹⁷⁹ a tacit national conspiracy to avoid discussing race as the foundation of American political and economic exploitation.

Furthermore, it is notable that with the exception of William Saunders’ letter, the other protests revolve around the Christian *modus vivendi*; as a purportedly Christian nation, Christians violate their faith when they treat others cruelly. The aim of Christianity, then, is justice; Richard S. Newman states, “...these ideas--this mental map which outlined a vision of antislavery activism and black equality within the American nation--first took root (and then flourished) in free black churches...As Albert Raboteau has argued, these early black churches were not merely islands of autonomy for distressed blacks...but antislavery centers.”¹⁸⁰

Additionally, all three authors seem to arrive at a similar epiphany. No matter what their income and obvious prosperity, their intellect and rationality, their respectability and piety, it seems they realize in these missives that their color confines them immutably to the lowest caste, belying the struggle to earn the respect of whites by their belief in “uplift.” Like many of their contemporary African-American activists, including Douglass, William Saunders, Selah Africanus and William Williams worked toward the goal of equality and respectability in their lives, but evinced a dismay that they would never live to see the day when the “predators” would change

¹⁷⁸ Dorothy Porter, ed. *Negro Protest Pamphlets*. (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

¹⁷⁹ Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1999).

¹⁸⁰ Richard S. Newman’s “‘A Chosen Generation’: *Black Founders and Early America in Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*. edited by Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer. (New York: The New Press, 2006), 69.

their ways;¹⁸¹ their letters provide a useful context for analyzing Connecticut responses to Frederick Douglass, especially in his visits to the state.

Douglass in Connecticut

Douglass wrote a powerful series of three autobiographies protesting racist behavior and thinking throughout his life, but his writings were paid little attention or support in the Connecticut press. In fact, a look at his press coverage in Connecticut revolves around humiliating discriminatory incidents (included his aforementioned “mobocrat” experience on the *Cambria*) similar to those that Saunders and Williams experienced.

Occasional biting notices of Douglass’s activities continued in the early 1850s. In 1851, a small note on Douglass appeared in *The Hartford Daily Courant*:

“Frederick Douglass, when in Providence lately, declared according to *The Providence Post*, that every man of the actual rioters at Christiana has escaped but two, and that thirty-six out of thirty-eight of the persons indicted, are innocent. He, probably, is good authority.”¹⁸²

The use of the word “declared” in the first sentence suggests that Frederick Douglass is pompous and self-important enough to declare, to state a fact as true, based only upon his own self-perceived expertise. The last sentence suggests that Douglass *would* be knowledgeable about these criminals, because he has inside information about such illegalities. At this point, the *Hartford Daily Courant* was expressing thinly veiled hostility for Douglass. The *Courant* also reprinted a piece from the *Chicago Tribune* of Oct. 18, 1851:

¹⁸¹ Ironically, on this point, American whites who considered themselves “allies” of African-Americans seemed to agree fully, and offer colonization as the only viable option in such a racist nation. See Hugh Davis. “Northern Colonizationists and Free Blacks, 1823-1937: A Case Study of Leonard Bacon.” *Journal of the Early Republic*. Vol. 17, No. 4 (Winter 1997).

¹⁸² *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Dec. 4, 1851, 2.

“The celebrated orator and writer, Frederick Douglass, was in this city on yesterday. He left here for Janesville, Wisconsin, in the afternoon, where he speaks to day. He will be at Aurora on Thursday, and will reply to his namesake, Stephen A. Douglass, who speaks there on that day. This will be one of the most interesting events of the whole canvass. The Black Douglass against the White one! Who can doubt as to the result!”¹⁸³

Without the snide tone of earlier articles, it might be difficult to posit a guess as whether or not this remark was intended to mock Douglass. However, in light of the past few stories, it seems that the Black Douglass is expected to lose dramatically to the White Douglass.

Steven Douglas (with only one s in his family name) was a pro-slavery Senator from Illinois who was arguing in 1854 in favor of his Kansas-Nebraska bill, which would create the territories of Kansas and Nebraska based on the “popular sovereignty” policy, allowing residents to vote on the legalization of slavery there. The debate announced originally in the *Chicago Tribune* never took place, however. Steven Douglas refused to debate Frederick Douglass.

There can never have been much hope that Douglas would share a platform with any black man, let alone this one, but Douglas in Chicago in October 1854, relished the idea: “Ebony and ivory are thought to look better standing together than when separated. A white Douglas, canvassing the State for slavery,” might meet his match in a black rejoinder for “freedom.”¹⁸⁴

In April 1864, Frederick Douglass appeared in Hartford to speak. This visit, probably combined with the ongoing tragedy of the Civil War, marked a sea change in the attitude of *The Hartford Daily Courant*.

¹⁸³ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct. 24, 1854.

¹⁸⁴ McFeely 188.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS -- A fair audience listened to the address of Frederick Douglass on "The National Crisis," at Allyn Hall, Saturday evening. -- The speaker confined himself mainly to the position of colored men in this war, and their rights under the government now and hereafter. He thought the distinction made in paying the colored soldier less than is paid the white recruit, when both share equally the burdens and dangers of the contest, very unjust; and in this few intelligent men will disagree with him. The color of the man who fights well should have nothing to do with his payment as a soldier. It is a foolish prejudice which reasons otherwise. In one thing he claimed for free colored men an advantage--they are all loyal; none of them are copperheads or have any sympathy with treason. The copperhead party can think on this with profit, if they will consider it honestly. There is more truth than poetry in it. Judge Tacy once reasoned that "the negro had no rights which a white man was bound to respect," but the patriotism of both races had not then been called upon as it is now.--Mr. Douglass' account of his visit to the White House was interesting, as showing the remarkable change which has been wrought in public opinion within a few years past. Buchanan would have thrust Douglass from his door; Mr. Lincoln received him politely. Because he did, many men will abuse him; but others will admire the President for his good manners. While much that Mr. Douglass said was fair and just, he expressed many opinions which are valueless, because bound up in prejudice. His own, and the wrongs of others of his race, have been so great that he can hardly be expected to criticize government with the impartiality that is due great political questions. His finding fault with the slowness of Mr. Lincoln, shows how little he realizes the responsibilities of the Presidential office.--Such a policy as Mr. Douglass advocates, and urges that Abraham Lincoln should have established at the beginning of the war, would have caused rebellion in the North, because people were not educated up to the proper point. Notwithstanding the extreme views of Mr. Douglass, he has won for himself an enviable reputation as an orator, and wherever he appears, always bearing in mind the obstacles he has overcome in passing from the darkness of slavery into the light of

freedom, the people will be glad to respect his opinions as coming from an honest man.¹⁸⁵

This account of Douglass's address indicates progress in the tone assumed by the writers at *The Hartford Daily Courant*. Not only is it deemed "unintelligent" and "foolish prejudice" to oppose equal pay for soldiers, but other social changes have taken place; Lincoln has received Douglass politely at the White House while Buchanan would have cast him from the door, and now, Northerners "are educated up to the proper point" where they can approve of more justice for the negro.

At the same time, seemingly reluctant to arrive so late to this conclusion, the author rationalizes that Judge Tacy's statement in the Dred Scott decision ("(T)he negro had no rights which a white man was bound to respect,") was not wrong, but only preceded the proof of Negro patriotism elicited by the war. The author seems to regard Tacy as being correct for his era, a remnant of enduring racism.

At this point, Douglass's opinions are being treated respectfully, albeit with condescension. Ascribing naiveté to Douglass in not fully grasping presidential responsibilities seems to be another way of demeaning the orator's education and understanding; labeling Lincoln's welcome as polite good manners reduces earlier injustice and discrimination to a mere breach of etiquette. Nonetheless, Douglass is being taken more seriously, without the taint of obvious ridicule.

Frederick Douglass visited Connecticut to lecture many other times during his long crusade for the rights of African-Americans. He spoke again at Allyn Hall and Touro Hall in Hartford in 1864 and in Plainville in 1872. The local papers covered all these events respectfully and polite notes were made about the hosts who welcomed Douglass into their homes.

¹⁸⁵ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, April 18, 1864, 2.

In *The Hartford Daily Courant* of January 22, 1867, appeared a brief note:

-Frederick Douglass refused to lecture at several towns in the west unless colored persons were permitted to sit where they chose. Frederick carried his point.¹⁸⁶

By stating the facts of Douglass's triumph so simply, the author of this note implies approval. The use of the first name reference bears comment, but it is hard to tell now whether the usage suggests affectionate or inappropriate familiarity. In the same column, a painter, without antecedent, is referred to as simply "Waugh" and contributors to a charity are listed as "...Bancroft, Bayard Taylor, Agassiz, George William Curtis, Bierstadt, Gilford and Tuckerman." The well known men appear to go by surnames; one would expect the same for Douglass, but this is not the case.

Nonetheless, the tone of Connecticut coverage of Frederick Douglass continued to improve. As in the case of Douglass's experience on the ship proves, the more discourteous his treatment, the more sympathetic his press coverage in Connecticut. Frederick Douglass's visit to Meriden, Connecticut was covered in *The New York Times*, *The Sun* (Baltimore), *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Hartford Daily Courant*.

On February 18, 1868, the mayor of the town, Charles Parker warmly greeted Douglass at the train station, inviting him to stay at his home and make use of his carriage to get there. News accounts of the events note that Douglass graciously declined and set off to stay at Meriden House, a local inn. Douglass was able to check in, but when Mr. Breckinridge, a representative from the lecture committee, arrived to call on him, he heard the innkeeper, Stephen Ives call out, "Has that nigger come down to dinner yet?"¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, Jan. 22, 1867, 4.

¹⁸⁷ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, February 21, 1868, 2.

At this moment, Mr. Breckinridge learned that Ives had barred Douglass from eating in the public area of the inn, and had assigned Douglass to a "secondary" room. Breckinridge and other "prominent citizens" soon pleaded with Douglass to depart immediately and accept the hospitality of several of the "leading" families in town, but Douglass asserted that he would maintain his courteous standards of behavior, no matter how Ives behaved. "I will be more polite than the landlord has been, and I will not leave his house."¹⁸⁸

The lecture apparently took place as planned and Douglass departed Meriden without further consequence, but no note of events involving Douglass after this point are noted in the newspaper accounts.

However, the editor of the *Meriden Recorder*, Captain Luther G. Riggs, denounced Stephen Ives in the next edition of his newspaper. According to *The Hartford Daily Courant*, the editor incited so much "excitement" because he

vindicated Meriden as the only town that gave a majority vote for impartial suffrage, and characterized the conduct of Stephen Ives as a "burning disgrace to the city," called it "barbarism," said that Ives was a "member of the chivalrous democracy of the South and had just come up from Alabama," and asked that the "barbarism" be "charged upon unreconstructed, Democratic Alabama, not upon loyal, patriotic Republican Meriden."¹⁸⁹

A few weeks later, when Captain Riggs showed up at a meeting held at Meriden House, Ives was infuriated enough to ask to speak to him, saying he "felt aggrieved by the article in the

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Recorder.”¹⁹⁰ Riggs responded he was sorry but that he had simply published the truth, whereupon

Ives

instantly struck the latter, who was sitting in a chair, a wholly unexpected blow directly in the face, knocking him over backward upon the head, then followed it up with two other severe blows, both upon the face. Bystanders thereupon interfered.¹⁹¹

Ives was immediately arrested and prosecuted for criminal assault, then beginning a long and uninteresting sequellae involving his brother and a search for an attorney.

Of course, in 1868, the nation was still recovering from the brutality and depression caused by the Civil War. The bitterness that remained on the part of Northerners is evident in almost every newspaper account. *The Hartford Daily Courant*, in this essay, is explicitly in a defensive position since this

matter has become a subject of sarcastic comment by several prominent journals of other states, among them *Zion's Herald*, the able Methodist paper of Boston, which somewhat indiscriminately blamed the people of Meriden.¹⁹²

Though it may sound silly from a distance of one hundred and forty years, the Hartford editor seems to have been insulted by the implication of a Boston paper that Connecticut was less socially and humanely advanced than Massachusetts. Since Boston had been a hotbed of abolitionism, especially since the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, it makes sense that a neighboring city just south of Boston would see itself as striving to catch up. In a story run the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

very same day, the editor makes another effort to set Connecticut's record straight. The following paragraph ran in an untitled editorial section.

Apropos of the circumstances accompanying and following the visit of Frederick Douglass to Meriden, as related elsewhere, let us describe an incident that came to our knowledge some time ago. Several years ago, Marshall Jewell, the present Republican candidate for Governor, who in earlier days, belonged to the conservative Whig school, was traveling in another state. Entering a dining room, at a railway station, he saw that a well-dressed, fine-looking colored man had taken a seat at a table, and the crowd was hesitating a moment, some objecting to sitting with a negro. Mr. Jewell was not personally acquainted with Fred Douglass, nor did he sympathize with his political views, but recognizing him and comprehending the situation at a glance, he stepped forward directly with the cordial manner we all know so well, shook Mr. Douglass's hand heartily, calling him by name, and sat down by his side to dine. Others heard the name and all saw the example. The tables were filled and nothing further occurred save that some others came forward to introduce themselves. After a long and pleasant conversation, just as they were parting, Mr. Douglass said to Mr. Jewell, (neither having made any reference to the matter before,) "I see that you comprehend the embarrassments under which I sometimes labor: I thank you very sincerely."¹⁹³

This anecdote seems to have been added not only to cast Marshall Jewell in a generous light, but also to point out that this Connecticut native, Jewell, exemplified gentlemanly courtesy and unselfish gallantry typical of Connecticut citizens in treating Mr. Douglass so honorably, while others in "another state" were poised to humiliate him. The story not only serves to elevate Mr. Jewell's deportment as sensitive and kind, but also highlights his ability to defuse a tense situation

¹⁹³ Ibid.

and ease Mr. Douglass's way, suggesting that this is standard operating procedure for Connecticut natives.

In contrast, the commentary about Stephen Ives is clearly intended to disown him; he is not a "loyal, patriotic Meriden" citizen, but instead "an unreconstructed, Democratic" Alabamian. Invoking the rebellion of the South to Northerners still aching from the war offered multiple benefits to this anonymous editorial writer. Not only does he suggest that Ives is an aberration in Republican Connecticut, but he draws on deep wells of Northern bitterness against Southerners to belittle him. His "barbaric" violence marks him as an alien to this courteous city of Meriden, where Mr. Breckinridge and Captain Ives and other "prominent, leading men" are the norm. Here and elsewhere, the Connecticut papers are not shy about asserting what Connecticut normative behavior is or should be; yet, in blatantly doing so, the anonymous editor is boldly courting social change.

The Jewell incident makes several other points about ideal behavior. The author explicitly notes that Mr. Jewell did not share Mr. Douglass's political views; he did not know "Fred Douglass" beforehand; he saw "in a glance" his awkward predicament and stepped in to assist in a warm and cordial way intended to preserve Mr. Douglass's dignity. And "Fred Douglass" was duly grateful.

So that the reader understands the depth of Mr. Jewell's kindness and sensitivity, the author makes clear that Douglass was a stranger and a political opponent, and, of course, colored. No matter, the author suggests, a Connecticut gentleman sets the example for the un-Connecticut crowd.

Yet a certain tone is set with the words, "Fred Douglass." The familiar nickname seems inappropriate for a well-known celebrity orator, though he is, admittedly, "a well-dressed, fine-looking colored man." While one might posit that the "Fred" is used affectionately, as if out of the mouth of Mr. Jewell, one must wonder whether Wendall Phillips, a contemporary abolitionist orator, would have been referred to as "Wen Phillips" in a similar narrative context.

In any case, the highlighting of Mr. Jewell's behavior is implicitly contrasted with the behavior of Stephen Ives. The shameful fact that Stephen Ives was born and raised in Meriden, Connecticut is omitted from all relevant articles, as is the fact that he was descended from a respectable Connecticut family. Captain Riggs, editor of the *Meriden Recorder*, knew Ives' origins, though he was probably correct in suggesting that Ives' many years in Alabama shaped his bigotry.

More interesting, however, is the focus of all the reports on the physical violence of Ives against a little-known editor, as opposed to the verbal and social assault on Douglass, a celebrity of his time. In fact, the tone of the articles implies that Frederick Douglass conducted himself with the utmost propriety and dignity under the circumstances, but makes no comment on the pervasiveness or injustice of the landlord's bigotry. In fact, such demeaning treatment is deemed to be ordained by God:

Of course, he (Douglass) is frequently reminded that this is a country in which the Lord intended that only one of the many races of man shall have fair play...he (Douglass) carries himself like a well-bred gentleman, who, for a reason that his Maker has created, is liable to the insults of the wicked and mean.¹⁹⁴

This sanguine attitude of an undoubtedly white editor to the effects of white racism might have

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

comforted those even briefly outraged by the disrespect shown to a respected orator. The reader need not feel guilty or bound to take offense on the part of Douglass because such racism is natural, intended by God in the very act of creating a man "colored," within a country "intended" for fair play only for whites.

Yet, one of the carefully applied judgments of the author(s) of these articles relates to perceived social class and a certain respect due an accomplished and socially compliant individual like Frederick Douglass, no matter what his color. In a prelude in the article "*A Disgraceful Assault*," the author describes the stature of Frederick Douglass in great detail.

Frederick Douglass is one of the ablest men in the United States. A slave during his youth, he so applied himself to study that he has for 25 years been known as an admirable writer, and a keen and powerful logician as well as a splendid rhetorician. And calling to mind the list of men who have won, or at least borne, the title of orator, so far as we have heard them we find ourselves puzzled to say that Mr. Douglass is inferior to any. His delivery resembles that of Wendell Phillips, but with something more of fire and power. His words are admirably chosen, his self-possession is perfect, his enunciation distinct, his gestures easy and graceful, and upon the themes that naturally command his devotion as a champion of an oppressed and despised race, no audience ever heard him without being for the time subdued by his eloquence and compelled to respect not only the cause but the man. He is almost constantly traveling, being, despite the prejudice against his color, one of the most popular candidates for the favor of lecture associations...But Mr. Douglass never invites notoriety or contrives a scene. He maintains his self-respect, returns no insulting language, and neither demeans himself by unmanly yielding nor puts himself forward as a candidate for martyrdom. In short, he carries himself like a well-bred gentleman, who, for a reason that his Maker has created, is liable to the insults of the vicious and the mean.

The author's assertion of Douglass's respectability is notable in itself. One would guess that a white orator of Mr. Douglass's fame would not require such an extensive introduction. Yet, this background information serves multiple purposes.

Firstly, Douglass's rise from slavery as a self-educated man, whose oratorical skills exceed those of conventionally educated, well-born white men, sets him apart not only from his white peers, but also from his African-American brethren. This is not an ordinary black man, the editor is saying. He is extraordinarily accomplished even among others of significant public stature. Therefore, the author suggests, he is due greater respect than the "ordinary" African-American, who, due to the "intentions" of the Lord, may not be due this deferential treatment from white people.

Secondly, the author takes pains to discuss the facets of Douglass's oratory that might surprise readers who have not heard him. "His words are admirably chosen," the author assures us. This might not be surprising in a professional orator after twenty-five years on the circuit, but Douglass is black, and to subvert the expectations of white readers, the author is asserting that Douglass's eloquence meets the highest standards, despite his low birth.

"(H)is self possession is perfect," a double entendre, perhaps unintended. Of course, an excellent speaker must be self-possessed so as not to be overcome by nervousness and distraction. but Douglass had only "possessed himself" legally since December 12, 1846, when British abolitionists bought his freedom from Hugh Auld.

"(H)is enunciation distinct, his gestures easy and graceful;" these traits, too, would be surprising to readers who might expect poor language and crude gestures from a former slave.

Sensitive about his image as a gentleman, Douglass refused to heed the advice of people like Parker Pillsbury, that "it was 'better [to] have a *little* of the plantation' in his speech and to Garrison's that he should not sound too 'learned' lest people not 'believe you were ever a slave.'" ¹⁹⁵

"(U)pon the themes that naturally command his devotion as a champion of an oppressed and despised race, no audience ever heard him without being for the time subdued by his eloquence and compelled to respect not only the cause but the man." This statement suggests that Douglass "subdues" his audience, in a sense, dominates his listeners into submission with his superior oratory, and thus they feel "compelled" to respect his cause and him, but begrudgingly, and only "for the time." By noting the temporary nature of this "submission" and begrudging respect, the author suggests that the effect of Douglass's oratory cannot be permanent, but lasts only as long as the speech does; even a "subdued" audience returns to the comfort zone of its own bigotry later, perhaps made even more uneasy by the clear superiority of this black man.

Thirdly, there is an implicit elevation of Douglass to the image of the ideal Christian: "But Mr. Douglass never invites notoriety or contrives a scene. He maintains his self-respect, returns no insulting language, and neither demeans himself by unmanly yielding nor puts himself forward as a candidate for martyrdom." He is admired for his ability to avoid "a scene," to escape unwanted attention, "to turn the other cheek," and refuse to return insult for insult, all the while comporting himself like a man, not *yielding* in an *unmanly* manner, and not calling attention to his *martyrdom*. This burden of "christological weight," ¹⁹⁶ as scholar William S. McFeely called it, was one that

¹⁹⁵ William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 95.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 91.

would force Frederick Douglass to set himself apart from the masses of both black and white people. "For the whole of his life, Douglass would have to appear as a man more admirable than other men."¹⁹⁷ However, this distinction from others, as suggested by the author of this article, raises the likelihood that Douglass, as an accomplished orator, should be treated respectfully because of his individual achievements, but that the rest of "colored" humanity may be treated as badly as was customary.

"In short, he [Douglass] carries himself like a well-bred gentleman..." Here, the author of this article establishes that Douglass has earned the status of "gentleman" although he was born into the status of a non-human, a slave. This classic American rags-to-riches theme takes on an epic quality because of the extremes of Douglass's life story. An individual rises through his own individual effort and virtue to eminence; an excellent writer, orator and newspaper editor, Frederick Douglass proves the greatness of this republic in his story.

Douglass has worked his way into a tiny class of his own, an African-American elite; this earned "gentlemanly" status is ironically pitted against what Captain Riggs called "the barbarism" typical of a man like Ives, a "member of the chivalrous democracy of the South...just come up from Alabama," "unreconstructed, Democratic Alabama."¹⁹⁸ The stinging irony of words like "chivalrous" when opposed to the gentlemanly behavior of Frederick Douglass points up Riggs' intention to suggest that barbarism and low class behavior transcend race.

Indeed, in this case, a "colored" man has assumed the mantle of chivalry, courtesy and Christian forgiveness and generosity, while a white man, albeit an "unreconstructed" former

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, February 21, 1868, 2.

Alabamian, represents barbarism and backward baseness. Ironically, carrying the banner of chivalry comprised part of the myth of the Southern gentleman, who was, of course, white. By ascribing chivalrous behavior to the "colored" Douglass, the author of this article subverts the myth of Southern white chivalry.¹⁹⁹

This attempt to paint Stephen Ives into a low-caste corner is reiterated at the end of the *Hartford Daily Courant* article: "No matter whence he came, he has brought the manners and temper of the crossroads grog shop of the worst sections of rebellion to a very poor market in Meriden."²⁰⁰ Again, the Southern "manner and temper" of the crossroads grog shop is asserted, as is the image of a common, boozy, "white trash" innkeeper.

The suggestion that Frederick Douglass occupies a lonely gentleman class of his own not only permits an audience of white readers the relief of knowing that few "colored" men besides Douglass require deferential treatment, but also assures them that their own superior status remains unchallenged. Only a few "barbarous" "unreconstructed" recent arrivals from the South will verbalize their disrespect for the likes of Douglass, but there is no awareness that "colored" people as a group are barbarically treated, or that their suffering goes unnoticed by a white public. Implicit in the singling out of Douglass is the understanding that the abuse endured by non-celebrity "coloreds" is acceptable and normal. Such a theory of celebrity exceptionality allows white acknowledgment of certain individuals of color as worthy of exceptional -- that is, "equal" --

¹⁹⁹ This so aptly described by a contributor to *The Veteran*, who wrote about his view of ante-bellum Southern culture: "In the eyes of the Southern people all Confederate veterans are heroes. It is you {the Confederate veterans} who preserve the traditions and memories of the old-time South- the sunny South, with its beautiful lands and its happy people; the South of chivalrous men and gentle women; the South will go down in history as the land of plenty and the home of heroes. This beautiful, plentiful, happy South engendered a spirit of chivalry and gallantry for which its men were noted far and near." Ethel Moore, "Reunion of Tennesseans: Address of Welcome by Miss Ethel Moore," *Confederate Veteran* VI (October 1898), 482.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

respect, but allows whites to continue to maintain their prejudices regarding the rest, unexceptional African-Americans.

As was common at the time, journalists rewrote stories from other major papers, simply paraphrasing. Predictably, the farther south the city newspaper, the less import was attached to the incident; in fact, the three-column, two-article coverage in Hartford shrank to ten lines in Baltimore on the same day. Some of that interest may, of course, be ascribed to the heightened impact of a local story. However, an examination of the headlines of the articles as they find their way south indicates that the underlying insult to Douglass was certainly of less moment than the physical assault on a newspaper editor.

The headlines about this incident around the country offer powerful evidence about regional attitudes toward racial issues. In Hartford, Connecticut, the article was headlined "A Disgraceful Affair,"²⁰¹ reflecting the shame felt by Douglass's mistreatment. In New York, the focus tightened to just the physical attack. The headline ran, "The Assault Upon the Editor of the Meriden Recorder,"²⁰² evincing more concern and interest on the part of the New York journalist about a Connecticut colleague than interest in the precipitating event. In Philadelphia, the 10-line story was entitled simply: "From Connecticut" and in the first line, notes that "Frederick Douglass was called 'nigger'" and was "ejected" "from public table."²⁰³ The rest of the account stresses the "brutal" assault on Riggs. On the same day, February 21, 1868, the Baltimore *Sun* published essentially the same story as that in Philadelphia, but apparently intending to minimize its import.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² *The New York Times*, February 23, 1868, 5.

²⁰³ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 21, 1868, 4.

headed it, "Great Noise Over a Small Affair."²⁰⁴ Perhaps the *Baltimore Sun* was attempting to convey its opinion that both the humiliation of Douglass and the attack on the editor were beneath notice; if so, its headline succeeded in diminishing the newsworthiness of both elements of the story. In all accounts appeared a line similar to the one that ran in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "Much excitement prevails here and popular indignation is aroused against Ives..."²⁰⁵ The message seems to be that this "great noise" in Connecticut over a black man's being barred from a public dining room is almost inexplicable, presumably because customary segregation was accepted. But at the end of *Hartford Courant* February 21st account, the author concludes that the consequences of disapproving public opinion in Connecticut promise to be powerful and determinative of the success of Meriden House:

The affair created not a little excitement, and the general sentiment of the citizens of both parties was wholly with Captain Riggs. Some of the boarders immediately left the Meriden House and others declared their intention of doing so. It is not probable that brutal a ruffian as he will succeed in keeping a very popular hotel. Of one thing he will be speedily convinced; he has not taken a course which will prevent the Recorder from commenting on his disgraceful and barbarous conduct, as it deserves, and we shall assist in giving him the reputation he covets.

The author seems to give the impression that many customers will avoid Meriden House in order to punish Ives for his barbarous behavior; the offense is taken more on behalf of the physically injured Riggs than the publicly humiliated Douglass, but in either case, Ives' failure as an

²⁰⁴ *The Sun*, February 21, 1868, 1.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

innkeeper is predicted, and the journalists seem to be banding together to cement Ives' reputation as a Southern ruffian.

Unfortunately, these predictions were unfulfilled. Ives continued to run a successful inn for at least another decade.²⁰⁶ He disappears from public record after that, but Captain Riggs' reputation did not escape unscathed. (About a year later, Riggs was horsewhipped in the streets of Meriden by another man, who claimed Riggs had defamed him; this time, *The New York Times* excoriated Riggs.²⁰⁷)

However, the Douglass incident lived on. In *The Meriden Literary Recorder* of March 4, 1868, a follow-up letter written by George W. Bungay about the Douglass affair was published; Mr. Bungay makes some remarkable points about the Douglass "affair" in Meriden and focuses his attention on the insult to Douglass, while addressing his letter to the Editor Captain Riggs.

{For The Recorder}

FRED. DOUGLASS AND THE MERIDEN LANDLORD

The papers of the west, Democratic and Republican, are making bitter comments on the treatment Fred Douglass received at the Meriden House, and of the brutal and cowardly assault made upon you by the keeper of that house for ventilating the facts in relation to the history of

²⁰⁶ Meriden City Directory 1878, Book section M. (New Haven, CT: Price, Lee & Co., 1878), 149.

²⁰⁷ "It is a matter much to be regretted that so disgraceful an affair should have occurred in a sister city, with so fair a fame as that of Meriden. No paper is published that does not occasionally say something to disturb the equanimity of some of its readers, but few ever admit to their columns anything that brings the cowhide into the sanctum or upon the editor's back. There is no need of it. The editor can be severe without vilifying and he has no business to use his columns to gratify personal malice." *The New York Times*, September 2, 1869.

the Douglass affair.²⁰⁸ Why did he treat Fred Douglass so discourteously? Why did he refuse him the accommodations accorded to other guests? Was it because he (Douglass) had not the money needed to pay his bill? His income from his lectures alone must be at least fifteen thousand dollars a year. Is there a hotel landlord in Meriden whose income is equal to that? Was it because of his birth? He is the son of a United States Senator. Is there a landlord in Meriden who can boast of such an illustrious descent? Was it because of his lack of ability? He is a welcome contributor to the columns of the Atlantic Monthly, and he has won golden honors as one of the most eloquent men of the nation and of the age. Is there a landlord in Meriden who is his peer with the pen or on the platform? Was it because of his color? He is as God made him -- unpoisoned of rum and tobacco. Is there a landlord in Meriden who can say as much as that of himself? Undoubtedly it was because of his complexion that he was excluded from the public table. Now, Mr. Douglass is a welcome guest at the tables of noble dukes and lords who have over and over again invited him to dine and sup with them and their wives and daughters; and an English nobleman is just as good as a Connecticut innkeeper, and no better when they both behave well. Is color a crime which calls for banishment from a hotel table? Are the guests in *that* house in Meriden so squeamishly sensitive that while they can endure the presence of coal-black waiters and barbers they are

²⁰⁸ Excerpted from this letter: Was the man intoxicated or insane? Is he so demented as not to know that it was your *duty* as a journalist to make a record of the remarkable occurrence of insulting without provocation a distinguished guest? Did he think that you would have no opinion in regard to such a breach of etiquette and law? Does he not know that an editor who has no opinions is a dead fish swimming with the stream and tainting the air with unpleasant odors? Your columns are always open to correct misstatements; the law stands, staff in hand, to punish for libel; why, then, resort to brute force in an age when king brain sits upon the throne of public opinion? No man has physical power to stop the press. No editor who has the pluck suited to his position will be intimidated by blows. It is impossible to hush the voice of thought by the use of cowhides and bludgeons and brass knuckles and pistols. I know nothing of the merits or demerits of the case save what I glean from the papers picked up in my lecture tour; but if the press is the voice of the people, and the voice of the people is the voice of God, the verdict must be stunning in its effects now that your assailant has had time for reflection. Had he called at your office and asked for an explanation or defense through your columns, I am sure that the chivalry which led you to the front when the life of the nation was in jeopardy would have given him easy access to them-but an assault is more like a confession of guilt than an argument of justification....Douglass is considered worthy of the best the house affords wherever he stops, and no reference is made to his color. It is known that he has a white soul and a great intellect, and it is believed that his name will be remembered in song and history as long as our literature lasts. The minister from the Argentine Republic is as dark as Douglass. He is now making a tour of this country, gleaning facts in reference to our school systems. If he stops at Meriden will he be driven from the table of the principal hotel there? In a recent issue of *The Independent* I gave an account of two white men quarreling on the cars, each supposing the other to be a negro. What would have been their fate in Meriden had they put up at the Meriden House? *The Meriden Literary Recorder*, March 4, 1868.

sickened at the sight of a man who is three-quarters white? I do not believe there are a half-a-dozen educated and well-poised men and women in Meriden who would object to sitting at a public table with Fred Douglass. I know something about Meriden. I have the honor of being acquainted with many of its leading citizens, and I cannot think of one of either party who would treat a gentleman with incivility because his skin was a few shades darker than his own...Here at the west, where I have spent most of the winter, the people have no such narrow notions...Daniel Webster-"black Dan" was once refused accommodation at a public house because his skin was not white enough to suit the fastidious taste of the landlord. Tom Corwin, who rejoiced in the *soubriquet* of "black Tom," was often the subject of criticism because of his color. These gentlemen, however, never expressed a wish for a whiter hue; and their complexion did not prevent their rising to the front rank of political distinction. I know, friend Riggs, that you have enemies. He who has no enemies deserves to have no friends-but I sincerely hope you will not puff your enemies into importance by too frequently repeating their names in the widely circulated paper under your management.²⁰⁹

George W. Bungay, a friend of Captain Riggs, comes to his defense in this letter and inadvertently, explains much about 19th century bigotry. In a series of rhetorical questions about Douglass, he explains some of the grounds on which an innkeeper might publicly humiliate a patron. Douglass does not merit the mistreatment because he cannot pay. In fact, he earns \$15,000 a year, far more than a Meriden innkeeper. He does not merit mistreatment due to his low birth -- here Bungay must tread carefully since Douglass was indisputably born a slave. But Bungay, rather disingenuously, states that Douglass is the son of a U.S. Senator, as no Meriden innkeeper is. However, Bungay knows, of course, that Douglass has not earned the respect of the nation by being the illegitimate son of a *Senator* and a slave. Douglass does not merit discourtesy because he is a man of ability, as is evident by his earned stature. Bungay, like other authors before him, feels

²⁰⁹ *The Meriden Literary Recorder*, March 4, 1868.

the need to elevate Douglass into a class "of such an illustrious descent," so as to surpass the ordinary white man.

However, when Bungay comes to the issue of color, one can almost hear him stumbling over himself to get his argument right. Douglass "is as God made him -- unpoisoned by rum and tobacco." The abstemious virtue and the fact that Douglass is, like every other man, "as God made him," superior in his nature to Connecticut innkeepers, did not save him from discourtesy, Bungay notes. So Bungay again resorts to the class argument:

Now, Mr. Douglass is a welcome guest at the tables of noble dukes and lords who have over and over again invited him to dine and sup with them and their wives and daughters; and an English nobleman is just as good as a Connecticut innkeeper, and no better when they both behave well.

Mr. Douglass dines with nobility and, most tellingly, the wives and daughters of noblemen. Here Bungay addresses the well-nurtured racist fear of black men on behalf of white women. Bungay asserts here that Douglass was treated as exceptional by those who have cause to look down upon ordinary Americans. Douglass is not a threat to wives and daughters. (Of course, Bungay attempts to invoke the superiority of nobility, clearly impressed by it, while suggesting, democratically, that good behavior is the final measure of a man.) But then Bungay reveals more:

Is color a crime which calls for banishment from a hotel table? Are the guests in *that* house in Meriden so squeamishly sensitive that while they can endure the presence of coal-black waiters and barbers they are sickened at the sight of a man who is three-quarters white?²¹⁰

²¹⁰ *The Meriden Literary Recorder*, March 4, 1868.

First, he asks if color is a crime calling for banishment; then he maintains that white people are not "sickened" by having "coal-black" waiters and barbers, men who are looked upon as "the help." So, Mr. Bungay rightly points out that it is not the color itself that "sickens," it is the color of a man attempting to be treated on an equal footing that sickens those "uneducated and ill-poised" few who might object to Douglass's presence in the dining room. But most notably, Bungay calls Douglass "three-quarters" white, proclaiming three of his grandparents white. Regardless of whether this was true -- and according to Douglass²¹¹ it was not -- to assert that Douglass was almost white, indeed as white as the minister from Argentina and perhaps whiter than Daniel Webster or Tom Corwin, defuses objections to Douglass based on color. By saying no "leading citizen" of Meriden would mistreat a man whose skin tone is just "a few shades darker than his own," offers Meriden the chance to denigrate men *more* than a few shades darker, like those "coal-black" waiters and barbers.

Bungay goes on to praise the people of the west who "have no such narrow notions," evidenced by the fact that Douglass travels there without racial incident. And then, Bungay claims that "(I)t is known that he (Douglass) has a *white* soul and a great intellect..." (Italics mine.) Bungay's argument for the fair treatment of this black orator is that he is three quarters white with a white soul.

While Bungay's observations probably made it easier to convince Meriden bigots of the rightness of his cause, he essentially contends that Douglass has classed himself out of blackness and has become mostly white. His mention of two white men quarreling about each other's putative negritude is supposed to highlight the silliness of these racial accusations. But he then

²¹¹ Douglass was most likely half white. He calls his grandparents "quite dark" and his mother, "still darker." Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave*. (1845; reprint, Garden City, N. Y., 1963), 1.

goes on to relate how Webster and Corwin never expressed a wish for a whiter hue; he might have mentioned that being white, they had no need to. However, the quarreling men make clear how threatening it was to be called black. And Bungay's own denial about the race of Douglass's soul and that of his ancestors makes clear that he feels the whiter he makes Douglass, the more defensible he is.

Frederick Douglass had earned the respect of the press during his lifetime of speaking out for the rights of African Americans; as he became Ambassador to Haiti, endured attacks by former friends, married a white woman and lived out his last days, he was always newsworthy, but the early skepticism and mockery never resurfaced. At his death, in 1895, Connecticut papers, like others across the nation, recognized that in Frederick Douglass, a brilliant spirit had shone.

What becomes clear from the Douglass incident, though, may be the clearest expression of a wider public national embarrassment at uncouth Connecticut behavior. George Bungay asserts that the Douglass incident is the talk of papers of the West, subject to "bitter comment." Captain Riggs' exclaimed that the "barbarism" shown to Douglass "be charged upon unreconstructed, Democratic Alabama, not upon loyal, patriotic Republican Connecticut."²¹² Again, as in the New Haven college and Crandall cases (to be discussed later), and the Douglass on the *Cambria* incident, New England pride in its regional virtue is injured by the violent or discourteous expression of outright bigotry. That Republican Connecticut -- especially after the divisive and bloody Civil War -- should be mocked throughout the country for the blatant exposure of its racism was anathema.

²¹² *The Hartford Courant*, February 21, 1868, 2.

When William Saunders and Selah Africanus protested injustice publicly, the press published their words, empowering them to speak broadly, but allowing their voices to call out alone, without further editorial support. In 1843 it may have been politically risky to stand behind Saunders; the riots in New Haven and Hartford were not yet a decade behind them, and still fresh was the memory of newspaper editor Elijah Lovejoy's 1837 murder in Ohio for his principled stand against lynching. Greater yet was the risk to Saunders and Africanus themselves, both fairly public figures in Hartford.

By 1868, the year of the Meriden incident, Connecticut had suffered great losses, along with the rest of the country, and its regional, Republican loyalty was at its peak. After all the bloodshed and sorrow, the shameful behavior of one Meriden innkeeper to Frederick Douglass had to be denounced publicly, or the state would be mocked for its racist hypocrisy. By then, survivors of the Civil War needed proof that their dead had not died in vain, for if Frederick Douglass could be treated with contempt, then Connecticut was no better than Alabama.

The preservation of Connecticut's self-image is of key import in the Douglass case, as it was in the *Amistad* case. Charles Horton Cooley advanced the sociological theory of the "Looking Glass Self," suggesting that human beings, even from infancy, build their self-image on how they imagine they appear to others and how the judgments and reflections of others refract upon themselves.²¹³ It is for these reasons that Connecticut journalists appeared to take the part of Douglass in the embarrassing incidents they reported. In the case of the ship incident, "others" (Southerners) provided a valuable foil to the civilized and open-minded behavior of Connecticut residents, so the states's self-image could be sustained. In the Meriden and Jewell

²¹³ See Charles Horton Cooley, and Hans-Joachim Schubert. *On Self and Social Organization*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.)

stories, again, the vast majority of courteous and Christian Connecticut citizens stand against an imputed Southerner (though Yankee-born), and the articles manifest great concern about how the state will be seen by others. The reflection back to Connecticut of a state as racist as any in the South seems to have been unbearable, and the press goes to great lengths to counter this untenable image.

Additionally, Saunders, Africanus, Williams and Douglass express the concept that behavior, rather than skin color, should dictate social class; in the writings of all these men, racist discourtesy is derided as brutish, uncouth and unworthy of respect. They attempt not to overturn the social hierarchy, but to use a new measure that would reverse the existing order based on the Christian values that ostensibly undergird the entire culture. Furthering this social reordering is the appeal of Africanus, Williams and Douglass for a closer obedience to God's laws, rather than human laws that support slavery, injustice and inhumanity to man. In taking this spiritual approach, the protesters peaceably wrest the Bible from the clutches of racists, and urge in a rational, faith-based argument that justice and God are on their side.

The ideology of uplift supports their arguments, and provides a feasible and empowering goal; while African-Americans could only *attempt* to change the hearts and minds of their white peers, they could, and did, work hard to improve their own lot and their "respectability." Selah Africanus did this through his teaching in the Hartford African school; William Saunders did so in his successful business; Douglass lived the message of uplift.

Nonetheless, when faced with discriminatory and public racist assaults, these courageous men all felt that they could resist only after the fact, and only in writing. The threat of violence or greater humiliation presumably lurked behind every white order to sit in another train car, a

“nigger” pew, or in a private dining room, and in every case, the surrounding crowd was white and the protester was a lone black man. This fear of open defiance in the moment certainly preserved their lives, but functioned as a “Christological weight,”²¹⁴ at once raising their moral status, reinforcing their Christian message, and defusing the perceived black male threat to the white community, but also crushing their optimism and their faith in progress through uplift. Their silence during each incident had to take a great toll that grew even more disheartening with repetition, since these protests represent a minute fraction of the daily humiliations that African-Americans had to endure without obvious resistance. Yet, they still wanted to be part of the church, the community, and the nation, so their protests had to be careful and measured. William Williams defines this paradox with the warm salutation and closing of his letter; he was enraged at the injustice he suffered, but he did not *want* to cut off relations with his church, in spite of their relegating him to the “nigger” pew. He wanted to maintain his place in the church, and kill the monster prejudice itself; he did not want to withdraw or be forcibly ejected to make his point.

Nevertheless, Williams eventually gave up his white town and church and moved to New Haven, where he could join the black community; Africanus’ last letter decries persistent degradation of African-Americans, in 1880, long after the Emancipation Proclamation he fought for. William Saunders never lived to see such progress, but his letter ends with the reminder that he knows he lives in a wilderness with wild beasts. Douglass’s belief in uplift as the answer to the problems of African-Americans flagged in the face of his experience; he recognized that the “Negro problem” was problem created by whites, saying in 1895, “...some of our colored

²¹⁴ See Footnote 194.

orators...still insist upon calling it a 'Negro problem,' ...Now there is nothing wrong with the Negro
whatever; he is all right. Learned or ignorant, he is all right."²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Kevin K. Gaines. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1996), 67.

CHAPTER III

Mark Twain, Race and Connecticut

Decades of academic controversy have continued to make Samuel L. Clemens, known as Mark Twain, a subject of discussion, and one of the central questions raised is whether his works are fundamentally poisoned by racism. Is there value today in reading *Huckleberry Finn* or *Pudd'nhead Wilson* if they heap humiliation on people of color? How did his Connecticut residence and experiences affect his evolving views of racial issues? While some African-American authors like Frederick Douglass and Langston Hughes revered Mark Twain, others have called for his work to be shut away from today's students.²¹⁶ Though he was widely traveled, Twain chose to spend so much of his life in the state that it is worth investigating the role of his Connecticut experiences in the development of his racial thought.

Mark Twain's geographical connections make this discussion most interesting. The child of a slave-owning and slave-trading Missouri family, Twain grew to young adulthood ensconced in Southern racism. However, he fell in love with Olivia Langdon of Elmira, New York, the daughter of avid abolitionists and underground "railroaders." He moved to Hartford, Connecticut in 1871, eventually living next door to Harriet Beecher Stowe, and made lifelong friends with Charles Dudley Warner, the Republican editor of *The Hartford Courant*. Most of his noteworthy literary work was written in Connecticut, either in his home in Hartford, or later in life, at "Stormfield," his home in Redding.

Combined with the geographical connections of Mark Twain, the fact that he was at his most productive during the Reconstruction years of promise and post-Reconstruction years of

²¹⁶ One recent attempt to "pasteurize" Twain is recounted in "Censoring Twain", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan. 5, 2011. <<http://chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/censoring-mark-twains-ghost/30789>>. Accessed 7/3/2009.

retrenchment, complicates his the story. While Mark Twain may have been evolving more empathetic viewpoints, the nation as a whole was backlashing in the opposite direction. Many former slaves were being forced into a newer form of slavery through the sharecropping system, and violence against blacks was rising in frequency and viciousness. The Supreme Court in 1883 found the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional, while arguments for white supremacy and reconciliation between whites of the North and the South dominated the national conversation, trumping the interests of African Americans.

Certainly, all agree that when Samuel Clemens left the South, he took his Missouri family's racism with him; he famously wrote to his mother, "I reckon I had better blacken my face, for in these Eastern States niggers are considerably better than white people."²¹⁷ In *The Journal of Negro History*, in 1971, scholar Arthur G. Pettit noted that Mark Twain was especially offensive in his early years, writing privately and publicly about "the disagreeable properties of Negro odor."²¹⁸ His prolific use of the word, "nigger," his enjoyment of black minstrelsy, and his apparent mockery of negro speech are all frequently cited evidence for Mark Twain's continuing racism.²¹⁹

And yet, in 1869, Mark Twain met twice with Frederick Douglass, discussing, among other things, Douglass's daughter's recent expulsion from a private academy due to the complaints of white parents. In a letter to his wife, Twain wrote, "Had a talk with Fred Douglass to-day, who seemed exceedingly glad to see me -- I certainly was glad to see him for I do so admire his

²¹⁷ Letter to Jane Lampton Clemens, 24 August 1853, *Mark Twain's Letters, vol. 1:1853-1866*, ed. Edgar Marquess Branch, Michael B. Frank, and Kenneth M. Sanderson. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

²¹⁸ Arthur G. Pettit, "Mark Twain and the Negro, 1867-1869", *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Apr. 1971), 89.

²¹⁹ Arthur G. Pettit, "Mark Twain and the Negro, 1867-1869", *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Apr. 1971), 89.

‘spunk.’”²²⁰ The friendship between the men continued on through the years; in 1881, Twain wrote to President James Garfield, warmly recommending that Douglass be retained as marshal of the District of Columbia.²²¹ One might argue that a recommendation for an outstanding individual like Frederick Douglass speaks more about Douglass than it does about Twain, but it remains a part of the picture in examining Twain’s words and actions for bigotry.

In 1868, Mark Twain met Harriet Beecher Stowe, and by 1871, he was renting her brother-in-law’s house in Hartford. By 1874, the house Twain built next door to Stowe in the Nook Farm area was complete and Twain and his family moved in. For twenty years then, Twain lived happily in Hartford’s intellectual community, sharing dinners, entertainments, discussion groups and public and private events with Mr. and Mrs. Stowe; Horace Bushnell; James Hammond Trumbull; John and Isabelle Hooker (Mrs. Stowe’s sister and brother-in-law); Charles Dudley Warner; and Rev. Joseph Twichell. While no direct Twain commentary about *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* survives, in Twain’s letters, he measures the success of his books against Stowe’s.²²² Maintaining this amicable relationship for two decades, along with those of the other Republican members of his Hartford coterie suggests that Twain was, at least, comfortable in their company.

Another clue to the evolution of Mark Twain’s racial views comes in his publication of “A True Story, Repeated Word for Word As I Heard It,” in *The Atlantic Monthly* in November 1874. Mark Twain met Mary Ann Cord (called “Aunt Rachel,”) the subject of “A True Story,” in Elmira, New York in the summer of 1874. She told Twain the story of her enslavement, her forced

²²⁰ UVa Library Press Release, March 31, 1997. “Important Mark Twain Letter Acquired By U. VA. Library.” www.lib.virginia.edu/old-press/96-97/twain.html. Accessed 7/3/09.

²²¹ UVa Library Press Release, March 31, 1997. “Important Mark Twain Letter Acquired By U. VA. Library.” www.lib.virginia.edu/old-press/96-97/twain.html. Accessed 7/3/09.

²²² Leland Krauth, *Mark Twain & Company: Six Literary Relations* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 89-93.

separation from her husband and children and her chance meeting with her youngest son Henry twelve years after he had been sold away from her. Twain recounts the story "word for word," having recorded it immediately after hearing it.²²³

The beginning of the story paints the background:

It was summer-time, and twilight. We were sitting on the porch of the farmhouse, on the summit of the hill, and "Aunt Rachel" was sitting respectfully below our level, on the steps—for she was our Servant, and colored. She was of mighty frame and stature; she was sixty years old, but her eye was undimmed and her strength unabated. She was a cheerful, hearty soul, and it was no more trouble for her to laugh than it is for a bird to sing. She was under fire now, as usual when the day was done. That is to say, she was being chaffed without mercy, and was enjoying it. She would let off peal after peal of laughter, and then sit with her face in her hands and shake with throes of enjoyment which she could no longer get breath enough to express. It was such a moment as this a thought occurred to me, and I said:

"Aunt Rachel, how is it that you've lived sixty years and never had any trouble?"

She stopped quaking. She paused, and there was moment of silence. She turned her face over her shoulder toward me, and said, without even a smile in her voice:

"Misto C-----, is you in 'arnest?"

It surprised me a good deal; and it sobered my manner and my speech, too. I said:

"Why, I thought--that is, I meant--why, you can't have had any trouble. I've never heard you sigh, and never seen your eye when there wasn't a laugh in it."²²⁴

²²³ Shelley Fisher Fishkin. "Race and the Politics of Memory: Mark Twain and Paul Lawrence Dunbar." *Journal of American Studies*, 40; (2006), 284.

²²⁴ Mark Twain, "A True Story, Repeated Word for Word As I Heard It." *The Atlantic Monthly*. (Nov. 1874), 591.

"Aunt Rachel" goes to tell her story in vernacular, without further commentary or interruption from her interviewer. Her words pack emotional power and honesty and the pain in her story is both personal and universal. Twain backs away from his usual ironic stance and allows this woman to speak with dignity and feeling. More importantly though, in his introduction, cited above, he makes absolutely clear that he had been a fool; witnessing this woman laughing heartily and enjoying his teasing led him to draw the deeply fallacious conclusion that this black woman had lived without trouble or grief during her sixty years, knowing that she lived fifty of those years in a slave nation. By the end of the story, his blindness becomes almost unimaginable, and one understands the intensity of her horror and her sudden coldness, as she turns toward him "without a smile even in her voice." Revealing his humiliating short-sightedness without comment or excuse, Twain suggests that white people might frequently mistake natural warmth and good nature for a lack of suffering or limited understanding. In yielding the floor to Aunt Rachel, he allows her an opportunity to stand on the public plinth and give lie to those delusional impressions.

In the *Atlantic Monthly* of December 1875, William Dean Howells wrote about how the vast majority of critics misunderstood "A True Story."

The shyness of an enlightened and independent press respecting this history was something extremely amusing to see, and we could fancy it a spectacle of delightful interest to the author, if it had not such disheartening features. Mostly the story was described in the notices of the magazine as a humorous sketch by Mark Twain; sometimes it was mentioned as a paper out of the author's usual line; again it was handled non-committally as one of Mark Twain's extravagances. Evidently, the critical mind feared a lurking joke. Not above two or three notices out of hundreds recognized A True Story for what it was, namely, a study of character as true as life itself,

strong, tender, and most movingly pathetic in its perfect fidelity to tragic fact.²²⁵

Illustrating the chilly response to “A True Story” is Louisa Chandler Moulton’s column in the *New York Tribune* of October 1874: “Mark Twain can be so very funny that we are as naturally dissatisfied with him, when he is not funny at all, as we should be with a parrot that could not talk, or a rose that had no odor.”²²⁶

Shelley Fisher Fishkin contends that it was contact with people he met in eastern cities, including former slaves like Mary Ann Cord, that shattered Mark Twain’s illusions and made him recognize the truth about slavery.

Twain’s move to the East coast, and people he met not only in Elmira, but also in Boston and Hartford—including Frederick Douglass—helped shape his awareness of both the real nature of slavery, AND the continuing legacies of it in American society; they helped him understand the racism that prevented many African-Americans, even after slavery had been ended, from realizing their dreams and from living full lives.²²⁷

Most tellingly, as “A True Story” begins, “ ‘Aunt Rachel’ was sitting respectfully below our level, on the steps—for she was our Servant, and colored.” Aunt Rachel’s physical position reflects not only the expectations of her society, but also the psychological mind set of the speaker in the story. However, toward the end of the story, “Aunt Rachel had gradually risen, while she warmed

²²⁵ William Dean Howells, “Recent Literature.” *Atlantic Monthly*. 36, (December 1875), 760.

²²⁶ Louise Chandler Moulton, “Boston. Literary Notes.” *New York Tribune*, October 15, 1874.

²²⁷ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Mark Twain’s America,” *Authors’ Corner*, April 11, 1997. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/authors_corner/jan-june97/fishkin_4-1, accessed 7/3/09.

to her subject, and now she towered above us, black against the stars.”²²⁸ Not only has she risen to the height of the narrator, but she now towers over him, superior in the wisdom of her suffering, in the strength of goodness faced with evil, and even in her art in recounting her truth. This “rising” of Aunt Rachel in stature reflects Mark Twain’s personal understanding: beginning his adulthood as a racist, he comes to understand that not only are African Americans his equals, but sometimes, they “tower above” him. There may also be an element of fear here, should such a towering figure ever decide to retaliate.

The insights Mark Twain earned over the years continued to mature, but rarely did they erupt in print with the manifest tragedy of “A True Story.” Perhaps that experience of being unexpectedly unfunny — and therefore — misunderstood, informed and reinforced the irony Twain wielded in composing the work for which he is most well known. After all, Twain mistakes Aunt Rachel’s sweet and laughing nature to mean that her life has been trouble-free; in a small way, Twain, too, was frequently mistaken for being simply a cynical quipster, whose white suit, cigar and wit were always meant to entertain.

Huckleberry Finn, written while Twain lived in Hartford and published in 1885, has been a focus for literary critics who point out that the African-American character Jim is portrayed as a patient fool, a dupe for Huck and Tom, a continuation of the role played by blacks in minstrel shows, for the amusement of whites.²²⁹ Furthermore, at the end of the book, we learn nothing about Jim’s fate; he simply disappears into a dark future, as Huck Finn assures the reader, “There ain’t no more to write about.” As Bernard Bell asserts, “Twain — nostalgically and metaphorically

²²⁹ James S. Leonard, Thomas Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis, eds. *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn*. (Durham: Duke University Press: 1992), 152.

— sells Jim down river for laughs at the end.”²³⁰ Toni Morrison reads the racial dynamic similarly, noting, “the apparently limitless store of love and compassion the black man has for his white friend and white masters; and his assumption that the whites are indeed what they say they are, superior and adult.”²³¹

Scholars have speculated for years about the causes and extent of Mark Twain’s transformation from the son of slave-holders to an author whose writings became “overwhelmingly antiracist, anti-imperialist and revolutionary” according to Helen Scott and others.²³² Richard Lowry cites several possible seeds of change; after noting that Twain carried his Missouri prejudices with him in his migration north, he continues:

However, after marrying into a family with abolitionist antecedents and, most particularly, after discovering “the Matter of Hannibal” as the source of his writerly inspiration, Twain’s attitudes towards African Americans clearly underwent a change. By the 1880’s he was speaking at blacks-only gatherings, and in that same period he paid the board for the final years of the first African American to graduate from Yale Law School. Accompanying these liberal politics was a deep personal investment in African American culture that was evident in his relish for African American gospel music and in his use of black voices to animate the “low-down and ornery” voice of Huck. Twain was explicit about his debts to African America: he identified both the signifying brilliance of the Hannibal slave Jerry, and the delicate artistry of the spoken ghost tale “The Golden Arm,” which he heard as a boy...²³³

²³⁰ Bernard W. Bell, “Twain’s ‘Nigger’ Jim: The Tragic Face Behind the Minstrel Mask.” James S. Leonard, Thomas Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis, eds. *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn*. (Durham: Duke University Press: 1992). 138.

²³¹ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 56.

²³² Helen Scott, “The Mark Twain they didn’t teach us about in school,” *International Socialist Review* ,10, (Winter 2000), 62.

²³³ Richard S. Lowry, “Mark Twain and Whiteness.” Peter B. Messent, Louis J. Budd, *A Companion to Mark Twain: Blackwell Companion to Literature and Culture: 37*. (Malden, MA: Oxford Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2005), 54.

Arthur G. Pettit suggests that Samuel Clemens' "personal response to the Negro" changed decisively between 1867 and 1869; "Clemens' clash with New England and Midwestern 'pilgrims' on the *Quaker City* tour in 1867, followed by his position as a newspaper reporter in the nation's capital in 1868, doubtless convinced him that a certain amount of reform was in order."²³⁴ In addition, Pettit suggests that his marriage into the Langdon family and his exposure to the leading international intellectuals of his era helped him along, but that his black characters "still lagged somewhat behind Clemens' personal efforts to acquire a more tolerant attitude toward Negroes in general."²³⁵

However, Pettit's commentary might not withstand the force of Shelley Fisher Fishkin's arguments. Fishkin first began to suspect Mark Twain had been insufficiently understood when she learned that he had referred to Jerry, a slave he remembered from his childhood, as "the greatest orator in the United States," and earlier than that, "the greatest man in the United States."²³⁶ In addition, Mark Twain had written about a ten year-old black boy named Jimmy as "the most artless, sociable, exhaustless talker," "to whom he listened, 'as one who receives a revelation.'"²³⁷

Fishkin became convinced that "black speakers had played a central role in the genesis not only of Twain's black characters but of his most important white one: Huck Finn."²³⁸ Citing the slave Jim's selflessness in giving up his own freedom to remain with the injured Tom, Fishkin suggests that Mark Twain portrays not only Jim's virtue and compassion, but in the tacit foiling of

²³⁴ Arthur G. Pettit, "Mark Twain and the Negro, 1867-1869", *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Apr. 1971), 95.

²³⁵ Arthur G. Pettit, "Mark Twain and the Negro, 1867-1869", *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Apr. 1971), 96.

²³⁶ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Huck's Black Voice," *Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 20, Issue 4 (Autumn 96), 81.

²³⁷ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Huck's Black Voice," *Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 20, Issue 4 (Autumn 96), 81.

²³⁸ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Huck's Black Voice," *Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 20, Issue 4, (Autumn 96), 81.

his behavior with that of the whites, demonstrates white obtuseness and injustice; the white characters recognize that some reward for Jim is in order, but their only reward is a vow “not to curse him no more,” along with his chained imprisonment, bread and water.²³⁹ As Fishkin asserts,

Twain

knew that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, a black man could do — including selflessly sacrificing his freedom, the only thing of value he had — that would make white society see beyond the color of his skin. And Mark Twain knew that depicting racists with perfect pitch would expose the viciousness of their world view like nothing else could.²⁴⁰

Mark Twain’s fiction continues to arouse such revolted recognition and opprobrium because, Fishkin contends, it “can grab us by the throat and thrust our nose into foulness so deep the smell is suffocating.”²⁴¹

Thus, the ending that so offends the modern reader is a revelation of a disturbing reality.

Fishkin sees the dehumanization of Jim, the blind failure to recognize not only his humanity, but his superiority and nobility. Nonetheless, unlike many other Twain critics, she believes this is the point that Mark Twain was making:

In the book’s famous ending — variously maligned as a failure, a mistake, a retreat, or worse — what do we find? Incarcerated in a tiny shack with a ludicrous assortment of snakes, rats and spiders put there by an

²³⁹ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Mark Twain’s America,” Authors’ Corner, April 11, 1997. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/authors_corner/jan-june97/fishkin_4-1>, accessed 7/3/09.

²⁴⁰ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Mark Twain’s America,” Authors’ Corner, April 11, 1997. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/authors_corner/jan-june97/fishkin_4-1>, accessed 7/3/09.

²⁴¹ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Mark Twain’s America,” Authors’ Corner, April 11, 1997. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/authors_corner/jan-june97/fishkin_4-1>, accessed 7/3/09

authority figure who claims to have his best interests at heart, Jim is denied information that he needs and is forced to perform a series of pointless and exhausting tasks. After risking his life to get the freedom that unbeknownst to him is already his, after proving himself to be a paragon of moral virtue who towers over everyone around him, this legally-free black man is still denied respect—and is still in chains. All of this happens not at the hands of charlatans, the duke and the king, but at the initiative of a respectable Tom Sawyer and churchgoing citizens like the Phelps and their neighbors.

Is what America did to the ex-slaves any less insane than what Tom Sawyer put Jim through in the novel? ... “One of the functions of comedy,” (Ralph) Ellison said, “is to allow us to deal with the unspeakable. And this Twain did consistently.” What is the history of post-Emancipation race relations in the United States if not a series of maneuvers as cruelly gratuitous as the indignities inflicted on Jim...?²⁴²

Fishkin suggests that we read Twain’s work with an eye for his sense of irony; the racism he reveals is our ugly American reflection in the mirror. This is not the way Twain believed the story *should* end; this is the way it *would* end, with Jim simply evaporating from Huck’s consciousness. Perhaps sophisticated modern readers have greater difficulty in seeing his point because we are influenced by what we already know, that Samuel Clemens came by his tolerance the hard way. His portrayal of the myriad humiliations of African-Americans look to us more like his acts, his choice to abandon Jim, rather than white exploitation and egocentricity.

Supporting Dr. Fisher’s position are varying constructions of Twain’s previously cited remark to his mother about blackening his face.

As Eric Lott has pointed out, the young printer’s joke about blacking his face expresses a “subterranean” fantasy: “the lure to *be* black” that was expressed most

²⁴² Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Mark Twain’s America,” Authors’ Corner, April 11, 1997.
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/authors_corner/jan-june97/fishkin_4-1 accessed 7/3/09

popularly in minstrel shows, where white men did literally blacken their skin, and sing, dance and joke as “authentic” darkies from the plantation and the urban street. Delighted white audiences, including Twain, found such entertainment a powerful vehicle for fantasies of identification with pre-industrial frivolity, leisure, sexuality, and playfulness, all of which they both longed for and feared. At the same time, the accompanying caricature and ridicule of black lives so crucial to minstrelsy, made such feelings safe by creating a wall of racial difference, and a distinct hierarchy which allowed audiences to accrue an ancillary wage of whiteness by virtue of their distance “above” the antics they saw on stage. Out of this dynamic of anxiety and ambition, lure and loathing, emerged another increment of the wage of whiteness: the distinct awareness of “whiteness” as a dominant, and dominating, racial category.²⁴³

Thus, this very longing for the “freedom” of blackness (in expressing frivolity and sexuality) is safely distant from white experience; whites must consciously choose to wear a mask to express these desires. That whites have this choice, while blacks do not, could be construed as one more natural and comforting aspect of white “superiority,” but if Eric Lott is correct, Twain longed for blackness as a form of freedom that he, a white man, was ironically denied.

Furthermore, Richard S. Lowry argues that Twain’s references to whiteness are not always positive. When his father is threatening to beat Huck Finn, “(T)here warn’t no color in his face where his face showed; it was white; not like another man’s white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body’s flesh crawl – a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white.”²⁴⁴ In these lines, Mark Twain places Pap on the farthest, whitest end of the color-line, and associates this

²⁴³ Richard S. Lowry, “Mark Twain and Whiteness.” Peter B. Messent, Louis J. Budd, A *Companion to Mark Twain: Blackwell Companion to Literature and Culture*: 37. (Malden, MA: Oxford Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2005), 56.

²⁴⁴ Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*. (New York: Plain Label Books, 1931), 20.

“...whiteness...as it formed around the core of male anger.”²⁴⁵ Lowry also makes the point that through his drunkenness, violence and bitterness, Pap ultimately cares about no one but himself; the rest of the world is made of people who exist for him only as personal threats to his manhood. Pap also evokes the “evil slave-owner or overseer...Frederick Douglass’s Covey, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Simon Legree, and Harriet Jacobs’ Dr. Flint are each obsessed in their own way with “bossing;” and each terrorizes his charge with mysterious unpredictability.”²⁴⁶ This “tree-toad white,” “fish-belly white” Pap suggests a father who is nauseating, ghost-like, already dead at soul-level, floating belly up and horrifying through his son’s life.

Fueled by liquor and resentment, Pap is

gripped by an equal-opportunity violence that will take as its object anything at hand -- an old barrel, a black professor, his son, himself. Within the world of *Huckleberry Finn* this irrational explosiveness, despite Huck’s insistence to the contrary, makes Pap’s whiteness just like “another man’s white.”²⁴⁷

Yet, if failing to detect the irony in Mark Twain’s work today is understandable, there were certainly many more people who failed to “get it” in his own time. Part of this may be due to Twain’s refusal to drop hints to his readers about his true feelings, which might have undercut his satire.

For example, when Twain published *Huckleberry Finn* in three sections in the *Century* magazine, chapter fourteen was republished in the *Hartford Courant* on January 5, 1885. “The

²⁴⁵ Richard S. Lowry, “Mark Twain and Whiteness.” Peter B. Messent, Louis J. Budd, *A Companion to Mark Twain: Blackwell Companion to Literature and Culture*: 37. (Malden, MA: Oxford Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2005), 57.

²⁴⁶ Richard S. Lowry, “Mark Twain and Whiteness.” Peter B. Messent, Louis J. Budd, *A Companion to Mark Twain: Blackwell Companion to Literature and Culture*: 37. (Malden, MA: Oxford Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2005), 58.

²⁴⁷ Richard S. Lowry, “Mark Twain and Whiteness.” Peter B. Messent, Louis J. Budd, *A Companion to Mark Twain: Blackwell Companion to Literature and Culture*: 37. (Malden, MA: Oxford Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2005), 58.

Judgment of Solomon” was published with the subtitle, “How it was Viewed by an Observant Colored Scriptural Student,” a subtitle not included in the book. It seems likely that this subtitle would have been added by an editor at *The Hartford Courant*, and its presence changes entirely the way the chapter would be read.

First, chapter fourteen delineates a discussion — or a debate — about the wisdom of King Solomon, during which Jim seems to consistently miss Huck’s point. That impression is underscored by the double irony of labeling Jim, in the subtitle, “an observant colored scriptural student,” when his speech makes clear his lack of education, and the juxtaposition of the words, “colored” and the incongruously formal “scriptural student” would evoke chuckles.

Secondly, the subtitle directs the reader to believe that the following dialogue would be a farcical mockery of Jim. Frederick Woodard and Donnarae MacCann see in this scene Mark Twain’s literary minstrel show:

The “stage Negro’s” typical banter about wife troubles, profit making, spooks, and formal education is echoed in episodes in *Huckleberry Finn*...Jim gives his impression of “King Sollermun” and his harem in minstrel-like repartee...Throughout the novel Jim is stupefied by information that Huck shares with him, as when they discuss Louis XVI’s “little boy the dolphin.”²⁴⁸

Yet, the discussion about King Solomon and King Louis XVI bears another interpretation. Although it is clear that Jim misses the point of the Solomon story, not understanding that Solomon was only threatening to cut the child in half to determine which woman loved the child enough to save his life, but lose him, we readers are not absolutely certain that Huck gets that point either,

²⁴⁸ Fredrick Woodard and Donnarae MacCann. “Minstrel Shackles and Nineteenth Century ‘Liberality’ in *Huckleberry Finn*.” James S. Leonard, Thomas Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis, eds. *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn*. (Durham: Duke University Press: 1992), 145.

since he doesn't express it. Furthermore, Jim is not only inquisitive, he is smart enough to know that there are things he doesn't know. Huck never lets on that there's a limit to *his* knowledge.

Jim thinks metaphorically, comparing a child to a dollar bill, useless if cut in half. Furthermore, Jim thinks about what kind of man might devalue a human life—in his mind, that would be a man with a harem full of wives, and thus “'bout five million chillen runnin' roun' de house.”²⁴⁹

And here, by pitting Huck and Jim against one another in argument, the humor arises from several sources: the waywardness and creativity of Jim's mind and language; the apparently prurient interest on Jim's part in a harem irrelevant to Solomon's wisdom; *and* the pairing of two equally uneducated people, one of whom believes he is the superior of the other because of a few things “the widow” told him about (including a dolphin son of a king, rather than a dauphin). His final statement in the chapter, “I see it warn't no use wasting words -- you can't learn a nigger to argue. So I quit.”²⁵⁰ His giving up strikes us as funny (and disturbing because of the language) not only because Huck, with his allegedly mighty white mind, has been silenced by Jim, but also because we sense that Jim has defeated him with casuistry, energy and his own brand of imperturbable logic. Huck's poor white (or black, as Fishkin proves) language establishes that Huck is in no position to be “learning” anybody.

Interestingly, although the chapter is reproduced with the addition of the subtitle, the first paragraph in the text, which follows, was omitted in the *Hartford Courant*.

I told Jim all about what happened inside the wreck
and at the ferryboat, and I said these kinds of things was

²⁴⁹ Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*. (New York: Plain Label Books, 1931), ch. 14.

²⁵⁰ Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*. (New York: Plain Label Books, 1931), ch. 14.

adventures; but he said he didn't want no more adventures. He said that when I went in the Texas and he crawled back to get on the raft and found her gone he nearly died, because he judged it was all up with him anyway it could be fixed; for if he didn't get saved he would get drowned; and if he did get saved, whoever saved him would send him back home so as to get the reward, and then Miss Watson would sell him South, sure. Well, he was right; he was most always right; he had an uncommon level head for a nigger.²⁵¹

That last line of the chapter fourteen introductory paragraph sets up the "Judgment of Solomon" dispute between Huck and Jim. Without that paragraph and that line, the reader sees only Huck's disdain for "trying to teach a nigger to argue." *With* that paragraph, it's clear that it's not true disdain that Huck feels, but a brand of cowardice. He knows from the start that Jim "was most always right" and that he had "an uncommon level head for a nigger." In those condescending words, complete with slur, is a profound respect and an acknowledgment that though Huck would like to think of himself as "learning" Jim to argue, Jim already has him beaten.

Jim's questions to Huck also evoke other deeper, philosophical ideas.

"Is a cat a man, Huck?... Well, den, dey ain't no sense in a cat talkin' like a man. Is a cow a man? --er is a cow a cat?... Is a Frenchman a man?"²⁵²

Unspoken, but understood in this exchange, is that Jim, who will end up chained like livestock at the end of this book, is certainly as much as a man as any Frenchman. It is after this conversation that the frustrated Huck avers again that Jim is a hopelessly ignorant "nigger," after Jim has verbally defeated him and asked the unaskable question that echoes Sojourner Truth and the Abolitionist slogans, "Am I not a man?"

²⁵¹ Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*. (New York: Plain Label Books, 1931), ch. 14.

²⁵² Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*. (New York: Plain Label Books, 1931), ch. 14.

Why the *Hartford Courant* would seem to intentionally skew the “Solomon” story with its addition and subtraction may only be surmised, but it seems plausible that Charles Dudley Warner, the *Hartford Courant* editor and close friend of Twain, might want to lighten the tone to give his readers what they expected from Twain: humor. As a result of this editing, readers were prepared to laugh only at black Jim, not at Huck and Jim. While Warner was relatively progressive, in comparison to other newspaper editors of the period, in this case, he seems to have chosen the easy laugh rather than the principled stand. (It is notable that Warner “opined in print that higher education encouraged idleness among African Americans.”²⁵³) At the same time, Twain’s meanings and intentions must be clearly distinguished from his reception, especially in cases in which his work was edited and thus arguably distorted.

Beyond the *Hartford Courant* version of the chapter, Dr. Fishkin has argued convincingly that this episode should be interpreted in a sensitive and nuanced way.

I have come to recognize that other scenes which are often indicted as sheer minstrelsy are also only minstrelsy if you do not probe beneath the surface. I refer to the exchanges sometimes referred to as “Jim’s investments” etc. ... or the “Solomon” story...the “Solomon” story gives him the chance to condemn with impassioned anger anyone who treats a child’s life and welfare cavalierly. Both stories, then, culminate in statements that catapult Jim’s character far beyond a minstrel stereotype and that indict the shameless usurpation of a system that steals his labor, his liberty, and his children. Critics today...increasingly believe that Jim dons the minstrel mask as a strategic performance, playing a minstrel role when that is what a white person expects him

²⁵³ Shelley Fisher Fishkin. “Race and the Politics of Memory: Mark Twain and Paul Lawrence Dunbar.” *Journal of American Studies* (2006), 40; 285.

to do. As Ellison observed years ago, it is from behind that mask that Jim's humanity – and complexity — emerge.²⁵⁴

Some evidence that Mark Twain did understand African-Americans in all their humanity, complexity and potential arises from his Hartford years. While living in Hartford, the Clemens family employed a black butler, George Griffin.²⁵⁵ Griffin, a former slave, “came one day to wash the windows and stayed for eighteen years.”²⁵⁶ According to Twain, George was “shrewd, wise, polite, always good-natured, cheerful to gaiety, honest, religious, a cautious truth-speaker, devoted friend to the family.”²⁵⁷ On the third floor of the family home, George's room was maintained for him even after he had saved enough to purchase his own home nearby in the city.

Further proof that Twain's relationship with George profoundly affected him is found in his letter to a friend in which he grieves: “Susy is gone, George is gone, Libby Hamersley, Ned Bunce, Henry Robinson. The friends are passing, one by one; our house, where such warm blood and such dear blood flowed so freely, is become a cemetery.”²⁵⁸ In this passage, Twain laments the loss of George immediately after the loss of his beloved daughter, Susy, indicating George's primacy in his heart; this impression is further emphasized by the list of other lost friends, who, unlike George, require both first and last names to be recognized by Twain's correspondent. George, like Susy, needs no family name, because, to Twain, both were family.

²⁵⁴ Shelley Fisher Fishkin. “Race and the Politics of Memory: Mark Twain and Paul Lawrence Dunbar.” *Journal of American Studies* (2006), 40; 284.

²⁵⁵ My thanks to Shelley Fisher Fishkin for impressive work on Twain, so heavily underlying this chapter, and her assistance and insight in our correspondence in July 2009.

²⁵⁶ “After a Long Absence, Twain's Butler is to Return,” *The New York Times*, June, 18, 1994.

²⁵⁷ “After a Long Absence, Twain's Butler is to Return,” *The New York Times*, June, 18, 1994.

²⁵⁸ The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Letters Of Mark Twain, Complete* by Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens). Letter to Rev. Twitchell in Hartford dated March 4, 1900, accessed October 31, 2012.

Years earlier, during the 1893 economic crisis, Griffin visited Mark Twain in New York. In an unpublished account of that meeting, Twain wrote:

George called at the hotel, faultlessly dressed, as was his wont, we walked up town together...He had been serving as a waiter a couple of years, at the Union League Club acting as a banker for the other waiters, forty in number, of his own race...Also, he was lending to white men outside...The times were desperate, failure ruin everywhere, woe sat upon every countenance. I had seen nothing like it before, I have seen nothing like it since. But George's ark floated serene upon the troubled waters...he was a prosperous happy person about the only one thus conditioned I met in New York.²⁵⁹

Shelley Fisher Fishkin points out that George had become a lender to previously wealthy white men, (perhaps men including Mark Twain) and unlike those supposedly superior men, knew exactly how to manage his money and make it multiply.²⁶⁰ When he was with George that day in New York, Twain made an unplanned visit to the offices of two magazine publishers and seemed to relish the effect of his entrance with the well-dressed George.

On our way up town that day in New York I turned in at the Century building, made George go up with me. The array of clerks in the great counting-room glanced up with curiosity—a "white man" and a negro walking together was a new spectacle to them. The glances embarrassed George, but not me, for the companionship was proper; in some ways he was my equal, in some others my superior; besides, deep down in my interior I knew that the difference between any two of those poor transient things called human beings that have ever crawled about

²⁵⁹ Twain [Samuel Clemens], photocopy of manuscript of "A Family Sketch," 18b. Mark Twain Papers. Quoted with permission in Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 124.

²⁶⁰ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

the world then hid their little vanities in the compassionate shelter of the grave was but microscopic, trivial, a mere difference between worms.²⁶¹

Fishkin has expressed some thoughts about Mark Twain's bracketing *white man* in quotation marks:

Does it reflect the irony inherent in our often wildly inaccurate color-labeling of racial and social categories? Or might it imply his desire to distance himself from the privileges a "white" skin entailed? Might it suggest that he considered it foolish to take the term as indicating anything at all about a person? Does it reflect a thought that "race" may be more a social construction than a biological determinant? And what of the idea of black "superiority"? In the case at hand, Twain suspected, probably correctly, that George Griffin's talent for making and holding onto money was better than his own.²⁶²

Twain and society's typical association of whiteness with more wealth and success looks ludicrous in the light of the financial insecurity of Twain, the other Hartford white men of privilege and society at large, when juxtaposed with Griffin's growing financial confidence. While both men are self-made, in the classic American sense, Twain is conscious that the distance covered by Griffin far exceeded his own, since his whiteness gave him a relatively easy pass into the upper reaches of white society. Griffin, who had no such pass, worked serving others, and even in that capacity, had the foresight and acuity to build himself a business on the side and some financial security.

²⁶¹ Twain [Samuel Clemens], photocopy of manuscript of "A Family Sketch," 24b/27. Emphasis added. Published with permission in Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 124.

²⁶² Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 124-5.

Furthermore, Twain sees that in the eyes of the office clerks, the odd pair are simply a “white man” and a negro; in his own “deep down interior,” he knows the differences between them are microscopic. Twain seems almost amused by the “spectacle” they make, while Griffin is embarrassed. African-Americans had learned to be wary of white scrutiny and attention, but Twain enjoys the dissonance of breaking some unspoken social rule, all the while knowing that “the companionship was proper; in *some ways he was my equal, in some others my superior.*”

Shelley Fisher Fishkin comments tellingly about Twain’s subversive thought that blacks might be superior to whites:

Twain's comment that "what was base" in Tom Driscoll's character stemmed from "the white blood in him debased by the brutalizing effects of a long-drawn heredity of slave-owning" curiously echoes comments that were commonly expressed in the slave quarters, and were recorded in slave narratives. Thomas L. Webber writes,

Each generation of slaveholding families was thought to become more and more debased. According to [James C.] Pennington, "this decline in slaveholding families is a subject of observation and daily remark among slaves. . . . As far back as I can recollect, indeed, it was a remark among slaves, that every generation of slaveholders are more and more inferior." ²⁶³

If there were any doubt about Mark Twain’s being a racial subversive, it was erased in a public way in Twain’s adopted hometown in the *Hartford Courant* of January 15, 1898. In a review called “Mark Twain’s Mixed Pickles,” Charles DeKay discusses *Innocents Abroad*, and *Following the Equator*, which disappoint him on several counts, taking the author to task for “the injection of serious topics into his humorous papers, and occasional lapses into what they call

²⁶³ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 124-5.

coarseness.”²⁶⁴ However, the review reveals that Mark Twain has inverted the social hierarchy by insisting that brown skin is far superior to white for virtually all purposes:

The King’s jester used to insinuate wholesome truths when no one else dared to speak out against wrongs everybody felt and silently resented. Mark Twain is the people’s jester, and continues the tradition. With the utmost good humor he reproveth that bane of modern times, the slaughter of wild animals from a senseless love of murder...*But he is not jesting when he notes the superiority of black and coffee colored complexions to white faces; he is serious.* (Italics mine)

“The white man’s complexion makes no concealments; it can’t. It seems to have been designed as a catch-all for everything that can damage it. Ladies have to paint it and powder it and cosmetic it and diet it with arsenic and caramel and be always enticing it and persuading it and pestering it and fussing at it to make it beautiful; and they do not succeed. But these efforts show what they think of the natural complexion as distributed. As distributed, it needs these helps. The complexion they try to counterfeit is one which nature restricts to a few—to the very few. To ninety-nine persons, she gives a bad complexion, to the hundredth a good one. The hundredth can keep it—how long? Ten years perhaps. The advantage is with the Zulu, I think. He starts with a beautiful complexion and it will last him through. And as for the (East) Indian brown—firm, smooth, blemishless, pleasant and restful to the eye, afraid of no color, harmonizing with all colors, and adding grace to them all—I think there is no sort of chance for the average white complexion against that rich and perfect tint”²⁶⁵

De Kay acknowledges Twain’s comic genius in his mixed review, but his restrained response is telling. His only commentary is, “But he is not jesting when he notes the superiority of black and coffee colored complexions to white faces; he is serious.” Striking this note of surprise,

²⁶⁴ Charles De Kay, “Mark Twain’s Mixed Pickles.” Hartford Courant, Jan. 15, 1898, BR40.

²⁶⁵ Charles De Kay, “Mark Twain’s Mixed Pickles.” Hartford Courant, Jan. 15, 1898, BR40.

he warns the reader that Mark Twain is not always joking and that in his role as the jester, he is “insinuating wholesome truths when no one else dared to speak out against wrongs everybody felt and silently resented.” Whether this social racial inversion is one of those “wholesome truths,” he refrains from saying.

Furthermore, De Kay asserts, Mark Twain recommends “the quick extermination of the blacks” in Rhodesia “by bullets and by poison, rather than the old-fashioned Rhodesian method of making wars on the natives, taking their cattle and enslaving them. This grave argument is a favorite with him. He holds up to the detestation of the world the hypocrisy and slow cruelty of the Anglo-Saxon in his dealings with his defenseless brethren round about the world.”²⁶⁶ De Kay “gets” Mark Twain. The choice of the words, “defenseless brethren” makes clear that he shares Twain’s disgust with Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy and cruelty.

While the review, overall, is not entirely laudatory, Charles De Kay’s take on Mark Twain’s counter-cultural and revolutionary sentiments is impressive even by today’s standards. Perhaps the long-trying friendship between Twain and *Hartford Courant* editor Charles Dudley Warner convinced the reviewer that as long as he was fair to Twain, he could not go far wrong. That this was acceptable, or at least not objectionable to its Hartford readership in 1898 may be evidence of either public affection or tolerance for Mark Twain, total indifference to him, or quite liberal thinking.

Another fictional work, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, still raises questions about Twain’s ambivalence about race. The titular character is a lawyer with an interest in fingerprints, and over the course of twenty years, he has recorded most of the residents in the southern town of Dawson’s

²⁶⁶ Charles De Kay, “Mark Twain’s Mixed Pickles.” *Hartford Courant*, Jan. 15, 1898, BR40.

Landing. The fingerprints eventually reveal to the town the plot of the first half of the novel, in which a light-skinned slave mother, Roxy, exchanges her baby for her master's child. The switch goes undetected until Roxy's son, now called Tom, murders his uncle. Within the early pages of the novel are moving passages recounting Roxy's nearly suicidal torment when she fears her baby will be "sold down the river." Nonetheless, the denouement of the trial, revealing the "selfish" switch of the babies and Tom's true heritage, has disappointed many readers and critics. Christopher Gair suggests that the novel "partially shares the conservatism of ... (hugely popular plantation novels) and finally, will not permit Roxy's power to survive."²⁶⁷ Yet Gair concludes that Twain was not a racist but simply was unable to address the ideology of racial hierarchy without "reinscribing" it. Similarly, Shelley Fisher Fishkin believes that Twain's Southern racial attitudes grew into a profound respect for African-Americans after his prolonged residence in the North, and that his works, especially those written in his later years, as was *Puddn'head Wilson*, must be read in that light.²⁶⁸

Other critics have not been as generous; Sinead Moynihan notes that Twain failed in emphasizing "the importance of environment in shaping character while simultaneously suggesting the innateness of blackness."²⁶⁹ Indisputably, Roxy, probably the most intelligent character in the novel, and Twain's most fully developed female character, completely buys into the racial hierarchy of her time and place; when her son's cowardice disappoints her, she scolds him, saying, "Pah! It makes me sick! It's de nigger in you, dat's what it is! Thirty-one parts o' you is white, en

²⁶⁷ Christopher Gair, "Whitewashed Exteriors: Mark Twain's Imitation Whites." *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2, *Nineteenth Century Literature*, August 2005, 205.

²⁶⁸ Shelley Fisher Fishkin. *Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.)

²⁶⁹ Sinead Moynihan. "History Repeating Itself: Passing, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *The President's Daughter*." *Callaloo*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (Summer 2009), 813.

on'y one part nigger, en dat po' little part is your *soul*. Tain't wuth savin'; tain't wuth totin' out on a shovel en throwin' in de gutter..."²⁷⁰

But even this atavistic view of race, repeated throughout the novel, is not Twain's greatest sin, according to Stephen Railton, who claims that Twain "represses," through Pudd'nhead Wilson, what Twain has already told us. "...(W)hen Wilson tells his white listeners that they do not know, and do not need to think about, why those babies were switched, we are witnessing the erasure of slavery. We see history being replaced with a communally self-serving narrative that ironically labels as 'selfish' the Other it is excluding."²⁷¹ Railton's premise, that Twain, in a sense, erases slavery from white consciousness through Wilson's words, is supported by other textual evidence. In the first chapter of the novel, Twain introduces the gentry of the town, all "F.F.V.", descendants of the First Families of Virginia. Among them is "Colonel Cecil Burleigh Essex, another F.F.V. of formidable calibre; however, with him we have no concern."²⁷² Essex is the white father of Roxy's child, and in dismissing him so immediately from reader awareness, Twain accomplishes several goals consistent with the erasure of slavery from white minds. Firstly, in dispatching Essex, the story of Roxy's impregnation is also dispatched; in such an unequal and apparently one-time pairing, white-on-slave rape appears likely, and Twain can then avoid positing that image in the readers' minds. Secondly, the prevailing idea of hypodescent, the assignment of the perceived "inferior" race to mixed race children (also known as the "one-drop" rule) not only forms the basis

²⁷⁰ Mark Twain. *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Other Tales*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 88.

²⁷¹ Stephen Railton. "The Tragedy of Mark Twain, by Pudd'nhead Wilson." *Nineteenth Century Literature*, (Vol. 56, No. 4 March 2002), 535.

²⁷² Mark Twain. *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Other Tales*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

of Wilson's legal case, but whittles down all the tragic complexities of the story to the seemingly immutable and dispositive fact of race.

Railton also documents the author's changes to the novel manuscript, which indicate that Twain abridged a rumination that traced the baseness of Roxy's son to his "white blood," cutting it down to "the awful difference made between black and white."²⁷³ While Shelley Fisher Fishkin cites this as proof of Twain's racial evolution in thought, it is significant, Railton asserts, that these words were *excised*. Railton also cites Twain's own words about the exchange of babies as "flippantly and farcically described" in an earlier chapter, a characterization that attempts to drain the pathos from Roxy's terrible pain.²⁷⁴

Additionally, the play derived from *Pudd'n'head Wilson* was endorsed eagerly by Twain (no doubt because he profited from it shortly after being driven almost to bankruptcy), and the play morphs from the "tragedy" of the novel's title to full-fledged comedy, making Roxy the butt of jokes. Railton perceives that here is the tragedy, "that whatever Clemens thought about white 'baseness' or black 'fineness,' 'Mark Twain' was not allowed to say those things to his audience."²⁷⁵ Examining this statement closely requires knowing what scholars know about Twain -- his personal generosity to and warm friendships with African-Americans; the abolitionist leanings of his extended family; the parts of his books that he edited out or would release only posthumously -- and concluding that he wrote what he did, the way he did, in order to keep his readers blithely laughing, and buying his books.

²⁷³ Stephen Railton. "The Tragedy of Mark Twain, by Pudd'nhead Wilson." *Nineteenth Century Literature*, (Vol. 56, No. 4 March 2002), 536.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 537.

²⁷⁵ Stephen Railton. "The Tragedy of Mark Twain, by Pudd'nhead Wilson." *Nineteenth Century Literature*, (Vol. 56, No. 4 March 2002), 543.

Further evidence of his financial motives are Mark Twain's comments in 1901 about a Missouri lynching. As Donnaræ MacCann analyzes his arguments, Twain assumes that the guilt of the black victim will be proven in court; the mob need not shortcut the legal process.²⁷⁶ Indeed he says, "I do not dwell upon the provocation which moved the people to these crimes, for that has nothing to do with the matter; the only question is, does the assassin take the law into his own hands? It is very simple, and very just. If the assassin be proved to have usurped the law's prerogative in righting his wrongs, that ends the matter; a thousand provocations are no defense."²⁷⁷

Furthermore, MacCann notes that

Twain continues his analysis by arguing that a lynching is counterproductive in relation to the ultimate goal of the White community: the protection of White women from Black rapists. He says that a luridly described happening will be such a "much-talked-of event that it will be "followed by imitations." Twain's critique of lynching is not essentially different from that of Thomas Nelson Page when Page is promulgating the myth that Black males focus on Caucasian females.²⁷⁸

In addition to these discouraging thoughts, MacCann points out that Twain did not forsake his Southern friends, in spite of his decades in the North. He made certain that his lynching essay would not be published during his lifetime, for if it was, "I shouldn't have even half a friend left

²⁷⁶ Donnaræ MacCann, *White Supremacy in Children's Literature: Characterizations of African-Americans, 1830-1900*. (Garland Publishing: New York, 1998), 172-173.

²⁷⁷ Mark, Twain. "The United States of Lyncherdom." <<http://people.virginia.edu/~sfr/enam482e/lyncherdom.html>>, Accessed 4/19/2012.

²⁷⁸ Donnaræ MacCann, *White Supremacy in Children's Literature: Characterizations of African-Americans, 1830-1900*. (Garland Publishing: New York, 1998), 173.

down there [in the South].”²⁷⁹ Thus as much as Twain opposed violence against African-Americans, he valued his Southern popularity and commercial interests over the importance of his attempt to discourage that violence.

Without a doubt, Mark Twain struggled with his own bigotry, and suspected that it came from a place of blind ignorance. He was not entirely successful, but at least he let more open-minded forces wash over him. Of course, while it is impossible to discover exactly the degree of influence Hartford, or his wife, or the intelligentsia of the Northeast had on Mark Twain, clearly at least one former slave-turned-Connecticut businessman, George Griffin, earned his unquestioned loyalty and respect, and a place as a family member in his home. The Connecticut tolerance that allowed such a transformation, and the Connecticut intellectual coterie that applauded it, had to influence Samuel Clemens to reject some of his earlier racist roots. He felt grounded in Connecticut, and his experiences there, along with the evolving racial thinking he absorbed during that time, shed light on his assumptions and values. It may be unreasonable of twenty-first century readers to hope that a nineteenth century man, even one who knew the truth in his heart, as Samuel Clemens did, would bet his income and his celebrity as Mark Twain on behalf of a persecuted people.

²⁷⁹ As quoted in Donnarae MacCann, *White Supremacy in Children's Literature: Characterizations of African-Americans, 1830-1900*. (Garland Publishing: New York, 1998), 177.

CHAPTER IV

Harriet Beecher Stowe and Abolition in Connecticut Newspapers

It remains a point of pride in Connecticut even today that Harriet Beecher Stowe was a native daughter, who began her life in Litchfield, Connecticut in 1811, and remained in the state until her family's move to Ohio when she was 21, and then chose to live out her "retirement" in Hartford. The experiences that inspired her famed novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, derived from stories and memories of living in the border state of Ohio, along with daily reports in the nation's newspapers about the consequences of the Fugitive Slave Act;²⁸⁰ but the values that undergird the novel are clearly Connecticut Congregationalist. Both sides of her family, the Beechers and the Footes, were part of the Connecticut establishment; her father was the famed minister Lyman Beecher and her brother was Henry Ward Beecher, a nationally celebrated preacher. As a descendant of two old New England families,²⁸¹ the daughter of one minister, the wife of another, and the sister of six ministers, Stowe would have been well respected, even without the Beecher name, but that certainly added to her standing. In addition, she was well connected in Hartford, where her sister Catherine Beecher had founded the Hartford Female Seminary, where Harriet had taught before the family decamped for Ohio. So it was not surprising that upon her husband's retirement from teaching in 1863 that they should move to the Nook Farm neighborhood of Hartford, where both family and friends lived. Harriet Beecher Stowe may have been a rebel elsewhere in the nation, but her philosophy of human rights with all of its flaws, her foundational Christian thinking and her activism, anchored at her kitchen table, all were firmly rooted in her native soil of Connecticut.

²⁸⁰ Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe, a Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 202-217.

²⁸¹ Boardman, William F. J. *The Ancestry of William Francis Joseph Boardman*. (Hartford, Connecticut. 1906.)

A frequent contributor of stories and short pieces to magazines and newspapers including the *Hartford Daily Courant*, Stowe was no stranger to the newspapers when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first appeared serially in June 1851. Her status as a writer, all her state connections, along with her family's later friendship with Nook Farm neighbor, Charles Dudley Warner, editor of the *Hartford Daily Courant* during her residence in Hartford, put her and her family squarely among a small coterie of Connecticut's intellectual and social elite.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's political impact was claimed to have been so great that it was she who started the Civil War,²⁸² but her work was not viewed as controversial in Connecticut. Like many other Northerners, she considered immediate abolitionists "ultra" or far too extreme, and her moderate views raised few eyebrows.²⁸³ In fact, the appearance of her novel merited almost no commentary in the Connecticut press. Perhaps editors, with typical New England modesty, viewed her as one of their own, and therefore felt it would be almost unseemly to cover her work favorably. Furthermore, her novel, while viewed as scurrilous by slaveholders, simply seemed to reinforce the beliefs of most Connecticut residents about the evils of slavery. But most importantly, Stowe presented what white Northerners felt were the only acceptable solutions to the "negro problem:" slaves should be freed, protected, educated, christianized and then, deported as missionaries to Africa. With this neat resolution of the issue proposed in the text itself and its afterword, Stowe echoed the feelings of most Northern whites, even those like herself with exceptional compassion for African-Americans.

²⁸² This phrase was attributed to Lincoln, but is thought to arise from an apocryphal story. See "Lincoln, Stowe, and the 'Little Woman/Great War' Story: The Making, and Breaking, of a Great American Anecdote" by Daniel R Vollaro in the *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Volume 30, Issue 1, (Winter 2009).

²⁸³ She shared the opinion of the rest of her large family that Garrisonians "were regarded as a species of mono-maniacs who ... had lost all sight of proportion and good judgment." Reynolds, David S. *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle for America*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2011), 91.

An examination of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* opens many American perspectives on the slavery question through its characters. Uncle Tom, though nominally the protagonist, portrays a suffering Christ-like figure rather than a political one. But George, an articulate escaped slave, speaks directly to the question of the possibility of black success in the United States:

...our race have equal rights to mingle in the American republic as the Irishman, the German...Granted, they have. We ought to be free to meet and mingle,-- to rise by our individual worth, without any consideration of caste or color; and those who deny us this right are false to their own professed principles of human equality. We ought, in particular, to be allowed *here*. We have *more* than the rights of common men;-- we have the claim of an injured race for reparation. But, then, *I do not want it*; I want a country, a nation of my own....As a Christian patriot, as a teacher of Christianity, I go to my country, -- my chosen, my glorious Africa!...I go to *Liberia*, not as an Elysium of romance, but as to a *field of work*.²⁸⁴

Here Stowe makes George the ideal black Christian, one who seeks no reparation from the United States except the leaving of it; one who will take his (New England) work ethic to Africa; one who will christianize the continent in a way impossible for white Americans.²⁸⁵ By asserting that African-Americans have more than the rights of other immigrants, Stowe puts an unpleasant thought into white minds: what indeed is owed to these people? Not only were Americans unwilling to "give" them their rights, or offer reparations of any kind, but they wanted them gone, if the numbers of donations to colonization societies are any indication.²⁸⁶ Inserting the question of

²⁸⁴ Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly*. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 610-611.

²⁸⁵ Since it was believed that that whites were constitutionally unfit to survive in Africa, it was only fitting that black Americans were the only ones who could survive to do this work. See See Hugh Davis. "Northern Colonizationists and Free Blacks, 1823-1937: A Case Study of Leonard Bacon." *Journal of the Early Republic*. Vol 17, No. 4 (Winter 1997).

²⁸⁶ See Hugh Davis. "Northern Colonizationists and Free Blacks, 1823-1937: A Case Study of Leonard Bacon." *Journal of the Early Republic*. Vol 17, No. 4 (Winter 1997). In addition, many *Hartford Daily Courant* articles reporting the quarterly meetings of these societies, Connecticut donations exceed those of more populated states like Massachusetts and New York State.

reparations in George's words, Stowe sets up her own viewpoint in the book's "Concluding Remarks:"

Does not every American Christian owe to the African race some effort at reparation for the wrongs that the American nation has brought upon them? Shall the doors of churches and school-houses be shut upon them? ...Do you say, "We don't want them here; let them go to Africa"?

That the providence of God has provided a refuge in Africa, is, indeed, a great and noticeable fact; but that is no reason why the church of Christ should throw off the responsibility to this outcast race which her profession demands of her. To fill up Liberia with an ignorant, inexperienced, half-barbarized race, just escaped from the chains of slavery, would be only to prolong, for ages, the period of struggle and conflict which attends the inception of new enterprises. Let the church of the north receive these poor sufferers in the spirit of Christ; receive them to the educating advantages of Christian republican society and schools, until they have attained to somewhat of a moral and intellectual maturity, and then assist them in their passage to those shores, where they may put in practice the lessons they have learned in America.²⁸⁷

In this passage and others, Stowe lays a light burden on Northern citizens, with a recent memory of the *Amistad* captives' "education" and eventual return to Africa. Northern Christians could feel more virtuous than ever by opening their churches to a few refugees (thinking of the deserving George and Eliza), educate them a bit (reinforcing their sense of inherent white superiority), and then set them off for Africa. Stowe assumes, in this passage and others, that white Northerners feel the conflict of their Christian duty and their deeply held fears and prejudices; fortunately, she

²⁸⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly*. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 625-626.

reminds them, God has presented a ready solution for them.²⁸⁸ They must simply do their Christian duty in preparing the blacks for their exile, doubling the good done. This small, short-lived generosity would pay back the debt owed to African-Americans, true, but it would also elevate white self-image; even better, training black Americans to go forth and preach Christianity on a heathen continent exponentially increases their scope of influence and the number of souls brought to God through white agency, reaping spiritual and earthly benefits for everyone. Best of all, it would leave America safely white. It seems undeniable that right beneath the ostensible interest in the “welfare” of blacks lay a personal contempt expressed by Stowe’s father to activist Theodore Dwight Weld: “If you want to teach in colored schools, I can fill your pockets with money; but if you will visit colored families, and walk with them in the streets, you will be overwhelmed.”²⁸⁹ Again, charity is acceptable, even desirable, but social contact between the races was absolutely unthinkable.

The fact that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* espoused the view that there was no place in the nation in which it was safe or desirable to be a black American made it easy for Northern newspapers to accept *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Typical of press coverage of the era were articles reporting on the prodigious generosity of New Englanders to the various colonization societies, and the number of black former Connecticut residents who had left for Liberia. Many of these accounts end with passages similar to this one, published in January 1856:

²⁸⁸ Stowe also articulated her approval of colonization in a letter to Frederick Douglass in 1851. She contends that there are two topics about which she disagrees with Douglass: “the church & African colonization.” However her long letter goes on only to discuss her defense of the church; perhaps she realized the implications of the colonization plan could not be discussed with Douglass without the revelation of the policy’s racist foundational beliefs. *Letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to Frederick Douglass, (1851)*. Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford. CT.

²⁸⁹ Reynolds, David S. *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom’s Cabin and the Battle for America*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2011), 97.

...most.. (are) *living and prospering* (in Liberia)... Who will say they have not bettered their condition by their change of residence? Who can doubt that their good influence is more needed there than here? How shall we speak of them, if not as *Pilgrim Fathers* to bless the generations to come in their Fatherland? The Lord prosper those on their way, and others may follow; and give the willing heart and ready hand of increasing numbers to the noble work of African Colonization.²⁹⁰

It appears to be an exercise in pretense for colonizationists to elevate unwanted American blacks to the level of Pilgrim Fathers, but for some people, the religious motivation of wishing African-Americans well, at the same time they wished them to return to Africa, was probably at least partially sincere. The tendency to clothe such sentiments in religious language pervaded colonization discussions, in part because so many were run by ministers, including the influential Rev. Leonard Bacon of New Haven. However, the groups' underlying arguments are revealed by an earlier (and typical) journalistic endorsement of colonization, entitled *African Colonization*, much more direct and unencumbered by prayerful verbiage:

The colored population will always hold an inferior situation in our country. Call it prejudice or what you will, it is nevertheless *fact*.

There is no room for the proper exercise of what talent they may possess, or for the creation of any talent in their children as they grow up. Were the designs of the Abolitionists carried out, and every slave freed, that would not give them an elevated position in society here, nor the opportunity to reach it...How, then, can any one, in the exercise of a correct moral sense, oppose this plan?²⁹¹

Here, the bigotry of whites is presumed to be so profound that it is not eradicable, and furthermore,

²⁹⁰ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, January 29, 1856, 2.

²⁹¹ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, January 17, 1852, 2.

not even worth challenging; it is simply *fact*. So is the lack of opportunity offered to blacks; there is no room for their talents because they and their talents are not wanted here. Then, raising the terrifying specter of millions of freed slaves, what other alternative is there except to ship them all off? This view of African-Americans was made even more explicit in a New Haven "Address to the Public" by the Colonization Society of Connecticut on May 6, 1828. First, the society presents the accepted understanding that "every man with one drop of African blood" is marked as a "subject of degradation inevitable and incurable."²⁹² Neither "refinement, nor argument, nor education, nor religion itself" can alter this degradation; this train of thought clarifies the "benevolent" white perception of the futility of uplift, or self-improvement for racial progress. Furthermore, "what are they but a sleeping volcano? Nay the volcano does not sleep,-- we hear its stifled murmurings from afar; and they who dwell on the mountain feel it heaving beneath them."²⁹³ By declaring uplift "hopeless," and pairing that thought with the threatening human volcano waiting to explode, colonizationists could see only one solution: mass exportation. Associated with ostensibly right-hearted clergymen, the Colonization Society of Connecticut was generously supported by church donations, the Congregational clergy in their Connecticut Convention in 1827, and a State Resolution adopted by the Legislature in 1824.²⁹⁴

It follows, then, that Stowe's support of colonization was mainstream "Christian" thinking for her time, so that the Connecticut press would be quietly supportive of Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; during the height of her fame, a search of Hartford newspapers reveals only advertisements

²⁹² _____ *An Address to the Public by the Managers of the Colonization Society of New Haven*. (New Haven: Treadway and Adams, 1828), 5.

²⁹³ *Ibid.* 4.

²⁹⁴ _____ *An Address to the Public by the Managers of the Colonization Society of New Haven*. (New Haven: Treadway and Adams, 1828), 31-32.

and brief sales notes for Mrs. Stowe's book. In a one-line notice on September 15, 1852, *The Hartford Daily Courant* stated:

Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is having an unprecedented run in England; the Times reviews it in a three column article not at all favorably.²⁹⁵

The juxtaposition of these two interesting facts in the same article seems, in all likelihood, just an uneasy pairing of facts about the same book, based on information culled from other newspapers.

Just about a week later, the news was more uniform.

The *Evening Post* states at the New York trade sale, Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had a large popularity. Six thousand copies of the work were disposed of; while of *Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is*, only 350 were sold.²⁹⁶

Here, the news for Harriet Beecher Stowe was uniformly good. The number of copies sold was certainly remarkable²⁹⁷, but more notable is the mention of *Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is*. This title was shared by two "anti-*Uncle Tom*" novels, one written by W. L. Smith and the other by C. H. Wiley, both in 1852. While *Uncle Tom's Cabin* aroused the fury of the slave-holding South, creating a notoriety so widespread that these books were well enough known to the readers of *The Hartford Daily Courant*, and perhaps *The Evening Post*; nothing more than the comparison of sales numbers needed to be said; apparently, no further identification of the books was necessary.

During the book's first decade, no editorial commentary was published or reprinted about the book's content, either by Hartford authors or out-of-state commentators. Whether this omission

²⁹⁵ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, September 15, 1852, 2.

²⁹⁶ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, September 23, 1852, 2.

²⁹⁷ By the end of the first year, 300,000 copies were sold in the United States, and in the same time period, 1.5 million were sold in Great Britain. Harrietbeecherstowecenter.org, Accessed May 15, 2012.

speaks to a silent approval of the anti-slavery sentiments of the novel can only be guessed, but an early report of criticism of Mrs. Stowe is recorded on January 4, 1853:

The British Army Despatch of Dec. 3rd, received by the last steamer, has a severe criticism upon "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and also upon Thackeray's new novel of "Desmond." Speaking of Mrs. Stowe, the author of "Uncle Tom," the Despatch says: -We can imagine her to be endowed with an awful sense of womanhood and to make -- if she ever condescends to such a task, since the second edition of her book was sold -- about the worst dumplings that were ever placed on a dirty table cloth, in a slovenly parlor. We can imagine she writes with a big scrawling hand, with the letters all backwards, avoiding neatness with painstaking precision. Her voice is probably harsh, her attitude imposing and she will or does, wear her own grey hair in a mother-of-a-nation style." Doubtless Mrs. Stowe, if she reads this imaginary sketch, will laugh as heartily as we have at the "counterfeit presentiment" of the London scribe. -*Worcester Spy*.²⁹⁸

Although both Stowe and Thackeray have come in for criticism, according to *The Hartford Daily Courant*, only the attack on Stowe is repeated, perhaps, because Stowe was of greater import to American and Connecticut readers, but also because of the amusing nature of the commentary. The blatant sexism of the *Despatch* was ludicrous even to Stowe's American contemporaries, but as Joan D. Hedrick has observed, "The risk that a woman author took in identifying herself with the cause of the slave was considerable. Stowe placed her own womanhood on the line. Either her reputation would be blasted, or she would transform the meaning of womanhood. Her very conventionality, her insistence on the forms of 'true womanhood,' was her armor in the battle to transform the meaning of the term. That she was the wife of a clergyman and the mother of seven

²⁹⁸ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, January 4, 1853, 2.

children gave her some latitude in following out the implications of unconventional ideas --" ²⁹⁹

The specific suppositions and accusations against Stowe's femininity -- her inability to cook, to clean, to speak softly, to write delicately, to make herself attractive -- do not concern Stowe's book, but rather impugn the character and nature of the author as a woman. The *Hartford Daily Courant* takes a mere one sentence to render the charges laughable and absurd, and in doing so, clearly aligns itself with the author, and mocks her detractors, while giving them the print space necessary to amuse the reader.

The next notice received by Mrs. Stowe in *The Hartford Courant* occurred on September 15, 1856, in a brief book review written by the staff of the newspaper.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's new work, called "Dred, a tale of the Great Dismal Swamp," demonstrates that Mrs. Stowe's success in Uncle Tom was not an accidental hit; due to being the first to explore the mine, as has often been said; but is as fairly due to the real talent of the authoress, as any of Dickin's (sic) work are due to the genius of that great writer. We took up Dred with some misgivings; but after a hasty perusal, we pronounce it full of beauties, touches of nature, deep thoughts and free philosophy, far beyond our expectation-it contains sentiments, and reflections upon the conventional religions of the day; the mere exterior of the religious husk, that may shock people whose souls are bound up in formal and wooden theologies-but the spirit which maketh alive, seems to be there; and genuine religion can survive such squibs, or it is not worthy to survive, and the sooner it takes itself out of the way, the better. Dred was drawn from the character of Nat Turner, the leader in the Southampton massacre in 1831. Nat is described as a fanatic under the impression that heaven had enjoined him to liberate the blacks and had made its manifestations by loud noises in the air, an eclipse and the greenness of the sun--other slaves having implicit confidence in Nat, followed his lead. Under this poor leading and crazy commander, a headway was made that

²⁹⁹ Hedrick 232.

frightened old Virginia so, that to this day, they allude to the Southampton affair, in a mysterious and cautious paraphrase-this Dred of Mrs. Stowe's, will set all the world, North as well as South, to thinking and reading upon the possibilities involved in American slavery. It must be a forbidden book in the South; but none the less eagerly read on that account. We congratulate the authoress, and the publishers, Messrs. Phillips, Sampson Company, on the literary and pecuniary success that is palpably written on the face of this Dred. In many respects, it is far more interesting and fuller of touches of genius, than was Uncle Tom.³⁰⁰

This generous review of *Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, praises *Dred* above *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the better book, though *Dred* is all but forgotten today. The reviewer seems to have indeed given the book just "a hasty perusal," but he evinces general good will toward Stowe. One compelling line about Nat Turner raises questions. "Under this poor leading and crazy commander, a headway was made that frightened old Virginia so, that to this day, they allude to the Southampton affair, in a mysterious and cautious paraphrase --" In discussing the Nat Turner rebellion, this Connecticut reviewer concedes Turner's "craziness," while referring to his murderous acts as "headway," progress of some kind. The reviewer's sympathies seem skewed toward "crazy" Nat Turner.

Furthermore, according to the reviewer, Turner has "frightened" old Virginia so deeply that twenty-five years later, Virginians cannot mention his name or call his actions what they were, a rebellion or an uprising. They have to euphemize the event as "the Southampton affair." That the reviewer sees the reversal of the power structure as "headway," impressive for the longevity of its terrorizing effects, evidences strong support for the slave and for Stowe's work. While most critics

³⁰⁰ *The Hartford Courant*, September 15, 1856, 2.

of the past and the present recognize *Dred* as a rushed work with less emotive characters³⁰¹, this reviewer confessed to seeing in it more genius than in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Here, Mrs. Stowe seems to have gotten the benefit of the doubt from this review, typical of her press treatment. During the Civil War years, Harriet Beecher Stowe received little attention from Connecticut newspapers, but upon her moving to Hartford, she received occasional adulation on a birthday or at the opening of another *Uncle's Tom's Cabin* play. By her later years, she was seen as the female Nestor, compared to Oliver Wendell Holmes,³⁰² the wise old Christian grandmother, the devoted widow and bereaved mother. Articles of this period seem more comfortable with Stowe, as she slips into a harmless senility.

Hartford has many a claim to honor and fame in her institutions or in the achievements in various fields of some of her citizens; but it is probable that her greatest distinction is due to the fact that here has lived and worked and here will die the most famous literary woman of America, who by her writings has changed the United States Constitution...Here, her days of literary endeavor far behind, she is passing the blameless and honored evening of her days, cared for by her daughters....When she quietly, peacefully drops out of life someday, the eyes of the civilized world will be turned toward Hartford, and the city will realize, as it hardly can now, how of great and good it held in this worn, wee woman who has lapsed through stress of years to the simplicity and forgetfulness of childhood.³⁰³

³⁰¹ See Samuel Otter, "Stowe and Race" in *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Ed. Cindy Weinstein. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15-38.

³⁰² *The Hartford Courant*, June 13, 1893, 8.

³⁰³ *The Hartford Courant*, June 13, 1893, 8.

It would be three more years before Harriet Beecher Stowe closed “the evening of her days,” and at that point, the tributes filled in her biography, her achievements and included this summary of the source of her inspiration:

Mrs. Stowe has since repeatedly said, “I could not control the story; it wrote itself;” or, “I, the author of ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin?’? No, indeed. The Lord himself wrote it and I was but the humblest of instruments in his hand. To him alone should be given all praise.”³⁰⁴

Yet, however laudatory Connecticut papers were, Southern perspectives were still given space in *The Hartford Courant*, even upon her death.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin

Two Southern Estimates of the Book and its Author (Atlanta Correspondent)

The death of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe is one of those events which call up the tragedies of the past. It is understandable that the story of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” fed an ignorant prejudice and fanned it into a flame that almost lost a nation its life, and from which may be seen the specters of millions of human victims. The question of slavery as it existed at that time was one which appealed to the religious sensibilities of people who were indifferent to defects in their own midst, and who were more willing to pluck the mote out of their neighbor’s eye than the beam out of their own. It was for this mawkish and over-wrought constituency that Mrs. Stowe pandered when she wrote her celebrated novel, which, while skillfully portrayed the lights and shades of slave life, was actually untrue in every real condition, and was in fact, a well-toned falsehood. The effort to pain(sic) the negro to the religious mind of the North as a being suffering in sensibilities which he did not possess, was one deliberately entered into and played its part in adding religious fanaticism to political expediency.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ *The Hartford Courant*, July 2, 1896, 6.

³⁰⁵ *The Hartford Courant*, July 10, 1896, 11.

Here, the Atlanta writer accuses Stowe of being “the little lady who started this great war,” as President Lincoln is supposed to have called her, holding her responsible for millions of lost American lives. Beyond this, the author contends the novel was untrue “in every real condition,” and pandered to religious, hypocritical Northerners, in order to manipulate them politically. Furthermore, this author contends that the novel promulgated prejudice, presumably against Southerners, rather than revealed any truth about slavery.

More to the point, the novel falsely attributed to the “negro” “sensibilities which he did not possess,” presumably human sensibilities or a consciousness of the burdens of servitude. Another, less overtly racist Southern view from the *Mobile Register* was reprinted immediately after the *Atlanta Correspondent* piece.

The *Mobile Register*, at this printing, was run by the Managing Editor, T. C. De Leon, who had served Confederate President Jefferson Davis as secretary during the Civil War; De Leon’s two brothers also served the Confederacy, one as Surgeon General and the other as an unofficial propagandist for the Southern cause in Europe.³⁰⁶ Because De Leon considered himself a literary man, close attention was paid to the print culture of the time, and so *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* would naturally be fair game. The article follows.

(Mobile Register)

It was a book with a purpose. It was a part of the abolition literature of before-the-war time, and was of immense value to the abolition cause. It presented particular instances as general; and offered the exception as the rule. It has been said that a partisan appeal alone arouses the passions, if one is just, one finds good in all

³⁰⁶ Benjamin Buford Williams, *A Literary History of Alabama* (New York: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1979), 112-113.

things. There is no such thing as an unmitigated evil. Mrs. Stowe did not want to be just; she wanted to be effective. She understood the secret of making her work touch the Northern heart. She perpetrated what now-a-days is known as a smart piece of journalism; and if she ever stopped to think that in painting her picture of Southern slavery wholly in black she was doing grave injustice to a people who were not all bad, she probably consoled herself with the thought that the end justified the means. There is no question that from this point of view the book was powerfully written. The writer was an artist in playing upon the emotions. Few could resist the appeal, even well-informed readers being overcome by the dramatic force of the fiction. It is easily understood, therefore, how strong was the appeal this book made to the sympathetic Northern people who had been for years in training to accept as true almost any statement that could be made derogatory to the South. It was a firebrand that helped spread the conflagration of sectionalism and embittered the struggle between the factions of the North and the South.

It is doubtful the book can be considered a contribution to the permanent literature of the century. It partaken (sic) too much of the character of a brief, with argument. The writer seems to have been merely an instrument of the times; for she never wrote anything else of importance, although she wrote much. It is possible the book will pass away with the remembrance of the passions which excited its productions and gave it great vogue.³⁰⁷

The Mobile writer takes Stowe to task for composing an effective piece of propaganda that unfairly tarred all Southerners as being guilty of unmitigated evil. However, his anger seems tempered by his certainty that Stowe wrote nothing else that mattered, and that *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, too, would be fleeting in impact and soon forgotten.

While such dismissal by Southern journalists might not be surprising in 1896, the year usually designated to have "legalized" the Jim Crow era, the fact that these hostile articles were

³⁰⁷ *The Hartford Courant*, July 10, 1896, 11.

reprinted within ten days of Stowe's death in Hartford, her "hometown," makes one wonder whether some Southern sympathizers may have lurked in the newspaper offices.

Toward the end of that same year, another kind of remembrance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared, but this one was a sign of things to come.

AN UNCLE TOM OF TO-DAY

There are no more slave Uncle Toms. Harriet Beecher Stowe said there should not be. But in those same parts of the country where Uncle Tom lived and suffered there are to-day white-haired, bending negroes, with simple lovable natures like his, and like him tenderly and dearly faithful to the uttermost, according to their lights. The difference is not in the man, not so much as we could wish, perhaps; it is in the people around him. Not that the old slaves did not have their appreciative friends, indulgent and forgiving, but when the blows of an owner did fall or when the human piece of property was torn from his life partner and dragged to distant places among strange people, there was no one to find a voice or lift a hand for him-no one until Mrs. Stowe spoke for them all.

There are clashes and enmities to-day between the black men and the white in the South, but the most of them are the results of political intemperance on one side or the other. Inequalities of rank are awaiting the slowly leveling hand of education and unjust discriminations, found in the North as well as in the South, are yielding to the widening, uplifting spirit of the brotherhood of man. A Southern paper, the "Journal" of Henderson, in the state of Kentucky, gives us a bit of the new-world realism, to set over against the days of the auction block and the lash.

There were many in the Henderson court room one morning recently when "Uncle Jack" was brought in. He was a negro, old, poor and ragged. When Judge Sandefur asked him his name, he straightened himself up and answered proudly, "Jackson McCain, suh," seeming to feel that that was his badge of glorious freedom, the token of his physical equality. Jesse Stroud, the railroad night watchman, proffered the charge against him, reluctantly. Near daylight, Stroud had seen a dark form gliding among

the coal cars. He struck a match to warn the thief. To his surprise, however, the man deliberately climbed upon a car and put two large lumps of coal in his sack, so the watchman had to arrest him and "Uncle Jack" appeared in the police court for the first time in his seventy years of life. The judge sternly asked him what he had to say for himself. The Southern chronicler notes that throng of hangers-on stopped their murmur of conversation as the aged negro took the stand and everybody in the court room felt a thrill of pity for him. The black face quivered and his toil knotted hands twitched aimlessly as he began to talk. What he said is best given in the language of the Kentucky reporter who heard him: "I've been in dis town nigh on to sity-foh years," he said, "an' no man has 'cused me of stealin' befo'. Hitt's dis way, suh: De ole woman's been sick nine weeks. I fen nachly kaint fin' no wuk to do. Gawd knows I've tried, fuh one place, den anthuh. I batter take keer o' de ole' woman, an' I difn't think it were any ha'am to pick a little coal. I thought mebbe ef I could bull up a fiah and wa'am her up good twel de coal git outer her, she mont get bettah an', an'_" Uncle Jack had lost control of his emotions. Then this account, written by a Kentuckian, about Kentuckians and for Kentuckians primarily but happily for all the world, continues-

His voice, which had grown huskier as he talked, failed him utterly and he covered his face with his hands. Great tears trickled over his fingers and dropped one by one on the patches on his knees. Four or five city officials coughed loudly and became interested in something that was going on outside. There was a curious choke in Judge Sandefur's voice when he began to speak. "Old man." He said, didn't you know you could have come to my coal house, even if I had only two lumps, and gotten one of those? Will you promise me now to keep out of the railroad company's coal hereafter? If you will, I'll let you go back to the old woman, and take care of her as long as you both shall live." This promise was tearfully given, and "Uncle Jack" shuffled out.³⁰⁸

Here, the story of Jackson McCain, a simple, poor, elderly black man caught in a petty crime in Kentucky, is recounted in a Hartford newspaper, complete with the "Kentucky" dialect, to

³⁰⁸ *The Hartford Courant*, December 12, 1896, 8.

paint a picture of a living Uncle Tom for Northern Americans. The Connecticut writer explicitly explains his comparison: "...where Uncle Tom lived and suffered there are to-day white-haired, bending negroes, with simple lovable natures like his, and like him tenderly and dearly faithful to the uttermost, according to their lights." So, reminding readers of the elderly "simple," "lovable," "dearly faithful to the uttermost" negroes who still inhabit the South, Northerners are assured that Stowe's characters still exist, and might not have changed "so much as we could wish;" nonetheless, readers can rest assured that Uncle Tom's world has changed.

Indeed, *The Hartford Courant* writer contends that this story "gives us a bit of the new-world realism, to set over against the days of the auction block and the lash." Though there are "clashes and enmities," "(I)nequalities of rank are awaiting the slowly leveling hand of education and unjust discriminations, found in the North as well as in the South, are yielding to the widening, uplifting spirit of the brotherhood of man." Ironically, this was written in 1896, the same year that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" laws conformed to the Constitution in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which held that state laws mandating the segregation of public facilities passed the test of constitutionality. This affirmation of the "Americanness" of racial division set off decades of Jim Crow laws and violent racism, the nadir of post-bellum human rights for African-Americans.

"Uncle Jack" "was a negro, old, poor and ragged." Of those four descriptors, it is hard to tell which one evokes the most pity. When "asked... his name, he straightened himself up and answered proudly, 'Jackson McCain, suh,' seeming to feel that that was his badge of glorious freedom, the token of his physical equality." This pride in his name is made to seem outsized, especially after notice has been taken that "physical equality" is one of his basic needs, being old,

poor and ragged. "His badge of glorious freedom," his pride in his name, may derive from his "good name," but in spite of his pride, his name throughout the rest of the piece is "Uncle Jack" or "Old man." Even without the allusion to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for the defendant, the very "badge of his glorious freedom" is noted only for the court records; in reality, "Jackson McCain" has disappeared, replaced by a name suggestive of slavery, a familiar name that reduces the old man to a subordinate and servile role.

The first person account of his crime is told in dialect, and it is here that Jackson McCain comes to life. His deference to the judge ("Suh"); his honesty; his desperation; his devotion to the old woman; his simplicity in wanting to "wa'am her up good;" all these combine to form a bond of condescending and pitying trust between the reader and the old man. He is a familiar character, kind and harmless.

The use of "plantation dialect" in the Uncle Jack story, and in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* serves multiple purposes. "(P)lantation-dialect fiction, because of its familiarity to white readers, presents itself as a logical choice for seeking to alter white racial attitudes,"³⁰⁹ placing its Northern white readers in the comfortable seat of amused, if pitying, condescension as they dip into the colorful world of the uneducated and underprivileged. It clearly establishes the caste of each character, and works as shorthand for fleshing out his race, history, and background. But most of all, the black dialect suggests to readers that there is an unalterable connection between the intelligence of the speaker and his language; white readers can rest assured of their innate and carefully cultured superiority, and so, they may feel freer to empathize, knowing these blacks pose them no threat.

³⁰⁹ Paul Petrie, "Charles W. Chesnutt, The Conjure Woman, And The Racial Limits Of Literary Mediation." *Studies in American Fiction*, (Autumn 1999).

Samuel Otter has labeled Stowe's approach "Romantic" racialism;³¹⁰ explicitly expressed, ironically, through the letter of George Harris in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "If not a dominant and commanding race, they are, at least, an affectionate, magnanimous and forgiving one."³¹¹ This describes not only the African-Americans in Stowe's fiction, but also the perspective of the most benevolent whites of this era. Assuming that whites will always be the race of domination and command, it becomes easier to offer Uncle Jack access to that one piece of coal. He will never seek to supplant the judge, or the night watchman, or the white observers in the courtroom; whites can afford to be somewhat compassionate and benevolent. Furthermore, this article was reprinted six months after the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision (approving de facto segregation); it would reassure white readers all over the nation that while black Americans were confined to "their place," if they were "well-behaved" and humble, they were being treated with generosity and good humor, when they came before white authority.

Yet, in reality, this Mobile story suggests, Uncle Jack is no saint; he is not a spiritual model for whites, as Uncle Tom may have been. Hollis Robbins has noted that "Uncle Tom began as a Christ figure—a character like Jesus who loves God, loves his tormentors, turns the other cheek, and shows inhuman forbearance in the face of cruelty—but has been transformed into the perfect, silver-haired, silent, sexless, stalwart servant."³¹² Jackson McCain is hardly Christ-like (not being persecuted here), nor is he the silent, sexless, stalwart servant. While Jackson McCain has risked his freedom (from jail) to steal coal for his wife, his behavior does not rise to the level of the

³¹⁰ Cindy Weinstein, Editor, *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20.

³¹¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly*. (New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1851, 1878, and 1879), 360.

³¹² Hollis Robbins, "Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Matter of Influence." <http://www.historynow.org/06_2008/historian2.html>. Accessed June 27, 2008

heroic, like that of Stowe's Uncle Tom. In his desperate need, Jackson McCain simply earns the reader's compassion.

Perhaps "Uncle Tom," as a character, became the pitiable, old, defenseless black man, stripped of his Christ-like love and almost superhuman fidelity and wisdom, soon after the novel made its appearance. There were so many roving acting companies producing low-brow plays based on the story that it is probable that far more Americans were exposed to those rather than the book itself, so the stock character of Uncle Tom had likely become watered down and oversimplified over time. It is likely that for white readers, an "Uncle Jack" would be a comforting figure, non-threatening physically and intellectually. Not only does he require little from the white readership - after all, Judge Sandefur needs only to offer him one piece of coal and his freedom - but "Uncle Jack" does not challenge the status quo by asking for or seeming to deserve the respect due to a white man, much less the adulation due a character of Christ-like virtue and wisdom.

And so, this little parable from Kentucky assures Connecticut readers that blacks in Kentucky remain as docile and kind-hearted as ever, in spite of the ostensibly rising tide of equality. Northerners could take comfort in the existence of generous Kentucky judges and in the great distance between themselves and Jackson McCain, economically, politically, intellectually and geographically. There would be no catching up for "Uncle Jack," not at the rate of one coal at a time.

A useful comparison to the press treatment of Stowe is provided by the coverage of John Brown, whose raid on a federal arsenal in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, was excoriated by the Connecticut newspapers. Springing from the same Christian lineage as Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the same county, Litchfield, in Connecticut, Brown represented the extremist views that

Connecticut and American journalists found terrifying. And yet there was support for him expressed from some Connecticut pulpits, much to the dismay of *Hartford Daily Courant* writers:

It is painful to hear that religious bodies, churches at formal meetings, and pastors in their pulpits, in some few instances in Connecticut, have palliated the crimes of Brown and avowed a sympathy for convicted law-breakers. It is wrong and such things should be discountenanced by all good men and patriotic citizens in Connecticut...The ultra politicians of the South are systematically using the sympathy for Brown to detach the South from the Union. They misrepresent the great body of Northern voters and put a few crack-brained Abolitionists (who have not patience enough to mind their own business and leave the Great Ruler of events to mind his...) in the foreground as if the noisy cacklers represented the great mass of right-minded, clear-headed Northern men. To put ammunition into the pouches of these Southern Fire-Eaters is sheer folly..."³¹³

In this article, as with all the others on the same topic, Brown is condemned as a criminal and a danger to the Union. The article notes that some people in the North sympathize with his commitment to his cause, but that this sympathy must not be trumpeted about, effectively condoning his actions, since that approval will only be appropriated by Southerners as proof that the Union must be dissolved. Ironically, just as Brown literally attempted to put ammunition into the pouches of slaves, the writer here suggests that supporting Brown puts ammunition into the pouches of slave-holders, essentially dividing the nation along the same lines that Brown did. Nonetheless, it is clear that "right-minded, clear-headed Northern men" must be patient and allow God to address the wrongs that "crack-brained," "noisy cackler" Abolitionists want to right immediately.

³¹³ *Hartford Daily Courant*, December 5, 1859, 2.

Compared with Brown, Stowe merely reflected Connecticut values. Brown had attempted something unimaginable: if he had succeeded, he would have put white Americans -- perhaps in the North as well as the South -- in danger of attack by armed African-Americans. He embodied the worst nightmares of white Americans in attempting to offer blacks an opportunity to turn the tables.

Stowe, on the other hand, endorsed acts of civil disobedience in defiance of the Fugitive Slave Act, but these were small domestic acts of protest, familiar in the Christian ethos of caring for the poor and clothing the naked. By comparison to Brown, Harriet Beecher Stowe did not say anything revolutionary by Connecticut standards, so little comment was necessary in Connecticut papers. She articulated the faith-based morality of New England Congregationalism: one owes a Christian duty of kindness to one's lessers. In addition, an essential part of that kindness was preparing African-Americans for their removal to Africa, where they could act as missionaries for New England values and religion, and no longer be troubled by the fear, racism and repugnance white Americans were loath to purge in themselves. This enabled New Englanders to remain unchallenged in their beneficent self-image, and comfortably ensconced in their hegemony.

Nevertheless, while Stowe's colonizationist philosophy was familiar, her villainous character Simon Legree sent a message that may have escaped the notice of most readers. In the novel, Stowe stresses the fact that Legree, like Miss Ophelia, is a Vermonter,³¹⁴ raised by a pious mother in an ideal and idyllic republican town whose days are structured by the ringing of church bells. Yet, when Legree goes South, he sheds these (feminine) Christian community standards of

³¹⁴ Vermont was universally acknowledged to be a stand-in for Stowe's Connecticut. See Conforti, Joseph A. *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century*. (Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 169.

behavior, the belief in hard work, civility and generosity; though he is tormented by memories of his sainted mother, he transforms himself into a serial rapist of slave women, a brutal torturer, and ultimately Uncle Tom's monstrous murderer. Central to his moral corruption is his turning away from God, and the teachings of his mother. In her construction of Legree's story, Stowe suggests that faith -- and the strong women who promulgate that faith at home -- are the only safeguards against the possibility of one's becoming an evil brute. It may have been a politic choice to make Legree a New Englander to deflect criticism of Stowe as a Yankee; but Stowe advances the unwelcome image of a New England-raised Legree acting upon his animal instincts with uninhibited racism, sexism and capitalistic greed. Even well-raised Vermonters might cede their self-control to the temptations offered at an isolated plantation without the oversight of law, church or a community of socially-empowered, good women.³¹⁵

We have no way of knowing if Connecticut readers saw some shade of themselves in the depravity of Legree, but the press seemed to share Stowe's vision of the nation as so hopelessly and unapologetically racist that decent Christian Americans wanted all blacks out of the country in short order. For their own good, for the good of God and Africa, but most importantly, for the preservation of a virtuous Connecticut self-image, it was essential that they go. After all, there might be a Legree in any mirror.

³¹⁵ If there is any doubt about Northern slave owners having the potential to be more brutal than Southerners, William Wells Brown wrote that an especially cruel Missouri overseer was "a regular Yankee from New England. The Yankees are noted for being the most cruel overseers." Another man "was from one of the free states; but a more inveterate hater of the negro I do not believe ever walked God's green earth." David S. Reynolds. *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle for America*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2011), 112.

In spite of all its Southern sources,³¹⁶ Stowe contended that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was dictated to her by God, and readers may well believe that this was God of every white-washed Congregational Church on the center green of every village in Connecticut.

³¹⁶ These sources were detailed in *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

CHAPTER V

Uplift through Education: The Dream of a “Negro College” in New Haven and Prudence Crandall’s School for Little Colored Misses

In the 1830s, aspiring African-Americans were moved by the conviction that they could earn social equality, or at least, betterment through education, “uplifting” themselves to respectability. Two attempts to offer educational opportunities beyond the local Connecticut schoolhouse occurred in 1831 and 1832, and both ended quickly and violently.

The first dream began in Philadelphia at the First Annual Convention of the Free People of Color on June 11, 1831. A distinguished group of white men proposed to build a “Negro College,” modeled on the manual labor schools in Europe; they were William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the *Liberator*; Arthur Tappan, a wealthy merchant; and Simeon Jocelyn, a Congregational minister of an African-American church in New Haven. Among the African-Americans enthusiastically responding to the proposal were “wealthy entrepreneur James Forten; Bishop Richard Allen, the free states’ most prominent African-American cleric; and Samuel E. Cornish, editor of the nation’s first African-American newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal*. Forten, Allen, and Cornish, the North’s most visible activists of color, had led their communities with distinction for decades.”³¹⁷ New Haven seemed like the perfect place for such a college; endowed with a port easily accessible from New York, Boston, and the West Indies, from which students could be recruited, New Haven had a population of 10,000 people, a small town and growing city at the same time.

³¹⁷ James Brewer Stewart, “The New Haven Negro College and the Meanings of Race in New England, 1776-1870.” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (Sep., 2003), 324. See also: Robert A. Gibson, “A Dream Deferred: The Proposal for a Negro College in New Haven.” *Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society*, 37:2, 24 and Mary McQueeney, “Simeon Jocelyn, New Haven Reformer,” *Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society*, 19:3, 66.

The fund-raising for this worthy cause began almost immediately. In the *Episcopal Recorder* of August 27, 1831, an announcement was made, probably at the behest of Reverend Cornish, who was a clergyman of the Episcopal church:

EDUCATION.—It is proposed by the respectable negro men and philanthropic whites, to establish a Negro college at New Haven. Arthur Tappan, Esq. has proposed to raise among the whites, \$10,000, provided a like sum is raised by the blacks. Rev. Samuel E. Cornish has been duly appointed to receive subscriptions.³¹⁸

The timing could not have been worse:

news of Nat Turner's bloody slave insurrection in Virginia hit the North, just as New Havenites were convening their town meeting to consider the Negro College. In recent years, white New Havenites had grown increasingly distrustful of "vagabond Negroes." As ever greater numbers of African Americans entered the city, residents accused them of undermining moral order and undercutting the "white" labor market.³¹⁹

By September 10th, news of the proposed college had reached unhappy New Haven residents who turned out in force for a town meeting. Not surprisingly, the vote was 700 to 4 against the college.

The preamble and resolutions adopted that Saturday at the City Hall were unambiguous. In the preamble, the authors made certain to link the establishment of the college with the abolitionist cause:

Whereas efforts are now making to establish a college in this city, the education of the colored population of the United States, the West Indies, and other countries

³¹⁸ *Episcopal Recorder*, August 27, 1831, 9, 22. 87

³¹⁹ James Brewer Stewart, "The New Haven Negro College and the Meanings of Race in New England, 1776-1870." *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (September 2003), 325.

adjacent, and in connexion with this establishment, the immediate abolition of slavery in the United States is not only recommended and encouraged by the advocates of the proposed college, but demanded as a right;--...

Resolved, That inasmuch as slavery does not exist in Connecticut, and wherever permitted in other states, depends on the municipal laws of the States which allow it, and over which neither any other state...has any control; that the propagation of sentiments favorable to the immediate emancipation of slaves, in disregard of the civil institutions of the States to which they belong, and, as auxiliary thereto, the contemporaneous founding of colleges for educating colored people, is an unwarrantable and dangerous interference with the concerns of other States and ought to be discouraged.

And whereas, in the opinion of this meeting, Yale College, the institutions for the education of females, and the other schools already existing in this city, are important to the community and the general interests of science...the establishment of a College in the same place to educate the colored population is incompatible with the prosperity, if not the existence, of the present institutions of learning, and will be destructive of the best interests of the city; --And believing as we do that if the establishing of such a college in any part of the country were deemed expedient, it should never be imposed on any community without their consent:--

Therefore, Resolved, By the Mayor, Aldermen, Common Council and Freemen of the city of New Haven, in city meeting assembled that we will resist the establishment of the proposed college in this place, by every lawful means.

And on motion it was Voted, That the proceedings of said meeting be signed by the Mayor, and countersigned by the Clerk, and published in all the newspapers of the city.

Dennis Kimberly Mayor³²⁰

³²⁰ "The New Haven Excitement," *Christian Index*, Oct. 1, 1831; 4, 14; 220.

The resolutions assert that the citizens of Connecticut have no right to take positions opposing slavery in other states; of course, the proposal never touched upon the slavery issue. The authors of the resolution contemplated that educating the African-Americans of other states would enable them to return to their states and foment revolution or abolition.

The second resolution deems the existence of a negro college “incompatible with the prosperity, if not the existence,” of Yale and other New Haven schools. While not explicitly explained here, the presence of African-American students might raise concerns in the minds of parents and discourage them from patronizing these schools.

The local newspaper coverage of these events was as unanimously hostile to the college proposal as the voters at the meeting. An article from the *New Haven Palladium*, a Republican leaning paper,³²¹ is typical:

“NEGRO COLLEGE.”

From the New Haven Palladium

Our readers, no doubt, will be surprised at the caption of this paragraph, and will wonder what we mean by a “Negro College.” We will inform them that we mean, without any jesting, to say that there has been an attempt, a serious attempt, to get up an institution in this place for the education of colored men. The blacks for a few years past have been treated with attention and kindness by inhabitants of this city. Two or three of our citizens have devoted much time and money for bettering their condition, but the zeal of a few has constantly increased, until a project has been brought forward, which, if carried into execution, would ruin the prosperity of the city. New Haven was fixed upon, by the convention held in Philadelphia some time since, for the location of a black

³²¹ National Endowment for the Humanities, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014518/holdings/> accessed 7/14/09. Its preceding titles were: *National Republican*. (New-Haven, Conn.) 1831-1832 and *New-Haven Palladium*. (New Haven, Conn.) 1829-1832.

college. Our citizens called a public meeting to take the subject into consideration, and the following resolutions were advocated by Judge Daggett, N. Smith, R. I. Ingersoll and I. H. Townsend, esqrs. and adopted by about 700 freemen. The rev. S.S. Jocelyn and three others opposed, and voted against them.³²²

The quotation marks around the phrase, negro college, attempt to elicit the mockery of readers.

The author goes on to say that no jest is intended, "that there has been an attempt, a serious attempt to get up an institution in this place for the education of colored men." The word serious, as used here, doubles in meaning: the attempt is in earnest (this is not a joke, believe it or not) and this attempt is threatening. Moreover, the use of the word serious suggests that one's first reaction to the first idea of such a college might arouse incredulity. Interestingly, the phraseology used for African-Americans changes from "colored" to the more direct "black," when the writer takes stock of the kindnesses showered upon that population. This earlier kindness has culminated in this 'project...which...would ruin the prosperity of the city." In mentioning Simeon Jocelyn's opposition, interestingly, the first "r" in Reverend is lower-cased, perhaps a deliberate error.

Scholars have examined this case from a variety of perspectives. James Stewart Brewer has concluded that "the abortive 1831 New Haven Negro College project represented not a failure but, instead, a moment of crisis and regeneration in an extended, unavoidable struggle to achieve a level of equality that recognized only one race, the human."³²³ He cites the New Haven rejection of the college proposal as the motivating force behind William Nell and Benjamin Franklin Roberts' fight to outlaw school segregation in Massachusetts.

³²² Niles' *Weekly Register*, Oct. 1, 1831; 41, 1045. 88.

³²³ James Brewer Stewart, "The New Haven Negro College and the Meanings of Race in New England, 1776-1870." *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (September 2003), 355.

Hilary Moss has explained that the working classes “rejected the idea of a manual labor college because they perceived it jeopardized their social and economic stability.”³²⁴ The pre-existing tension between free blacks living in the “New Liberia” section of town combined with escalating fears on the part of whites, was exacerbated by the Nat Turner rebellion and David Walker’s Appeal.³²⁵

Antony Dugdale, J. J. Fueser, J. Celso de Castro Alves, in their piece, “Yale, Slavery and Abolition,” make the point that this story cannot be understood without taking into account the power and influence of members of the American Colonization Society. While the goals of the New Haven Negro College proponents were multi-faceted, implicit was their attempt to integrate educated and productive African-Americans into the fabric of American society. This goal conflicted fundamentally with the desire of the colonizationists to remove as many blacks as possible from the country.

Furthermore,

With fundraising agents throughout the South, Yale had reason not to “offend [its] Southern patrons.” If Yale was to maintain strong, positive relations with the South, but also retain its prominence in the North, then Yale would need to find some way to reconcile the growing civil tension surrounding the question of slavery. For university officials, this made it difficult to be either pro-slavery or anti-slavery.

Many Yale officials found an answer in the movement known as “Colonization,” or sending black people to Africa.³²⁶

³²⁴ Hilary Moss, “‘Cast down on every side:’ The Ill-Fated Campaign to Found an ‘African College’ in New Haven.” *Hog River Review* (Summer 2007.)

³²⁵ David Walker’s Appeal justified black-on-white violence in the interests of racial progress.

³²⁶ Antony Dugdale, J. J. Fueser, J. Celso de Castro Alves, “Yale, Slavery and Abolition,” The Amistad Committee, Inc, (2001). www.yaleslavery.org, Accessed 7/12/09, 23.

With four times the number of Southern students as Harvard or Princeton, and substantial economic and social ties, Yale officials were anxious to be inoffensive. Many eminent Yale men, including college President Jeremiah Day, and its only law professor, David Daggett, espoused colonization, a midway position acceptable to both a Southern and Northern constituency, and therefore "believed" in *not* educating African-Americans.³²⁷ "Not a single (Yale) professor joined Jocelyn and Roger Sherman Baldwin...to argue in... favor" of the school. "With the sole exception of Ezra Stiles Ely, Connecticut's Congregational clergy were equally unresponsive."³²⁸

Because Simeon Jocelyn made the announcement of the school proposal on September 7, 1831, and the public meeting was called for September 10th, the plan had a only a three-day long public life, although its ramifications lived on. Newspaper coverage, therefore, was almost entirely retrospective, beginning with the resounding defeat of the college. The *New-Haven Advertiser* provided its obviously opinionated account:

COLLEGE FOR BLACKS

The City Meeting on Saturday was very large, and the opinion of the citizens respecting the location of a College here for the education of coloured youth, was very decisively expressed, and almost without dissent (sic). Our

³²⁷ Antony Dugdale, J. J. Fueser, J. Celso de Castro Alves, "Yale, Slavery and Abolition," The Amistad Committee, Inc, (2001). www.yaleslavery.org, Accessed July 12, 2009, 23.

From the same source, page 20: "David Daggett, a colonizationist, condemned the "Negro college" and then, as Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court, ruled in 1833 that, since free black people could not be U.S. citizens, the jury could prevent black people from being educated.¹²⁷ Then in 1835, Daggett undertook another town meeting linking states' rights, pro-colonization and anti-abolitionism: A citizen's meeting held at the Statehouse on September 9, 1835, found Noah Webster, David Daggett, Simeon Baldwin, James Babcock and Minott Osborn helping to frame resolutions which condemned any interference by Congress with the treatment of slaves within any of the states, opposed the use of the mails for 'transmission of incendiary information,' proposed African colonization for 'the free colored population,' and 'viewed with alarm the efforts of the abolitionists.' Hence, it is not surprising that many African-Americans hated the American Colonization Society and everything it represented." Indeed, as Chapter IV indicates, colonization was still the solution of choice through the 1850s, and apparently accounts for northern acceptance of the ideology underlying *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

³²⁸ James Brewer Stewart, "The New Haven Negro College and the Meanings of Race in New England, 1776-1870." *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (September 2003), 325.

citizens are indisposed, for various reasons, to bring in upon themselves a greater coloured population than will be drawn here by the ordinary conveniences of a residence.³²⁹

Here, the authors assert that the college proposal would “bring in upon” the people of New Haven an “extra-ordinary” number of “coloured” people. The use of the prepositions, “in upon” suggests that such a population will somehow not only invade (in), but also lie down on top of (upon) the white people of New Haven. Such a quasi-sexual suggestion will be relevant later. The article continues:

It is not desirable, but ruinous to the interests of the city to constitute New-Haven the head quarters of a scheme of emancipation, not addressed to the white masters, but the slaves. As members of a civil society, as christians, we are not permitted to encourage emancipation by blood—and impressing on the mind of the slave the conviction of his immediate right to unqualified emancipation, is the first step in instigating insurrection. Even if the right be unquestionable, we are not permitted to bring cruelty and death into the habitations of our southern brethren by inciting the slave to enforce it. Such a position deprives one of no freedom of opinion nor of action. We say, God speed and enterprise which aims to convince the slaveholder that it is in his interest and duty to manumit the slave. Induce the master, if possible, to liberate the slave; but teach the slaves, as the Apostle did, submission. That we have a right to hold and express opinions adverse to slavery, no one doubts.³³⁰

In this paragraph, the authors equate the location of the college with the “head quarters” of emancipation, which, by their definition, carries violence against “our southern brethren.” The assertion of brotherhood with white slaveholders clearly divides the nation by race; whites, Northern and Southern, must guard each others’ interests against the outsiders, the blacks, free and

³²⁹ Reprinted in *United States Catholic Sentinel*, Oct. 1, 1831, 3, 1, 12.

³³⁰ Reprinted in *United States Catholic Sentinel*, Oct. 1, 1831, 3, 1, 12.

slave. At the same time, all blacks, free and enslaved, are conflated into “slaves.” This obviates the question of advancement for free blacks, while consciously lowering all black Americans into the hands of slaveholders, to whom they already pose a threat. The slaves’ minds must not be opened to the possibility of freedom or even the possibly “unquestionable” right to freedom, because that incites the slave to bloody violence against whites. In the meantime, trying to persuade slave masters to emancipate is the only route for those who espouse this cause.

The citizens entertain a very strong hostility to the idea of a negro college being thrust into contact with our venerable Yale—and perhaps they expressed at the meeting a little more than they meant.—We confess that we regret that more was done than to declare it inexpedient to locate a college here — for that was the main consideration with us. And that point, we rejoice to say, was explicitly avowed as to leave no mistake as to the public sentiment.³³¹

The citizens oppose the “idea of a negro college being thrust into contact with our venerable Yale.” Again, the phraseology suggests a repugnant sexual contact. In addition, in the authors’ apology is an admission of opponents’ poor behavior or language at the meeting—“they expressed a little more than they meant...more was done than declare it inexpedient to locate a college here.” One can only imagine the invective of that day.

So great was the interest to hear the discussions, that, notwithstanding the excessive heat and the almost irrespirable atmosphere of the room, the hall was crowded through the afternoon. The meeting was addressed, in favour of the resolutions below, by I.H. Townsend, R. I. Ingersoll, Nathan Smith and David Daggett, Esqs. and by Rev. S. S. Jocelyn in opposition. The resolutions passed by almost a unanimous vote.

The resolutions were proposed by a Committee appointed to draft them, composed of the following gentlemen:-- Judges Bristol and Baldwin, Jehiel Forbes, S. J. Hitchcock,

³³¹ Reprinted in *United States Catholic Sentinel*, Oct. 1, 1831, 3, 1, 12.

R. I. Ingersoll, Samuel Wardsworth, Doctor Panderson, A. H. Street, I. H. Townsend, and John Darrie, Esquires, and almost unanimously adopted—only three or four voting in the negative.³³²

The end of the article celebrates the conviction of the meeting members, the near unanimity of the vote and the eminence of the names in opposition, in spite of stifling heat. The phrase “only three or four” minimizes both the number and the insignificance of the college proponents.

What role did this coverage play in the aftermath of the drama? The influence of any particular newspaper on the populace is hard to gauge, since circulation numbers are either unavailable or unreliable. The *New Haven Advertiser*, the paper whose articles were picked up and recirculated throughout New England, issued fortnightly, but lasted only from 1829 through 1832.³³³ But in 1830, throughout the country, there were just sixty-five daily papers, and patrons had to go out of their way to visit a newspaper office or book shop to purchase one.³³⁴ Even more prohibitive to the average citizen was its cost.

Most circulation was by subscription and subscriptions cost ten dollars a year, the equivalent of a week’s wages for a skilled journeyman.

Daily news, then, at the beginning of the Jackson administration remained a luxury of the urban wealthy.³³⁵

³³² Reprinted in *United States Catholic Sentinel*, Oct. 1, 1831, 3, 1, 12.

³³³ National Endowment for the Humanities, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014518/holdings/>, Accessed July 14, 2009.

³³⁴ Alexander Saxton, “Problems of Class and Race in the Origins of the Mass Circulation Press,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer 1984), 211.

³³⁵ Alexander Saxton, “Problems of Class and Race in the Origins of the Mass Circulation Press,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer 1984), 212.

Journalists, then, were geared to appeal to the wealthy urban dweller in 1831, so it is probably not surprising that even Republican-flavored newspapers would take editorial positions in line with the majority of their well-to-do white constituents.

More interesting is the position of Bishop Benedict Fenwick of Boston, editor of the *United States Catholic Sentinel*, a weekly paper distributed throughout New England. Since papers often carried Protestant Sunday sermons rife with anti-Catholic sentiment, Fenwick believed it was necessary to counter with his own journalistic rebuttal.³³⁶

If the target audience of local dailies and weeklies in 1831 was the upper crust white male, Fenwick's target was three-fold. Since the Catholic population in the nation was uneducated, poor and small, (but beginning to grow exponentially with the Irish potato blight), Fenwick wrote, firstly, for his literate, but few, Catholic clergy. Secondly, he wrote in hopes of converting Protestants.³³⁷ Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, he wrote to consolidate the burgeoning number of Irish immigrants and support them in their struggle against poverty and bigotry.³³⁸ As a Baltimore-born Catholic, Bishop Fenwick was educated from the age of ten at Georgetown, in Washington D.C. (where he eventually was made college president, twice); he also served in South Carolina. Thus, for virtually all his life before arriving in Boston, he would have witnessed first-

³³⁶ Donis Tracy, "The Pilot enters 175th year," *The Pilot*, Sept. 3, 2004. See also Arthur Riley, "Early History of the Pilot." *The Pilot* (March 8, 1930): Section B, 22.

³³⁷ "In its earlier form, when it enjoyed the direct control of the bishop and the editorship of Dr. O'Flaherty, its articles were theological and controversial in tone. ... Bishop Fenwick... entertained hopes of numerous conversions consequent upon the decay of the Protestant sects, which at one time seemed imminent. The newspaper was employed by him chiefly as a weapon to this end..." William Byrne, William A. Leahy, Joseph H. O'Donnell, John E. Finen, J.J. McCoy, A. Dowling, Edmund J. A. Young and John S. Michaud. *The History of the Catholic Church in the New England States* Vol. 1 (Boston: The Hurd & Evarts Co., 1899), 49.

Any doubt about the persuasion of Fenwick's paper, also known as *The Pilot*, might be resolved by the title of this study of the newspaper: Francis Robert Walsh, *The Boston Pilot: a Newspaper for the Irish Immigrant, 1829-1908*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1968.)

³³⁸ See Appendix I for more information.

hand the reality of slavery.³³⁹ So his account of the Negro College in New Haven bears the mark of these multi-faceted concerns. The article in the *United States Catholic Sentinel* begins:

We cannot sufficiently admire the good sense and devotion to the solid interests of the union, which have of late characterized the people of New Haven, relative to the erection of a College for Negroes in that section of the Northern States. Darkened as our political horizon is by the angry workings of the nullifying storm, dreary as seem the prospects of our National *integrity*, from the blasted ambition of political aspirants, the machinations of the itinerant disorganizers, and the insurrectionary movements of the swarthy Moors, who, stimulated by the infectious influence of the fanaticism of the *Reformation saints*, are now scattering desolation and death through the South, the Resolutions of the New Haven meeting cannot be too highly valued by every christian, every friend to humanity. We feel much pleasure in laying them before the public; while we earnestly hope that every city in the Union, should the question ever be agitated by its inhabitants, will follow the salutary example already given by the enlightened and patriotic people of New Haven.³⁴⁰

Bishop Fenwick, in charge of writing and editing the paper at this early date, makes clear that there are two sides to this debate: on one side are white people of "good sense and devotion to the interests of the union," who are Christian enlightened and patriotic friends to humanity. "Darkening the political horizon," (certainly no accident, this darkening by the swarthy Moors) on the opposite side are the angry agitating political aspirants, scheming itinerant disorganizers and insurrectionary, restive, swarthy Moors infected by fanatical *Reformation saints*, scattering desolation and death. In this writer's mind, the negro college proponents are inciting a blood-lust in African-Americans, and they must be stopped.

³³⁹ William Byrne, William A. Leahy, Joseph H. O'Donnell, John E. Finen, J.J. McCoy, A. Dowling, Edmund J. A. Young and John S. Michaud. *The History of the Catholic Church in the New England States* Vol. 1, (Boston: The Hurd & Evarts Co., 1899), 44, 46.

³⁴⁰ *United States Catholic Sentinel*, Oct. 1, 1831, 3, 1, 12.

The author goes on to excoriate William Lloyd Garrison as the author of this violence, both in the past and in the future. But the next section states unequivocally that the Southern slave enjoys a better and more moral standard of life than the free black or the indigent Northern white man.

We are friends of well-regulated freedom and from our souls detest oppression under any shape or colour. While we are convinced that no human institution is, or can be, exempt from defects, we must, to the credit of our Southern neighbors, say, that although Protestant Britain has fastened the curse of Negro servitude upon them, the slave of the South enjoys more comfort, is often more moral, and certainly more exempt from care, and temptations to vice, than the free black, or indigent white man of the North.³⁴¹

Interestingly, though Bishop Fenwick calls slavery a curse, for which Protestant Britain can be blamed, it is a curse that actually benefits those enslaved. This is the familiar paternalism of the South, not only allowing the slave to live carefree lives, but also safeguarding their eternal souls.

Why, if slavery be, as it is, a blot upon the escutcheon of American freedom, did not the Fathers and Founders of our National Constitution, when the Revolution-battle was being fought and gloriously won, immediately wipe it off by their Declaration? No, they were convinced of the propriety of leaving that subject undisturbed, and that no injury would fall upon the Republic from the coloured population. Negroes were as quiet and orderly as if they were citizens of this new-born country, and would have continued long so, had not the fanatical and evil-minded *preachers* poured in upon them from the non-slave-holding states, and by their wicked cant and disorganizing speeches, frenzied the poor people's minds with *gospel liberty, and civil and religious freedom*.

The Founders knew that the Republic would not be harmed by "the coloured population," because the "poor people" were as content as citizens until Northern "fanatical and evil-minded

³⁴¹ *United States Catholic Sentinel*, Oct. 1, 1831, 3, 1, 13.

preachers,” of course Protestant, as all “preachers” are, “frenzied” the minds of slaves with “*gospel liberty, and civil and religious freedom.*” The Bishop’s italics indicate his scorn for such concepts as applied to slaves. The “preachers” are merely disturbers of the peace.

Yes, it was in a similar way that the practical infidels and incarnate fiends of France, unfurled the flag of liberty, equality, *philanthropy* and *fraternization* to the eye of the wide-mouthed Negro of St. Domingo, and caused him, in his savage might, to open cataracts of human blood upon the wretched isle.

Here, *philanthropy*, is italicized as if it, too, is one of the triple threat of dirty French words; *fraternité* is deliberately mistranslated to fraternization, evoking the fear of interracial sexual relations and forced socialization. Unfurling that liberty flag empowered the negro in his “savage might” to spill “cataracts” of human, that is, white blood. The image of “the wide-mouthed Negro,” especially when paired with the words “savage might,” suggest creatures who will not only spill white blood, but will consume whites.

But, why, if southern slavery be such an eye-sore to our Boston *philanthropists* does he not make a feeling appeal to the Bible, Tract Education and Missionary Societies, to negotiate with the planters and effect by their Mammoth wealth, as far as it can go, the emancipation of the slaves for a fair and established equivalent, and then transport them to the land of their fathers? Would not *such* an appropriation of the Northern Mammon be worthy of *those practical christians*? Why not expend the sums that are annually laid out on sectarian papers, that calumniate and misrepresent the Catholic Church, or that would be requisite for the erection of a Negro College, and the annual salaries of the *Professors*, upon the chartering of vessels for the exportation of the free Negroes to their aboriginal clime?

Therefore, according to Fenwick, the money pledged for the negro college should go to slave-holders to buy their slaves and return them to Africa. This would end the calumnies against the Catholic Church and pay for the slaves and ships to Africa.

This is practicable; it would be benevolent and wisely calculated at least to retard the awful catastrophe, which, it is to be feared, will one day, involve in promiscuity, ruin, every condition, colour and sex, and the very liberty, morality and religion of the great American family.

If this mass deportation does *not* take place, every American is at risk and the risk is clearly sexual in nature, involving the promiscuous mixing of people, endangering all American liberty, morality and religion. More to the point, this passage offers a view of a catastrophic and promiscuous future in which both men and women of every color and class will be drawn, "ruining" the classic (white) American family. The use of the word "ruin" with all its sexual connotations is deliberate. So great must be the sexual temptations of people of color among us that every one will succumb to debauchery. Fenwick suggests that even liberty is at stake; in the following paragraph, he argues that interference in the right of other Americans to hold slaves endangers the liberty of (white) slave-holders.

The laws of several slave-holding States identify the Negro slave with property; it is not for us, whether we live in a slave or a non-slave-holding state so to discuss the propriety of such identification; but we do say that any attempt, direct or indirect, that would tend to alienate property acknowledged as such by law, is tantamount to flagrant injustice, to criminal theft, and evidently calculated to sunder the links of social order and national *integrity*. If E. G. L. (William Lloyd Garrison) and his *brethren* so charitably yearn after the ameliorated condition of his *black friends*, in what he calls "this land of the free and equal," why do they not, for their reception, widen the doors of the elementary and high schools, of the Colleges and

Universities, that are already in operation throughout the New England States? Why not, if "*improvement*" is his *real* object, adopt this measure, and prevail upon his own family, relatives and friends, to associate, on all occasions, *freely and equally* with them, as with persons of his own colour?

Bishop Fenwick regards the property argument of slave owners paramount; it is theft to attempt to separate a man from his property; whether that property is human or not makes no difference as long as the property is legally his. He mocks William Lloyd Garrison for suggesting a negro school; unfortunately, for all the vitriol in a passage like this, he is correct that New Englanders themselves would not welcome African-Americans into their colleges, schools or homes, as this controversy makes clear. He all but sneers the words "black friends," again suggesting the hypocrisy of those who claim to see black people as their equals, when white personal attitudes betray nothing of the sort.

Furthermore, if Garrison is not a hypocrite, he will publicly espouse mixed race schools, and encourage color-blindness in his family and friends, to the extent that he would marry a woman "of the Ebon hue:"

He who preaches ought to be the first to practise (sic),... and as proof of his sincerity and *orthodoxy*, should he not lead the van by giving, if he be not pre-engaged, his hand and heart to a blushing Desdemona of the Ebon hue? In his "rectitude of purpose and consistency of principle," he may, ere long, confound and "improve" the taste of the ladies and gentlemen of Boston, by opening his nuptial ball and kindly leading through the merry mazes of the dance his delicate bride, or newly acquired sister, niece, or daughter-in-law, or behold in an ecstasy (sic) of delight a daughter, sister, aunt or niece, capering on the light fantastic toe, in all sportiveness "of the free and equal," with a frowsy Othello, to the no small envy and mortification of the "most potent grave and reverend seignors and seignoras of the city!" We are far from envying him and his *brethren* on the

score of taste, philanthropy and policy, and while we protest even against the possibility of being considered his aiders or abettors in a *scheme*, which (heaven forbid!) if once adopted among us, would ultimately lead to the most tragic drama ever acted on the stage of time, we shall merely remind our Quixotic *liberator* of the *improved* pranks which the coloured "*gemmen*" are kicking up in the South.

In this paragraph, Fenwick brings to the fore his ironic portrait of Garrison's dancing with "his blushing Desdemona of the Ebon hue," "his delicate bride." In every possible way, Fenwick suggests that there can be no delicate, blushing *dark* bride. In calling her Desdemona, though, one wonders whether he intended to suggest both that she was a bride in an interracial wedding, and a soon-to-be innocent victim of her husband's unreasonable passion; this is clearly a case of racial inversion, making Desdemona the "Moor," and implying perhaps the fatality of such a union for the white spouse.

Fenwick extends his vision to imagining the ecstasy of Garrisonian types in witnessing their female relatives "capering on the light fantastic toe with a frowsy Othello." The threat of black sexual conquest of white women is again used to evoke the reader's horror. Here there is no doubt that in naming the purported groom "Othello," Fenwick is reminding the reader of the jealous and violent turn Shakespeare's Othello took, in spite of his protestations of love for his wife. Furthermore, the adjective "frowsy" is significant, because of the public nature of this imagined wedding ball: not only is Othello dark and dangerous, but he is messy or slovenly, shabbily dressed, and/or unpleasantly musty or stale-smelling. This is the groom to whom a Garrison-type would be happy to see his daughter wed before a closely watching high society? In addition, this "scheme" will inevitably lead to the bloody violence of a Nat Turner or other upstart "coloured

gemmen.” This, Fenwick assures the reader, is the natural outcome of proposals espousing *equality* and *fraternization*.

Among them, he must know, are already some *preachers*, who, it seems, have derived great *benefit* from their *liberal and religious* education, by being not only brevetted as ringleaders in the present infernal insurrection, but by adopting the principle of *private judgment* as a rule of faith, have fanaticized their jetty brethren into the belief that they were rendering some service to the Saviour, as puritanic *levellers* did, when they arrested Dr. Porteus, the Bishop of St. Andrews and his suit, according to the text.—“The Lord delivered them into our hands,”—and they murdered them.³⁴²

The adoption of “private judgment as a rule of faith” portends the loss of ecclesiastical authority, the domination of private conscience over institutional teachings, especially anathema to an authoritarian, hierarchical church. Connected with that is the labeling of abolitionists as “*puritanic levelers*,” people, who by their Protestant faith are infidels to the Bishop, and by their struggle for racial equality, endanger the entire social caste system, encouraging a bloody and promiscuous anarchy. Again, Fenwick accuses Protestant preachers for the infernal violence of rebellious slaves; these slaves are “their jetty brethren,” sooty brothers not to all humanity, but only to these diabolical preachers. He accuses them of mind control, instilling the belief in the slaves that they were doing service to Jesus in their rebellion. Implicit in this accusation is the gullibility and lack of true agency on the part of the slaves.

Fenwick ends his diatribe with a reference to the arrest and murder of Dr. Porteus, an act he

³⁴² *United States Catholic Sentinel*, Oct. 1, 1831, 3, 1, 13.

considers a barbaric example of mob rule.³⁴³ While it is difficult to know exactly what event Fenwick was referencing in mentioning the bishop of St. Andrew's, it is clear that he believes the incident to showcase the same public savagery.

Ironically, just that kind of violence was perpetrated by the opponents of the "Negro College" in the streets of New Haven. The *Liberator* covered the story with this short article:

RIOTS AT NEW HAVEN!

We learn that the house of Arthur Tappan, Esq. in New Haven, (the summer residence of his family,) a few nights since, in his absence, was rudely assailed by some vile fellows who gave utterance to their malice in words the most obscene and blasphemous, mingled with 'Magdalen,' and 'Immediate Emancipation,' c. c. and concluded BY STONING THE HOUSE!!! This daring outrage has occasioned some sensation in that city, although the New Haven papers are silent on the subject.—The authors are unknown, but it is conjectured they were southern medical students. It may be safely affirmed that no man in the nation is doing so much for the temporal and eternal happiness of his fellowmen as Arthur Tappan; and yet no man is so constantly assailed in his character by miscreants and libellers (sic)....

Another meeting, scarcely more disreputable than the College convocation—in fact, its legitimate offspring—made up, it is true, of different materials, took place in New Haven, on *Sunday* evening, about 11 o'clock, not to overthrow an 'African College' but to pull down a 'negro house,' situated on Mount Pleasant. It was levelled (sic) to the ground, although 'it must have taken great forces to

³⁴³ "Porteous riots, 1736. In Edinburgh on 14 April 1736 the hanging of a smuggler sparked an angry reaction from the watching crowd, and as the body was cut down stones were thrown at the town guard. The troops then opened fire, though Captain John Porteous always denied that he gave the order. Six were killed and about a dozen more injured. The provost feared the mood of the populace and had Porteous arrested; he was tried by the Court of Judiciary and sentenced to be executed. But the government, concerned that the partiality of these proceedings had compromised its authority in the city, granted Porteous a temporary reprieve. Resentment was widespread, and on 7 September a mob of 4,000 stormed the Tolbooth prison, seized the captain, and hanged him. A parliamentary inquiry in 1737 resulted in punitive measures against the city, but the episode cost Walpole much Scottish support in Parliament, which played an important part in his downfall in 1742."

John Cannon. "Porteous riots." *The Oxford Companion to British History*. Oxford University Press. (2002). Encyclopedia.com. 17 July 2009 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>>.

destroy so substantial a building, reared as it was upon a stone base.' The rioters vanished into the air.

New Haven has almost irretrievably lost the high reputation which it has lately sustained. How fatal, sometimes, is a single step from the path of rectitude!³⁴⁴

To the shame of Connecticut newspapers, these acts of vengeance against Arthur Tappan and black New Haven residents went unreported. That choice speaks volumes about the editorial position of the papers, and also suggests the fear that full reporting of these events might curry sympathy for the negro cause. By avoiding the mention and the symbolic image of residents stoning one home and tearing another down to the ground, the public involved in these acts is exonerated, and the silence condones the behavior.

While Garrison assumes in print that the perpetrators were Southern medical students, a conjecture that might have some basis in fact, the use of the epithet "Magdalen" suggests a more British Christian source.³⁴⁵ Furthermore, since in the minds of Christians, Mary Magdalen represented a fallen woman, or even a prostitute, again, these vandals were associating the "Negro College" with the sexual mixing of the races, and attributing the desire for that "miscegenation" to African-Americans. The unwarranted attack on innocent New Haven African-Americans seems to be the physical demonstration of the fear of "leveling" and interracial sex. Interesting, too, is that stoning Tappan's house (and Prudence Crandall's house a few years later in Canterbury, Connecticut) was the chosen method, rather than fire or battering, since stoning is the Biblical punishment for sexual sinners.

³⁴⁴ *Liberator*, Oct. 22, 1831: 1, 43, 171.

³⁴⁵ "Magdalen homes were institutions for the detention and rehabilitation of prostitutes. Originating in the 13th century in Europe, Magdalen Homes began as a consequence of the Catholic Church's efforts to reclaim prostitutes...Magdalen Homes, asylums or institutions...sprang up in England, Scotland and Ireland." Melissa Hope Ditmore. *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press: 2006.)

As if to prove that opposition to the school was based primarily on fears of sexual mingling, one article published on September 10th, the day of the town meeting on the proposal, ended as follows:

One word more—if it is necessary to have an African College, in Connecticut, may not the projectors of it, on mature consideration, conclude to locate it in the town of Cornwall, and there occupy the buildings prepared to their hands by the friends of the Indian Colleges, who flourished in these parts, a few years ago? Cornwall possesses many advantages for such an institution, over other places; and it is not least among them, that the ladies of that town readily give themselves, better for worse, and worse for better, to the colored gentlemen. This and other considerations may have a strong tendency to draw the proposed College to that town. We hope, therefore, that our citizens will act with coolness, on this subject.³⁴⁶

Thus, by invoking the Cornwall interracial marriages (discussed at length in Chapter VI), this journalist clarifies the worst fears of the white New Haven populace: if African-Americans were educated, they could not only take the jobs of white workers, posing an economic threat, but they could additionally earn their way, through wages and “improvement” into the beds of white women.

In Yale’s self-assessment study of its role in African-American history, *Yale, Slavery*

³⁴⁶ Newspaper article quoted verbatim by William C. Fowler. *The Historical Status of the Negro in Connecticut: A Paper Read before the New Haven Colony Historical Society*. (Charleston: Walker, Evans and Cogswell, Co., 1901), 38-39. The article begins: Negro College - New Haven, Saturday, September 10, 1831. It will be seen by an advertisement in this paper, that a call is made on our citizens, to meet this day, and express their opinion on the expediency of establishing a College, in this city, for the education of colored persons. We do not know, but we are slow of heart to believe, but we confess we cannot think there are just grounds to fear the establishment of any such institution in this town. Notwithstanding all the idle reports, we do not believe that money can be raised for such a purpose to make it worth while for any man or body of men to spend time in talking in favor or against such an institution. Besides, who would think of locating a School or College in a town where forty-nine-fiftieths of the inhabitants are against the project? There is, to be sure, one individual citizen, who has publicly engaged in favor of the project, and has, for some time shown an honest and commendable zeal in the work of civilizing and christianizing the blacks among us? There is, probably, not a man in town of more honest and upright intentions; but, in this project, zeal has eaten up his better sense. If there are half a dozen others, whose feelings correspond with his, it is enough to say they are somewhat delirious. We repeat it, we see no cause for such an excitement (growing out of a project that hardly begins to be talked about, by its friends) as to call for a City-meeting, at present... We say, give us time to hear, with ears.

Abolition, the impact of the loss of the “Negro College” follows:

Many months of violence followed the New Haven town meeting. The day after the meeting, a mob of white people attacked Arthur Tappan’s house. In October, there were similar raids in New Liberia, a black community in New Haven.

As for Simeon Jocelyn, “Jocelyn was forced to stop officiating at the African Church in 1834, and three years later, a mob attacked his residence.” Nevertheless, Jocelyn continued working for racial justice in New Haven, building a racially integrated neighborhood in what would later become “Trowbridge Square.” Simeon Jocelyn and his brother, Nathaniel, also served as “conductors” on the underground railroad, ferrying fugitive slaves north to safer areas. New Haven’s Connecticut Journal printed statements from other cities that followed New Haven’s example and stopped the Philadelphia Convention’s attempt to establish schools or colleges. The first college established for African-Americans in the U.S. was “Lincoln University,” established in Pennsylvania in 1854. For twenty-two years after New Haven stopped Jocelyn’s proposed “Negro college” from opening its doors, there remained no African-American institution of higher education. Yale historian George Pierson notes, “No blacks attended Yale College as students, however, until after the Civil War when Edward Alexander Bouchet earned his B.A. with the class of 1874.”³⁴⁷

This examination of the reportage surrounding the African-American college controversy reveals profound fear of African-American ability, sexuality and appeal. Ironically, the articulation of the threats blacks posed bely a begrudging admission of temptation and an acknowledgment of competitive potential. These inchoate fears were so great that even in a generally non-violent New England culture, violence following any proposal that was thought likely to increase the numbers

³⁴⁷ Antony Dugdale, J. J. Fueser, J. Celso de Castro Alves, “Yale, Slavery and Abolition,” The Amistad Committee, Inc., (2001). <www.yaleslavery.org>, Accessed 7/12/09, 21.

of African-Americans, and at the same time, improve their social status, in this predominantly white state. But, in addition to the fear-mongering, the journalistic silence about “months of mob violence” in the streets of New Haven emphasize two consistent trends in Connecticut history: firstly, if white citizens reacted savagely to the threat of black “uplift” and relocation, that news would never be seen in print, preserving the state’s reputation as a civilized and reasonable state, a particularly useful strategy to use as a foil against the South, as regional rifts grew; secondly, outrages committed against African-Americans were simply not newsworthy, any more than would be more vicious murders of slaves in the South. Such events, absent from the press, reveal how distant and illusory white fears could be magnified into mob fury, while the real terrorism tormenting their black neighbors could be complacently -- and ignominiously -- ignored in an ostensibly Christian state.

These identical issues arose only a year later in 1832, in Canterbury, Connecticut, when a young Quaker teacher, Prudence Crandall, admitted a light-skinned African American girl into her otherwise all-white school. The young woman, Sarah Harris, was the daughter of a “respectable” farmer, and though Miss Crandall’s students did not object because they knew Miss Harris from their shared days in the integrated district school, their parents did object. After attempting to gain the support of these parents, Miss Crandall decided to open the school up to African-American girls from Connecticut and nearby states. Her announced intention drew protests from local residents, on the grounds that she was bringing into Canterbury young women of color who were “unknown” to the community. At a public meeting, through a spokesman, the young teacher offered to sell her home to anyone who would take it off her hands, and move her school to another town, but no one offered to purchase it. At the same time, local Democrat officials threatened to

write legislation specifically designed to make schools like Miss Crandall's illegal, which was done in short order.

In the summer of 1833, Miss Crandall had appealed for help from abolitionists including Lewis and Arthur Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison, who supported her by supplying legal assistance and by posting bonds insuring that none of her students would become financial burdens on the village of Canterbury. In spite of these efforts, Miss Crandall was charged with breaking the law; she was arraigned, imprisoned and tried, but the jury was unable to reach a verdict, even after three tries. The case was later dismissed on a technicality, but when Miss Crandall returned to her home, her enemies attempted to set her house on fire, with her and many of her students within it. The fire was discovered as it smoldered, but shortly thereafter, a group of men battered in the windows of the house in the middle of the night. This final event led to the closing of the school, since Miss Crandall could no longer guarantee the safety of her students.

The press coverage of these events seems to reflect some ambivalence on the part of Connecticut residents. First of all, it is essential to note that all Connecticut *district* schools, that is, one-room schoolhouses throughout this rural state, were already integrated. Frugality, rather than generosity, ruled here; it was simply not economical to run separate school systems for African-Americans when they made up such a small fraction of the population. In New Haven and Hartford, cities with sizable black populations, schools were segregated, and poorly supported.³⁴⁸ However, the Crandall school was a private school for middle class girls, a tuition-based school for educating more "gentile" daughters of the upwardly aspiring middle class. A contemporary English

³⁴⁸ Bureau of Education, HISTORY OF SCHOOLS FOR THE COLORED POPULATION 361 (1871). "Both Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut operated segregated schools until the Connecticut legislature mandated mixed schools by statute in 1868." 328. 334-35.

Also see Douglas, Davison M., "The Limits of Law in Accomplishing Racial Change: School Segregation in the Pre-Brown North" (1997). Faculty Publications. Paper 118.

writer, Edward Abdy, who visited Canterbury during that period, described the controversy in just these terms:

I could not understand, I said, how it was that, in the very place where the white and black children of the humbler classes were educated together, any one should insult the parents of the latter by openly asserting that schools for the wealthier classes ought not to admit a colored pupil among them...If the carpenter's and mason's child escape contamination in the public schools, the lawyer need not fear for his daughter's "gentility" and purity, even though a brunette should be admitted to her presence.³⁴⁹

Such a logical approach was, of course, not to be countenanced by the people of Canterbury; Edward Abdy had put his finger on the tinderbox potential of the Canterbury controversy. While it was indisputable that in the "common" rural one-room schoolhouses of Connecticut, black and white children sat within the same walls with no permanent damage done to the white children, an academy like Miss Crandall's was set up to educate the daughters of a more refined class, those with enough expendable income to pay tuition. So while these same students had sat next to Sarah Harris in their earlier years without protest, the tacit understanding of parents paying at Miss Crandall's school was that their daughters were "rising" in gentility in preparation for marrying "up." The presence of Sarah Harris would deflate these hopes, as any academy accepting a student of color could not, by definition, be gentile enough.

Furthermore, as David R. Roediger points out, a great fear of whites, as articulated in a labor appeal in Pennsylvania in 1834, was that opening job and educational opportunities to blacks would "break down the distinctive barriers between the colors that the poor whites may gradually sink into the degraded condition of the Negroes—that, like them, they may be slaves and tools."

³⁴⁹ Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, Vol. 1*. (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214.

Though the animus was ostensibly directed toward the weak Blacks and their designing manipulators, the fear that any change in the status of Blacks could show white freedom to be illusory runs through the document..."³⁵⁰

Not only was there a danger that African-Americans like Sarah Harris *were* rising—after all, her father could afford the tuition, when many white residents could not—but worse yet, the rise of blacks would have to be accompanied by a concomitant “fall” of some whites, “a breaking down of the distinctive barrier between the colors,” which might be the only “capital” some whites felt they had.

If there were any doubt about the fear of opponents that African-Americans would “rise,” Mr. Judson, the author of the “Black Law” put them to rest in a conversation with Mr. May, a supporter of Miss Crandall:

The honorable gentleman (Judson) hardly gave me time to finish my sentences ere he said, with great emphasis:--"Mr. May, we are not merely opposed to the establishment of that school in Canterbury; we mean there shall not be such a school set up anywhere in our State. 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..."³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ David R. Roediger. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. (New York: Verso Books, 2007), 58.

³⁵¹ Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School." *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 39-72. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

Judson's statements are replete with contradictions. "The colored people never can rise from their menial condition in our country; they ought not to be permitted to rise here," he contends. If he were so certain that they could never rise, he would not be so concerned about their being educated. The uneducable would not be able to rise. Furthermore, the phrase, "they ought not to be permitted to rise here," suggests that whites must exercise their dominion, and not "permit" them to rise, but he here admits that they *could* rise, if *permitted*. Thus, his anxiety grows because of the unacknowledged potential of blacks.

As if he somehow senses he has said too much, he continues, "They are an inferior race of beings, and never call or ought to be recognized as the equals of the whites." He is careful to use the word, "beings," a word ambiguous in tone. "Beings" is half of "human beings," but clearly Judson prefers not to assert humanity on behalf of blacks. Judson also contends that blacks should "never call... to be recognized as the equals of whites." The claim to equality of status is at stake here, according to Judson, and the status quo of white superiority must be maintained by vigorously excluding blacks from every opportunity that might encourage them to seek equality.

"Let the niggers and their descendants be sent back to their fatherland..." Judson repeats the word "niggers" twice in this passage and twice he repeats that he is a colonizationist; he could not be clearer on his position—he wants the blacks off this continent, back in Africa where "they belong." So his rage is almost understandable, given this animus, that right next door to his home, he might have to witness the "improvement" of these most unimprovable people.

The fear of the rise of "the colored people" may have been reinforced both by the resentment of whites who could not afford to send their daughters to schools like Miss Crandall's, and the very real possibility that girls like Sarah Harris, the first black student, would surpass their own

daughters in education, refinement and beauty. Edward S. Abdy, who witnessed the trial in Brooklyn, Connecticut, assessed Sarah Harris, the school's first black student.

There was nothing objectionable in the conduct or character of the person thus introduced. She was a very fine young woman, about twenty years of age... She had, indeed, so small a portion of the prohibited fluid in her veins, that she might have escaped observation at a soiree in London...except for her good looks and graceful manners... the nearer the two castes approximate each other in complexion, the more bitter the enmity of the privileged; the jealousy of encroachment being sharpened in proportion as the barriers that separate them are removed. Shades of color...augment by their minuteness, the hatred of the orthodox and predominant party... Forbearance may be shewn, where admittance to equality is rarely, if ever, claimed; — but contempt and contumely and persecution are sure to be the lot of those who seem to stand on the "vantage ground," and claim the full and free payment of their rights... As for her pupils...their good looks and lady-like deportment might excite jealousy and envy among the belles and matrons of the district. Most of them had better claims to grace and beauty than an equal number of Anglo-American females... Some were scarcely to be distinguished from whites; and all were dressed with...much taste and propriety...³⁵²

Mr. Abdy favors Miss Crandall's school, but he inflames the greatest fears of an aspiring middle class white population in suggesting that their tenuous climb to upward mobility might be threatened by competition from a young woman "with the prohibited fluid in her veins," one who might stand out because of "her good looks and graceful manners." Indeed, Mr. Abdy suggests that Miss Harris might be overlooked in a London or Paris soiree, except that her "good looks and graceful manners" would distinguish her. So not only is she the equal of European white ladies, but she is their superior, a bitter pill to swallow for white American women who would be loath to see

³⁵² Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States*, Vol. 1. (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

in women of color competitors in beauty and grace.

To make matters worse, Mr. Abdy comments that “the jealousy of encroachment” is exacerbated when “the two castes approximate each other in complexion.” In fact, he goes on at some length about his theory that higher caste (white) people might tolerate the lower caste (people of color) if they make no claim of equality, but once they want to claim their “full and free payment of their rights,” “contempt and contumely and persecution” will result. Though Mr. Abdy believes in the removal of the barriers that separate the races, in pointing out the threat posed by the beautiful and graceful Miss Harris, he supplies to his opponents more cause for apprehension.

Abdy’s commentary demonstrates that some free women of color were becoming almost indistinguishable from refined white women; this fact alone makes it possible that women of color might “pass” undetected into the white community through marriage and that the “prohibited fluid” might pass into the next generation, a duplicity greatly feared. As Werner Sollors contends, “Though now relegated to a footnote in cultural history, the phenomenon of passing ‘unleashed tremendous anxiety and fear and fascination among whites,’ and became a ‘terrifying issue’ to them.”³⁵³ This terror of being deceived by a mixed blood person persisted uncomfortably with the American concept of “raising oneself up by the bootstraps,” beyond the circumstances of one’s birth; though an honored trope in American culture, it was a theme focused on poor white males, not blacks. Sollors points out that “the paradoxical coexistence of the cult of the “self-made man” and the permanent racial identification and moral condemnation of the racial ‘passer’ as imposter constitute the frame within which the phenomenon of passing took place.”³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Werner Sollors. *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 283.

³⁵⁴ Werner Sollors. *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 250.

Of course, none of these young women *intended* to pass for white, since they were attending a school for "Colored Misses," but the fact that Abdy stresses that they *could* pass and *surpass* white women posed a threat to the white community. Mr. Abdy seems to relish the repetition of this theme toward the end of the passage: these women of color would not stand out

unless it were, that their good looks and lady-like deportment might excite jealousy and envy among the belles and matrons of the district. Most of them had better claims to grace and beauty than an equal number of Anglo-American females taken indiscriminately. Some were scarcely to be distinguished from whites; and all were dressed with as much taste and propriety as could be found in any other school of the same kind.

Again, Mr. Abdy asserts the superior graces of the African-American young women, implying that much of the resentment toward them might be fueled by sheer jealousy, an argument bound to be less than persuasive with the people of Canterbury, but no doubt, touching on the truth.

Mr. Abdy also questions how any "country village could be disturbed, and 'the rights of its inhabitants' (such was the jargon used on this occasion) could...be invaded by nineteen young women..." Here, Mr. Abdy again hit a sore point. As James and Lois Horton have commented, "(S)trangely, the white citizens of Canterbury saw themselves as victims in this confrontation. Several resolutions passed in a town meeting were designed to justify their opposition to the school. In their attempt to do so, they contradicted history and justice, reminded African-Americans once again of the intransigence of white prejudice..."³⁵⁵

In taking the part of the injured party, the white community, led by Andrew T. Judson,

³⁵⁵ 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, 1997), 217.

could state with a straight face that Abolitionists were violating the Constitution, the sanctity of the village of Canterbury and could, in the same breath, hope for the "civilizing and Christianizing" of Africa. And yet for all the protest, Abdy asserts that the privileged class had nothing to fear; these were not the "fashionable arts" being taught in this private institution in Canterbury.

...nothing like rivalry with "fashionable ladies" could ever be promoted by (the school);... none of the ornamental branches of education were taught there; and the utmost ever contemplated was to afford the simple accomplishments of reading, writing, and arithmetic; with a general knowledge of common subjects. To qualify its inmates by these, and the aid of religious principles, for the active duties of life; and raise, by their example and influence, an unhappy race from a state of degradation and despondency, to brighter hopes, and a more honorable rank in society, is the only crime that has ever, with the least shadow of truth, been imputed to the "village school-mistress" and her friends.³⁵⁶

Yet, as was abundantly evident, this raising of the unhappy race was threat enough. Earning respectability through literacy, simple accomplishments and religious principles would be recommended by Amos Gerry Beman and other Connecticut African-American leaders of this era; as Beman preached, "(B)y self-control and abstinence, by self-government and education, by industriousness, forethought, and the striving for the highest capabilities, a people or an individual rises."³⁵⁷ Tragically, it was just this prospect of rising that some whites found intolerable.

This small storm in the village of Canterbury began modestly enough. In Prudence Crandall's own words,

³⁵⁶ Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States*, Vol. 1. (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

³⁵⁷ Robert A. Warner, "Amos Gerry Beman-1812-1874, a Memoir on a Forgotten Leader." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (April 1937), 215.

Canterbury, Feb. 26th, 1833

Mr. Jocelyn Sir

I can inform you that I...laid before (my family) the object of my journey and endeavoured to convince them of the propriety of the pursuit. My views by them were pretty cordially received. Saturday morning I called on several of the neighbours and to my astonishment they exhibited but little opposition. But since that time the people have become very much alarmed for fear the reputation of their village will be injured.³⁵⁸

The concern that the reputation of the town might be damaged stemmed from the belief that a houseful of “colored” young women, one that raised the specter of the brothels they’d heard of in cities, would compromise the morality of the community. A village delegation tried to dissuade Miss Crandall from her plans. On March 12, 1833, Henry Benson wrote William Lloyd Garrison with this account of the public meeting:

Many remarks were offered upon these resolutions by Andrew T. Judson, Esq., ...and others, wholly unworthy of a civilized... enlightened, Christian community. The injury that would accrue to the town from the introduction of colored children, was represented in an awful light by Mr. Judson. He said that the state of things would be...precisely as they now are in New-Orleans, where there is scarcely... a happy person—that their sons and daughters would be forever ruined, and property be no longer safe.³⁵⁹

This remark makes explicit the sexual danger that an “influx” of “colored” would pose; white sons and daughters would be “ruined,” a word reserved for the loss of innocence. By raising the image of New Orleans, a city long known for its mixed racial sex trade, and its lawlessness, Judson slyly

³⁵⁸ Prudence Crandall, "Letter to Simeon Jocelyn (February 26, 1833)," published in "Abolition Letters Collected by Captain Arthur B. Spingarn," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. XVIII, (1933), 80-81.

³⁵⁹ Henry B. Benson, "Letter to William Lloyd Garrison (March 12th, 1833)," published in *Fruits of Colonization*, 1833.

suggests the advent of prostitution and the criminality that attends it. Furthermore, the newcomers will be thieves too -- "property (will) no longer be safe." Here Andrew Judson calls upon all the sexual and criminal stereotypes familiar to Canterbury people.

A local newspaper described the meeting at which Andrew Judson spoke in this way.

... a Committee...visited her"persuad(e) her, if possible, to give up her project, so far as Canterbury was concerned."— The propriety of the conduct of this committee, and the manner in which they presented to the lady...(was) highly creditable....every argumentative effort was made to convince her of the impropriety and injustice of her proposed measure...(and) to address Miss C... in a kind and affecting manner. ...(Mr. Frost) alluded to the danger of the levelling principles, and intermarriage between the whites and blacks; when Miss C. made him the following reply, —"Moses had a black wife." This is not stated for the purpose of bringing censure upon the lady, but because her reply to the Com. seems to have been made in justification of the course she had adopted. The public must decide whether the amalgamation of the whites and blacks is a profitable or safe doctrine. The lady is not here charged with teaching that doctrine. The above reply was made by her to the committee, and every reader must decide its meaning, for himself.³⁶⁰

The author of this piece makes every effort to *sound* objective- "This is not stated for the purpose of bringing censure upon the lady." "The public must decide whether the amalgamation of the whites and blacks is a profitable or safe doctrine. The lady is not here charged with teaching that doctrine... every reader must decide its meaning, for himself." And yet, clearly, knowing how reviled such views would be, the author suggests that Miss Crandall holds the inflammatory view that racial intermarriage is sanctioned in the Bible, and that she has no objection to it.

³⁶⁰ "Statement of Facts, Respecting the School for Colored Females, in Canterbury, Ct. Together With a Report of the Late Trial of Miss Prudence Crandall," *Advertiser Press*, (Brooklyn, CT: 1833.) The entire text follows in Appendix I.

The discussion of “the danger of the leveling principles, and intermarriage between the whites and blacks” poses the two main objections to the school. The “leveling” danger and the possibility of intermarriage are related; if blacks can rise, and be privately educated, and like Sarah Harris, benefit from good looks and graceful manners, then they might attract the romantic attentions of whites. Not only might this result in racial mixing, but it also gradually eliminates the comfort poor whites find in knowing there is an underclass below them.

A more legitimate interest expressed in a March 1833 town meeting was avoiding the import of “foreign” paupers, whose support might come to rest on the shoulders of local taxpayers.

“Thereupon Resolved,—That...a school, for the people of color...within...this town...for persons from foreign jurisdictions, meets with our unqualified disapprobation, and... that the inhabitants of Canterbury protest against it... (Connecticut people of color)... enjoy a special exemption from the poll tax and military duty...Here our duties terminate...We are under no obligation...to incur the incalculable evils, of bringing into our own State, colored emigrants...(who, in a) white population... are an appalling source of crime and pauperism... a great portion...would make this State their permanent residence. The immense evils which such a mass of colored population...would impose on our own people burthens ...(with) no future remedy.... avoided only by timely prevention.

The... criminal courts, prison and asylums for the poor where great numbers prevail among a white population, admonish us of the dangers to which we are exposed...³⁶¹

Sadly, this account of Connecticut generosity is a bit one-sided; African-Americans were exempt from the poll tax and military service because they were excluded from both the voting booth and the military. Furthermore, “this unfortunate class of beings” must await “the benevolent

³⁶¹ “Statement of Facts, Respecting the School for Colored Females, in Canterbury, Ct. Together With a Report of the Late Trial of Miss Prudence Crandall,” *Advertiser Press*, (Brooklyn, CT: 1833.) The entire text follows in Appendix I.

efforts of individuals directed to" education; and those efforts would not be supported if people of color were invited in from other states. Twenty students of color in Canterbury would attract "a great portion of the whole number (who) would make this State their permanent residence. The immense evils which such a mass of colored population, as would gather within this State...(would be seen in the) criminal courts, prison and asylums for the poor where great numbers prevail among a white population."

The racist assumptions here are obvious, but they raise the question of why Prudence Crandall saw fit to place ads in other states to recruit students. This decision offered ammunition to her enemies and allowed them to raise the otherwise irrelevant defense that Canterbury citizens need not host citizens -- or blacks who could not be deemed citizens under the laws of their home states -- in a Canterbury boarding school. Since the legislation under which she was charged revolved around the residency and citizenship of the "colored" girls, it seems this could have been easily avoided by soliciting students only within Connecticut. However, it also seems likely that Miss Crandall, along with her abolitionist allies, the Tappan brothers and William Lloyd Garrison, knew that they could not find within the state, twenty girls of color whose families could pay for private education.

Wherever the students came from, though, to the people of Canterbury, what mattered was their race. The public reaction was ugly. At the town meeting, Samuel May represented Prudence Crandall and offered this account of Andrew Judson's opposition:

...the Hon. Andrew T. Judson rose...undoubtedly the chief of Miss Crandall's persecutors. He was the great man of the town, a leading politician in the State, much talked of...as soon to be governor... His house... stood next to Miss Crandall's. The idea of having "a school of nigger girls so near him was insupportable."

He vented himself in...reckless hostility to his neighbor, her benevolent, self-sacrificing undertaking, and its patrons, and declared his determination to thwart the enterprise. He twanged every chord that could stir the coarser passions... and with such sad success that his hearers seemed to...(believe) a dire calamity was impending... that Miss Crandall was the author...of it, that ...powerful conspirators engaged with her in the plot, and that the people of Canterbury should be roused...to prevent...the design, defying... all who were abetting it.³⁶²

This might have been merely a nineteenth century “NIMBY” (not-in-my-backyard) meeting, but the rhetoric about the impending disaster and the language of “a school of nigger girls” aroused great trepidation in his listeners. Another account of this meeting reinforces the mob mentality that was brewing.

Community reaction was swift and unmistakable. The local church excluded her students, opponents fouled her well with a dead cat, local merchants refused to sell her food and supplies, and mobs attacked her home and school. Townspeople disrupted classes by blowing horns, ringing bells, and firing guns.³⁶³

The protests of the villagers were morphing into anger and physical violence against the school and its mistress. Mr. Abdy stresses the vulnerability of the all female household that must have emboldened Prudence Crandall’s tormentors; also obvious is the community attempt to intimidate her and her pupils. Yet, in the most local paper, *The Advertiser Press*, these violent taunts were easily explained away.

³⁶² Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School" *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 39-72. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

³⁶³ 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, 1997), 217.

It has been charged upon the people of Canterbury, that their excited and unjustifiable state of feeling, led them to indecorous measures against the school. — Such as disturbing the Instructress and her pupils in their walks, — encouraging improper assaults upon her house, &c. Such conduct, (it is stated upon the best authority,) never was sanctioned by her opponents. Whenever any thing of the kind was resorted to, it was the work of boyish folly, or is chargeable upon some of the blacks belonging to the neighborhood.³⁶⁴

The language here is telling; either such behavior was just “boyish folly,” “or is chargeable upon some of the blacks belonging to the neighborhood.” The author doesn’t exactly accuse local blacks of these acts. He merely states that he *could* charge them with these acts, although why blacks would harass an ally of theirs is left undiscussed. Furthermore, if white males are responsible for these acts, their boyish (harmless) high spirits are excusable. If not, “blacks belonging to the neighborhood” are “chargeable.” The actual nature of the behavior changes before the reader’s eyes, as the acts are attributed to white youths, or “charged” upon “neighborhood blacks.” The writer leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind that he has no information about the facts of the case, yet his ready response to this harassment speaks volumes about his assumptions.

In characterizing this obviously bad behavior according to the race of the perpetrators, this article illustrates what David R. Roediger’s theory that, as derisive terms for blacks moved from

describing particular kinds of whites who had not internalized capitalist work discipline...to stereotyping Blacks. Rustics and con-men, fops and ‘fascinators of women’, brawlers and ‘sentinels of the new army of the unemployed’-all of these proved easier to discuss when blacked up. Such an evolution of language suggests that some use of the concept of projection is necessary to understand the growth of a sense of whiteness among

³⁶⁴“Statement of Facts, Respecting the School for Colored Females, in Canterbury, Ct. Together With a Report of the Late Trial of Miss Prudence Crandall,” *Advertiser Press*, (Brooklyn, CT: 1833.) The entire text follows in Appendix I.

antebellum workers, who profited from racism in part because it enabled them to displace anxieties within the white population onto Blacks.³⁶⁵

What has clearly happened in this article is a transfer of responsibility for boyish pranks, if the actors were white, to the doings of neighborhood blacks; such a glib verbal transfer exonerates whites of wrongdoing, and thus, as Roediger notes, frees white readers of guilt or anxieties, and neatly assigns improper conduct to blacks. This simple reapportionment manages not only to assuage white guilt, but also underscores the need for white victory in the Crandall case: since black neighborhood rowdies are already doing their damage, every effort must be made to keep out other blacks, male or female.

The Advertiser Press, one of hundreds of small newspapers all over Connecticut, was probably the one Samuel May had in mind when he wrote:

In addition to the insults... mentioned above, the newspapers of the county and ...the State frequently gave currency to the most egregious misrepresentations of the conduct of Miss Crandall and her pupils, and the basest insinuations against her friends... Yet our corrections... were persistently refused a place in their columns. The publisher of one of the county papers, who was personally friendly to me... confessed... that he dared not admit into his paper...(a) defence of the Canterbury school. It would be, he said, the destruction of his establishment. Thus situated, we were continually made to feel the great disadvantage at which we were contending with the hosts of our enemies.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ David R. Roediger. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. (New York: Verso Books, 2007), 100.

³⁶⁶ Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School" *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, Co., 1869), 39-72.

Intimidated by the powerful enemies of Prudence Crandall, who were judges, lawyers and legislators, journalists at the time reserved their opinions, crafting their coverage to be as objective as possible; one must read carefully between the lines of a *Connecticut Courant* article written in the beginning of the first Crandall trial, to detect any point of view.

...the case of Prudence Crandall...came on for trial... Our informant...says... that.. the new State Attorney... sent a note to the court that he was sick...The Court then appointed Mr. Stoddard... States Attorney... in behalf of the State... He was suddenly taken sick on Thursday, and soon left the town. The Court then assigned Mr. Welch as principal...to carry on the prosecution... The prosecutor called as witnesses, the students in Miss Crandall's school... They refused to testify because ...they should implicate themselves... The Court decided the witnesses should testify-but they refused, and were ready... to go to prison... (Crandall's) Baptist minister... declined testifying... The Court said he must testify-he refused. The Sheriff was then directed to...commit him to prison for contempt! He was arrested and in custody an hour or two, and finally answered... another pupil...likewise refused to testify... The Court ordered her to prison and ...she was advised to testify, and returned and told all she knew.³⁶⁸

This rather painful passage is quoted here to demonstrate that the facts of the Crandall case were faithfully recited. However, in the litany of state attorneys who fall ill and leave town, and the number of witnesses who refuse to testify or are forced by threats of imprisonment to testify against Prudence Crandall, the *Courant* writer reveals a loyalty to Miss Crandall, and a certain malaise even among the prosecutors, who seem to be fleeing association with the case. A picture is being painted here: young girls are being forced to betray their teacher; they are ready to go to jail so as not to incriminate themselves and her; a Baptist minister is arrested and held in custody until he decides to testify. ("The Sheriff was then directed to arrest him and commit him to prison for

³⁶⁸ Editorial Article 1 -- No Title. *Connecticut Courant*, August 26, 1833, 3. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

contempt!”) Here, the writer allows himself to express the shock of this disrespect, but only in an exclamation point. But again, a minister is threatened with imprisonment, unless he agrees to betray his parishioner. The article goes on to present the arguments of both sides objectively, but then goes on to note the likely bias on the part of the judge:

We have not heard what the Charge of the Court was, though it was supposed that the presiding Judge... was a member of the very committee in the Legislature, that formed and reported the bill, and... was the only person in the Legislature who advocated it on the floor of the House, would instruct the Jury that the law is constitutional; but it was the almost universal opinion that the Jury...never would convict Miss Crandall. The current was turning and setting with *great force* in her favor,-Miss C. appeared... very interesting, and her pupils were inferior to no others, in their conduct, language and appearance. The particulars of this interesting and important trial we will give more fully, when we obtain them.³⁶⁹

Most noteworthy is the intrusion of this writer's subjective opinion that the jury "never would convict Miss Crandall...The current is turning and setting with *great force* in her favor..." Such certainty expressed not about whether the jury *should* convict, but whether the jury *would* convict, could not arouse the ire of frightened and bigoted readers. And even the bias of the presiding judge is described factually and inoffensively, rather than judgmentally. It is likely that this is the kind of journalistic timidity to which Samuel May referred.

Yet, to counterpoint these journalistic acts of timidity, Arthur Tappan funded a newspaper, to be run by Rev. May in Connecticut, to earn support for Prudence Crandall. No stranger to journalism, Rev. May edited *The Christian Monitor*; but while he was a staunch supporter of Miss Crandall, he did not approach the story in his own newspaper:

³⁶⁹ Editorial Article 1 -- No Title. *Connecticut Courant*, August 26, 1833, 3.

I was at that time publishing a religious paper,--The Christian Monitor,--which... filled quite full the measure of my ability. Unfortunately the prospectus of The Monitor... precluded from its columns all articles relating to personal or neighborhood quarrels. Therefore, though the editor of a paper, I could not, in that paper, repel the most injurious attacks that were made upon my character.

His explanation leaves open some questions about his motivation in omitting coverage of the Canterbury controversy in the religious newspaper he edited; after all, abolition and its related causes had long been viewed as issues of concern to Christians. After all, one could hardly characterize this case as a "personal or neighborhood quarrel," particularly after Arthur Tappan described its national impact: "(T)he cause of the whole oppressed, despised colored population of our country is to be much affected by the decision of this question."³⁷⁰

In any case, the feelings of the people of Canterbury were reflected in the jury verdict: seven voting for conviction under the "Black Law," and five voting against the conviction. The sentiments of some Connecticut citizens were captured by the visiting Englishman, Mr. Abdy:

...the driver...had...neither coat to his back nor shoes to his feet... He was a very civil and a noble fellow withal...

...[the stage driver] asked, whether I had heard of what had ... taken place at Canterbury... after detailing the particulars, he launched out in praise of Miss Crandall's magnanimity and in censure of her persecutors. "For my part...I cannot see why a black skin should be a bar to any one's rising in the world or what crime there can be in trying to elevate any portion of society by education. It is prejudice alone that has made the distinction and... It is my firm belief... that if they had the same advantages as we have, they would be superior to us... Often, when they work ... they are unable to get their wages..."

³⁷⁰ Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School," *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, Co., 1869), 39-72.

My other companion was of the same way of thinking...³⁷¹

Later in his account, Mr. Abdy quotes some other locals with widely differing viewpoints.

One of (the farmers in Brooklyn, Connecticut) said ...that he knew no distinction between man and man; and should... sit down ...with any human being who differed from him in complexion only. This same man, when it was proposed (at his church)...to remove the people of color to seats more remote...strongly opposed the proposition, and declared, that...they should sit in his own pew.

... one of the passengers observed, that he had never heard so much about the blacks as...during his ...stay in Brooklyn... All parties were agreed in condemning poor Miss Crandall. One said that she was a mere tool in the bands of agitators and fanatics, who had gained her over to their cause by paying her debts: another (was) assured that...all the disturbance had originated with Mr. Judson's enemies...³⁷²

The idea that Miss Crandall was a “mere tool in the bands of agitators and fanatics,” had gained much traction, especially after her association with William Lloyd Garrison and the Tappan brothers became common knowledge. The local paper, *Advertiser Press*, noted that her supporters were “(A)ll Abolitionists, and with a few exceptions, residents of other States.”³⁷³ This was a powerful argument because it raised the ire of people on two counts: not only were “outsiders” in the form of African-American young women “invading” Canterbury, but now “outsiders” were coming in to direct the local events; Andrew T. Judson knew exactly how to capitalize on these

³⁷¹ Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, Vol. 1.* (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

³⁷² Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, Vol. 1.* (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

³⁷³ “Statement of Facts, Respecting the School for Colored Females, in Canterbury, Ct. Together With a Report of the Late Trial of Miss Prudence Crandall,” *Advertiser Press*, (Brooklyn, CT: 1833.)

sensitive points, by appealing to the pride of the people of Canterbury. If New Haven and Union could stand up to a negro school, dare not Canterbury?

...(Andrew T. Judson) was not willing... that even one corner... should be appropriated to such a purpose. After the example which New-Haven has set, he continued, shall it be said that we cannot, that we dare not, resist? ...the laws shall be put in force. I, for one, am happy to see the Rev. gentleman here, who has attempted to impose upon me, and seek my property, and rouse my feelings—I am happy he is here to hear me. The feeling expressed by the citizens of New-Haven...was represented by him to be a feeling common in through-out the State; that it had been said that there was one town in Connecticut that was willing that a school of this kind should be established, and that was Union. He said there were about 75 voters in Union, and a freeman of that town told him a few days since that should Miss C. attempt to cross their line for the purpose of establishing a negro school... it would not be until they were no longer able to defend themselves.³⁷⁴

Andrew Judson knew how to arouse a community. Are Canterbury men less willing to “defend themselves?” Are Canterbury men such cowards that they dare not “resist those like Rev. gentleman (May) here, who has attempted to impose upon me, and seek my property, and rouse my feelings?” This had become a small war for independence, Canterbury vs. outsiders and Abolitionists. The answer to this kind of rhetoric came in the behavior of the townspeople toward Prudence Crandall.

Miss Crandall received... fifteen or twenty colored young ladies... At once her persecutors commenced operations...the stores ...denied her...She and her pupils were insulted... The... door-steps... were besmeared, and her well was filled with filth...(Her opponents)... insulted and annoyed her and her pupils... The storekeepers, the

³⁷⁴ Henry B. Benson, "Letter to William Lloyd Garrison (March 12th, 1833)," published in *Fruits of Colonization*, (1833). The entire text follows in Appendix I.

butchers, the milk-pedlers of the town, all refused to supply their wants; and... her... relatives... were insulted and threatened. Her well was defiled with the most offensive filth, and her neighbors refused her... even a cup of cold water... the physician ... refused to minister...the church forbade her (and her pupils) to come... an attempt was made to set her house on fire... But...afterwards it was... too plain that the enemies...were bent upon...destruction... Miss Crandall's house was assaulted.. with heavy clubs and iron bars; five window sashes...and ninety panes...were dashed to pieces. I was summoned...to ...the terror-stricken family. Never before had Miss Crandall seemed to quail... therefore, it was determined that the school should be abandoned.³⁷⁵

Reverend May's account of the persecution of the town is intended to outrage his readers: he suggests viewing Miss Crandall as a leader of soldiers under attack: "Miss Crandall and her little band behaved somewhat like the besieged in the immortal Fort Sumter," courageous and heroic. But another set of images works to greater effect in this account; Reverend May makes use of words like "insulted," "besmeared," "filth," "evil," "malice," "threatened," "defiled...with offensive filth," "malignant," and "atrocious." These words describe the attacks upon "Miss Crandall" and "fifteen or twenty colored young ladies and misses." The imagery pits a violent, insulting and defiling crowd, presumably male, against a small band of brave, but justifiably terrified young ladies and misses. The mob behavior is not only racist, but as Reverend May suggests in his language, it goes outrageously beyond the unchivalrous, besmearing the purity of an innocent young woman's home.

Furthermore, as depicted here, the young women are all alone in this house under siege; the Crandall family lives out of town, and so her father and brother and Quaker friend only visit with

³⁷⁵ Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School." *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, Co., 1869), 39-72. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

supplies when needed. The rest of the time, as the story is told here, Miss Crandall can rely on no male protector. Even the men in her village who might normally be considered “paternal” have turned against her. Her neighbors deny her even a cup of water; the village physician refused to enter her home; the trustees of her church forbade her and her students entrance to church; the storekeepers, butchers and “milk-peddlers,” again all men, refuse to supply her. From a nineteenth-century perspective, such gross abandonment of an otherwise virtuous young woman should provoke compassion in the hearts of Reverend May’s readers, particularly women who might empathize with her position. Presumably, Reverend May was writing with such a presumed readership in mind.

Mr. Abdy’s version of much the same events places gender more saliently in the forefront:

...her enemies, by employing every weapon that baffled resentment and vulgar malice could suggest, were endeavoring to drive her from the place... She had been openly insulted and derided; she had been surrounded... by troops of boys, who annoyed her by blowing horns, beating drums, and playing “rough music” with...noisy instruments. A large stone was... thrown in at the window, when the family happened to be upstairs...the stone...as broad as my fist... was put into my hands. Had it struck any of the females—there was not a man in the house—the blow might have inflicted a very serious injury.

In addition...no tradesmen... would supply her...no one had ever cast the slightest doubt upon her character, and...she was... in a weak state of health, the baseness of her unmanly tormentors will be still more striking.³⁷⁶

Similarly to Reverend May’s report cited earlier, Mr. Abdy is careful to capture the gender dynamics of these incidents. Again, the male-upon-female nature of the attacks is highlighted. Miss Crandall was “openly insulted and derided,” “surrounded or followed...by troops of boys

³⁷⁶ Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, Vol. 1*. (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214. The entire text follows in Appendix I.

playing 'rough music'" Not only do the boys insult her, but they do so publicly, without fear of adult male correction, surrounding the young teacher and her female students, presenting the reader with the very imagery of male intimidation and victimization of females. Interestingly, both May and Abdy refer to the residents of the house as "the family," a term that would not normally apply to a household of unrelated females. Yet, both men know that this word is charged with emotion, and powerful. They describe a "family" under physical and psychological attack; it is unimaginable that female readers especially would not be moved by such diction.

Later in the passage, Abdy reinforces the male violence toward a household of females with this line: "Had it struck any of the females—there was not a man in the house—the blow might have inflicted a very serious injury." Logically, of course, readers would know that had the stone struck any human being, male or female, serious injury might have resulted, and few men could have claimed the ability to anticipate and deflect a stone thrown in the dark. But the idea that the young women were being terrorized without a man in the house to protect them calculates that readers will react with indignation toward the male perpetrators.

Furthering his theme of male abandonment of this innocent female, Mr. Abdy notes that no tradesmen would supply the necessities for her "domestic" consumption; like Reverend May, the author here pits the idealized protective providing male against the males surrounding Miss Crandall; not only is she unprotected, and unprovided for, but she is maliciously attacked and almost starved out of her home. The word "domestic" is used advisedly, as all things domestic were associated with womanhood, and the very use of this word suggests that Miss Crandall is merely attempting to fulfill her womanly duties, rather than foment a social rebellion in a small village.

Mr. Abdy's final sentence clinches his attempt to find sympathy in the hearts of his readers:

"When I add, that no one had ever cast the slightest doubt upon her character, and that she was at the time in a weak state of health, the baseness of her unmanly tormentors will be still more striking." Several strains are heard here. If being female does not warrant the reader's commiseration, Miss Crandall suffered these assaults while "in a weak state of health." The trope of the sickly female, struggling to fulfill her duties, was a familiar one, and though no other account claims as much, no doubt anyone under siege like this would begin to feel weak. Again, the "unmanliness" of her tormentors is asserted; these are base men who refuse their duty to protect and provide for women.

Most noticeable, though, is Mr. Abdy's assertion that "no one had ever cast the slightest doubt upon her character." This innocent character makes the torment she is suffering outrageous, as it might not be, Abdy suggests, if she were tarnished by rumor. The cult of true womanhood requires that virtuous women be shielded by gentlemen from the vulgarity and baseness of the lowest in society. In this case, Mr. Abdy contends, Miss Crandall has done nothing to deserve such treatment. While the expression of her sexuality might seem irrelevant to her case in Canterbury, it was not at the time; any hint of impropriety would have given her enemies cause to suspect her house was destined for uses other than education. By asserting the purity of her character once more, Mr. Abdy is seeking out the approval of his middle class female readers, and presenting the image of a proper young woman, with whom readers can fully identify, and thus approve.

The long pattern of harassment and abuse documented by many witnesses certainly indicated that the most passionate Canterbury residents opposed the school and those who did not

were too intimidated to speak out in her favor. And yet, Rev. May says that she had much support in newspapers.

...(A)n excellent young lady had been imprisoned as a criminal...in the State of Connecticut, for opening a school for the instruction of colored girls. The comments that were made upon the deed in almost all the newspapers were far from grateful to the feelings of her persecutors. Even many who, under the same circumstances, would have probably acted as badly...denounced their procedure as unchristian, inhuman, antidemocratic, base, mean.

Perhaps there was such support, and these newspapers do not today survive. Some sixteen years after the event, *The Hartford Daily Courant* presented the story as a persecution, rather than a prosecution, by the Democrats, with the Whigs being the heroes.

The law under which Prudence Crandall was prosecuted... was passed in 1833, by a 'Democratic' Legislature...reported by a 'Democratic' Committee...based upon a petition from Canterbury signed (and, as it is believed, drawn,) by ANDREW T. JUDSON, the present Loco Foco District Judge...and its only advocate on the floor of the House, was Judge Eaton... *then* a prominent member of the Democratic party.

It was passed by a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate, signed by... a Democratic Speaker, and ... a Democratic Lieutenant Governor, and received the approval of... a Democratic Governor. So much for the *passage* of the law itself.

... A Democratic Judge... charged the jury strongly against the prisoner...The accused was defended by Whig counsel, Messrs. Strong and Ellsworth, __ and discharged pursuant to the decision of a Whig Judge, Chief Justice Williams. Such are the real facts in the case...³⁷⁷

Similarly, in 1879, forty-six years after the case closed, "Mr. Oliver Johnson, in his 'Recollections of an Abolitionist,' now in course of publication in the *New York Tribune*, relates

³⁷⁷ Prudence Crandall, *Hartford Daily Courant*, April 25, 1849, 2.

the following story of persecution..."³⁷⁸ in terms of party politics. He writes a familiar recap of events, but ends his article in the certainty of the righteousness of Miss Crandall's cause, but also in the historical righteousness of his party.

For these outrages in this Christian town there was no redress, and the school was abandoned. If anybody wishes to know how it happens that Windham county, by her large republican majority, has often saved the state from falling into the hands of the copperhead democracy, he may find the explanation in the facts above related, and in the discussions that ensued.³⁷⁹

So ended the newspaper coverage of the Prudence Crandall school, on a congratulatory note to Windham County. One irony left unmentioned by extant contemporary newspaper accounts is the role played by Judge Andrew T. Judson, the force behind the legislation and prosecution of Prudence Crandall. Judge Judson played a more admirable part in the Amistad drama just a few years later in 1839-40 when he authored the court decision that freed the Mendi captives from their Spanish slavers. His decision was based on principles of property law, specifically that in order to claim ownership of property, human or real, one must show legal paperwork indicating a sale or gift transfer.³⁸⁰ Fortunately for the Africans, the case could be narrowed down to this legal point. In addition, following a still-respected tradition of deciding cases on the narrowest grounds possible, Judge Judson was careful to avoid dicta that questioned the premise of slavery, the idea that human beings could be someone else's property.

³⁷⁸ PRUDENCE CRANDALL'S SCHOOL IN CANTERBURY, *Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct 21, 1879, 1.

³⁷⁹ PRUDENCE CRANDALL'S SCHOOL IN CANTERBURY *Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct 21, 1879, 1.

³⁸⁰ See Appendix II for more information.

Prudence Crandall moved out of state after the attack on her Canterbury home, and ironically, the Black Laws under which she was prosecuted were repealed in 1838. Her story still evokes shame in Connecticut residents since Prudence Crandall stood up to attack largely alone, assisted by out-of-state abolitionists, but not by her silent, intimidated Connecticut friends.

The Prudence Crandall story also serves as a precedent to the desegregation cases of the 1950s, when Federal troops had to escort nine black students to school to desegregate Little Rock High School in Arkansas in 1957, in defiance of hostile white protesters. In her essay on Little Rock, Hannah Arendt notes that the civilian population of Arkansas was eloquent in its protest against forced desegregation:

The sorry fact was that the town's law-abiding citizens left the streets to the mob, that neither white nor black citizens felt it their duty to see the Negro children safely to school. That is, even prior to the arrival of Federal troops, law-abiding Southerners had decided that the enforcement of the law against mob rule and protection of children against adult mobsters were none of their business. In other words, the arrival of the troops did little more than change passive resistance into massive resistance.³⁸¹

In Little Rock, as Hannah Arendt reminds us, children bore the brunt of the racist mobs swarming them on their way to school. The community, black and white, was either too angry or too fearful to stand up to the force of the mob, and in their absence, allowed the innocent children to be terrorized by those who respected no rule of law.

In Canterbury, the populace was equally clear in its disapproval of the African-American school. Not only did white families remove their daughters when Sarah Harris was admitted, but

³⁸¹ Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*. Werner Sollors. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 495-496.

they then stood by, silent in apparent approbation, as Andrew T. Judson rammed legislation through to legalize Prudence Crandall's school and others like it. In the trial that followed, public opinion may have shifted between sympathy and antipathy for Crandall, but after her exoneration, mob justice won out; the townspeople who did not harass her stood by silently as others did, until her house was viciously attacked and later set on fire. Like Little Rock, otherwise law-abiding citizens "decided that the enforcement of the law against mob rule and protection of children against adult mobsters were none of their business."

Such social resistance, "massive resistance" as Arendt calls it, is a consequence of legislating social change before society is ready to accept it. Her argument rests on the forced desegregation of *public* schools, in that

(T)o force parents to send their children to an integrated school against their will means to deprive them of rights which clearly belong to them in all free societies—the private right over their children and the social right to free association.³⁸²

One could imagine Andrew T. Judson enjoying and adopting this line of argument, even though his children would not be forced to attend school with blacks, since Prudence Crandall's school was private and independent. Nonetheless, in living next door to Prudence Crandall, he and his family would be forced to live in proximity with "colored" girls, and he might argue that such forced association would deprive him of his right to free association, in that he could not be "free" of their presence even in his own home.

Hannah Arendt's larger point, that the judicial/legislative forcing of social change puts the onus of backlash on those least equipped to handle it, applies to the children in both Little Rock and the

³⁸² Ibid. 501.

Prudence Crandall cases. However, one could have made such an argument about the Emancipation Proclamation as well; enslaved people claiming their new freedom were least able to protect themselves physically, legally and politically, and yet theirs was the burden and responsibility to exert themselves to take freedom into their own hands. Moreover, one might well wonder how long it might have been before the tide of public opinion shifted enough to allow a smooth transition from slavery to emancipation.

The subtextual fear of interracial sexual mixing played a significant role in both the New Haven College and Crandall cases. In New Haven, the college intended for black males would have been expected to bring to New Haven families of African-Americans interested in their sons' education. That such families would include young women who might serve as a temptation to Yale men, or fulfill white nightmares or fantasies of brothel activities, lurked just under the surface of the rhetoric. In the Crandall case, the same fears are aroused, with the complication that the most visible activist was an obviously innocent young woman with good intentions. By using the same weapons to tarnish her as would be used on women of ill repute -- stoning; assaulting her publicly; befouling her home and drinking water; setting fire to her home; isolating her socially; prosecuting her; and expelling her from her church -- a message is clearly sent that one's good reputation can be compromised even without sexual contact, as if bringing in women of color for the purposes of education had the other baser motives suspected and feared by her enemies. Furthermore, the face of change, in Canterbury, was Prudence Crandall's face, so the methods used to crush her project needed to be potent and gendered, putting her back into "her place" as one who could not effect change, as one who would be punished, tarnished and run out of town as a woman of ill repute, if she, as "just" a woman, dared face down powerful male interests.

In both the New Haven College and the Prudence Crandall cases, journalists either ignored white violence or "blackened" it, displacing guilt for the violence against innocent African-Americans and their advocates upon the victims themselves. When even clear supporters of Prudence Crandall like Rev. May, Editor of the *Christian Monitor*, failed to comment on the case in print, it is hardly surprising that other newspapers would only print apologies for her opponents, especially after the stoning of Arthur Tappan's house a year earlier in New Haven. This refusal to report the truth about white violence, intimidation and revenge springs from the same cowardice that enables all bullies: no one wants to be the next victim.

Furthermore, this picture of Connecticut citizens setting a young woman's home on fire, or pulling down the homes of African-Americans in New Haven, challenges the self-image of Connecticut citizens as law-abiding, civilized and at least nominally Christian; according to Connecticut journalists, it was better that this picture remain behind a veil of legislative and civic bustle.

Chapter VI

Marrying Up? Interracial Marriages in 19th Century Connecticut

Although it is naturally impossible and misleading to generalize about the attitudes of any two people, much less those of an entire state or region, a close look at the discourse in newspapers allows historians to see the tenor, tone and types of arguments of both sides of a debate. This examination of the conversation about interracial marriages in nineteenth century Connecticut offers an opportunity to reevaluate the issues raised by the Prudence Crandall case in a broader context.

Legally, interracial marriages were banned by all Southern colonies, along with Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, by 1750. By the early 1960s, forty-one out of the fifty states had had at one time or still had, such a law on the books. New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Vermont and Connecticut never legally banned interracial marriage.³⁸³

In spite of its legality, the frequency of interracial marriages in nineteenth century Connecticut is difficult to gauge; the most reliable sources of this information, census records, often indicate that one individual is identified in succeeding census decades variously as black, mulatto, white or Indian. Certainly, it appears that intermarriage was uncommon, but it did occur.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Interracial marriage was illegal from 1821 through 1883 in Maine; from 1705 through 1843 in Massachusetts; and from 1798 through 1881 in Rhode Island. See <<http://civilliberty.about.com/od/raceequalopportunity/tp/Interracial-Marriage-Laws-History-Timeline.htm>>

³⁸⁴ *Hartford Daily Courant*, November 23, 1858, 2. This article reflects upon Rev. Lemuel Haynes, born of a black father and a white mother and abandoned by both. Upon being proposed to by a white woman in 1783, Haynes is said to have sought the advice of his fellow ministers, "feeling as he did the peculiarities of his complexion and position", and they gave "unanimous approval. The marriage was a happy and prosperous one..." The Haynes remained married until the minister's death in 1833, after having served in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont.

In Connecticut newspapers, the first notice of racial intermarriage came during the Foreign Mission School crisis in 1824, precipitated by two marriages of Cherokee men to white women in Cornwall, Connecticut. While perhaps the reaction to these marriages seemed to have been more muted than the reaction to African-American--European-American unions, in some of the commentary, Native-American and African-American peoples are conflated into "black" or "colored," and so following the developing rhetoric on this issue is instructive. The Cornwall incidents garnered much attention, and the school's administrators hurried to tamp down the alarm and assure the public that they disapproved completely of such "connections" between the races. The first article, which appeared in the *Connecticut Herald* (a paper not known for its racial tolerance) on Feb. 10, 1824, excoriated Secretary of War William Crawford who had averred that "civilizing" the Indians might be more likely if "intermarriages between them and the whites (were to) be encouraged by the Government."³⁸⁵

INTERMARRIAGES

Mr. Crawford's plan for civilizing the Indians, by intermarrying with the whites and amalgamating their blood with ours, appears to be going into practical operation in this state. One of the Indians...at the school... has lately been married to a respectable white female... He is said to be of the Cherokee or Choctaw tribe, and of full blood. The marriage took place without the consent of the father... of respectable standing in society, but [it] was effected through the instrumentality of the mother and her advisers, who has thus thrown her child, at the tender age of sixteen, into the embrace of this son of the forest, scarcely redeemed from his native wilds, and destined again to mingle with the tawny herd from which he is descended.

³⁸⁵ *Annals of Congress*, 14th Congress, 1st Session (14 March 1816), 199.

In the three-sentence synopsis of the facts, the respectable social standing of the bride's family is mentioned twice. The girl's youth and the lack of paternal consent in the marriage exacerbate the author's disgust, but the savagery of the Indian (perhaps slightly romanticized) emphatically emerges in the words, "tribe," "full blood," "son of the forest," "native wilds," and "tawny herd." The article continues:

We deem this act so repugnant to the moral sense of a decent community as to be worthy of public and general reprehension, especially as it is said that three other marriages of the same nature are now in contemplation. It is the result of a course of conduct towards these sables and blacks, which, divested of an ultimate though very precarious object, would disgust the meanest citizen, and throw its perpetrators out of the pale of respectability and decency. The Indians and negroes at Cornwall, it is stated, are treated with more marked attention and respect than the common citizens, or the sons of worthy or reputable farmers—"the females of that place ride and walk out with them by night and by day—spend evenings with them—invite them to tea parties—correspond with them—suffer themselves to be complimented by them—in short, receiving them as the most favoured gallants and beaux—while young men of the town, poor white boys, are often cast into shade by their tawny rivals."—These advantages, coupled with the personal attentions of their superiors, strangers and others, so strongly calculated to fan, to flutter, beguile and decoy the heart of a young and inconsiderate girl, form the only apology for the unnatural connection, by creating an impression that an association with the character so highly praised and so much caressed, though of a different colour, would not, after all, be *so very unpleasant*. This must be a state of society by no means enviable.

So, the "meanest" citizen would be disgusted by the machinations of those proponents of interracial mixing: in this stratified society, even the lowest (presumably white) person has standards and limits that should make such social barriers inviolable. The "mission" of the Foreign Missionary School, according to this writer, is not only to break down those barriers, but to elevate "these sables and blacks" *above* "common citizens, or the sons of worthy or reputable farmers" or "young men of the town, poor white boys." The social stratification rules clearly identified here require race to trump education and wealth, while in Cornwall, "respectable white" daughters are allowing the charming, educated, dark-skinned students to become their "most favoured gallants and beaux." In the eyes of the author, this "favor" and attention is bestowed upon "these sables and blacks" by authority figures in the town, *at the expense* of farmers' sons and poor whites, and creates double damage by encouraging the social elevation of the men of color through marriage into the most respectable families, and worse yet, allowing them to surpass the "common" white citizen in education, attention, respect and marital prospects.

This undue respect powerfully influences the uninformed heart of a "young and inconsiderate girl," and leads her to think romance with a student of color might not be "*so very unpleasant*." In an unsurprising approach, the role of women in this episode is key: a foolish mother "effects" her young and beguiled daughter's marriage in the absence of the wiser male authority of the home; the Indian groom becomes a sort of home invader among stupid and defenseless females while they are left unprotected, a variation on the classic Indian attacker stories of old New England. The writer continues:

The waywardness of youthful fancy, in opposition to the common sense and the sterner dictates of judgment, under such impulses, may often bring a pang to the parents (sic) bosom, who may be brought to endure the mortifying

reflection that the daughter of his love and the child of his hopes is to become a nursing mother to a race of mongrels or mulattos.³⁸⁶

Again in this last section, the contrast between the female (“waywardness of youthful fancy”) and the paternal and patriarchal (“the sterner dictates of judgment”) interests sets up the tragedy, that “the daughter of his love and the child of his hopes” will essentially be degraded to the level of an animal feeding her mongrel young. This last line evokes for a nineteenth century reader an image of nursing, a private part of mothering, here set out in public to remind Americans of Indian women, partially clothed and carrying out private activities in the perceived public world of the Indian, the outdoors. This “daughter of his love” becomes a mother, of course suggesting the sexual connection with the Indian, but furthermore gives birth to “a race of mongrels or mulattos.” The word “mongrels,” reminds the reader of mixed breed dogs, and the word, “mulattos,” of course, evokes African parentage; worse yet, by using the plural word for the progeny of this marriage, the phrase creates the image of a dog, nursing multiple babies at one time. If this were not degrading enough, the idea that these children are a new “race,” all their own, encourages the reader to think of them as something other than human, and implies, with all the other language, that this young white woman has interbred with another species entirely, producing a “litter.”

In the *Times and Hartford Advertiser*, a remarkably neutral marriage announcement³⁸⁷ precedes the scathing editorial comment on it.

Married, at Cornwall, on the 27th inst. by the Rev. Mr. Smith, John Ridge, an Indian of the Cherokee tribe, and late a member of the Foreign Mission School, to Miss

³⁸⁶ *Connecticut Herald*, February 10, 1824, 3.

³⁸⁷ At this time, marriage announcements were not always respectful. Some of them mocked the bride for being too old or the groom for taking seven years to propose.

Sally B. Northrup, aged 19, daughter of Mr. John P. Northrup, late Steward of the F.M.S.

Communicated

[Re:] the following remarks of The Litchfield Eagle on the above marriage... without offering... any other apology than the extraordinary and shameful character of the affair. We are informed by a young gentleman who was in Litchfield last week, that the father of the young lady, afflicted to distraction at the degradation of his daughter, had left his family and gone off it was not known where.

...The affliction, mortification and disgrace of the relatives of the young woman, who is only about sixteen years old, are too great for that. Her father and connexions ...are among the most respectable and worthy of that parish. To have her thus marry an Indian and taken into the wilderness among savages, must indeed be a heart-rending pang, which none can realize except those called to feel it.

Again, the respectable origins of the young lady are asserted, and that "worthiness" of family, juxtaposed with her marrying "an Indian and (being) taken into the wilderness among savages," makes "the heart-rending pang" the greater. The class difference between a respectable white young lady and an Indian is perceived as much greater than that between a poor white woman of questionable social origin and an Indian. Ridiculously, the author goes on (in the extract below) to forbear the mention of the names of the parties, while earlier pointing out their names in the foregoing nuptial announcement. At the same time, while assiduously avoiding the reintroduction of the names, the paper goes on to smear them with the use of the word, squaw and sanup (presumably husband or lover), words even then felt to be derogatory when used by whites.³⁸⁸

We forbear to mention their names, or the name of her who has thus made herself a *squaw* and connected her ancestors

³⁸⁸ J.A. Simpson, and E.S.C. Weiner. *Oxford English Dictionary*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.)

to a race of Indians. But her conduct, or the conduct of the Indian, her *sanup*, or of her mother...is not so much a case of wonder. It is, and will, it is believed, on examination be found to be the *fruit* of the *missionary spirit*, and caused by the conduct of the clergymen at that place and the vicinity, who are agents...of the school. And though we shrink from recording the name of the female thus throwing herself into the arms of an Indian, yet...we hesitate not to name those believed to be...the cause of this unnatural connexion; they are the Rev. Dr. Beecher, etc...

In this article, as in the others, the women involved are given no credit for agency, for their behavior has been manipulated by the "missionary spirit" of the men involved in the school.

We have however been told that one of them did contrive with the *mother* to bring it about; that another of them has publicly advocated the *principle* as being the best mode of christianizing the savages...

But...their whole system of conduct towards these natives, seems to evince their wishes to bring about these results, and to mingle their blood with ours; or at all events their system of conduct has long had a tendency to this. And the relatives of the girl... or the public at large... indignant at the transaction, some of whom have said the girl ought to be publicly whipped, the Indian hung, and the mother drowned, will do well to trace the thing to its true cause, and see whether the men above named, or their system, are not the authors of the transaction, as a new kind of *missionary machinery*.³⁸⁹

While this article excoriates the many ministers associated with the school, it is less vicious toward the married couple and the mother than the earlier *Connecticut Herald* article. Instead, this author seems to suggest that if anyone is to be publicly hanged, whipped or drowned, it might be wiser to focus those efforts on the architects of the marriage, those *men* "whose system of behavior" has the "mingling of our blood" for its object.

³⁸⁹ *Times and Hartford Advertiser*, February 10, 1824, 3.

Ironically, such a focus on the men of the school exonerates the women of responsibility in the same way that a child or incompetent would be exonerated, by suggesting that they are acting only in response to the “missionary machinery;” they are not even rational enough to take blame for they are not “authors” of the transaction, but merely puppets fulfilling the secret mission of the clergymen. Such a view would align completely with the view of women as irrational and requiring male guardianship. In this case, part of the author’s outrage seems to be on behalf of the patriarchy; other male figures—John Ridge, the Cherokee and various ministers—seem to have subverted the patriarchy by taking control of the actions of these women in the absence of the man of the house.

Under public attack in the newspapers and in town, the Foreign Mission School agents felt compelled to respond in print, to defend their school and perhaps their lives.

Mission School at Cornwall. One of the Agents of the Foreign Mission School has...complained of the abuse which that institution... suffered, in consequence of certain misrepresentations of the matrimonial connexion lately formed at Cornwall, between the Indian John Ridge and a young white female of the town. — He has informed us that the officers of the institution had no participation in the act alluded to—that they viewed it with reprehension, and sincerely regretted its occurrence—That it is not true that the females of the town associate with the colored members of the school—and that the only intercourse between them, has been the exchange of a few letters between a certain class, perfectly innocent in character; and that it is a libel upon the females of Cornwall, to accuse them in this case of having “overstepped the modesty of nature.”

It is worth noting here that again in the above paragraph, “Indians” and African-Americans are lumped together as “colored members of the school,” a softening of language in comparison to

early labels of “savages” or members of “the tawny herd.” The refutation of the ostensibly inappropriate behavior of the Cornwall girls is notable in that they are accused of “overstepping the modesty of nature” in their conduct towards the “colored students.” It is interesting that here the suggestion seems to be not that the FMS students pursue the Cornwall girls in the stereotypical male pursuit, but that the girls were acting flirtatiously and inappropriately in seeking out the attention of the students. The need to refute such a suggestion in print reflects on the perceived fragility of the female reputation for virtue, along with an underlying fear of female sexuality, if allowed to run its natural course, especially in the midst of young men of color.

We make these corrections cheerfully; and... publish the following statement from the last “Report of the Foreign Mission School:”

“A newspaper... first published injurious reports... John Ridge, a promising Cherokee youth, the son of Ridge, the chief speaker and one of the first characters of his nation... left... because of ill-health, nearly a year and a half since. He has lately married a young female...

A year before he returned to his nation, he was dismissed from the school, and yet continued in the house of Mr. Northrup...when confined...he was very kindly attended. An attachment was then formed between him and his present wife...the young man returned to the Cherokee nation, in...1822... But he regained his health... came back to Cornwall... married, to the surprise of the people of the town, Miss Sarah B. Northrup.

The details of John Ridge’s illness and the development of the romance, do help to humanize the young couple, and this more balanced account informs readers that the marriage was made with the consent of both parents. Nonetheless, such a “connexion” is blameworthy, and the school authorities “viewed (it) with reprehension, and sincerely regretted its occurrence.” The bridegroom is called “John Ridge, a promising Cherokee youth, the son of Ridge, the chief speaker

and one of the first characters of his nation," which seems to establish for him an Indian respectability, with a distinguished lineage and a promising prospect of success. Unable to "fix" the racial disparity, the F.M.S. writer at least attempts to address the perceived class difference between bride and groom. His explanation and regrets seem to have been accepted at face value by the editorial writer at the *Connecticut Herald*.³⁹⁰

...the teachers and authority [played no role]...*directly or indirectly* in promoting this marriage...The parents of the young woman were present at the marriage and gave their assent; and also attended the young couple to New Haven on their way to the Cherokee nation. The character and conduct of young Ridge and of his companion has been fair, although neither of them profess to be pious...Also the people of this village are to be entirely exonerated. Not a solitary instance is known, of a female of Cornwall, who has been seen walking with a foreign scholar, ("arm in arm").... It is true our females are friends to the missionary cause; and these strangers are treated with kindness and civility...as many...are amiable and pious."³⁹¹

In this section of the defense, we get a sense of some of the questionable behavior the Cornwall girls are accused of, "walking arm-in-arm with a foreign scholar." This behavior again suggests a fear that this public physical contact might develop into greater familiarity in private, and again, the females are not ascribed agency, and so cannot be trusted to guard the appropriate boundaries.

It is notable as well that the school is entitled the Foreign Mission School, and that students there are consistently referred to as "foreigners" or "strangers," while every one of them is American-born. Their "otherness" is racial, defined by a society that declares whiteness normative,

³⁹⁰ It is amusing that the author of this statement complains that "shafts of slander were aimed at the character of the amiable and excellent principal..." perhaps unconsciously suggesting the arrows used by Native Americans in hunting and warfare. This time, of course, the poisonous shafts were launched by the white community.

³⁹¹ *The Connecticut Herald*, May 18, 1824, 1.

and every other shade "foreign," and therefore that much more threatening and alien. The F.M.S. agent continued:

But as for the repetition of the event which gave cause to so much slander, there is not...any distant prospect. Enmity to the mission school, was the cause of such reports..."³⁹²

This assurance to the public that this was a unique situation, unlikely to have any imitators, was soon belied in article about a year after the Ridge wedding.

Another Marriage of an Indian with a White Girl contemplated.—Our readers will recollect, that about a year ago, a marriage took place between an Indian Chief... at Cornwall, and a white girl...the papers spoke in decided disapprobation. The Agents of the School... have published a Report...in which they state, that a negociation for a marriage has been carried on... between Elias Boudinot, a young Cherokee, and Harriet R. Gold... of Cornwall, and that there is...an...engagement...—The object...is to declare "their unqualified disapprobation of such connexions." And they regard the conduct of those who aided or assisted in this negociation as highly "criminal."³⁹³

This article, reprinted in many Connecticut papers, seems remarkably reticent in tone compared to the earlier John Ridge articles. In this one, Ridge is elevated to an "Indian Chief," and the disapprobation mentioned arises from the agents of the school themselves. Nonetheless, community outrage at the Boudinot-Gold engagement dwarfed the reaction to the Ridge-Northrup wedding, perhaps because the first wedding was announced ex post facto, too late to change the course of events without outright murder. In the Boudinot case, the violence that erupted most painfully came from Harriet Gold's brother, who tarred and burned effigies of Elias Boudinot,

³⁹² *The Connecticut Herald*, May 18, 1824, 1.

³⁹³ *Middletown Sentinel*, July 6, 1825, 3; *Norwich Courier*, July 6, 1825, 3; and *Connecticut Courier* July 6, 1825, 3

Harriet and Harriet's mother. More personal disapproval followed: "Residents shunned the bride-to-be. The church choir leader banned her from sitting with the other girls, and asked the choir to wear black arm bands. (They refused.)"³⁹⁴

The engagement of Elias Boudinot and Harriet Gold created great tension within the Gold family, but the Agents of the Foreign Mission School (two of whom were brothers-in-law of the bride) issued an alarming circular in order to divert responsibility for the engagement from themselves. "Let the blame fall where it justly belongs,"³⁹⁵ they proclaimed, as if to direct any hangmen to the engaged couple. Yet, it seems there was a softening in attitude toward the marriage, if not evidenced by the choir's refusal to wear armbands, then perhaps in the somewhat snippy response of the *Middletown Gazette* (later reprinted in other Connecticut papers) to the *New York Evening Post* account of the engagement.

The N.Y. Evening Post, notices the marriage of Mr. Boudinot, the Cherokee Indian, to Miss Gold of Cornwall, and observes, that according to a law in Connecticut, passed in 1650, and *which for aught the Editors know to the contrary*, is still in force, the young lady will be subject to more than the usual risque of a matrimonial voyage; and thus gravely subjoins the law, which inflicts severe penalties upon all who settle or join with Indians. We wish the editors of the papers published south of Connecticut, would take the trouble of ascertaining what the present laws of the state really are, before they *undertake* to misrepresent them³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ John Andrew, "Educating the Heathen: The Foreign Mission School Controversy and American Ideals." *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Dec. 1978), 336-337.

³⁹⁵ As quoted in John Andrew, "Educating the Heathen: The Foreign Mission School Controversy and American Ideals." *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Dec. 1978), 336.

³⁹⁶ *Middlesex Gazette*, April 26, 1826, 3.

The tone of this article, putting another paper in its place for not knowing that there *was* a law against interracial marriages in Connecticut, although in truth there was not³⁹⁷, seems both defensive of the Connecticut marriage laws and ironically, defiant in its respectful treatment of the marriage, while asserting its criminal nature. (He is *Mr. Boudinot*, the *Cherokee* Indian engaged to *Miss Gold of Cornwall*). Another element that might have changed Connecticut attitudes was the recent elevation of the first white bride to slave-owning status. Scholar Tiya Miles notes:

In the aftermath of protests, however, the people of Cornwall, who saw Sarah Northrup in a new light, had a change of heart. Cornwall citizens came to realize that Sarah had married into a prominent Cherokee family with wealth, slaves, and even a famous Indian chief. John Ridge's father, Major Ridge, (sometimes called "The Ridge"), was a Cherokee hero and political leader, making John Ridge something of a prince and thus redeeming Sarah for white womanhood. Historian Marion Starkey writes: "The Ridge had come to visit John dressed in broadcloth and driving a coach-and-four...His state was kingly. Cornwall decided to make Sarah an Indian princess after all." Biographer Thurman Wilkins further explains that "the townspeople even came to think of Sarah Northrup Ridge as a kind of princess who dressed in silk every day and had fifty servants to wait on her." Wilkins quotes from a history of Cornwall in which Sarah is remembered: "She simply said to this [slave], go and he goeth, and to another on Come and he did so."

Sarah Northrup Ridge's transformation from squaw to princess depended on a triangular relationship among white women, Cherokee men, and black slaves. Possessing a bevy of slaves to wait on her made Sarah's life with an Indian husband acceptable and even enviable, just as the

³⁹⁷ David Fowler avers that in New York State, lawmakers did not propose legislation prohibiting interracial marriage because of diminishing black population and immigration, the sparse rural black population and the social confinement of blacks to menial work. *Northern Attitudes Toward Interracial Marriage: Legislation and Public Opinion in the Middle Atlantic States and the States of the Old Northwest, 1780-1930* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987.) Elise Lemire ("*Miscegenation: Making Race in America*" (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) argues that the language and literature of the time effectively quashed any legislators' anxiety about increasing intermarriage. Both positions are consonant with the absence of such legislation in Connecticut.

wealth derived from slave labor made Major Ridge worthy of respect.³⁹⁸

The taboo against interracial marriage, called intercaste marriage by Robert K. Merton, on the assumption that each race occupies a particular caste known to all within a society, is held in force by the net of social relationships touched by any given marriage. The rage evidenced by the male Gold relatives can be explained by Merton's observation:

cacogamous intercaste marriage introduces an abrupt breach into this network of social relations for with it comes a conflict between the superordinate-subordinate relations deriving from status differences of the new-made kin and the mutual accessibility in terms of equality deriving from the kinship structure.³⁹⁹

Clearly, Harriet Gold's family was not ready to surrender what they perceived as their superordinate status to these new relations. Nonetheless, whatever the nastiness going on in Cornwall streets, instigated by the bride's brother, the public acknowledgment of this second interracial wedding was different. Papers all over New England carried this respectful announcement:

MARRIED, At Cornwall, Conn. Mr. Elias Boudinot, of the Cherokee Nation of Indians, to Miss Harriet R. Gold, daughter of Deacon Benjamin R. Gold.⁴⁰⁰

While some sympathy was here evinced for the second intermarriage, the Cornwall incident was

³⁹⁸ Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 22-23.

³⁹⁹ Robert K. Merton. "Intermarriage and the Social Structure: Fact and Theory" in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature and Law* by Werner Sollors. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 484.

⁴⁰⁰ *Gazette of Maine*, April 18, 1826, 2; *Portland Advertiser* (Maine), April 18, 1826, 2; *Essex Register* (Salem, Mass.), April 24, 1826, 3.

hardly forgotten. When a school was proposed for African-Americans a few years later, Cornwall and its women took the brunt of the barbs thrown by editorial opponents to the school.

...(If it is necessary to have an African College, in Connecticut, may not the projectors of it...locate it...in Cornwall, and...occupy the buildings...of the Indian Colleges...? Cornwall possesses many advantages...over other places;...the ladies of that town readily give themselves, better for worse, and worse for better, to the colored gentlemen. This...may have a strong tendency to draw the proposed College to that town. We hope...that our citizens will act with coolness, on this subject.⁴⁰¹

Here again, the “darker” races are conflated into the phrase, “colored gentlemen,” intended, of course, to be ironic. Yet, again, the use of the word “gentlemen” suggests the unspoken fear that education *could*, in fact, produce gentlemen of color to compete with whites of all classes; this is why white citizens must react “with coolness on this subject,” and allow no human empathy to get in the way of their children’s social standing.

Notable in the extract above is the sexual suggestion that young ladies of Cornwall “give themselves readily,” with wordplay on the marriage vow, to the “colored gentlemen.” Again, the specter of “immodestly” enthusiastic female sexuality is set before the reader, and the young women’s “giving” of themselves seems to occur before rather than after the vow of marriage. In this way, again, the fear of women acting out sexually without the consent of their male keepers is excoriated publicly to shame them back into appropriate female modesty and self-control, if not total obedience to their endogamous marital circle.

Ultimately, these concerns led to the closure of the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall. The backlash against the marriages caused school officials to reevaluate the education of “foreign”

⁴⁰¹ Newspaper article quoted verbatim by William C. Fowler. *The Historical Status of the Negro in Connecticut: A Paper Read before the New Haven Colony Historical Society*. (Charleston: Walker, Evans and Cogswell, Co., 1901), 38-39.

youth in white communities. Within a short time, the Prudence Crandall case would raise the same issues, with the same result: a failure to educate people of color in private academies in Connecticut.⁴⁰²

Nonetheless, intermarriage probably most often occurred without newspaper coverage, and seems to have created upset. In an 1883 article regarding a recent, unrelated crime, George Coe related the story of his parents' interracial marriage in Connecticut in about 1805 and its attendant troubles.

Mr. Coe is very indignant concerning the statements in the REGISTER regarding...his family[and]...the marriage of his parents. His mother was a white woman...a Fairchild... whose ancestry goes back to Puritan times...a young oysterman, who had no money, made love to her. Her parents forbade him the house, and she in revenge vowed she would marry the first man who proposed. Coe was a waiter ...and hearing of this vow, immediately asked her hand in marriage. She consented. He thought she did so out of nonsense...but she adhered to her promise.⁴⁰³

This account stands up to proof in the census records; Betsy Fairchild was the daughter of Peter Fairchild (1756-1828) and his wife Sarah Fuller (1763-1817) of Stratford, Connecticut, both of English ancestry. Betsy Fairchild did marry Robert Coe, and if the number of children are any indication of contentment, their thirteen surviving progeny suggest that they were quite content.⁴⁰⁴

The article continues:

⁴⁰² John Andrew, "Educating the Heathen: The Foreign Mission School Controversy and American Ideals." *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Dec. 1978), 341-342.

⁴⁰³ This article, published in the *New Haven Register*, May 17, 1883, 1, is Coe's rebuttal to a scathing article about his family that will be discussed later.

⁴⁰⁴ Of course, contentment cannot be measured in any couple, much less one long dead. Even for this period, the "production" of thirteen children was higher than average, as was sometimes the case in poor families.

“There were laws then in this state prohibiting the marriage of blacks and whites,” said George Coe, who was the second son by this marriage, and is now 72 years of age, “so my mother told him to go to Bridgeport and she would meet him there Thursday night... There she sat... When they got to New York state...they were married... They...then returned to Stratford. They swore they would kill him for marrying a white woman. That’s how they felt in those days—it was nearly eighty years ago... Several tried to knock him down, but he escaped by jumping into a mill pond at dusk. They were after him on horses and searched the grass thoroughly. They even looked right at him, but as his face was the only thing visible above the water, and that was black, they didn’t see him.... After he had been working there sometime, men surrounded the house one night and demanded his body. He looked out the window and saw that the men were armed with pistols and cutlasses and other weapons and concluded it was best to surrender.⁴⁰⁵

The fact that there was no publicity is not surprising. Until the 1830s, newspapers did not cover items of general family or local interest, humor or “ladies’ stories.”⁴⁰⁶ The evasive measures to get married, Coe’s escape, arrest and trial all sound realistic, but even more interesting is that after his “trial,” “he was never troubled after that...” Either the community accepted that there was no recourse in the absence of a law⁴⁰⁷, or it tired of running Coe down; either way, he not only lived peacefully with his white wife thereafter, but he did exceptionally well in business, so clearly he was not “starved out” of the various towns he lived in, a blessing considering his team of dependents. While the violence directed at Coe cannot be underestimated, it seems to have been

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Edwin and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1978), 120; Frederick Hudson, *Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872*. (New York: Harper’s, 1873.)

⁴⁰⁷ See Appendix Note 1 for the complete article from the *Hartford Daily Courant*, August 19, 1865, 2.

short-lived, and it resulted in a trial, not a summary execution by his captors on a dark road.

Further on, we read:

“They took him to Stratford and tried him for a week. Then the judge, who had been going through the statutes and looking at many books, said, “Stand up, Robbie.” He called him Robbie, but his right name was Robert.

“Stand up, Robbie.” You know how judges talk.

“I find nothing in the statutes to prevent a white woman and a black man from marrying. If any pretty white girl wants to marry a nigger, she has a perfect right to do so. You may go.”

And he did go. And he told me he made ten miles in a half an hour. And he was never troubled after that.”⁴⁰⁸

In spite of George Coe’s assertion that there was a law in Connecticut forbidding interracial marriage, the judge was correct; no such law was on the books at the time.⁴⁰⁹ The Coe couple’s assumption that there was, however, is telling; probably the social hostility to the union was strong enough that the couple assumed the marriage was illegal here. Their escape to New York State, though, was probably as much from wanting to elude interfering parents and nosy neighbors.

The noted disrespect on the part of the judge in using a nickname form of Coe’s Christian name, Robbie, rings true for the time. More importantly, the elder Coe must have made this point in telling his story to his son, and his son relates it to the reader, making all aware that such familiarity was both noticed and resented by African-Americans, but that exception had to be taken outside of the hallways of power.

The Coe case reaffirms that it is almost impossible to ascertain the number of mixed marriages or relationships in nineteenth century Connecticut because the records do not usually accurately

⁴⁰⁸ *New Haven Register*, May 17, 1883, 1. For the complete article, see the Appendix, Footnote 369.

⁴⁰⁹ Interracial marriage was illegal from 1821 through 1883 in Maine; from 1705 through 1843 in Massachusetts; and from 1798 through 1881 in Rhode Island. See <<http://civilliberty.about.com/od/raceequalopportunity/tp/Interracial-Marriage-Laws-History-Timeline.htm>>.

reflect the races of the parties. For instance, in an 1850 New Haven census record, Betsy Coe, mentioned above, was labeled "Mulatto," as were her children, when she was clearly white.⁴¹⁰ (Her husband Robert is labeled unambiguously "Black.") Furthermore, Native- or African-Americans might be labeled "Black" or "Mulatto" or even "White." These early nineteenth century marriages occurred without written public commentary, but the issue was getting hotter by the day, as indicated by the following letter of apology from Reverend Henry G. Ludlow, who apparently became carried away with enthusiasm at an Anti Slavery Society in May 1834. His frightened letter appeared in the *New London Gazette*, known for being unfriendly to Africans and African-Americans.⁴¹¹

To the Editors of the Journal of Commerce.

Gentlemen...I regret very much the necessity of appearing in this manner before the public, but circumstances...render it unavoidable.

I have been informed by my friends, that the rumor is abroad that I have...advocated the doctrine of Amalgamation of the White and Black people. And here given proof of my faith, by marrying a White to a Black. I wish to disabuse the community of the impressions of these reports.

I did in my pulpit, no longer ago than on the Sabbath evening previous to the late excitement in New York, openly...oppose the doctrine of Amalgamation. I told them that my object was to prevent it. This is still my wish,--and I neither desire nor expect it.

Mr. Ludlow, accused of promoting "amalgamation," is attempting to restore his reputation by denying any wish for amalgamation. Clearly he has been hurt and possibly professionally injured by rumors to the contrary; worse yet, as his son recorded later, shortly before this letter was

⁴¹⁰ *U.S. Federal Census* 1850, New Haven, CT, 420.

⁴¹¹ See the Chapter I.

written, "my father, mother, and sister were driven from their house in New York by a furious mob. When they came cautiously back, their home was quiet as a fortress the day after it has been blown up. The front-parlor was full of paving-stones; the carpets were cut to pieces; the pictures, the furniture, and the chandelier lay in one common wreck; and the walls were covered with inscriptions of mingled insult and glory. Over the mantel-piece had been charcoaled 'Rascal'; over the pier-table, 'Abolitionist.'"⁴¹² Having been so violently attacked, Rev. Ludlow backed away from his public statements as soon as possible, in print.

2—I have never been present at the marriage of a White to a Colored person, nor have I ever officiated as a minister on such an occasion, nor do I wish to do so.

As some of the public have been misinformed...and circulated these reports, I ask them, as an injured individual, to give equal publicity to this denial.

Although the minister here denies ever being present at an interracial union, he does not promise that he would never marry such a couple, if requested. He says simply that he does not wish to do so.

I wish also...to acknowledge my faults. In reviewing ... the unhappy divisions existing between the Anti Slavery and Colonization Society, I feel I am not guiltless... I went to the meeting of the Anti Slavery Society in May, without any expectation to be called upon to speak. The resolution I seconded was put into my hand but a moment before I arose, and I uttered what I did under strong excitement. It was perfectly impromptu, undigested, and intemperate effusion, and I believe as much regretted by the Anti Slavery and Colonization Society. As soon as I had time to reflect upon it, I repented of it, and confessed my fault wherever I had an opportunity... Differing as I did from... [my friends at the ASCS], I ought not to have used language calculated to irritate, but to soothe. I hope they

⁴¹² F.H. Ludlow, "If Massa Put Guns Into Our Han's." *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1865), 505-507.

will accept this...sincere confession of one who wishes to have no conflict with men, but with principles.

July 25, 1834 H.G. Ludlow⁴¹³

Whatever he said, (words he wisely does not here repeat), Ludlow assures the readers of the *Connecticut Courant* that he had not planned to say them, nor did he really mean them. His regrettable remarks were “uttered under strong excitement,” and were an “impromptu, undigested and intemperate effusion,” committed in the heat of passion.⁴¹⁴

That mob violence could terrify people of good conscience into temporary silence or retraction puts into perspective the courage of interracial couples attempting to marry in this hostile climate. While Connecticut was not a mob-dominated lynching state, the image of Robert Coe’s eyes peering, alligator-like over the surface of a pond, remind us that it came perilously close. Furthermore, the mob attack on Rev. Ludlow’s New York home amply provided him with evidence of public sentiment on this dangerous issue.

In the New London *Morning News*, we get a sense of the bigotry still being bandied about as humor in 1847.

The newspapers are recording the marvelous fact that a negro woman who was not long ago married to one of Ibrahim Pasha’s guard, had turned quite white since the marriage; her black skin having all peeled off. This is a process most people would prefer taking place *before* marriage. It is not very long since we saw a *white* creature, miscalled a woman, who had with her a husband, who would have looked like a more suitable match for her if the ebony had “peeled off” a little previous to the performance

⁴¹³ *Connecticut Courant*, July 28, 1834, 2.

⁴¹⁴ It is notable that although Ludlow may have seemed cowardly in his retraction letter, he did not lack courage. He later went on to be an agent for the Underground Railroad and was instrumental in his work on behalf of the Amistad Africans. F.H. Ludlow, “If Massa Put Guns Into Our Han’s” *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1865), 505, 507.

of so disgusting a ceremony as marriage between them—
though the negro certainly had the worst of it as it was.⁴¹⁵

This strange little piece about someone's "black skin" peeling off gives rise to a weak joke about "a *white* creature, miscalled a woman," since she had married a black husband. Here is the concept that a woman who marries outside of her own white race does not even deserve to be called a "woman," much less a "lady." She is a "creature," not even a human. Again, interracial marriage is suggested to be inter-species. In addition, the white woman in this interracial union is insulted finally by saying that "the negro certainly had the worst of it as it was." A white woman who would marry outside her race is by definition, inferior to him, so she automatically forfeits her white privilege; such a forfeiture demotes her to sub-negro status, so that her negro husband actually stoops to marry her. Moreover, since a woman's attractiveness was considered at least part of the "consideration" in a marital contract, the phrase, "the negro certainly had the worst of it as it was" also insults the woman's lack of beauty; this is an even more potent insult when one recognizes that "negroes" were ostensibly considered universally unattractive to whites. Furthermore, the article reissues the old idea that consorting with a partner of another race can change one's skin color, as if racial mixing communicates a disease that fundamentally changes one's identity; this idea extended into the twentieth century when a Professor Stephenson wrote, "(m)iscegenation has never been a bridge upon which one might cross from the Negro race to the Caucasian, though it has been a thoroughfare from the Caucasian to the Negro."⁴¹⁶ Such thinking reflects the theory of hypodescent, that is, that when races mix, the resulting child will assume the

⁴¹⁵ *Morning News*, June 30, 1847, 2. (New London, CT)

⁴¹⁶ Gilbert Thomas Stephenson. *Race Distinctions in American Law*. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1910.) 15-16.

status of the “inferior” race. Yet, in the white “creature” and black husband story above, not only do progeny fall into the disdained race, but so does the white wife as well; mere association with African-Americans changes one’s caste, and in Professor Stephenson’s world, that road runs only one-way.

Yet, this issue attracts such venom *when the woman is white*; interracial marriage of white men and black women was surely less frequent, but they were also rarely the subject of commentary, perhaps because white men seem to have infrequently bothered to make these relationships legal, given the lower social status of the woman. Nonetheless, these relationships, of course, occurred. Merton explains this by saying, “..(A)n upper-caste male [white male], by virtue of his sex role, may more properly make advances than an upper-caste female, and he may more readily flout the caste taboos, by virtue of his upper-caste status than the lower-caste male may dare...This enables us to see the structural sources of the fact that most intercaste sex relations—not marriages—are between white men and Negro women.”⁴¹⁷ This confirms the conclusion of French observer, Alexis De Tocqueville in 1835 when he noted, “to debauch a woman of color scarcely injures the reputation of an American – to marry her dishonors him.”⁴¹⁸

In the town clerk’s records of Woodbury, Connecticut, we read the following entry:

Rachel Freeman born in 1837, resident in Southbury in 1853, gave birth to illegitimate Alexander Mercier Jr. on 3/2/1855 at age 18. Child’s father was a Canada Frenchman, harness stitcher, Alexander Mercier.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ Robert K. Merton. “Intermarriage and the Social Structure: Fact and Theory” in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature and Law* by Werner Sollors. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 491.

⁴¹⁸ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume II*. (Stilwell, KS: Digireads.com, 2007), 139.

⁴¹⁹ William Cothren, *The History of Ancient Woodbury, Connecticut* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1977), 815 and Woodbury Vital Records, 140. In this case, it appears that Alexander Mercier fathered this son by the same name, and did not return to Rachel Freeman; he was married some years later, when he was enlisted as a Union soldier, and died in the war in 1864.

The secret to these legitimate and illegitimate relationships seems to have been the class of the white people involved. In the case of Alexander Mercier, he was not a resident of any of the local towns, but seems to have been passing through; since this information was probably given by Rachel Freeman to the town clerk, it indicates that Rachel, too, saw him as a foreigner, being "Canada French." As a harness stitcher who had apparently passed through town, he was under no social pressure from local family or friends not to associate with a woman of color, and probably never returned to support the child. As Robert K. Merton notes, "A highly mobile, segmented society...minimizes the disturbing influences of cacogamy upon the local community and affords somewhat more loopholes for such irregular unions."⁴²⁰ The fact that Mercier moved on meant simply that in a small Connecticut village, townspeople were not reminded of this cacogamous relationship simply because they didn't see it; they saw only another mixed race child. (However, they did see another relationship, but there, both parties were lower class, and the woman Hannah Crosby—normally seen as the subservient partner anyway—was white and Irish-born.)

Ransalier Freeman fathered unnamed daughter born 9/7/1864 to white mother, also unnamed.⁴²¹

In the Ransalier Freeman case, the identity of the "white mother" and the child are protected by the town clerk. This was not unusual, especially in small towns, where the town clerk knew everyone and was related to half the town.⁴²² (This child may have grown up to be Catherine

⁴²⁰ Robert K. Merton, "Intermarriage and the Social Structure: Fact and Theory" in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature and Law* by Werner Sollors. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.) 485.

⁴²¹ Woodbury Vital Records, 322.

⁴²² The Woodbury town clerk was known to protect his own relatives especially assiduously. See *The Confession of Harriet Stiles* by Theresa C. Vara, unpublished.

Freeman, age 16, a servant in Ellington, Connecticut.⁴²³) It is unclear if this mixed race child was raised by the white family.

Crosby Freeman resident in Southbury in 1853 married to Hannah (White, Irish, born 1834). He was a black laborer.

Children: Morris born 5/9/1862

Walter born 3/24/1861

Willis born 9/8/1859⁴²⁴

In the case of Crosby and Hannah Freeman, married sometime in the 1850s, Hannah was born in Ireland, and in later census records is labeled as white. However, in the 1860 Census for Woodbury, Connecticut, her race is crossed out and blotted over with an ink stain. Her children are marked "M" for mulatto, and her birthplace is clearly indicated, but Crosby Freeman's occupation is farm laborer and Hannah's is "domestic," unlike the other white wives on the page, who have a blank in the occupation column. These couples seem to have lived and loved without outside interference from the 99% white town they lived in, probably because they were thought to occupy a laborer class not worthy of public concern or attention, and their union was perceived to be intercaste, but not interclass.⁴²⁵

It is worthwhile here to consider an attitude expressed in fiction in Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1851 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In it, Stowe characterizes Miss Ophelia, a prim New England cousin of the Southern slave-owner St. Clare, as more deeply and even physically bigoted than Southerners. When Ophelia sees her niece Eva sitting on Uncle Tom's lap, she confronts St. Clare, the child's father by saying: "How can you let her?...Why, I don't know. It seems so dreadful."

This gives Stowe an opportunity to reveal Northern racism, made more profound but the lack of

⁴²³ U.S. Federal Census record, 1880 for town of Ellington, 16.

⁴²⁴ Cothren 815; WVR, 148, 152, 150.

⁴²⁵ Crosby Freeman did serve in the Colored 29th Regiment in the Civil War, but returned alive.

familiarity between the races in the North; it was a terrible paradox that the intimacy of day-to-day slavery allowed some whites to recognize the humanity of slaves more readily than Northern whites did. St. Clare responds:

You would think no harm in a child's caressing a large dog, even if he were black; but a creature that can think, reason, and feel, and is immortal, you shudder at; confess it, cousin. I know the feeling among you northerners well enough...but custom does what Christianity ought to do, -- obliterates the feeling of personal prejudice. I have often noticed in my travels north, how much stronger this was with you than us. You loathe them as you would a snake or a toad, yet you are indignant at their wrongs. You would not have them abused; but you don't want anything to do with them yourselves. You would send them to Africa, out of your sight and smell, and then send a missionary or two to do up all the self-denial of elevating them compendiously...."⁴²⁶

To this, Ophelia answers, "Well, cousin, there may be some truth in this."⁴²⁷ Stowe has her character St. Clare articulate the ugly truth about Northern racism. For all its Christian good-will and activism, there still existed a physical repulsion for the African-American among many Northern whites,⁴²⁸ which was exacerbated by the infrequency and distant nature of interracial relations. Unlike the culture of the South where African-Americans were house servants, wet-nurses, nannies, butlers, and cooks, most Northern white households had no contact with African-Americans, except in urban areas. The lack of daily intimacy that St. Clare refers to as "custom"

⁴²⁶ Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 273.

⁴²⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 273.

⁴²⁸ David Goodman Croly took full advantage of these sentiments in his "Miscegenation" hoax, discussed below, capitalizing on them for political purposes, during the Civil War.

largely protected blacks from the sexual exploitation so prevalent in the South, but also created the ambivalence of dutifully desiring that justice be done, but at a safe and considerable distance.

In 1863, the next notice *extant* of interracial marriage in Connecticut papers turns up when the term “miscegenation” was coined and popularized. Two clever Democratic writers, George Wakeman and David Goodman Croly (an Irish-born immigrant) from the *New York World* conceived (pun intended) of an ideal hoax. They created a new word for interracial “breeding,” derived from Latin roots, and wrote a pseudo scientific pamphlet urging that the races intermingle to create the ideal American race, an explosive concept in 1863. Purporting to be a Republican document, it was sent to various abolitionists and President Lincoln, in hopes of a returned written endorsement that would then be dragged before the public and result in a Democratic triumph at the polls.⁴²⁹ The hoax failed as far as the election went, but succeeded in getting the word into the American lexicon, with its “miscere” Latin root (to mix) also conveniently suggesting misery, mistake and every other unlikable word with “mis” as a prefix.

The *New London Daily Chronicle* republished news of the fictional “Grand Miscegenation Ball” on September 24, 1864, alleging gleefully the spreading of this practice among Republicans.

GRAND MISCEGENATION BALL

The miscegenation theory is rapidly gaining favor with the Lincolnites. One of the Lincoln Clubs in New York City... airing their views of the necessity of social equality existing henceforth between “culled pussons” and “white folks,” proceeded to illustrate their works. The *New York World*...says:

“In came the colored belles...arrayed in all that gorgeous and highly colored, not to say highly scented, splendor for which the dark daughters of the Aethiop race are

⁴²⁹ Sidney Kaplan. “The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 34, Issue 3, (July 1949), 274-343.

aesthetically distinguished. One might pick out all the colors among the hundred and fifty belles who soon tripped on the light fantastic toe... others, seized by eager partners, whirled round... displaying...that extravagant voluptuousness and wriggling of figure for which the dancing African female is so remarkable. Some...belles were octoroons, to suit...the lovesick glances of Republicans... Others were...quadroon...others yet mulattoes..while not a few were of the Congo or Bozoo..., black as the ace of spades, and ready for any work from shaking a carpet to talking philanthropy and humanitarianism with the most perfect professor of the Lincoln creed.”

The New York Tribune...failed to state what the concluding exercises would be. It is supposed therefore that the negro ball is the regular divertissement with which the members of “Central Lincoln Club” upon all occasions relax their minds...

In this piece, much mockery is made of “highly scented” African-American women of “all the colors,” “displaying all that extravagant voluptuousness and wriggling of figure for which the dancing African female is so remarkable,” and “ready for any work from shaking a carpet to talking philanthropy and humanitarianism with the most perfect professor of the Lincoln creed.” While the “highly scented” remark is certainly meant derogatively, the author clearly understands the sexual temptations offered by these fictional “wriggling” figures of “extravagant voluptuousness.” Feeding into the stereotype of African-American sexual voracity, he pivots away from this imagery of libertine sexual invitation to mock the black women’s ability to serve as a maid, and also, discuss intellectual topics.

The language used to list various shades of skin suggests not human beings, but creatures bred into existence: octoroons; quadroons; mulattoes; Congo or Bozoo characters, black as the ace of spades. Intentionally enumerating the choices of the “belles,” a word also used with stinging irony, allows the satirist here to spread before his white audience, the selection and the variety of

presumably sexually available and compliant women with which the Republicans are supposedly cavorting. This picture would naturally repel Victorian sensibilities and raise fears in the minds of white women, for whom racial progress might now mean the corruption of their husbands, brothers and sons. In light of the fact that women were believed to be the repository of virtue, the only bastion against illicit male sexuality, if African-American women were believed to be as loose as they were here portrayed, there was now no safety against white male licentiousness.

Interestingly, the author suggests that Republican men are seeking these black women “to relax their minds,” perhaps to fill the minds of white wives with the fear of their husbands’ allegedly “political” activities.

In the following article, again reprinted from the *New London Daily Chronicle*, the author questions the abolitionist motives of white women, suggesting that firstly, that they are too cooperative in allowing their husbands to attend Miscegenation meetings (or “the Paradise of Nigger-dom”) where presumably they may be tempted, and secondly, that the white women may be forced to take a black husband when most white men are taken or killed in the war.

The fellow who writes the dirty stuff which appears daily in...the Chronicle, hasn't decency enough to withhold from insulting the Union ladies of that city... Here is a specimen:

“Last night was the ladies’ levee at the Miscegenation Assembly Rooms. The women, dear, accommodating creatures, stay at home when requested, and when invited to come out crowd the halls with beauty, sweetness and perfume. True to their amiable natures, females of both sexes jammed Lawrence Hall last evening, with breathless expectation to be Ferry-ed over the political Styx into the Paradise of Nigger-dom. It has always puzzled us a little that some of the fair sex attended these Abolition meetings. The old married ladies have got their men and are provided for, and we trust satisfied. The young damsels, however, duly appreciate the fact that if the war goes on white beaux

will be scarce; and...they all rush forth to get the first pick among the "cullud gemmen."⁴³⁰

Beyond the demeaning depiction of women seeking abolition to increase the potential husband candidate pool, some of the language used in the article above suggests that white women seek out black men to satiate their sexual desires. They "crowd the halls with beauty, sweetness and perfume," implying their interests are more romantic than political. Furthermore they wait with "breathless expectation," a phrase freighted with more personal than political weight, to be "Ferry-ed" over to "the Paradise of Nigger-dom," someplace where presumably they will be made "happier." The River Styx allusion, of course, means that these perfumed travelers are crossing over into the underworld, an apt metaphor if one takes into account the social position of African-Americans at the time.

Additionally, the feigned query as to why *married* women attend these meetings, since they are presumably "satisfied," implicitly connects the women to the search for some sexual satisfaction, if not the search for a potential husband.

Besides tarring the women with these subtle accusations of vice, the author also says that "(T)rue to their amiable natures, females of both sexes jammed" into the hall; the author might be suggesting that the men in attendance at this event were emasculated by their attendance, or that their presence there had been demanded of them by their wives. In either case, the reference seems intended to insult.

The reaction of other papers to such articles was swift and clear:

The Copperhead party, generally headed by the *Times* and the *Register*, having got "miscegenation" on the brain to an alarming extent, the white folks of the Union party of

⁴³⁰ *Hartford Daily Courant*, November 4, 1864, 2.

Connecticut have concluded that they should be colonized. On the 4th of April they should be sent up the Salt river, arrangements having been made to that effect. We are sure that every lover of humanity will rejoice at the humanity of this project.⁴³¹

Here, the *Hartford Daily Courant* excoriates its New London rival for so disrespecting the ladies of New London, accusing the paper again of being a Copperhead organ, but reprints “the dirty stuff” and so disseminates it further. The Copperhead party was pro-slavery, pro-Confederacy and white supremacist, and seemed to have friends in the editors of the *New Haven Register*, the *New London Daily Chronicle* and the *Hartford Times*, in addition to the *New York World*, so the following *Hartford Courant* article suggests that the Copperheads should be defeated in the next election, (sent up the Salt river⁴³²) but also colonized, that is, put out of the United States, a fate often suggested for African-Americans.

In another attack from one “copperhead organ,” the *New London Daily Chronicle* on another, the *New York World*, Copperhead leanings seem to be trumped by sectional loyalties:

The negro equality doctrines are fast becoming a cardinal feature of the administration programme. It needs no prophet to tell what all this leads to.

The above interesting paragraph is from the *New York World*. What it evidently means to imply is that “the negro equality doctrines” are going to lead to a union of the white and black races. The secesh have lately taken to denouncing “miscegenation,” when *their brethren* of the South have all the while been the only practical “miscegenators” in the country. Where do the mulattoes

⁴³¹ *Hartford Daily Courant*, March 21, 1864, 2. In her book, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North*, Jennifer Weber asserts that the Copperheads, also known as “Peace Democrats” seriously undermined the Union war efforts by encouraging Union desertion and demoralizing Union troops. Jennifer Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.)

⁴³² “sent up the salt river” is (A) common term to designate an imaginary river, in which a defeated candidate is said to be rowed. It is the River Styx of politics, only the dead ...” people.virginia.edu/~rmf8a/gaskell/poldict.htm, Accessed 7/30/09.

come from? From rebeldom, and their fathers were Democrats, and are now rebels. It is decidedly out of taste for the secesh of the North to revile "miscegenation" since the Southern Democracy are originators of that ism. They should uphold and applaud that doctrine. No administration man is in favor of matrimonial alliances between the white and black races, but the rebels favor and make alliances with their negro women without the formality of the marriage tie.⁴³³

Here, the author makes explicit the irony of the "miscegenation" threat: while Democrats

tried to pull that alarm bell to draw support to their side, the reality of interracial sex presented itself not in the North, but in the South, where white-on-black rape created a large mixed race population. This sexual mixing was quietly condoned because white men exploited their power over black women, ostensibly not threatening the social status of their legitimate white families.

But it was in that very social status that Northerners perceived the truest threat. The author continues:

"Negro equality" under the law is quite a different thing from making the colored race equal in social station, wealth, refinement, etc. to the white race. The poorest white man in the land is the equal under the law to the very richest, but no one pretends he is equal in all things.⁴³⁴

So, extending "Negro equality" will *not* endow "the colored race" with equal social status, wealth or refinement; it will simply make them as equal as the poorest white man in the land, and then they may rise from there:

Make the negro a man as much so as his white neighbor and then leave the future to God. If the negro ascends in the scale of humanity and becomes the honored associate of the

⁴³³ *New London Daily Chronicle* March 30, 1864, 2. Also reprinted in the *Hartford Daily Courant* November 4, 1864, 2.

⁴³⁴ *New London Daily Chronicle* March 30, 1864, 2. Also reprinted in the *Hartford Daily Courant* November 4, 1864, 2.

best and purest in the land, so be it. No one should complain, but all should rejoice.⁴³⁵

In this last reassurance to white readers that the “negro” will not be “given equal social status to whites, the author essentially asks that he be allowed his political rights, and society will watch to see what he makes of them. To then say, that if “he ascends the scale of humanity, and becomes the honored associate of the best and purest in the land,” several points remain salient. First, in order to ascend the scale of humanity, he must now be at the base of it, therefore he has a long and hard ascent. Second, assuming that he could achieve that ascent, he is extremely unlikely to associate with the best in the land, simply by virtue of the nadir from which he began. Third, the “purest” in the land might well be “whitest” in the land; purity is an odd word to choose since the most elite members of society do not especially value purity. The suggestion here must be that the likelihood of the wealthiest, most elite, most educated, “whitest” people associating with the “negro” was indeed remote. Thus, says the author to his white readers, what do *you* have to fear?

This ongoing debate about postwar black male suffrage again raised the specter of interracial sexual relations. Scholar Eugene Berwanger asserted, “Coexistent with the resentment against a large Negro population was the fear that, when their numbers became large enough, Negroes in the North would demand political equality and seek miscegenation. In 1860 Negroes were permitted to vote in only four New England states; all of the other free states denied them the ballot or enforced stringent voting qualifications...One liberal lawyer remarked, ‘Negro equality is their dread—If [the Negro] is enfranchised, they are perfectly certain they will have to sleep with him.’ In such an atmosphere both anti-slavery and proslavery protagonists denounced political equality and miscegenation. Alexander Mitchell of Ohio spoke out against slavery as early as 1816

⁴³⁵ *New London Daily Chronicle* March 30, 1864, 2. Also reprinted in the *Hartford Daily Courant* November 4, 1864, 2.

because, he insisted, the system would produce a mulatto population in the Old Northwest if it were introduced into the region...⁴³⁶

In an editorial entitled "Equality before the Law" published on August 19, 1865, a *Hartford Daily Courant* writer argued against linking suffrage and racial "amalgamation."

Our neighbors of the *Time* (sic) take exception to our views regarding the rights of negroes to the elective franchise... and...his ideas...contain...less logic than unsupported assertion and unjustifiable deduction...He says, in effect, "if I concede to a man the right of voting, I also invite him to dine with me; if a man has been five years in this country and can read, he is fit, morally, intellectually and socially, to be the companion of myself, my wife and my daughters."⁴³⁷

Interestingly, this rebuttal attempts to dissociate the right to vote from the right to be socially accepted by upper or middle class rights. The *Times* writer claims to socialize with immigrants once they are in this country five years, a social olive branch considered too generous by the *Courant* writer; yet the fear of the negro rising is almost palpable: might the negro be fit to be a companion of his wife and daughters?

If the gentleman likes it, we will not quarrel with him and call him fanatic, but we pray to be excused from joining the select company whom, to judge from his proclaimed principles, he gathers around him. But we doubt that he or anyone else practices this theory. The trouble is that our neighbor does not observe the difference between a prejudice involving a question of right or wrong, and one in which taste or preference is alone concerned. His "prejudice against the political equality" of the lower class of foreigners has been nobly cast aside, but we seriously

⁴³⁶ Eugene Berwanger "Negrophobia in Northern Proslavery and Antislavery Thought," *Phylon*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Third Qtr., 1972), 272.

⁴³⁷ *Hartford Daily Courant*, Aug 19, 1865, 2.

doubt whether he “at once discarded the prejudice which keeps them from his parlor and his dinner table”? It is rather too much to require more from us toward the negro...⁴³⁸

The above quoted article argues for a balanced approach to the granting of voting rights, while explicitly laying a firm foundation for the perpetuation of rigid social class and caste barriers. He almost admires prejudice, proposing that the concerned father does not truly socialize with low foreigners in his home, so nor would he have to do so if blacks were given the vote. The article continues:

It is right that an intelligent man, be he negro, or foreign, however low in the social scale, should vote, and our prejudice in the case of each should be put aside; but it is simply a matter of individual taste, whether they be admitted to our companionship, and involves no right or wrong, nor is in any way connected with political rights. We have yet to see what the negro, as a class, is capable after enjoying to the full, the advantages of freedom. Future ages alone will show. But, be assured, common sense and social propriety will give him his proper station. If we do give the negro a vote, we force no one to embrace him.⁴³⁹

The vote is political; one’s prejudices are merely matters of taste, not moral decisions, and he hopes they will continue to be so exacting that even white foreigners are not admitted to the family parlor, much less others, so “low on the social scale.” “(I)t is simply a matter of individual taste, whether they (negroes) be admitted to our companionship, and involves no right or wrong, nor is in any way connected with political rights,” he assures his readers. The author is adamant that one’s selection of social contacts involves neither legal nor moral consideration, attempting to

⁴³⁸*Hartford Daily Courant*, August 19, 1865, 2. The entire article is reprinted in Appendix III.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

sever the connection between voting rights and social equality that opponents repeatedly conjured up.

This fear of socializing with African-Americans is elaborated in the following *Times* quote, excerpted by the *Courant* for rebuttal:

“After all it is a question of races. The two cannot commingle without lowering the white race. We cannot have political equality without a greater degree of social intimacy and equality. We cannot introduce mongrelism without injuring the dominant race. We have too large a proportion of negroes in the country—one-eighth of the population—to venture upon political or social equality. It would work great harm...this is a white man’s government, and when the white race prove incapable of controlling it, we say, let the negroes try their hands at the work.”⁴⁴⁰

This articulated terror of “mongrelism” reveals the perceived precariousness of white privilege, the perceived threat to the white power structure and apparent likelihood of greater social “intimacy.” The example of the South may have influenced this writer, but without his realizing that social intimacy developed even without political or social equality, and was exacerbated by the gross inequality of power. The sheer number of “negroes,” one-eighth of the population, stirs great concern in this writer’s heart. Ironically, he ends by saying this is a white man’s government, and when the white man can no longer control it, he will give the remaining mess to the “negro” to “try their hands” at it, certainly maximizing their chances for success.

All these ideas are refuted by the *Courant*, but with greater racism, if possible:

In joining hands for this work, it is not necessary that one race should be obliterated or swallowed up in the other; neither that both should become socially equal and one amalgamated tribe of “mongrels.” Both ideas are alike preposterous, there being nothing in the nature of the case

⁴⁴⁰ *Hartford Daily Courant*, August 19, 1865, 2.

which implies such a result. Analogy is against it. The natural repugnance between native Americans and the lower class of foreigner is much less than between them and the negro, yet they are widely separated by social distinctions; also the ratio of foreigners to Americans is much greater than that of blacks (we are speaking more especially of our own State), yet we see no necessity of relinquishing the government into their hands, or requiring their complete withdrawal from it.

According to the *Courant*, not only will “native Americans” not intermarry with either foreigners or negroes, but they evince a “natural repugnance” to the idea, and furthermore, they are so “widely separated by social distinctions” that there is nothing to fear. Most striking are the issues upon which both authors agree: there must be no *social* equality between native whites and foreigners or Negroes; there must be no sexual or marital mixing, which would “mongrelize” Americans; widely separated social distinctions must endure, whatever political rights are bestowed upon the “lower race;” intermarriage or worse, sexual unions without marriage, would only abase whites.

Further evidence of this position is offered by an editorialist calling himself “Justice”, in a piece published just a month after the article analyzed above.⁴⁴¹ “Justice” mocks the *Hartford Times* Editor for his terror of race-mixing:

THE HARTFORD TIMES AND NEGRO SUFFRAGE

The Editor of the *Times* is opposed to placing the negro on a level with the white man, so far as legal and political rights are concerned, lest it should elevate his social position. But what evil would result, if every negro man in the state were as well educated, as intelligent and as prosperous as the editor of the *Times*?... “Oh no!” says the sage editor. “If negroes are allowed to sue white men for debt, they will be equal to white men, and our State will

⁴⁴¹ *Hartford Daily Courant*, September 27, 1865, 2. Please see Appendix IV for the full article.

soon be filled with mulattoes." ...Mr. Burr's head is filled with visions of troops of mulattoes parading our streets, and he advises the negro not to sue lest negroes be placed on a level with white men...He answers "No. If negroes are allowed to testify against white men they are placed on a level with white men and amalgamation will be the certain consequence."⁴⁴²

Again, the *Hartford Times* Editor is mocked for his obsession with amalgamation, but the contradictions inherent in this editorial are instructive; he satirizes the connection between the right to sue and the immediate result being "troops of mulattoes parading our streets." Although his intent is to deride such fears, he paints exactly the picture most dreaded by opponents to the New Haven College for Men of Color and Prudence Crandall's school, that is, that African-Americans from other states would pour into Connecticut and change the culture, all as a result of Connecticut's generosity.

...Should the question whether negro children should be allowed to attend school be put to him, his answer must surely be in the negative; as nothing tends to elevate and improve a man's social position more than education and the holding of property...What! do you propose to bestow all these rights on the negroes and make him the equal to the white man? I answer, "do yourself no harm." I propose no such thing. Ever since Connecticut has been a State, the negro has been on a perfect equality with the white man, in all these particulars. In addition to this, he has had the right of marriage, and has control of his children. And his marital and parental rights have been secured to him by the same laws that secured these rights to the white man. ...

And notwithstanding all this, we have had no very frightful amount of amalgamation. In the only two cases which the writer recollects, the white men concerned belonged to the political party, which "can't stand the smell of niggers." It is believed that if we go one step further and allow the

⁴⁴² *Hartford Daily Courant*, September 27, 1865, 2.

negro, who possesses a good moral character and can read the constitution, to vote, it will not much increase the dreaded evil; and that Connecticut may still compare favorably in this matter with that part of the country where "negroes have had no rights which white men were bound to respect." Because negroes have equal civil and political rights with white men, it does not follow that the white man shall make them his intimate friends and associates, nor that they shall intermarry with them; much less that they shall be compelled to do it. Though the negro has enjoyed all the rights above enumerated, the editor of the *Times* has not been compelled to marry a black wife, and I trust he never will be, even though the right of suffrage should be extended to the negro. Our marriages and our friendships are matters of taste and choice, and ordinarily, no one is under any constraint in this ...

Justice⁴⁴³

Again, amalgamation is unlikely, says "Justice," but he still calls it "the dreaded evil," whether tongue-in-cheek, it is hard to say. He reaffirms every person's right to be socially discriminatory; these are simply matters of taste, unrelated to law.

Additionally, while advocating equal rights for African-Americans, he reassures readers that he does *not* propose to make them equal to white men. In fact, he reminds Connecticut readers, in this state, blacks have had these rights and still whites do not count blacks among their intimate friends. Indeed, the remark that the only men who have "amalgamated" were Democrats "who can't stand the smell of niggers" reinforces the impression that those most loudly opposed to them might be attracted to them sexually, while Republicans, fighting for their political rights, hold themselves far above such associations. Additionally, the use of the crude word "nigger," in this context, appears to suggest that these are the words of lower class Democrats, again associating race-mixing, and ironically, the grossly racist language, with the lowest class of white.

⁴⁴³ *Hartford Daily Courant*, September 27, 1865, 2

It is worth considering, also, that the careful injection of the word, “nigger” into this discussion could be interpreted as a revelation of the author’s own attitude toward African-Americans, in spite of his advocacy of “justice.” He seems to be averring that no matter what legal rights are offered the black man, he will still be a “nigger.” That status, he seems to assert, cannot change, as it is as inherent as a man’s color.

Another article from the *Courant* in 1866 takes on much the same tone, with the discouraging headline, “The Nigger Again.”⁴⁴⁴ One wonders whether the *Courant* felt the need to comfort its readers with its continuing bigotry in order to make the plea for equal rights more palatable; would the insulting headline remind whites that whatever rights might be more fairly offered to blacks, that whites still retain their one privilege, that of not being “niggers”?

And yet, in 1879, a regular agricultural contributor to the paper wrote a heartfelt and honest response⁴⁴⁵ to a mixed marriage in his family home:

THE COURANT’S philosophy of the miscegenation case out in Pennsylvania is doubtless correct and touches the quick. May we not suppose, however, that a young married pair of two colors in our society must have the public eye concentrated upon them for good in this day of our Lord? Do they not really need precisely the treatment they get! Can they help being all and all to each other with such an outside pressure! Let us hope the girl got her piano. Let us believe—we who do believe in the sacrament of marriage—that *that* is good for man and woman too, even though they be of different races.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴*Hartford Daily Courant*, April 18, 1866, 2. Please see Appendix V for the rest of the article.

⁴⁴⁵ AGRICULTURAL MATTERS: OUR REGULAR AGRICULTURAL CONTRIBUTOR. *Hartford Daily Courant*, May 30, 1879, 1.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The Danbury writer begins with a plea for compassion for the young love of this couple, “who can’t help being all and all to each other.” He says he is touched to the quick by the case, a confession both rare and honest. He continues:

By the way—is not Othello generally done on the stage in black and white? Possibly the girl—enamored of literature or history—may have thought she was marrying an Othello or a Toussaint.⁴⁴⁷

His citing of Othello is an extraordinary allusion since he wishes this couple the best. Certainly the Othello-Desdemona marriage does not offer a hopeful example for the bride, and citing Toussaint might remind Connecticut readers of the violent Haitian rebellion, not a national hero.

We can’t be particularly squeamish about a few legal marriages of blacks and whites, after living all our lives in union with southern, slavish concubinage—can we?

I should not have touched this subject if we hadn’t a case of miscegenation right in the neighborhood and my own family. Here’s a likely young colored fellow married some time within a year or two, to a white girl, for reasons of their own. There are no parents to object to that I know of, but society thinks it very odd...the couple is settled in my father’s house, and the old gentleman was up here the other day bragging about the nice bread the wife makes. He—you must know—was a regular old fire-eating abolitionist, in the time of it. He’d yoke thunder and lightning, so to speak, if they promised to work together, and there is a certain poetic justice in their finding a home with him. She has no piano, but her singing is music without that. We all think the arrangement deuced odd, though, and treat the peculiar couple like a parcel of blamed heathen. No doubt

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

we shall get used to the novelty in time, as we become civilized.⁴⁴⁸

In a folksy, grumbling tone, this correspondent admits his reluctance to accept this mixed marriage (“We all think the arrangement deuced odd, though, and treat the peculiar couple like a parcel of blamed heathen,”) and ascribes to his abolitionist father the liberality of opening his home to the couple. Yet he makes some powerful points: we accept the love story of *Othello*, don’t we? Marriage is sacred, is it not? This is not Southern sexual exploitation. Though the old man accepts the situation, the rest of them cannot until “they become civilized.” Thus the fault lies with the observers, not the couple.

I call to mind again, the three beautiful women I saw in Rio on a Sunday; one was black as the ace of spades, one was only middling and the other white as a lily. Very lovely middle-aged ladies, mind you, they were, and richly though plainly clad. They were alighting from a handsome carriage at a church door and their manner with several distinguished looking friends they met was as fine as anything I have seen before or since.⁴⁴⁹

Here, off on a tangent, he seems to be addressing the “natural repugnance” of white people for black people and admits his own attraction to three ladies of varying shades. As a man, he can admit to being smitten by three respectable, church-going ladies, especially because “their manner was fine.” This disposes of the argument that physically, the race is unattractive to whites.

White young women do sometimes bring disgrace upon themselves and parents by marrying in their own color, we may remember; and about disobedience to parents—I recollect how we were all shocked, years ago, because one of our girls was like to become a mother. Some old woman—I forgot who—said after all, that dreadful baby might

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

grow up to be the chief comfort of the grandparents and I have lived long enough to see the hopeful prophecy come true. Don't let us worry, over the inevitable. The mixing of stranger races will proceed slowly, but surely proceed, unless we let off steam and quash modern civilization.

White women sometimes degrade themselves badly by marrying within their race. The husband in question is "a likely young colored fellow," and the bride is a "white girl;" they are ordinary, after all. The final argument appeals to the softest of hearts: "Can they help being all and all to each other with such an outside pressure! ...Let us believe—we who do believe in the sacrament of marriage—that *that* is good for man and woman too, even though they be of different races." This is a love that can't be helped; shouldn't we support this married love, so different from the illicit and unsanctified sexual unions of the South?

Yet such a generous take on this issue was rare. Beginning in the early 1870s, the few notices in Connecticut papers of interracial marriages made much of the wonder of pretty white "girls" choosing black husbands;⁴⁵⁰ the tone of these articles evinces both the wonder of such a choice and the horror of concerned parents who cannot undo the damage done by their wayward daughters. The language used almost always focuses on the bride's "form" and lovely face, as well as her education and family prosperity, making it clear that a black husband might do for a white girl with none of these advantages, but presents puzzling and troubling picture otherwise.⁴⁵¹ In fact, one headline reads "Strange Freak of a Beautiful White Girl."

The fact that every article takes note of the racial difference of the couple makes clear that such unions were unusual. However, when the bride comes from the working class, and is

⁴⁵⁰ In fact, I was able to find only one article noticing a marriage of a white man and a black woman, and the writer of this article subjects the black mother-in-law to great mockery.

⁴⁵¹ See Appendix VI for the complete text.

designated a cook or a waiter, the tone of astonishment seems muted, and even somewhat factual and respectful.

In cases where the bride is an attractive white woman of standing or wealth, the article stresses the bride's advantages, while often highlighting the groom's darkness of skin, ugliness or slyness: "Hall is 30 years old, quick-witted and cautious. Mamie is 17, a blonde, handsome and accomplished. Her father is rich;" "One of the prettiest, wealthiest and most accomplished young ladies of the town left her house and deliberately married a negro, who is as ugly and ignorant as he is black;" "Coe, a repulsive-looking black man..."

Confirming the unflattering verbal descriptions of blacks in newspapers, Elise Lemire describes the pictorial political cartoons of the era casting them "with unrealistically dark skin. Hair is imagined as so coarse that it can...defy gravity. Noses and lips are portrayed as inordinately wide. Jaws jut out beyond all proportion."⁴⁵² According to Lemire, such artistic hyperbole intentionally portrayed blacks as ugly, the antithesis of sexual desirability. This comports well with the written accounts mentioned above, particularly when one man is labeled "as ugly and ignorant as he is black;" here, blackness flows into the characterization as the capstone of repulsiveness, even more off-putting than the ugliness and ignorance.

The degradation of white women and their mixed race children is another recurrent theme in newspaper coverage of interracial marriages during the Reconstruction era. Not only are these women reduced to polygamy, poverty, alcoholism, and sometimes insanity, but their children also wind up indigent, dead, or worst of all, debauched burdens on society.

⁴⁵² Lemire 3.

TWO CASES OF MISCEGENATION

The Town Authorities are asked to take care of a Negro's White Wife and an Infant.

Insane wife and dead infant: mother will not let baby go because she thinks they will dissect it. It gets buried in pauper's grave.⁴⁵³

IN POVERTY AND CRIME

Horrible Results of a Miscegenation in Waterbury

Waterbury, June 7. -- Humane Agent John F. Simmons, of Winsted, has found a deplorable state of affairs in Goshen in the case of George Prince and family. Prince, who is a drunken negro, is married to an undivorced white woman and the couple have six children ranging from 16 months to 18 years. They live in a ramshackle cabin hardly fit for dogs.

The house is void of furniture and the family sleeps upon the floor. They work enough to barely live and then spend the rest of the time in drinking and quarreling. They present a most unclean and neglected appearance.

The oldest girl, 18 years old, is entirely lost and the 14-year old boy drinks like a horse and swears like a pirate. Though Prince is a negro of the darkest shade, the four older children have hair as red as fire.⁴⁵⁴

If there was any doubt left after the headline above ("Horrible Results of a Miscegenation") that this intermixture benefits neither race, the attitude of one Connecticut editorialist clarifies further in the following 1887 *Hartford Daily Courant* article supporting the legal right to intermarry in the South.

The remedy he (a black Baptist minister) proposes for a bad state of things is the removal of all restrictions on marriage. He says that that it would be as clearly unconstitutional to enact a law that says that a red-haired man should not marry a red-haired woman as that a black and white should not marry.

⁴⁵³ *New Haven Register*, March 24, 1892.

⁴⁵⁴ *New Haven Register*, June 8, 1896.

This raises a much larger question than that of sympathy with the colored race. It is a question of physiology. There is, history teaches, a mixture of races, as in those that go to form the present English race, that is beneficial; but there is a mixture that has never yet, in all experience, made a good population. The mixture of the Spanish with the Indian and the African has always been thoroughly bad. One need only to look at Mexico to see this. The majority of Mexicans are mongrels and they are without moral or physical stamina. They have the bad qualities of two bloods. The experience of illegitimate miscegenation in the south is certainly not encouraging for bringing out the best qualities of either race and we do not see how legitimate miscegenation would improve the prospect. As a matter of fact, at the north there is very little intermixture. With increased education and self-respect in the south, there will probably be as little in time.⁴⁵⁵

Here, in pseudo-scientific jargon, the author refers to the “mongrelization” of races, noting that whatever races blended to make the English, that was clearly a good mixture, while other combinations lead to weak “mongrels.” In denigrating the Mexicans, their lack of physical and moral stamina is fabricated and highlighted. Furthermore, the author expresses faith in the increasingly segregated societies of the nation, suggesting that as Southerners (presumably whites) become more self-respectful and educated, they will become more like Northerners, among whom race-mixing is rare. In all, the legalization of intermarriage, then, will “cost” whites nothing, and yet protect black women from predatory white males and society from their illegitimate offspring,

⁴⁵⁵ MISCEGENATION At a Baptist ministers' conference in Baltimore on Monday, the Rev. Mr. Braxton, pastor of the Calvary colored church, read a very plain spoken paper on the injustice and unconstitutionality of the laws, mainly southern, forbidding marriages between blacks and whites. Probably he speaks the sentiment of the colored people of his section, whether he does of those of the whole south we doubt, for in many places there is a desire to separate the races rather than bring them closer together. The pure black looks down upon the mongrel. And it is probably true that less mulattoes are born now than in slavery times.

The Baptist minister is rightly indignant that white men should be intimate with colored women, and that the latter are without the protection of the law, or of the law as administered by public opinion... (the excepted section is in the body of the paper.) It is not at all certain that liberty to marry by law would extirpate the social evil in the south upon which Mr. Braxton comments in such plain terms. That is to be extirpated north and south by a growth of moral sense. But what the colored people have a right to ask is that the same protection that white women enjoy should be extended to colored women. *Hartford Daily Courant*, February 3, 1887, 2.

presumably because black women will be able to counter the seductions of white males with a reasonable demand for marriage first. While allegedly empowering black women, this disturbingly racist defense of an intermarriage law presumes that white men will rarely follow through on their courtship to marriage.

In one case in which a white man marries a black woman, readers are reminded that in such cases, the rare black bride is marrying “up.”⁴⁵⁶ A note about the bride’s mother focuses on her satisfaction with her new white son-in-law: “Mrs. Hinckman, the bride’s mother, was seen at her residence near the Flushing cemetery, a couple of miles from the village. She is a large and portly female, with characteristic features. She spoke of her daughter’s happy union with “de man ob her choice,” and chuckled quite audibly.” This combination of mockery of her speech, and her “chuckling” triumph combines unsurprisingly with her description as “a large and portly female with characteristic features.” The mockery reiterates the belief in the unattractiveness of African-Americans, while making it clear that this “capture” of a white husband (though a German

⁴⁵⁶ TOOK HIM FOR A MULATTO

Excitement in Long Island over a Case of Miscegenation

New York, Oct. 10.—There is much excitement and no little indignation among both the white and colored population of Flushing, L.I. over the recent marriage of Irella Hinckman, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Hinckman, one of the oldest colored families in the county and Joseph Miller, a white man of Cincinnati. The fact that the parties were of different races was not disclosed until sometime after the ceremony. Rev. C.C. Lasby, the white pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Flushing, was very annoyed on discovering the fact in the case since he has been severely censured in social circles for his apparent indifference to the sense of propriety. He stated, in self-defence, that he was not aware at the time of a difference in race.

About 9 o’clock, just after prayer meeting in church, the man and woman, accompanied by other colored persons, who proved to be the relations of the bride, came to him and asked to be married. He gathered the little party at the residence of a friend, where, the usual questions being satisfactorily responded to, the pair were made one. Miller said he was a German, twenty-nine years old and a Cincinnati brewer. He was so dark-complexioned and his general features so resembled that of the colored race that Mr. Lasby took him for a mulatto, though somewhat lighter than the bride, who, however, was quite good-looking and only seventeen years of age. The girl’s mother, uncle and aunt, who accompanied her, were all very black.

Mrs. Hinckman, the bride’s mother, was seen at her residence near the Flushing cemetery, a couple of miles from the village. She is a large and portly female, with characteristic features. She spoke of her daughter’s happy union with “de man ob her choice,” and chuckled quite audibly.

Threats are made by both white and colored that they will not be permitted to live together. They have gone west to spend their honeymoon, and will probably remain in view of the situation. *New Haven Register*, October 10, 1883, 2.

immigrant) has earned this low-status mother-in-law a valuable prize, an entrée into some level of white society.

Another aspect worthy of consideration is the literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, since novels offer a valuable view into the concerns of American society regarding sexual relationships. The first novel printed in America in 1744 was Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, published by Benjamin Franklin. While the title character must defend herself from corruption at every turn, no one doubted that this novel, like many of the period, dwelled on "social and domestic virtues, on piety, filial duty, humility, and charity."⁴⁵⁷ Richardson's novels were in print in at least twenty British editions by 1800; his name "was a household word wherever novels were discussed in the Colonies." While women were drawn to the heartbreaking turns of fate that dramatized the passions of the heroines, moralists approved and recommended that they take the lessons of the novels seriously. "William Woodbridge, who conducted a school for girls in New Haven in 1779-80...testified that *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, along with Young's *Night Thoughts* and a few other books, were significant factors in the development of female character in America before the establishment of seminaries for women."⁴⁵⁸

A novel set in Connecticut, *The Coquette*, by Hannah Webster Foster, first published in 1797, was wildly popular with thirteen editions and approximately thirty printings in its first century. *The Coquette* gained notoriety and interest because it was based on the newspaper account

⁴⁵⁷ Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*, (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, Essay Index Reprint Series, 1940), 29.

⁴⁵⁸ Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*, (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, Essay Index Reprint Series, 1940), 29.

of a true Connecticut woman, Elizabeth Whitman, who was seduced, abandoned and left to die alone.⁴⁵⁹

The overriding theme of *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, *The Coquette* (by Mrs. Foster), *The Power of Sympathy* (by W. H. Brown), and novels like them was simple and fascinating: seduction. Richardson had opened a topic for which there was endless interest, all under the guise of teaching morality. "The most striking manifestation of Richardson's influence is to be seen in the appalling popularity of the seduction motif with its seemingly limitless possibilities for sentimental and sensational scenes..." Following Richardson's lead, the debut of American popular fiction began,

somewhat apologetically with an attempt in *The Power of Sympathy* 'to expose the dangerous consequences of seduction.' No other theme was able to provoke more purple patches or to inspire more poetic flights. One of these excursions into the sublime was quoted in 1789 by the *Massachusetts Magazine* as a 'beauty' from *The Power of Sympathy*: 'Behold the youthful virgin arrayed in all the delightful charms of vivacity, modesty and sprightliness—Behold even while she is rising in beauty and dignity, like the lily of the valley, in the full bloom of her graces, she is cut off suddenly by the rude hand of the seducer.' Seduction darkens many pages of this novel. 'Surely there is no human vice of so black a die—so fatal in its consequences—or which causes a more general calamity,' wrote the author, 'than that of *seducing* a female from the path of honour.'

Seductions in these novels led to catastrophes of all kinds: suicide; abandonment; sham weddings; the births and deaths of illegitimate children; and the death of the gullible woman in childbirth. But one consequence was always guaranteed: shame. Yet, the novels sent other messages as well. One recurrent theme was that ultimately the seducers pay for their evil deeds. A

⁴⁵⁹ Mulford, Carla. Introduction, *The Power of Sympathy* by William Hill Brown and *The Coquette* by Hannah Webster Foster, (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), xli-xlii.

seducer could expect a long prison term, hanging, suicide or a lingering death in a filthy hospital.⁴⁶⁰ (This theme is also played out in the Connecticut newspaper stories of intermarriages ending with brutalized and debauched children.)

This "seduction" literature must be considered as part of the cultural backdrop of the reportage of interracial sexual relationships in this literate and well-educated state. But however prepared people were for the selfish and invidious motives of seducing men, they believed that women were particularly prey to the appeals of good looks and the trappings of wealth. So the "Major Sanford" seducers were portrayed to be handsome libertines who either used their wealth to seduce women serially, or went into deep debt to achieve the appearance of wealth for that purpose.

This stereotypical view of the seducer explains the great puzzlement accompanying the journalistic commentary on the interracial marriages of the time. While presumably any man could flatter and charm a woman, certain advantages were presumed necessary: education, which would enable a man to flatter a middle class woman; good looks to attract her; and wealth -- or the pretense of it-establishing a respectable social status. In all of these areas, by nineteenth century conventional white standards, African-American men seemed to fall short. As documented earlier, their lack of education, and its marker, speech, were sometimes mocked even in friendlier newspapers; their looks were caricatured and deplored; and in every case examined, wealth, and naturally social status were markedly lacking.

These many deficits in African-American men would have otherwise rendered them non-threatening to the white family. But when these "obvious" failings seemed to be overlooked by

⁴⁶⁰ Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*, (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, Essay Index Reprint Series, 1940), 29. Richard Godbeer elaborates on similar theses in his book, *Sexual Revolution in Early America*, 31.

white women of status and beauty, journalistic onlookers -- along with neighbors and families -- seemed simply flummoxed. This may perhaps account for the alarmism in the manufactured "miscegenation" controversy. If these seducers did not wield the familiar seducer tools so well understood by nineteenth century Americans, and yet they sometimes succeeded in wooing some white women into marriage, then the threat was even greater than previously thought. Indeed, Orlando Patterson has identified this threat, positing that "racist oppressors were virulently obsessed with the maleness of the African-American male and brutally sought to extinguish any hint of manhood in him."⁴⁶¹ While that obsession with maleness and sexuality hides behind the text of Victorian journalists, its animating fear emerges in language and the desire to satirize, mock and attack the dignity of African-American men.

In nineteenth century Connecticut newspapers, from the Cornwall cases to the final commentary on the Hinckman case, several patterns are clarified. Firstly, aspiring white families had few opportunities to raise their social status, and pretty daughters offered one such opportunity, but it was one fraught with the serious risk of losing ground if she should choose to marry "down" racially. Secondly, given a daughter's power to influence family status, and the higher status white male's reluctance to "marry down," the social change represented by interracial marriages was effected by those few white women who chose relationships with African-American men, but insisted that the relationships be legal marriages. Thirdly, racial mixture would result in a "mongrelized" progeny, impoverished and degraded. Fourthly, other poor whites lose the opportunity of improving their family status if pretty white women choose black men, thus lowering the social status of all whites by their private act. Fifthly, poor whites had nothing except

⁴⁶¹ Orlando Patterson. *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*. (New York: Basic Civitas, 1998), 8.

white privilege and a segregated social world; racial mixing would take this small advantage away, perhaps inspiring blacks to see themselves as potential spouses of whites, their social equals, a terrifying prospect especially for those who had little else.

Finally, despite all these overt and covert messages, the writers in Connecticut newspapers evinced some ambivalence — the outrage at news of an interracial union is frequently followed by a mellower, more measured response. In the end, journalistic second thoughts often carried the day, but only after racist and often sexist seeds--many germinated in an inchoate fear of African-American male sexuality, and the possibility of white female responsiveness-- had been cast upon fertile ground.

Conclusion

Blinded as nineteenth century Connecticut was by white bigotry, the state's culture was characterized by a conflict between Christian, intellectual good will versus profoundly emotional racist and hierarchical ideologies that emerged at every juncture.⁴⁶² Connecticut's first journalistic reactions to racially-centered events fell squarely on a white supremacist, emotional side of the debate, but second and third thoughts shifted over time (and usually very little time), to a more just and broad-minded, intellectual conclusion. Examples of this abound. The Foreign Mission School brides defied social norms in taking Cherokees as their spouses; their eventual acceptance by local papers as Indian princesses was evidenced in a certain pride that Connecticut marriage law did not ban such unions. The *Amistad* captives were cared for in the homes of welcoming Farmington women who raised the funds for their return trip; while these men were admitted killers, their evolution from criminal to victim to hero made it possible for women to use their church activities to muster support for them. Prudence Crandall stood up to verbal and violent attacks upon her, her students and her home, events that ended with her removal from her town, but this outcome shamed many Connecticut citizens. Andrew T. Judson, her adversarial neighbor and a politician, wrote and forced through the "Black Laws" in 1833 to exclude schools like Crandall's, but these laws were quietly revoked in 1838. It is notable that for most other states, such laws were only revoked after the Civil War, and that in the South, *Brown vs. The Board of Education*, decided the issue, de jure at least, only in 1954.

⁴⁶² It is notable that until 1818, all citizens were taxed to support the Congregational churches; after that date, many Congregational churches faltered financially as their source of income fell, and other denominations sprang up to draw away former church members. Nonetheless, the state remained one in which the Christian tradition dominated, even extending to the local schoolhouse where it was commonplace for the town minister to serve as schoolmaster until late in the nineteenth century. See *The History of the United Church of Christ, Southbury, Connecticut* by Theresa C. Vara.

The historical Christianity that gave Connecticut some conscience, though, had built within it the very paradigms that enabled racism and classism to flourish. The original Puritanism of the founders still survived into the first half of the nineteenth century;⁴⁶³ young people were taught that they might be selected by God for salvation, but there was no way to be certain. God's favor might be interpreted from one's accumulated wealth, social position, success, or living children, and one had little power to influence God's decision in any way. Such insecurity about one's eternal destiny could easily translate into seeking evidence of God's choice in the earthly hierarchy of wealth and class. Thus, Puritan-rooted Christians quite naturally saw individual fate, race, class, and fortune as God's ineffable choice, to suffer or enjoy with acceptance. As the churches evolved into Congregational churches, democratically organized and congregation-run, they boasted an equality between minister and congregation, but nonetheless were deeply concerned that the "best" (wealthiest, most powerful) families be given the best pews, the most respect and the closest homesites to the church.⁴⁶⁴ So, from the very inception of Puritan religion in New England, social hierarchy could be read from church seating; this ordering of all people (and the usual poverty and reassuringly low social caste of African-Americans) made it easy to slip people of color in at the unseen end of the queue. A clear view of the role of African-Americans in Connecticut was expressed in the *Hartford Courant* of October 24, 1915. Looking back on almost three centuries of African-American contributions to Connecticut, the article opens by averring that "(C)olored people in Hartford in the days of yore seem to have played well their part as factotums to the first

⁴⁶³ See *Mightier Than the Sword* by David S. Reynolds for an excellent account of Harriet Beecher Stowe's spiritual struggle with her Puritan-rooted faith.

⁴⁶⁴ See Theresa C. Vara, *The History of the United Church of Christ, Southbury, Connecticut*.

families and in contributing to the comfort and convenience of white folks generally.”⁴⁶⁵ This direct characterization of African-Americans’ sole purpose as that of a servant class for the comfort and convenience of “white folks” unveils the walls erected around people of color to keep them “in their place,” waiting to provide comfort on the social periphery. In this way, journalists did their part in maintaining the status quo, consistently reinforcing an ideology that held some Americans in a perpetually subservient role.

Similarly, this reflexive conservatism emerged politically as well; my work suggests that while Connecticut journalists might titillate readers with discussions of “miscegenation”⁴⁶⁶ or graphically described criminal acts, they were reluctant to explicitly approve of some Connecticut events and individuals who raised uncomfortable questions. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the book that largely changed the attitudes of Northern Americans at a critical period. As a woman, she was sometimes excoriated for her boldness, and mocked for her gullibility elsewhere in the country, but in Connecticut, the newspapers remained ostensibly uncommitted and simply factual, releasing articles about the sales of her books, and those of her competitors, but never endorsing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, or remarking upon this native daughter until her old age thirty years later. Notably, though, since Stowe was so much a part of the state’s intelligentsia and a frequent contributor to these newspapers, she represented the colonizationist views of most Connecticut citizens, so journalistic silence should be viewed as an endorsement rather than political reticence, especially since such reticence was not at all in keeping with the opinionated anti-South tone of the time.

⁴⁶⁵ *Hartford Courant*, October 24, 1915, 1.

⁴⁶⁶ Not much changes; discussing the Church and birth control, Maureen Dowd said, “They become fascinated by what they deplore.” *The New York Times*, April 29, 2012.

In fact, the silence about Stowe seems much more like a state-wide press approval compared to the outright condemnation of John Brown, another Connecticut-born public figure. His actions were reported baldly, but in another face-saving effort, none of his Connecticut ties were discussed; nevertheless, he was roundly and universally denounced for his extremist act, and the use that would be made of it by "Southern Fire-Eaters" in their effort to destroy the Union. (In contrast, the terrorist acts of white mobs in the streets of Hartford, New Haven and Canterbury, though not of national significance, earned no comment, much less a denunciation; those riots put only African-Americans in jeopardy.)

Connecticut newspapers may have condoned the colonizationist sentiments of Stowe, if only by the absence of commentary in the 1850s and 1860s, but this selectivity reflected a desire to project a certain state image. This selectivity was also obvious when the papers also failed to record the white violence in the Crandall case, or 1830s era white riots against Hosea Easton's African-American church in Hartford.⁴⁶⁷ Nor did papers carry coverage of the violence upon African-Americans for months in New Haven in 1831, after the proposal of the black college. One can speculate at length about the causes of this journalistic sin of omission, but this could have simply been part of not airing one's dirty laundry to the world. Additionally, mob violence was expected in New York City or in some other "uncivilized" places; it did not fulfill the the state's self-image of a law-abiding, pious white citizenry or a black servant class treated with Christian tolerance. Reportage on the riots would have had to suggest that white arsonists and rioters met the standard definition of a savage far better than did innocent black victims. It was easier to pretend

⁴⁶⁷ See page 45, Footnote 27 of *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice: The Life and Times of Hosea Easton* by Hosea Easton, George R. Price and James Brewer Stewart.

that none of this violence ever happened than to deal with the stark reality of white hatred. Of course, the hyperbolic coverage of white fears and the simple omission of the real terrorism suffered by blacks reflects the social power structure, helping to shape public opinion in viewing whites as the true victims of "levelling" schemes, and normalizing violence against blacks. The intensity of the violence seems to have sprung from the threat of black uplift and therefore competition. English observer Edward Abdy said, "Forbearance may be shewn, where admittance to equality is rarely, if ever, claimed; — but contempt and contumely and persecution are sure to be the lot of those who seem to stand on the "vantage ground," and claim the full and free payment of their rights."⁴⁶⁸ Indeed, whenever those rights surfaced in the form of plans or proposals, a visceral violence immediately ended them, acts that would immediately slip into Connecticut's amnesiac history of itself as a tolerant and civilized state.⁴⁶⁹

Another contribution I have made through this thesis is to reveal the import of incidents and relationships hitherto largely overlooked. Both Frederick Douglass's experience in Meriden and Mark Twain's relationship with George Griffin have garnered little critical commentary until now. Douglass's humiliation in Connecticut may not have been a rare event for him, but it quickly became an embarrassment for Meriden that took on a life of its own, quickly morphing into a more comfortable story to report in the subsequent white-on white assault of a newspaper editor. Again, the incident calls down upon the racist innkeeper a printed condemnation, but the larger question remained. Whereas few Connecticut white innkeepers might have acted so inhumanely to Douglass, what could the ordinary African-American expect? At no time in the brouhaha that

⁴⁶⁸ Abdy, Edward, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States*, Vol. 1. (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214.

⁴⁶⁹ Any doubt about the self-image of Connecticut would be erased by a glance at the older Connecticut histories listed in the Introduction.

followed the Meriden event did anyone suggest that if discrimination against a celebrity like Douglass was patently offensive, then so would be similar discrimination against other blacks. Additionally, the incident was used to highlight the outrage of Connecticut people to Douglass's mistreatment in Meriden and on his transatlantic voyage, along with memories of how Mayor Jewell of Hartford extended Douglass a warm welcome. The face-saving machinations of the Connecticut press reveal a profound desire to maintain the appearance of Connecticut fairness and justice, while making it clear that Douglass alone occupied a category of African-Americans worthy of such deference.

Regarding Twain's relationship with George and other African-Americans whom he respected, one could say that he exploited his friendship as he roamed New York offices with George, forcing other whites to be courteous to George out of deference for the famed, but iconoclastic author. Twain's liberalism had limits, however; his fiction subtly supports the idea of racial equality (or even black superiority, some might argue), but it takes sophisticated literary critics many thousands of words to detect and defend his anti-racism message. Readers could easily miss Twain's egalitarian leanings, primed as they were to laugh at whatever he said. His humorist cloak even robs some of his best work on race of its poignancy since more unsophisticated readers could simply misread a piece like "Aunt Rachel" as a puzzling essay out of sync with his usual humor, or worse yet, as a farcical look at black dialect.

And though it may be unfair to blame Twain for his readers' lack of discernment, his deliberate suppression of his mild disapproval of lynching until after his death and his apparent choice to subvert the serious issue raised in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* betray an all-too-human focus on

the value of his income versus speaking out against racialized murder. One might conclude that if Twain's friendships and experiences in Connecticut moved him to oppose virulent race-based hatred, given human nature, the era, and his roots, Twain could change only so much.

Another surprising revelation in my work has been the extent to which women, though reined in by the limited expectations of their time, were agents of social change in the state. Obvious examples are Prudence Crandall and Harriet Beecher Stowe, but the many Farmington women who nurtured, taught and raised money for the Amistad victims were certainly unsung heroes. As far as interracial marriage signals significant social change, a few white women pioneered great changes. While African-American women and white men formed some sexual extramarital relationships, I could find no record in the press of any such Connecticut relationships ending in marriage, suggesting that the more socially powerful partners – white and male – still regarded marriage as an economic and social tool to better oneself and one's family. Yet a few white women of respectable social standing crossed the color line to marry against enormous social pressure, indicating that marriage for them was evolving into a union with personal meanings that trumped economic or social interests. (It is notable here that the white women married presumably for love, choosing to "marry down," but that their African-American husbands even if they were also marrying for love, exercised the male prerogative to "marry up.") Again, contrasted with cases like *Loving vs. Virginia*, a century later, Connecticut maintained its front-runner place in the slow evolution of racial thinking.

In turning to the voice of African-American protest, it is notable that in 1843, William Saunders, a well-recognized shopkeeper in Hartford, did not accept his relegation to second-class

train seats, nor did he fear writing a public letter of protest to the *Hartford Courant*. It is remarkable firstly that he records several earlier train trips during which he was treated with courtesy and respect; it is even more remarkable that in phrasing his distress, he chose to call the white bigots around him "wild beasts," turning stereotypical racist imagery on its head; to this strong language, no white rebuttal was published, indicating at the very least, some sense of its being an apt characterization.

William Williams' letter to Henry Stiles, twenty-two years later, recounts a similar incident in a local church. Again, an African-American man speaks movingly about the hypocrisy of "Christian" America, in tones reminiscent of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Williams did not fear making his displeasure known to Stiles, so it is clear that at least the right to protest injustice, personally or publicly, was respected. The fact that the protests were heard, however, does not indicate that any change was contemplated.

Another facet of this study reveals the role journalism played in the development of nineteenth century thought. Newspapers would be expected to reflect the thoughts of readers, and to a certain extent, to act as a harbinger of trending ideas. Connecticut papers did express the slow evolution of social change, from outright antipathy toward people of color in the 1830s to a sense that as Christians, good Northern citizens must seek to send this oppressed people to Africa; to an acceptance that colonization plans could not work, and that African-Americans had earned at least political rights, if not social rights, when they fought for the Union. But the papers also acted as an instrument of the status quo, literally urging white Americans to be more selective about those they invited into their homes, to be sure to exclude immigrants and others who might not be

worthy companions for one's daughters. In this way, journalists actively sought to promote class endogamy while they argued for civil rights *because* they could not possibly affect the patrician caste of whites.

Even more troubling are the omissions of the press; if news worthy events like white street violence were noted, they were attributed to African-Americans (Crandall), or they were simply not mentioned (New Haven College; Hartford riots). As far as white readers knew, such things never happened in Connecticut, preserving the self-image of the state as tolerant and benevolent. Only in "alternative" newspapers like the *Emancipator*, or in private writings, was the truth revealed, and readers of those sources were already converts. The motto of the press in Connecticut could have been "All the news fit to preserve white illusions."

Finally, one might conclude that nineteenth century Connecticut could have been a refuge for African-Americans; there were few legal restrictions, only three relatively short-lived (recorded) incidents of white-on-black violence, a state self-image that promoted civility and Christian behavior and opportunities for "uplift." The truth, however, is far more complicated. While anti-black legislation was quickly revoked, deeply rooted racist attitudes made such legislation unnecessary. As a state known as "the land of steady habits" for its tight grip on the status quo, Connecticut (and New England) customs trumped law anyway.⁴⁷⁰ No one need legislate a ban on an academy for "Little Colored Misses" or a New Haven Negro College because neighbors saw to it -- with violence -- that such institutions would never take root. No one need legislate segregated train seating for William Saunders in 1838; the protest of one white person was enough to effect it.

⁴⁷⁰ For a sense of the modern clannishness and xenophobia of New England, Shirley Jackson's fiction is unparalleled. Her novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, portrays this classist, rigid, and unwelcoming social climate in a darkly picturesque Vermont village.

No one need legislate segregated public dining, even for Frederick Douglass, in 1843; an individual innkeeper could mandate it. No law was needed to keep African-American teacher Rebecca Primus out of Connecticut classrooms after she began her own school in Maryland for freed slaves; she simply could not get a position. In 1872, the YWCA refused a young black woman residence in the articulated belief that all white women would vacate if she were admitted.⁴⁷¹ Furthermore, no interracial marriage laws were enacted because legislators saw such unions as so unlikely to occur in the constituency they cared about.

This presumption of white bigotry was borne out by the experiences and protests of African-Americans themselves, but the absence of restrictive legislation, ironically, allowed room for some to thrive. Entrepreneurs like William Saunders⁴⁷², Venture Smith,⁴⁷³ Anna Louise James,⁴⁷⁴ William Lanson,⁴⁷⁵ and Robert Coe⁴⁷⁶ could find economic success within this legislatively freer society, even if racism probably ate into their possible profits.

The ramifications of such entrenched white prejudice could hardly be understated. The bigotry of small white towns certainly contributed to the economic motivation of black flight from rural

⁴⁷¹ *Hartford Daily Courant*, December 21, 1867, p.1.

⁴⁷² Saunders was owner of a popular Hartford store.

⁴⁷³ Venture Smith ran a good business fishing, whaling and working his farm in Haddam Neck, Connecticut.

⁴⁷⁴ "Her father had been born a slave in Virginia. When he was 16 years old, he escaped. He made his way, like so many seekers of freedom from southern slavery, to New England. He stopped his journey in Connecticut, and made his home here. His daughter Anna was born in Hartford, but while still a small child, the family moved to the Connecticut shore village of Old Saybrook. Miss James, in 1908, was the first female African-American to graduate from the Brooklyn College of Pharmacy. She took over the management of her brother-in-law's business, changing the name to the James Pharmacy, and was the first female African-American pharmacist in the state of Connecticut." "Miss James and the James Pharmacy -- Old Saybrook, Connecticut", October 12, 2010. <http://newenglandtravels.blogspot.com/2010/10/miss-james-and-james-pharmacy-old.html>, Accessed May 12, 2012.

⁴⁷⁵ Lanson was "a prosperous landholder, stone mason and stable owner" in New Haven. "Citizens All: African-Americans in Connecticut, 1700-1850," Gilder-Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance & Abolition, (2007), 1.

⁴⁷⁶ Robert Coe created a construction business in New Haven, building some of the New Haven harbor.

areas. William Williams' eloquent statement sheds light on the post Civil War migration of African-Americans to Connecticut cities where there was safety in numbers, and a community large enough to justify the formation of solely African-American churches, reading clubs and social groups; there they could all be treated with respect rather than continuing to endure the begrudging tolerance in overwhelmingly-white towns.⁴⁷⁷ Sadly, this movement to urban centers led to the same rigid division between city and country/suburb that dogs Connecticut today. Although they were admitted to rural schools and churches, African-Americans were still consigned to "nigger pews" in white church as late as 1865, as William Williams attested, and many of these rural blacks left for Connecticut cities to find black churches and black communities as Williams later did in New Haven. Urban opportunities drew all ethnicities, including an incoming flood of immigrants in the second half of the century, but rural out-migration was exacerbated by the decline of agriculture. Many white Connecticut residents fled the state to go westward to Ohio from 1812 through 1850, despairing of agricultural success on depleted, rocky land; so African-Americans, too, fled the countryside to remove to cities where industry might offer them work. Unfortunately, by 1860, the period of African-American economic prosperity had peaked, and then steadily declined through 1880.⁴⁷⁸ Furthermore, though Hartford was thought to be the wealthiest city in the nation between 1871 and 1891, most of its populace was painfully poor, and this certainly included its black community.⁴⁷⁹ As Connecticut cities grew denser African-American neighborhoods, many rural Connecticut towns that had once been home to a 2 to 3% African-

⁴⁷⁷ "Citizens All: African-Americans in Connecticut, 1700-1850," Gilder-Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance & Abolition, (2007), 3.

⁴⁷⁸ "Great Expectations: Family and Community in Nineteenth Century Black Hartford," unpublished dissertation by Barbara Jean Beeching, University of Connecticut, (2010). 3464378.

⁴⁷⁹ Goldberg, Carole. "Twain's World Lives Anew: Best-Selling Autobiography Renews Interest In Author and In Hartford's Rich History," *Hartford Courant*, December 24, 2010.

American population recorded none in succeeding census records. As the Great Migration northward occurred in the twentieth century, these older African-American enclaves enlarged, leading to massive white flight by the 1960s, deepening poverty in Connecticut urban centers.

It was in this way that Connecticut cities became, in effect, walled-in communities of minority citizens, while suburbs and rural areas whitened. By 2011, the Bridgeport-Stamford, Connecticut region led the nation in family income segregation,⁴⁸⁰ and Connecticut in 2012 is more segregated than thirty-four other states, with 32% of its black students attending schools that are 90-100% minority.⁴⁸¹ The consequences of such deep-seated, historical segregation are myriad: less economic opportunity; poorer educational outcomes; fewer broad social connections; cultural isolation; and psychological and physical disadvantages such as limited access to good health, widespread depression, exposure to environmental toxins, and obesity.⁴⁸²

In fact, a 1989 civil case, *Sheff vs. O'Neill*, was filed against the state alleging a denial of equal protection under law because of the de facto segregation of Connecticut schools. The Connecticut Supreme Court issued a decision in favor of the plaintiffs, requiring on-going long-term efforts to desegregate the schools.⁴⁸³ So ironically, African-Americans in the nineteenth century seeking to ameliorate the sting of prejudice by grouping together in cities eventually evolved into a community seeking, but frequently failing, to escape the poverty and dysfunction.

⁴⁸⁰ Rick Green, "We're #1 in Income Segregation" *Courant.com*, November 22, 2011.

⁴⁸¹ "Education and Opportunity in Connecticut." <<http://www.realizethedream.org/reports/states/connecticut.html>>, Accessed May 12, 2012.

⁴⁸² These consequences are just now being more seriously investigated but even in 1975, it was evident that segregation in Connecticut had unfortunate implications for those segregated. See Hadden, Kenneth P. and Werling, Thomas, "Residential Segregation in Metropolitan Connecticut" (1975). Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station. Paper 47.

⁴⁸³ I am privileged to teach at one of the Hartford magnet schools that is the product of this case; maintaining white student population continues to present challenges.

The paradox of all this is highlighted by Martin Luther King Jr.'s impression of Connecticut in the 1950s:

“After that summer in Connecticut, it was a bitter feeling going back to segregation. It was hard to understand why I could ride wherever I pleased on the train from New York to Washington and then had to change to a Jim Crow [racially restricted] car at the nation’s capital in order to continue the trip to Atlanta.”⁴⁸⁴

The courteous and respectful state that inspired Dr. King to fight for civil rights was a complicated place where many of his Connecticut brothers and sisters knew those bitter feelings, having experienced them right at home.

⁴⁸⁴ “Martin Luther King: His Time in Simsbury, Connecticut,” Simsbury Historical Society, May 26, 2012. <<http://www.simsburyhistory.org/SimsHistory/mlking.html>>, Accessed May 2, 2012.

APPENDIX I

“Priests from Ireland now began to follow the movement of their people into the new world... Following a natural tendency, the immigrants from Ireland became concentrated in great numbers in the capital...the great majority of the newcomers from Ireland lingered in Boston, ...by 1831, they were estimated at ten to thirteen thousand souls...”

William Byrne, William A. Leahy, Joseph H. O'Donnell, John E. Finen, J.J. McCoy, A. Dowling, Edmund J. A. Young and John S. Michaud. *The History of the Catholic Church in the New England States*, Vol. 1 Boston: The Hurd & Evarts Co., 1899, 48.

“Between 1821 and 1830, Irish immigrants arrived in North America at a rate of 5,000 per year. During the 1840s, that number swelled to over 78,000 and in the 1850s to over 90,000 per year. At the peak of this human traffic an international postal system barely existed. People disappeared, accidentally or intentionally. Children travelling alone went astray. For a dollar fee The Pilot, with a weekly nationwide circulation approaching 50,000, would try to find them...Founded in 1829 by Benedict Fenwick, a Jesuit priest and later bishop of Boston, The Pilot was originally called The Jesuit or Catholic Sentinel and was published chiefly as a resource for immigrants of all nationalities. In 1838, however, under the editorship of Patrick Donahue, the weekly newspaper became particularly associated with the Repeal Movement (whose official periodical in Dublin was also called The Pilot) and increasingly addressed itself to both the established and the newly arrived Irish immigrant.

A political, religious, social and employment resource, The Pilot was critical in reinforcing - perhaps even forming - a sense of Irish identity in America by encouraging those who had left Ireland to reconstruct the life they had left behind.”

Anna Mundow “An Irishwoman’s Diary Irish Times June 2005” <http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/rvp/pubaf/05/IrishAdsIrishTimes.html>, Accessed July 13, 2009.

A Brief History of the Boston Pilot

Bishop Benedict J. Fenwick, a Jesuit priest and the second bishop of Boston, founded the newspaper that is now known as the Pilot in September 1829. Bishop Fenwick’s congregation consisted mainly of French and Irish immigrants. During his tenure Bishop Fenwick would see Irish immigration numbers grow. The average number of Irish immigrants to the United States was approximately 5,000 per year between 1821 and 1830. Most settled in New York and Boston.

In its early years, the paper offered guidance to a sometimes disoriented and insecure immigrant population. Though it served all nationalities of immigrants, it had a particularly Irish focus, especially after Bishop Fenwick turned the paper over to H. J. Deveraux and Patrick Donohue. Deveraux and Donahue had both been employed by the printing firm that had published the Jesuit.

Deveraux had worked closely with the Bishop in the role of publisher of the paper in the early years. Bishop Fenwick had found that a strictly religious paper did not sell well as a weekly publication. Very early on, about 1831, a new section that included political news from Europe was added to the paper to appeal to a wider readership. This section added another dimension, particularly under the editorship of Reverend Dr. O'Flaherty, who covered much more about Irish political news. Even so, circulation remained small. Difficulties such as low readership and Bishop Fenwick's reluctance to use clergy to edit a publication that catered mostly to one ethnic group resulted in the Bishop's decision to put the paper into the hands of Deveraux and Donohue with George Pepper as editor.

<http://infowanted.bc.edu/history/briefhistory/>, Accessed July 14, 2009.

The honorable gentleman (Judson) hardly gave me time to finish my sentences ere he said, with great emphasis:--"Mr. May, we are not merely opposed to the establishment of that school in Canterbury; we mean there shall not be such a school set up anywhere in our State. 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..." You and your friend Garrison have undertaken what you cannot accomplish. The condition of the colored population of our country can never be essentially improved on this continent. You are fanatical about them. You are violating the Constitution of our Republic, which settled forever the status of the black men in this land. They belong to Africa. Let them be sent back there, or kept as they are here. The sooner you Abolitionists abandon your project the better for our country, for the niggers, and yourselves.

Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School." *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 39-72.

There was nothing objectionable in the conduct or character of the person thus introduced. She was a very fine young woman, about twenty years of age, if I might judge from her appearance. She had, indeed, so small a portion of the prohibited fluid in her veins, that she might have escaped observation at a soiree in London or Paris, except for her good looks and graceful manners. It should be observed, that the nearer the two castes approximate each other in complexion, the more bitter the enmity of the privileged; the jealousy of encroachment being sharpened in proportion as the barriers that separate them are removed. Shades of color like differences of religious opinion, augment by their minuteness, the hatred of the orthodox and predominant party. The pressure from above increases with the elastic force below. Forbearance may be shewn, where admittance to equality is rarely, if ever, claimed; — but contempt and

contumely and persecution are sure to be the lot of those who seem to stand on the "vantage ground," and claim the full and free payment of their rights...

If I might judge of what I saw, both of this lady (Prudence Crandall) and of her establishment, during the three or four hours I remained there, never was there a person less deserving of such treatment. As for her pupils, — it would be no easy matter to explain to an European, how any man of common sense could fancy the tranquility of a country village could be disturbed, and the "rights of its inhabitants" (such was the jargon used on this occasion) could, by any possible combination of "untoward" circumstances, be invaded by nineteen young women; — unless it were, that their good looks and lady-like deportment might excite jealousy and envy among the belles and matrons of the district. Most of them had better claims to grace and beauty than an equal number of Anglo-American females taken indiscriminately. Some were scarcely to be distinguished from whites; and all were dressed with as much taste and propriety as could be found in any other school of the same kind.

Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, Vol. 1.* (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214.

On the day after the white scholars were dismissed, a Committee...visited her for the purpose of "persuading her, if possible, to give up her project, so far as Canterbury was concerned."—The propriety of the conduct of this committee, and the manner in which they presented to the lady, the objections which existed, to the course she was pursuing, has been spoken of in every instance, as highly creditable. It did not however, produce any visible effect, and consequently the same gentlemen were delegated from a larger body of the citizens of the town, to wait on Miss Crandall, on the 1st day of the following month. At this interview, every argumentative effort was made to convince her of the impropriety and injustice of her proposed measure. Daniel Frost, Jr., was appointed by the committee, to address Miss C., which was done, says one of the gentlemen, in a kind and affecting manner. In the course of his remarks, he alluded to the danger of the levelling principles, and intermarriage between the whites and blacks; when Miss C. made him the following reply,—"Moses had a black wife." This is not stated for the purpose of bringing censure upon the lady, but because her reply to the Com. seems to have been made in justification of the course she had adopted. The public must decide whether the amalgamation of the whites and blacks is a profitable or safe doctrine. The lady is not here charged with teaching that doctrine. The above reply was made by her to the committee, and every reader must decide its meaning, for himself.

"Statement of Facts, Respecting the School for Colored Females, in Canterbury, Ct. Together With a Report of the Late Trial of Miss Prudence Crandall," *Advertiser Press*, (Brooklyn, CT: 1833.)

On the 9th of March, a Town Meeting was held... the following Resolutions were submitted, and after proper consideration, unanimously adopted:

"Whereas it hath been publicly announced, that a school is to be opened in this town, on the 1st Monday of April next, using the language of the advertisement, 'for young ladies and little misses of color,' or in other words, for the people of color, the obvious tendency of which would be, to collect within the time of Canterbury, large numbers of persons from other States, whose characters and habits might be various, and unknown to us, thereby rendering insecure, the persons, property and reputations of our citizens. Under such circumstances, our silence might be construed into an approbation of the project—

"Thereupon Resolved,—That the localities of a school, for the people of color, at any place within the limits of this town, for the admission of persons from foreign jurisdictions, meets with our unqualified disapprobation, and it is to be understood, that the inhabitants of Canterbury protest against it, in the most earnest manner... (Connecticut people of color) are alike protected in their persons and property, and in... every occupation and profession. They also enjoy a special, exemption from the poll tax and military duty. In regard to the education of all those of that unfortunate class of beings who belong to this State, the Legislature ought not to impede, but so far as may be within their province, and consistent with the best interest of the people, to foster, and sustain the benevolent efforts of individuals directed to that end. Here our duties terminate. The colored people of other States, and other countries, are under the laws and guardianship of their respective sovereignties, and we are not entrusted with the powers of enquiring into the expediency or justice of their local regulations, except to acquire wisdom in regard to our own. Here are the boundaries of our Legislative rights and duties. We are under no obligation, moral or political, to incur the incalculable evils, of bringing into our own State, colored emigrants from abroad. For this we have the example of other members of our confederacy by whom slavery is tolerated. It is a fact confirmed by painful and long experience, and one that results from the condition of the colored people, in the midst of it white population, in all States and countries, that they are an appalling source of crime and pauperism. As this, in our own State, proceeds from the degradation to which their ancestors have been wrongfully subjected, it imposes on us an imperious duty, to advance their morals and usefulness, and preserve them so far as possible from the evils which they have been obliged to inherit, but at the same time the duty is not less imperative, to protect our own citizens, against that host of colored emigrants, which would rush in from every quarter, when invited to our colleges and schools.

Although the introduction of colored persons for the purpose of education merely, would seem to contemplate but a temporary residence, yet that class of people have seldom any settled establishments in their own States, or other inducements to return, after the period of instruction has expired; and as their last association and attachments would be here;— a great portion of the whole number would make this State their permanent residence. The immense evils which such a mass of colored population, as would gather within this State, when it has become their place of resort from other States and from other countries, would impose on our own people burthens which would admit of no future remedy, and can be avoided only by timely prevention.

The records of criminal courts, prison and asylums for the poor where great numbers prevail among a white population, admonish us of the dangers to which we are exposed, and evince the necessity, in the present crisis, of effectual legislative interposition.

"Statement of Facts, Respecting the School for Colored Females, in Canterbury, Ct. Together With a Report of the Late Trial of Miss Prudence Crandall," *Advertiser Press*, (Brooklyn, CT: 1833.)

...the Hon. Andrew T. Judson rose. This gentleman was undoubtedly the chief of Miss Crandall's persecutors. He was the great man of the town, a leading politician in the State, much talked of by the Democrats as soon to be governor, and a few years afterwards was appointed Judge of the United States District Court. His house on Canterbury Green stood next to Miss Crandall's. The idea of having "a school of nigger girls so near him was insupportable."

He vented himself in a strain of reckless hostility to his neighbor, her benevolent, self-sacrificing undertaking, and its patrons, and declared his determination to thwart the enterprise. He twanged every chord that could stir the coarser passions of the human heart, and with such sad success that his hearers seemed to be filled with the apprehension that a dire calamity was impending over them, that Miss Crandall was the author or instrument of it, that there were powerful conspirators engaged with her in the plot, and that the people of Canterbury should be roused, by every consideration of self-preservation, as well as self-respect, to prevent the accomplishment of the design, defying the wealth and influence of all who were abetting it.

Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School" *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 39-72.

We understand that the case of Prudence Crandall... for instructing children of color contrary to the law passed at the last session of the Legislature, came on for trial... Our informant...says... that on the day previous, the new State Attorney, Mr. Cleaveland, sent a note to the court that he was sick...The Court then appointed Mr. Stoddard, the Lieutenant Governor, States Attorney, who had before retained in behalf of the State... He was suddenly taken sick on Thursday, and soon left the town. The Court then assigned Mr. Welch as principal, and Messrs. Judson and Buckley as assistants, to carry on the prosecution... The prosecutor called as witnesses, the students in Miss Crandall's school... as persons of color from out of the State... They refused to testify because they said they should implicate themselves, and the law subjected all who aided or abetted her in the art of teaching... The Court decided the witnesses should testify-but they refused, and were ready... to go to prison, if the Court chose to send them there. The prosecutor then sent for the Baptist minister, to whose church Miss Crandall belonged, and had him sworn. He said his knowledge of the school derived from his being an adviser, and he declined testifying, for he should expose himself to the penalty. The Court said he must testify-he refused. The Sheriff was then directed to arrest him and commit him to prison for contempt! He was arrested and in custody an hour or two, and finally answered... another pupil...likewise refused to testify... The Court ordered her to prison and ...she was advised to testify, and returned and told all she knew.

I sat... between the driver and another passenger. The former ...had...neither coat to his back nor shoes to his feet... He was a very civil and a noble fellow withal, who might well put to blush "the wealthy and the proud."

After some "confab" upon indifferent subjects, [the stage driver] asked, whether I had heard of what had lately taken place at Canterbury... after detailing the particulars, he launched out in praise of Miss Crandall's magnanimity and in censure of her persecutors. "For my part," said this single-hearted fellow, "I cannot see why a black skin should be a bar to any one's rising in the world or what crime there can be in trying to elevate any portion of society by education. It is prejudice alone that has made the distinction and, if a white man will not enter my coach because I have admitted, and always will admit, a colored person into it... he must find some other conveyance... It is my firm belief... that if they had the same advantages as we have, they would be superior to us. But they have no chance as things are at present. Often, when they work ... they are unable to get their wages; and, as they know how strong the prejudice is against them, they dare not complain to a magistrate...One man, I knew myself, who worked for a farmer... for a year... he was an honest hard-working creature; — yet... his employer would not pay him one cent for his services." "Did no one," said I, "offer to assist him in obtaining justice?" "No!..."

My other companion was of the same way of thinking. He was a laboring man — another proof that the country is less infected than the towns with this shocking antipathy; and that the humble tillers of the ground have... more real dignity of character...

Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, Vol. 1.* (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214.

The plague-spot that has infected the cities and towns and hamlets of the whole commonwealth, has been thrown off from the healthy and manly minds of many of the farmers in... Brooklyn. One of them said ...that he knew no distinction between man and man; and should think himself disgraced if he refused to sit down at the same table with any human being who differed from him in complexion only. This same man, when it was proposed...to remove the people of color to seats more remote, from the body of the church, to which he belongs, strongly opposed the proposition, and declared, that, if the resolution were carried, they should sit in his own pew.

The stage was nearly full... one of the passengers, observed, that he had never heard so much about the blacks as he had during his short stay in Brooklyn... All parties were agreed in condemning poor Miss Crandall. One said that she was a mere tool in the bands of agitators and

fanatics, who had gained her over to their cause by paying her debts: another (was) assured that...all the disturbance had originated with Mr. Judson's enemies...

Edward S. Abdy, *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, Vol. 1.* (London: John Murray, 1835), 193-214.

Miss Crandall received... fifteen or twenty colored young ladies... from Philadelphia, New York, Providence, and Boston. At once her persecutors commenced operations...the stores in Canterbury were denied her; so that she was obliged to send to neighboring villages for her needful supplies. She and her pupils were insulted whenever they appeared... The... door-steps of her house were besmeared, and her well was filled with filth...But she was enabled to "hold out," and Miss Crandall and her little band behaved somewhat like the besieged in the immortal Fort Sumter.... (Her opponents)... insulted and annoyed her and her pupils in every way their malice could devise. The storekeepers, the butchers, the milk-peddlers of the town, all refused to supply their wants; and whenever her... relatives... were seen coming to bring... the necessaries of life, they were insulted and threatened. Her well was defiled with the most offensive filth, and her neighbors refused her and the thirsty ones about her even a cup of cold water... Nor was this all; the physician of the village refused to minister to any who were sick... and...the church forbade her (and her pupils) to come... Soon after... an attempt was made to set her house on fire. Fortunately...the combustibles...were somewhat decayed. They burnt like a slow match...the inmates perceived the smell of fire... It was quickly quenched; and I was sent for to advise whether...it was safe and right for her to expose her pupils' and her own life any longer to their wicked devices. It was concluded that she should hold on and bear yet a little longer. Perhaps the atrocity of this attempt to fire her house, and at the same time endanger...her neighbors would frighten the... instigators... to put more restraint upon "the baser sort." But...afterwards it was... too plain that the enemies of the school were bent upon its destruction...on the night of the 9th of September, Miss Crandall's house was assaulted.. with heavy clubs and iron bars; five window sashes were demolished and ninety panes of glass dashed to pieces. I was summoned next morning to ...the terror-stricken family. Never before had Miss Crandall seemed to quail... The front rooms of the house were hardly tenantable; and it seemed foolish to repair them... After due consideration, therefore, it was determined that the school should be abandoned.

Samuel J. May, "Miss Prudence Crandall and the Canterbury School." *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict*, (Boston: Fields, Osgood, Co., 1869), 39-72.

APPENDIX II

The government of Spain, demand of us, under their treaty, a restoration of these negroes, and we ask them for their title. It is a very well settled principle, here and else where, that the party

demanding restoration, must show his title -- This [onus probandi] lies on him. Aware of this rule of law, the Spanish claimants sent to me their evidence of title. And what is that document. A deed -- a bill of sale -- a transfer? No. It is a permit -- A License a Passo signed by the Governor General of Cuba for Don Pedro Montez and Don Jose Ruiz to transport 54 Libenos [sic] to Guanaja, and this is all! This embraces the whole evidence of property and title both. In point of fact, these are not Libenos. They might be lawfully sold and carried to Guanaja. These negroes are Bozals and not Libenos.

Here then is the point -- the pivot upon which this great controversey [sic] must turn! I find then as matter of fact, that in the month of June 1839, the law of Spain did prohibit under severe penalty the importation into Cuba of negroes from Africa. These negroes were imported in violation of that law and be it remembered that by the same law of Spain, such imported negroes are declared to be free in Spain. This accounts for the declaration of the Spanish Consul, "that if these negroes should be returned to Cuba, some of the leaders might be punished, but none of them could be made slaves" This declaration is in exact conformity with the law of Spain so far as the matter of slavery is concerned. They could not be slaves there, because the law declares them free. They were Bozals, and not slaves. This declaration is from a high government functionary of Spain. Why then should the law be doubted by me! I do not doubt it. I do expressly find it to be such. Title must be shown in the property claimed, as belonging to the claimant or it cannot be surrendered. The positions I have laid down here, are fully recognized.

"Rough draft of Andrew Judson's ruling on the Africans, January 1840, Andrew T. Judson Papers, Coll 247, box 1/7, Manuscripts Collection, Mystic Seaport Museum.

APPENDIX III

Equality before the Law

Our neighbors of the *Time* (sic) take exception to our views regarding the rights of negroes to the elective franchise in this state, and expresses his ideas in an article containing less logic than unsupported assertion and unjustifiable deduction...He says, in effect, "if I concede to a man the right of voting, I also invite him to dine with me; if a man has been five years in this country and can read, he is fit, morally, intellectually and socially, to be the companion of myself, my wife and my daughters." If the gentleman likes it, we will not quarrel with him and call him fanatic, but we pray to be excused from joining the select company whom, to judge from his proclaimed principles, he gathers around him. But we doubt that he or anyone else practices this theory. The trouble is that our neighbor does not observe the difference between a prejudice involving a question of right or wrong, and one in which taste or preference is alone concerned. His "prejudice against the political equality" of the lower class of foreigners has been nobly cast aside, but we seriously doubt whether he "at once discarded the prejudice which keeps them from his parlor and his dinner table? It is rather too much to require more from us toward the negro. The cases are quite parallel. It is right that an intelligent man, be he negro, or foreign, however low in the social scale, should vote, and our prejudice in the case of each should be put aside; but it is simply a matter of individual taste, whether they be admitted to our companionship, and involves no right or wrong, nor is in any way connected with political rights. We have yet to see what the negro, as a class, is capable after enjoying to the full, the advantages of freedom. Future ages alone will show. But, be assured, common sense and social propriety will give him his proper station. If we do give the negro a vote, we force no one to embrace him.

Having thus built his man of straw, in the shape of "Political and social equality inseparable," he proceeds to set him up and pitch into him as follows:

"After all it is a question of races. The two cannot commingle without lowering the white race. We cannot have political equality without a greater degree of social intimacy and equality. We cannot introduce mongrelism without injuring the dominant race. We have too large a proportion of negroes in the country—one-eighth of the population—to venture upon political or social equality. It would work great harm...this is a white man's government, and when the white race prove incapable of controlling it, we say, let the negroes try their hands at the work."

We have only to do with the latter portion of this extract—the former being merely a reiteration of the absurd conclusion to which he jumped previously, mingled with a little spice of "miscegenation" nonsense, which we had supposed had been laid aside with the other electioneering machinery of last fall's campaign. The question is not as to which race shall govern, but whether all men, "born free and equal," shall not enjoy their right, and combine to direct the government. In joining hands for this work, it is not necessary that one race should be obliterated or swallowed up in the other; neither that both should become socially equal and one amalgamated tribe of "mongrels." Both ideas are alike preposterous, there being nothing in the nature of the case which implies such a result. Analogy is against it. The natural repugnance between native Americans and the lower class of foreigner is much less than between them and the negro, yet they are widely separated by social distinctions; also the ratio of foreigners to Americans is much greater than that of blacks (we are speaking more especially of our own State), yet we see no

necessity of relinquishing the government into their hands, or requiring their complete withdrawal from it.

We pass over the paragraph concerning the part taken by the blacks in the past war—in which the writer, not brazen enough to deny their actual service, indignantly asserts that they didn't do *all* the fighting—and make one more extract:

“No distinction on account of color,” “Perfect equality at the ballot-box,” “Equality in representation,” “To vote and be voted for,” “Equality of blacks and whites,”—these are the demands of the fanatics and republican leaders. To comply with these demands is simply to lower or degrade the white race and to introduce the seeds of ruin into our government.”

Notice that in all these “demands of the fanatics,” as garbled by one of their enemies, there is nothing to warrant the assertion that anything is asked for the negro but his rights as a man—except, perhaps, the closing one, which, however it may be perverted, was never used except as referring to political equality. Even as represented by our opponents, the “fanatics”—by whom we suppose they intend the republican party in general—are guilty of naught but a desire for justice. The conclusion to which the writer arrives...

ON THE WHOLE, WE COULD ASK NO BETTER ILLUSTRATION THAN IS AFFORDED BY THE ARTICLE WE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING, OF THE TRUTH OF OUR POSITION THAT AN UNREASONABLE PREJUDICE IS THE ONLY REAL CAUSE OF OPPOSITION TO THE RIGHTS OF THE NEGRO IN THIS STATE. THE FEW ARGUMENTS USED ARE BASED ON ASSERTIONS WHICH CAN ONLY OBTAIN CREDENCE AS FACTS THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF PREJUDICE SAND MISREPRESENTATION. THE RIGHT IS LEFT OUT OF THE QUESTION; BUT UPON THIS WE DEMAND THE OPINION OF EVERY VOTER TO BE FORMED, NOT UPON PARTY PREFERENCE OR PARTY PREJUDICE. *HARTFORD DAILY COURANT*, AUGUST 19, 1865, 2.

APPENDIX IV

HARTFORD DAILY COURANT
THE HARTFORD TIMES AND NEGRO SUFFRAGE

The Editor of the *Times* is opposed to placing the negro on a level with the white man, so far as legal and political rights are concerned, lest it should elevate his social position. But what evil would result, if every negro man in the state were as well educated, as intelligent and as prosperous as the editor of the *Times*? I wish to propose a few cases for the consideration of that gentleman. I hire a negro and he works for me for a month or a year. At the end of the time I refuse to pay him. He goes to the editor of the *Times* as a special friend of the laboring poor man and asks if he can sue me? "Oh no!" says the sage editor. "If negroes are allowed to sue white men for debt, they will be equal to white men, and our State will soon be filled with mulattoes." I knock a negro down in the street and give him a hard beating, or kill his horse or cow. He goes to Mr. Burr for sympathy and advice. Mr. Burr's head is filled with visions of troops of mulattoes parading our streets, and he advises the negro not to sue lest negroes be placed on a level with white men. Again, a murder is committed by a white man; but unfortunately, the knowledge of the crime is confined to negroes. Mr. Burr is asked whether it is proper to permit a negro to testify against a white man? He answers "No. If negroes are allowed to testify against white men they are placed on a level with white men and amalgamation will be the certain consequence." Should he be asked whether negroes ought to be allowed to hold property, to be consistent he should give a negative answer, as this is a right equal to the white man's. Should the question whether negro children should be allowed to attend school be put to him, his answer must surely be in the negative; as nothing tends to elevate and improve a man's social position more than education and the holding of property. On reading this "bill of rights," the hair may bristle with terror and he may ask with open-mouthed wonder: What! do you propose to bestow all these rights on the negroes and make him the equal to the white man? I answer, "do yourself no harm." I propose no such thing. Ever since Connecticut has been a State, the negro has been on a perfect equality with the white man, in all these particulars. In addition to this, he has had the right of marriage, and has control of his children. And his marital and parental rights have been secured to him by the same laws that secured these rights to the white man. ...

And notwithstanding all this, we have had no very frightful amount of amalgamation. In the only two cases which the writer recollects, the white men concerned belonged to the political party, which "can't stand the smell of niggers." It is believed that if we go one step further and allow the negro, who possesses a good moral character and can read the constitution, to vote, it will not much increase the dreaded evil; and that Connecticut may still compare favorably in this matter with that part of the country where "negroes have had no rights which white men were bound to respect." Because negroes have equal civil and political rights with white men, it does not follow that the white man shall make them his intimate friends and associates, nor that they shall intermarry with them; much less that they shall be compelled to do it. Though the negro has enjoyed all the rights above enumerated, the editor of the *Times* has not been compelled to marry a black wife, and I trust he never will be, even though the right of suffrage should be extended to the negro. Our marriages and our friendships are matters of taste and choice, and ordinarily, no one is under any constraint in this matter....Justice *Hartford Daily Courant*, September 27, 1865, 2.

APPENDIX V

Hartford Daily Courant, April 18, 1866, 2.

THE NIGGER AGAIN

The passage of the civil rights bill has brought on again those spasms of fear which the negrophobists have always suffered when it has been proposed to allow human rights to all men. When emancipation was proposed, it was claimed that such a measure would let loose a crowd of demons who would be a curse to the country and a terror to the whites. When it was proposed to allow them to vote under proper restrictions these men howled with fear lest they and theirs should be carried off in marriage by some of "the lower race." Now that the negroes are securing their rights as citizens, similar ridiculous fears are expressed.

As an example, that paragon of nonsensical inconsistency, the New York *Herald*, mentions and bemoans as the "first operation of the civil rights bill," the blunder of a negro seating himself in the diplomatic gallery of the Senate. The negro was requested to leave, and did so, just as any other man would have served; but the *Herald*....The civil rights bill allows the blacks to live and enjoy liberty to the same degree as any other class, and that is all. It is eminently wise and quite indispensable (sic) in the present state of affairs and commends itself to the good sense of the people.

APPENDIX VI

The *Connecticut Western News* reports a case of miscegenation. It says: --“Last Monday afternoon a young and, we are assured, a very pretty white girl visited Millerton on the westward bound train on the Connecticut Western Road, having in her company a stalwart negro, on whose arm she hung with all the tenderness of a true lover. Proceeding to the office of Squire Scott in the village, the two besought the astonished squire to make the twain no longer twain, but one. With great reluctance, yet scarcely realizing what he was doing, acting perhaps more from force of habit in responding promptly to such requests, he performed the ceremony.”

Daily Constitution, January 13, 1874, 2 . Middletown, CT.

WHITE AND BLACK -- Strange Freak of a Beautiful White Girl—She Marries a Low-Lived Black Coal Digger

The little town of Beaver, which is one of the suburbs of Pittsburgh, is in a terrible state of excitement. One of the prettiest, wealthiest and most accomplished young ladies of the town left her house and deliberately married a negro, who is as ugly and ignorant as he is black. For some time past Annie Mason has given her parents a good deal of trouble by her reckless, wayward conduct, but, being an only daughter, she was spoiled by indulgence. Her father is United States storekeeper in Indiana county, but lives in Beaver and is wealthy. Her uncle is ex-Chief Justice Daniel Agnew of the supreme court and the family is one of the best in this part of the state. Mrs. George Jones, nee Miss Annie Mason, is 20 years old. She is a brunette, with large eyes, an exceedingly pretty face, and a fine form. She had a quarrel with her parents on Wednesday night, and early yesterday forenoon, she left her home and met George Jones, a coarse, illiterate coal digger, by an appointment which, she had made by some unknown means the night before. At 5 o'clock in the morning, Jones and Miss Mason went to Rochester, which is about a mile from Beaver, and hurried to the house of a colored clergyman, who married them in the presence of two white men, who were called in to act as witnesses. The couple then took the next train back to Beaver, where Jones hired a room in a small house which has only three rooms in it, two of which are already occupied by negro families. The reckless girl sent home for her trunk, her piano, and some of the ornaments from her room, and this was the first intimation her mother had of the marriage. Her mother tried to persuade her daughter to return to her home, but she refused. Her father is not yet at home, and knows nothing as yet of the affair. It is not known how Miss Mason became acquainted with Jones, or where she ever met him. Threats are openly made by the young men of Beaver of tarring and feathering Jones and driving him out of town, but up to the present time, nothing has been done and Mr. and Mrs. Jones are living in their squalid room, while the wayward girl's mother is lying at her elegant home crazy with brain fever, brought on by her daughter's conduct.

New Haven Register, May 17, 1879, 1.

A CASE OF MISCEGENATION -- A Wealthy Manufacturer's Daughter Marrying a Colored Man

Adolphus Hall, a full-blooded negro, was arrested in Hartford yesterday for bigamy. On May 13 he married Mamie Grover, a white girl, the daughter of William Grover, superintendent of mills in Holyoke, Mass., he being already married to Jennie Chase Hall, colored. Two years ago Hall and his first wife were employed in the steward's department of Trinity college in Hartford. They quarreled frequently, and in the fall of 1881 Hall abandoned her and fled the town. In the early part

of the present year he went to Holyoke, Mass. And got employment at the place of a wealthy resident of that town. Adjoining the premises is the Young Ladies' high school. Miss Grover was a pupil there, and had opportunity of frequently seeing Hall at his work. At length they met and the girl became infatuated with him. Her father's commands and threats were unheeded and at every opportunity she had clandestine meetings with Hall. Soon afterward the couple fled to Springfield, Mass. and were married by the Rev. Mr. Garrett, a retired white clergyman, Mamie falsely swearing she was over 18 years of age. Her father learned of this clandestine marriage the next day, and locked up his daughter and used every effort to bring about a divorce, but he was stoutly opposed by Mamie, who would not consent to a separation. Hall fled. Recently Mr. Grover heard of Hall's first marriage and steps were taken to arrest him for bigamy. He was arrested yesterday morning on arriving in Hartford from Meriden, and on refusing to go to Massachusetts without a requisition, he was locked up. He professes a willingness to do anything which may be necessary for a legal separation from Mamie. Hall is 30 years old, quick-witted and cautious. Mamie is 17, a blonde, handsome and accomplished. Her father is rich.
New Haven Register, June 17, 1882, 4.

ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE HISTORY OF THE COE FAMILY

One of them murdered by Randolph—Another Disemboweled—One of Them Causes Andrew Potter's death on the Gallows—The Mother Coe a White Woman—Mrs. Randolph's Rosy Cheeks.

This morning Griswold L. Gilbert, who was one of the jurors who tried and convicted Isaac Randolph (colored) for the murder of his wife, said that the dream story of George M. Coe, a brother of the murdered woman, was attempted to be introduced...The discovery that the garden had been dug, was made, as already stated, by William Tuttle, the elder, who, seeing some yellow earth, thrust his cane into it. It readily yielded... Beneath it was a carpenter's rule which Randolph had used for years....The Coe family have been a singularly unfortunate family. The murdered woman's mother was a white woman and her own hair was straight and her cheeks rosy. Many white young men became enamored of her. Her mother was of a respectable Derby family and was jilted by the man who was to have become her husband. She was so angered at this—her trousseau was complete—that she vowed she would marry the first man who asked her. Coe, a repulsive-looking black man, heard of it, and immediately popped the question and was accepted. The couple had thirteen children and most of them led bad lives.

Young Mrs. Randolph was the cause of Andrew Potter's death. He was the son of a respectable farmer in Hamden and became so infatuated with her that he borrowed the gold watch of Osborn, a fellow workman, and loaned it to her. She refused to return it and one Sunday he decoyed Osborn on a walk by the railroad and brained him, so that he might not have to account for this trivial mechanism. He was hanged.

Another of the Coe girls, if we are not mistaken, proved truant to her sailor-lord and was found disemboweled in a Hamden field.

Randolph is supposed to have killed the woman he called his first wife. They lived in Woodbury. She was missing, but he hushed the matter up by saying she had gone to her folks in New York state. There was no investigation, but so far as known she was never heard from. The thefts and crimes which with this family were credited would make an interesting novel.

New Haven Register, May 15, 1883, 1.

BROWN-MALONEY

A New Haven Colored Man to wed a Good Looking White Woman

Registrar Rowland in City Hall today, and Sidewalk Inspector Thompson and Lamp Inspector Upson, the two latter having incidentally called at the Registrar's office at the same time, had their bump of curiosity knocked endwise when they heard a very good-looking colored man and a very rosy-cheeked white maiden make a joint application for a marriage license. It was the second time during Mr. Rowland's administration that he has been appealed to for a license where there were somewhat similar circumstances. Yesterday the groom appeared at the registrar's office and answered all the preliminary questions under oath. He gave his name as Henry Brown, his age as twenty-seven, his occupation as waiter and his home as New Haven. When it came to a few questions about his intended bride, he stated that her name was Mary Maloney, her residence, Bridgeport, and her age between eighteen and nineteen years. The official, unless the bride has the written consent of her parents or guardian, is prevented by law to issue a license for the marriage of the bride until she has attained the age of 21. And here was a barrier to the expected happiness of the couple.

"You may come here tomorrow," said the registrar to the groom when he found out the age of the bride, "and bring your young lady with you that I may make some inquiries of her."

And when the pair walked in to see the registrar this morning, they did not manifest the slightest concern. Miss Maloney was a very pretty girl without a doubt. She was neatly attired, and to quote the officials, was a "young, innocent, bright, intelligent girl." Her companion was a very good-looking colored man, of about medium height, and not of that rich dark hue that is often noticed in his race. Miss Maloney said that her father resided in this country but that she did not have any written consent from him to marry Mr. Brown. They both gave the impression that they were employed as waiters at the same establishment, but whether it was a hotel or a private home they did not state. The registrar could not give them the necessary permit and they departed. Mr. Brown told the registrar that they had intended to be married by Rev. Abbott of the Zion. M. E. church.

New Haven Register, September 18, 1886, 1.

A WHITE GIRL AND A NEGRO

A Danbury dispatch to the *New York Sun* says: "Deborah Knapp, the pretty sixteen-year-old daughter of Farmer Knapp on Mill Plain, a little hamlet two miles out of the village, has eloped with a negro named Treadway, three years older than herself. On Thursday last, Deborah left her home and did not return. It was learned that she and the negro went to Brewster, and being once or twice refused, found a justice of the peace to marry them. The young couple returned to Danbury on Tuesday and are living together. Treadway drives the city express wagon for the one-armed veteran W. H. Hitchcock, who gives him a good character. Mrs. Treadway's parents are nearly broken-hearted over the affair."

The Hartford Courant, October 10, 1888, 6.

WHITE AND BLACK TO WED

George H. St. John, a colored man of Ansonia, secured a marriage license here today to marry Mary Mead, a white girl of the same place. It is the expectation of the groom to be married by the

Rev. Mr. Jackson of Day street. Mr. St John is 26 years of age and his white bride to be, 21. St. John expected to be married yesterday but Mary failed to be in an appearance and the wedding was postponed. Incidentally, Mr. St. John was not sure that she would keep her agreement with him this evening.

New Haven Register, January 5, 1893, 1.

HARTFORD NEGRO MARRIES WHITE WOMAN

Couple get license at Thompsonville, Married by a Justice. (Special to the Courant)

Thompsonville, Feb. 20.

John Hubbard, a negro, aged 47; occupation, cook; birthplace, Springfield, and residence, Hartford, was granted a marriage license today to marry Mary E. Clark, a white woman, aged 46, occupation, also cook and birthplace, Eastport, Me. with a residence in Hartford. At the close of business hours at the town clerk's office, the certificate had not been returned, but it is understood that the couple were married by a local justice of the peace.

The Hartford Courant, February 21, 1912, 21.

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