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American Free Blacks and Emigration to Haiti

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ABSTRACT

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This paper discusses the resettlement of American free blacks in Haiti in the period 1804-1830. In 1804 the government of Dessalines offered cash incentives to black refugees in the United States willing to return to Haiti. A decade later black Bostonian Prince Saunders devised an emigration scheme aimed at American-born free blacks.

In 1824 the administration of Jean-Pierre Boyer sponsored its own scheme. Boyer was aware of the fears of many white Americans about the growth of their free black population. He believed that by permitting American free blacks to immigrate, he would win United States recognition for his regime. Between 1824 and 1826 an estimated 8,000 free blacks accepted Boyer's invitation to settle in Haiti. At least 2,000 returned to the United States where they spread reports of sickness and ill-treatment. However, settlers fortunate enough to have health and education prospered in their new homeland.

The emigration scheme ended in 1826, when Boyer refused to continue funding it. Although he gave as his reason fraud on the part of some of the emigrants, he had realized that United States recognition would not be forthcoming. Most black Americans who came to Haiti after 1826 were ex-slaves freed on the condition that they leave the United States.

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When historians of America's antebellum free black community examine responses to emigration they invariably focus on the hostility of many free blacks to the policies of the white American Colonization Society. However, while free blacks were deeply disturbed by the efforts of the ACS to ship them off to Liberia, they were prepared to consider resettling in Haiti. They took great pride in the establishment of the Haitian republic, even while they expressed regret for the violence out of which it had been born. Speaking to a white advocate of African colonization in 1817, Philadelphia native James Forten, one of the sternest critics of the ACS, explained his interest in Haiti's future. He pointed to Haiti as an example of what black people could achieve. It was proof that American blacks "would become a great nation" and that they "could not always be detained in their present bondage."[1] As events were to show, Forten was not alone in seeing Haiti as a potent symbol of black nationalism.

The idea of Haitian emigration was not new in 1817 when James Forten made his views known to colonizationist Robert Finley. In 1801 President Thomas Jefferson had offered to write to Toussaint L'Ouverture on behalf of the legislature of his home state of Virginia. Law-makers wanted to be rid of slavery, but they were not eager to live alongside thousands of freedmen. Jefferson proposed sending the ex-slaves to the black republic. Slave unrest put paid to the debate on emancipation in Virginia and to the suggestion for an exodus to Haiti, but Toussaint's successor, Dessalines, launched his own relocation program in 1804. He offered amnesty and cash incentives to black Haitian refugees in the United Jstates who agreed to return home.[2]

The first emigration scheme that aimed at the resettlement of American-born blacks in Haiti got under way in 1818, when Philadelphia's free black community welcomes into its midst a young New Englander "of pure African blood [and]…of highly polished manners."[3] A talented and articulate man, Prince Saunders had attracted the attention of a group of white philanthropists in his native Boston and they had sent him to England for an education. On his arrival in London Saunders was speedily recruited by the abolitionists Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce; they hoped to employ him as an intermediary to persuade the Haitian ruler, Henry Christophe, to receive black emigrants from America. They intended to help the

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[1]Isaac V. Brown, *Biography of the Rev. Robert Finley* (2nds ed.; Philadelphia, PA: John W. Moore, 1857; reprint ed. New York: Arno Press, 1969), 123. Forten (1766-1842), a sailmaker and a successful entrepreneur, was one of the most influential black leaders in the antebellum North.

[2]Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776-1891* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 173. For two other short-lived attempts to recruit settlers to go to Haiti see Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1864* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975), p. 1975, and James Frankling, *The Present State of Hayti* (London: John Murray, 1828; reprint ed. Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 187.

[3]William Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church in the United States of America, Now Styled the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas* (Philadelphia, PA: King and Baird, 1862), 124.

slaves, rather than the free blacks, but Saunders eventually prevailed upon them to widen the scope of his mission.

On his first visit to Haiti Saunders was welcomed by Christophe and sent back to London to recruit teachers for the schools that the king was establishing. While in London Saunders published his *Haytian Letters*, in which he gave a glowing account of Christophe's administration. By the fall of 1818 he was in Philadelphia, where he took every opportunity to praise Haiti to blacks and whites alike.[4]

Appearing before the white delegates to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, he began by conjuring up an alarming prospect. "The recent proceedings in several of the slave states towards the free population of colour…seem to render it highly probable that that oppressed class of the community will soon be obliged to flee to the free states for protection." If "Christian philanthropists" used their efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement on Haiti between Christophe and his rival, Jean Pierre Boyer, Saunders believed that "many hundreds of…free people in the New England and middle states…would be glad to repair there immediately to settle," along with the refugees from the southern states.[5] He spoke of the rich natural resources of Haiti and sought to convince the delegates that, by encouraging emigration, they would be helping free blacks to better their situation. The officers of the convention agreed to give the matter further consideration.[6]

Saunders then set about winning over Thomas Clarkson. His support would be vital. The British abolitionist was one of the few foreigners King Henry trusted.[7] Clarkson displayed some initial reluctance about changing his plans and sending free blacks, as well as newly emancipated slaves, to Haiti. He cautioned that, whatever was done, it must be with the full consent of the free people, for "the United States is as much their Country, as it is that of any White man whatever." He suggested alternatives to emigration, including the establishment of a separate black state in the American West. However, he did not refuse to entertain the whole concept of Haitian resettlement. He was confident that both Christophe and Boyer would welcome settlers if the United States purchased the Spanish part of the island for them, and he promised to write to King Henry about the project.[8]

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[4]See, for example, Prince Saunders, *An Address Delivered at Bethel Church, Philadelphia; on the 30th of September, 1818. Before the Pennsylvania Augustine Society, for the Education of People of Colour* (Philadelphia, PA: Joseph Rakestraw, 1818), in Dorothy B. Porter, ed., *Early Negro Writing, 1760-1837* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 89.

[5]Prince Saunders, *A Memoir Presented to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the African Race* (Philadelphia, PA: Dennis Heartt, 1818), in Porter, ed., *Early Negro Writing*, 272-3. Saunders also hinted that the Spanish might be willing to cede the part of the island they claimed.

[6]At the same meeting the delegates heard James Forten, one of the most influential black spokesmen in Philadelphia, denounce the whole concept of African colonization and insist that free blacks did not wish to have anything to do with the program devised by the American Colonization Society. Saunders' speech evidently convinced them that Haitian resettlement did meet with the approval of the free black community. See Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988), 179n.

[7]Christophe had been corresponding with Clarkson since 1814 and with Wilberforce since 1815. He began writing partly out of gratitude for the efforts of the two men to outlaw the slave trade, and partly because he hoped they might use their considerable influence to secure British recognition for his regime. Hubert Cole, *Christophe: King of Haiti* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), 223.

[8]Clarkson added that he was wary of supporting any emigration scheme which was not closely tied to the abolition of slavery. He did not wish to remove the free people and leave the slaves behind. Clarkson to Saunders, February 3, 1819. Misc. MSS, Henry E. Huntingdon Library. Black Abolitionist

True to his promise, Clarkson wrote to Christophe in February 1819 to say that both he and Wilberforce believed that the American government could be persuaded to buy the region of the island claimed by the Spanish if Christophe would permit American blacks to immigrate. He added that Saunders had been praising Christophe's achievements in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and that positive results could be expected.[9]

Within months the international situation had greatly complicated matters. As Clarkson acknowledged, the anger of the Spanish at being forced to cede Florida to the United States made them most unwilling to negotiate with the Americans about their territorial claims on Haiti. Clarkson was frustrated in his hope that the land could be used as an inducement to encourage both Boyer and Christophe to accept large numbers of American settlers.

> Hayti might have been made the Asylum, and acknowledged as the adopted Mother not only for all those to go to, who were now free in the United States, but for those also, who might at any time hereafter have been freed, so that any benevolent Master…who should feel a Disposition to give freedom to his Slaves, might know where to send them after their manumission.[10]

The emigration plan could now no longer be a "public undertaking" and must be instead a "private adventure in the cause of Humanity."[11]

Papers Microfilm (New York: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1981-1983; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1984-), reel 17. In a letter to Roberts Vaux, a member of the American Anti-Slavery Convention who had been won over by Saunders, Clarkson wrote that he expected the United States government to give "pecuniary aid" to the scheme and to use "its diplomatic Influence towards settling [the American emigrants] in the most complete Manner." He warned of the problems involved in the whole undertaking. If the United States bought the part of the island claimed by the Spanish and settled the free blacks there as an independent people, it might well excite the jealousy of Christophe, of Boyer, or of both men. The situation would be equally fraught with tension if the United States sent all the settlers to one of the two rivals. He suggested sending equal numbers of Americans to each half of the island. Clarkson to Vaux, March 8, 1819. Roberts Vaux Papers, 1819-1827. Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

[9]Clarkson to Christophe, February 20, 1819, in Earl Leslie Griggs and Clifford L. Prator, eds., *Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson: A Correspondence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1952), 125. See also Clarkson to Christophe, June 28, 1819 in Griggs and Prator, eds., *Correspondence*, 146.

[10]Clarkson to Vaux, January 31, 1820. Roberts Vaux Papers, 1819-1827, HSP.

[11]In fact, private citizens in Haiti were already at work organizing their own immigration program. Silvain Simonisse was a mulatto from South Carolina whose white father had sent him and his two brothers to England for an education. When Simonisse returned to the South at the age of 20, he quickly discovered that his education had made him unfit "to endure the vexations to which the free men of his class were subjected and he had resolved to come and settle in Haiti." He prospered in his new homeland and, reflecting on the situation of those free blacks who remained in the United States, he devised a scheme to bring them to Haiti. Simonisse found an ally in Secretary General Balthazar Inginac. On June 11, 1820, a public meeting was held in Port au Prince under the chairmanship of Inginac, and the "prominent citizens of the capital" formed the "Societe philanthropique de la Republique d'Haiti." Subscriptions were solicited to aid the emigration "principally [of] those who were agricultural workers or artisans." The Societe undertook to send agents to the United States to recruit settlers. Those who wished to hire emigrants would pay for their passage and supply them with whatever they needed until they could support themselves. Beaubrun Ardouin, *Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haiti* (Paris, 1860), vol. 9, 288-9. Simonisse eventually became a teacher of English at the Lycee National. Jonathas Granville, *Biographie de Granville, par son fils* (Paris : E. Briere, 1873), 245.

Although he was disappointed, Clarkson did not abandon the project. He sounded out Christophe and found him still interested, even though the king knew that he would reap no political advantages from sanctioning immigration, since he would not be dealing with the United States government, but with private citizens. Christophe did insist on imposing certain restrictions on immigration. He wanted no Haitian renegades who had fled to the United States without his permission and now sought to return. He also refused to accept "idle Families" and persons of "bad or abandoned character." He proposed that the American Convention of Abolition Societies send him a list of the families who wished to go, with notes on their skills and their moral character. He would study the list and check off the names of the families he was willing to accept.[12]

When they learned of Christophe's terms, the Philadelphia abolitionists Roberts Vaux and Richard Peters (the president of the American Convention of Abolition Societies) assembled "a number of the friends of abolition" and put the plan to them. There was considerable interest, and one of their number, Evan Lewis, proposed to travel to Haiti to negotiate with King Henry.[13] Prince Saunders was still in Philadelphia as the houseguest of Peters. His situation had been somewhat tenuous since the fall of 1819, when Christophe had disowned him for various misdeeds, but he was now restored to the king's good graces and recalled to Haiti to receive his orders regarding American immigration.[14]

Encouraged by Clarkson and by the American abolitionists, Christophe proposed to put a ship and $25,000 at the disposal of Saunders. However, by the time Saunders arrived in Haiti, Christophe was incapacitated by a stroke. He was still awaiting an interview with Christophe when a rebellion broke out and the king committed suicide, rather than fall into the hands of his enemies.[15] In the upheaval Saunders barely escaped with his life. He wrote to Clarkson that the coup had frustrated the plans of many prominent American blacks. He had been the bearer of letters "to some of the most respectable people of color" in the United States and they had given him full authority to make arrangements for them to relocate. In a further letter he spoke of "many thousands" still "*waiting, anxiously waiting*" for peace to be restored.[16] In fact, black Americans no longer needed an intermediary. The new regime of Jean Pierre Boyer contacted them directly.[17]

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[12]Clarkson to Vaux, January 31, 1820. Roberts Vaux Papers, 1819-1827, HSP.

[13]Vaux, like Clarkson, saw emigration as being inextricably linked to emancipation. In a letter to the British abolitionist he expressed his disgust at the Missouri Compromise and charged that many of those who endorsed the work of the American Colonization Society opposed abolition and merely wished to rid themselves of the free blacks. Vaux to Clarkson, May 1, 1820. Roberts Vaux Papers, 1819-1827, HSP.

[14]He had supposedly published his *Haytian Letters* without the king's permission and had hired teachers without reference to Wilberforce (whom Christophe had ordered him to consult). Cole, *Christophe*, 240.

[15]Christophe had actually ordered the master of a vessel bound for Philadelphia to delay his departure for a day so that he could take Saunders back to begin the work of recruiting settlers. *Ibid*., 269.

[16]*Ibid*., 269, 274. Saunders to Clarkson, July 14, 1821, and May 2, 1823, in Griggs and Prator, eds., *Correspondence*, pp. 226, 249. Saunders eventually became Attorney General of Haiti under Boyer. He died in Port au Prince in 1839. See Arthur O. White, "Prince Saunders: An Instance of Social Mobility among Antebellum Blacks," *Journal of Negro History* 60 (October 1975), 535. Some American free blacks did come to Haiti independently during Christophe's administration. See Rev. S.W. Hanna, *Notes of a Visit to Some Parts of Haiti* (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1836), 68-69.

[17]In the early years of Boyer's administration, a few black emigrants arrived at their own expense and he gave orders that they be placed on government lands "so that they could cultivate them to their profit and become landowners." Ardouin, *Histoire*, Vol. 9, 290. See also Boyer's circular, issued on

One of Boyer's major objectives in the early 1820s was to secure United States recognition and he made repeated overtures to the American government, even offering to find a diplomatic representative who was light-skinned enough to be acceptable in Washington. Every approach was rebuffed. When Secretary General Inginac wrote to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams to point out the extent of trade between the two nations and the fact that Boyer had united the island under his rule, President Monroe forbade Adams to reply.[18] Faced with the possibility of an invasion by the French, who had never reconciled themselves to the loss of their colony, Boyer was badly in need of friends. United States recognition would increase trade, provide Haiti with a powerful ally, and enhance Boyer's personal prestige. The island was also desperately short of manpower. Decades of warfare and internal feuding had taken their toll. The prospect of American immigration offered a solution to all the difficulties facing Boyer. Unskilled settlers could be put to work on the plantations, while artisans and those with capital could contribute to the revival of Haiti's sagging economy. In return for helping white Americans to solve their racial problems by receiving the country's unwanted free blacks, Boyer hoped to win the official recognition that had so far eluded him. In every respect the immigration of American free blacks to Haiti seemed likely to benefit the republic and its president. Boyer's only concern was how to initiate a scheme to secure the desired results.

In New York Loring D. Dewey, a white agent for the American Colonization Society, was finding it impossible to persuade blacks to embark for Liberia. The New Yorkers were thoroughly hostile to the idea, although he noted that they often expressed interest in Haiti. On his own initiative Dewey wrote to Boyer to find out whether the president would accept American immigrants, how many he would receive, and what provision he would make for them. He also asked whether Boyer would permit the ACS to establish a colony on the island, "having its own laws, courts, and legislature, in *all* respects like one of the States of the United States, and *connected with* and *subject to* the government of Hayti, only as each state is with our general government."[19] Dewey insisted that he must have detailed answers to his questions. He planned to slicit funds and "the givers must be well satisfied, that it will go to benefit those for whom it is given." Moreover, "the coloured people themselves must be well satisfied, as to their prospects."[20]

December 24, 1823. Loring D. Dewey, *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Hayti, of the Free People of Colour, in the United States. Together with the Instructions to the Agent Sent Out by President Boyer* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1824), 12. Others came to the island with the assistance of white philanthropists like George Flowers. Flowers, an English opponent of slavery, had moved to Illinois and had endeavored to assist a number of free black settlers. Three of the settlers, brothers by the name of Jones, had been "mustered into the service of the United States by General Harrison who formed a colored company to aid in defending the frontier during the War of 1812." The presence of the settlers provoked violent assaults directed against them and against Flowers by whites in the area. In 1822, Flowers finally determined that he must seek a place of refuge for the free blacks. Through an intermediary, he sounded out Boyer about aiding them. Boyer sent permission for the party (which numbered about 30) to immigrate to Haiti and he settled them on a plantation outside Port au Prince. George Flowers, *The English Settlement in Edwards County*, 204-7.

[18]Ludwell Lee Montague, *Haiti and the United States, 1714-1938* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1940), 50-52.

[19]Dewey, *Correspondence*, 3-4.

[20]*Ibid*., 5.

Convinced that Dewey was acting on behalf of the American Colonization Society and its influential supporters in Washington, Boyer responded with enthusiasm.[21] He confessed that he had often wondered why the ACS had not favored Haiti over Africa, but that he had been reluctant to approach the society in case his disinterested motives were misconstrued. Far from wishing to increase Haiti's population, he wanted only to serve "the cause of humanity" by offering "a sure asylum, to the unfortunate men, who have the alternative of going to the barbarous shores of Africa, where misery or certain death may await them."[22]

In answer to Dewey, he said he would receive as many families as chose to settle. His government would share the cost of transporting them with the ACS and he would give them land. They would enjoy religious freedom as long as they did not try to convert the Haitians. He could not, however, permit the ACS to establish a semi-autonomous colony. "Those who come, being children of Africa, shall be Haytiens [sic] as soon as they put their feet on the soil of Hayti."[23]

Boyer hastily dispatched to the United States an agent, Jonathas Granville, with a set of instructions clearly intended for publication.[24] Couched in the most diplomatic of terms, the instructions were directed at white philanthropists, potential colonists, and the American government.[25] They were full of Boyer's hopes for a rapprochement with the United States. Boyer was prepared to welcome three distinct classes of emigrants. The first class would consist of those who went in groups of twelve to work on "uncultivated, or neglected lands." Each person would get free passage, four months' supplies, and three acres of land. Once they had improved that land, they would get as much more "as the government may judge them entitled to, as a reward for their *sobriety*, *industry*, and *economy*." Members of the second class would work land already under cultivation as share-croppers. They would have to repay the cost of their passage in six months. After fulfilling their obligations to their landlords, they would be free to farm on their own account. Craftsmen, merchants, and teachers would also be welcome, although they, too, would have to repay the cost of their passage. Boyer envisaged the arrival of six thousand settlers in the first year.[26]

Granville's first stop in the United States was in Philadelphia. Dewey would later maintain that this had been a grave mistake. The Quakers were firmly in control there, and they

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[21]Dewey admitted that he had not been as clear on this point as he perhaps should have been. *Ibid*.

[22]*Ibid*., 7, 11.

[23]*Ibid*., 7-10, 20.

[24]Jonathas Granville (1785-1839) had been sent to France by Toussaint L'Ouverture to be educated. He eventually became an officer in the French army and served for ten years during the Napoleonic Wars. He returned to Haiti after Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo and entered the service of Alexandre Petion. When Petion died, Granville remained loyal to his successor, Jean Pierre Boyer. After his mission to the United States he seems to have fallen from favor with Boyer. His son and biographer indicated that Granville met a violent death, but that the authorities declared it as death by natural causes and declined to investigate further. *Biographie*, 3-18, 320-4.

[25]Boyer also sent a cargo of coffee to Charles Collins, a New York merchant and philanthropist, with a request that it be sold and the proceeds used to charter ships and get settlers to the port of embarkation. Dewey, *Correspondence*, 15-16.

[26]Haytien Emigration Society of Philadelphia, *Information for the Free People of Colour, Who Are Inclined to Emigrate to Hayti* (Philadelphia, PA: J.H. Cunningham, 1825), 7-10. Boyer also envisaged establishing a shipyard at Samana. Granville was authorized to recruit "forty artisans [sic] of African blood." They would build small coasting vessels and sell them to the Haitian government. If they had wives and children they would be given land to cultivate. Granville eventually recruited the skilled workers in Philadelphia. Dewey, *Correspondence*, 25.

considered "that every measure concerning the blacks which did not originate from them was mistaken." Dewey alleged that the Quakers who truly wished to see blacks enjoy equality were in the minority. Most thought it sufficient to free them and see that they were "well treated as domestic servants." As soon as they discovered what Granville was about, they tried to take control of the scheme. When that failed, they set about undermining it.[27] With hindsight, it may have been a tactical error to begin operations in Philadeophia, but in the summer of 1824 prospects there seemed very promising. Robert Walsh, the editor of the influential *National Gazette and Literary Register*, was soon won over and he used his newspaper to publicize Granville's mission. He assured his readers that Boyer's representative was "on the level of the good society of any country" and he denounced the American Colonization Society when its officers came out in opposition to the Haitian scheme.[28]

Besides Walsh, the editor of *Nile's Register* was recruited to the cause of Haitian emigration. He wrote enthusiastically: "Hayti is not the land of [his] ancestors, but it is and will be the American black man's home, the asylum of this oppressed race in the new world."[29] Granville also enlisted the aid of Nicholas Biddle, the president of the powerful Bank of the United States, and the publisher Mathew Carey.[30]

Within the city's black community it was Bishop Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal church who quickly took charge. While Granville went off to New York to secure more support, Allen summoned representatives from the various black churches to his home.[31] The Philadelphians were understandably cautious. They had opposed the American

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[27]Dewey to Granville *fils*, May 11, 1865, in *Biographie*, 239-41.

[28]Walsh repudiated the notion that emigration would entail United States recognition of the Haitian republic. In answer to those who charged that the settlers might use Haiti as a base from which to launch attacks on the United States he observed that "precautions could be more easily and effectually taken against an external than a domestic foe." *National Gazette*, June 16, 19, 21, and 22, 1824, in *Biographie*, 114-6, 126. On the opposition of the American Colonization Society to Haitian emigration see *New York Commercial Advertiser*, June 21, 1824, in *Biographie*, 120-4.

[29]*Nile's Register*, July 8, 1824. He urged that a special effort be made to encourage young black women to emigrate. In Haiti they could "become respectable matrons…the wives of grave and reverend senators' perhaps, or gallant captains, independent land holders, or thrifty merchants." Their departure would also lead to a dramatic reduction in the free black birth rate. *Biographie*, 200, 206.

[30]Granville called the latter "Correy," but he was clearly referring to the publisher Mathew Carey. Carey and Biddle gave Granville a number of letters of introduction to influential politicians and members of the business community. Granville to Boyer, June 16, 1824; *Biographie*, 211. Although Granville had influential friends, he found his situation in the United States an uncomfortable one. As he reported to Boyer soon after his arrival: "Despite the trade between the United States and us, they really don't have the least idea what we are like; people regard me as if I was an unusual animal [bete curieuse]." In a subsequent letter he observed that "The people of color here are…in such an abject state that every time I find myself with them I feel that their debasement [avilissement] reflects on me." He deplored the effects of prejudice. There were free blacks in the United States "who would do honor to our country" but they were "as used to this state of things as we are to the sun." As for him, a man who had "commanded whites with honor and distinction in their own country," the situation was intolerable. Granville to Boyer, June 12, 1824; Granville to Boyer, July 9, 1824; Granville to Boyer, July 21, 1824. *Biographie*, pp. 210, 216-7. Granville did manage to turn one insult directed at him to his advantage. See *New York Commercial Advertiser*, June 18, 1824, in *Biographie*, 118-20.

[31]Allen and the other black ministers did not know that their questions about religious liberty on Haiti often frustrated Granville. He wrote to Boyer: "The Quaker wants to know if he will have to join the national guard, the Protestant asks if we could pass a law to prevent the four reviews of the national guard from taking place on a Sunday, and the Methodist asks if a man can be deprived of the freedom to teach God's law. Unfortunately, most of our people are in this last class of madmen." Granville to Boyer, June26, 1824, in *Biographie*, 214.

Colonization Society since 1817, and the involvement of Dewey, an agent of the ACS, in the Haitian scheme probably led some to believe that it had been sanctioned by the society. However, their doubts were eventually overcome and a large meeting was organized at which the scheme was presented to the community.[32]

The meeting was well attended and Allen read to those present the correspondence between Boyer and Dewey, together with Boyer's instructions to his agent. Careful consideration was also given to a letter from Thomas Paul, a highly respected black Baptist minister from Boston. He had spent several months in Haiti and was full of praise for the republic and its president. He had met Boyer and had been commissioned by him to carry back an invitation to American blacks to immigrate. Paul had found the Haitians very friendly and he considered that economic prospects on the island were excellent. Moreover, the determination of the Haitian people to preserve their liberty "must possess advantages highly inviting to men who are sighing for the enjoyment of the common rights and liberties of mankind."[33] After reading Paul's letter, the Philadelphians endorsed emigration and their community leaders organized the Haytien Emigration Society.

The members of the Haytien Emigration Society set to work at once and published a pamphlet setting forth the advantages to be derived from moving to Haiti. They stressed that their motives in advocating emigration were above suspicion. "We are your brethren in colour and degradation; and it gives us a peculiar delight to assist a brother to leave a country, where it is but too certain the coloured man can never enjoy his rights."[34] Freed from the effects of prejudice, emigrants would be able to prosper in Haiti as they never could in the United States. As a further inducement to emigration they insisted that blacks should be ready to fight to defend each other. While discounting fears of an imminent French invasion of Haiti, they noted the praise heaped on the Marquis de Lafayette "for flying to the aid of an oppressed people" during the Revolutionary War. Haiti was "the only spot where the coloured man has gained his rights" and its overthrow "would…be putting out the very sun of our hopes.[35]

The optimism of the Philadelphians was shared by the New Yorkers, who formed their own emigration society.[36] Other societies sprung up along the Atlantic seaboard and as far west as Cincinnati.[37] No city with a sizable free black community was untouched by what one writer called the "emigration fever."

In their campaign to recruit settlers, black leaders drew heavily on the glowing accounts of Haiti furnished by Granville and Boyer.[38] However, they failed to take into account the

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[32]*Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, July 5, 1824.

[33]*Boston Sentinel*, July 6, 1824, in *Biographie*, 140-4.

[34]*Information for the People of Colour*, 4.

[35]*Ibid*., 6. The Marquis de Lafayette was on his triumphal tour of the United States and had recently passed through Philadelphia.

[36]Granville reported that he addressed a meeting attended by over three thousand black New Yorkers and a large number of whites. See *Information for the People of Colour, Who Are Inclined to Emigrate to Hayti* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1824), and another pamphlet by the same title, printed in New York in 1824 by Mahlon Day. It appears that the extent of white involvement in the Haitian emigration scheme in New York and in Baltimore was much greater than it was in Philadelphia. On recruiting efforts in New York and Baltimore see *Biographie*, 138, 158-62, 164, 200.

[37]*Biographie*, pp. 156-8, 166, 182. One man reportedly walked from Wayne County, Indiana to New York to board a ship leaving for Haiti. *Ibid*., 170.

[38]Whites as well as blacks relied on the information supplied by Granville and Boyer. See *National Gazette*, September 15, 1824, in *Biographie*, 168. Granville also arranged for the reprinting of a

devastation that years of war and neglect had brought about. Port au Prince was described by one traveler as being in a "ruinous state," with its population shrunk from 60,000 to 5,000.[39] In rural areas conditions were far worse. The census of 1824, upon which the enthusiasts of emigration relied, was referred to by another observer as "Boyer's bravados."[40] The Haitian peasant could be forgiven for asking in whose interests the revolution had been fought. "The united Haitian family of the patriotic orations" was really "two Haitis, the one consisting of a small exploiting class, the other of the mass of ex-slaves—a situation differing from the colonial regime only in externals."[41] Black Americans had little idea how themajority of Haitians actually lived, but hundreds of them would soon learn firsthand about life in the Haitian countryside.

When the first party of emigrants was ready to leave Philadelphia Bishop Allen wrote to inform Boyer about the progress that was being made. He had collected the names of five hundred would-be settlers and he was receiving more inquiries daily. His heart warmed to a man who wanted to provide "a poor oppressed people" with "an asylum where they can enjoy liberty and equality." Whites were trying to persuade the black elite to stay: they hoped to foist on Boyer the disreputable element within the black community, but their appeals were useless.[42] It was the "respectable and hard-working" people who were opting for emigration. As Allen explained: "The voice of liberty is sweet in our ears."[43]

To further the emigration scheme Allen also began corresponding with Secretary General Inginac, who was playing host to Allen's son, John.[44] Inginac assured Allen that the first group of settlers was delighted with Haiti. He acknowledged that there were some whose "desponding inertion" made them unwilling to work, but he insisted that Haiti was the land of opportunity for industrious settlers and he expressed his government's gratitude for Allen's attempts "to reunite the great family" of blacks in America and Haiti.[45]

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history of Haiti, originally published in 1818. See [Anon.], *History of the Island of St. Domingo, from Its First Discovery by Columbus, to the Present Period* (London, 1818; reprint ed. New York: Mahlon Day, 1824). He wrote an introduction to the work and promised that a second volume would appear to cover the years from 1818. See *Information for the People of Colour* (New York: Samuel Wood), 8.

[39]*Nile's Weekly Register*, 44, 867, cited in John Edward Baur, "Mulatto Machiavelli: Jean Pierre Boyer and the Haiti of His Day," *Journal of Negro History* 32 (June 1947): 332.

[40]Baur, "Machiavelli," 342.

[41]Montague, *Haiti*, 11.

[42]Allen probably had in mind the kind of sentiments expressed by an anonymous white Philadelphian in a letter to the *National Gazette*. "If we send away the better class, what can we expect but that those who remain will become more idle and dissolute…The orderly blacks are efficacious auxiliaries in governing the rest…If President Boyer would be content to take our thieves and drunkards and leave us our sober and industrious blacks we would be very much obliged to him." The writer, who described himself as an abolitionist, did add that free blacks were "in constitution and habits essentially American" and he called upon his fellow philanthropists to do more to improve their situation in the United States. *Biographie*, 152-4. For Granville's reply see *ibid*., 178.

[43]Allen also commissioned two men to preach until he could send over an ordained minister. Allen to Boyer, August 22, 1824, in *Biographie*, 224-5.

[44]John Allen was very enthusiastic about life in Haiti. He urged his father to send over his brother, Richard Jr., and he advised Allen to relocate. See James O'Dell Jackson III, "The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism: Afro-American and Haytien Relations, 1800-1863," doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1976, 262.

[45]*Genius of Universal Emancipation*, January 1825.

Since many emigrants set out with hopes of immediate prosperity, disillusionment was inevitable.[46] Benjamin F. Hughes, the pastor of Philadelphia's First African Presbyterian Church, emigrated in 1824. Because he had promoted emigration so energetically, he felt bound to give an account of his experiences and observations. In a letter to his friend Bishop Allen he laid the blame for any dissatisfaction on the unrealistic expectations of the settlers. Some thought the Haitian government should supply them with everything they needed, while others had been deterred by an initial bout of sickness as they adjusted to the climate. In Hughes's opinion, Boyer's government was not at fault: it "has been and continues to be liberal beyond any reasonable conception."[47]

Hughes's favorable report was borne out by another Philadelphian, John Summersett. The Haitians had received him and his companions "more like brothers than strangers" and had taken them into their houses. "[T]he first gentlemen took us by the hand and led us to their tables, and the ladies would take all our children to use them as their own, if we would part with them." Summersett was convinced that "no African of candid or industrious habits can deny this being the happy land of African liberty."[48] However, Hughes and Summersett were men with wealth, skills, and established leadership positions back home. The "first gentlemen" of the Haitian Republic came out to meet them, but the reception that poorer, less talented immigrants were accorded was very different.

Hughes and Summersett could find nothing to complain of, but Haitian officials were becoming frustrated at the attitude of other settlers. On his return to Haiti Granville wrote to Allen about the progress being made.[49] He described how emigrants flocked to the towns, ignoring attempts to settle them in rural areas. He insisted that those who "attend to their business are happy with the pleasing prospect of a plentiful crop, and enjoying that liberty, which was denied them in America." While the Haitians wanted such settlers as these, they would be happy to be rid of those whose "disappointed vanity" made them unwilling to "bend to a hoe or…an axe." Granville hastened to assure Allen that he and those of his social standing would find a warm welcome and he urged the bishop to send over another of his sons.[50]

Despite the favorable accounts they received from some of the emigrants, black leaders and their white allies were soon involved in a desperate attempt to defend Haitian emigration. The American Colonization Society disowned Dewey for advocating Haitian emigration, but

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[46]Granville warned of one disgruntled settler who was already making trouble back in Philadelphia. The man insisted that he had gone to Haiti to see what conditions there were like, and then returned to the United States. He had offered to repay the money advanced for his passage, but he charged that Inginac had tried to prevent him from leaving. Granville to Boyer, October 31, 1824. *Biographie*, 231-2.

[47]*United States Gazette*, April 18, 1825.

[48]*Ibid*., December 28, 1824, cited in Jackson, "Pan-African Nationalism," 116. Hughes and Summersett were not the only emigrants who sent back enthusiastic reports. Belfast Burton, a long-time resident of Philadelphia, wrote from Samana (where he estimated that about 270 Americans had settled) to tell Allen that the government had abided by its promise to give the settlers land and provisions. He added: "I will remark that no man can have any just conception of the country, without seeing it, as I had no idea of there being any such place on the globe…It is well known there are some people who will not be satisfied in any place or any situation, but those here generally express the highest satisfaction; and say it surpasses their most sanguine expectations; and that they would not return to the United States again, if lands were given them there for nothing." *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, June 1825. See also the account by Daniel Copelain in *ibid.*, August 1825.

[49]Granville left Philadelphia for Haiti early in December of 1824 with "a large number of emigrants." *Biographie*, 208.

[50]*United States Gazette*, April 18, 1825.

this did not dampen his enthusiasm. He visited Haiti and, although he encountered some dissatisfied settlers, he was encouraged that others had taken up land and expressed their willingness to stay. His only fear was that white Americans were not doing enough to help those, especially the slaves, who wished to go to Haiti. He observed that their "oppression is a thousand fold more injurious" than that of the American colonists at the time of the Revolution, and he warned of the consequences if their plight was ignored.[51]

In a subsequent letter Dewey asked Allen to pass on his advice to would-be settlers. They should form themselves into groups of eight or ten families, and elect a couple of men to handle all the negotiations with the local authorities. They should start planting crops as soon as possible so that they could survive when the government rations ran out. Most importantly, they should be religious, industrious and sober. "Attention to the above directions…will make [their] situation better here, in *five years*, than that of the white emigrants to the new countries of the west, is *in ten*."[52]

Benjamin Lundy, the white abolitionist editor of the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* and an enthusiastic supporter of the Haitian scheme, joined with Dewey in observing that the Haitians had "invited such of our colored people…as were of good character, and accustomed to industrious habits." They did not want "the vicious and the idle." However, many whites were anxious to rid themselves of "the worthless part" of the black population.[53] They had convinced "hundreds of effeminate, lazy wretches" to go, with the assurance that they would immediately be given "offices of honour, trust, and profit." Naturally they were discontented, but the Haitians did not force them to stay…The government of Haiti, according to Lundy, was allowing anyone who wanted to return to do so. He conceded that the tales of life in Haiti circulated by returning settlers would have a negative effect: "But the check will be momentary." He noted that two prominent black New Yorkers, Rev. Peter Williams and Peter Barker, had gone to investigate conditions, and he was confident that their reports would prove that most of the settlers were prospering.[54]

By the spring of 1825 the emigrationists had another problem to contend with. Boyer was rethinking his whole policy with regard to the American settlers. In May Inginac issued a statement that the transportation of settlers was becoming a "matter of sordid speculation." He charged that American blacks were conniving with masters of vessels to defraud the Haitian government by claiming their passage money and then returning to America. To put an end to this abuse, all emigrants would have to pay the cost of their passage.[55]

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[51]*Genius of Universal Emancipation*, March 1825. See also *United States Gazette*, June 1, 1825.

[52]*Genius of Universal Emancipation*, April 1825.

[53]Some of the efforts by whites to secure emigrants were well-intentioned, although it is unlikely that they would have met with Boyer's approval. For example, a member of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society noted that there were "a number of colored people[,] both male & female…confined & languishing in the State Penitentiary for crimes of a very inferior grade." He suggested that the governor of Pennsylvania should pardon them, on condition that they agree to leave for Haiti, where their "condition might be greatly improved and their moral character reformed." The officers of the society declined to act on this suggestion. Pennsylvania Abolition Society, American Convention, assorted documents, undated, HSP.

[54]*Genius of Universal Emancipation*, April 1825. On the mission of Barker and Williams to Haiti see *Biographie*, 237-8.

[55]*Genius of Universal Emancipation*, April 1825. Boyer was evidently satisfied with the American settlers as late as January of 1825. Ardouin, *Etudes*, Vol. 9, 306.

Far more lay behind this withdrawal of support than a desire to stop a few people making a profit at the expense of the Haitians.[56] Boyer and his advisers had discovered that the Americans were less tractable than they had supposed. While members of the elite were more than willing to aid in building up trade, poorer blacks were not fitting in with Boyer's plans. He needed them as agricultural laborers, but they were mostly city dwellers and such skills as they had were more suited to an urban environment.[57] They soon rejected rural life and began drifting to the towns, where unemployment was already high.[58]

Although Boyer was aware of the discontent among the settlers, it was the fact that his gamble had failed that induced him to withdraw his backing. He discovered that Dewey, far from speaking for the American Colonization Society, was working in opposition to it. Moreover, many of the influential whites who had pledged themselves to support Haitian resettlement when it was first proposed were now less enthusiastic. Dewey was a virtual outcast. He no longer had any friends among highly-placed colonizationists in Washington, and Boyer's hopes of winning recognition were dashed.[59] From his point of view the whole undertaking had been a dismal failure.

By April 1826 Inginac estimated that, of the 6,000 settlers whose passage had been paid by the Haitian government, 2,000 had returned to America.[60] If Boyer was disenchanted so were they. The promised government aid frequently failed to materialize and, instead of being welcomed as long-lost members of the "great family," they were regarded as inferior foreigners fit only for menial labor. The warm welcome was reserved for a privileged few. As the Haitian historian Beaubrun Ardouin observed, most of the Americans found themselves in the midst of "a people whose language they could not understand, even though they were the same color as

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[56]Granville's son linked the failure of the scheme, at least in part, to the breakdown of negotiations between Haiti and France, and the threat of a French invasion. *Biographie*, 21n.

[57]Under President Boyer's Rural Code, passed in 1826, efforts were made to prevent vagrancy and keep people from deserting the countryside for the towns. [Zephaniah Kingsley], *The Rural Code of Haiti, Literally Translated from a Publication by the Government Press; Together with Letters from that Country, Concerning its Present Condition, by aSouthern Planter* (Granville, Middletown, NJ: George H. Evans, 1837), 3-4, 10-17, 29-31. In many respects, Boyer was simply continuing the policies of his predecessors. On Toussaint L'Ouverture and his rural codes see Montague, *Haiti and the United States*, 8.

[58]When Benjamin Lundy visited Haiti in 1825 he tried to persuade Boyer's government to continue its immigration program. The main opposition came from Secretary General Inginac, who told Lundy that many of the immigrants were "idle vagrants." Lundy disputed this judgment and observed that he had found most of them hard at work. He also made contact with Silvain Simonisse's Societe philanthropique, but its members were not willing to receive American settlers on very equitable terms. Merton L. Dillon, *Benjamin Lundy and the Struggle for Negro Freedom* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 100-1.

[59]Granville learned soon after his arrival in the United States that the officers of the ACS did not approve of the Haitian scheme, but he hoped that influential supporters of the organization could still be won over. Granville to Boyer, June 25, 1824, in *Biographie*, 212. Dewey considered that he had become a virtual outcast after his visit to Haiti. Some whites charged him with seeking to rob them of their black servants, while others alleged that he wished to strengthen Haiti and make it a base for attacks on the slave-holding South. Dewey to Granville *fils*, May 23, 1865, in *Biographie*, 244.

[60]The exact number of immigrants is uncertain. Granville's son drew on the *Telegraphe*, the official gazette of Haiti, to state that, between September of 1824 and January of 1825, six thousand Americans arrived. *Biographie*, 21n. See also *ibid*., 164, 166, 170, 172, 182, 206, 224-5, 231. Dewey to Granville *fils*, May 23, 1865, in *Biographie*, 243. However, Benjamin Hunt estimated that as many as 13,000 Americans accepted Boyer's offer. *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans; and on the Mulatto as a Race for the Tropics* (Philadelphia: T.B. Pugh, 1860), 4.

themselves, and on whose faces they saw mocking smiles, in spite of all the good will they pledged them."[61]

Even after Boyer's administration refused to continue offering free passage, immigration from the United States continued.[62] Some of those who arrived were newly emancipated slaves. At the encouragement of Benjamin Lundy, the British reformer Frances Wright took thirty-two former slaves to Haiti from her failed utopian community of Nashoba. Boyer received her as an honored guest and settled her colonists on one of his own plantations.[63] Lundy also urged members of the Society of Friends in North Carolina to send their slaves to Haiti, and he himself made two trips to Haiti with manumitted slaves entrusted to his care by Southern planters.[64] He remained an enthusiastic supporter of Haitian emigration for many years, although he insisted that any resettlement scheme must be tied to securing the complete abolition of slavery in the United States.[65]

While some of the immigrants to Haiti in the 1820s and 1830s were ex-slaves shipped off to the republic by well intentioned whites, others came on their own initiative. The failure of Boyer's program meant the end of large-scale resettlement, but just as some free blacks were attracted to Canada, Trinidad, and Jamaica, so others found their way to Haiti. When he graduated from Bowdoin College in 1826, John Browne Russwurm gave a commencement address entitled "The Condition and Prospects of Hayti" and announced his intention of

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[61]Ardouin, *Etudes*, Vol. 9, 300-1. He also charged that the Americans had introduced smallpox to Haiti and that, as a result, the republic lost more workers than it gained. For a more favorable assessment of the scheme and the reasons for its failure see M.B. Bird, *The Black Man; or, Haytian Independence, Deduced from Historical Notes, and Dedicated to the Government and People of Hayti* (New York: The Author, 1869; reprint ed. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 389.

[62]On the economic situation of the American settlers and their role in the political life of Haiti see Charles Mackenzie, *Notes on Haiti, Made During a Residence in That Republic*, Vol. 1, 30, 89-90, 110-11. However, the Jamaican missionary S.W. Hanna suggested that Mackenzie had his own reasons for his scathing criticisms of most aspects of Haitian life. *Notes of a Visit*, 47-8. Some of the American settlers eventually found themselves in the Dominican Republic when the island was divided in 1844. See *Liberator*, November 5, 1847; Samuel Hazard, *Santo Domingo, Past and Present; With a Glance at Hayti* (New York: Harper, 1873), 199, 204, 486; H. Hoetink, "'Americans' in Samaná," *Caribbean Studies*, 2 (April 1962): 3-22.

[63]Frances Wright met Citizen Granville when he was in Philadelphia in 1824. In 1829 the Marquis de Lafayette agreed to write to Boyer on her behalf. Lafayette to Boyer, October 28, 1829. Ferdinand J. Dreer Autography Collection, Lafayette Letters, Vol. 169, 89, HSP. Celia Morris Eckhardt, *Frances Wright—Rebel in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 81, 198, 211-2; Margaret Lane, *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1972), 35, 44.

[64]North Carolina Friends sent over at least 199, and perhaps as many as 700, former slaves. The Society of Friends forbade its members to own slaves, but the laws of North Carolina prohibited manumission unless the slaves were immediately removed from the state. Archibald Alexander, a staunch supporter of the American Colonization Society and an opponent of the Haitian scheme, alleged that many of the North Carolinians were unhappy in Haiti and wanted to return to the United States, even if it meant re-enslavement. *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa* (Philadelphia, PA: William S. Martien, 1846; reprint ed. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 262-3.

[65]In 1825 Lundy went to Haiti to negotiate with Boyer's government on behalf of a group of former slaves and to investigate the situation of the American emigrants. He made another trip with a party of ex-slaves in 1829. See [Anon.], *The Life, Travels and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy, Including His Journeys to Texas and Mexico; With a Sketch of Contemporary Events, and a Notice of the Revolution in Hayti* (Philadelphia, PA: William D. Parrish, 1847), 23-4, 29, and Dillon, *Benjamin Lundy*, 89-90.

studying medicine and emigrating to Haiti.[66] John Allen, the bishop's son, remained on the island for many years and established himself as a printer. Robert Douglass, Jr., a talented portrait painter, went to Haiti with two white abolitionists in the fall of 1837. When they returned to the United States he stayed on to become Boyer's court artist. Learning Spanish and French, he gained admittance to the Haitian elite and sent back glowing reports of life in Haiti to his friends and family in Philadelphia.[67] Hezekiah Grice of Baltimore initially went to Haiti because he had been humiliated by other leaders in the free black community. However, he prospered in his new homeland, and occasional visits to the United States only served to convince him that he had improved his prospects by emigrating.[68] James Forten, who had spoken with such emotion of his sense of kinship with the Haitian people, remained in Philadelphia, but two of his apprentices emigrated, and both did well.[69]

Like James Forten, many within America's free black community eventually decided against emigration in the 1820s and 1830s (although the Haitian scheme would be resurrected by James Redpath and James Theodore Holly in the 1850s and would find many new supporters). However, like Forten, even if they had no intention of settling in Haiti, they continued to express their deep interest in the future of the republic and to call upon the defenders of slavery in the United States to acknowledge an unpalatable truth—that slave rebellions were not always doomed to failure.[70]

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[66]However, Russwurm did not emigrate to Haiti. He went first to New York, where he established *Freedom's Journal*, the first black-owned and edited newspaper in the United States. Then, in 1829, he announced his support for the American Colonization Society, and the following year he left for Liberia. Philip S. Foner, "John Brown Russwurm, A Document," *Journal of Negro History* 54 (October 1969): 393-7.

[67]After witnessing the celebration of the anniversary of Haitian independence, a scene he subsequently painted, Douglass wrote to his family back in Philadelphia: "What I have seen to-day I shall not forget – for although too much of a peace man to approve of a military government – yet the sight of what these people have arisen to, from the most abject servitude, caused in my bosom a feeling of exultation which I could not repress." *Colored American*, March 3, 1838. See also *ibid*., June 16, 1838.

[68]Hezekiah Grice, a native of Baltimore, claimed that he had laid the groundwork for the black national convention movement, only to see black leaders in Philadelphia take it over. His final humiliation came in 1832 when he attempted to take his seat at the third convention as a representative from Baltimore and the Philadelphians refused to admit him. Within months he had settled in Haiti. He began working as a carver and gilder and then he was appointed Director of Public Works in Port au Prince. *The Anglo-African Magazine*, October 1859, in Howard H. Bell, ed., *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864* (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

[69]Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti*, 6.

[70]See, for example, *A Colored American, A Brief Inquiry into the Prospective Results That Might Follow the Secret Mission to Dominico and Hayti, With Its Probable Effects on Colored Americans* (Philadelphia, PA: John Coates, 1852). (The Pamphlet had actually been written in January of 1846.)

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