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THE SPELL OF AFRICA: THE DEVELOPMENT OF

BLACK NATIONALIST THEORY, 1829-1945

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Field of History

By

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For STERLING BROWN,

whose deeply perceptive and imaginative renderings of the whole range of the folk heritage have placed us permanently in his debt.

The spell of Africa is upon me. The ancient witchery of her medicine is burning my drowsy, dreamy blood. This is not a country, it is a world - a universe of itself and for itself, a thing Different, Immense, Menacing, Alluring. It is a great black bosom where the Spirit longs to die. It is life so burning, so fire encircled that one bursts with terrible soul inflaming life. One longs to leap against the sun and then calls, like some great hand of fate, the slow, silent, crushing power of almighty sleep - of Silence, of immovable Power beyond, within, around. Then comes the calm. The dreamless beat of midday stillness at dusk, at dawn, at noon, always. . . . Life slows down and as it slows it deepens; it rises and descends to immense and secret places. Unknown evil appears and unknown good. Africa is the Spiritual Frontier of human kind. . . .

W.E.B. DuBois
1924

The Spell of Africa is primarily an exploration of theoretical
attempts on the part of Afro-Americans to lay the groundwork for winning
hegemony over their lives in America, not on foreign shores. While some
attention is devoted to emigration movements, those movements are con-
sidered only insofar as they were integral to the concerns of those
nationalists who continued to believe that liberation could be won in
America. For this reason, Martin Delany, Bishop Henry McNeil Turner
and Marcus Garvey - all of whom were major proponents of emigration -
receive subsidiary treatment in these pages. The years within which
the study is focused, 1829-1945, were chosen because they represent, in
the first instance, the critical beginning stages of the ideology of
black nationalism and, in the last, the highest stages of that doctrine's
development.

As this study should reveal, to explore the growth of black
nationalist ideology is to touch base with Afro-American thought on
Africa on almost all levels, including the uses of African history and
the controversy over what people of color in America should call them-
selves. While the writing of African history is important in its own
right, and while that activity falls more within the purview of Afro-
American "attitudes" toward Africa, insight into that subject is neverthe-
less essential to seeing the nationalist movement whole, especially since

a preoccupation with the history of their people is particularly character-
istic of nationalists. The controversy over a name for individuals and,
more especially, for the group also reflected much regarding the attitudes
of people of color toward Africa. But that controversy was linked in a
very direct way to black nationalist theory and movements, and therefore
an attempt is made to reconstruct the terms of the entire controversy.
Those who choose may therefore read this dissertation as an incomplete
but substantial record of the history of Afro-American thought on Africa,
but The Spell of Africa is primarily an attempt to grasp the lineaments
and essential ingredients of a particular way in which certain seminal
Afro-American thinkers have tried to view the world and the place of their
people in it.

As will be evident to the reader, there were significant differences
within the ranks of leading theoriticians of black nationalism, and not
a few inconsistencies in the thought of most nationalists. Beyond that,
they had no monopoly on all of their ideas; but they did share a corpus
of thought that was rather easily distinguishable from the philosophies
of other people of color. Though this is mainly a study of the national-
ist thought of articulate, leading members of Afro-America, an effort is
made, at certain junctures, to assess nationalist sentiment, especially
in the cultural sphere, among the masses of blacks.

A great many people and institutions were helpful to me in the
preparation of this study. Professor Otey Scruggs of Syracuse University
and Mr. Lamont Yeakey, a graduate student at Columbia, provided inestim-
able assistance by directing my attention to fugitive and valuable documents.

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I am indebted to Professors Benjamin Quarles and Howard H. Bell of Morgan State College for ready assistance when I needed it in trying to unravel the mystery of "Sidney." Professor Bell also made available a copy of one of the few extant issues of The National Reformer newspaper. Herbert Aptheker spent several days and much time bringing relevant DuBois papers to his office for me to see. He has also offered much encouragement.

Mr. Paul Robeson, Jr., an extremely impressive man in his own right, offered invaluable information on his father over two meetings. Mr. Lloyd Brown, the novelist, not only illuminated a number of aspects of Robeson's life that only an intimate friend would be aware of, but, like Paul Robeson, Jr., generously provided food and drink as well. Mr. Brown's comments on Robeson, though valuable, did not relate to the nationalism of Robeson, which is the focus of this investigation. The late Mrs. Frances Herskovits, who knew both Robeson and DuBois, shared her penetrating insights into each man. Her comments on Robeson during the 1920's and during his years in London were especially helpful. The observations of Professor Joshua Leslie, who has lived in two major centers of the African diaspora - the United States and the West Indies - as well as in Africa were helpful at several points in the study.

Dorothy Porter of Howard University's Moorland Collection was every bit as helpful to me as she is reputed to have been to more than a generation of scholars. A leading librarian of Afro-Americana and a fine scholar, Mrs. Porter, through her assistance, saved me much time and money in completing my research in Washington, D.C. Ernest Kaiser at New York's Schomburg Collection was always prepared and eager to

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offer knowledgeable assistance during my visits to that library. Donald Franklin Joyce, who is dedicated to making Chicago's George Cleveland Hall Library once again a major repository of materials on African peoples, has assembled a collection of ante-bellum Negro newspapers that I found helpful in carrying out my research. Ralph Maylone of Northwestern University's Library, on a request from the writer, not only located Robert Alexander Young's _Ethiopian Manifesto_ but, within a matter of days, secured a copy of that very rare document.

My appreciation to my adviser, George Daniels, and to George Fredrickson and Clarence L. Ver Steeg of Northwestern's history department, who have taken a special interest in my dissertation topic. Finally, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod of Northwestern's Political Science Department provided the priceless boon of making me feel so guilty about not having finished this project that I decided I could only eliminate such unsettling authority by getting on with the work.

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INTRODUCTION

It is one of the great ironies in the history of African peoples that the triangular slave trade was a major source of unity among Africans at precisely the moment it posed the greatest threat to their lives and cultures. More precisely, the slave trade, never constructed to this end, provided a transmission belt extending all the way from Africa, through the West Indies to the U.S. along which manifestations of the African ethos passed, with considerable retention in the West Indies and some in America. Fresh influxes of Africans into the U.S. lasted well into the nineteenth century, and thereby guaranteed Africa in America. For centuries, then, black men in America moved in a kind of Pan-African environment brought on, principally, by the slave trade.

As difficult as it is to conceive in our time, the movement of black leaders between the West Indies and the U.S. during the first half of the 19th century was perhaps as great as during the first fifty years of the 20th century. Paul Cuffee, for example, had been among the first of the key Afro-Americans to visit the West Indies, having traveled to Cuba quite early in the century. He was followed by other influential blacks, including Henry Highland Garnet and James Theodore Holly, who visited Cuba and Haiti, respectively. Other blacks from America visited the West Indies in the ante-bellum period, but the flow from the West Indies to the U.S. was, of course, much greater historically, for the West Indies had been - indeed remained into the 19th century - an inter-

mediate prison house for those Africans "seasoned" there, before finally being brought to the U.S. to replenish, to merge fully into, to become one with the black population of North America. Indeed, the West Indian link to North America, save for Africans brought straight to the U.S., provided the most important transmission belt between Africa and her transplanted children in the U.S. It was only in America, then, that the triad of blacks became one, that the multiplicity of tribes and cultures, preserved to a greater extent in the islands and in South America, were hammered into a single people and culture on the bloody anvil of American slavery.

Such was the ambience in which the need for African hegemony or control - black nationalism - was borne in upon Africans in America. While the European model of nationalism was unquestionably an influence on Afro-American nationalists, a close reading of the history of the period reveals that the time to consider other influences is long over-due, indeed essential to understanding the nature of the quest for, and practice of, black nationalism in America. The black nationalism referred to in this introduction compassed both European and African elements, in that order.

The desire for a separate and wholly sovereign black nation has not necessarily formed the burden of Afro-American thought on national-ism. Nevertheless, when such a nation has been projected for North America or for other shores, it has been based on precepts very much like those which undergirded European nationalisms of the nineteenth century - among them the desire for a government of one's own and separate land on which to mount it, the recognition of special characteristics possessed

by the people in question, the perception of interests and problems peculiar to them, their belief in shared cultural characteristics, the affirmation of their common heritage and history, and the presence among them of common institutions.[1] Obviously some of the enumerated categories took on a special cast in slaveholding America.

For example, as great numbers of Africans were brought into the country, sexual aggression against African women led to white admixtures so pronounced that, as time passed, the very physical existence of Africans was threatened. Nevertheless, Afro-Americans, owing to the tremendous oppression they were undergoing, continued to think of themselves as one people, but they were a people far more fragmented and disoriented than any nineteenth century European people. The black church, to cite one more example of the distortions of nationalism among Afro-Americans, was the most enduring and powerful institution of black America, but one more European than African in theology. Yet it is very likely that the differences between black and white churches in America were more significant than those between, say, the Catholic Churches of France and Italy during the nineteenth century: black religion, which was deeply concerned with affirming freedom, was almost diametrically opposed to mainstream American religion, which favored the enslavement of human beings. However numerous the distortions - the list could be extended greatly - the deep involvement of African peoples with a white nation did not destroy all of the preconditions for the development of the form and substance, the theory and practice of black nationalism in America.

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But there are other aspects of black nationalism which deserve major attention. Indeed, it is possible that the essentially non-western ingredients of nationalism have played as important a role (if not a greater one) in fashioning the desire among Afro-Americans to control their own destinies and create their own institutions as European models of nationalism. For instance, the influence of African group traditions or tribalism must surely have been felt in America. The fact that tribal differences were being destroyed under the tremendous impact of American slavery, laying the basis for radically different perspectives by Africans about each other - conceiving each other as members of a single group and Africa as essentially one place with one people - did not prevent them from recalling and valuing the levels of black hegemony in Africa. A major obstacle to nationalism in Africa in the twentieth century, in the ante-bellum period tribalism, through its suggestion of African self-assertion, was in some instances probably the foundation stone of black nationalism in America. Considering the tremendous numbers of Africans forcibly brought into America during slavery, it would be absurd to believe that the majority entered seeking integration, desiring white control.

The thesis that African tribalism while on its deathbed in America continually, with each new influx of Africans, breathed new life into black nationalis consciousness is corroborated by the character of slave communities during slavery. These communities were very significantly influenced by African traditions especially prior to the nineteenth century, providing informal alternative models to entirely white values, to white control

over the values of the slaves. Though the milieu of the slave quarters cannot be reconstructed with anything approaching precision, there are substantial reasons for believing that the African presence was significant enough to make itself felt in a variety of ways. For example, the African presence contributed to non-European life-styles by blacks, especially through the arts and religion, informing and helping to shape the slave's culture, his ways of growing up, working, playing, struggling, surviving, aspiring, and looking at himself and the world. Black religion and art sufficiently distinguished the values, preferences and ways of doing things of enough slaves to mark the culture of the whole as distinguishable in critical ways from that of the white nation.

The various forms of proscription, of racist controls, helped to preserve the African values of black people during the slave era, helped to shore up whatever sense of African solidarity and special interest they possessed. Ideologists of black nationalism, as distinct from certain Africans in the slave quarters, did not realize the value or uses to which specific African influences might be put until the creation of the theory of cultural nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century. To value ancient African history while considering contemporary African cultures backward and depraved, as did nearly all nationalists during the nineteenth century, is not cultural nationalism, which must involve advocacy of a largely autonomous, self-sufficient realm of values to guide the living of a people. The cultural nationalists' realization that African cultures contained much of value for Afro-Americans was an essential step toward shattering the horrible

images of Africa with which slave overlords and their allies had saddled Africans in America. The knowledge that the most vital, creative aspects of Afro-American culture were somehow tied to African cultural forms was not only essential to understanding Afro-American culture but the soundest starting point for building the alternative cultural construct for blacks in America.

Not only has the African influence on Afro-American culture been given insufficient attention by scholars of black nationalism but one of the most pronounced nationalist tenets, the messianic role of black people, has not been considered integral to nationalist theory. Though not entertained exclusively by nationalists, the place of messianism in black nationalist thought has been so great, has been espoused so consistently, that it should be accounted a fundamental aspect of black nationalist thought.

But messianism and the importance of African cultural influences are not the only categories of nationalism which have not received adequate attention. The humanistic dimension of black nationalism receives attention in this study because a deep concern for the whole of mankind has been about as great a characteristic of black nationalism as it has of any ideology or faith known to the writer. Humanism has in fact been a first principle of black nationalism. Thus the historic black nationalist has been relatively free of hatred of white people. While he has emphasized the indispensability of black control of the Afro-American liberation movement, the nationalist has not been averse to white support.

Nor have most black nationalists, despite their extreme skepticism of white politics, turned their backs on American political processes. A sense of pragmatism, born of an acute awareness of the merciless oppression to which America subjects blacks, has in fact been more a part of nationalist theory and practice than usually assumed. For "free" blacks, who were not considered human by most Americans, to seek the franchise in a nation which threatened them with mob action, possibly death, if they sought to cast a ballot should not be regarded as reformist action on their part. In this study, therefore, there is no recognition of "revolutionary black nationalism" for ante-bellum America because almost any effort to affirm black humanity, whether through the ballot or in attempts to establish autonomous institutions serving the needs of black people, leaned more toward revolutionary than reformist activity.

The interest of most nationalists in the liberation of Africans throughout the world has been so profound an aspect of black nationalism that the label appears to be too narrow to contain so expansive a concern. The interest in Africa was so much a part of the lives of black nationalists that we find them continually vaulting beyond the limits of America to embrace all of African humanity, wherever found. Though the term Pan-Africanism is used very infrequently in this study until the twentieth century is considered, the essentials of that ideology were very much in evidence from 1829 down to the advent of the new century. Pan-Africanism was in fact virtually inseparable from black nationalist ideology.[2]

The designation for the ingredients which make up the ideology of black hegemony - "black nationalism" - has been inadequate all along, partly obscuring our understanding of that phenomenon. Professor Hollis Lynch's "Pan-Negro nationalism" is a much more perceptive reading of the movement toward black hegemony. The preference here, however, is for "African autonomy" because this designation also accords little regard for geographical or other factors considered conducive to insularity. Even so, the phrase black nationalism, with the qualifications kept in mind, will be employed in this study. The movement for African hegemony in the U.S. has shared enough common denominators with European forms to justify use of the term black nationalism, that is, until long ignored features of Afro-American interest in autonomy for African peoples are more widely recognized. One purpose of this study is to hasten the day of that recognition.

PART I

THE BIRTH OF BLACK NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY

[Y]our full glory and happiness, as well as all other
coloured people under Heaven, shall never be fully
consumated, but with the entire emancipation of your
enslaved brethren all over the world.

David Walker, 1829

Let them bring in a hundred thousand [Africans] a
year! We do not say it is not a great crime, but we
know that from the wickedness of man God brings forth
good; and if they do it, before half a century shall
pass over us we shall have a Negro nationality in the
United States.

Henry Highland Garnet, 1859

1. DAVID WALKER AND THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF BLACK NATIONALISM

The "respectable meeting of the people of colour" which took place at the home of one David Walker in 1827 to promote Freedom's Journal provided few intimations of the host's smoldering resentment against slavery and racism, of his deep attachment to Africans throughout the world – an attachment that had by then doubtless taken nationalist shape and focus. The fact that Walker and the others who gathered under his roof resolved voluntarily and freely to give their utmost support to the paper's efforts, however, was a measure of their consciousness of the expansiveness and depth of the problems facing people of African ancestry, for that paper from its inception had made clear its opposition to slavery and racism, and had opposed those forces which would hold back the advance of African peoples in the ancestral home and in diaspora.[1]

I

During the 1820's, the decade during which Walker moved from North Carolina to Boston, black interest in Africa was still very considerable. More than that, he lived in a community in which now a few blacks were still referring to themselves as Africans. Many of the men and women of this period were in fact in the process of making what was perhaps their first effort to think of themselves as Americans.[2] But

the circle in which Walker moved included men who not only considered themselves essentially African: they went beyond this level of Africa consciousness to identify with the ancestral home and with Africans on a variety of levels. Walker himself was at the vortex of those swirling African concerns, literally consumed by interest in Africa and her transplanted children in the Americas. Thus, his nationalism, though not shared in equal measure by the great majority of articulate blacks of his period, was not developed in a vacuum.

In fact, an examination of the principles and practices of Freedom's Journal not only reveals something of the intellectual atmosphere in which Walker lived, an atmosphere charged with concern for people of African ancestry, but discloses the expectation of the editors that black people generally would be very interested in reading reports on Africans wherever found.[3] While white contributors were not barred from publishing in that paper, editors Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm recognized the need for black people increasingly to speak for themselves on matters crucial to their people: "We wish to plead our own cause," reported the first editorial of that paper. "Too long have others spoken for us" - clearly a nationalist sentiment from editors responsible for the coming into existence of an important black institution which they expected black people to make financially viable.[4]

In that small group which promoted Freedom's Journal, a factor which undoubtedly contributed to interest in Africans everywhere, was the interaction between a person of African descent from the West Indies, editor Russwurm, and sons of Africa born in America, a vital pattern of alliance which was repeated on numerous occasions for more than a century

following the advent of <u>Freedom's Journal</u>. At a time when many northern blacks still regarded themselves and blacks in the Caribbean as Africans, the presence of a forceful, articulate Afro-West Indian such as Russwurm must have reinforced feelings among some of sharing a common destiny, especially since American slavery and racism were no respecters of differences among Africans.[5]

But if any single event of ante-bellum America best symbolized the attitudes of significant numbers of black people toward Africa and her transplanted children, it was the dinner in the autumn of 1828 celebrating the presence in Boston of Prince <u>Abduhl Rahaman of Footah Jallo,</u> who had been enslaved in the American south. Assembling at the <u>African</u> School House, members of the dinner party formed a colorful procession, in which the Prince and Walker participated, and marched to musical accompaniment to the <u>African Masonic Hall</u>.[6] The opening toast, an affirmation of the Africanness of the black man in diaspora, reflected a sentiment which was still strong at the time, "May the happy era be not far distant when Africa universally shall stretch forth her hands unto God." And it was proposed: "May the time soon arrive when the sons of Africa, in all parts of the world, shall be emancipated and happy, and the word slave never more be heard." Another statement won "distinguished applause" from the audience — "<u>Liberty</u> and <u>Equality</u> — The most inestimable gift of God conferred on man. May the time be not far distant when all the sons and daughters of Africa, who are now in bondage, shall be enabled to exlaim, 'We are free.' "[7]

Walker's toast, an act symbolic of his basic political position, was that the guest of honor had been torn from his country, religion and

friends by Africa's enemies and "doomed to perpetual though unlawful bondage." But one of the last toasts offered revealed, for all the sincere concern for Africa reflected in it, a belief about Africa among blacks in America as stongly held as any other: "May the sons and daughters of Africa soon become a civilized and christian-like [sic] people, and shine forth to the world as conspicious as their more highly favored neighbors."[8]

II

If there was one individual of the period, apart from Walker, who represented the nationalist ideological current which later swelled, with Walker's assistance, to significant dimensions, it was Robert Alexander Young, who published his oracular Ethiopian Manifesto a few months before the appearance of Walker's Appeal. His statement provides an interesting ideological backdrop against which to view Walker's better known exploration of the status of his people. In addition, the Manifesto is an almost ideal representation of black revolutionary thought, and as such deserves inclusion as perhaps the earliest extont statement of black nationalist thought which approaches ideological coherence.[9]

Very little is known about Young. He was living in New York at the time of the appearance of his Manifesto, and was, as that document attests, a deeply religious man, but not in the traditional sense of black Christian commitment. He seemed rather to depend on inspiration from sources alien to these shores, from a God long since forgotten, according to Young, by most blacks. Mystical to the core, pronouncing, through references to certain signs and seasons, the doom of the slave-

holder's reign, his <u>Ethiopian Manifesto</u> is an expression of outrage at
the degredation of the African, an affirmation of faith in the coming of
a new order. "We here speak of the whole of the Ethiopian people," said
Young, referring in an all-African way to their lack of liberty.[10]

> Fallen, sadly, sadly low indeed, hath become our race,
> when we behold it reduced but to an enslaved state
> . . . here we are met in ourselves, we constitute but
> one, aided, as we trust, by the effulgent light of
> wisdom to a discernment of the path which shall lead
> us to the collecting together of a people . . .[11]
> (Italics added.)

It is not claiming too much for Young to suggest that for him the
word people was the equivalent of the word nation. The "imperious duty"
of Ethiopians, he observed, was to effect their "convocation in a body
politic," to promote their order, to establish "ourselves a people
framed unto the likeness of that order." According to Young, God had
said:

> Surely hath the cries of the blacks, a most persecuted
> people, ascended to my throne and craved my mercy; now,
> behold! I will stretch forth mine hand and gather them
> to the palm that they become unto me a people, and I
> unto them their God.[12] (Italics added.)

A new people and, for the crushed blacks of his time, a new God.
And so the gathering of themselves into a people, whole and renewed, was
Young's design for Africans around the world, and their rights, religious
and civil, would be derived from and sanctioned by a religion - as visioned
by him - peculiarly African and a "spirit" which was that of the black man.

> This we issue forth as the spirit of the black man or
> Ethiopian's right, established from the Ethiopian's
> Rock, the foundation of his civil and religious rights,
> which hereafter will be exemplified in the order of its
> course. Ethiopians, throughout the world in general,
> receive this as but a lesson presented to you from an
> instructive Book, in which many, many are therein con-
> tained, to the vindication of its purpose. (Italics
> added.)

As the word was meant for all Africans, so too was the leader, heralded as the Black Messiah. Young's words were intended, he said, "to denote to the black African or Ethiopian people, that God has prepared for them a leader, who awaits but his season to proclaim to them his birthright." "Peace and liberty to the Ethiopians first," he exclaimed as he closed his manifesto, then added: "also all other grades of men, is the invocation we offer to the throne of God."[14]

Robert Alexander Young, by February of 1829, had moved to the threshold of an ideology of black nationalism, of a formulation of the plight of blacks and a design for the solution to their problems, a solution which stressed independence and a new dispensation consonant with the demands of their history and their needs as a people. Thus, one of Young's major contributions to the development of black nationalist ideology (and to the struggle for African unity) is the emphasis which he places on the need for Africans to reestablish themselves as a people.[15]

The intense degree of identification with Africa and opposition to oppression suffered by people from Africa throughout the world, major themes at the ceremony honoring Prince Rahaman and the keystone on which Young mounted his proto-nationalist manifesto, received their ultimate expression with the appearance of David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, a work which was written, as Henry Highland Garnet said in 1848, 'with an overflowing heart."[16] It is this small volume on which Walker's reputation as the harbinger of the militant phase of abolitionism rests, and it appears that the very ardor with which he advocated slave revolution has, over the past

century, largely obscured a related dimension of the man and the work:
Walker ~ and this is the burden of the discussion of him - should be
regarded as the ideological precursor of a long line of black national-
ists and advocates of African freedom extending all the way to Paul
Robeson in our century. While it is not being asserted that he was
the first black nationalist[17] (for such would be, based on what we know
of black leaders before him, patently false), it is being advanced that
Walker should be regarded as the father of black nationalism. This is
so because the lineaments of nearly all of the significant aspects of
black nationalism, despite the frequently disjointed way in which he
presented his views, emerge in his writings.

III

Walker's ideas on the need for black nationalism seemed to flow
logically from a belief which he strongly held, that white people
generally and Americans in particular, owing to chilling historical
and contemporary crimes against people of African ancestry, were
the "natural enemies" of blacks. As regards Africans in America,
he contended that the crimes had been such that his people had been
reduced to "the most degraded, wretched, and abject set of beings
that ever lived since the world began," and he prayed that no such
humiliated and oppressed "ever may live again until time shall be
no more."[18] All the people of the earth - the Greeks, the Irish, the
Indians of North and South America, and the Jews - "are called men,"
Walker thought, except "the sons of Africa." White America's treatment

of black people had been "more cruel (they being an enlightened and Christian people), than any heathen nation did any people whom it had reduced to our condition."[19] Walker sought to telescope what he considered the essence of the character and history of peoples of European descent:

> The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerci-
> ful, avaricious and blood-thirsty set of beings, always
> seeking after power and authority. - We view them all
> over the confederacy of Greece, where they were first
> known to be any thing (in consequence of education) we
> see them there, cutting each other's throats. . . . We
> view them next in Rome, where the spirit of tyranny and
> deceit raged still higher. We view them in Gaul, Spain,
> and in Britain. - In fine, we view them all over Europe,
> together with what were scattered about in Asia and Africa,
> as heathens, and we see them acting more like devils than
> accountable men.[20]

In Walker's opinion, the black people of Africa and "the mulattoes of Asia" did not "go on in the same way as did the whites of Europe," were not half as unmerciful, deceitful, and avaricious.[21] Indeed, he deepened his indictment, stating that the European, having moved beyond heathenism to Christianity, was "as cruel if not more so than ever." He thought their cruelties as heathens were compounded ten times over by their practice, as Christians, of dumping overboard, during the slave trade, whole cargoes of men, women and children.[22]

The Jews fared better under the heathen Egyptians, whom Walker considered African and colored, than the sons of Africa under Christian whites.[23] He offered as an example the liberties granted by Pharoah to Joseph, pointing out that they were not available to blacks in America. He challenged Americans to show him a person of African descent "who holds the low office of - constable, or one who sits in

a Juror Box, even on a case of one of his wretched brethren, through-out this great Republic!!"[24]

Calling attention to the rights of Jews in Egypt and the near total absence of rights among his own people, free as well as slave, Walker used the illustration of the Egyptians encouraging Joseph to marry one of their own to raise an issue which has been considered an essential one by most black nationalists since his time, the relationship between the black man and white woman in America. After making his preference abundantly clear - "I would not give a pinch of snuff to be married to any white person I ever saw in all the days of my life" - he declared that the black man or man of color who would leave his own "colour [provided he can get one who is good for any-thing] and marry a white woman, to be a double slave to her, just because she is white, ought to be treated by her as he surely will be, viz: as a NIGGER!!!" Still, the day would come when whites would be glad to be in the company of blacks, in spite of the fact that blacks were being treated "worse than they do the brutes that perish."[25]

In one of his few references to the need for land, often a major but by no means indispensable component of black nationalism, Walker, again referring to the treatment of the Jews, quoted from the Bible in pointing to the relative generosity of the Egyptians on this question:

> The land of Egypt is before thee: in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle.[26]

With full sarcasm, he remarked: "I ask those people who treat us so well, Oh! I ask them, where is the most barren spot of land which they have given unto us?"[27]

Of all the assaults upon his people, the one which seems to have disturbed Walker most – one related to blacks being without liberty and land – was the charge that they were inferior to whites, not even members of the human race. He challenged racists to show him a page of history, sacred or profane, which contends that Egyptians visited the "insupportable insult upon the children of Israel" of "telling them that they were not of the human family."[28] After denouncing the view that blacks, unlike whites, had "descended originally from the tribes of Monkeys or Oran-Outangs," he took exception to Jefferson's somewhat tentative assertion, set forth in Notes on Virginia, that blacks are inferior to whites in body and mind, stating that Jefferson had compared "our miserable fathers" with "philosophers of Greece."[29] But to Jefferson's charge that Roman slaves of white ancestry were often great artists Walker, seeing great degradation among the African slave in America, offered no direct rejoinder.

Walker thought it incumbent upon blacks everywhere, considering their relationship to whites, to depend primarily upon their own resources in seeking liberation. The issue of unity, then, was paramount for him. He was deeply disturbed by the spectacle of people of color in the U.S. "courting favour with, and telling lies to our natural enemies, against each other - aiding them to keep their hellish chains of slavery upon us."[30] It was precisely this issue which form

the burden of what was perhaps his first public expression of the
essentials of black nationalism. Addressing a meeting of the General
Colored Association at Boston, a year before the appearance of his
Appeal, he stressed the need for unity among the sons of Africa. The
formation of the Association had been opposed by certain blacks in
Boston who had acted, Walker explained, with a zeal and avidity which
"had it been on the opposite side, would have done great honor to
themselves." Only the "undeviating and truly patriotic exertions" of
those supporting the organization had made possible the assemblage
which was listening to him.[31]

Though Walker was not explicit, it is very likely that, as
throughout the life of the Negro Convention Movement, the Boston
meeting had come under fire from people of color who felt it worked
against their best interest if they organized along racial lines.
In any case, he observed that it was strange when "men of sound sense
and tolerably good judgement" behave in a way "so diametrically in
opposition to their own interests."[32] From his point of view, the
objectives of the Association were decidedly in the best interest of
all people of color. Indeed, his account of the purposes of the
Association - he called it "this institution" - in some ways pre-
figured the Negro Convention Movement as a national organization.
Seeking to unite the black population of the United States in ways
practicable, to establish "societies, opening, extending, and keeping
up correspondences, and not withholding anything which may have a
tendency to meliorate our miserable condition,"[33] Walker's perceptions
of the Association's objectives, some of which were already being

pursued on local and state-wide bases elsewhere, on one level
anticipated the form of things to come: he called for a broad net-
work of organizations dedicated to ameliorating conditions facing
his people. Such organizational unity came to partial fruition two
years later when blacks from a number of states sent delegates to
Philadelphia to attend what became the first national Negro Con-
vention.[34]

Walker thought that disunity within the ranks of his people
had been a powerful factor in preventing them from being free, from
being "respectable men, instead of such wretched victims of oppres-
sion," who together with their mothers, fathers, wives and children
were being dragged "around the world in chains and handcuffs" in
order to work for white people.[35] In his speech before the Association,
he had predicted that if only the free blacks, who were "two-thirds of
the way free," were united and determined to support each other to the
full extent of their power, they could effect great deeds for the good
of the sons and daughters of Africa. Either blacks, he explained,
would become unified or "they must be or always live as enemies."[36]

Walker understood perhaps as fully as any one of his time the
extent to which self-hatred was prevalent among oppressed blacks,
North and South. His description of the debased behavior of "free"
blacks, of the fighting and treachery which took place within the
group, contains highly suggestive insights into the possible character
of sizeable numbers of people of African ancestry in Southern slavery.
He wrote that certain blacks in the North were known to tell "news and
lies, making mischief one upon another."[37] If such was the case in

the North, as it doubtless was, then Walker provided strong indications of what behavior among some Southern blacks might have been, and revealed the arduous task ahead for black leadership in seeking to unite their people.

An observer in the North might see, according to Walker, blacks working in collusion with slaveholders by "selling their own brothers into hell upon earth" not unlike "the exhibitions in Africa, but in a more secret, servile and abject manner."[38]

> Oh Heaven! I am full . . . I can hardly move my pen
> . . . There have been and are at this day in Boston,
> New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore coloured men,
> who are in league with tyrants, and who receive a great
> portion of their daily bread, of the moneys which they
> acquire from the blood and tears of their more miserable
> brethren, whom they scandalously deliver into the hands
> of our natural enemies!!!!!![39]

Men of color who worked with slaveholding interests militated against that unity which would inevitably, Walker believed, lead to new eminence for Africans "in the estimation of the world," and therefore should be regarded as a "gang of villains." Not only were such traitors active among the children of Africa in the U.S. but treachery by people of color was being perpetrated "against the government of our brethren, the Haytians," forming "powerful auxiliaries" which work toward the destruction of people of African ancestry.[40] Walker recalled how Africans had paid dearly in the past for disunity. "O my suffering brethren!" he exclaimed, "remember the divisions and consequent sufferings of Carthage and of Hayti." He conjured blacks to "read the history particularly of Hayti, and see how they were butchered by the whites," and "take warning."[41]

Judging from the attention devoted to Haiti in the pages of
Freedom's Journal, and the inspiration that country was providing black
people during the first quarter of the century, it does appear that
Walker was not being excessive in describing that then fledgling country
as "the glory of the blacks." Though God, in Walker's view, favored
Haiti, it was essential for the Haitians to "be united, keeping a strict
look out for tyrants" in order to avoid further disunity which defects
of character among some might engender."[42]

Walker remarked that such defects were not inherent, as whites /3
would have the world believe - rather, the misfortunes were probably
born of "our fathers" disobedience to God.[43] Proper consciousness
among Africans everywhere would disclose the need for unity, and only
those who delighted in the degradation of blacks would deny this. Owing
to the long absence of this awareness among the masses of blacks in
America, they were made to undergo "intolerable sufferings," had been
plunged into what Walker called a slumbering state from which they only
occasionally, when their arms were not folded, cried out against their
miseries.[44] They seemed unable to change their condition, or the shape
of their future.

Ignorance and treachery reigned in such full force among African
peoples in the U.S., the West Indies, and on the continent of Africa
that, in Walker's opinion, they threatened to destroy all of worth that
remained. While such a force - the force of deceit and degraded ignor-
ance - doubtless existed in significant measure, Walker might have more
closely linked the behavior of the race traitor with what is both implicit
and explicit in much of his Appeal, the uses of terror and violence in the

North, and especially in the South, to control black people and to smooth the path, for the less stable in mind and spirit, toward opportunism and treachery. In justice to Walker, it should be said - indeed can scarcely be ignored on a reading of the Appeal - that on balance he vividly portrayed the violence on which the system of oppression was based, a force and violence which he sincerely believed had reduced some slaves to the apparently irretrievable condition of loving their masters.[45]

IV

So devastating were the effects of the slave trade and slavery on African peoples that Walker came to the conclusion that they were prepared to endure tyrannies to which other people of color, Asians and American Indians, would offer the most violent resistance. Caught in a "death-like apathy," Africans all over the world, according to Walker, "have a mean, servile spirit."[46] Blacks had been reduced to a state so low and mean that, in spite of certain advantages which they enjoyed, their servility of spirit and love of masters prevented them from uprooting and throwing off the institution of slavery. In fact, Walker thought Africans everywhere, save for the Haitians, dispirited. What was worse, he described them as cowering before, in almost all instances, vastly outnumbered white people. To "pass in review" before the world the sorry state of African people, he said that he would "only hold up to view" Jamaica "as a specimen of our meanness."[47]

> In that island there are three hundred and thirty-five
> thousand souls - of whom fifteen thousand are whites,
> the remainder, three hundred and thirty-five thousand
> are colored people! and this island is ruled by the
> white people . . . [15,000] ruling and tyranizing over

> 335,000 persons . . . 0' how long my colour shall we be
> dupes and dogs to the cruel whites? . . . [15000] whites
> keeping in wretchedness and degradation [335000] viz. 22
> coloured persons for one white . . . when at the same
> time, an equal number [15000] Blacks, would almost take
> the whole of South America, because where they go as sold-
> iers to fight death follows in their train.[48] (Italics
> added.)

Walker's belief in the reserves of physical power and courage

of blacks was so strong that he claimed 450,000 armed blacks in the U.S.

could take on all of the white people on the continent because "the

Blacks, once they get involved in a war, had rather die than to live,

they either kill or be killed."[49] Thus, he juxtaposed in the person-

alities of blacks the most terrible ferocity and the most abject submis-

siveness, contending that if it were not for the solemn awe felt by

blacks with respect to acts of murder, the situation obtaining between

them and whites would be decidedly different. How much this awe was

credited to natural inclinations and how much to fear born of oppres-

sion he does not make clear. In fact, an excellent illustration of this

ambiguity was offered when he alluded to the "groveling submissions and

treachery" of blacks, to their "ignorant deceptions and consequent

wretchedness," and exlaimed:

> But when I reflect that God is just, and that millions
> of my wretched brethren would meet death with glory -
> yea, more, would plunge into the very mouths of cannons
> and be torn into particles as minute as the atoms which
> compose the elements of the earth in preference to a
> mean submission to the lash of tyrants, I am with
> streaming eyes, compelled to shrink back into nothing-
> ness before my MAKER, and exclaim again, thy will be
> done, O Lord God Almighty.[50]

Just as Walker overestimated the physical powers and the potency

of numbers among African peoples, he underestimated the real power which

had gravitated into the hands of whites as a result of technological changes wrought in the West since the Renaissance and the mathematization of science. If, for example, learning had originated, as he and other black people contended, with his ancestors and been passed on to white people, whites had built a structure on African first principles so imposing that it was already casting a lengthening shadow of conquest over large numbers of people of color throughout the world.[51] Even though he placed great value on learning, the lack of such knowledge did not disturb the impeccability of Walker's logic, for what was techno-logical power before the determination of blacks and, more especially, the fury of a just God?[52]

For all his intense desire to see his people free, it was unthink-able to Walker that people of color should leave America to satisfy the desires of those interested in colonizing them in Africa or elsewhere. Thus the plan of Henry Clay and other defenders of the American Colon-ization Society to colonize free blacks in Africa met, in the person of Walker, a fierce antagonist. He questioned Clay's motivation for stating that Christianity, together with "the arts and civilization," should be introduced into Africa.

> Here I ask Mr. Clay, what kind of Christianity? Did he mean such as they have among the Americans — distinction, whip, blood and oppression? I pray the lord Jesus Christ to forbid it . . . Does he care a pinch of snuff about Africa whether it remains a land of pagans and of blood . . . so long as he gets enough of her sons and daughters to dig up gold and silver for him?[53]

Walker moved to the heart of the Clay position when he dealt with the latter's refusal to deliberate upon the question of the emancipation of the slave. His argument was one that had already become classic among

blacks, that slaveholders wanted free blacks removed in order the more securely to rivet the chains of slavery on their brothers in the South, "and consequently they would have more obedient slaves" by removing the explosive example and teachings of free blacks.[54] His charge against partisans of the American colonization society would be summed up in a word, hypocrisy, and it was that quality on the part of white America as a whole which drew from him one sarcastic denunciation after another - "this happy republic, or land of liberty!!!!!; [T]his land of oppression but pretended liberty!!!!![55]

In spite of his strong opposition to the "plots" of the American Colonization Society, Walker did not completely rule out emigration for some of his people, conjuring those who would leave to go to their "greatest earthly friends and benefactors - the English." Those not interested 20 in going to England or in forming "the residue of coloured people" who would remain in America until the final disposition of slavery and race prejudice, were urged to "go to our brethren, the Haytians" for protection and comfort.[56] Though he did not say no, it is likely that he did not want blacks to go to Africa at that time, among other reasons, because of the chaos and corruption wrought by the slave trade, a trade in which certain degenerate Africans were playing key roles.

Why Walker thought England and Haiti would be willing to receive sizeable numbers of blacks as permanent residents he did not fully explain. There is reason to believe, as regards the English, that a crucial reason for his respect for them stemmed from their role in opposing the slave trade. He admitted that the English "have oppressed us a little and have colonies now in the West Indies which

oppress us sorely." Even so, he thought the English had done "one hundred times more" towards mitigating the plight of blacks "than all the other nations of the earth put together."[57] His reference to Haiti within the context of limited emigration is more easily explained. The Haitians, in his opinion, served as the best model of how black people should behave: they had risen to defeat their oppressors, to liberate themselves, and that was surely sufficient reason for emigration to that island.[58]

Apart from emigration to Haiti or to England, Walker adamantly opposed any such movement of his people from America, lashing out at the American Colonization Society with the passionate anger which predominated among blacks during the entire existence of that organization. But he represented that type of black leader who was profoundly concerned about Africa despite the fact that he opposed general emigration of his people to their ancestral home. As would later be the case with Garnet, Bishop Henry McNeil Turner and other nationalists, Walker held the view that America was more the black man's home than it was the whites. The failure of whites to recognize and protect the humanity of black people, from his point of view, in no way diminished the degree to which the country belonged to those whose "blood and tears" had enriched the land. Indeed, he picked up and developed in full a theme which had been expounded at least as early as the period shortly following the establishment of the American Colonization Society in 1816, the view that blacks had more than earned their citizenship, that their labor and their suffering had settled for all time the question

of whether they had a right to be in America. He repeatedly drew

attention to the extent to which white wealth rested upon black

blood and sweat, to the role which blacks had played in helping to

build the country.

> Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders
> come to beat us from our country. America is more
> our country than it is the whites. . . . The greatest
> riches in all America have arisen from our blood and
> tears: - and will they drive us from our property and
> homes, which we have earned with our blood.?[59]

Since he did not consider all white people devils, Walker

believed cooperation possible with whites who opposed the oppression

of blacks. But Walker's version of cooperation with whites was

precisely that - Walker's, with a meaning rooted deep within a

nationalist consciousness: a recognition of the need for blacks to

combat those forces within their ranks which contributed to self-

hatred and disunity. "(T)hat we should co-operate with them, [whites]

as far as we are able by uniting and cultivating a spirit of friend-

ship and of love among us, is obvious, from the very exhibition of our

miseries, under which we groan."[60]

Walker's interest in friendship and love among blacks was

integrally related to his recognition of their need of self-confidence,

a confidence which would help them, among other things, take on the

responsibility of refuting white attacks on their humanity.

> For let no one suppose that the refutations which have
> been written by our white friends are enough - they are
> whites - we are blacks. We, and the world wish to see
> the charges of Mr. Jefferson [that blacks are inferior]
> refuted by the blacks themselves, according to their
> chance, for we must remember that what the whites have
> written respecting this subject, is other man's labours
> and did not emanate from the blacks.[61]

In the process of advancing the idea of black intellectual hegemony, Walker renewed an old quarrel between blacks and Thomas Jefferson, a dispute that went at least as far back as Benjamin Banneker's letter to Jefferson in 1791. Just as Banneker had assured Jefferson that he was proud to number himself among those Africans "of the deepest dye,"[62] Walker called attention to millions of misguided whites who

> are this day, so ignorant and avaricious, that they cannot conceive how God can have an attribute of justice, and show mercy to us because it pleased Him to make us black - which colour, Mr. Jefferson calls unfortunate. . . . As though we are not as thankful to our God, for having made us as it pleased himself, as they, (the whites) are for having made them white.[63]

Walker added that whites, because they held blacks in slavery, thought they wished "to be white but they are dreadfully deceived" since blacks preferred to be just as they were made by their creator. As he was often given to doing, he left little doubt as to his personal position on this matter, remarking that if anyone wanted to know who he was "know the world, that I am one of the oppressed, degraded and wretched sons of Africa, rendered so by the avaricious and unmerciful, among the whites.[64] But what was as important as his assessment of how he thought blacks felt about the charge of wanting to be white was his view that they should not want to be the initial premise upon which any system of black nationalism must be constructed.

Not the least of the labors to be performed by blacks, then, was the successful struggle for intellectual hegemony. Central to this task was, he contended, the recording of the American experience, the writing of the history of the country. Walker said that the "Lord

shall raise up colored historians in succeeding generations" who would "present the crimes of this nation before the eyes of a gazing world."[65] Not to take such a position would have meant that Walker accepted the American version of her reality, the American value dispensation, and would have negated the need for his advocacy of an autonomous vision for people of color in America.

In spite of the great suffering of people of African descent, a suffering brought on in part by their failure to remain in the proper relationship with God, their troubles would one day come to an end, Walker prophesied, "In spite of all the Americans this side of eternity." When that day arrived blacks would need "all the learning and talents among ourselves, and perhaps more, in order to govern ourselves." He added that "Every dog must have its day, the American's is coming to an end."[66] Further, and this was one of the very few instances in which he referred to people of color in America as a nation, he predicted that the "enslaved children of Africa will have, in spite of all their enemies, to take their stand among the nations of the earth."[67] (Italics added.) They would be repaid for all of their suffering and miseries, and would one day govern themselves as a black nation.

Walker expected people of color of every language, nation, and tongue to secure a copy of his Appeal and read it, or get someone to read it for them. God was listening to the moans of people of color, and it would not be long before they would be enabled in the most extended sense of the word, to stretch forth their hands to the lord,

provided, of course, people of color made an effort to liberate themselves.

> I advanced it therefore to you, not as a problematical, but as an unshaken and for ever immovable fact, that your full glory and happiness, as well as all other coloured people under Heaven, shall never be fully consummated, but with the entire emancipation of your enslaved brethren all over the world. . . . Our greatest happiness shall consist in working for the salvation of our whole body. When this is accomplished a burst of glory will shine upon you, which will indeed astonish you and the world.[66]

Unlike some nationalists who followed him, Walker never really contended, despite his argument that white people in the U.S. are the natural enemies of blacks, that blacks could never secure freedom and justice in America, and therefore that large numbers of them might have to leave the country to find freedom. Nor did he rule out the possibility of future cooperation between the races in America once liberation and some degree of self-government had been won by blacks. Walker was, perhaps wisely, not altogether clear, and certainly not precise, regarding the form of government which should prevail after liberation.

> (W)e ask them for nothing, but the rights of man, viz. for them to set us free, and treat us like men, and there will be no longer, for we will love and respect them, and protect our country - but cannot conscientiously do these things until they treat us like men. . . . Treat us like men, and there is no danger but we will all live in peace and happiness together. For we are not like you . . . unforgiving. . . . Treat us like men, and we will be your friends. And there is not a doubt in my mind, but that the whole of the past will be sunk into oblivion, and we yet, under God, will become a united and happy people. The whites may say it is impossible, but remember that nothing is impossible with God.[29]   (italics added)

27

With that statement Walker laid down what would become cardinal precepts for most nationalists who followed him: There should be no

defense of the country until the country is willing to defend blacks;
there can be no real love of country until respect is extended to those
who suffer at the hands of white Americans; and there can be no friend-
ship or peace with whites until blacks are treated as men. But Walker
pressed the issue beyond that point, insisting on the necessity for
atonement or repentence before "peace and happiness among whites and
blacks can be established." "The Americans," he said, must "make a
national acknowledgement to us for the wrongs they have inflicted on
us."[70]

But what did Walker mean by a "united and happy people?" Like
nationalists following him it is likely that he would have been willing
to see Americans, black and white, as "one people," provided blacks had
some significant influence in determining the direction in which the
country would move, provided, in short, America ceased being a white
country. With his willingness to see his people secure liberation
within America, Walker was one of the first nationalists not to make
the freedom of blacks contingent exclusively on the formation or devel-
opment of a nation of their own. Moreover, it is clear that he wanted
to see black people enter American society on terms that would preserve
them as a people and accord them a place of power in the new dispensation.
This much is clear from a reading of the Appeal. But it is no less clear
that his belief in the possibility of whites and blacks in America living
in harmony was a very, very minor theme in the Appeal, possibly because
it was predicated on a basic change taking place in white behavior and
attitudes toward black people. While Walker thought such a development
possible with God's intercession, it is evident that he considered the

virtual destruction of white America more likely. There was no need for him to be exhaustive about the relationships which might obtain between whites and blacks when the eerie promise of the _Appeal_, for whites, was of probable doom.

V

Though Walker was obviously influenced by western thought, it would be a mistake to conclude that his _revolt_, _political_ and _spiritual_, was grounded primarily in a white world view, in European political and theological sources. There was more to his message than that, for it was he who presented white people, with appropriate qualifications, as the grim persecutors, _the natural foes of African peoples_, and [it was on that distinctly un-American basis that he called his people to resistance or revolution.] A reference to the Declaration of Independence at the end of his _Appeal_, though calculated to provide a context in which the black man's cause would be more readily understood or even supported by whites, was not the _decisive_ basis established in his incendiary document for revolutionary violence, though the Declaration was doubtless invoked for that purpose too.[71]

It was with no small irony, then, that a reporter for _Freedom's Journal_ had in 1827 referred to a meeting of "respectable men of colour" having taken place at the home of David Walker. Indeed, two years later, with the appearance of his _Appeal_, Walker was considered so notorious at the South that a "reward" was being offered for him.[72] Perhaps never before had there been such a brooding, uncompromising attack on American slavery, and perhaps seldom if ever had there been such an assault on

American pretensions to being a democracy, precisely at the time when, it has been said, Andrew Jackson was cultivating a new flowering of freedom for the common man.

Since its publication nearly a century and a half ago, Walker's Appeal has taken on something of the quality of the primordial, something of the cry of outrage for all wrongs suffered by Africans at the hands of whites since the first transaction of oppression between the two peoples. In other words, there is something about the character of his critique which is original, which provides through the ideology of African autonomy, as subsequent nationalists would demonstrate, both a point of departure and a point of arrival for proponents of black nationalism. In his belief that people of African ancestry in the Americas were no less African than their brothers in the ancestral home, in his recognition of their common history as captives and chattels of white men, and in his passionate avowal of the imperative need for revolt wherever African peoples were found, David Walker was perhaps the greatest advocate of total African liberation produced anywhere in the nineteenth century.

2. HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET AND THE AMBIGUITIES OF BLACK NATIONALISM

If there were people who found Walker's _Appeal_ unsettling, there were also those for whom the _Appeal_, as an uncompromising expression of black disaffection, was a greatly respected document. Perhaps Henry Highland Garnet more than any other black, with the possible exception of Nat Turner, was influenced by Walker's words.[1] In time he published the _Appeal_ together with a statement of his own against slavery which, while failing to generate as much fear, largely because it had not been published and circulated until five years after it was framed, probably had greater impact upon black leadership than the _Appeal_.[2] And like the theme of revolt in Walker's _Appeal_, Garnet's _Address To The Slaves_ contains an exhortation to insurrection which has overshadowed, for most authorities, the strong element of nationalism in that and other writings of the man. As there were obvious ideological similarities between the two men, so too were the formative influences on them in some ways largely the same.

In fact, Garnet's background and experiences had prepared him to look upon much of Walker's message with favor. In the very year that Walker's pamphlet electrified large sections of the nation, sending forth currents of fear, Garnet's family, having escaped from slavery, was paid a visit by slave-hunters who had discovered and invaded their retreat, causing his father in escaping to leap from the roof of their two-story home. And though his mother barely managed to elude the hunters, his sister was arrested and tried as a "fugitive from labor." She was released when her "alibi" - of having been in residence in the

city of New York at the time she was accused of being a slave in Mary-
land - proved persuasive.[3] The slave-hunters stole or destroyed all of
the furniture of the Garnet's, obliging the family to start life anew,
empty-handed. "This news fell like a clap of thunder," wrote Dr. James
McCune Smith, upon the fourteen year old Garnet, rousing him "almost to
madness." He purchased a large knife, "carried it in his hand and
sturdily marched up Broadway, waiting and hoping for the assault of the
men-hunters."[4]

Courageous though the youth was, that quality of character,
though important in understanding him, provides but partial insight
into his personality. A number of forces impinged upon him, and the
effects of some were singularly beneficial, especially in preparing him
for a lifetime of dedication to Africa. He found large numbers of black
people in New York who, like those of Boston during the 1820's, still
regarded themselves as Africans. Moreover, the black community of New
York, years before the Garnet's settled there, had established some-
thing of a nationalist tradition which, it is quite possible, was not
uninfluenced by the traditions of West African societies.[5] Organizations
with the word African in their titles were supported by relatively large
numbers of men and women who sometimes displayed boldness in parading
through the racially hostile city carrying banners which affirmed their
humanity, "easily thrusting aside the small impediments [white people]
which blocked their way."[6]

The Garnets had been among the flow of slaves across the Mason-
Dixon line which added to the New York African community some of the
best energies of the South - men and women "in search of freedom, or

escaping from attempts at insurrection." Dr. James McCune Smith, a close associate of Garnet and a major figure of the anti-slavery crusade who knew well the New York African community, described some of the men as "secure in their manhood" and possessing a "feeling of independence," qualities for which Garnet would become widely known.[7] This was probably true of his classmates whom he later met at Oneida Institute. Perhaps never before or since has such a distinguished array of young black men of talent matriculated at the same schools at the same time.[8]

As late as 1827 relatively large numbers of West Indian blacks were being drawn to New York City, together with native born people of color and a substantial number of Africans who had survived the middle passage. The three groups, representing every state in the union, met under conditions especially conducive to fostering unity among them, to enhancing their hatred of slavery and, far more perhaps than they realized, to reinforcing shared cultural traits while lowering some of the barriers between them. The celebration of New York's emancipation Act of 1827 was the magnate which caused the various communities of blacks, in addition to those already residing in New York, to gravitate together to participate in a colorful parade led by "the New York African Society for Mutual Relief."[9]

On that occasion Garnet found himself a participant-observer at a scene which had been enacted, in varying ways, countless times during the more than two centuries of slavery in America: members of the African diaspora were drawn together in one country. During that time, America had been mercilessly hammering out their differences on the anvil of oppression, creating essentially one people in language and culture. But

during Garnet's youth, as fresh imports of Africans from the mother-
land and from the Caribbean were brought in, the three groups were
easily identifiable, especially on occasions such as the Emancipation
celebration:

> The side-walks were crowded with the wives, daughters,
> sisters, and mothers of the celebrants, representing
> every state in the Union, and not a few with gay ban-
> danna handkerchiefs, betraying their West Indian birth:
> neither was Africa itself unrepresented, hundreds who
> had survived the middle passage . . . joined in the
> joyful procession. The people of those days rejoiced
> in their nationality and hesitated not to call each
> other 'Africans' or 'descendants of Africa.'[10]

Garnet's attitude toward Africa, together with his basic com-
mittment to the liberation of his people everywhere, seems to have been
determined by his twelfth year, if not somewhat sooner. But he had a
more direct and personal connection with Africa. Only two generations
removed from the ancestral home, Garnet's grandfather had been an
African chief and warrior. Indeed, it was said that he had "the blood
of a long line of chieftains in his veins," the knowledge of which
undoubtedly provided some inspiration for him to become a leader of
his people.[11] Reputed to be of pure African blood and, according to
one white editor, of "full, unmitigated, unalleviated, and unpardonable
blackness," Garnet took pride in his African heritage. Perhaps because
of his youthful feelings of closeness to Africa and his sense of security
regarding his color while young, he did not feel the need to create a
mystique of blackness or even to indulge in debates over what black
people should call themselves.[12]

I

Though Garnet's early experiences were such that the eventual working out of a nationalist position on his part seemed quite possible, even probable, his first major speech before a meeting commemorating the seventh anniversary of the American anti-slavery society disclosed few, and then rather inconclusive, indications of anything bordering on nationalist sentiments. In fact, that maiden speech, given in 1840, can be said to have been one which reflected considerable faith in the ultimate translation into reality of the principles upon which the country allegedly was founded. Unlike David Walker, Garnet's assessment of American institutions did not, in his speech, reflect revulsion and stern alienation, and it betrayed little of the explosive fury of his most famous speech, one that caused an outcry in both black and white circles three years hence. In short, he appears to have begun, like so many other nationalists, deeply dedicated to the dream of an America free of slavery and race prejudice, of black and white people working out a common destiny in a common country.[13]

While Garnet, in addressing the abolitionists, displayed great respect for the founding fathers, he evinced anything but reverence for their descendants, complaining "in the most unqualified terms, of the past conduct of their degenerate sons." If he pardoned the revolutionists for not plainly "seeing in the first dawning of the day of liberty, " all parts of their patriotic duty

> now that we have reached the mid-day of our national
> career - now that there are ten thousand suns flash-
> ing light upon our pathway, this nation is guilty of
> the basest hypocrisy in witholding the rights due to
> millions of American citizens.[14]

Garnet proceeded to claim American citizenship for black people on the grounds that they defended the country in times of peril, provided, through their enslavement, leisure for whites to improve themselves in literature and science, exercised a religion which taught them to endure much and suffer long, and through their labor turned "a wilderness into a fruitful field."[15] Only in a few places in his speech did he suggest that the faith of his black fathers, of those who fought for the country in the Revolutionary War and in the War of 1812, might have been misplaced, almost an essential step along the road to that disaffection which leads to black nationalism. Did the black men who fought for America fight and bleed as fools or as wise men? he asked.

> They have gone to their rest, many of them with their
> brows all marked with wounds received in fighting the
> battles of liberty, while their backs were furrowed by
> the cruel scourge. Unfortunate men! They knew not
> that their children were to be immolated upon the altar
> of slavery - altars erected upon their very graves . . .
> But what shall be said? Shall we blame these men, and
> say that they slew their own interests? No sir, if the
> revolution was right, they have done nobly . . .[16]

In a word, America was the black man's country, won with blood and tears. Here was a position, proclaimed earlier by Walker, from which Garnet would not retreat, even after moving fully into the sphere of black nationalism nearly a decade later. In his expression of faith in the wisdom of both the founders of the country and his black fathers who fought to preserve and protect America, he had stated what was for him a bedrock principle, one to which he would continue to subscribe throughout his political career. Though this speech was largely oriented toward American principles and institutions, there were intimations of deeply banked burnings of radicalism beneath its sometimes serene

ideological surface. From those depths burst forth fiery indictments to stand in strange juxtaposition to most of his oratory of the day.

> I would hold up before you covenants written with
> blood, that might have been placed in the ark of
> the nation's glory, but which have been seized by
> the oppressor's hand, and torn to pieces by his
> scourge. I would call you to listen to the shrill
> sound of the plantation horn, that comes leaping
> from the South, and finding an echo ever beneath
> our northern hills. In a word I would direct your
> attention to a pile of wrong and national disgrace,
> and shame, as high as heaven.[17]

At the end of his speech Garnet elected to mention Africa, and then in a context with which he would later become closely associated, that of emigration. Failing of prophecy, he asserted that he would never subscribe to emigration, preferring - to "the gentle winds that whisper of freedom among the groves of Africa" - being a stranger to freedom during his pilgrimage below if it "cannot be found in my own native land."[18]

In his _Address to the Slaves_ in 1843, a rather different Garnet from the man who addressed the Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840 seems to emerge directly out of the context of his youthful resistance to oppression and devotion to people of African descent. Those portions of his thought three years earlier which seemed to stand out so awkwardly against that background appear, in his exhortation to the slaves, to be consumed in the fire of his rage against slavery and the defenders of that system. He remarked that Christians disclosed to "the first of our injured race brought to the shores of America . . . the worst features of corrupt and sordid hearts," and convinced them that no robbery and no villainy were too abhorrent, no cruelty too great for men driven by avarice and lust.[19]

The Africans, "from their beloved native land," were plunged into forced labor and "deep degradation." Garnet spoke of the "gross inconsistency" of a people enslaving others after having come to America seeking freedom, of humanity "supplicating with tears" for the liberation of "the children of Africa," of the colonists having won independence only to add "new links to our chains."[20]

Garnet's references to Africa during the course of the relatively brief speech are positive, and seem to reflect genuine pride in that continent. In conjuring the slaves to rise and destroy the institution of slavery, he cited Joseph Cinque's heroics on board the _Amistad_ in emancipating a ship-load of Africans. Cinque, he said, "now sings of liberty on the sunny hills of Africa and beneath his native palm-trees, where he hears the lion roar and feels himself as free as that king of the forest."[21] Even when not discussing deeds of grandeur by Africans of Cinque's stature, Africa was no place of unrelieved savagery for Garnet. Thus, he contended that the "untutored African" roaming in the wilds of the Congo loved liberty as much as the "nice discerning political economist," that it was as wrong for blacks to be held in slavery as it was for "The man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa," that blacks should therefore use the same kind of resistance that was just with their ancestors "when the bloody foot-prints of the first remorseless soul-thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland."[22] An aspect of his breed of nationalism, clearly evident from 1848 until his death - the right of blacks to seek the establishment of a nation elsewhere while remaining unflagging in their insistence that America is their home and citizenship their sacred right - was foreshadowed in his

Buffalo speech of 1843: "Think of the undying glory that hangs around the ancient name of Africa: - and forget not that you are native-born American citizens, and as such, you are justly entitled to all the rights that are granted to the freest."[23] (Italics added.)

Garnet shared Walker's belief in the power of black men, though he did not join Walker in positing superhuman strength for people of African ancestry. He spoke substantial truth, in reflecting on the physical prowess of blacks, when he noted that their sternest energies had been developed through the severe trial of bondage.

> Slavery has done this, to make you subservient to its own purposes; but it has done more than this. It has prepared you for any emergency. If you receive good treatment, it is what you could hardly expect; if you meet with pain, sorrow, and even death, these are the common lot of the slaves . . . Among the diversity of opinions that are entertained in regard to physical resistence, there are but a few found to gainsay that stern declaration. We are among those who do not.[24]

While it is true that black nationalists sometimes had a tendency to exaggerate the power of blacks, it is not unfair to note that some were given to excesses at the other end of the spectrum, of assessments of black manhood which were almost the equivalent of the view that slavery practically dehumanized their people. Not surprisingly, Garnet's analysis of his people was no exception. As he surveyed four million, he did not see many who were willing to resist. Rather, he viewed and was horrified by black men who allowed their wives to be defiled before their very eyes, their sisters to be driven into concubinage, their children's cries to go unheeded.[25] But his judgment of the oppressors of blacks was stern and unflinching: The overlords were damanged, spiritually and psychologically, by the oppressor-oppressed relationship; they were

"incarnate devils" who had "cursed themselves" and "the earth which they have trod." (Italics added.) In his opinion, just as the blacks were strong, the whites were "weak." If blacks were being forced to satisfy the lusts of the overlords, then whites were the "sensual" ones.[26]

II

Garnet's Address sharply raised a point of contention between blacks inclined toward nationalism and whites who felt that the ideological stance of blacks must somehow be ratified by them. His thesis that the time had come for violence, that non-resistance was "ridiculous and not to be thought of" by the slaves met with an angry and condescending response from Maria Weston Chapman. A poet, Garrisonian abolitionist and editor pro tem of the Liberator, she chastised Garnet for joining the Liberty party and for his advocacy of violence. While approving the behavior of those who opposed him, she ascribed the basest motives to Garnet and his followers. He responded to Miss Chapman by saying that he could "think on the subject of human rights without 'counsel,' either from the men of the West, or the women of the East," that he was "one black American who dares to speak boldly on the subject of universal liberty."[27]

Garnet's display of daring in advocating open rebellion among the slaves at a time when men as influential as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass were advancing moral suasion as the best means of effecting a resolution of the problem of slavery elicited opposition from a host of black Abolitionists in attendance at the Buffalo Convention. But the fact that his resolution supporting the desirability of slave rebellions nearly carried attests the considerable impact of his

ideas and personality upon black Abolitionists.[28] Considering the degree
to which many of the black Abolitionists were dependent on the Garrison-
ians for Abolitionist strategy, the support of nearly half of the Con-
vention for Garnet's resolution must be regarded as an affirmation of
independent thought for black people, as a contribution toward a measure
of black nationalism as a means, if not the end, of liberation.[29]

Far more important than the exchange with Miss Chapman, however,
had been Frederick Douglass' fight against the adoption of Garnet's reso-
lution, which was undoubtedly the key to securing its defeat. It is
quite likely that the long and apparently irreconcilable rift between the
two men dated from that Buffalo encounter of 1843. Douglass, a non-
resistant and generally regarded as the leading black figure in the
Abolitionist movement, a decade later would not only come out for violence
but for using political parties as a means of advancing the cause of
abolitionism, positions for which he, Miss Chapman and others had bit-
terly assailed Garnet. But the Buffalo clash between Douglass and
Garnet was but a curtain raiser for other passages of arms between these
giants of the black Abolitionist movement.

Garnet's work on the local level revealed as much about his
political philosophy as his activities at national meetings such as the
one at Buffalo. Much of his work was carried out under auspices of the
convention movement of the state of New York. In a report drafted for
the Fifth Annual Convention of the Colored Citizens of that state, he
urged his people to patronize those among them who were engaged in "use-
ful handicrafts" and, more importantly, to become the owners of land
and "the founders of towns and villages."[30] Though he did not say so,

there is every reason to believe that he had in mind blacks governing these towns and villages. This thesis is consistent with his belief, given full expression later, that blacks must be free to determine their own destiny.

Typical of Garnet's efforts on behalf of black autonomy was the role he played in the Convention Movement's attempt to establish a national Negro press at their meeting in Troy, New York, in 1847. Garnet, James McCune Smith, Alexander Crummell, and Charles L. Reason were among those who led the fight to institute the press. This effort was opposed by Frederick Douglass on the floor of the convention and later in the North Star, which led some of the delegates to charge him with selfishness.[31] Had a national black press been created and financed by blacks, it would have been a significant institutional development within the Afro-American community, since other Negro newspapers depended heavily on white financial support to stay alive.

Garnet was not alone in believing that the problems of people of color could be successfully resolved in America while recognizing the value of black people creating and controlling institutions of their own. Dozens of leaders believed as much.[32] But these forces within Garnet, as the years passed, seemed to be held in dialectical tension, as illustrated in one of his most important statements, one in which he gave significant attention to the African in diaspora. Writing in 1848, his treatment of the West Indian dimension of the black experience was such as to barely suggest a tipping of the balance, a possible ideological turn in his thinking, one which would be fully evinced a year later. A key statement prefigured his coming interest in emigration and the need

for the accumulation of larger and larger amounts of power in the hands

of African peoples:

> Nine hundred thousand of these people are enjoying
> their freedom in the British West India Isles . . .
> while in Haytl we have an independent population of
> nearly a million. Possessing a land of unsurpassed
> fertility, they have but to turn their attention
> manfully to agricultural pursuits and it will shine
> forth the brightest isle that slumbers in the arms
> of old ocean.[33] (Italics added.)

Considering his early exposure to West Indian and African blacks,

it is clear that Garnet made little or no distinction between blacks in

the U.S. and Haitian blacks, that he felt that Haiti belonged to all

people from Africa, and that the possibility of a better life for some

might be in the offing there. His interest in the suffering ancestral

home and in Africans abroad was deep: "O Africa! thou has bled, freely

bled, at every pore! Thy sorrow has been mocked, and thy grief has not

been heeded. Thy children are scattered over the whole earth, and the

great nations have been enriched by them."[34]

Garnet believed that overseas Africans had been greatly crippled

by disunity within their ranks. He sounded this theme and, like Walker,

would not permit his people to abdicate responsibility for changing

their condition. He presented a full list of problems affecting them -

party feuds and dissensions, idolatry and sectarianism from those

supposedly dedicated to God, endless disputes over what they should call

themselves, the drawing of the color line within the group, and the

expenditure of huge sums of money on empty display. He suggested that

while such evils may have arisen from slavery, they are ingredients with-

out which that oppressive condition would not exist. If black people as

much as was in their power, he noted, did not destroy the evils then blacks would be covered with much of their own blood.[35]

Neither Garnet's black nationalism nor his love of American institutions should be taken at face value, for there was much complexity beneath both. He believed that "this republic, and this continent, are to be the theater in which the grand drama of our triumphant Destiny is to be enacted," that the West "is destined to be filled with a mixed race."[36] Yet regarding the possibility of Mexico being annexed to the U.S. and subject to the intrusion of the "black" flag of slavery, he remarked that he would not despair of the success of liberty in the hemisphere if Mexico were annexed to the United States: "For one I would welcome my dark-browed and liberty-loving brethren to our embrace. Aye! Let them come with the population of seven and a half millions." He thought one fifth of the people of Mexico white, two fifths Indians, and two fifths of them "black, and mixed races."[37]

Delighted at the prospect of adding millions of people of color - red, black and brown - to the American population, Garnet, at this time was a very special kind of amalgamationist, if amalgamationist at all. It is evident from this position that even his conception of the future racial makeup of America sharply reflected the ideological tension within, but the matter was being resolved in favor of greater reliance on people of color, one which would reach major proportions within the next decade.

Meanwhile, Garnet was not prepared to see an exodus of blacks from America. He rejected the possibility, on the grounds that it was too late, of seeing the whole of his people "re-colonized back to our

fatherland." Black and white people loved each other too much for that
to occur. Nature and circumstances had decreed that the two peoples
would remain together. If colored people should all consent to leave
America "there would be sore lamentations, the like of which the world
has not heard since Rachel wept for her children, and would not be
comforted, because they were not."[38] Black people were already colonized,
planted in America, and whether the motives of those who wanted them
colonized elsewhere were good or evil the scheme was utopian, impossible
of realization. While the Indian was retreating before the approach of
the white man, falling "like trees on the ground in which they first took
root, and on the soil which their foliage once shaded," colored people,
even though colonized in a foreign land, "have clung to and grown with
their oppressors, as the wild ivy entwines with every tribe from Cape
Horn to Frozen Ocean."[39] Within a year, however, Garnet altered his
position on emigration, bringing it into line with selective emigrationists
before him.[40]

While elements of nationalism had been present in his 1843 Buffalo
speech, in his Past and Present Address, in his general posture of leader-
ship and in programs for improving the black community, it was not until
1849 that Garnet embarked on a more complete program of nationalism, one
which combined selective emigrationism and the strengthening of previous
tendencies toward a nationalist program for the U.S. These objectives
were substantially complementary, evolving out of his earlier position.
But the new ideological departure did run counter to his earlier rejection
of any kind of emigrationism, a rejection which, considering his previous
ties with Africans and West Indians, can perhaps best be explained on the

grounds that emigration was so closely associated in his mind and the minds of others with the American Colonization Society.

In any case, during the initial stages of his advocacy of emigration, Garnet restated the citizenship rights of his people and began developing his position along lines that would provide the classic defense for significant numbers of blacks of talent leaving America – to build a strong black state which would elevate the image and status of black people throughout the world.[41] In effect, the dedicated emigrationist would be fighting on two fronts, not abandoning his brothers and sisters in America. In time Garnet honed this concept to the point of developing a program which addressed itself specifically to the plight of the American slave. Meanwhile, he made it clear that he favored colonization in Mexico, California, Africa, the West Indies, in a section of the U.S. – "wherever it promises freedom and enfranchisement."[42] With that, the emigration movement had won over its most distinguished proponent of the ante-bellum period, a man as highly regarded by many within the national black community as Frederick Douglass.

III

In 1849 the anti-slavery movement in England invited Garnet to visit that country. In a "portrait" of Garnet, Douglass said that "This individual we understand, is to leave the United States for England during the approaching autumn." Douglass argued, perhaps erroneously, that Garnet, because he had made many speeches calling for slave insurrections, while attacking moral suasion as a means of anti-slavery activity in America, was being hypocritical in going abroad "to appeal

to the moral sense of England, and ask the moral aid of England for the
abolition of slavery."[43]   But he did not stop there. Knowing that his
words would be read in England as well as the U.S., and intending them
more perhaps for consumption there than at home, he wrote -

> The man whose conviction [sic] do not go with his
> words, is not fit to plead this cause - and his
> eloquence will merely be sound and fury signifying
> nothing . . . His feelings towards us so far as we
> have been able to learn them, are those of bitter
> hostility. His cause here has been that of an enemy
> . . . We prefer an open enemy, to one in disguise.[44]

In response to Douglass' editorial assault, Garnet launched a
counterattack. He said that he was speaking plainly and pointedly be-
cause the "poison" which he was analyzing emanated from a respectable
and lofty source as far as influence and ability were concerned. He
began with the charge that Douglass was guilty of not believing America
to be the home of people of color.[45] This was an especially interesting
accusation since one might have expected it to have come from one inter-
ested in the absorption of black people into American life rather than
from one with strong nationalist sympathies. In fact, each man seemed
to have the argument that one might have expected from the other.[46]

In responding Douglass contended, with respect to the allegation
that black people had no country, that in the sense in which he made the
assertion it was perfectly true. - "we have no country." He said that
Garnet knew precisely what was originally intended by the charge, that
the colored man did not have the rights and privileges of a citizen of
the country, and as such was "an outlaw of the land." That Garnet would
"resort to palpable falsehood" was, Douglass thought, but a measure of
the weakness of his position. To test his belief that he had a country,

Douglass conjured Garnet to go to Charleston, South Carolina "under the protection of the American Constitution, and his country will be limited to a prison."[47] Douglass affirmed that his people had a "right to a country here," but distinguished between this right and realities confronting them.

Douglass pointed out that Garnet's trip to England was more significant in one respect than the visits of most black abolitionists who preceeded him. In his case, the English would be afforded an opportunity to observe and evaluate the talents of one of incontestable African heritage. As relatively free of race prejudice as the English were, the talents of light-skinned men of color were usually dismissed in that country, as was often the case in the U.S., by friend and foe of slavery on the ground that their white ancestors were responsible for their ability. But as James McCune Smith explained

> Here was a gentleman of splendid physique, polished manners, extensive learning, well up, especially in English poetry, ably filling the pulpits of their best divines, and bearing all the laurels in elo- quence, wit, sarcasm, interlarded with soul-subduing pathos . . . and this gentleman an African of pure lineage, with no admixture of Saxon blood as the source of his unquestionable talent and genius.[48]

Described by his hosts as "a coloured gentleman, of pure African descent," Garnet said that he was laboring in behalf of an injured race "on the continents of America and Africa, and of countless numbers on the islands of the ocean."[49] Though received with enthusiasm, he did not spare England from criticism for her role in supporting American slavery, accusing that country of having woven the fabrics that were exchanged for captive slaves, and of having forged the slave's chains.[50]

It was precisely in the area of procuring and producing slave products that he thought moral suasion would be effective, and so he urged the British to choose free over slave produce. He displayed cottons and cotton fabrics, products of non-slave labor on sale in Gateshead, New-castle, and elsewhere. Garnet told his audience that there were British colonies which could grow cotton more advantageously than the American South, and he hoped "every encouragement would be given by the Britons to this branch of industry."[51]

Some months later, before a meeting of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Garnet repeated his concern over Britain patron-izing the slave South. England "could strike a death-blow at slavery," if she would cease using "slave-grown" produce. He urged England to invest in producing articles of free-labor - "in Australia and in Africa," which would cause Americans to realize the unproductiveness of holding blacks in slavery, which in turn would cause them very speedily to stop"; and, instead of hearing of slaves running from their masters, they should hear of masters running from their slaves."[52]

Garnet was unsparing in his criticism of the American Colonization Society and its leaders, whom he considered the black man's worst enemies because they presented to view two faces, or as many as would best meet the demands of their purposes. "This society had encouraged," Garnet reported, "outrage and oppression towards the coloured people, and in their affliction they deceitfully come up, and with smiles say, 'Now had you not better go to Africa?'"[53] Garnet remarked that when black people indicated a desire to remain in their native country, the Coloni-zationists would press still harder, rejoining, "But don't you see that the laws are against you, and therefore you had better go?"

Why, who had made these laws?

The very men who would be first to transport them!
The Daniel Websters, and Henry Clays, and such-like
man, slave-owners, with their hundreds of slaves —
these were the men who made the laws, and would
then transport the black man that he might be freed
from their operation![54]

While critical of the American Colonization Society, Garnet made clear his continuing strong interest in Africa, explaining that Africa was the land of his fathers, that they had lived and died there. He asserted that he loved Africa and felt "grateful to any one and everyone who labours to promote its welfare."[55] Nor had he gone back on his interest in Liberia; it was simply that no good, he felt, could come of any relationship between that country and the Colonization Society. His audience was informed that support for that Society could not be found among intelligent colored men in the U.S., so much so that agents of that organization "would not attempt to appear at a meeting of coloured people in any city of the free States."[56]

Garnet did not exaggerate in saying, regarding his views on the Colonization Society, that he spoke "in the name of the mass of the free American blacks," and that "whoever asserts that the coloured people or their true friends entertain any other sentiments towards the Society than the deepest contempt and abhorrence, asserts that which is entirely false."[57] It appears Garnet had not gone to England either to denounce his ideological opponents at home or in any way to change his long-held position on the Colonization Society.

For a while Garnet had not wanted to return to America. Having traveled through Ireland, England and Wales, Scotland, France, and

Germany, he had experienced a degree of freedom scarcely imaginable in
America. Garnet and the rest of his family, his wife and son, had been
so pleased with life abroad, especially in England, that he had decided
never to live in America again, unless so directed by divine providence.
His love of England, however, had not been strong enough to prevent him
from wanting to minister to the needs of African peoples, and under
those circumstances he had gone to Jamaica - an unexpected tour made
possible through the good offices of the United Presbyterian Church of
Scotland.[58] An attack of fever led Garnet to decide to return to
America, and he did in 1856, accepting a unanimous call to pastor a
church.

Long years of absence from the country had meant, among other
things, that Garnet was not on the scene as emigrationist sentiment
grew. During his absence, more and more blacks, Frederick Douglass
among them, came to believe that non-resistance was no longer the method
to be used in coping with slavery, nor were Douglass and others who had
been in the Garrisonian camp still subscribing to the view that political
parties were worthless. Indeed, Garnet found the atmosphere somewhat
more congenial to his own views on more than one level.[59] Having missed
the emigration convention of 1854 at Cleveland, he had returned to an
America in which he was no longer the only major advocate of black
nationalism. In the years of his absence, Martin Delany had emerged as
an important proponent of black nationalist ideology, but he lacked Gar-
net's preeminent stature as a leader.[60]

The emigrationist activities of Delany, Robert Campbell and other
black leaders, the promotion of Yorubaland and Haiti as possible places

to which blacks might emigrate, these developments and more marked the decade of the 1850's as one of significant interest on the part of black people in emigration.[61] Not surprisingly, the period was also one during which criticism of such plans was especially harsh and trenchant. Garnet and Douglass, the two most outstanding black leaders of ante-bellum America, were also the two most influential to clash on the issue of emigration.

Though Garnet had declared for emigration in 1849, largely due to his years abroad in the cause of anti-slavery he had not for some time, except by letters, expressed his thoughts on that subject to American audiences. As the decade neared its close, as the situation of black people became worse, North and South, it was clear that he was favoring the voluntary emigration of enterprising blacks more forcefully than ever. It was also certain that opposition to Garnet's ideas on emigration, especially from Frederick Douglass, was no less forceful. Once again he would have to answer Douglass, as he had nearly twenty years earlier on the question of slave insurrections, if he were to secure important black support for the emigration movement.

Early in 1859, Douglass received a letter of protest from Garnet in which he was accused of not giving the recently established African Civilization Society, of which Garnet was President, a fair hearing in Frederick Douglass' Monthly. Challenged to set forth his objections to the program of the Society, which aimed, among other goals, to destroy slavery and the slave trade, Douglass appeared eager to oblige. He rather curiously accused Garnet of believing that there could never be equality between whites and blacks in America - a point of view which

Garnet had denounced for nearly twenty years. In addition, Garnet and his followers were accused of encouraging the belief, through the solicitations of funds to send colored men to Africa, that Africa and not America is the Negro's true home - a strange, rather inexplicable position in light of Garnet's consistency in arguing that the U.S., not Africa, was the home of Afro-Americans.[62]

To Garnet's question if he had "objections to the civilization and christianization of Africa," Douglass retorted that those goals were in fact being achieved "through the instrumentality of commerce, and the labors of faithful missionaries."[63] Douglass' view that the best way to destroy the slave trade was to deracinate slavery in America was surely one of his more weighty arguments. But even here he failed to take into account the relatively effective role that Negro emigrants to Liberia, together with the navies of the British, French and Americans, were playing in stamping out the slave trade along the coast of Liberia.[64] And so his argument that there was "no reason to believe that any one man in Africa can do more for the abolition of that trade, while living in Africa, than while living in America" was not altogether convincing.[65]

Despite very strong feelings against emigration, Douglass said that he did not object to individuals of their own volition going to Africa, to the West Indies or elsewhere. Instead, he objected to organizations being formed to encourage and support voluntary emigration, for then the matter ceased being private and became public, and therefore subject to legitimate opposition.[66] Such was Douglass' stature that his criticism, no matter its merit, could not be ignored.

Attacks directed at Garnet some months later from delegates to the

New England Convention, provided the immediate provocation for him to spell out in full his views on emigration and nationalism.[67] At that convention he had been opposed by some of black America's most distinguished Abolitionists, among them William Wells Brown, William C. Nell, and George Downing, who placed the African Civilization Society in the most unfavorable light possible, a cloud having been cast upon it when a resolution of censure was introduced coupling it with the American Colonization Society.[68]

Wells Brown, long-time foe of slavery, attacked the Civilization Society on the grounds that "he could not countenance any movement" favoring emigration. He told the New England Convention that despite the "very good plan" which he ascribed to the Society, their tactic of "begging" distressed him because it served to "degrade" the movement. Nell juxtaposed in resolutions of condemnation the American Colonization Society and the organization headed by Garnet, and charged that the African Civilization Society was a money making operation, that it looked "rather dark [laughter]," and that no one active in the civilization movement was interested in going to Africa. When a person on the platform said he would, Downing countered, "the sooner you go the better. [Great sensation and laughter]."[69]

J. Sella Martin, presiding at a meeting of colored citizens in Boston, the meeting at which Garnet answered his critics, indicated in his introductory remarks something of the seriousness and intensity of the debate in which Garnet was engaged. Of Garnet, Martin said that he had been unchanging and unchanged in his fidelity, that he

> advocates the movement . . . has given his time and
> talent to it without reward, and . . . now comes to
> remove the aspersions cast upon him in the late New
> England Convention, and to vindicate, by his own
> statements, the position he occupies with regard to
> this movement. Allow me, then, to introduce to you
> the Rev. Henry Highland Garnet. (Prolonged applause)[70]

Garnet began by brushing aside an objection that he, when referring to the New England Convention, should have mentioned that whites were also present. He remarked that he had "emphasized 'colored men' to show that we are in an age of progression." (Italics added.) He observed that during one stage of his people's history - "a few years ago" - there was a feeling all over the free states among the leadership that black people "need not make any effort in the cause of liberty . . . as people of color." He remarked that during that period he had told them that they were in error, yet they, despising the name of color, talked "only about universal rights and universal liberty."[71] Then Garnet, in a single sentence, framed the core of his philosophy of black nationalism.

> I knew that the day would come when you would think
> that we, as colored people, had peculiar interests
> - feelings and interests that no other people had -
> and that we understood the cause better than any
> others, and that if we wanted the work done at all
> we must do it ourselves.[72]

Garnet stated that blacks had too long been depending on others. Years had passed away and they were still looking to the Abolitionists to make the difference when only they themselves could do the work that would win their liberation. The task of the white Abolitionist, and it was not an inconsiderable one, was to prepare the public for a free and full discussion of the oppression of blacks, for the emancipation of the

slaves and for the enfranchisement of "free" blacks, that is, to create a climate which would help the thrust of blacks for freedom successfully carry home.[73]

Many blacks, according to Garnet, would not give serious consideration to leaving America because white men say they should go. Referring to such Afro-Americans, he remarked that they would not go to Africa if the land were strewn with gold and silver covered the shores because white people had told them to go. He thought "some people wouldn't go to Heaven if a white-man should say they must go." In a way which anticipated a key argument of Bishop Turner a quarter of a century later, Garnet remarked that black men waited until white men, realizing the economic potential of Africa, went there and earned great sums of money before finally, if they went at all, lagging behind. He said that some eight thousand white men were engaged in economic activity along the coast of Africa, enriching themselves. Some were eager to tell blacks that they should not seek economic advancement in Africa because they would interrupt trade "already established between Africa and England."[74]

Garnet rebuked his people for having suffered "the white man to plunder the land of their forefathers of living souls, for three hundred years," and for standing idly by while whites made economic capital out of "the wonderful discoveries of Livingston, Barth, and others." "God, and science and unconquerable human energy," he thought, "have turned the tide of fortune in our favor." Yet white men were laughing as black men, quarreling among themselves, failed to take advantage of opportunities available to them. He pointed to developments in the Western part of the U.S. as an illustration of the slowness of blacks to act, stating that

after whites have mined the gold "you will see my poor brother coming, all covered with dust, with his tongue lolling out [great laughter] to take what is left."   Only after the Anglo-Saxon has gotten rich in Africa would blacks "begin to talk about putting our funds together and buying vessels." If blacks put a dozen ships to sail out of Boston harbor, keeping up a trade with Africa, more would be done to effect the overthrow of slavery, to create respect for them and to break down pre- judice "than fifty thousand lectures of the most eloquent men of this land." [75]

The discussion of the African Civilization Society in Garnet's Boston Speech established the general framework in which his views on emigration would be more fully developed from 1859 until the emancipation of the slaves. He reiterated the major goals of the Civilization Society, the unconditional and immediate abolition of slavery in North America and in Africa, and the destruction of the slave trade on both continents. He added as an objective of the Civilization Society a strategy for destroying slavery that was also held by Martin Delany, the cultivation of cotton in large enough amounts to undersell the American South on the world market. This he hoped would free certain countries, especially Britain, from "dependence on the cotton raised in the Southern states by slave labor," and would, he hoped, "strike the death-blow to American slavery." [76]

Denying that he was a Colonizationist, Garnet accused anyone who would make the charge behind his back of being an assassin and coward, and labeled one who would make it to his face a liar, "and I stamp the infamous charge upon his forehead!" He added that he had hated the

Colonization Society since his childhood, continued to detest the sentiments advocated by its leaders, and expected to do so until that Society renounced its program of Colonization before the world. The Colonization Society, he noted, says that America is not the home of the colored man. Garnet remarked that America "is the home of the colored man, and it is my home." As to the American Colonization Society's belief that black people "cannot be elevated in this country," he would subscribe to "nothing of the kind."[77]

Garnet asserted that though he might not live to see it, the day was not far away when, the sky brightening over the land from Maine to California and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, "shouts of redeemed millions shall be heard" and "truth and peace shall fill the land, and songs of rejoicing shall go up to Heaven."[78] Surely the members of the American Colonization Society did not entertain those sentiments. But for all his expectations regarding the future of blacks in America, he nevertheless did not want whites, who had grievously wronged the homeland, to escape responsibility for Africa's degradation and redemption.

> I believe that black men in general are bound by
> the laws of love and humanity, and the principles
> of the Gospel to do all they can for the land of
> our forefathers, and that white people are bound
> in particular to do it, since they have robbed us
> of our lives, and become rich by our blood, and it
> is therefore for them to make sacrifices that Africa
> may be redeemed, and that they may bless it as they
> have so long cursed it.[79]

In language strikingly similar to that of his former classmate and good friend Alexander Crummell, the most distinguished black divine of the century, Garnet said he wanted to see established, in Africa or in the U.S., "a grand centre of negro nationality, from which shall flow

the streams of commercial, intellectual, and political power which shall make colored people respected everywhere." If necessary to effect this end, he favored the reopening of the African slave trade.

> Let them bring in a hundred thousand a year! We
> do not say it is not a great crime, but we know
> that from the wickedness of man God brings forth
> good; and if they do it, before half a century
> shall pass over us we shall have a Negro national-
> ity in the United States.[80] (Italics added.)

Garnet considered the South the best American area in which a black nation might be developed. In addition to the presence of the greatest concentration of his people in the South, the strong tendency among Northern blacks to try to escape their group by speaking of universal rights, by wanting to drop racial designations. While he thought such behavior false and dangerous in the North, it would have been almost beyond imagining for blacks in the South and, if acted on, very likely fatal. This he obviously knew. Garnet, in short, recognized the great mass of Southern blacks to be people with few illusions about the group to which they belonged, about their destiny as a people bound together by history and oppression. He thought them especially receptive to a Negro nationality, unless "I am mistaken in the spirit of my people."[81]

With an eye for population figures in the West Indies reminiscent of Walker, Garnet added that in Jamaica there were forty colored men to every white man, that "Hayti is ours," that "Cuba will be ours soon, and we shall have every Island in the Caribbean Sea."[82] (Italics added.) These islands with predominantly black populations belonged, he thought, to all black people. Thus, he complemented Walker's position that Africans everywhere must be free before those in the U.S. could enjoy real freedom by adding that land occupied by black people belonged to all people of African ancestry.

IV

Almost from the beginning of his public pronouncements on the oppression of his people, Garnet had displayed sufficient flexibility to use nationalism as a means toward achieving freedom in the United States as well as, if need be, an end in itself. Since his nationalism was at least in significant measure a response to race prejudice, he implied that as the larger society accorded more rights to blacks, he would be prepared to accept a new order in which blacks would have something less than complete autonomy. In this context, he could declare, much like David Walker a generation before, that when slavery _and prejudice_ were uprooted, when color was no longer important to white people, black people "should lay aside all distinctive labors, and come together as men and women, members of the great American family."[83] (Italics added.) In characteristic nationalist form, in the end he gave freedom primacy over nationalism, for it was the liberation of his people that was the supreme object of his endeavors.

That Garnet, and so few nationalists of ante-bellum America, did not despise white people as a whole seems extraordinary indeed, considering the way in which Americans generally, and many white "friends" in particular, betrayed black people. Instead of having built up abundant hatred of whites, Garnet and most of the black leaders of his time, including nationalists, manifested a remarkable degree of humanism. And it was precisely this humanistic strain of thought -- a willingness even to forgive the oppressors of their people provided the oppression ceased and atonement took place, a recognition that white people had been brutalized

by their environment and consequently were not inherently evil - which helps explain the willingness of Garnet, Walker and other ante-bellum nationalists to allow for the possibility of alliances with certain members of the larger society.

Garnet's refusal to eschew white support, as long as blacks took major responsibility for their liberation, was consistent with nationalist behavior before and following his years of involvement in nationalist endeavors.[84] Still, he was not willing to have his people give up their right to revolt. In fact, his belief in the right of the slaves to overthrow salvery was, ironically, integral to his faith in the future of people of color in America. That Garnet and others believed in the desirability of Afro-American hegemony while seeking, to whatever extent possible, to realize their objectives through the machinery of American politics was not contradictory. On the contrary, such an approach, since it was not aimed at bringing about a colorblind America in which black people would embrace the values of white society, might well enhance rather than subvert efforts of black people to establish a power base for themselves in America.

But serious contradictions enter at the point at which the nationalist advocated, as did Garnet, the carving out of a separate black nation within the boundaries of the United States or proposed the emigration of very large numbers of their people from America, as other nationalists would, for such developments would be clearly antagonistic to U.S. political and economic institutions (though not to the spirit of the Declaration of Independence as interpreted by black revolutionaries such as David Walker).

When one considers the vulnerability of blacks in a country with scarcely any interest whatever, prior to the Reconstruction years, in extending the most elementary rights to them, North or South, it is unreasonable even to expect consistency of strategy on the part of nationalists, individually or in groups. The very complexity of the problems confronting black people presupposed no simple strategy of liberation, which doubtless explains the willingness of men like Walker and Garnet to propose first one then another approach, sometimes to put forth multiple strategies simultaneously.

If an examination of Garnet's political philosophy reveals the tensions of ambiguity, the same cannot be said in anything like equal measure of his views on the value system of people of color in America. Indeed, the complexity of his political position, when compares to his views on black culture, is all the more striking, for like almost all nineteenth century nationalists, including Walker, Garnet failed to acknowledge the presence and the power of black culture. He did not concern himself with Afro-American arts - the music of his people, sacred or secular, or their folktales and dance. Nor did he seem to be aware of the specifically African influences in Afro-American art, or the manner in which African influences led to transmutations of the Christian faith.

These African-influenced artistic and spiritual creations had a deeply functional purpose which Garnet and other early nationalists failed to acknowledge, perhaps even perceive: the various elements of

Afro-American art and religion, especially, acted in cluster to militate against the great bulk of black people being overcome with despair, forming the foundation of the black ethos even as one after another African attribute - language, artifact, religion, name, tribal alignment - was rendered little more than a remnant or vestige when not completely erased by American slavery.

Had Garnet appreciated the worth of Afro-American art and religion, understood that the strengths of Afro-American culture could be measured in part by its distance from the larger society, it is likely that he would have been in a position to conceive more of worth in contemporary African societies. Apparently the volume of anti-African propaganda was so great that it virtually blinded him to the possibility that Africans, while in numerous respects very _different_ culturally, were certainly no more "savage" or "uncivilized," despite their lack of technological advances, than Wester, Christian man. Unable to make this leap, Garnet and other black leaders found it easier to condemn most of what they knew of the black man's culture(s) in Africa and in the Americas.

This failing had far-reaching effects for the development of nationalist ideology. Specifically, slave art and religion were the most essentially nationalistic or African possessions held by people of color in America. Had Garnet been aware of them and attempted to use those expressions of black culture as vehicles for defining, clarifying and sustaining values, as instrumentalities for forging greater group consciousness among his people; hadhe, in short, attempted to meld the political and cultural in defining the place of black people in American life, he would have made a profoundly original contribution to black

nationalist thought at a critical period in its ideological develop-
ment. As suggested earlier, perhaps the degradation of his people,
which was real and deep enough, but nonetheless a degradation to which
he had given grim, stereotypical emphasis, did not for him admit of
vaulting creativity among those in bondage.

It is also likely that Garnet was too revolted by what slavery
had done and was doing to black people to contemplate the heights which
slave art and religion had attained. After all, most men who call for
the oppressed to throw off the terrible yoke of oppression, who live on
terms fraught with the gravest dangers – and Garnet and Walker were
surely such men – are seldom given to emphasizing the virtues of the
subjugated. Their emphasis is more likely to be on what must be done
to shatter the various forms of oppression. And when urging immediate,
violent revolution, as did the young Garnet, it is unlikely that much
attention will be devoted to the art and religion of the oppressed.

Whatever the explanation for his failure to appreciate certain
aspects of black culture, Garnet's contributions to black nationalism
and African unity, like those of Walker, are incontestable. As a
practionner of black nationalism on the community level, he had few if
any peers. And though his ideas on nationalism were generally not as
seminal as those of Walker, he more than any of his contemporaries, owing
to his enormous prestige among black people, made the nationalist position
– and that of the need for African unity – felt in the highest councils of
black leadership. His communal conception of the widely scattered African
family led him to the view that land controlled by people of African
ancestry belonged to African peoples everywhere, a perspective which broke

beyond old boundaries and constituted his most important contribution to black nationalist ideology, complementing Walker's principle that Africans must be free in all countries before they can be free anywhere.

PART II

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AND THE DEFENSE

OF AFRICAN HUMANITY: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Ye dark-skinned peoples, are you listening?
Those who gave birth to us, before they start to speak,
They think deeply, they look for appropriate proverbs,
    they ponder profound matters,
They say: One must first consider one's tradition and
    history, before deciding on a name for the child.
They say: One's name is one's bridle.
Ye dark-skinned peoples, listen to me:
Our fathers did not play about with names.
To hear their names is to know their origin,
Every name a veritable testament!

                    Tobosun Sowande

Africa lies low and is wretched. She is the maimed
and crippled arm of humanity. Her great powers are
wasted. Dislocation and anguish have reached every
joint. Her condition in every point calls for succor
- moral, social, domestic, political, commercial, and
intellectual.

                    Alexander Crummell, 1860

The woeful volume of our history as it now lies open
to the world, is written with tears and bound in blood.

                    Henry Highland Garnet, 1848

1. WHAT SHALL WE CALL OURSELVES? THE NAME
   CONTROVERSY AS INDEX TO BLACK NATIONAL-
   IST AND ASSIMILATIONIST CONSCIOUSNESS

Shortly after the Garnets escaped from Maryland slavery and
entered the city of New York, Henry's father led the family in a "bap-
tism to liberty," a ceremony solemn and simple, one which was enacted by
thousands of ex-slaves long before the Emancipation Proclamation. In
this instance - the year was 1827 - Garnet's father said: "Wife, they
used to call you Henny . . . but in future your name is Elizabeth."
Then placing his hand on his daughter: "Your name is not Mary any
longer, but Eliza." Turning to his son, and taking him on his knee:
"And, my dear little boy . . . your name is Henry." "My name is George
Garnet."[1]

At roughly the same time the Garnets were taking new names, the
great Sojourner Truth, who emerged from Northern slavery, was engaged
in a similar ceremony, she believed, in the presence of the Lord.
Emancipated under the New York Emancipation Act, Sojourner, formerly
Isabella, cast aside her slave name because when she left the house of
bondage she wanted to leave everything behind. She had not wanted to
keep "nothin' of Egypt on me," she said, "an' so I went to the lord an'
asked him to give me a new name. And the lord gave me Sojourner, because
I was to travel up an' down the land, showin' the people their sins, an'
bein' a sign unto them." Sojourner later asked for another name and "The
Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people."[2]

These re-baptisms in most instances probably owed more to the Holy Scriptures than to direct African influences, but these individual efforts at naming, whatever the immediate impetus, were not unrelated to other more collective quests which were more or less continuous during the nineteenth- and even into the twentieth-century to find a name for the entire group. And just as the individual naming ceremonies were carried out in an attempt to disassociate blacks from some of the degradation of slavery, the attempts to find an acceptable group name, growing out of similar historical circumstances, were directed toward the same end, reflecting in the forced meeting between African and European a clash of cultures. Whether most blacks were aware of it or not, the naming ceremonies were linked with Africa since those blacks who came to America directly from Africa or via the West Indies originally had African names, names which together with most other African qualities were systematically destroyed.[3]

Ironic it was that the African, who attached so much importance and meaning to names, was the victim of American slavery, for the slave over-lord in America attached about as much positive concern to naming slaves as to naming pets - indeed, often not as much. The effect of robbing the African of his name, which had firm cultural moorings, must have been very traumatizing for succeeding waves of African-born arrivals down to the Civil War. As for the majority of black people not born in Africa, resentment at not having a surname and dissatisfaction at having a Christian name not of their choosing were immediate causes of the distress felt in response to this particular attack on their sense of identity. Nevertheless, the ill effects of that condition were doubtless not as great

as what was experienced by those slaves who remembered the importance given to names in the African homeland.

In West Africa, the section of Africa from which most American slaves came, the names of many of the people constituted their "essence," producing deep and constant psychological effects. In fact in some sections of Africa, especially in Yorubaland, child-naming has been a ritual for centuries. The Yoruba language, for example, doubtless at one time spoken by thousands of American slaves, consists largely of monosyllabic words each syllable of which has its own meaning. Thus, a Yoruba name can telescope a whole sentence of phrase, and very often represents much reflection on the part of the parents of the child. In other sections of West Africa, including the area once referred to as the Gold Coast, from which scores of thousands of slaves were taken, names have also been greatly valued and respected, and have histories just as in Yorubaland.[4]

While it is true that the African was enslaved by people who attached no positive importance to the names of those whom they placed in captivity, and while it is no less certain that Americans did not place nearly as much importance on names as Africans, it would be a mistake, despite the comparatively slight attention given to names in the West, to discount their significance, for people in the West have long been sensitive to their own names, and to how others use or misuse them. Freud has written that the "twisting round of a name when it is intentional amounts to an insult; and it might well have the same significance in a whole number of cases where it appears in the form of an unintentional slip of the tongue." Moreover, he makes it clear that to

distort another's name can in certain circumstances mean that the distorter inwardly despises the person whose name is being abused.[5] If in Freudian terms even simple distortions of names in the West, conscious and unconscious (slips of the tongue), constitute acts of aggression, then the act of denying a whole people their names and giving them new ones in a new language - and only partial names at that - must be regarded as a very serious act of hostility indeed.

Having observed the ritualization and celebration of names in his homeland, and the use of names as a weapon against his sense of humanity in an alien America, the African was made to know, through the microcosm of the names trauma, some of the tensions generated by the larger cultural problems confronting his people in America. The crisis over names - like that larger identity crisis - was perhaps best symbolized by the mark of bondage branded into thousands of Africans at the start of the slave trade. But that fiery iron had been ambiguous, searing into the slave's consciousness an awareness that his sense of identity was under attack, triggering a recoil from the attempt to depersonalize which would last throughout and beyond slavery.[6]

I

The African brought to America in the early seventeenth century was introduced into a world in which he became,   for the first time in his life, a Negro. In North America, as in the Americas generally, the word Negro was closely associated with "slave" and slavery. A South Carolina court ruled in 1819 that "negro" did in fact, mean "slave."[7] Despite the fact that the two words were virtually synonymous in some parts of the Americas, such apparently was not the case in North America, at least not for a great many people, which in part must

account for a tendency even among slaveholders sometimes to refer to slaves as Africans. Moreover, how else can one explain, when considering nineteenth century debates among blacks over what they should call themselves, the infrequency of references to the word Negro being tantamount to the word slave? In the slave states, where the overwhelming majority of "Negroes" were in fact slaves, the tendency to equate the two words was no doubt much greater.

If Negro was closely associated with slavery in the South and therefore an objectionable word to many people of African descent who were no longer or had never been slaves, the word "nigger" was still more demeaning. This epithet must have been a veritable din in the ears of slaves for it appears very frequently in their oral literature, but often not as a negative term.[8] The use of the term nigger was so frequent, so nearly reflex action, that there is reason to believe that many southern whites, long before the end of slavery, had practically lost the ability to pronounce the word Negro, sounding a word which fell between Negro and "Nigger" - Nigra.

Use of the terms colored and brown - more perhaps than any other appellations prior to the nineteenth century - reflected a certain disdain on the part of some people of African ancestry for a great majority of their people, a certain tendency to look down on them on grounds of color and class. Such was the case when these terms were initially used by the descendants of Negro women (some of whom worked in the great houses of the South) and slaveholders who used them as sexual objects. The light-skinned children of such relationships helped form many of the free Negro populations of the South, and it was within their ranks that the early adoption of the terms brown and colored were found.[9]

In Charleston, South Carolina, the Brown Fellowship Society was founded in 1790, admitting "only brown men of good character who paid an admission fee of fifty dollars."[10] Clearly the great bulk of people of African ancestry would have been ruled out by their darker hue, even if they could have contributed the large fee. So too were class and caste distinctions drawn by those "gens de coleur" and "people of color" of mixed African, French and Spanish ancestry who affected the ways of the white aristocracy of New Orleans long before the founding of the Brown Fellowship Society.[11] Those men, in affirming white values, consciously tried to disassociate themselves from their African roots. While "brown" and "colored" enjoyed limited popularity among certain "free" Southerners of African descent in the late eighteenth century, the word African found significant expression among blacks in the South. Unlike use of the terms brown and colored by certain people of color in the South, the term African, as we shall see, more often than not reflected pride in blackness and racial inclusiveness rather than color and class distinctions.

One of the ultimate expressions of African solidarity in America occurred early in nineteenth century America, and very likely represented the sentiments of some men who had seen the shores of Africa. In 1813, in the vicinity of South Carolina, long a stronghold of African influences, this strong African consciousness was expressed by slaves said to have been planning an insurrection. Their "Hymn of Freedom" reflected a degree of African awareness that was remarkable even for South Carolina: "Hail, all hail! ye Afric clan; Hail! ye oppressed, ye Afric band, who toil and sweat in Slavery bound." The song also contained the line:

"Blow the clarion: a warlike blast! . . . Wrest the scourge from Buckra's hand, and drive each tyrant from the land."[12] But the singlemost important line in the "Hymn of Freedom" is the one which ends with the exhortation: "Let independence be your aim, ever mindful what 'tis worth."[13] That clearly separatist or, better, nationalist sentiment suggests that some South Carolina blacks considered themselves a people apart from their oppressors, and were desirous of remaining independent after achieving liberation.

In the years preceeding the Vesey conspiracy of 1822 the success-ful separatist black church movement in Charleston signalled a conscious-ness of the peculiar interests of slave and non-slave participants which was clearly a manifestation of nationalism. The use of the words "Afric" and African in the vicinity of Charleston, and elsewhere in South Carolina, probably carried considerable nationalist content and African Conscious-ness. It is in fact possible that South Carolina represented, from roughly 1810 to the Civil War, the most significant African cultural outpost in America: the influx of Africans into South Carolina even after the slave trade was outlawed together with the numerical majority enjoyed by blacks more effectively militated against the complete absorption of African traits in that state than in others. Moreoever, the relative isolation of substantial numbers of blacks, particularly in the Sea Islands off the coast, contributed to the retention of Africanisms.[14]

Despite the greater hostility and oppression encountered in the South, some blacks there, owing to fresh imports of Africans, considered themselves African as late as the Civil War. For a long period of time,

perhaps for generations, American slaves had thought of themselves as African. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, it is doubtful if more than a small minority continued to regard themselves as Africans.[15] In any event, the relative isolation of the overwhelming majority of slave communities from the larger American society, from the influences of city life and the more profound assimilationist pressures to which other minorities, including free black populations in the North and South were subjected, meant that the possibility of the majority of slaves remaining under some African influence, though in diluted form, was substantial. Still, the great majority of them, in the generation before the War, probably were culturally more Afro-American than Africa.

Even after blacks in the North had stopped placing the word African in organizational titles, their people in the South continued the practice. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, a First African Baptist Church was founded in 1841.[16] Nearly two decades later Sojourner Truth authored and sang a song which reflected considerable identification with Africa!: "Look there above the center," a line read, "where the flag is waving bright; We are going out of slavery, we are bound for freedom's light; We mean to show Jeff Davis how the African can fight, As we go marching on." The closing stanza of Sojourner's song read: "Father Abraham has spoken, and the message has been sent; the prison doors have opened, and out the prisoners went; To join the sable army of African descent, As we go marching on."[17]

Though naming ceremonies of the kind performed by Sojourner and the Garnets occurred on a great many occasions before the Civil War and general emancipation, with the coming of the war millions

of blacks gave themselves names. "After the coming of freedom," wrote

ex-slave Booker T. Washington,

> there were two points upon which all the people were
> agreed, and I find that this was generally trut through-
> out the South: that they must change their names, and
> that they must leave the old plantations for at least a
> few days or weeks in order that they might really feel
> sure they were free.[18]

Not thinking it at all proper to carry the surnames of their former

owners, a great many blacks immediately supplied themselves with last

names. Though their new names were obviously not African, they were

related to Africa in the sense that they represented efforts to recover

at least a portion of the dignity they had lost with enslavement. Even

so, the frightful impact of American slavery on the African and his

descendants is no where more evident than in the very names which blacks,

once free, elected to adopt for themselves. The new names, indistinguish-

able from those of white Americans, mostly refer one to various parts of

the British Isles and Europe rather than to sections of Africa from

which their ancestors came. Following emancipation, it is highly unlikely

that more than a few blacks, in addition to those born in Africa, knew

African names which they might have taken for themselves. The fact that

the names adopted by millions of blacks in the nineteenth century were

exactly like those used by white people is a significant measure of the

degree to which the assault on African peoples had taken its toll. But

the recurring debates over a group name suggest, as did the many instances

of names being changed during and following slavery, that black people

as a whole never reconciled themselves to white designs to depersonalize

them.

For two centuries blacks in the north called themselves African or Free African, and placed the word African in the titles of their organizations.[19] In the nineteenth century both the word African in titles of organizations and the scores of thousands of northern blacks continuing to refer to themselves as Africans or free Africans were challenged by those who thought other designations more appropriate. During the course of the century, a wide variety of names were used by people of African ancestry, and some were put forth to contend for primacy over the rest. Among the names employed were African, Ethiopian, Colored, Negro, Children of Africa, Sons of Africa, Colored American, people of color, free people of color, blacks, Anglo-African, Afric, African-American, Afro-American, Afmerican, Aframerican, Africo-American, Afro-Saxon, and Africo-American.[20]

With the establishment of the American Colonization Society in 1816, blacks in increasing numbers began to eschew use of the terms African and "free African," opting instead for a safer appellation Colored - safer because to continue to refer to oneself as African was thought to encourage the belief among Colonizationists that one might want to be shipped back to Africa.[21] It is reasonable to assume that an effort was underway, dating from the formation of the Colonization Society, for some blacks to cease thinking of themselves as Africans. No doubt a very heated and serious debate over what blacks should call themselves took place in the wake of the Colonizationists' efforts to encourage the view that America was not the home of the African abroad. Unfortunately, owing to the rather fugitive nature of the sources

between 1816 and the appearance of Freedom's Journal roughly a decade later, it is necessary to rely almost exclusively on what can be inferred regarding the name controversy for this period.

It is known, however, that by the late 1820's David Walker and other blacks were using "African," "coloured," "black," and "Negro," with little if any distinction being made between the words. Walker used these words interchangeably to designate people of African ancestry. But Walker, hardly representative of black thinkers generally, had simply done what would become widespread among blacks of a later period: he attached his own meaning to names such as black, colored and Negro, apparently investing them with all the positive qualities which he associated with the name African.[22]

Walker was not alone in using more than one term in referring to his people. During the 1820's the contributors to Freedom's Journal also used roughly the same appellations and with much the same intent.[23] It is reasonable to assume, however, considering the sharpness of the differences raised and recorded in the late 1830's over what black people should call themselves, that more than a few black people by the time of the appearance of Walker's Appeal had decided that they were merely descendants of Africa, and there the relationship ended. This was in sharp contrast to Walker who, though given to using more than one term in referring to blacks, considered all people of African ancestry to be essentially African with profound obligations to Africans everywhere.

In any event, one of the earliest and most serious drives to jettison the words colored and African took place at a meeting of the

Negro Convention movement in 1835, an effort spearheaded by the chief antagonist of racial designations of any kind, Mr. William Whipper. At that meeting a resolution was passed exhorting black people to "as far as possible . . . abandon the use of the word 'colored,' when either speaking or writing concerning themselves; and especially to remove the title African from their institutions, the marbles of churches, etc." The minutes of the meeting reveal that the resolutions, put forth by Whipper, after "an animated and interesting discussion . . . was unanimously adopted."[24]

But more than opposition to the words "colored" and "African" was involved. In calling for the removal of the word African from titles, and from the marbles of churches and other institutions, the desirability of the disappearance of the all-black character of the institutions to which the resolution referred was strongly implied. It is, however, quite unlikely that the prime mover of the resolution, Mr. Whipper, during the discussion of the motion, made its full intent known. That he was cautious enough to assert, with reference to the use of the word colored, that the term be abandoned "as far as possible" suggests an early willingness on his part, quite uncharacteristic of him later, to compromise on this matter. That he made reference to removing the word African from the marbles of institutions instead of urging explicitly that all-black institutions be transformed into color-blind ones, as he would later, attests a certain reluctance on his part in 1835 to mount an overt campaign for sweeping structural changes.

The question is: why were Whipper's attacks on black nationalism at that time measured? Could it be that he was moving with some caution

because he doubted that feeling against black institutions was strong enough to support an all-out attack on various manifestations of black nationalism? If one considers his subsequent strategy in the names controversy, such a possibility is altogether likely. What does seem clear, even during the 1835 meeting, is that in advocating the removal of the name African from the marbles of churches and other institutions he hoped to force fissures so great that they would penetrate to foundations and eventually cause the collapse of institutions controlled by, and serving the particular needs of people of color. Only color-blind organs of interracial harmony were considered desirable by Whipper.

There were grounds for believing that some of the men present who felt the need to maintain control over their churches, lodges and other institutions hoped that the time would come when there would no longer be all-black or all-white institutions but non-racial structures for all.[25] The passage of the Whipper resolution made especially vivid the desire of some of its backers to oppose attempts, unless mounted interracially, to liberate their people. Could it be that just as certain blacks ceased referring to themselves as Africans - following the establishment of the American Colonization Society - still others, perhaps some of the same, thought involvement in all-black organizations an incitement to whites to regard them as that much more alien to America? Perhaps this theory explains why Samuel Cornish, when the debate over names surfaced in the pages of his paper in 1839, took sharp issue with a Whipper who by then

had thrown all caution to the wind in advocating the elimination of racial designations, indeed, in denouncing all organizations comprised exclusively of blacks.[26]

Though we need to know more about William Whipper and the origins of assimilationist movements, it is likely that the "shock" of being forced to turn away from the word African had caused many blacks to attempt to force Africa further and further into their subconscious minds. For those who felt shame rather than pride in being of African ancestry, the opportunity to abandon the word African must have been welcome. In any case, the loss of popularity of the word "African" was accompanied by an intense, protracted campaign among numerous leaders to prove, largely by drawing on Afro-American history, the right of their people to be granted freedom.[27] And though men secure in the faith that their people should maintain their own institutions openly opposed the Colonization Society and proclaimed love of their African homeland, no doubt others, out of a sense of fear, concentrating their energies on being accepted by the larger society, kept their loyalty to Africa to themselves to more easily establish their right to remain in America. The fear evoked in large numbers of blacks by the prospect of being removed from the only land they had known must have reached the proportions of terror in some, making it easier for them to turn their backs on institutions with the word "African" in their titles.[28] Another step for some should have been easy enough to take: pursue one's freedom by enlisting interracial cooperation, thereby achieving a degree of insulation from that greater white hostility which a self-propelled black movement might invite.

By the year in which William Whipper launched his second major

assault against complexional designations, 1839, the movement against all-black organizations apparently had grown to impressive proportions. An opening editorial of The Colored American, in which Cornish explained why he chose the title of his paper, drew from Whipper a number of letters that, taken as a whole, form a model of early "integrationist" ideology, though the word integration was not in use at that time. Before returning to Whipper, however, full consideration should be given to Cornish's explanation for the title of his paper, for he was putting forth more than just a name but a definition of the position which he thought people of color occupied in America life. This time the debate over names would reveal, perhaps as never before recorded, not only a split of interests regarding what the group should be called but, be- neath that surface friction, ideological differences of the deepest nature.

Acknowledging that differences of opinion had been expressed over the name of the paper and attempting to justify "Colored American" as an appropriate title, Cornish raised a concern which had been agitating sizeable numbers of blacks ever since the founding of the Colonization Society. As to the choice of the word "American," the editor, to an extent making new use of an old argument, contended that the distinction more emphatically belonged to his people"than to five-sixths of this nation," and said that it was

> one that we will never yield. In complexion, in blood,
> and in nationality, we are decidedly more exclusively
> 'American' than our white brethren; hence the propriety
> of the name of our paper, Colored American, and of
> identifying the name with all our institutions, in
> spite of our enemies, who would rob us of our nation-
> ality.[29]

Cornish's meaning regarding blacks being more American in complexion

and in blood is puzzling. But if he was referring to admixtures of
Indian and European blood among blacks, then his esteem for that new
combination would not have been shared by contemporaries such as Henry
Highland Garnet and Martin Delany, who prided themselves on the purity
of their Africanness.[30] Moreover, Cornish's enthusiasm for "American"
was not shared by free blacks generally, who were undergoing a slow,
painful and sometimes embarrassing transition from thinking of them-
selves as Africans to regarding themselves Americans, a process that
would not be completed even following the emancipation of the slaves.
While the terms "Colored" and Negro met with notable success between
1816 and the Civil War years in claiming organizational titles that
might otherwise have carried the word "African," it was not until later
that "American" enjoyed popularity among black people, and then largely
in the form of Afro-American, reflecting a "double consciousness."[31]

It would be a mistake to interpret   The Colored American
editorial as an attempt to have people of color move away from group
consciousness so that it would be easier for them to be accepted by the
larger society as individuals. As employed by Cornish and most blacks
of the 1830's, "Colored" was a designation of militance, a word reflecting
the special interests of the group, just as African and "free" African
once mirrored and affirmed a certain determined and rather pervasive
sense of community among northern blacks.   Without such a distinction,
Cornish thought, it would be difficult for his people to "be known" and
their interests to be "presented in community"[32] thus the need for "some
distinct specific name - and what appellation is so inoffensive, so
acceptable as colored people - Colored Americans?"

We are written about, preached to, and prayed for, as
Negroes, Africans, and blacks, all of which have been
stereotyped, as names of reproach, and on that account,
if no other, are unacceptable. Let us and our friends
unite, in baptizing the term 'Colored Americans,' and
henceforth let us be written of, preached of, and prayed
for as such. It is the true term, and one which is
above reproach.[33]

Apart from the relative newness of the term, why Cornish thought

"colored" would not become offensive - in fact, was not already offensive

to some whites and blacks - is left unexplained. Perhaps he thought

people of African ancestry would be more acceptable to whites if they

began referring to themselves as colored Americans - a myth which would

be exploded in due course, and one which was related to Frederick

Douglass' belief that blacks were being elbowed off the streets of

America and being proscribed because they regarded Africa, and not

America as their home. In any event, Cornish's exhortation to blacks

to call themselves Colored Americans was not carried out by black con-

tributors to his newspaper, in part because most blacks were more con-

cerned about issues affecting their people than in adhering religiously

to a single appellation.[34]

Cornish's failure to evoke interest in the term American, how-

ever, may well have meant that black people in the last three decades

before the Civil War, subjected to crushing political, economic and

other forms of oppression, found it rather too difficult to consider

themselves Americans, even colored Americans. American nationality,

non-existent for blacks as far as objective reality was concerned, was

probably not felt by the majority of Northern blacks and by very, very

few slaves.

The intensity of the debate over a group designation quickened when it was tied, as it was in the exchange between Cornish and Whipper, to basic strategies for securing the liberation of black people, North and South. Such a strategy was the unsubtle motive force behind Whipper's attack on the inclusion of a racial designation in the title The Colored American. Whipper, a respected fighter for the rights of his people, framed what amounted to the classic argument against people of color using terms which set them apart from white Americans, and in the process become the purveyor of the archetypal statement of what would in time be called integrationism. Complexional distinctions were, in his view, always to be condemned, whether white or black. He conjured people of color to "look at the incorporated feature of complexional distinction in our churches, schools, beneficial, and literary societies." Attacking the convening of a Convention of Colored Citizens on the grounds of "complexional distinction," Whipper broadened his assault to encompass black institutions, including   The Colored American newspaper, suggesting that those institutions and that newspaper should not be "defaced" by the insertion of complexional terms, positing that all-black institutions should not exist.[35] In a word, he would only acknowledge universal rights and a color-blind America. He was the complete, consumate integrationist of ante-bellum America.

In answering Whipper, Cornish struck at the heart of his argument, his opposition to the existence of separate black organizations and institutions, explaining that those institutions came into existence as a result of "desperate necessity," not out of a spirit of caste; he strongly objected to Whipper's desire to see the name of his paper "ground

to powder." "How grind a name to powder?" he asked. "Only by destroying the thing named."[36] His distinction between names and the thing or actual condition, elementary as it was, would prove a useful one for others to make whatever their position on the proper group designation.

Cornish's rejoinder was by no means sufficient to silence Whipper. "As a people," Whipper fired back, "we are deeply afflicted with 'color-phobia' [and not withstanding there may have been causes sufficient to implant it into our minds], it is arrayed against the spirit of Christ-ianity, republican freedom, and our common happiness, and ought once now and forever to be abolished." Whipper thought colorphobia an evil, one which had to be met without delay. More vividly than in his first letter, he denounced the presence in America of black institutions, which in itself was a renewal of his assault on all organizations with "complex-ional" titles: "We must throw off the distinctive features in the charters of our churches, and other institutions."[37]

III

Whipper's position provided an occasion for the most sophisticated exponent of black nationalism of the ante-bellum period to express him-self. No doubt not as all-encompassing in his statement of nationalism as Walker, and not as effective in putting into practice nationalist tenets and fostering the overall nationalist movement as Garnet, the man who signed his letters "Sidney" was perhaps the most accomplished theoritician of the three. A man who probed beneath the surface of the names controversy and laid bare the fundamental ideologies and movements being contested Sidney readily perceived that Whipper's concern over what blacks should call

themselves reflected a far deeper problem, one involving both methodology and ultimate objective: Whipper wanted to employ integrated methods, blacks and whites working in the same organizations with no concern for color distinctions, to achieve a free and color-blind society. He began his riposte by suggesting that Whipper's views were "by no means novel and unheard of," and indicated that, since the convention of 1835, integrationist partisans had picked up new adherents.

> They represent the views of a respectable portion of our people. They are the sentiments which have characterized the controversy, which has been carried between many of our brethren . . . this controversy . . . has been carried on for the past three or four years with singular earnestness, and at times, with warm pertinacity . . .[38] (Italics added.)

The anonymous author, who may well have been Henry Highland Garnet or Alexander Crummell, laid down what was fundamentally a nationalist precept, one to which both those who believed in black nationalism as a modus operandi and those who would later view it as a possible end in itself subscribed: only blacks could in the end, no matter how great the support from their allies, secure their freedom. Sidney, who was very much in the tradition of Walker and Garnet, said that Abolitionists could redouble their efforts, could greatly "exert their means" and the condition of blacks would remain essentially the same, and their sufferings would go "unmitigated, unless we awaken to a consciousness of a momentous responsibility . . . We occupy a position, and sustain relations which they cannot possibly assume. They are our allies — Ours is the battle."[39]

What relationship did a "complexional distinction" have to the thrust of the movement, to alliances with other?

> In coming forth as colored Americans, and pleading for our rights, we neither preclude the necessity, nor

forbid the action of our friends, no more than the Americans forbade the help of their French allies. We ask their sympathy, and entreat their prayers and efforts. The Americans received the aid and cooperation of their French allies; but they kept the idea of _American_ resistance to oppression distinct and prominent. As wise men, they knew much depended upon that. They knew not what evils - perhaps failure - might result from an admixture of extraneosities.[40]

It was against the theoretical backdrop of the call "for the exertion of a people peculiarly interested in its objects" that the Albany Convention of Colored Citizens, to which Whipper had objected, had taken place. Sidney believed that blacks, as an aggrieved people, had a duty to perform activities peculiarly their own, that this obligation was dictated by common sense and reason, "and the testimony of history." To answer any other theory or call would represent straying from the paths of their fathers, who had come together along racial lines in order to attempt to solve their problems.[41] Sidney rejected Whipper's denunciation of specific actions, and accused him of being able to "deal in nothing but generalities - universalities." He said that he and those for whom he spoke had no sympathy "with that cosmopoliting disposition which tramples upon all nationality," and which, while encircling the universe, "theorises away the most needed blessings, and blights the dearest hopes of a people."[42] In opposing the "cosmopoliting" spirit, and in objecting to the preoccupation of some blacks with universals, Sidney prefigured on the political level, as did Garnet some years later, a debate which would take place in the next century on the aesthetic plane: To what extent, in short, should people of color in America be concerned with universals? Beyond that argument, he raised yet another,

apparently in response to white and black critics, which would be posed
in almost precisely the same manner more than a century later. He
ventured that if one waters and preserves a plant that performs in his
room it does not follow that all other plants are disliked. Speaking
for blacks of similar persuasion, he said they did "not believe that in
loving our mother's sons, our brothers, that therefore we create a cord
of caste, and exclude mankind from our rights."[43]

In one of the finest defenses on record of the need for autonomy
among blacks, the young nationalist argued that the best representatives
of the oppressed are the oppressed themselves, that even an abrupt dis-
play of intense feeling from them is more effective than the most polished
and refined eloquence from their allies, though prompted by deep humanity.
In the process of vindicating their character, which suffers from the
overlord's projection of the stigma of inferiority onto them, the oppressed,
not relying on "abstract disquisition from sympathizing friends," must
display "energy of character and elevation of soul."[44] In a spirit which
recalls David Walker, and a long line of nationalists who followed him,
Sidney remarked:

> This is a radical assurance, a resistless evidence both
> of worth and manliness, and of earnest intention and
> deep determination. We maintain that these evidences —
> these feelings, desires and capacities, must stand out
> prominently, as coming from their proper source, to
> have their rightful influence . . . experience proves
> that they lose by retailment or admixture. Let an ex-
> pression of our wants and feelings be produced by others,
> and should there be anything of character, intellect, or
> dignity connected with it, it is not predicated of our
> ability.[45]

When documents demanding the rights of blacks and setting forth
their views, and ostensibly written by colored men, have turned out to

be the productions of whites the effort on behalf of blacks has fallen "powerless to the ground." This understanding of the need for people of color to do the basic work of liberation was not new but the realization of their sires, the thinking of their fathers, who had acted in that way for years. "It was this conviction," according to Sidney, "which led to the concentration of their energies in the annual conventions."[46] In other words, as Sidney correctly pointed out, the tradition of black leaders founding organizations the composition and direction of which were determined by blacks themselves was a very old one.

Obviously referring to blacks in the North, he was aware of the fact that organizations formed after the American war of independence – the first real opportunity for blacks to develop organizations of import – represented, in a number of instances, deliberate, aggressive choices for the men who launched them, which raises an intriguing and hitherto neglected question for historians: Is it possible that the early impulse among people of color to form all-black organizations owed as much to African traditions, aided by their relative isolation as a proscribed and oppressed group in America, as to European nationalist example? Indeed is it possible that the inspiration for early black nationalist forms in America owed more to African traditions of tribal loyalty and hegemony? Could the great bulk of Africans, before the nineteenth century, with thousands being brought into America via the slave trade, have forgotten and not been reminded that at one time their people had their own organizations and rites and tribes with allegiances as strong as those inspired by European nations? Could Sidney have had such questions in mind and answered them in the affirmative?

Whatever the origins of the African impulse to nationalism in America, Sidney insisted that blacks would have to rely on their own activity and energy. The development and growth of black people depended, according to him, "upon the putting forth of whatever power we possess," an exertion which could not be made "by the employment of foreign aid."[47] Citing the Irish - that "long-insulted and deeply injured people" - as an example of those who did not eschew exclusive associations, who used exclusive effort to sweep away every hindrance before them, Sidney moved on to credit the reliance of colored men on themselves for their emancipation in the West Indies.[48] Thus, using nations as analogues to the experiences of blacks in America, he clearly implied that his people in the U.S. constituted a nation.

Not before having written several letters to The Colored American did Sidney take up in extended form Whipper's objection to the name "colored," by then more widely used by blacks than any other. "It will be seen that we have argued the matter thus far," he averred, "without any reference to color." In previous communications, the brilliant young man noted it had been his object to defend measures employed by his fathers in past times, of his brothers of the present time, "in their laudable self-exertion to elevate themselves."[49] While not avoiding the issue, he was nevertheless disturbed by the emphasis given to color.

> This endless clamoring about 'color,' is alike devoid of reason, as it is disreputable for us as a people. The people are perishing by oppression, and our leaders, one opposing the other, upon a word . . . when they should be using the resistless energy of principle, to vindicate their wronged and deeply injured brethren; and instead of giving living, productive action - proposing idle theories![50]

In defending the use of the word colored, Sidney argued that wherever people are oppressed distinctive action or organization is required of them. Since the colored people of the U.S. were oppressed, they were therefore "required to act in accordance with this fundamental principle." He said that color had been so disturbing to some blacks, meaning Whipper especially, that they "have written long articles to banish the designating term into oblivion." "The color God has given us," he asserted almost serenely, "we are satisfied with; and it is a matter of but little moment to us, who may be displeased with it."[51] Addressing himself to the possibility that Whipper might attribute prejudice to color, and therefore dissuade people from using the term "colored" - which was precisely what Whipper was saying - Sidney argued that "If it [prejudice] is the result of color, then it does not proceed from the word; and if that [color], is the cause, and Mr. W. [Whipper] desires to act upon the cause, then let him commence his operations upon the color."[52]

Prejudice for Sidney had little to do with color; it proceeded more from the condition occupied by blacks and was therefore "a moral phenomenon, a wrong exercise of the sentiments and sympathies, and a disease of the will." White people simply had to get over their prejudices, for blacks should not yield to them in this area. Since their color had come from God, blacks should be pleased with it, "and so must they [whites] get to be. Surely the term colored is not disgusting to Mr. W. and his friends? They cannot be ashamed of their identity with the negro race!"[53]

The term colored was acceptable to Sidney because it, like all

correct and proper definitions, distinguished its class or object from others. Since from time immemorial various groups of men had been distinguished on the grounds of color, there was nothing objectionable about applying the term colored to blacks in America. Referring to red men, black men, white men, and others, Sidney asked: "do the terms create prejudice, or are they employed from prejudice?" and answered: "Neither one. There is, then, no such marvellous power in the word as to make it so repugnant to the tender sensibilities of Mr. W."[54]

Sidney concentrated his analytical and creative powers on the actual relationships between the oppressor and oppressed, on demonstrating the need for Afro-American autonomy. Refusing to be deflected by designations, he nevertheless had not avoided answering Whipper's contention that black people should avoid racial designations, but not before using the argument over names as a point of departure for making a notable contribution to the development of black nationalist theory. His rejoinder to Whipper was at times representative of the thinking on the issue of a significant number of leading blacks of his period, for while finding more than one designation proper he associated them all with Africa, as demonstrated in one of his responses:

> That we are colored, is a fact, an undeniable fact.
> That we are descendants of Africans - colored people
> - negroes if you will, is true. We affirm there is
> nothing in it that we need to be ashamed of; yea,
> rather much that we may be proud of. There is, then,
> on our part, as identified with the negro race, no
> reason why the term should be repudiated.[55]

Sidney's expression of pride in blackness, a pride bereft of chauvinism, can be traced back in written sources to Benjamin Banneker in the 1790's. In this connection, it is worth noting that, given the

extreme forms which white chauvinism took in matters ranging from politics to aesthetics, not one of the great nationalists of the nineteenth century, including Martin Delany, attempted to elevate blackness to the level of a mystique. Sidney's attitude of cool confidence in blackness may well have meant that he was personally secure in his blackness, since insecurity toward blackness is not infrequently associated with an aggressive, challenging stance in its favor. Sidney's opposition to Whipper represented the interest of the black nationalist in preserving the identity and institutions of his people, a process, it seems, that was so natural for him that he could discuss it with quiet, controlled passion.

IV

The controversy over names during the eighteen thirties and forties also disclosed critical gradations along the continuum between black nationalism and integrationism. For example, Frederick Douglass, who desired the ultimate absorption into American life of his people, displayed little of the rigidity of arch integrationist Whipper. While by no means as great a believer in the autonomy of blacks as Sidney, Douglass nevertheless recognized the necessity of people of color having control of their own institutions as long as prejudice persisted. The young Douglass was, in addition, no more willing to dispense with racial designations than he was prepared to see people of color give up their institutions, including newspapers, in the interest of integration.[56] In an editorial in his The North Star in 1848, one probably written by him, the continuing discord in black circles over approaches to freedom

and dignity was acknowledged, and it was indicated that these differences were reflected in the debate over names. In fact, the editorial concerned the objection of some blacks to the existence of black newspapers. Beyond that, it was reported, there was dissatisfaction in some quarters with "the very mention of color." The editorial denied that colored newspapers served to perpetuate a repugnant distinction between colored and white people, and thereby warred against equality for all Americans. "We have, sometimes, heard persons reject the very mention of color and to counsel its abandonment" ran one line. The North Star admitted of no such sentiment and denied being sensitive on this point: "Facts are facts; white is not black, and black is not white. There is neither good sense, nor common honesty, in trying to forget this distinction."[57]

Douglass, not as interested in Africa as Walker and Garnet, and a proponent of the view that the destiny of blacks would most assuredly be worked out in America, seldom used the word African when referring to people of color in America. Even though he found it quite difficult indeed to regard the land of his birth as the home of black people, his belief that blacks were inextricably bound to America probably accounted for his more or less consistent avoidance of the term African as a designation for his people. The fact, however, that Garnet, who believed America the home of blacks, used the word African more frequently than Douglass in referring to his people illustrated that something other than a systematic and logical approach to names was often employed.

Like Sidney and Walker, Henry Highland Garnet did not consider the quest for a single designation for his people to be of great moment. His attitude on this matter was in part a product of his essential realism,

of his interest in getting decisive results when approaching the prob-
lems of his people. The name controversy, no doubt continually refueled
by frustration resulting from the failure of each generation of blacks
to make real progress toward freedom and creative fulfillment, drew
salient remarks from Garnet on more than one occasion. The fundamental
question for him in 1848 was similar to the one taken earlier by Sidney;
it concerned the necessity to concentrate on breaking the chains of
oppression:

> How unprofitable it is for us to spend our golden
> moments in long and solemn debate upon the questions
> whether we shall be called 'Africans,' 'Colored Amer-
> icans' or 'Africo Americans,' or 'Blacks.' The
> question should be, my friends, shall we arise and
> act like men, and cast off this terrible yoke?[58]

Garnet returned to the name issue more than ten years later.
Then, as remarked before, he pointed out that he had warned large numb-
ers of his people that they were mistaken in trying to ignore the fact
that they were of African ancestry and black - "I knew they were wrong";
"I told them so" - in speaking of universal rights as if they did not
have problems particularly their own. It is especially worth noting
that Garnet, speaking in 1859, said that "a few years ago to talk in
New England of holding a Colored Men's Convention was to have the idea
scouted." That attitude "ran all over the free states; and by and by we
swelled up to such dimensions that we dispised [sic] to take the name of
color. . . ."[59] (Italics added.)

By "a few years ago" it is unlikely that Garnet was referring to
a period during the 1850's, considering the exceedingly harsh anti-black
measures taken throughout most of the decade. His reference to the

known simply as Americans. While it is undeniable that during Reconstruction blacks more than ever began to think of themselves as Americans because dazzlingly promising vistas seemed for a while to be opening before them, there was still considerable evidence of interest in the ancestral home, a tendency on the part of some, and not uninfluential people of color at that, to refer to themselves as Africans.[61] In fact, one of the most interesting of all references to Africa occurred in 1874 in the House of Representatives in Washington when South Carolina Legislator, and former associate of Garnet and the African Civilization Society, Richard Cain responded to an ugly attack upon his people by countering:

> The gentleman further states that the Negro race is
> the world's stage actor - the comic dancer all over
> the land; that he laughs and he dances. Sir, well
> he may; there are more reasons for his laughing and
> dancing now than ever before. There are more sub-
> stantial reasons why he should be happy now than
> during all the two hundred years prior to this time.
> Now he dances as an African; then he crouched as a
> slave.[62]

The influence of the word African was such, even in the decades following slavery, that not a few whites used that appelation, among others, in referring to blacks. Not maintaining consistency either, they at times chose their designations - save for the term "nigger" - according to what was respectable and fashionable among blacks themselves. One of the many examples of white people calling blacks Africans in the last half of the nineteenth century was John W. Forney's description of an encounter between the former Vice-President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, and Robert Brown Elliot, the black lawyer and legislator from South Carolina: "Mr. Stephens . . . spoke January 6, 1874, and Mr. Elliot, the colored champion of the liberation race, followed him

the next day. I cannot describe the House when the two men addressed it, especially when the African answered the caucasian."[63]

More significant than scattered, individual references to various appelations for black people - following slavery as before - were those linked to movements, institutions and social upheavals in America. In much the same way that emancipation and Reconstruction represented profound changes in the lives of black people, the violent denouncement of Reconstruction across the South, sweeping the great majority of black people back toward reenslavement, must have affected the consciousness of the race in ways nearly as profound as the hope inspired by freedom from slavery, enough at least to have it borne in upon them that, however they regarded themselves, the vast majority of white Americans, North as well as South, did not consider them American citizens, perhaps not even Americans. And whatever whites thought of them, people of color were not treated as Americans.

More than that, the flood of immigrants pouring into the country in the last half of the century coupled with the grotesque contradictions between American practice and preachment, especially relating to blacks, raised the question of just what constituted an American. If the lords of the land had no enlightened conception of what truly lay behind the phrase, if the majority of ordinary citizens knew little of the meaning of being American - and the evidence supporting both contentions is persuasive - then how could more than four million exslaves, the victims of more than two centuries of propaganda denying their very humanity, have known what it meant to be American? They had no clear philosophy on the subject, it is true, but there is reason to

believe that, ironically as it seems, they were much closer to the mark than whites: post emancipation blacks, as the speeches of their representatives confirm, sensed that being American meant being included, on the basis of equity, in the body politic, of respecting the rights of others, irrespective of color, and of being respected in turn.[64] As the fires of Reconstruction were being extinguished, the hopes of many blacks for American citizenship expired among the embers, and all but the very insensitive must have wondered if being American, in the sense of being free, would be possible for them.

Toward the end of the century the ambivalence of many Afro-Americans toward their status in America was again reflect in a serious debate over what they should call themselves. On that occasion an important name controversy occurred within the African Methodist Episcopal Church over the use of the word African. Once again, the much deeper conflict between the contending philosophies of integrationism and black nationalism were involved. It should be borne in mind - indeed emphasized - that as black churches found their spiritual and financial moorings following emancipation very significant numbers of blacks, even as barriers fell in other areas, were not in the least interested in integrated churches or integration generally.[65]

Such was true of the A.M.E. Church movement during the Reconstruction period and later, despite the presence of dissidents who favored interracial churches. Indeed, their opposition caused a pivotal figure in the black church movement, Benjamin Tucker Tanner, not only to defend

the need for separate churches but to define and defend the word African

in African Methodist Episcopal Church.

> What then is the intended force of the title African?
> Is it doctrinal or national: It is first 'doctrinal'
> and secondarily 'national.' The doctrinal goal to
> which the A.M.E. Church aspired was the humanity of
> the Negro . . . The sublime truth, and means only
> that men of African descent are to be found there,
> and found as men, not slaves; as equals, not inferiors,
> The doctrine of the Negro's humanity is its primary
> significance.[66]

The defense of the term African within the A.M.E. Church did not

end with Tanner. Near the end of the century, in the pages of the

official organ of that church, The A.M.E. Church Review, the debate

flared up again with the appearance of a piece by Rev. H.L.L. Astwood

advocating the substitution of the name Allen for African in the title

of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The mission of the word

African, Astwood observed, was ended "when the race became citizens of

the United States, and accepted that citizenship." As far as he was

concerned, and here he displayed far more optimism than most blacks of

his era, blacks had, through emancipation, taken on the nationality of

the members of the larger society.[67]

The continued use of the word African, Astwood pointed out,

sounding rather like William Whipper, would contribute to the maintenance

of "the odious discrimination which we have battled so long and so faith-

fully to destroy." It was time for blacks, he believed, to face their

posterity bearing the proud name of citizens of America, throwing open

the doors of their father's Church and burying "within its sacred pre-

cincts the name of their past identity which served them so well." In place

of the word African, he wanted to "raise a monument to Bishop Allen, the

founder of this glorious institution, under which name all races and people and kindred and tongues can unite — 'The Allen Methodist Episcopal Church.' "[68] Again the dispute over institutional designations had led the antagonists of "complexional distinctions" to posit a more universal position. And once again it had been advanced that, through the magic of a word and the elimination of the all-black composition of institutions, liberty might be won from whites. This was still believed in some quarters, though the exertions of blacks for over a century had not secured freedom, though not even Radical Reconstruction had brought about the hoped for new order.

Yet there surely were blacks — no doubt concentrated mainly among the somewhat privileged elements — who agreed with or wanted to believe in Astwood's position, just as there had been a quite substantial number supporting William Whipper. Astwood's assertion that the identity of blacks as Africans had been lost, absorbed by a nationality "which we have accepted and of which we feel justly proud," was made to order for those wanting to escape any association with color, to forget the pain and tragedy of being Negro in America.[69] That his position was somewhat excessive for even the moderate segment of articulate blacks was demonstrated by the response[s] to his call for the elimination of the word African.

The rejoinder was finally offered by the Reverend J.T. Jenifer, who responded with an argument which would not be easy for those of Astwood's persuasion to counter: They were, he said, ashamed of their African past, of their African ancestry, of their color, and that was why they recoiled from, why they wanted their people to disassociate themselves from the

word. "We are no 'Africans,'" Jenifer shrewdly accused Astwood and his followers of postulating.[70] He observed, with some license, that the Germans of America were not ashamed of Germany though they were born in the U.S.; and the same was true, he said, of the Frenchmen, Irishmen, Englishmen, and other descendants of the various peoples making up the nation. "Why, then," he asked, "should the Negro of this country, with African blood and of African parentage, be ashamed of Africa?"

> Ashamed of Africa! The seat of the earliest civil-
> ization, the cradle of arts and sciences; the earl-
> lest nursery of the Church of God. Ashamed of the
> place where Abraham and Jesus went for refuge!
> Ashamed of the land of the Pyramids and the Ptolemies
> . . . Ashamed of Africa![71]

Astwood's charge that the word African in the title of the A.M.E. Church injected caste into religion of members of that church was rejected by Jenifer, who was largely correct in stating that prejudice was respon-sible for the existence of African methodism. Moreover, he supplied a perceptive probe into one of the sources of black religious nationalism, using the name of the church to illuminate his meaning. "[T]o the pro-scribed and downtrodden colored people of this country this name was a symbol of hope; it was an asylum and an inspiration--a protest against religious oppression or proscription at the altar of God." An asylum -from the degrading and blasphemous spirit of prejudice; a refuge where "free minds and space to rise" could be found; where black people could find "fields for usefulness or development," could exercise their individuality and rise on the basis of merit while helping advance their people in the U.S. and elsewhere.[72] In a word, people of color could find in the A.M.E. Church their most important institution.

Regarding the work of missions, Jenifer wrote that the A.M.E.
Church "has always felt that under God she had a special mission to the
colored races, hence Africa has been a field of increasing interest."
The A.M.E. Church, having planted its first mission in Africa in 1821,
followed that with missions in Haiti, San Domingo and British Guiana.[73]
No less important than this consideration was the fact that a great
many leaders of the Church - and members of that Church - had come
from the lowest depths of black life: "many of these cultured men and
women were slaves, while others are the children of slave parents of
one or two generations."[74]

Because so many leaders of the Church had been slaves or the
children of slaves in part explains their involvement in a nationalist
institution such as the black church, for slave communities, especially
on large plantations, existed with their own subterranean laws and
leaders, and the slave preacher was often at the center of the slaves'
community.[75] Since it is known that even the slave - or perhaps one
should say especially the slave - preferred his own religious ceremonies
to those of his master, it is understandable that the overwhelming major-
ity of ex-slaves and those deeply involved in the black community would
by preference, after slavery, be found within the black religious com-
munity, which illumines a larger reality which, so far as I know, has
gone unexplained: the fact that the great majority of ante-bellum black
nationalists were ex-slaves may well have been the one most significant
determinant in their advocacy of black autonomy. Of course, the pro-
scribed life with its minimum of material opportunities which almost all
people of color were forced to live ruled out significant class

differentiation among them and, together with the slave heritage of the most gifted black leaders, contributed to a sense of Afro-American community. But the lineaments of what occurred in this area are nearly all that we have at present.

In the 1890's, the term Afro-American enjoyed considerable popularity. The decline in the fortunes of black people following Reconstruction may well have contributed to a realization among many that, objectively speaking, they were not as American as whites. Because they were still being treated as outsiders, perhaps it was felt by many that they should affirm, together with their American roots, their African ancestry and heritage. Whatever the reason for the popularity of "Afro-American," the late 1880's down to the opening years of the new century constituted the period during which that term was most frequently used, appeared to competing with "Negro" as the most popular designation for black people. Especially in the 1890's, the term Afro-American began appearing in the titles of black organizations.[76] In addition, the phrase was used with such regularity by blacks, especially in the North, that it enjoyed pride of place - behind African and free African, colored and Negro - as one of the four or five most prominent designations used by them in the nineteenth century.

In 1892, J.C. Embry said that he thought Afro-American much superior to the title "Negro," which he considered "an intruder - an outlaw in our literature - it is not the language of science, nor the voice of religion and fraternity." And though he had "the highest and most affectionate regard for 'the brother in black,' " believing him "as sure to be heard from in the years just before us as the government of

God is sure and just," he considered "Negro," when translated, "too narrow and exclusive to comprehend the race."[77] Embry could not understand why the name of the many millions of people of African descent should derive from color alone. The Indian, the Mongolian, the Caucasian, and the Arabian refer to the origins of the people to whom the titles apply, so if geographical divisions were sufficient to describe those peoples Embry felt such a division was in order for blacks. But he thought the term Negro - "an intended stigma which European and American slaveholders invented for us" - could not possibly do the job.[78] He dismissed "colored American" because it was too inclusive, covering people of color who were not of African descent as well as Africans and their descendants. Besides, "colored" also represented no precise geographical division - a position which would receive considerable support in the twentieth century.[79]

As the new century opened, concern over titles again found its way into the pages of Afro-American newspapers and magazines. To be sure, a debate early in the century over names established a number of the main lines along which the controversy over names, when conducted, proceeded   down to and a little beyond mid-century.[80] Should the word Negro be capitalized? was the question before a symposium of Afro-American leaders in 1904. The word had been employed with growing frequency among free blacks following the Colonization Society's formation in the second decade of the previous century, and very often was not capitalized even by blacks who submitted articles to various periodicals. In time, however, not a few had come to resent whites using the lower case, regarding it as an insult to their people.[81]

Still, blacks themselves were not in complete agreement regarding the wisdom of capitalizing Negro, and this was so for a variety of reasons, some of which were directly rooted in concern for their relationship to Africa. A Negro newspaper, The Independent, had broached the question of whether Negro should be capitalized answering that since it qualified as an adjective - black - it should not. But the mere fact that there were blacks who wanted Negro capitalized reflected a growing regard for the word. The A.M.E. Church Review thought the matter of sufficient import to sponsor a symposium under the heading "A Minuscule."

The question put to participants in the symposium was: "In spelling the word Negro, would you always begin it with a small or a capital N?" Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner raised the rather peculiar though accurate objection that, as applied to all nine millions of people of African ancestry, the word Negro was not appropriate "for all of us are not black."

> Far from it. It is questionable if it would not be a
> miserable misnomer to fully one-half of us. Taking us
> as a whole, it would be more nearly correct to describe
> us as a brown people, but a black, never. As little as
> many might be inclined to believe it, a genuinely black
> person among us is a rarity . . . As a matter of fact,
> it is just as likely that you will discover quite as
> many who are genuinely white as you will find genuinely
> black. The vast majority will be brown and mixed.[82]

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that for Tanner a very dark complexion was objectionable. His reference to the use of the term Negro as "a miserable misnomer" for one-half of the Afro-Americans; to many being a brown people, "but a black, never" - these indicate that he conceived of black in the literal physical (as opposed to the psychological or sociological) sense and was somewhat repelled. One can

safely assume that there were a great many other Afro-Americans who shared Tanner's opposition to being called black.[83] Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, Tanner was not one to deny his African roots. On the contrary, he remarked in a very important passage that the word Negro had been thrust upon a people for whom the name African for centuries was "The one and only name recognized by us officially and by others as well." Moreover, "in common with a rule that is universal," his people had referred their name "to the continent whence we came." "Who is the European but the man from Europe?" So too with the Asiatic. "So we, being from Africa, regarded ourselves as Africans."[84]

Tanner had called attention to one of the most important aspects of the history of the names controversy among blacks in the nineteenth century: They had been forced to abandon calling themselves Africans when their overlords attempted to saddle them with the word Negro. But blacks, Tanner contended, had "spurned the title, negro, and took that of Colored," as exemplified in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.[85] This latter assertion is in part born out not so much by explicit assertions in the sources as by implicit preferences for that designation through the names which people of color selected for their organizations. Nevertheless, it should be recalled, leading blacks did not shrink from referring to themselves as Negroes too while giving priority, in organizational titles, to the word Colored. Thus the dichotomy between Colored and Negro was not as sharp for many blacks as Tanner would have us believe.

The government had eschewed referring to blacks as Negro troops,

according to Tanner, because "it would have deemed it an insult to her soldiers of all shades of color, but alike sharing African blood, to have called them negroes," for the prejudiced and ignorant rabble would quick begin referring to "nigger" troops. He expressed a concern felt by many Afro-Americans, that the term nigger was too close to Negro for the latter to be acceptable. And just as the term "nigger" had an affinity to Negro, he thought Negro or black "full cousin to the term 'darkey,' " selected and insisted upon by the enemies of his people.[86] Certainly one of his more interesting objections to use of the word Negro was his belief that if it were accepted, then wives and daughters would be Negresses "and God have mercy on the man of African blood that can stand it. If he can, he may rest assured that he can stand more than these wives and daughters are willing to stand."[87]

Finally, Tanner objected to capitalizing the word Negro on the grounds that, being primarily descriptive, it is exceptional, and when applied to a people out of line with the manner by which other people are designated. Proceeding along lines established by Jenifer, he asked, "Why aren't the people of Europe, who are mainly white, not referred to as the Whites? And why aren't the peoples of Asia, who are mainly yellow, not referred to as the Yellows?" Indeed, if the designation is to be according to color, "why not take those with red hair, and have a class of Red Heads; and take all who have grey eyes and have a class of Grey Eyes, etc., etc."[88] Tanner thought the term Afro-American most appropriate, just as "Anglo-Americans, German-Americans, and Franco-Americans" were used by peoples settled in America from various parts of the Old World.[89]

Bishop Henry McNeil Turner, who participated in the dialogue, took a different tact. He argued, with a feel for the practical, that since the term Negro "has been accepted by the Afro-American, or the colored race," it "should always begin with a capital letter." He granted that in its inception the word Negro was the white man's word for the African, "just as Buckra is the black man's appellation [for whites], as applied in all parts of Africa."[90] That a significant number of black people considered the word Negro a legitimate one contributed significantly to Turner having argued its acceptability as a nomenclature. Despite the fact that he had been the most powerful of all advocates of Back to Africa movements, he did not give primacy to the words African or Afro-American over Negro. Like Walker, Garnet, Sidney, and Delany, he apparently considered the debate over names to be far less important than other issues facing his people.

Another participant in the symposium, Dr. George W. Henderson, objected to use of the word Negro because it "is not national or geographical," and does not denote a nation. But after arguing, much like Tanner, that Negro is inappropriate for those of mixed blood, he then proceeded to attempt to demonstrate that perhaps the game was not worth the candle and in the process reduced the whole debate to absurdity.

> The term Afro-American possesses even less merit . . . .
> Some of us have English or French or Italian or Irish
> blood in our veins; some the blood of nearly all races;
> we are descendants of all continents. Hence, to be
> accurate, our proper designation's would be English-
> Afro-, Franco-Afro-, Germanico-Afro-, Italico-Afro-,
> Spanish-Afro-, Dutch-Irish-Afro-, Russo-Afro-, or in
> some cases, English-Franco-Germanico-Spanico-Scotch-
> Irish-Afro-American![91]

In another culture, in say, Brazil, an argument similar to Henderson's

would have made far more sense, but in America, given the realities of racism, it amounted to sophistry, for admixtures of European blood did not change the status of Negroes. Moreover, his argument failed to take into account that the white peoples to whom he referred were not of unmixed heritage, and consequently, on his logic, should not have used hyphenated designations in referring to themselves. Yet Henderson's position on a name for the group served the purpose of showing just how ridiculous and what a great waste of time the controversy over names could become when not treated seriously. His view, in short, failed to take into account, as DuBois had correctly observed a year before the Minuscule symposium, that the consciousness of blacks was essentially double - American and Negro - not the product of greatly disparate and diffuse sources.[92]

By 1904, nearly one hundred years of controversy over names had established beyond doubt that, among other things, the major black figures of the nineteenth century, especially those deeply involved in the fight for the liberation of their people, once a "complexional distinction" had been agreed upon, did not think it important to debate the relative merits of various such terms. These men emphasized the necessity of decisive action and unrelenting effort on the part of their people if they were to be free. They did not countenance the view, firmly advanced by Whipper and others, that non-racial appelations contained near magical qualities which would help to exorcise the demon of racism. Nor were they advocates of the view, later postulated in the debate over names, that one rather than another complexional designation would substantially affect the self-image of their people.

It had also been established by the turn of the century that major nationalist leaders maintained a firm, unyielding interest in the ancestral home, and whether they called themselves Colored, African, black, Afro-American, or Negro the term was extended to include black people throughout the diaspora and in Africa. To be sure, the Pan-African perspective applied as much in the use of names as it did in political affairs.

Those black men who did engage in long hours of debate over names, particularly those who put forth the term Afro-American as the one most appropriate to identify their people, do appear to have moved the argument, by the turn of the century, to a higher level. Afro-American referred people of African ancestry in the Americas to the land, history and culture of their foreparents while recognizing their presence in America. Moreover, given the "outsider" status of blacks, that designation seems to have more accurately reflected the status of a people excluded from full freedom because of their African ancestry. So strong had the pull of Africa been on black consciousness, however dimly or inaccurately perceived, that it had profoundly influenced the thought of millions of black people for more than two centuries. Only under threat, real or imagined, had most black people ceased referring to themselves as Africans or as free Africans. In the nineteenth century, with the systematization and theoretical grounding of anti-African propaganda, shame over Africa for many blacks, though mixed with residual pride, was doubtless responsible for their eagerness to reject a designation which so directly connected them with that continent.

The term Afro-American had the advantage of making it easier for

those attempting to escape their relationship to Africa to have some degree of confrontation with reality. Unlike those blacks who successfully opposed America's attempt to get them to direct hatred of Africa inward against themselves -- unlike, in short, those who were strong enough to take fundamentally healthy positions in relation to their ancestral home, there were certainly many more people of color, especially in the last half of the nineteenth century, who were more ambivalent about their heritage. Even partial affirmation of Africa in a society in which Africa was regarded as a symbol of savagery, was for many blacks an indispensable step, small though it was, in securing a hold on themselves, in having some significant anchorage for their identity, some sane reference point.

The substantial extent to which the names debate reveals ideological and methological currents, reflecting essential attitudes toward Africa and the place of black people in American life, discloses the crucial import of the history of that conflict. In fact, the record of the debate over names might be read as an incomplete but essential part of, as an index to, the history of black people in America, as a record of the continuing effects of the slave trade and slavery. As such, that record reflects much of the cultural, political, economic, and moral history of America.

Since the forced Odyssey of Africa's millions in America resulted in one of history's most notable examples of a people cut adrift from the moorings of their identity, the debate over names has been a salient reflector of the consequences of that condition, at times illumining the bases on which the confusion over identity rests - the economic, political

and social structures oppressing black people in America. Long before the opening of the twentieth century, it was evident that only when unjust treatment of the Afro-American had come to an end, when the structural inequities producing the crisis of identity had been extirpated, would the debate over names even have a chance of ending.

Still, that happy circumstance could not possibly come to people of color in America until they had achieved some sense of their history, for it was widely believed that the history of black people everywhere in the world was unworthy of serious attention. Beyond that, the Western world was convinced that people of African ancestry were inferior, which accounted for the quality of their past. Afro-American leaders had not remained silent in the face of attempts to dehumanize them through the uses of history; in fact, they gave great attention to their history - in Africa and in the Americas.

2. ALEXANDER CRUMMELL: THE AFRICAN
   PAST AND PRESENT

The Afro-American's awareness of West African history had no easy birth. Indeed, from the time their ancestors were torn from their tribal moorings in West African societies, transported to and enslaved in America, a process designed to sever their ties with Africa was underway. The very nature of the slave trade and the peculiar system of slavery encountered in America warred against black American identification with Africa and made, as generation followed generation, the retention of knowledge of the African past ever more difficult.[1]

If knowledge of the nature of West African cultures was largely foreign to European slavers and scholars during the centuries of the slave trade, it is small wonder that transplanted Africans in America knew little of African history and culture. This was especially true of those who were enslaved, centuries removed from their ancestral home, the victims of an evolving and virulent ideology of racism. With respect to both free and slave blacks, however, a long tradition of interest in Africa can be demonstrated throughout the ante-bellum period. But concern for Africa was one thing, accurate knowledge of the continent, historial or contemporary, was quite another.[2] The consequences of such a lack of information - or of simply refusing to believe positive findings about Africa even when available - was nowhere better illustrated among Afro-Americans in the nineteenth century than in the life of that great advocate of African redemption, Alexander Crummell.

In his tireless dedication to eradicating heathenism from the

shores of Africa to the interior, Alexander Crummell epitomized, as no other black of the century, the spirit of those black missionaries seeking African redemption. In addition, despite his concern for the land of his fathers, he appears to have internalized more fully than other black intellectuals the most terrifying myths of African barbarism and savagery, myths which seem to have been reinforced by his studies abroad and his long residence in Africa. It is to him that one must look for both the singlemost influential Afro-American position on contemporary African history and for the bleakest Afro-American portrait of the ancient African past.

I

When one considers Alexander Crummell's childhood, it is not difficult to understand his interest in Africa, an interest which later mounted to consuming passion. Born the son of an African who was stolen from West Africa at the age of twelve or thirteen, his mind was fired at an early age by intense interest in Africa. His father, he tells us, possessed a "burning love of home," had "vivid remembrances of travels with his father into the interior," had contact with numerous tribes and customs, and constantly had thoughts of his native land. "And thus it was in listening to his tales of African life [that] I became deeply interested in the land of our fathers; and early in my life resolved, at some future day, to go to Africa."[3]

Long before Crummell's arrival in the land of his fathers, his earliest impressions of Africa and Africans had been distorted by those to which he had been exposed in American schools. He had been

"taught the personal inferiority of the Negro," that Negroes were creatures "almost approaching the brute" in physical appearance, with "retreating forehead, flat nose," and "long projecting heel."[4] We can never know the precise effect of that type of "education,' that is, the mental anguish it caused, the degree to which it contributed to a sense of personal inferiority in the impressionable and sensitive young man. It is very likely, in any case, that the negative treatment of Africa in American schools was, coupled with the earlier, more positive influence of his father, a contributing factor in propelling him toward his life-long vocation, the work of seeking African uplift and redemption.

The treatment of Africa in English schools was no better in the mid-nineteenth century than in American colleges. Crummell's matriculation at Cambridge University, in which the theory of African savagery was in vogue, doubtless served to strengthen any feelings of African depravity which may had already been entertained by the young man. Not only did Cambridge call into question the values of non-western societies, scoring the African as the most barbarous of heathens, but Crummell's Episcopal faith was far removed from African religious values.[5]

Shortly after having taken a degree from Cambridge, Crummell fulfilled the resolve of his childhood, traveling to Africa in May of 1853 to begin twenty years of missionary work in Liberia. On returning to the land of his fathers he carried with him such distinctly western cultural baggage, as events would demonstrate, that it was difficult for him to understand much about Africa past or present. But this was

not apparent from his first impressions of the peoples of Africa, which were, at least on a superficial level, at sharp variance with what he had been taught in American and English schools. The "African is physically one of the finest men on the face of the earth," he observed. He spoke of their "general manly strength, symmetry and bodily beauty . . ." Concerning natural proportions, he thought the African "the equal to any other race of men on the globe." He had not expected to find "the native man, in tribe after tribe, an erect, finely proportioned, well developed, symmetrical and noble being."[6]

In the future, few would be the occasions on which Alexander Crummell would speak well of Africans, and then usually because they had come into contact with and absorbed some of the elements of Western Civilization. To be sure, it was this contact between peoples, he believed, which accelerated the process of civilization, and Africa had been bereft of civiliazation and civilizing influences. According to Crummell, Africa was a land that "for thousands of years" had been enshrouded "by the murkiest gloom of paganism." Idolatry among her people was a "radical, congential element" in their "life blood and being"; they were "without the simplest alloy of civilization."

> Thrown thus back upon herself, unvisited by either
> the mission of letters, or of grace, poor Africa,
> all the ages through, has been generating, and then
> re-producing, the whole brood and progeny of super-
> stitions, idolatries, and paganisms, through all
> her quarters. And hence the most pitiful, the most
> abject of all human conditions! And hence the most
> sorrowful of all histories! The most miserable,
> even now, of all spectacles![7]

More than most black intellectuals of his time, Crummell had accepted the biases of the larger society regarding African history.

Yet even he on one occasion acknowledged the possibility, with appropriate qualifications, that the Negro may have played a significant part in the origins of Egyptian civilization. His references to the whole of Africa, to the North as well as South, almost invariably were virtually indistinguishable from his comments on that section of Africa from which most New World slaves were forcibly taken, West Africa. His reflections on that section of Africa were characterized by such bleakness that it was difficult for him, especially since the advent of the slave trade, "to connect ideas grateful and gracious with even _any_ part of that continent."[8]

Unlike many black leaders of his time, Africa from ancient to modern times provided Crummell with no source of pride or inspiration. And since he admitted that "three hundred years of West African history" - during the years of the slave trade - "had made that section of the continent the synonyme of everything painful and horrible,"[9] it is very likely, given the extreme racism of the middle and late nineteenth century, that he felt much ambivalence, a mingling of shame and sorrow, when he thought of Africa.

What is pivotal, the foundation stone on which Crummell's grim edifice of African theory was erected, was his virtual identification of "civilization" with Christianity. Unless a people, whether African or Asian had embraced Christianity, they were doomed. It appears that, as far as he was concerned, the mere introduction or extension of Christianity into so-called backward areas - or the forcible saddling of a people with this religion - was in and of itself sufficient to set them on the road to civilization.[10] This helps explain why even American slavery, with all of the horrors which attended it, had its redeeming qualities for not only Crummell but for other, more alienated and angry

blacks of the late nineteenth century. Not only was slavery part of God's plan involving retribution to the heathens for thousands of years of wretched idolatry, it was for some more: the institution was a training ground, a kind of school in which black people could learn the elements of civilization, which they could at a later date use in the uplift of the motherland.[11]

In truth, it might be said that Crummell's version of the relationship which would obtain between Africa and those seeking to redeem the continent represented an interesting rejection of the belief held by certain western intellectuals that it was the white man's burden to bring people of color, especially in Africa and Asia, from darkness into light. On this point he and other black missionaries were in agreement: New World blacks had an obligation - a burden, if you will, to uplift their African brothers, who were in Bishop Henry McNeill Turner's words, languishing there (in Africa) "in spiritual and moral blindness."[12]

Whether it was slavery in North America or slavery in the Antilles or South America, Crummell asserted, the millions of blacks who had been caught up in that institution had reaped the benefits of Christianity, of contact with Western nations and were in the main capable of providing streams of evangelizers to educate and save the souls of their African brothers. If Crummell accepted Christianity almost totally, it cannot be said that he was eager to entrust the work of evangelization to Christians irrespective of color. Like other black missionaries of the last half of the nineteenth century, he believed that black men, the transplanted sons of Africa, were better suited than white men to set up and run missions.[13]

Black men were better equipped to carry the faith to African and uplift their heathen brothers because they, being black and of African ancestry, could better understand the plight of the African. As with all human events, the migrations of black men from the New World were "providential . . . ordered and regulated by the Divine Will."[14]

Crummell's attitude toward missionary work varied from that of most white missionaries in at least one other vital respect. He and other black leaders did not, for all of their dire assessments of the state of contemporary African societies, regard Africans as innately inferior to other peoples. Africans were in such pathetic condition because they, more than any other large segment of people, had been cut off from centers of civilization by the Sahara desert and the Atlantic ocean – left to stagnate while other peoples, by virtue of that contact and cultural cross-fertilization which promotes civilization, advanced.[15]

Crummell was impressed by certain West Coast tribes, and thought they had definite potential for advancement. He found the Timmanee of great nobility of character, possessing an indomitable spirit. While the British had succeeded in subduing all other tribes, they had not been able, Crummell argued, to subdue them. The Dahomeans, he thought, were warlike with cruel customs: yet he described them on one occasion as having looked like "demi-gods." While he found the Veys not the equals of the Mandingoes, Dahomeans or Timmanees in manly vigor he nevertheless thought them "greatly distinguished." The Veys were especially notable for the beauty of their women and a keen intelligence which enabled them to invent their alphabet and demonstrate an impressive literary spirit.[16]

In spite of his many years spent in West Africa, roughly twenty
years in Liberia, it cannot be said that he possessed by the 1870's,
more than a superficial understanding of the people and their cultures.
He considered the fact that they were "heathens" a terrible handicap.
In short, Crummell thought the people possessed a veneer of culture
beneath which were found unspeakable defects. His blindspots regarding
Africans were particularly revealed in his observations of those who
had extended hospitality to him. Despite the courtesies provided by
the Veys, despite the fact that, as he remarked, they "treated me with
great hospitality, providing me with everything pleasant and agreeable,
preparing fire for me in my house, and a warm bath at night," he evinced
little real appreciation of the people.[17]

> As I sat in the towns in the mornings and saw these
> women, - mere children, dressing themselves with
> their hand-mirrors [i.e. adorning their faces with
> clay-paint], and heard their childish laughter and
> their glee, and observed their artless ways; I felt
> more keenly than ever before in my life the deep
> degradation of heathanism; and how that it is only
> by the evangelization of women, one can ever break [18]
> the chain of paganism thro [through] this land . . .

Referring to the Vey country, Crummell said that the missionary,
thanks to the absence of Moslem influence, had a great advantage. What
he did not say was that the Mohammedan religion would not have sought
to extirpate every custom of the peoples of the Vey country, to deny
the very basis of their existence. In a word, Crummell seemed able to
see, when looking at Moslem influence in West Africa, only "the blood-
shed which the Moslems have carried through a wide region further
north."[19]

For the young Crummell, who went to Liberia in 1853, that country

was considered a model of what could be accomplished in Africa with
the aid of Christianity. He thought Liberia was destined to be the
fountainhead for the spread of streams of Christian missions into the
interior of Africa. As a passionate defender of the Infant Republic,
he argued that never in the history of man had a state been established
in such inauspicious circumstances, on such "slender materials and such
poor resources." He felt that the wonder of Liberia was its birth,
effectuality and longevity under such circumstances, not its potential
for death.[20]

Yet by the early 1870's he was less than sanguine in his assess-
ments of the character and practices of the Afro-Americans who had
emigrated to Liberia and were controlling the government and every
other institution of Liberian life. While he acknowledged the role
played by them in helping to destroy the slave trade along the coast of
the country, and while he made allowance for the tremendous obstacles
which confronted the colonists, by 1871 he was finding life in Liberia
a "teeming perplexity." Crummell felt his former hopes for that
country were, at least for a while, "blasted." He reported "notable
adulteries; more frequent and more numerous divorces than ever before."
Further, he thought the whole people were "carried away in a hurricane
of political passion and strife: ministers of the gospel instead of
being heralds of peace, are the leaders of agitation,"[21] all of which
worked against evangelical zeal and missionary effort. Shortly there-
after, he returned to America, but by no means did he leave behind his
interest in Africa.

II

The severity with which Crummell criticized Africans and Americo-Liberians was in part an outcropping of what he thought he saw when he looked at Afro-Americans. If the allegedly more civilized Afro-American suffered grievously from what he called a lack of "the discipline of freedom," it is safe to assume that the Africans and Americo-Liberians, the latter having been among the most unfortunate of Afro-Americans, were in his estimation very much without a sense of discipline. The shortcomings of Afro-Americans, then, provide an index into the more pronounced weaknesses of their brothers in Africa. Under slavery black people, regimented in the extreme, had come to know the benefit of a certain discipline, which Crummell called "the discipline of slavery."[22]

In a sermon at the close of the Reconstruction period, at a time when Afro-Americans were being subjected to unspeakable atrocities, Crummell reviewed the history of his people since emancipation. In language much like that of David Walker, he asserted "that at the time of emancipation the Negro, so far as intellect was concerned, was a dead man!" He asserted that not a single scholarly or learned or scientific black man had emerged from slavery, that not twenty thousand blacks "knew the simplest elements of letters" that throughout slavery blacks had lived in darkness, ignorance and "unlettered benightedness."[23] Yet during this time Christianity and a hierarchical arrangement akin to that of medieval Europe were preparing blacks for the "discipline of freedom." Each slave had a niche in the system, "was made to stand in his own place: everyman to do his own work . . ." The "servile system-

atized energy" of the slaves brought forth "vast crops of Corn, Rice, Tobacco and Cotton" despite the "terrible system it was!" Crummell lamented the fact that Negroes, in freedom, were losing that discipline which, under slavery, directed all of their powers to a definite end. Like a vast machine, with every part in place, blacks worked with severest regularity and produced results so vast as to impress upon the world "the value of the Negro race." "But alas, what a terrible system it was!"[24]

The end of slavery had cast black people into limbo, suspended between the discipline of slavery and that of freedom, Crummell said. They would therefore, in his words, have to reach forth and acquire "the discipline of freedom!" The Afro-American would have to look to himself, develop his inner resources through the discipline of freedom before he would be prepared effectively to lead himself or the African. And just as Crummell had observed that the backwardness of Africa was a direct outgrowth of the continent's isolation, rather than the logical projection of inherent inferiority - a process to which European nations had also been subject prior to the spread of Christianity - so too did he believe that certain European peoples, especially the French, had not acquired that discipline of freedom which he contended would have to be mastered and bent to the service of Afro-Americans and Africans.[25]

Emancipation had brought "unspeakable blessings" - suffrage, personal freedom, freedom of will, property holding, family rights, freedom of conscience and religion, schooling and education, and the exercise of the "acquisitive principle." Not only had these freedoms

been severely circumscribed by reaction in the last quarter of the century but they had never been used by Afro-Americans in a disciplined manner. Crummell did grant that considerable time is required before a people can master the uses of freedom. He did not think it was in human nature "to make the sudden transition from abasement to superiority," since a system of rigorous training was needed for human nature, with such a heritage, to reach the state of manliness."[26] Implicit in this thesis was Crummell's belief that his people constituted, at least potentially, a nation, for he again compared them to the French. Conditions facing pre-revolutionary France, he reasoned, were somewhat analagous to the plight of American slaves. The French, in a paroxysm of fury and rage, "spread desolation through every province of the nation," but, despite the lapse of a century, had not "even to the present, learned the discipline of freedom."[27]

The outrages of the reconstruction, which were sweeping "like an avalanche over the . . . heads of our race" had made the weakness and powerlessness of black people all too vivid to him. However much he had embraced the religion of the oppressors of his people - without transmuting it to meet the special needs of his people - Crummell was not willing to rely on white people to solve the problems of black people in America. For he was, at bottom, a nationalist who regarded the essentially ethnic alignments of the peoples who made up America natural and desirable. He was of the opinion that there was "a constant tendency in varieties to hold on to, and abide in the stock, from which they [sprang]."[28] This view neatly dovetailed with the self-help sentiment that emerged among black people in the last quarter of the

nineteenth century. "I have the deep conviction that we are, under God, to look to a large extent to ourselves for relief: that we must work from within the outer circles of influence and power in order to get the might and success we need."[29] This approach to problems confronting his people was an expression of nationalism at its best.

The success of the effort at self-reliance would not come without severe trial, for a look at the history of the black man in America revealed "a perpetual entailment of weakness." He provided a description of the appalling lack of cohesion among blacks: since slavery, they had disclosed no cultural groundings, no unity of program, no resistance to persecution.

> In all this tempest of rage and murder . . . we have had no concerted appeal to authority and law! We have had no wise leadership to self-defense! Everywhere, even amid crowded populations ours has been a relaxed, nerveless hand! Like the leaves of the forest our poor people, in diverse sections, were scattered abroad at the fierce breath of their enemies![30]

On Crummell's assessment, Afro-American politicians were scarcely better prepared for their role of leadership than their counterparts and cousins in Liberia. Corrupt politicians, obsessed with office-seeking, indulged their selfishness because black people as a whole allowed it, allowed themselves to be used in ways that would not be countenanced, according to Crummell, by any other people in the land. What he saw, or thought he saw, certainly did not increase his optimism with respect to the role such men would play in redeeming Africa. Unable to redeem themselves, not made accountable to their own people, he suggested they deserved to be buried in oblivion, a form of justice which the Irish- and German-American people, if betrayed by their political leaders, would surely mete out.[31]

The corruption and uselessness of black politicians, though exaggerated by Crummell in rather typical nationalist style, neverthe-less served as a perfect foil for his call for the development of more black institutions, for his conjuring his people to devote the talent, zeal, energy and money wasted on "useless politicians" to that end. He wanted to see Afro-American resources used to establish savings banks, to start lucrative businesses, to set in motion the "springs of action in diverse departments of noble activity."[32] In a blanket indictment of politicians, he exhorted blacks in the South to avoid "the leadership of crazy office-seekers, who care nothing for your race, nor for yourselves," to "have nothing to do with the traders in politics!"[33] Leaders would in time be available to direct the new institutions, but their leadership would be of a different order from that exhibited by black politicians.

> Leaders you must have. But don't put up with any but
> righteous and race-devoted men! If you can't find
> such now, have patience! Scores of devoted youth
> full of the instinct of race are coming forth from
> your schools; and the day is almost at hand when a
> host of real black patriots will arise in the land -
> men not always screeching and scrambling after office,
> but full of anxious solicitudes to build up their peo-
> ple![34]

Much of Crummell's nationalism was rooted in his belief that black people would remain in America; they would not be colonized nor would they be absorbed. The absorption which Frederick Douglass at one point had looked to as a possible solution to the race problem in Amer-ica was no less likely to occur than colonization of black people. Crummell believed that the black race would not be "within the arms of the white" nor "the whites to be . . . in the arms of the black." The

weight of history was against absorption, evidencing as it did "the impossibility of the obliteration of any race by the process of absorption into another."[35] Small groups of people could be absorbed but not large ones, not races. While Italians in America, who constituted a very small number of people, might be absorbed, the Irish and the Germans, who numbered well into the millions, respectively, could not. And black people, a despised minority which numbered more than seven millions, could not be absorbed. Moreover, he believed the great races of mankind had "inherited for ages an unswerving allegiance to type" and "a pertinacious loyalty to lineage."[36]

Unlike Bishop Turner in the post-Reconstruction period, Crummell did not advocate the emigration of large numbers of black people to Africa. And while Turner had argued that unless blacks inter-married with whites in America they would, like the Indians, be wiped out, Crummell felt that a peculiar vitality had enabled black people to survive in the past - while Indian and Sandwich Islander had fallen before white fury - and assured their continued viability as a people in the future.[37]

In a speech before the Bethel Historical Society during the 1880's, he elaborated on these theses. Addressing himself to the topic of "colonization, absorption or subjection," he argued that colonization of the race was "a scheme utterly visionary and impractical." Such was the case because it was "opposed by the desires of the black race." He contended that "the expatriation of many millions of people contrary to their own wishes, is a thing which has never been done, and never can be."[38] Secondly, it was his opinion that white people in

the United States could never unite behind the goal of driving black people from the soil of the country. Displaying an optimism that contrasted sharply with the views of Bishop Turner and others concerning what whites were capable of (Turner believed them capable of utterly destroying black people), Crummell ventured the opinion that, like Garnet, if some whites sought to force blacks out, "multitudes of the very best, most thoughtful [White] Christian people" would "rise up, and in the name of God and humanity protest against so iniquitous a scheme as the driving out of . . . millions of fellow Christians." Thirdly, he thought the reluctance of the United States to lose such a large labor supply, one which had been the basis of "personal wealth and national prosperity" would militate strongly against the forced exodus of black people.[39]

Quite apart from moral considerations, it was precisely that which southern whites viewed as being in their self-interest which would doom to failure schemes for mass emigration. The fact that "thousands of freedmen in every southern state" had sought emigration following the failure of Reconstruction availed them little, as the planting interest had opposed such a move. The mass robbery to which the freedmen were being subjected in the south, the despair to which they had been driven, had caused many to "offer their household goods for sale; their farming utensils and cabins and their small allotments" but white people would not purchase these items. Crummell remarked that "every possible obstacle was thrown in the way to prevent [black] people leaving for Africa."[40]

There was another problem which antagonists of black people

would have to face if they were to achieve the voluntary or forcible removal of blacks, one which, from Crummell's point of view, was formidable. The removal of black people would have to take place virtually at once, for there could be no gradualism about it, considering the annual black birth rate of approximately 200,000 a year.[41] Estimating the cost of every passenger at one hundred dollars, pointing out the many fleets of vessels required for such an undertaking, he concluded that the cost of shipping the seven million black people to Africa would be close to $700,000,000 - a figure the mere statement of which was its own refutation. Not only was the colonization of black people impossible, it was for Crummell a sheer "absurdity to be relegated to the domain of the Arabian Night tales."[42] Summing up his position against colonization, he said that the race could not be ejected from the country, for the majority of blacks would resist expatriation.

The murky gloom which Crummell thought had enveloped the continent of Africa for thousands of years, since the beginning of time, had finally begun to lift - in those sections of the continent which had, around the turn of the nineteenth century, begun to feel the benignant rays and relieving shades of Christianity. The long and terrible nightmare that was heathenism would soon end for a great many Africans, for dawn was rising beyond the horizon. According to Crummell "streams of saving influence" had, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, begun to flow "out from every powerful protestant state in the world. The whole world's enlightened and reformed religion" was striving to civilize Africans.[43]

Nevertheless, nationalist that he was, Alexander Crummell was enamored of Anglo-Saxon civilization, and looked to the day when Africans would adopt Anglo-Saxon forms, including the English language. "The whole of Negroland," he said in a statement made in the 1850's — but one from which he did not veer for fifty years — "seems without doubt to be given up to the English language, and hence to the influence of Anglo-Saxon life and civilization."

> It is a most singular providence that that very people, who have most largely participated in the slave-trade, should have been brought, by the power of God's dealings, and in the workings of His plans, to bear the weighty burden of lifting up this large section of humanity to manhood . . . [44]

III

Crummell's statements at the Congress on Africa and The American Negro at Gammon Theological Seminary in 1895 reflected, with one important exception, no major shift in his thinking on Africa over the previous forty years. A generation or more before the Gammon Theological meeting he had expressed satisfaction that the slave trade had been brought to an end, that powerful protestant states throughout the world were striving for that regeneration of Africa which he considered both necessary and desirable. Moreover, he had welcomed commercial ties which had been established between Europe and Africa; -hese he hailed as evidences of legitimate commerce. Nor had he abandoned his belief that a tide of salvation sweeping along in a "broad mighty current" would bear "the mighty masses" of Africans to such salvation and glory that "Ethiopia," from the Mediterranean to

the Cape, from the Atlantic ocean to the Indian, "shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."[45]

In his Gammon Theological statement, "Civilization as a Collateral and Indispensable Instrumentality in Planting the Christian Church in Africa," Crummell restated a view which had long since become the burden of his critique of the African, and, probably, the source of no inconsiderable anguish for him. The African, innocent of Christianity, was spiritually "less than a quarter of a man." As he stands before the teacher of the gospel, when first converted, "he is but a child!"

> A crude, undeveloped and benighted child! A shadow
> of a man! Child, however, though he be, he is the
> head of a family. . . . But what is to be done with
> this Christian man-child? Done, not, I mean, as to
> his inner spiritual condition. . . . Is he to be
> left in the rude, crude, half-animal conditions in
> which the missionary first found him? Surely not,
> for Christianity is, in all the ways of life, a new
> creation. This man-child is to be reconstructed.
> All the childishness of inheritance is gradually to
> be taken out of his brain, and all the barbarism of
> ages to be eliminated from his constitution.[46]

As in the case of the individual convert, so too with groups of converts. Thus the need for a reconstruction of African society, for in both cases "it is humanity, maimed, crooked, low and degraded; falling short in every particular of that full development which is ever the aim of Christianity." The heathen, a disorganized being, needed reconstruction in every segment of his outer being and in every relation of his life. The introduction of Christianity into heathen society is a necessary precondition for the reconstruction of that society, for the attainment of civilization. "If you crave the

influence and inspiration of some majestic and inspiring civilization,"
Crummell said, "you must put yourself in immediate neighborhood to some
grand people under the influence of Jesus Christ."[47]

The benign, civilizing effects of Christianity would be felt,
according to Crummell, among the Zulus, in Sierra Leone, and in Japan.
That Liberia was not included among his examples, though he admitted
that the examples were many, is especially worth noting. Nor is
Liberia mentioned in his second statement before the Congress – "The
Absolute Need of an Indigenous Missionary Agency for the Evangelization
of Africa." In the latter case, more instances were offered of the
spread of Christian missions and the attendant transformations toward
"civilization," but still no mention of Liberia. There is reason to
believe that by 1895 Crummell felt the example of Sierra Leone was more
edifying and instructive than that of Liberia.

On the question of the need for an indigenous missionary agency
for Africa, Crummell remained true to his position of the 1850's that
people of African ancestry, apart from a possible initial introduction
of Christianity through the agency of others, must themselves recognize
their role as the main agency being employed by God to effect the
evangelization and civilization of Africa. He once again projected
what was essentially a nationalist imperative, but this time – and here
was the significant shift – one devolving more heavily than ever upon
the African on the continent. While in Africa he had for some time
believed New World blacks should play the decisive role in the process
of evangelization, but before the Congress on Africa he advanced that
the "native man" himself would have to play a far greater role in
effective evangelization, in constructing "civilization."

While Crummell's conclusion, that the African indigenous to the
continent must take responsibility for his destiny, was certainly pro-
gressive, and while his explanation for the decisive role to be played
by the native was in the main quite sound, his basic assumptions regard-
ing Africans remained as uninformed and as Eurocentric as ever. His
recognition that "by knowledge, by sympathy, by kindness and sentiment,
by his ready tongue and his evangelical spirit, the simplest native
man, if pious, is by far the most facile agent for the propogation of
the faith" was certainly rational.[48] But, once again, his argument
was sadly embarrassed by withering assaults upon the African's life-
styles. For example, his view on the importance of knowing the lang-
uages of the people among whom missionary work is to be done was
vitiated by a statement which betrayed his exceedingly limited under-
standing of the African mind and African linguistics: He thought Afri-
can languages uncouth and rude, vehicles of the Africans "narrow and
stunted thought."[49]

If Crummell was familiar with the works of the few European
scholars who were cutting the ground from under propounders of the
thesis that contemporary African societies were backward and steeped in
savagery, there are no such indications in his works. There is, for
example, not the barest suggestion that he was familiar with the better
works on Africa which appeared in Europe and America.[50] It is almost
a certainty that he must have known Robert Campbell's fine book on Africa,
for the author was a major figure in ante-bellum Negro life in America.
Yet given Crummell's bent of mind, there is no reason to believe, even
had he read the Campbell volume, that he would have taken it seriously.

The conclusion is very attractive that no amount of information on Africa which ran counter to Crummell's presumptions could have changed his opinions of that continent and her people. His unusually bleak vision of the African past and present was largely attributable to his acceptance, apparently without question, of the extremely chauvinistic and short-sighted view, widely prevalent in England during the years of his matriculation at Cambridge, that western civilization was the only truly valid one. But such an explanation is not sufficient to explain Crummell. Henry Highland Garnet and other black intellectuals were subjected, in varying degrees, to the anti-African propaganda to which Crummell was exposed. While they too considered contemporary African cultures backward, they were not generally moved to lavish as much praise on what seemed to be the opposites of those cultures. One is tempted to suspect that the intensity and sustained quality of Crummell's attack was rooted, ultimately, in a form of self-hatred, agonizing in depth and compass, even though his nationalism enabled him to stop short of embracing assimilationism of his people. Nevertheless, the values which he wanted black people to adopt were, minus the racism, very much those of the larger society.

IV

Alexander Crummell was perhaps the most distinguished black man to do missionary work in West Africa during the nineteenth century. There for twenty years, he left knowing little more about the peoples he had encountered than upon arriving. Thus there is reason to believe that Crummell very early lost most of the respect for Africa which was imparted to him by his father. It is altogether possible that a certain mixture of humiliation and sorrow over Africa - and toward himself as a person of African extraction - provided the main energy which powered his spiritual world.

Perhaps better than any one of his time, Crummell represented the position, through his writings and actions, that the African past and present were devoid of anything of worth, were without value. This he contended despite the fact that most black intellectuals and probably large numbers of ordinary blacks believed as a virtual article of faith that black people had played significant roles in constructing or helping to construct Egyptian civilization. It is small wonder that, unable to believe Africans had a past of any note, Crummell could see only barbarism and savagery in the African present, a rank backwardness spawned not by innate inferiority but by Africans at some distant point in the past having lived far apart from the rest of humanity, and having subsequently been separated, he erroneously thought, by the Sahara desert.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Crummell, in seeking to remake the African, was impelled by a desire to invest his own life with new meaning, to re-create himself. His views on Africa are more important, in the final analysis, for what they tell us about him and blacks similarly inclined than for what they reveal about Africa; and still more important for what they tell us about the moral and intellectual climate of America, of the Western world generally.[51] Not only did he live at a time when few people had more than a superficial view of contemporary African history and culture; he lived in a world in which black people were subjected to unrestrained racial abuse in theory and practice.

The intellectual stance of Crummell illustrated that more than concern over the plight of Africans was required to invest Africa consciousness with creative meaning. For all his sincerity and energy, Crummell's prescriptions for Africa's ills, had they been widely applied, may well have compounded the problems of that vast continent. Fortunately for the traditions of Afro-America, his position on Africans was not representative of the beliefs of most articulate blacks. On the contrary, black leaders throughout the century, in the face of soaring attacks on their humanity, began the extremely difficult task of attempting to reconstruct their past as one answer to their detractors. It was, in fact, their efforts which provided a far more

meaningful, even if at times distorted, frame of reference for determining what it had once been to be African, long before the modern phase of world history.

3. ETHNOLOGY AND HISTORY IN DEFENSE
   OF AFRICAN HUMANITY

What Afro-Americans learned of their ancestral home was usually accomplished in spite of the larger society, which gave major attention to attempts to demean Africa and Africans, to relegate them to the back-waters of civilization and humanity. Gradually building over the centuries, anti-African sentiment was linked to prejudicial attacks on the African in America, reaching a high point before the outbreak of the Civil War. Though American slavery had its intellectual defenders in abundance from its very inception, including the most distinguished statesmen, it was not until the attack on slavery intensified between 1830 and 1860 that an elaborate, theoretical defense of that institution was mounted, culminating in a full blown ideology of racism.[1]

The members of the American School of Anthropology, who were probably the chief intellectual defenders of slavery, rested their attack on the fulcrum of African ethnology, insisting upon the historic, natural and therefore permanent inferiority of the black man.[2] Hence the bright benediction of eternal white tutelage and supervision of enslaved peoples of African ancestry in America. Largely mounted in the South, the massive effort to justify oppression and proscription of blacks received support in the North from distinguished scholars and universities, as it would throughout the century.

The American School members ranged from the Philadelphia anatomist and physician Samuel George Morton, who founded the school, to the esteemed Harvard naturalist Louis Agassiz. Both Morton and Agassiz disclaimed

interest in fostering or justifying slavery, but both believed in the inferiority of blacks, which amounted to virtually the same thing. George R. Gliddon and Joshiah Clark Nott, key figures in the American school, made no effort to disguise their belief that slavery was justified on the basis of their alleged finding that Africans, bereft of history, constituted the lowest order of human beings whose enslavement, whatever the impulse that brought slavery into being, was essentially humane.[3] Such arguments were drawn upon by slave-holders and by white racists generally. The gifted ex-slave Frederick Douglass and the historian George Washington Williams attempted to answer such charges on the ground of ethnology. A larger group of blacks used history as a defense against racist attributions of the inferiority of their people.

I

Though the American School did not differ with Frederick Douglass' contention that "Egypt was one of the earliest abodes of learning and civilization," providing the basis for the civilizations of Greece and Rome, his assertion that the ancient Egyptians were not white but about the same complexion as the American Negro struck at the heart of that schools attempt to demonstrate the inferiority of people of African descent.[4] Challenging Samuel Morton's argument that the ancient Egyptians were completely removed from Negroes, Douglass used the author's own words - from Crania Americana - in attempting to embarass his argument. Morton's description of the Egyptians "complexion brown . . . nose is straight, excepting the end, where it is rounded and wide; the lips are rather thick, and the hair black and curly"[5] was thrown back at him as Douglass sought to demonstrate that the Egyptian people had a strong

admixture of black African blood. Douglass ventured that Morton's
description of the Egyptians "would certainly seem to make it safe to
suppose the presence of even Negro blood." A man of his time with a
brown complexion, added Douglass, "nose rounded and wide, lips thick,
hair black and curly," would have "no difficulty in getting himself
recognized as a Negro."[6] Morton's treatment of the Nubians, who con-
quered and ruled the Egyptians, was no less vulnerable to attack from
Douglass, who once again quoted Morton against Morton.

> The hair of the Nubians is thick and black - often
> curled, either by nature or art, and sometimes par-
> tially frizzled, but never woolly . . . Although the
> Nubians occasionally present their national characters
> unmixed, they generally show traces of their social
> intercourse with the Arabs, and even with the Negroes.[7]

Morton's use of the adverb "even," Douglass thought, showed the
spirit in which "our great Ethnologist pursues his work, and what deduct-
ions may be justly made from the value of his researches on that account."
Supporting Volney's contention that the Sphinx represented an Egyptian
Doity, he remarked that Morton's position that the Sphinx was a shrine
"worshipped at by degraded Negroes of Egypt" was patently absurd, "in
view of the fact that the great Sphinx in question was the chief of a
series, full two miles in length."[8]

Quoting from Denon's Travels in Egypt, which describes the
Egyptians as having "thick lips, full and prominent; mouth large, but
cheerful and smiling, complexion dark, ruddy and coppery, and the whole
aspect displaying . . . the genuine African character, of which the
Negro is the exaggerated and extreme representation," Douglass proceeded
to quote a passage from anthropologist James Prichard which was no less

persuasive for his purposes: Prichard, regarding an alleged colony of Egypt, Colchis, quotes Herodotus as having said that "there was one fact strongly in favor of this opinion - the Colchians were black in complexion and woolly haired."[9]

Charles Hamilton Smith - whom Douglass accused together with Nott, Gliddon, Morton, and Agassiz of having "duly been consulted by our slavery propogating statesmen" - in his Natural History of the Human Species raised arguments which impressed Douglass less than those of Morton. Smith's scholarship, Douglass said, was as mischievous as it was false. Discussing him under the rubric "Superficial Objections," Douglass had little trouble selecting findings which were indeed shallow: Smith thought the structure of the African head might be responsible for "the erect gait, which occasions the practice common to the Ethiopian, or mixed nations, of carrying burdens and light weights, even to a tumbler of water, upon the head." In addition, Smith advanced that "the voice of the Negro is feeble and hoarse in the male sex."[10] Douglass rejoined that not only had Orientals been carrying burdens on their heads for thousands of years but had Smith stood "at our door" he might have seen Germans and Irish by the hundreds "not bearing burdens of 'light weight,' but of heavy weight, upon the same vertical extremity." As for the Negro male's voice, Douglas accused Smith of failing to recognize that such a minor tone was assumed by the oppressed in order not to offend the oppressor, that any construct beyond that was ridiculous.[11]

Before leaving Smith, Douglass addressed his charge that the "woo haired races have never discovered an alphabet" or "framed a grammatica language" by referring him to the Mpongwe language, which he considered

"as truly a grammatically framed language as any extant." Douglass also cited, as an example of an African people who had recently created an alphabet, the Mandingoes, but he might have, had he been more conversant with African linguistics, alluded to other African languages as well. Still, few were the Americans who thought the Africans had developed languages beyond the most rudimentary stage.[12]

Douglass' authorities on the resemblance of the Egyptians to Negroes were among those used by black historians of his time and later, including those of the twentieth century - Herodotus, Eschylus and Volney. Relying on them, together with contemporaries such as the distinguished antrhopologist Prichard, Douglass' conclusion regarding Negro influence in Egypt reflected his usual judiciousness. While he did not claim, as did other blacks of his time, that the ancient Egyptians were Negroes

> answering, in all respects, to the nations and tribes ranged under the general appellation, Negro; still, it may safely be affirmed, that a strong affinity and a direct relationship may be claimed by the Negro race, to that grandest of all nations of antiquity, the builders of the pyramids.[13]

Douglass thought what racists found very disturbing was the presence of Egypt in Africa. "Pity that it had not been in Europe, or in Asia, or better still," he exclaimed, "in America."[14] He concluded his remarks on Egypt by venturing that the "people of Africa are, probably, one people." His suggestion that it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the various tribes of Africa may have been spun off by the Egyptians, "as implied by the evident relations of their language, and by other similarities"; that the various tribes and nations were intimately related to other tribes and nations - these were richly suggestive premises.[15]

though it is likely that he had no accurate conception of the extent of tribal loyalty which prevailed in Africa, a loyalty so narrow and deep as to divide vast numbers of peoples, however strong other unities.

It was Douglass' contention that "A man is worked upon by what he works on." Completing the brilliant principle, he added that a man "may carve out his circumstances, but his circumstances will carve him out as well."[16] In accounting for those physical characteristics which supposedly marked the African as an inferior race and, as some "scientists," preachers and other learned men of his period though, "a distinct species," Douglass used a cross-cultural approach. In language very much like that employed by Alexander Crummell and Bishop Henry McNeil Turner, he remarked that the form of the Negro had often been the subject of comment: "His flat feet, long arms, high cheek bones and retreating forehead, are especially dwelt upon, to his disparagement, and just as if there were no white people with precisely the same peculiarities."[17]

He reported that, on arriving in Ireland nine years earlier, while addressing a meeting of some 5,000 common people, on temperance, he observed human faces which never before told a sadder tale. These people had lacked only woolly hair and a black skin "to complete their likeness to the plantation Negro." (Italics added.) Gaunt, long arms; open, uneducated mouths; badly formed feet and ankles; vacant expressions and foreheads which retreated; the shuffling gait; and their petty fights and quarrels - all of these qualities reminded Douglass of his own sorely abused people.[18] Like those Irishmen, the greviously oppressed African (or the man of color in America) would look the part; so thought Douglass as well as many other Negroes who objected to the more stereo-

typical portraits of Africans being projected as representative of the
group.

A monogenesist, Douglass spoke for a large number of articulate
Negroes in his discourse on ethnology. Certainly his view that the
African branch of the human family extended "from the once highly civil-
ized Egyptian to the barbarians on the banks of the Niger" did not strike
a novel note among his black brothers.[19] The dichotomy in the African
past, as they conceived it, of a glorious ancient history in Egypt (and
in Ethiopia) and a barbaric, savage present in West Africa, might have
been received with a degree of equanimity by blacks had it not been for
slavery and, by the 1850's, full-scale racism in theory and practice.
Sensing the alignment of forces in the U.S., the formidable power of
racists on all levels of the Society, Douglass did allow for the possibility
of a separate creation, asking:

> What if the Negro may not be able to prove his relation-
> ship to Nubians, Abyssinians and Egyptians? What if in-
> genious men are able to find plausible objections to all
> arguments maintaining the oneness of the human race? What,
> after all, if they are able to show very good reasons for
> believing the Negro to have been created precisely as we
> find him on the Gold Coast — along the Senegal and the
> Niger — I say, what of all this?[20]

If one granted those premises, Douglass believed, they did not
lead to the conclusion that therefore black people should be despised,
that enslavement and imbrutement would be wise of just. "A diverse
origin dies not disprove a common nature, nor does it disprove a united
destiny," he reasoned, and added that "The essential characteristics of
humanity are the same." Whatever the white men decided, regarding such
questions, the African — with remarkable "tenacity of life," "powers of
endurance," and "inalterable toughness" was in the world to stay. In

America, the Indian was dying "under the flashing glance of the Anglo-Saxon." But this was not the case with the Negro: "civilization cannot kill him. He accepts it - becomes a part of it."[21]

II

George Washington Williams, a black historian, put the American School under attack by concentrating his fire on the internal contra-dictions and inconsistencies of its representatives. Beginning gently, he cited the interesting fact that Dr. Nott, despite his undisguised lack of enthusiasm for blacks, unequivocally asserted "the antiquity of the Negro," admitting that "Nigritian types were contemporary with the earliest Egyptians."[22] But far more damaging perhaps was a passage from Nott's Types of Mankind, one which describes pictures in a Theban tomb:

> A Negress, apparently a princess, arrives at Thebes, drawn in a plaustrum by a pair of humped oxen, the driver and groom being red-colored Egyptians. . . . Following her are multitudes of Negroes and Nubians, bringing tribute from the upper country, as well as black slaves of both sexes and all ages, among whom are red children, whose fathers were Egyptians. The cause of her advent seems to have been to make offer-ing in this tomb of a 'royal son of Kesh - Amunoph,' who may have been her husband.[23]

Williams thought it strange that Dr. Nott's views on the Negro allowed him "to make a statement that destroys his heretofore specious reasoning about the political and social status of the Negro." Regarding Nott's position that blacks were in a servile state throughout antiquity, the vassals of various Egyptian kings - a view shared by Agassiz and other members of the American School - Williams thought the reference

to the princess negated such an argument. He wrote that the black lady to whom reference was made - indeed, "the entire picture in the Theban tomb," was a refutation of Nott's argument, for the picture presented was that of a "Negro princess with Egyptian driver and groom, with a large army of attendants, going on a long journey to the tomb of her royal husband."[24]

The fact that black slaves were mentioned in the account in no way, in the opinion of Williams, invalidated the significance of the station occupied by the black princess, for at this time slavery was not confined to any special group of people. Furthermore, he thought it unlikely that such high position could have been attained by the black woman had her people not enjoyed a long and peaceful reign or won an honorable place for themselves by virtue of their valor in war.

As regards the antiquity of the Negro, in Asia as well as Egypt, the matter afforded little room for speculation. The astute investigator, testing the hypothesis, would find temples and monuments, pyramids and sepulchred stones rising before him, affirming the Negroes antiquity. Blacks had migrated over vast expanses of Asia: Their likenesses could be found among the Japanese, whose idols in some instances were "exact representations of woolly-haired Negroes"; in Siam, where idols were fashioned after Negroes in some of the temples; and in other regions of Asia.[25] Black people had been esteemed in Asia and in ancient Africa, according to Williams, and could not justly be accused of having exclusively occupied menial positions.

If Williams' observations were accurate regarding the political and religious haights - reflected in the art of Egypt and Asia - to

which some black Africans rose, his conception of the way in which civilization developed from pre-history through time leaves' very much to be desired. Like a great deal of the history writing of the nineteenth century, his theory on the origins of civilizations was seriously flawed by his "sacred" view of their birth - all the races of mankind, as a gift from God, were civilized from the start.[26]

Williams' observations on the "true Negro" of contemporary African societies were about as perceptive as his view of the origins of civilization. In fact, he displayed a susceptibility to brutal stereotypes of black people as great or nearly so as the people of whom he was critical regarding ancient Egyptian history. He quoted from a volume entitled Savage Africa, the author of which had crudely listed three "grand types" of Africans - "the bronze-colored class"; "the black-skinned"; and "Lastly, the typical Negroes":

> an exceptional race even among the Negroes, whose disgusting type it is not necessary to re-describe. They are found chiefly along the coast between the Casemanche and Sierra Leone, between Lagos and the Cameroons, in the Congo swamps, and in certain swampy plains and mountain-hollows of the interior . . . The typical Negro is the true savage of Africa . . . and I must paint the deformed anatomy of his mind . . . unrestrained moral laws, spends his days in sloth, his nights in debauchery.[27]

But this was by no means all. Williams was quite prepared to believe that the Negroes of the United States, approximately six million in number by 1880, were products of the "cast-away material of Africa." Williams added that for "the candid student of ethnography it must be conclusive that the Negro is but the most degraded and disfigured type of primeval African." Concluding his remarks on this subject with a

certain generosity, he contended that the Negro in West Africa and in the American South "shows that the centuries of savagehood and slavery have not drained him of all the elements of his manhood."[28]

Both Douglass and Williams, in the ignorance of their remarks regarding West African blacks, reflected a general lack of knowledge in black and white intellectual circles on West African history, one that prevailed into the next century. In remarking on the alleged "degeneration" of West African blacks from an ideal Egyptian type, they exposed a way of looking at their West African brethren which ruled out even the possibility of there being values of worth in that part of Africa without, presumably, a great deal of time and opportunity for development being available to the "degenerate"and so-called "cast-away" types. Clearly, there would be no light shed on West African peoples from the comments of Douglass and Williams. Nor would there be much more of worth from other Afro-Americans on West African history. But their work on the African in the Americas and in ancient Africa is another matter, one of import and thus worth exploring.

When Afro-Americans mounted their counter-assault in the historical arena, it bore striking similarities to their line of attack in the anti-slavery fight. For one thing their historical response came to maturity, became noticeably serviceable to them at roughly the same time that they were building a viable, if not very powerful anti-slavery movement. That this was the case is perfectly logical, since both developments were in a real sense responses to the charge that they were subhuman beings and therefore fit objects of white overlordship. But just as numbers of black people in the North wished to turn their backs on the fight against slavery, there is little doubt, though hard evidence is lacking, that others – perhaps some of the same men and women – wished to disassociate themselves from the writing of Afro-American and African history. Yet there is reason to believe, judging from the enormous amount of attention that Afro-American leaders devoted to history in their speeches and writings, that there was on balance very significant interest among black people in their past.[29]

What was implicit in the ideology of black nationalism as espoused by Walker, Garnet and Sidney, that people of African ancestry everywhere were members of the same family with special ties, was reflected in the attitudes toward history of those Afro-Americans, nationalist and non-nationalist, who wrote or spoke on their history. Whether it was Garnet or Wells Brown, when either man discoursed on the history of his people he ranged easily, seemingly naturally, from Africa to the Americas, suggesting that essentially the same people, sharing a common heritage, were

being chronicled. Before David Walker gave strong emphasis to a history reflecting the oneness of African peoples, of course, the concept was deeply rooted in the consciousness of black thinkers.[30]

It is little wonder that such was the case, for the very harshness and ruthlessness of attempts to deracinate evidences of African cultures in North America laid the groundwork, through the elimination of African tribal and cultural differences, for blacks to surmount those differences more easily - where they existed - and to view peoples of African ancestry whole, as one people. In Africa - and even in some parts of the Americas such as Brazil - a multiplicity of tribes with differing, though usually related religious and linguistic forms, for example, had at times served to provide barriers to unity. But in North America the more Akans and Yorubas and Ibos became indistinguishable from each other, the more prepared they and their children were to consider Africans one people with a common past and future. Rather curiously, while substantial cultural retention would doubtless have enhanced the chances of more effective - and ethnic - slave rebellions in North America, the ultimate absence of a very significant African cultural presence strengthened the chances for a conception of African unity broad enough to embrace all of Africa's children.[31]

When one recalls that for centuries the great majority of "free" blacks and generations of slaves thought of themselves as Africans, that large numbers of them had spent portions of their lives in Africa, the West Indies and America, then it should not astonish that their consciousness of what constituted being Africa, in the American setting of levelling oppression, was far more expansive, cutting across tribal and

linguistic lines, than it had been in the African homeland. In brief, narrow African allegiances were forced to give way rather quickly in America to a community of perceptions and passions formed in the crucible of slavery, to a condition in which the consciousness of most blacks extended beyond the boundaries of tribal groupings, enabling them to identify with Africans everywhere. This process worked more effectively in North America, owing to the peculiarities of the slave trade and slavery than anywhere else in the Americas.[32] For the oppressed black man, it finally resulted in a perspective on his history which was all-African, that is, a Pan-African view of the past. On certain levels, however, such a view was not necessarily positive and enlightening, as was demonstrated in the pages of Negro newspapers, books, sermons, and letters, the documents under examination here.

The essentials of the Afro-American approach to the writing of history can be found in the pages of Freedom's Journal, so deeply involved with African peoples were the editors and readers of that paper. From the very first issue of Freedom's Journal it was evident that, in addition to Africa, the entire diaspora was considered by the editors as their field of inquiry, historical and contemporary. In fact, scarcely an issue of that paper was without significant coverage of the transplanted African, and much of that reportage consisted of historical accounts of slavery in various West Indian and South American communities, including Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Haiti, Brazil and others.[33]

The Pan-African perspective was sometimes double-edged, for Freedom's Journal carried many articles which, while not devoted to history, contained references to African savagery and backwardness - that is,

articles, on the allegedly uncivilized state of contemporary African history. But this trend was balanced by the appearance of articles devoted exclusively to history, especially to the achievements of black people in ancient Egypt and Ethiopia. Though it played a pioneering role in the historical field, Freedom's Journal was not alone in the richness of its resources on African peoples. Essentially the same format was followed by The Colored American and by other important ante- bellum black newspapers in subsequent decades. Moreover, in reporting on the history of the African in the Caribbean or in South America, black editors did not hesitate to reprint the better articles which occasionally appeared in white newspapers and journals.[34]

More than the history of any other country in the Americas, the history of Haiti, especially the revolutionary period, was a source of fascination and pride for black leaders during the nineteenth century. That Haiti garnered more attention than any other African country was understandable precisely because it was the one country in which black people had successfully opposed the forces of enslavement. James Theo- dore Holly, more effectively than any other Afro-American, chronicled that country's past. His articles in the pages of the Anglo-African magazine coincided with, and probably contributed to, rising interest in emigration to Haiti on the part of people of color in America, an interest which resulted in several thousand of them taking up residence in Haiti in the late 1850's and early 1860's.[35]

The attention given to Africans in Haiti illustrates that, as important as the history of ancient Africa was to building an effective defense of African humanity, the history of the African in diaspora was