

Edward E. Baptist
Cornell University
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Solidarity Versus Parastate

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She must have tired of waiting, there in the Boston courtroom's spectator chairs. We don't know her name. White people described her later as "a huge negro woman." Huge? Racists exaggerate about Black women. But strong she surely was, and probably young—yet old enough to choose to be here. So too had chosen many other Black women and men. "Old and young, large and small, men and women of every variety of shade," they sat behind the rail that separated audience from the court's legal arena. On this August 1836 day, they were ready.¹

The old room's dust stirred; the door opened. Constables brought the prisoners, Ann Patten and Mary Pinckney. Their crime: escaping from Baltimore enslaver John Morris. They'd run on the waves, but hue and cry outran even the brig *Chickasaw*. Disembarking in Boston they met constables, arrest warrants in hand.

The woman in the audience—did she drum her feet here—or sit centered? The hearing might drag on. Judge Shaw might hear witnesses re: the prisoners' identity; their status (slave or free) back in Maryland. Lawyers might orate on the legal obligations Massachusetts incurred under the Constitution's Article 4.2, the Fugitive Slave Clause, and the 1793 act enabling it. This grand bargain assured enslavers that no *Somerset* principle would undermine their ability to demand state and citizen cooperation in policing Black people back into enslavement. In a 1772 decision, British chief justice Mansfield had ruled that without explicit statutory law, an enslaver in Britain itself could not reenslave James Somerset, a man who had escaped in London.² Or the judge might simply enforce the act immediately, remanded Ann and Mary, Patten and Pinckney directly to Matthew Turner, the lawyer who held Morris' power of attorney.

Perhaps this was the first time that Black men and women filled almost every spectator chair (aside from a "sprinkling here and there" of white abolitionists) here in the second -floor courtroom in Boston's main government building. Even in the allegedly liberal Bay state, two generations after the 1780s' legal end of slavery, Black men and women could rarely play the role of public citizen. After 1815, responding to demands from newly-enfranchised white citizens, many northern states' constitutional conventions barred Black men from voting and other rights and duties of citizenship. In states like Pennsylvania, where Black male landowners

could still technically qualify to vote in 1836, the threat of white mob violence often kept Black people from the polls.³ In Massachusetts, Black men (but not women, of course) could legally serve on juries and vote, but it is not clear how often they did so.

White people were finding new ways to reject Black claims to citizenship's rights. Yet here in Boston this court hearing was only happening because a Black man named Samuel H. Adams had boldly petitioned the judge to issue a writ of habeas corpus, instead of immediately remanding the women back to slavery. Adams, a sailor who when in port lived with his family at Pratt's Wharf, acted in the same spirit as a group of Black men who in January 1820 bombarded Boston courts with demands that a slavecatcher legally prove his claim on John Howard, alleged fugitive from slavery. When the courts rejected Howard's pleas for freedom, they attempted to seize him from the jailor. Eleven were jailed and indicted for this effort to rescue Howard from falling South, down into the chasm that yawned for any Black person. Now, sixteen years later, Adams' act had prevented Turner from simply hustling the two women back to Baltimore on the *Chickasaw's* return-leg voyage. Ann and Mary would at least get a hearing before a judge.⁴

The day came. Black Bostonians moved into this space not designed for them. Here in the upper room, men and women would do more than wait. But first they waited. The hearing dragged pro forma. A witness reported that when challenged as they disembarked, the women offered shipboard pseudonyms: "Eliza Small" and "Polly Ann Bates." Judge Shaw ponderously invoked the 1793 federal fugitive slave law, Article 4.2's enabling act. The 1820 case had gone the same way. Enslavers' counsel lectured fellow white Massachusetts settlers: no one, he preached, minded when the national deal worked in their favor, so "faith and honor and justice require us to observe [the Constitution's] conditions and perform them in the spirit and the letter without murmur." Returning self-liberating people to enslavers' claws was best for white Boston, anyway: "without a power to send back the fugitive who has escaped the labours to which he has been appointed, our cities would be an asylum for the most worthless of that wretched population which is considered as a most dangerous evil."⁵

Once Northern states began implementing gradual emancipation, white Northerners collectively stopped speaking of Black people as alternately amusing, or helplessly inconvenient contradictions to the ideals of freedom that white citizens of the new US vaunted. Instead many began to see Black folks, especially those on the run from slavery, as “a body of felons.” Their inherently dangerous presence required the exercise of government police power to expel them. Yet what tools might do the job? Northern whites weren’t sure; they had not imagined them yet. Unlike Southern cities, Northern ones did not begin the nineteenth century with organized police forces. Instead, white civic worriers assumed that officials (like judges) needed to excise Black folks like cancers from the local body politic.⁶

Thus, while propaganda has sometimes depicted white Northerners as generally tolerant of runaways from Southern slavery, the largely Black crowd understood that Judge Shaw might be pushing the women off a cliff. So, when the judge turned to the lawyers to give specific instructions, “the colored people,” reported the *Boston Morning Post*, suddenly “sprang from their seats in every direction.” Swarming over the railing, they surrounded the two women. A phalanx of Black women and men then moved as one towards the judge’s bench, behind which a door opened to a staircase leading down toward School Street.⁷

A deputy sheriff, one of two law enforcement officers in the courtroom, charged into the flying wedge of rescuers. Bodies moved with his force. Grabbing for one of the women, trying to keep this queen on the chessboard. In the game of the America political economy, she was the piece that connected all the spaces. Back in Baltimore, she’d be worth hundreds of dollars—a cash value by which slave traders priced in years of anticipated returns, her future use as collateral. Her body was by law not hers, but the womb of future slaves. Her hands’ task, after hours: to nurture hands who’d keep picking cotton, making Mississippi and Massachusetts both rich. She was a counter on the board of wealth, and in the political trades connecting white Americans. Yes: he wanted her back in his hands to protect “interstate comity,” the constitutional-law principle requiring one state to respect another state’s laws. He grabbed at her

to save the vast array of white political compromises, political alliances, and machines that rested on the agreement to hunt and catch Black people as interstate prey.

All that value and meaning paradoxically ensured that she had the power to destabilize the order white people wanted. Today, with the help of her brothers and sisters, she flowed like water out of white hands. Two people “seized [the constable] by the throat.” They threw him aside among the upturned chairs. “Pell-mell” they thundered across the courtroom floorboards towards the door by the judge’s bench. Judge Shaw, shouting for order, ran robes flapping to shut the door but the fastest beat him there and threw it open.

If we could but look at this “mob” and see its dozens of individuals, we’d name each one’s own specific route towards the door and into the staircase down which they rushed. We’d see her or his specific history. We’d see at the same time, how ascribed “blackness” linked them all together, especially in the way the US measured and watched them, sought to control their movement, excise them from the land entirely if they dared to be free. Yet each had chosen to forge of Blackness a different bond. The fate that linked them, they made a rope to pull on together. She, the large, strong, possibly young woman was pulling with this crowd. She decided she would not let anyone stop them on the stairs down to School Street. Not today. She picked up one of the two women in her arms.

She chose, she risked, she led. At the top of the stairs another constable made a stand. Someone “kicked [him] downstairs.” He bounced off steps, and they flowed down the risers, trampling yet another white man coming up the stairs on different business entirely. The woman from Boston kept her balance, riding the wave-form, holding open a space for the woman from Baltimore. The strength of her own body and her momentum carried her bursting through the ground-floor doors and onto the open southeast side of Court Square. With her were between one and two hundred women and men, a significant piece of Boston’s 1836 Black population.

Two white abolitionist women were still up in the courtroom, berating Matthew Turner, lackey to enslavers. The white lawyers, meanwhile, were shouting at each other about what had just happened. Turner’s advocate insisted that Samuel Sewell, the women’s counsel, had given a

signal to the crowd. Like white newspapers, he couldn't believe that Black people could plan and execute rebellious rescues on their own.⁸

The shock did not disappear quickly. Black folks had rescued two women from the clutches of a system designed to promise predatory white people that prey could not disappear. So newspapers almost universally bashed the “rioters” who freed Patten and Pinckney. “The case has not its parallels in the annals of crime.” Someone was guilty of “instigating a mob of negroes to perpetrate an act at which every good member of society shudders.” The fact that the perpetrators were from those depicted as perpetual outsiders, living on tolerance until they could be persuaded to emigrate “back” to Africa or elsewhere, accentuated the threat. One minute of courtroom chaos became an epic threat to law and order. And the white-led Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society held an emergency meeting that resolved to publish its regret at and disapprobation of the “tumultuous behavior” of “certain colored persons.”⁹

Maybe it was! As the newspapers also noted, “after three days search, neither the prisoners nor one of the rioters have been arrested.” A riot, in a courtroom, by such rioters, followed by the failure to arrest anyone seemed to imply an even deeper failure in the system of social control in general. As yet they did not use the precise term “policing” to describe the way in which the state would maintain public order. But the authors depicted the potential threat of Black riot in the courtroom as one existential to the current power structure: for a failure to “sustain[] the dignity and supremacy of the public tribunals” threatened “not only the rights and peace of the citizens, but the very existence of the state.”¹⁰

The warnings said “state”—meaning “government.” The specific threats posed by the 1836 Boston rescue struck at the federation of whiteness that made national sovereignty possible. Massachusetts, wrote a correspondent of Boston's *Columbian Centinel* owed “our Southern brethren” every effort to hunt down those who defeated the attempt to return the women to Baltimore. If not, “adieu to peace and Union.” This theme would be repeated. Resistance to racialized policing, especially to rendition of alleged fugitives from slavery, damaged the national state itself. Dissent by white people, or even the failure to drop the state's full hammer-

weight on the “rioters,” rejected the interregional agreement on how to police Black people. That agreement to govern all Black folks as presumed-slaves held the white union together.¹¹

Even the *Liberator*, produced by William Lloyd Garrison, uncompromising white proponent of slavery’s immediate abolition, called the rescue “unjustifiable.” Garrison opposed direct resistance to slavery, whether violence or electoral and/or constitutional-legal challenges to drive a government-managed end to slavery. He did point out that the newspapers most agitated after this “riot” had said nothing about a white anti-abolition mob that rampaged through Boston ten months earlier. That mob seized Garrison. It marched him through the streets and might have lynched him if Boston’s mayor and a posse of constables had not arrested the editor.¹²

Yet here was Garrison, counseling against direct action to free either the enslaved, or the to-be reenslaved. The new interracial abolitionist movement that emerged in the early 1830s attracted many whose beliefs forbade violence. There was thus a principle of sorts here. Garrison and other white abolitionists also presumed some tactics would not work. Yet their presumption built in conceptual room for an unending future of whites’ monopoly over violence. Some, or perhaps more than some white abolitionists feared the same fears feared by slaveholders, and by southern whites’ Northern “doughface” allies. Some fought to end slavery not only because it was a barbaric institution, but because it empowered white Southerners to control the direction and fate of the United States. For them, Black Americans were tokens in whites’ struggle over a white future. Some saw the South as lawless yet feared that Black people were dangerous, disruptive, inferior people. They could not imagine a future in which Black men could vote or come to table with them and their daughters. Nor still did they work for a future in which Black people could resist assault, coercion, kidnapping, murder with violence, armed or otherwise.¹³

Even whites whose commitment was unquestionable, like Garrison, often tried to impose limits that took defense of self, family, and community off the table—for Black people, anyway. Black Americans—like the woman who carried her sister away from the fire and towards freedom—rejected the idea that they could not take direct action to save Black life. White and black reformers were at times odds about how to achieve change, what changes were needed,

and what was the real danger of the institutions and behaviors this book calls racialized policing. In response to “riots” by white anti-abolitionists, to growing anxiety about multiracial and multiethnic working-class migrant populations, and to Black recuse attempts like that in Boston, white elites eventually created a new system of professionalized policing to extend their governing hand across expanding and transforming Northern cities in the 1840s and beyond.

That major shift in Northern state power—here using “state” to mean “the state”—began in the 1840s, but had a deep and convoluted history on these shores. I here refer to “the police power” as a political theory shorthand for those powers that enable the state and its agents to deploy force to protect the state, prevent harm to inhabitants, and arrest and hold accused criminals. These powers do not require those who execute state power to pause for permission from legislative or judicial bodies, and they run up to and include deadly force. We can recall here Max Weber’s dictum that the modern state is one that has collected a monopoly over deadly force. Yet in the pre-1840s US, much of what police powers existed rested with citizens themselves, particularly white citizens’ power over some or all Black and/or Indigenous people. This was true in all the slave colonies (and later, states), where white inhabitants all exercised a qualified immunity from prosecution for arresting, harming, and even killing Black people, especially if the latter resisted or were suspected “fugitives.” Did this make the pre-19th century state “premodern”? Or did it make white people themselves “the state”? For this deployment of power enabled every white inhabitant to wield what historian Kali Nicole Gross calls “sovereign violence” under the umbrella of first the colonial/imperial state, and later that of the US. What is more sovereign than the ability to deploy deadly violence without sanction?

When we ask why white Americans insisted that they possessed or should possess a kind of equality—one that almost all of them believed was only for those who were “white”—we might do well to look at the experience of possessing sovereign power by law, tradition, and practice over a legally subject population. When we ask why whiteness seems to require a subjected other to function as an identity, we should look at the protections from and powers to enact policing power that whiteness gave women, children, servants, apprentices in order to build

consensus against and prevent solidarity with enslaved African people and those Indigenous to the continent. When we ask why white Americans, in the era from 1763-1789, helped generate a concept of the sovereign “people” as the necessary consenting basis for a constitutional grant of power to a representative but imperial central government, we might look to the nexus of policing and sovereignty. Gradual emancipation in the North, and the refusal of enslaved people and those in solidarity (or even, co-marronage) with them to consent to any of the deployments of white power over their bodies and movement led to the complications and contests that make this chapter. And a “state” equipped with only a few constables was unable to prevent disruptive rescue of Black people being sent South as sacrifices to white national union.

To learn what impelled the unnamed woman in Boston to risk her freedom for Patten and Pinckney like she was their blood sister, let’s go back to 1808, and head south from Boston to New York. Settle on No. 43 Liberty Street, the morning of March 30, 1808. Here, in a basement room or shack out back, a woman braided her 8-year-old granddaughter Matty’s hair. The grandmother’s daughter or son was likely enslaved and scheduled under New York’s 1799 gradual emancipation law to always remain so. Matty had just barely been born free, and likely placed with her grandmother so the Overseers of the Poor could not bind her out to labor.¹⁴

Across decades of adulthood stretching to the Civil War, Matty’s first-freedom generation would struggle to stay afloat. She already lived that reality. Today, once grandmother braided her hair, she had work to do. Helping keep roof over head, Matty would hit the streets to gather “chips”: scraps of wood for starting fires or keeping them going if one was too poor to buy from the Black teamsters who sold firewood in the city streets. Sold or burned, Matty’s gleanings would help provide rent, food, and heat. When Matty’s hair was done, she stood: already dressed for the day. Striped petticoat of homespun cloth. Blue stockings. She was ready for school. But she couldn’t go. Maybe one day. Black community leaders had built up the African Free School; made it hire Black teachers. Yet it still could only house a few dozen students.¹⁵

This far down the island, few if any trees remained to drop branches for firewood-gleaners. She might have far to walk. So Matty's grandmother made sure that she wore her green coat against the blustery end of March. About ten AM, Matty set out into the streets.

That was the last time her grandmother saw her. Five days later, a notice appeared in the New York *Public Advertiser*: "Lost--supposed to have been kidnapped, on Wednesday morning last, a bright mulatto Girl, about 8 years of age, answers to the name of Matty. She was sent after chips, by her grandmother . . . and has not been heard of since." The ad described her clothes and noted that Matty "had her hair platted before and behind." Did anyone know what had happened to Matty? "Any information respecting her will confer an obligation . . . on her distressed grandmother, who lives at No. 45 Liberty street."¹⁶

Historians, using the language of the early 19th-century North, give the name "kidnapping" to what someone seems to have done to Matty. And this case of abduction likely led to her transportation and sale to the South. As early as 1799, free Black Philadelphians sent a petition to Congress, decrying the kidnapping "of those of our Brethren that are free."¹⁷ The market for enslaved people was expanding, as entrepreneurs began their seizure and deforestation of the southeast interior's Indigenous lands and launched a massive expansion of cotton production. Gradual emancipation in the North was creating large urban populations of young people rendered still more vulnerable by separation from their still-enslaved elders. An 1801 newspaper described a child-abductor as one of "a class of monsters...[who] carry on a regular traffic for slaves in this and other civilized towns of the northern and middle states."¹⁸

Black people fought back with this petition, the first collective Black America communication with the Congress. They fought abduction in other ways as well. One Philadelphia night in 1818, Benjamin Clarke's fellow Black neighbors heard his wife screaming. A constable was dragging Clarke, who'd escaped Virginia ten years before, out of the house to find the man's neighbors "prepared for war." Bricks rained from the windows, felling the officer. Clarke escaped and went to enlist the legal help of Isaac Hopper. Hopper, a white Quaker who often provided legal help for those targeted by kidnappers and other enslavers, met the man

seeking Clarke. He convinced the white man that he faced a stern court opponent. Clarke was able to negotiate a continued de facto self-emancipation.¹⁹

Although Hopper was a remarkable and usually helpful white ally, if not quite so radical as his predecessor Benjamin Lay, it was Clarke's Black neighbors who fought for him. And they won, providing covering fire that let him escape. Well before that, they had built a neighborhood that watched out for bounty hunters, a community bringing bricks to a law fight. We cannot see everything that happened inside those houses or hear conversations across backyard fences. We can see more in the emergence of more formal Black community-based institutions traces that both revealed and shaped the day-to-day progress of self-defined emancipation. Readers may be familiar with Rev. Richard Allen's Mother Bethel AME Zion church in Philadelphia, founded c. 1792. This was not the first independent Black church in the North, but more significant still is the fact that dozens more appeared in the next two decades. These institutions served as crucial sites of community-building. The experience of collective worship was not the least of the stones there shaped, but we can also mention the way churches served as focus points for politics, enabled women to provide leadership and community-building service, and provided substrates on which other institutions (African schools, lending societies, benevolent societies) could emerge to fill gaps that segregated cities never would.²⁰

We might also see these early efforts at community resistance, and the revenge taken on those Black Northerners who assisted whites in abduction, as building blocks for new kinds of street activism not readily organized in slavery. Whites from the New York Manumission Society (NYMS) attempted to interrupt and prevent kidnappings. But their legalistic approach depended on hearing from Black informants that something was going down, and on judges who would agree to block the transport of a person out of state until their "ownership" status could be clarified. Judges didn't always do that, even when ships hadn't already sailed. When things got rough, when they had to happen quickly, Black folks were on their own. And they responded: in 1800, two women held on a ship moored in New York Harbor escaped and fled to Brooklyn. Constables who were in with or paid by their would-be abductor pursued them until a crowd of

“blackmen” beat up the “Constables and other American Citizens.” The “blackmen” also freed a Black man who the constables had already seized. Someone stabbed a “mulatto” informer who’d helped authorities locate the women, while the women escaped. In 1825, Philadelphia constable George Alberti, who moonlighted as a kidnapper, crossed the Delaware River to Haddonfield, New Jersey with a gang of fellow abduction specialists. Alberti invaded a free Black settlement to seize individuals whom he would claim were “fugitives”—if anyone questioned him. But his henchmen had to carry him back, punched full of buckshot holes after those he tried to kidnap turned out to be both ready and armed.²¹

Most Northern whites did not directly profit from seizing their Black neighbors and selling them South, but few actively opposed the kidnapping of legally free Northerners. This was the case even while a Republican Congress, highly popular among ordinary white Northerners, railed against Great Britain for “kidnapping” US sailors when Royal Navy vessels stopped and searched American merchant vessels. In a familiar move, some white writers claimed that press like Matty’s brief mention showed that white philanthropists only cared about Black people. “Kidnapping of the African race has been discussed amongst us,” complained one newspaper, “but kidnapping our brethren, the brave sons of Neptune . . . is winked at.”²²

While Congress soon took the entire US into war, supposedly to protect sailors’ rights, Matty apparently did not fit into any category that merited substantive protection. Excluded from churches, schools, and the vote, Black people even faced assault in Northern streets on the 4th of July. White mobs saw Black efforts to participate in the festival of citizenship as insults to their own status. And while recently emancipated Northerners, children born into uncertain freedom, or freedom-seekers escaping from enslavers found in growing Black communities the opportunity to restart life with new names and roles, white officials were already blaming self-liberating people for social problems. Pennsylvania Governor William McKean blamed “an increase in petty offences in the city and county of Philadelphia . . . to the increase of a particular description of population, comprising not only the idle and dissolute of our own state, but the fugitive . . . of other states.” He proposed reducing the “necessity to punish” by locking up as a

“precaution” people who might be fugitives from slavery. This “early and a certain corrective” would block the “inconvenience” of petty theft and the more frightening “danger” lurking in Black presence. Not to worry, he added, “care will be taken, I am persuaded, to maintain the public police, without violating the rights of humanity.”²³ Such words were unlikely to encourage other whites to make sure the young people being dragged off were truly escapees from slavery. Many Northern whites also categorized kidnappers’ victims as an undesirable surplus: street kids and women sex workers. “They load their vessels chiefly by stealing children, and carrying off those negroes, women particularly, whom they meet with in convenient places, under the covert of night.” Kidnappers defended abduction with Article 4.2. If “the wretched captives utter their complaints to the passing stranger” who stumbled upon abduction-in-progress, the claim “‘It is my negro’— ‘It is a runaway’ suppresses every enquiry.”²⁴

Some white allies attempted to persuade elite peers to pass new laws to prevent abductions. In 1808, after pressure from the NYMS, the New York state legislature passed an anti-kidnapping law. Quaker activists attempted to pass anti-kidnapping laws in Pennsylvania, too. Through the 1820s and beyond, kidnapping scandals became public knowledge and showed that the state still had not sufficiently updated its law to punish kidnapping. In 1826, Philadelphia Mayor Joseph Watson learned of a ring responsible for transporting perhaps dozens of free Black Philadelphians, most of them children or teenagers, to the deep South. His response, an attempt to free victims and punish criminals largely failed. The only kidnappers tried were two Black accomplices. Only four Black abductees returned to Pennsylvania. Then, Jacksonian politicians, riding on the victory of their great white leader in 1828’s presidential election, denied Watson another term in the mayoral office, quite likely as punishment for deploying the apparatus of the executive and judicial to protect Black lives.²⁵

White people in the North made it clear that most opposed using the power of the state to return those kidnapped. They made little to no use of that power to prevent the abduction of new victims. They directed no municipal protection those who might be called “runaways,” “rightly” or wrongly. Historian Carol Wilson has identified at least three hundred specific victims of

kidnapping from legal freedom, and argues that the real number was exponentially greater.²⁶ Indeed policy—police power, as it emerged—actively flirted with a future without Black people. Still, there was surely at least one Black New Yorker who yet remembered and missed Matty. Maybe her grandmother was still alive, remembered the feel of Matty’s hair between thumbs and forefingers, tail comb canted, ready, through fingers three and four on the right hand. She held onto the last sight of Matty’s checked-cloth coat as the door closed behind her. Some neighbor boy, some play-cousin girl who turned chip-gathering into fun—once a child, now grown, she or he wondered where Matty was, if she still lived. Maybe her father tried to imagine her face longer, cheekbones lifting away the baby-softness, nose and chin and eyebrows adult but setting off something never-changing in her smile. Perhaps her mother never stopped searching the faces of the new freedom-seekers who passed stealthily through New York’s ad hoc Black networks, hoping against hope to see the same brown eyes that had looked up at her from day one.

We don’t know. Her disappearance did not matter to those who frankly did not mind that she was gone, and that is who controlled the production of the paper that historians tend to study. “Personal liberty laws” and anti-kidnapping statutes proposed by white philanthropists may have enabled them to believe that they had accomplished much good. But they left open a vast terrain of terror for anyone Black, all of whom were thus vulnerable to seizure. Under the system of reactive criminal law, kidnapping laws depended on police-citizens willing to intervene or investigate, and cooperative post hoc magistrates’ willingness to impose punishments. The most significant hole in the feeble white-philanthropic effort to prevent abduction was that it left open the process of “fugitive” extradition. This was not a bug but a feature, mapped directly into the new republic’s structural rules. According to Article 4.2 of the federal constitution, extending the tradition of whiteness-as-policing into the structure of the interstate relationships that made the nation-state possible, no one who escaped slavery actually escaped slavery.²⁷

The first fugitive slave act, passed by Congress in 1793, was an enabling act for Article 4.2. It empowered enslavers or their agents to arrest and retrieve any escapee from enslavement. It also required local officials to permit and assist such rendition. The act also left in place the

opportunity for individuals, typically whites, to deploy on their own recognizance, to embody the state's police power, by seizing Black people whom they claimed to be wanted fugitives from slavery. This they did, encouraged in many cases by the fugitive slave advertisements that persisted in many Northern newspapers two decades into the 19th century. Rewards, in early 19th-century dollars, put all who fit the description at risk. A Philly-based observer saw a group in of whites in the center of town, passing around a newspaper. "'The very man,' exclaimed one; 'I saw him here this morning--how happy I should be if I could find him'...they all seemed to be greatly concerned in this affair; each wishing that he should be so happy as to find him....upon listening further, I heard the words—'shall receive ten dollars reward'." In 1802 one David Lea went to Philadelphia's Northern Liberties and abducted a man who'd allegedly escaped from a Maryland enslaver. Lea carried him before a judge, and revealed that his pocket contained advertisements for forty-five different "runaways." While such accounts showed by the very fact of their publication that not all Northern whites countenanced a David Lea with pleasure, the efforts of philanthropic white societies to distinguish between kidnapping and legal rendition showed that they were willing to play by the rules of Article 4.2. Even so, some Northern whites insisted that there still wasn't enough hunting, accosting, interrogating, arresting going on. One Bostonian complained that local taxes were too high because the city government was not using its powers to make Black life locally untenable, due to a lack of "rigid police," that made Boston "remarked as an asylum for lazy, idle vagrants, and a rendezvous for runaway negroes."²⁸

Thus, Northern state and local governments, constitutionally committed to rendition, hostile to local free Blacks, often unable and unwilling to sort out who was free and who was still legally enslaved, did little if anything to block abduction. That in turn meant that simply living while Black exposed one to the sovereign violence claimed by white people, individually and collectively, over Black (and for that matter, Indigenous people) in the U.S. One could say that free Black people in supposedly free states were still presumptively enslaved. So Black Northerners were all in it with Matty, because almost any Black person was vulnerable to any white person who could seize and carry them off to Southern slavery. They all shared—and

shared with those materially enslaved in either North or South—what the political scientist Michael Dawson calls a “linked fate.” Even Richard Allen—one of the two or three most prominent Black men in America—found himself hauled into court by a Southern planter who tried to claim that the founder of the AME denomination was legally his slave. Allen had himself once been enslaved. He had materially freed himself by escaping to Philadelphia. Long since he’d made a deal with his Delaware enslaver that ensured his legally free status, paying good money for his own contractual manumission.²⁹

No wonder Sarah and Richard Allen’s home became the first place some enslavers tried to invade when they hunted escapees in Philadelphia. The Allens gave shelter, in no small part because they also needed shelter. From the Allens down the scale of prosperity/poverty to Matty’s grandmother, alleged differences between subtle mouth-feels of abduction—between “legal” fugitive rendition and kidnappings supposedly actionable by white courts—did not convince Black people to accept the legality of any forms of reenslavement. So Black people had already begun to do what was necessary. First, they resisted. Shouting warnings, throwing bricks, pushing, fighting, they drew on bonds of community that they wove together. Matty’s true “friends” who were looking for her surely began with her distraught grandmother. They ran down into the roots of Black community life in 1808 Manhattan. And if Matty’s friends seemingly never found her, a likely fate, as her story never resurfaced, that does not mean that they forgot her, or that they ever stopped feeling the pull of her fate on their own. As we will see, in response, they brought into being new forms of solidarity, collectively resisting, including by force in a society that could not countenance Black sovereign violence. Such forms surely drew on roots of slavery-time resistance. Now they deepened those taps and rhizomes.

Of course gradients of gender, property-ownership, of legal freedom and unfreedom, complicated everything. In the first two decades of the 19th century, Black religious leaders like Richard Allen and other prominent men, for instance, tried to navigate between wealthy whites’ white doubts about Black capacity and the enormous material vulnerability of Black people in the North. One could find evidence that such “elite” Blacks worried that the likes of Matty’s

grandmother might appear, by their behavior, dress, and comportment, no better than the working-class whites who drank and caroused (and attacked Black people) on parade days. For instance, in 1827, as New York moved to a final state abolition of slavery, some respectable Black New York city residents attempted to prevent other Black folks from holding a parade to celebrate on July 4, when it became official. They feared that white newspapers and pamphleteers would once again mock Black people who wore fancy dress and colorful costumes, dancing and playing music in African-descended ways. They urged local Black folks to instead confine celebrations to indoors spaces. If they went outside, let it be to travel to church, a respectable one where they could hear speeches and sermons given by the respectable.³⁰

Yet no matter how respectable, Black folks faced constant hostility, threats of street violence, disparaging racist words that denied their fitness for freedom (much less political citizenship), in all of which echoed the ongoing threat of abduction. James Forten, Philadelphia's wealthiest Black entrepreneur, acknowledged this in an 1813 pamphlet published to combat a proposed state law. Pushed by white representatives from Philadelphia and backed by a petition from the brotherly-love city's whites, this act would've registered all Pennsylvania Black people in a surveillance directory, required constant carriage of pass documents, and formalized white citizens' power to check said passes and arrest those without as presumed fugitives from slavery. Meanwhile, Allen funded an Irish-immigrant author named Thomas Branagan, supporting him while the writer (a supposedly repentant one-time slave-ship sailor and Antigua sugar-plantation overseer) composed and published an anti-slavery epic poem called *Avenia*. But Branagan next published a vicious anti-Black polemic: surprising, did it not contain all the functional elements of white rage. He claimed that Black people had demonstrated unfitness for freedom. Though wasteful and lazy, "Very many blacks," whether born free like Forten or escaped like Allen from slave states, "begin to feel themselves consequential." Arrogantly assuming equality instead of demonstrating public deference, they were (as the recent Haitian Revolution suggested) likely to kill white people in vast numbers if not subjected to constant coercive policing. Black men, claimed Branagan, were sexual aggressors who raped white women and children. Even worse for

Branagan: since gradual emancipation began many Philadelphia white women, “deluded through the arts of seduction by negroes,” had married Black men. “Fa[s]cinated by black men,” they gave birth to “thousands of black children.” In a one-drop racial regime, white women’s consent to Black equality reduced the number of white people, producing the slow-motion demographic equivalent of genocide-by-massacre.³¹

Branagan, purveyor of replacement theory, was deeply worried about the fate of white immigrants and white working classes generally. How would they obtain the benefits of settler colonialism—not only economic opportunity, but the psychological/political power that slavery had offered through whiteness as sovereign violence over Indigenous and Black others? His solution was one that many other whites were proposing—the expulsion of free Black Americans. These included many who, as historian Nicholas Guyatt shows, believed themselves “racial liberals.” Among them were ur-colonizationist Thomas Jefferson, his fellow Virginia aristocrat St. George Tucker, William Thornton, head of the US Patent Office, and Washington *National Intelligencer* editor Samuel Smith. such “liberals” never imagined that whites who could not accept Black equality should be the ones to leave. Some, prioritizing emancipation, offered colonization to convince whites to stop making their fear of free Black presence a deal-breaker. Antislavery colonizers also fretted that free Black people would avenge themselves on whites, doubted Black intelligence and morality, and concern-trolled about Blacks’ alleged inability to compete with white people in the nation’s emerging market economy. Some, like Branagan and in anticipation of independent Latin American nation-states to come, argued for whitening of the new nation to attract still more white immigrants who would join the white settler-colonial army of anticipated continental conquest and thus build a great empire.³²

Exasperated with the hostility of whites and exhausted from the constant threat of reenslavement, some free Black Northerners turned themselves to the idea of Black emigration from the US. One could say they agreed with the white racial liberals who argued that whites were incapable of doing better. While it rankled to bow to oppression, out-migration looked like a possible solution to the violations that whites’ violence continued to inflict upon them, and

their communities. The best-known Black American advocate for exodus in the years before the War of 1812 was Paul Cuffe. Son of a manumitted enslaved African and an Indigenous (Wampanoag) woman, Cuffe developed a shipbuilding business in Massachusetts. After learning that British antislavery philanthropists had helped implant a settlement of Revolutionary-era escapees from U.S. slavery and African refugees from the Atlantic slave trade on the west African coast at Sierra Leone, Cuffe proposed a similar project to fellow Black elites like Philadelphia's Allen and Forten. (In 1816, Forten warned Cuffe that Black Americans "will never become a people until they come out from amongst the white people.")³³ Other Black proposals contemplated resettlement in independent Haiti, which promised land and which would indeed become a destination for thousands of black emigrants in the 1820s.³⁴

In 1815, following transatlantic voyages to Britain and West Africa, Cuffe helped several dozen Black Massachusetts residents and two Philadelphia couples to make an eastward journey to Sierra Leone. His and other Black emigration projects were in effect versions of what Harry Washington and Barbara Quash did when they escaped George Washington's labor camps with the British in the Revolution, or what the "Merikens" did in the War of 1812. (The Merikens were Chesapeake escapees who joined the British, and who after settled in Trinidad.)³⁵ Black emigration proposals existed because Ona Judge, a fellow Washington escapee who settled in Northern New England, had to spend the rest of her life fearing abduction and reenslavement by the Washington heirs. Or for that matter, by her white neighbors who might want the reward.

In contrast, white colonization rhetoric built on long-pervasive racist hostility, and a newly elaborated language of contempt for Black efforts to demand recognition in an allegedly free republic. It uptook the free-floating, ambient depiction of free Black people as the main source of crime in an already rapidly growing, modernizing and marketizing set of urban environments.³⁶ That rhetoric was a vehicle on which could be loaded (and thus displaced) both white elite anxiety and white working-class competition. Prior to 1815-1816, however, white colonizationists had neither fixed on a site nor generated significant momentum for their policy ideas. Some speculated that free Black people could be exiled to the western shores of the

Mississippi and beyond, sent away from and thus unable to contaminate either whites or those still enslaved with their peculiar ideas of equality. This imaginary free black territory would be delegated, as it were, to displace Indigenous possession and prepare a junior-partner territory to be part of US empire. One can assume what would happen to Black land title once that territory was cleared and rendered productive for commercialized economies.

In 1815, however, Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans ended the War of 1812 on a note of victory and firmly closed the possibility that the US would not be able to hold onto the vast middle America terrain of the 1804 Louisiana Purchase. (Said acquisition, made possible by Haiti's defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte's western-hemisphere plantation-empire designs, had never been recognized by Britain.) With peace and secure legal possession, full white American access to that territory was no longer theoretical but imminent. Policy proposals that imagined handing valuable territory to Black people vanished. And a sudden, new/old problem emerged: the so-called "Negro Fort." This was a maroon settlement at Prospect Bluff on the Apalachicola River in Spanish Florida, founded by Black escapees from slaveowning America. Many were self-liberators from Virginia and Maryland who'd made it to British ships during the 1814 invasion of the Chesapeake. Once established, the fort became a refuge sought by freedom-seekers who fled Georgia and Alabama slave labor camps.

By 1816 state and federal policy-makers were worried about the Prospect Bluff community. In July, General Andrew Jackson, savior of New Orleans, sent a flotilla of gunboats down the Apalachicola. 330 people, most of them Black and self-liberated from slavery, were defending the Negro Fort on July 27. The Americans began to bombard it. Within minutes their guns scored a catastrophically lucky shot, igniting the fort's gunpowder magazine and producing a massive explosion that killed as many as 270 of the Fort's occupants.³⁷ Just a few months later, a new set of white colonization advocates offered a new colonization proposal. This effort used the possibilities of political power, publishing access, and civil society networks in a way that was new. It signaled the emergence of a new force in US history, a lens for concentrating elite power by building consensus around specific policy goals and mechanisms in spaces only

indirectly susceptible to electoral discipline. What political-powerful people crystallized outside of the formal political realm would of course end up beaming back over the decision-making chambers of legislatures, executives, and courts. Discipline of populations was the use of such force. One side of discipline was: persuading white populations via the mode of presenting novel conventional wisdoms as path-dependent necessity, and by engaging their identity. The other side was: disciplining non-white people on this continent. For to no small extent this force has been used to build consensus behind repressive modes of racialized policing. Certainly that was the intention on this occasion.

As the ashes of self-liberated Black Virginians cooled and crumbled in fall 1816, 800 miles north of the Negro Fort their birth state's legislature was reviewing a proposal offered by Virginia slaveholder Charles Fenton Mercer. In it, he called on the federal government to establish a colony and induce free Black people to emigrate there. The legislature resoundingly approved Mercer's scheme. A few days later a still more-distinguished group of prominent white Americans met in DC to answer this call. Henry Clay: speaker of the House, "War Hawks" leader who'd helped push the US into war on Britain, chaired. The gathering created the "American Colonization Society." They chose Bushrod Washington, Supreme Court justice and great-nephew of the first President, to head this new "ACS." Ostensibly off-the-clock, leaders of white America gave the ACS a task: eliminate free Blacks from a nation built on millions of white police-citizens' sovereign right to wield police power over all Black people as if they were fugitive slaves.³⁸

While some ACS founders cloaked their support for colonization in antislavery philanthropy, John Randolph candidly told the meeting that colonization "does not in any wise affect the question of Negro slavery." No: slaveholders were the ones most "interested in getting rid of" free Black folks. "Every slaveholder," argued Randolph, knew "that sort of population" complicated policing. They looked like slaves but transcended slavery's geography of containment. Free Black movements were "channels of communication" that linked enslaved people of "different districts." Randolph's account of free Blacks as "depositories of stolen

goods,” meanwhile, lined up with Northern whites’ stereotypes about Black thieves. By the way, having removed obstacles to westward expansion, white folks no longer wanted to plant Black settlements in their own path. Earlier colonizationists’ proposal for trans-Mississippian free Black colonies would create a gigantic Negro Fort. The ACS proposed a different policy entirely: eject free Black people from the US and exile them to Africa.³⁹

This was a significant moment in US history. The alliance of elite Northern and Southern whites who founded the ACS planned to call into being a new power for the national state, one not written into the 1787 constitution. This power was the capacity to create and deploy a policing strategy using the tools offered by the same federal state that was simultaneously building a navy, relaunching a public-private national bank, and proposing roads, canals, and harbor improvements. Akin to these other projects, which were necessarily national in scope, no single state or region of white folks could police Black people. Enslavers insisted that the existence of free Black communities north of the Mason-Dixon line could never be “consistent with the safety of the state.” As Elias Caldwell of DC argued, Northern free Blacks could undo the statecraft, the fugitive-catching anti-*Somerset* compromise white founders deployed in Article 4.2 to build the federal nation. With Maryland congressman Robert Wright, the ACS blamed Northern white dissenters like Isaac Hopper for “seductive conduct” that used “pretexts of religion and the natural rights of men,” to put the idea of freedom into Black Southerners’ heads. Wright believed colonization would eliminate the Black communities who sheltered the freedom-seekers who escaped northward. In Wright’s vision, as he expressed in an 1821 speech, policing sweeps would rip through “Philadelphia and its vicinage” to arrest “thousands of that class [self-liberated free Blacks] living in indolence” and “secure the restoration of those not entitled to liberty, to their masters.” Black Northerners who could confirm legal freedom should then go to Africa. This plan would not “sacrifice” enslavers’ by permitting escapees from Southern slavery to “mix” themselves into the “transportation of the free blacks.”⁴⁰

The Southerners were the most forthright, but the whole ACS project aimed to deny and defeat Black marronage in its various frames and forms. African colonization prevented

marronage on the western flank of white empire, the national meristem where the settler-colonial organism grew. Secondly, the ACS project aimed to prevent northward escape. When Steven Hahn argued more than a decade ago that northern free Black communities were maroon settlements, historians' mixed response was perhaps overhasty. Urban sectors of slave colonies and republics throughout the New World had their own besieged quilombos and palenques, and Northern free Blacks' status was equally precarious, well short of citizenship. Yet they did receive and seek to protect escapees, aspirant maroons, from more direct forms of domination. Unlike Cudjo and Nanny's people in the Jamaican interior, they had no distance from whites. But they also made no agreement to return freedom-seekers. Quite the opposite. The desire to exile free Black people who made refuges for the survivor/escapee/rebel explicitly sought to destroy possibilities in Northern communities for Black solidarity either with Southern Black folks, or within the North to protect against abduction. Finally, and related to that last point, removing free Black Northerners would resolve white Northern elites' bad feeling on the subject of slavery—specifically around the issue of kidnapping and other forms of abduction.⁴¹

The ACS founders were proposing that the federal government acquire the capacity to plan and implement a massive, forced population movement: demographic engineering as a macro-scale fix for an existential problem of the nation-state. The ACS program's formation and viral spread as a panacea to the "problem" of Black presence was one of the first instances of a phenomenon we could call the "parastate." This was the lens, the crystallizing apparatus described above: the amorphous but very consequential conglomeration of elite, and until recently solely white, Americans who seek to determine national policy by organizing conventional opinion.⁴² The members of the parastate have moved in and out of the actual state, electrons generating charge as they transit. Never more a few thousand in number, most parastate cadres have come from wealthy families. A few others have gained admission as protégés of well-connected benefactors. In-network, they could exploit state power and elite financial access, accumulating deposits of generational wealth. "Elite" and "popular" might seem antonyms, but the parastate developed like a settler-colonial republic's House of Lords in give-and-take with the

emergence of a more popular, white “democratic” politics in the first half of the 19th century. Throughout their durable careers in this period, influential members of the first parastate generation broadcast-seeded their opinions through networks and institutions. The result was then, as in later generations, convergence around specific policy options and closure of the horizons of possibility. This has been especially true around the policing of Black people.

The parastate consensus around “colonization” rapidly became the main (and seemingly the only) policy option visible to most ordinary white Americans when it came to free Black Americans. By February 1817, branch colonization societies and “auxiliaries” popped up across the northern and upper South states, and whites were petitioning Northern state legislatures in favor of colonization. In 1819, Congress passed the Mercer-authored “Slave Trade Act, empowering the US Navy to seize a stretch of West African coastline that the ACS named “Liberia.” President James Monroe then began appropriating federal funds for the ACS to begin settling Liberia as the first official US colony.⁴³

The ACS program implied a massive state investment in Black exile, implying in turn modes of seeking, finding, rounding-up, compelling, caging, and transporting necessary to carry out such a demographic engineering project. This need likely inspired the second and the third of at least four pre-1850 efforts to pass a new federal Fugitive slave law to replace the 1793 one. The 1817 effort would have empowered the federal nation to wield (directly and through the states) extensive predatory capacities, like those southern enslavers pursued in 1787 before settling for compromise and the final 4.2 text. Like the 1813 Pennsylvania predecessor Forten had opposed, it authorized “any constable, or any public officer, or any resident private citizen” to seize any Black person that they alleged had escaped slavery. A magistrate would then commit the alleged fugitive to jail for months while the system adjudicated the case.⁴⁴

The 1817 bill passed the House before narrowly failing in the Senate. The margin of defeat was Delaware’s two senators, whose state was already convulsed by abduction violence, and some had pointed out that the bill made no effort to prevent kidnapping.. Those senators could and did support colonization, which sidestepped the kidnapping issue and offered a

seemingly total, national policy answer to the question of policing Black people. Over the next fifteen years or so, the colonization movement, rather than substantive anti-kidnapping efforts, became the default white approach to “solving” slavery’s legacy. In fact, many whites who might have focused on opposing slavery where it existed now focused on moving free blacks out of the US. White ministers across the North preached special sermons every 4th of July, giving collections to the ACS. Colonizationists like Benjamin Lundy argued that antislavery whites should exile free people of color to secure Southern white support for emancipation. Ignoring opposition from the few unconverted, like John Jay’s son Peter, the national anti-slavery convention (composed mostly of white representatives of the NYMS and the Pennsylvania Abolition Society) made colonization their core goal. For most whites, the real problem the parastate was promising to fix was not slavery but the presence of free Black people in the US: “We do not wish to see beings so ignorant, and, of course, so unprincipled, cast into the enjoyment, not of liberty, but of license—a life of indolence and vice,” as Henry Clay put it in an 1827 speech. White ACS supporters could agree with him that colonization would “solve” the “interesting problem” which had “occupied the minds of some of our best men”—how to get rid of Black people. The colony would be “a country . . . to which the negro may repair, and separate himself from that race with which he can never associate.”⁴⁵

While ACS proponents claimed that they planned for voluntary emigration to Africa, it would be naïve to believe them. White states were already passing a new round of restrictions on free Black voting and movement by 1816. Such efforts tested techniques that could turn the heat up as high as needed to drive free Black people from the US. Colonization advocates also explicitly reserved the right of might to use force. As one 1817 advocate wrote, if Black Americans “should be blind to their interest”—or rather, whites’ interest—their “mere wishes in contravention to the will and interest of their country need not be heard but through indulgence to their weakness”! Since “the blacks are not constituent parts of the nation” they could “deny that the blacks have any right of residence.” Whites could remove “free blacks from the country without requiring their consent to the project.”⁴⁶ One suspects that the project’s projectors

understood that this threat, essentially one of eliminationist state violence, might actually increase the attractiveness of the ACS to non-elite whites. When Henry Clay promised his white audience that “benefits . . . will flow from the riddance of this part of our population,” we might wonder: was this paragon of the parastate leveraging ordinary white police-citizens’ longstanding belief that Black freedom undermined their own sovereignty?

Yet the new parastate’s members were also anxious. Black Americans and their potential accomplices have long been the greatest internal threat to the dominance of oligarchic rule in these borders. By December 1816, they had begun to generate a baseline political ethic of Black solidarity. The roots of the power to oppose in potentially radical ways already stretched deep across regions, into enslaved communities, families, fraternal associations, churches, and everywhere else diverse people met and helped each other because they were all “black” together. Those roots, and the promise of their branches’ fruit were not yet fully visible, but the winter of 1816-1817 is when many could see them bud.

In that winter, ACS founders courted prominent pro-emigration Black men. James Forten and Paul Cuffe had many reasons to believe that the white American majority’s opposition to substantive freedom for even nominally free Black northerners was growing more entrenched. Forten’s earlier warning to Cuffe wasn’t wrong. Through his life, white people would continue to demonstrate their determination to keep Black people crushed under them. For instance, New York’s 1821 constitutional convention opened political participation to all white men, regardless of wealth, while raising the property requirement for Black men to a level that eliminated virtually all Black ballots. Peter Jay argued that Black New Yorkers’ service in the American Revolution earned them a chance to participate in politics, but the majority shut him down. “It was said that the right of suffrage would elevate them,” said one opponent of Black voting—but, he asked, would it “elevate a monkey or a baboon to allow them to vote?”⁴⁷

The ACS planned to use Paul Cuffe’s image in promotional materials, hoping to signal to antislavery white readers that the 90,000 Northern free Black Americans supported its project. Cuffe’s name was the one Black American name that, aside from long-dead Phillis Wheatley,

might have been familiar to white American readers. He may have believed that other Black people, many of whom shared a grim assessment of white US racism, would endorse the goal of collective exodus to Africa or elsewhere. But those relatively prosperous free Blacks, some of whom had flirted with the emigration concept, soon discovered that other Black Northerners would not follow a call to depart the US at white command.⁴⁸

By the second week of January 1817, a group of Black District of Columbia residents had already organized a meeting to declare opposition to the ACS plan to police them off the continent. A week later, three thousand men gathered in Philadelphia's Mother Bethel AME church to discuss colonization. We don't know the exact date, but a January 28 letter from James Forten to Paul Cuffe states that the meeting had already happened. Forten also noted that it had responded to rising Black alarm: "The people here are very much fritened [sic]." The news of the ACS' founding, its ominous mission, and menacing power had been circulating.⁴⁹

The Philadelphia meeting apparently excluded women, but revealed a reality that Black people there, in or out of the building, were shaping a new kind of political network. In it, they were not "slaves" or the "negroes" the ACS or imagined. They were something more like "the people"—a people—whom Forten reported. Frightened or not they refused to bow and stood together. A three-thousand-person gathering of free Black men for a political purpose was something new in the world of the young US. Black Philadelphians had abandoned 4th of July parades because of white violence. Only white men campaigned and voted in city elections. Yet this meeting's purpose was political. The people confronted a massive demographic-engineering policy that targeted them without their consent. They grasped the threat's connection to the deeper politics of racialized surveillance and policing. And they recognized that the ACS was designed to keep them from helping save anyone else from slavery or reenslavement. They agreed collectively to stand up for themselves, each other, and for other Black people.⁵⁰

Perhaps James Forten had helped call the meeting. Perhaps when he came in and stood behind the lectern, he did so both as the meeting's designated chair and as a pro-emigration influencer trying to quell agitated talk in the streets and churches. Also on the dais with him was

Russell Parrott, assistant at Absalom Jones' St. Thomas Episcopal. Reverend Richard Allen, founding pastor of Bethel, was likely there. Not "perhaps" are these: the question, the decision, the deciders, and why they decided as they did. The meeting had gathered an enormous number of people to consider one key question. Did Philadelphia's Black people favor colonization?⁵¹

No. "Not one soul," as Forten wrote to Cuffe, "was in favor of going to Africa. They think that the slave holders want to get rid of them." (They were right.) "Afrade that all the free people would be compelled to go, particularly in the southern states," three thousand men did what the four or five men on the dais didn't have the backbone or the desire to do, and rejected the parastate's attempt to get them to surrender and self-deport. Three thousand rejected a plan that labeled them as progenitors of crime, obstacles to progress and social peace. (They likely did agree that they were repositories of safety for runaways from slavery.) A non-trivial percentage of the three thousand had committed the crime of escaping slavery. They were legally huntable anywhere in the US. But the meeting refused to abandon them, other free Black folks, or those still in slavery. With this choice they stood up for themselves, and for counting in those not in the room: women, children, and those still trapped under the Mason-Dixon line.⁵²

If the men on the dais tried to change the minds of other Black Philadelphians, they failed. Instead, the Black "masses" did something that white ones rarely have. They bent an "elite" to their will. A few days later, Princeton professor/ACS policy wonk Robert Finley came to town. Having heard that some Black Philadelphians opposed colonization, he planned to marshal "colored gentlemen" and advertise their endorsement. Instead, he met a committee of twelve anointed by the Bethel meeting as representatives. They included Forten as well as the reverends Allen, Absalom Jones, and John Gloucester. Cordially, everyone evaded discussion of Robert Wright's hope that the ACS could enhance slave-catching, or Charles Mercer's claim that "more than half the [free black] females are prostitutes and [half] the males rogues."⁵³ But while Finley came away reporting that several reverends allowed that Africa might be a suitable place for emigration. Yet the Black leaders had not agreed to ignore the mass meeting's will. Finley may not have understood that. Perhaps they did not tell Finley "no" to his face. And as historians

have noted, sometimes they played the role of moral scold, seeming to carry some white supremacist terms into their relationships with other Black people. But at the end of the day, a preacher like Allen or Gloucester depended on a congregation of working-class Black folks. They, and James Forten too, understood that the assembly of the faithful was moving.⁵⁴

They moved with it, as August 10, 1817, made plain. Responding to the founding of a local ACS chapter, a large gathering of Black Philadelphians unanimously supported a document, the “Address to the Humane and Benevolent Inhabitants” of Philadelphia. Though it cited Forten and Russell Parrott as authors, the points came from the meeting. It scorned the ACS, and its claimed benevolence. “[The ACS] is not asked for by us.” It rejected the ACS vision of a mass expulsion of Black people from the nation-state Black folks had built. No: Black people had not shown themselves unfit for freedom and equal citizenship, much less for fending for themselves. They knew what they needed: not emigration, but the protection of just laws and government “in common with every individual of the community.”⁵⁵

The term “solidarity” has a long genealogy, especially in the international radical labor movement. It also has a deep textual history in Panafricanism. Beyond, before, and in addition to that, solidarity as a concept was being worked out and lived into by many, even most Black Americans by 1817. The point at which some had the choice to endorse, and chose instead to reject ACS colonization was one step in that process. As organic commitment, their acts of solidarity grew upon acknowledgment, conscious and unconscious, of linked fate. Acknowledgment came from personal experience, not least of bodily vulnerability to abduction and the array of racialized and racializing surveillance and policing practices. Cultural practices, not least of all those of the Black church, helped people acknowledge and live into linked fate. This clear-sighted acknowledgement was and remains a massive mutual achievement. Few other social groups or large collectivities can match it. But solidarity is not only acceptance of externally-imposed vulnerability. It implies commitment to practices and politics, and for many an embrace of the resulting struggle as an identity preferred to other alternatives. The philosopher Tommie Shelby, not typically seen as a utopian radical, lists the

norms of Black solidarity. These include identification with the group, a consequent special concern for the other members of the group, a shared set of values and goals that define the group, and loyalty, even when loyalty is costly.⁵⁶

Of course, such solidarity is always in process, always under challenge from both without and within. But the August 1817 document is an almost pure statement of solidaristic commitment based on linked fate. It collates into one set of words thousands of already made and lived-into political choices: to stand together as a response to the coercive racialization of people, originating from massively diverse backgrounds, but scribed inside one circle of surveillance. The various people for whom it spoke would not, they said, “ever separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population of this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrongs.” There was “more virtue in suffering privations with them, than fancied advantages for a season.” All Black people in the US had become kinfolk, the Address insisted. Common experience made them “brothers, in blood as well as in early sufferings.” Whether enslaved, or longing for still-imprisoned “parents, from whom we have been long separated—wives and children, whom we had left in servitude,” the family’s members lived on the consolation of future hopes for freedom. The congregation had reformed suffering into a common bond of active solidarity, and refused to turn their backs on those still struggling to part the waters. Colonization was a slaveholder strategy for denying emancipation. “Our brethren who shall be left behind,” the “slave population of the southern states,” “will be easily secured” in slavery “augmented” by colonization. Enslavers would use Africa’s shore as a remote prison for “bondmen, who feel that they should be free,” who were “dangerous to the quiet of their masters.” “The tame and submissive” would face “increased rigour” as colonization rendered “perpetual” the bondage of “a large portion of our brethren.”⁵⁷

In 1817, thousands of Black people were collectively shaping themselves into something through the practice of political solidarity, both within the building and without. Unsatisfied with their constrained freedom, northern Black people focused on naming and deflecting the schemes of those who would lock all Black people in the US into new chains. The iron might not gall all

the same, but the load on one limb weighed the others too. In the years after 1817, at meetings in Philadelphia, New York, Brooklyn, and elsewhere, thousands of Black people repeatedly rejected ACS-directed deportation. Their assertion of a claim to America can read as a demand for shares in citizenship. Yet even more, they were committing to stay and fight for the sake of all the other Black people whom emigrants escape would strand. Despite lacking economic resources, political and civil rights, or shields against routine state and civilian sovereign violence, colonization's Black opponents refused to bow to an enormously powerful white alliance.⁵⁸

Historians sometimes describe those years after 1817 and before the early 1830s' emergence of highly publicized, verbally confrontational white immediatist abolitionists, as crucial ones for the emergence of Black platforms like the New York newspaper *Freedom's Journal*. In these spaces, we historians see Black authors rejecting colonization for Black, and increasingly white readers as well. The congregation to whom they preached had already rejected it. Given our bias toward the printed text, we need to bear in mind that much that we see only dimly was going on outside of the lamp-circle that lit the page.⁵⁹ Scholarship on the Black "colored conventions" and political print culture that emerged in full bloom by the 1830s leaves no doubt that these significant phenomena built on the unstinting work of local institution-builders in preceding decades. Women who made churches, men who organized anniversary celebrations of the end slave-trade abolition, families and elders who contributed their small savings to support Black schools, members of Masonic lodges and women's benevolence: all laid foundations for a Black organizational and political tradition in the US, one not subsumed by white abolitionists. These were crucial developments for the emergence of Black solidarity.⁶⁰

We historians also point to David Walker, organic intellectual and author of the uncompromising 1829 *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. Walker demanded immediate abolition. His rigorous critique of white hypocrisy and his prophetic vision of Black warriors' ability to destroy slavery in the South stand as a key proof-texts for a new historiography of abolitionism. This one emphasizes the role of black abolitionists in shaping the 1830s' immediatist pressure campaign of antislavery—and anticolonization—critique. Some of the

figures in that campaign about whom white historians have been written the most books were white author-activists like Lydia Maria Child, William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Weld, and the sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimké. The surge of that moment lasted in no small part because of the organizational investment by other abolitionists like the wealthy Tappan brothers. They helped fund a flood of publications ranging from newspapers to pamphlets, books, broadsides, and even the printed forms on which newly energized activists gathered signatures for antislavery petitions that temporarily paralyzed Congress in the 1830s, forcing debates that politicians did not want to have.⁶¹ While whites generated the most paper that survives for historians to read from the 1830s, the new historiographical emphasis on a broadly interracial movement represents a shift from focusing on individual white abolitionists and organizations, or finding causation for the early 1830s starburst immediatism primarily in white Northern bourgeois society's psychological wrestling match with emerging modernity.⁶²

There is another force to consider. This one may be as significant as anything else to shaping the future of Black political resistance against the various and changing forms of racialized policing and violence. What Black people did outside of interracial organizations was of enormous importance in opposing both slavery and reenslavement. Perhaps no institutions, and nothing white people put on pages to free their own souls from the stain of cooperation with slavery moved more directly to prevent the next Matty from disappearing. For Black people in the streets may have been the most effective means of preventing the abduction-to-the-south of other Black people. Black people acted while white people talked, and even when the most forward of the whites spoke most forcefully, they still temporized. Through meaningful political acts that put the theory of solidarity into the flow of reality, Black people risked life, limb, and liberty, all for the sake of solidarity. For sisters and brothers they did not know by name, they challenged the police power of the state. And though white people, even freedom-seekers' most relatively radical allies, opposed what rescuers did, rescuers' political, personal, and public acts helped shift the terrain of slavery, antislavery, and racialized policing violence. They shifted it directly, and they even more clearly shifted it dialectically. Their efforts were part of a broad

transformation in abolitionist efforts, in which Black people on the run from Southern slavery and its nationwide slavecatching system became the symbolic and the ideological drivers of opposition to white-run systems of enslavement. Joining them at the front were escapees' Northern Black accomplices. Among the latter, the majority were clearly unnamed and under-remembered, non-bourgeois people like the Boston woman and others who drove their unruly bodies through constables' arms to free sisters and brothers. All of that implies a different narrative for the decades before the Civil War than that offered by many newer histories of the rise of immediatist abolitionism.

In the first four decades of the 19th century, throughout the Northern states, Black people repeatedly joined together to attempt to free their brothers and sisters accused of the crime of running away to the North. These collective crowd actions defied Article 4.2's national white compact. Between 1800, when Black men had overpowered constables in Brooklyn to free two Martinican women, and late 1836—months after that crowd of Black women and men rushed Boston court officers to free the two Black women from being returned to Baltimore bondage—more than twenty Black crowds made such rescue attempts. On the record, for instance, are at least six cases from New York city, four from Boston, and five that took place in Philadelphia. These “mobs,” leading what white newspapers called “riots,” ranged from the twenty-odd who marched on the Boston jail on a cold winter night in 1820, to the multiple crowds of hundreds of Black people reported from 1824 and 1834 Philadelphia, and 1826 New York.⁶³

Sometimes, as in Boston in 1836, they succeeded. Crowd actions freed at least twenty people by late 1837 (*see appendix*). Not all their names made it into newspaper articles, hostile as they were to any use of sovereign violence (however restrained) by Black liberators. Even if the heroines and heroes who freed them often kept it incognito, we can say the names of some of the saved: Harriot and her baby; Mr. Blackburn, his wife; Mr. and Mrs. Stanford, their six-year-old child; Ann Patten and Mary Pinckney. Newspapers left others unnamed. If we could generalize, one thing made success most likely. When rescuers pulled their rescue-mission

targets into the body of the “mob,” people could pass them hand-by-hand through the crowd to the other side. From there, escapees could flee, often disguising themselves.⁶⁴

To stay rescued, they needed to keep moving. Going to ground nearby didn’t usually work. In a New York case, rescuers freed a man from constables, handed him two knives, and hid him in a coal cellar. The Black crowd marched on, shouting to try to draw away hunters’ attention. But one constable spotted the ruse, perhaps with help from a Black informer. He called help to re-arrest the unfortunate man. All in all, at least eleven attempted rescues simply failed. In the Boston 1820 case, the twenty-odd Black men who tried to free John Howard made their approach while he was still locked in the jail. They were neither able to break in, nor to cajole the jailer to set Howard free. In fact, Boston officials arrested at least eleven of the would-be rescuers and jailed them for up to two weeks. In still others, crowds made their move as constables or sheriffs’ deputies transferred prisoners between courthouse and transport (or jail) but could not break the physical hold white officials had on Black captives.⁶⁵

Black people took immense risks when they organized and acted. In the crowd actions from 1801 to the end of 1836, authorities arrested at least 95 Black people, and sentenced at least a dozen to terms of a year or longer. We should not be surprised. Those convicted were radicals who ripped the root of national and local state claims to special authority over Black people’s lives. Their actions were criminal under federal law and state and local practices of official justice. In most cases, no white people participated in the attempt to use force to prevent “legal” processes of fugitive rendition. Almost all arrested were Black. All ten-plus who definitely received prison terms were Black. At least four were seriously injured. At least one killed.⁶⁶

Only after the 1850 federal fugitive slave act would larger numbers of whites take the risk of direct mass action against legal kidnapping. Before then, when the demands of the moment got the answer of action, when real risks came into play, the participants were almost inevitably Black. One white exception was Russell Wheeler, a lawyer arrested alongside Henry Pierce, Jesse Harrod, and Keziah Manning—three Black members of the New York crowd that in 1837 attempted to free a man accused of the crime of escaping Virginia. The magistrate “Justice

Bloodgood” had ordered the man remanded to control of two deputy sheriffs, who tried to move him to the Alms House. A mob of hundreds (almost all Black, it seems) rushed the officers to free him. When Bloodgood jumped into the crowd to try to seize the alleged fugitive, “a strapping wench”—Keziah Manning “jumped on his back and threw her arms around his neck.” Harrod and Pierce rushed to help her; together they pulled the magistrate “to the ground” and “one of them commenced beating him on the back of the head and neck.” It appears that as deputies and constables waded into the crowd to arrest Manning and the other two, Wheeler tried to prevent them and was also arrested.⁶⁷

Most rescue attempts were, as whites described the 1833 Detroit rescue, “a large assemblage of blacks.” For instance, the all-Black 1832 mission that tried to free two men from a New York extradition process. A “mob” led by one of the men’s wives tried to break them out as officers tried to move the men from the courthouse, where they’d just been sentenced to slavery, to the Bridewell. From that city jail, enslavers would ship them South. Reporting on the arrests of several of the Black people who charged the officers, the newspapers sneered: “No white person appeared to give the least countenance to this disgraceful riot.” Two exceptions were Albany (1835), and Burlington, New Jersey (1836). In these cases, initial miscalculation by slavecatchers delayed the arrival of river boats that would come to take them and their quarry away. In the meantime, bystanders gathered. The crowds began to attract curious local whites. Some Burlington whites not only knew Severn Martin as neighbor “Negro Sam,” but resented the way outsiders had barged into their town. But constables drew pistols and the mayor gave a speech: “Fellow Citizens--there are laws for protecting slaveholders and their rights, even in this state. . . . As good citizens it is our duty also to obey the laws of our country. I warn you that the penalty for attempting to rescue a slave under these circumstances, is \$1000, or imprisonment.” The massive white crowd backed off, once again choosing their national political alliance with other whites. Meanwhile, in a few later and more western cases, like an 1839 case in Marion, Ohio, white intervention responded to what locals believed was high-handed aggression by Southern slavecatchers towards local white citizens.⁶⁸

Those rare cases of white intervention reveal their sense that they were the key stakeholders of the community, preserving their own sovereignty. In contrast—and unsurprisingly, given the economics of free life in the North, the Black crowds who freed those accused of the crime of escaping Southern slavery were typically made up of the poor and working class. Of course, the purposes of, for instance, Job Munday, a Black sailor born in Woodbridge, New Jersey, arrested in 1837 for trying to free a man being sent from New York to Virginia slavery, differed radically from those of white working-class rioters who in the same city and decade tried to kill Black children and burn Black churches. John Jolley, born in 1812 in New York, in 1835 defied the US constitution and the New York state government's commitments by participating in the attempt to free Robert Spicer from rendition to slavery in Delaware. The consequences of his arrest apparently included impoverishment, since the next year officials locked him in New York city's forced-labor Almshouse. Many other published names of the arrested are of people so transient that we can't trace them in census records. But they showed up to be counted anyway: William Dates, Aaron Watson, Jesse Harrod, Rufus Kingsman, John Skeiggs, Daniel Carter, Robert Wallace, John Johnston, William Jones.⁶⁹

The risks run by those who directly resisted someone else's rendition-south expanded exponentially if they took up the knife or loaded the bullet. Perhaps that is why rescuers often used the minimum force required to fulfill the aim. Or perhaps they just typically simply did not carry. On the other hand, in July 1835, Tennessee slavetrader/slavecatcher Bacon Tait and his henchmen abducted a Black family, the Stanfords, who'd escaped to eastern Ontario. The kidnapers carried them across the US border. But famed abolitionist William Wells Brown, who'd escaped from slavery along the Mississippi River, now lived in Buffalo. He mounted up and rode in pursuit, and fifty Black men joined him. As Brown recalled, "most of those were persons who had made their escape from slavery." Many had "left near and dear relatives" still enslaved. "We knew," he said, "how to 'feel for those in bonds, as bound with them'."⁷⁰

The rescuers caught the bounty hunters, holed up in a tavern, at the village of Hamburg. As they freed the Stanfords—a couple with a six-week-old baby—from ropes and gags intended

to secure them for transport south, Tait slipped away. He located a compliant sheriff, and hyped up a posse of 60-70 whites, many of them workers from the nearby Erie Canal. Those police-citizens intercepted Brown and his team as, guarding the Stanford family, they neared the Canadian border. The Black men, Brown recalled, had “resolved” that to reenslave the Stanfords “the sheriff and his men” would have to “first pass over [the rescuers’] dead bodies.” They fought their way onto the Niagara ferry, put the Stanfords on the boat, set them safely back on the Canada side where slavery had been illegal since January 1834. Then rescuers surrendered to the local sheriff. Brown’s party had killed a white man, a traveling actor who’d joined the slavecatching posse. Meanwhile, as many as 25 rescuers were jailed, prosecuted, and fined.⁷¹

The rescuers had taken enormous risks to their own lives and freedom. They knew that they were doing so. For two centuries whites had claimed sovereign violence as an essential power that they were entitled to use to subdue, control, to rule Black and Indigenous folks. Without that control they did not believe they were even themselves. They could not imagine living on the continent without the sovereign power to kill at will, the right to police with deadly force. When that control dissolved in a wave of resistance, those who’d been sovereign violence’s objects experienced freedom in complex ways that were not their own assertion of sovereignty over all others, but which did lead them to assert the right to use violence to defend their people. For instance, in 1826 a Black crowd trying to free two men and a woman arrested on behalf of a Virginia enslaver confronted constables outside the “Police Office” in New York’s City Hall. The confrontation turned from infuriated shouts into a battle when the constables pressed forward to clear the would-be rescuers from City Hall Park. Several of the court officers suffered injuries from rocks and punches. Someone found a Virginian and broke his nose with a brick. As the rescuers executed a fighting retreat from the park, some of them—pressed south towards the neighborhood where Harriet’s grandmother had lived—pursued a white man down Ann Street, shouting “Kill Him, Kill Him!” Meanwhile, a Black “woman “swaggered” around City Hall Park, brandishing a stick, “crying out, ‘where are the Virginians?’”⁷²

Whites who witnessed demonstrative Black interventions in public settings like churches or dramatic rescue attempts often charged Black women with breaking gender rules: other than, and less than, white women. Yet even such hostile witnesses can, under cross-examination, allow us to pierce the opacity of the white gaze. They do concede that Black women repeatedly leapt onto the stage as charismatic leaders of courageous solidarity. With words and with their bodies, Black women opened the door to spirit, with demonstrative, even celebratory performances. Like praying, shouting mothers/sisters, they pushed the congregation to a higher key, a more urgent tempo, challenging others, including Black men, to achieve more profound inspiration. Look at the dance done by the woman who triumphantly claimed City Park. She made sure that everyone knew that they were not “rioting.” They were reclaiming the space of juridical abduction, of interstate anti-Somerset alliance, and transforming it into a battlefield where the collective efforts of unafraid Black folks inflicted pain on Virginian kidnapers.⁷³

Some middle-class Black women attempted to navigate by different stars, such as the constellation of middle-class Anglo-American gender conventions. Through advice literature and popular novels, that 19th-century bourgeois culture preached a feminine self-control compliant with claims that true women were naturally demure. White newspapers spotlighted Black women’s occasions of non-compliance with “true womanhood” to mock them. In 1832, they reported on a New York Black woman, wife of a man seized and put on trial for criminal escape from slavery. She gathered a crowd, who rushed constables when they escorted him towards his cell. The constables won the battle. Multiple “rioters” wound up in jail with the husband. Maybe the woman was one. “Disgraceful,” sneered the newspaper. Yet perhaps someone read the story and wondered: did they know a white woman who loved themselves and a man bravely enough to throw themselves into physical combat against the state’s agents for his freedom?⁷⁴

Or consider how newspapers treated Keziah Manning in 1837, when she tackled a New York magistrate as he tried to shove through Black rescuers to recapture an alleged “runaway.” Oh, how they tried to sneer at her, calling her “a strapping. . . .sable wench.” But Black men followed her. They rushed in to help her fight. For a moment, she and they kept the alleged

“runaway” out of slavery’s long reach. Manning resembled the Boston woman who bodily carried a woman down the courthouse stairs and out of slavery. Both were kin to the Detroit woman who in 1837 visited a friend, jailed for escaping enslavement in Kentucky. The two swapped clothes in the cell. Jailers too racist to see individual Black women let the charged one walk free. The Detroit woman stayed to face what came next. Such a woman weighed the cost, and then stepped onto the balance. Such women were not like Andromache, who wept on the battlement as Achilles slew her Hector below. Such women’s business was on the battlefield. Like goddesses their power flooded courage into the hearts of other warriors, male or female.⁷⁵

Of course, solidarity had an obverse face: betrayal’s smirk. William Wells Brown called the Stanfords’ betrayer “a profligate colored woman.” Bacon Tait met her when he stayed in the Buffalo hotel where she worked. “As unprincipled as” the slave trader, Brown reported, she accepted his silver and set out to win the Stanfords’ confidence. When Black rescuers freed the Stanfords, they seized the woman and debated her fate. “Some were in favor of hanging her, others for burning her.” The majority were for “taking her to the Niagara river, tying a fifty-six pound weight to her, and throwing her in.” They didn’t want to hand her to the “civil law,” a tissue of lies that criminalized Black escape from slavery, permitted reenslavement, and rewarded betrayal. The rescuers were principled. They debated whether principle demanded well-earned punishment, or disgusted yet merciful refusal to shed blood.⁷⁶

Solidarity takes discipline. The history of Black rebellion against slavecatching includes crowd actions against Black people who rejected the demands of linked-fate thinking and sold others out for their own comfort or gain. Eventually Brown’s crew let Tait’s accomplice go, but other Black congregations levied serious punishment on those who helped white slavecatchers. A Black Baltimore crowd attempted in 1801 to kill or injure a “free mulatto fellow” for trying to kidnap two Black children for “Georgia-man” slave traders. In 1810 “a mob of Negroes . . . cut off the ears” of a Black Boston man who, after helping a fugitive hide, sought out a visiting Southerner to betray the freedom-seeker for silver. An 1835 rescue-attempt crowd in New York beat Henry Mitchell, accused “by some of his colored brethren” of selling out [Richard] Spicer,”

the man they wanted to save. White newspaper accounts painted rough Black justice as irrational, but crowds were enforcing the law of Black solidarity that forbade selling each other out to enslavers. In 1835 Philadelphia an enormous Black crowd attacked an elderly Black woman named Mrs. Congo after she testified in court that a young woman was a “runaway” and should be remanded to her alleged enslaver. In response, 300 “colored people of both sexes” broke into the white-owned house where Congo lived and “commenced an indiscriminate beating and stabbing of the inmates of the house.” While white observers suggested that relationship to whites should exempt her from retributive justice, Congo had betrayed her sister into the living death of captivity. She and others like her were murderers. Crowds responded, seeking to deter future incidents of sociopathic selfishness.⁷⁷

The crowd beat Mrs. Congo so severely that without the “timely interference of the police, death would have probably resulted.” By “police” the newspaper meant not a professional force of men in blue, but the city’s mayor, sheriff, and perhaps deputies. They arrested eleven avengers. Five were women. All appear to have lived in Philadelphia’s Black neighborhoods south of Spruce Street: “Lorice Louce” was probably the “Mrs. L. Lewis” found in Philly’s New Market Ward by census takers in 1830. Thomas Jordan and his wife Hannah, also arrested in 1835; a couple in their 20s. James Powell showed up in later censuses as a porter who lived on \$5/week. He and his wife Gracey, both born in Maryland (him: 1807; her in 1805) shared a house with four Black families. The Powells’ family included 16-year-old bootmaker Peter Burk, perhaps a stepson or nephew. They were working-class Black Philadelphians. We can only speculate about how the arrestees, nine of whom were convicted of assault with intent to kill, analyzed the political meaning of their resistance to racialized policing. But here’s what seems clear: their reprisal demonstrated linked-fate political ideology in the practices of everyday Black politics. Cooperation with “legal” authority was illegitimate so long as that authority treated Black people as white folks’ prey.⁷⁸

Despite the risks—arrest, jailing, conviction, prison sentences—even “failure” generated victories. Over time, these cases brought thousands of Black people together. Once gathered,

they fought to free others. Most crowd members escaped to fight again, by which time they had experienced galvanizing moments of mobilization, commitment, and power. Crowd actions were solidarity-building successors to the anti-colonization mass meetings that recharted Black politics in the 1810s. Rescues also developed political consciousness, and likewise taught a common vernacular political ideology. And rescues also taught upwards, not down. Where rescues differed from many other Black organizing efforts was in the fact that they did not prioritize literacy or relative financial independence. Rescues prioritized heart. Black working-class people had to have that just to stay alive in the 1830s US.

One of the effects of Black rescue missions was to reveal the unresolvable tension between Black solidarity's commitment to protect the lives and freedoms of others, and whiteness as the power to directly or through agents deploy sovereign violence against Black bodies—especially Black people engaged in marronage. Black crowd actions grew from, enacted, and fostered a politics of solidarity among Black people. Nothing was so radical as Black self-liberation, and these interventions attacked the whites' sovereign power to control Black mobility and decide on Black life. This put white abolitionists' claim to radical alliance with the enslaved to the test. And in many ways, the whites failed. In the 1830s, even Garrison, who on more than one occasion ran the real risk of death for his advocacy of immediate abolition, shared one thing with other white immediatists. Not only did they not participate in these rescues. In fact, they opposed them and indeed all direct Black action, whether armed or not, against slavery and other forms of racial domination.⁷⁹

For Garrison's part, he was so committed to pacifism that he believed that the only route to abolition was a fundamental transformation of white belief. Such had been his own path to uncompromising support of abolition. As time went on, his purist nonviolence eventually left him at odds with many former allies in antislavery.⁸⁰ In the 1830s, both he and they assured readers that neither self-defense nor reprisal justified Black deployment of force, even though the *Liberator's* own printed evidence repeatedly demonstrated how a white nation of enslavers and accomplices was destroying lives. Instead, Garrison's *Liberator* described the 1832 New York

city rescue effort as a “mob of blacks,” another evil “fruit of slavery” listed in a column along with interracial murders, rebellion conspiracies, and kidnapping. In 1835, the *Liberator* added to an account of the Detroit rescue their “most sincere advice to all our colored friends to render a strict obedience to the law of the land. Let them be as distinguished for their good conduct as for their unjust treatment, and the day of their deliverance will draw near.” The Tappan-funded *Emancipator* newspaper “regret[ed]” in 1834 that a man resisted a bounty-hunting attempt to seize him “and thereby endangered the life of the constable.” The writer acknowledged urged “our colored brethren to make up their minds to suffer a little longer, till outraged humanity can make an appeal on their behalf, which we do not doubt will be effectual.”⁸¹

Ironically, white abolitionists were responding to Black resistance with counsel nearly identical in prescription to that which more conservative whites gave. This is not to say that the motivation was identical. But anti-abolitionist whites also said: obey the law, even if the law does not obey justice. Slavery’s continued survival, they wrote, might “shock our sight,” but “still the rights of property must be held sacred, and the majesty of the laws sustained. In 1832, Black folks in Boston “flocked to the Court House” to try to free a man imprisoned at the command of a Maryland enslaver named Worthington. Constables locked them out of the building to wait. When the judge left work, they “crowded round him in the street.” Was this “a land of liberty,” they demanded—to which the “Judge answered ‘most truly, and a land of laws also.’ He then cautioned them against any attempt at a rescue.” The newspaper reported his words with approval. Law criminalized escape from slavery, and aid to those who broke that law. Law must be followed. An 1835 newspaper described an Albany rescue attempt as a “violation of the constitution of the United States, and of the laws of this state.” Active Black opposition to abduction, in its various dimensions, was a treasonous threat to America’s white Union. Speculating that white abolitionist “fanatics” had secretly incited the “mob of vagrants,” the pro-Andrew Jackson author grouped those imagined white race traitors with John C. Calhoun and his South Carolina allies. Both were “nullifyer[s]” who shared two characteristics: disregard of

settled law; and a desire “to excite a feeling of distrust and prejudice . . . that shall break out into an embittered sectional controversy.”⁸²

White antislavery-adjacent Northern whites sometimes supported direct white resistance to enslavers who threatened to deploy sovereign violence against other whites. Before the 1850s, however, even those kinds of responses were localized and brief. In the meantime, white abolitionists critiqued Black action from perspectives that ranged from principled pacifism—which still ranked Black lives lower than purity of methods—to rank moral cowardice. And for the wider white press, no cause justified “mob” violence, at least by Black crowds. Newspapers repeatedly insisted that legal authorities must bring the full weight of punishment on those who took the power of the state into their own hands to enforce their own algorithm of justice.

The same press was about to take a different approach to white actual mobs. By 1833 members of the white Northern elite, especially those who supported the parastate plan of colonization, had initiated a wave of mob assaults on Black communities as reprisal. White mob attacks on Black residents of Northern cities and towns had been a regular feature of the decades after gradual abolition’s beginning. But in the 1830s, multiple factors converged to launch a massive new wave of anti-black violence, one that targeted both white immediatists and Black communities. The Garrison’s *Liberator*, the incorporation of Black arguments against ACS colonization into the new white immediatist-abolition vocabulary, the 1831 rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia, the wave of abolitionist speaking tours that criss-crossed the North from 1833 on, and the bombardment of Congress with thousands of antislavery petitions infuriated many whites who experienced the new in-your-face abolitionism as a cataclysmic threat. Such whites were often especially enraged by Black refusal to simply permit the abduction of friends, family, neighbors, or even community members whom they hadn’t met. After the 1833 Detroit rescue, the *New York American* reprinted a Michigan white’s words: “the ignorant zeal of the blacks has received too much encouragement from the injudicious excitement felt by some of our citizens, who would have been sorry to have countenanced an open breach of the laws.” Whites who allegedly encouraged Black resistance needed to be held

to account for its outcomes. Certainly Blacks should be: “The attempt to oppose the authority of a civil officer, and attack his person by an organized mob, should receive the punishment due to such enormities.”⁸³ In 1835, the New York *Courier and Enquirer* complained that “The laws of the land are every day obstructed in their execution.” In his whites-are-the-real-victims voice, the editor wrote that “a white man, or white woman, may be arrested and suffer the penalty of their misfortunes or their crimes without the assemblage of a mob for their rescue. But touch a negro and all the cellars and dungeons of the city pour forth their imps of darkness. Rescue! rescue! is the cry, without inquiry into the cause of arrest, or the guilt of the prisoner.”⁸⁴

The shifts in antislavery organization and argument, plus the active solidarity of Black communities, compounded as a decisive rejection of colonization. The parastate, which now included opinion-shaping, political-party organizing editors of major penny-press newspapers like the *Courier and Enquirer*, struck back. On October 1, 1833, multiple New York City newspapers called for mob action to prevent the scheduled Oct. 2 meeting of the New York City Anti-Slavery Society. That evening a group of ACS activists met the *Courier and Enquirer* office. The next morning, handbills appeared across Manhattan, calling “All Persons From the South” to converge on Clinton Hall, alongside “[New York] citizens who may feel disposed to manifest the *true* feeling of the state.” 1500 white folks showed up. They pursued the society’s meeting-goers through several venues before seizing and abusing an older Black man.⁸⁵

Beginning in 1832-1833, leaders and supporters of the ACS helped organize what would add up to, by the end of the decade, between one and two hundred “anti-abolitionist” mobs. For the decade, in the post-slave north and Midwest, major national newspaper *Niles’ Weekly Register* reported 115 “major and minor mobs,” compared to 21 in the 1820s. Yet even that was a significant undercount. Antislavery newspapers reported 165 Northern “anti-abolitionist mobs” between 1833 and 1838 alone. They raged through larger cities like Boston and Cincinnati, ports like Newark, and industrializing towns like Utica, Lockport, and Troy, New York. Rural Northern counties generated such mobs in the 1830s. Cincinnati, New York, and Philadelphia were sites of multiple white rampages. And not even the term “anti-abolitionist” tells the full

story. This wave of violence targeted, above all, Black people and their institutions of solidarity and community. Mobs killed an unknown number of people, destroyed dozens of Black houses in multiple cities, burned an abolitionist meeting hall, a Black orphanage, New York's African Society for Mutual Relief, and attempted to burn Mother Bethel AME church in Philadelphia.⁸⁶

The decade was one of many kinds of white urban mobs, to be sure, including ones that assaulted Irish immigrants and British theatre actors. But the most common type of mob was the kind that attacked Black people, their property, their community, and their white abolitionist allies. The proximate triggers for such violence could include ostensible offenses like the arrival of antislavery speakers on town, the establishment of integrated or even segregated schools teaching Black children, or the victory of Black men and/or women in a street fight against white attackers—calling into question whites' monopoly on interpersonal sovereign violence.⁸⁷ The underlying spring-action of each of these triggers was Black unwillingness to signal consent to white supremacy, which was to say that they refused to stay in their ostensible place. They were “intruding themselves everywhere . . . seated in stately dignity in the ladies' cabins of steamboats, in the pews of churches, side by side with their mistresses, and fancying themselves their superiors, because such a fuss is made about them by modern philanthropists.” Even the obsessive claim that Black and white abolitionists didn't care about Southern slavery, but only formed their organizations as a cover for advancing opportunities for interracial sex fell into the same category. Black people were allegedly leading incursions into whites' assumed sovereign power to exclude them from physical, social, and political space, and trying to limit whites' ability to force Black submission to said power via the state-protected threat of violence. An assault on Black women for boarding a streetcar (a transport innovation of the 1830s, bringing citizens together in a new agora from which white would-be police-citizens tried to ban Black people) was of a piece with an attack on Black people for attempting to liberate a man in mid-rendition to the South.⁸⁸

The latter, ACS supporters and allies insisted, was only happening because white abolitionists supported Black resistance. Nothing loaded up sputtering and destructive rage like

Black interference with whites' plenary power to seize and expel Black individuals as if they weren't free. The US itself was at risk by such acts, which rejected the Constitution's key anti-Somerset bargain, and poisoned the demographic engineers' dreams of an all-white North. And undermined the

In July 1834, the New York-based abolitionist newspaper *Emancipator* printed warnings about the kidnapping of Black children. Then someone circulated a printed handbill warning Black New Yorkers to "Look Out for Kidnappers!!," illustrated with an image of a "negro-driver." When, on July 4, 1834, an interracial group gathered at the Chatham Street Chapel to celebrate the anniversary of New York's 1827 final emancipation law, a white mob, led by a city official, burst in shouting "Treason!" and "Hurrah for the Union." They broke up the meeting and started fistfights with Black people outside the building.⁸⁹ The *Courier and Enquirer* newspaper described the Black attempts to escape white attack as "an encouraged negro mob." Whites outnumbered Blacks, initiated the fighting, and by all accounts overwhelmed their Black targets. Yet the white newspaper asked its white audience: "how much longer are we to submit"? Black refusal to submit was itself a defeat for whites. Several days of similar newspaper rhetoric ensued, until on the night of the 9th, white mobs assembled and raged across the city. Over the next three nights, well-organized crowds moved in square formations. They blocked off streets to prevent the city's anemic forces of watchman and constable from entering. When constables made it to a targeted site before the crowd, the mob chased them away. Crowds looted the home of Lewis Tappan, funder of antislavery movements, and destroyed multiple Black institutions and dozens of Black houses. This was the biggest pre-Civil War eruption of civil violence in New York, and perhaps the US.⁹⁰

Readers of the New York *American* read that the Tappan brothers themselves—and not the racist mob—had, in effect, burned their own furniture in the street. The *Emancipator*'s anti-abduction warning, the author charged, incited the destruction of law and Union: "The object of this expressive cut . . . [is] Nothing more nor less than an appeal to mob violence, against the execution of the laws, nay, of the Constitution." Abolitionists' "business is not defence, but

attack. They set the whole community in a blaze by their violence—call men pirates, thieves, kidnappers...encourage the blacks to rescue slaves from the hands of the Police.”⁹¹

Black crowds were trying to enact an ideology of solidarity against the racialized policing that could send anyone of African descent to the cotton fields. Now white mobs imposed a moral economy of sovereign whiteness around the “need” for whites to wield police power. And those mobs raged for the rest of the decade. Responses to this varied, but some leading white abolitionists chose to scamper. On behalf of the AASS executive committee, Arthur Tappan and John Rankin issued a supine document. “[We]entirely disclaim,” they insisted, “any desire to promote or encourage intermarriages between white and coloured persons.” They also disavowed the handbill warning about kidnappers “recently circulated in this city, the tendency of which is thought to be to excite resistance to the laws.” As white abolitionists had been insisting for years, they did not countenance truly “immediate” abolition if that meant protecting Black people, by any means necessary, from abduction into slavery. They supported the theory of immediate emancipation but would consent to a reality of immediate re/enslavement: “Our principle is [that] even hard laws are to be submitted to by all men, until they can by peaceable means be altered.” Now mouthing the most conservative “antislavery” posture possible, they forswore all “intention to dissolve the Union, or to violate the constitution and laws of the country, or to ask of Congress any act transcending their constitutional powers, which the abolition of slavery by Congress in any state would plainly do.”⁹²

Of course, white antislavery responses were far more diverse than panic at the top indicates. While some fell off from the journey, others would join, enraged in equal parts by the mobs’ violence and parastate instigation thereof. Meanwhile, from the late 1830s on, the significance of Black charisma in attracting whites’ conversion to the movement, especially in the form of mass-marketed escape narratives with Black protagonists at the center, would grow dramatically.⁹³ Though far from uncomplicated, this represented a major turning point in a longer process that is in turn part of the long story of soldaristic resistance to racialized policing in the US. One of the thicker strands of that story has been the significance of charismatic Black

resistance in challenging racialized policing. We might see the effect of this charisma in drawing some whites in the direction of the altar as an externality thrown off by Black words, action, and the respiration of Spirit in the congregation itself. Congregants in solidarity had invoked Spirit for their own work among themselves, for moving themselves together so that they could roll away slavery's stone for one woman, one child, one brother, one sister.

While rescue attempts proliferated, middle-class free people had been building a visible Black political culture in state and national conventions. In 1830, Black Philadelphians organized the first of a long series of national conventions. Beginning with the inaugural 1830 Philadelphia one, Black citizens organized more than two hundred such 19th century political gatherings—including dozens of state ones, and at least ten national ones before the Civil War. Such “colored conventions” (as conveners named them) could not have existed without working-class Black people who supported and helped build institutions of church, school, mutual aid society, and Black newspapers from which “leaders” emerged. Some participants, and most of those who fed and housed delegates were themselves proletarians struggling to survive in an economy whose rulers hoped to expel them. The convention tradition welded geographically separated communities' forms of solidarity—establishing, as P. Gabrielle Foreman puts it, Black organizing “as a legacy of community, institution-building, and self-sufficiency” at scale.⁹⁴

Colored conventions pushed back against attempts to impose racialized policing designed to create a white region seamlessly integrated with the slaveholding South. The inaugural 1830 one responded, in part, to kidnappers' ongoing raids on Pennsylvania and Delaware African Americans. The 1831 one, also in Philadelphia, challenged that state's proposed Vansant law for surveillance and registration of free Black people. Published proceedings for those first meetings do not mention direct-action attempts to free “runaways.” Yet “colored convention” delegates, some of whom may well have participated in such resistance, could have plausibly argued that they were building processes of formal advocacy for demanding recognition of their political citizenship. This would allow them to challenge white predation's legal structures from within the same state formation that valued white union over Black life.⁹⁵

Despite the significance of such “practices of citizenship” (to quote literary historian Derrick Spires’ felicitous phrase) white electorates and politicians worked to deny convention practitioners’ access to formal electoral politics or judicial protection from violence. In Pennsylvania, a split among the same Jacksonian Democrats who had driven Joseph Watson from City Hall allowed former Jacksonian Joseph Ritner to win an unexpected gubernatorial victory in 1835. Aligning himself with rogue Whig Thaddeus Stevens, already known as a rare antislavery white politician, new governor Ritner began to campaign for a new law that would require jury trials of alleged fugitives before rendition south. But legislative support for the jury bill evaporated. And in the state’s ongoing constitutional convention, white Pennsylvania Democrats worked to write in the possibility that the state could prohibit all Black immigration, whether free person or freedom-seeking “fugitive.”⁹⁶

As that convention sat, some property-owning Black Bucks County voters, technically entitled to vote but unwilling to face unarmed the white mob violence that enfranchised Black men often endured, not only dared to go to the polls in 1837. They went armed in case of white mob assault. Maybe they had watched or participated in 1830 when “a large number of blacks” attempted to free a Philadelphia man, or in the 1834 attempt by a “crowd of colored persons” to free a man from Southward rendition, or in 1835, as “an immense crowd of colored people of both sexes” fought constables who’d arrested two Black men suspected of escaping slavery.⁹⁷ But meanwhile, at the constitutional convention, claiming that “a free negro is the freest man on earth—his freedom is unrestrained and irresponsible—unmixed with rational intervention” white delegates who argued for a complete ban on Black voting painted a picture of Pennsylvania elections swayed by a flood of shotgun-toting fugitive Black migrants from the South. Insisting that comity with Southern states overruled all other considerations, and that Black voting violated “the law of nature,” the antiBlack caucus won the day. The new constitution enfranchised every white man and disfranchised all Black ones—bringing Pennsylvania’s white police-citizenry into line with most states north of slavery and confirming commitment to comity with Southern enslavers. In 1839 Pennsylvania’s (all-white, male) electorate defeated Joseph

Ritner's bid for reelection. The backlash against Ritner, Black voters, and the right of Black people to live without constant fear of kidnapping shows that clever political organizers could build a majority of white Northerners against Black freedom-seeking. As municipal-level practices were already establishing, policing was done to, not for, Black people.⁹⁸

For now, white people had effectively contained Black formal-political activism, although such developments did not obliterate Black citizenship's practices. Yet outside the world of electoral politics, something else entirely was brewing. 1838, three years after he participated in the Philadelphia "mob" that attempted to punish Mrs. Congo for sending a Black woman into slavery, George Parker helped organize a new antislavery society in Philadelphia. He and many other Black folks continued, despite white mobs, to participate both in Black direct action and new forms of antislavery organizing that emerged in the 1830s.⁹⁹ Black crowd actions brought participants into active engagement with antislavery, enacted practices of solidarity, accelerated contradictions, and radicalized both participants and observers. Such galvanizing experiences may explain why some Black Northerners moved in the 1830s to support the underground process of evading slavecatchers and other police-citizens. In 1835, New York bookstore owner and activist David Ruggles, born to free Connecticut parents, organized the New York Committee of Vigilance. Publicly presenting their mission as opposing the kidnapping of legally free people, committee members secretly moved self-liberators between hiding places in and beyond New York City.

By the late 1830s, Ruggles and other activists—almost all Black—had established the real, as opposed to mythical, underground railroad. On this run, enslaved people started the locomotive by freeing themselves from the direct grip of their enslaver. At great risk they made it to a Northern space where they could access or be found by a network, one composed of working-class and middle-class Black folks. Those activists took risks to help freedom-seekers find their way around the nets of police-citizens, carried out by stealth carried out what crowd actions mapped as public political ideology. Ruggles' health broke down around 1840, but he'd

helped guide over six hundred freedom-seekers like Douglass through a city where enslavers operated with full assistance of New York city officers like constable Elias Boudinot.¹⁰⁰

In 1837 an alliance of bourgeois and working-class Black Philadelphians, inspired by Ruggles' crew, founded their own "Vigilant Committee." Black barber Jacob White interviewed those who sought refuge and managing their transit through Philly. A women's committee of fifteen, including working-class Hetty Reckless and Elizabeth Colly (a house servant) brought in much of the committee's resources through fundraising events like the annual celebration of West Indian emancipation. The Vigilant Committee was secret, especially after 1840, when its Black majority expelled the white members, perhaps because whites ran their mouths too much and thus endangered Black committee members and freedom-seekers. As an elderly man, committee co-founder Robert Purvis claimed that they had averaged one freedom-seeker assisted per day in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Committee records from the nine months between the June 4, 1839 and March 3, 1840 count sixty-two people. If the actual total was in the hundreds, rather than the thousands Purvis implied, they had still assisted a significant number. One whom they moved through the city in 1842 was North Carolina escapee Harriet Jacobs, whose *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, would be the first woman-authored "fugitive narrative."¹⁰¹

When William Still reorganized the committee in the 1850s, he began another period of extensive recordkeeping. His accounts identify 995 individuals whom he assisted from 1854 to 1858. With wife Letitia Still, he and other activists got the escapees moving on—often to New England, or all the way to Canada. Whether vigilance committees' undercover movements, or public confrontations carried out by Black crowds, Philadelphia's Black direct action to redeem sisters and brothers from the jaws of the police-citizenry stayed mostly Black. Other such associations also existed in other communities, notably in Boston from 1841 on. Here more whites participated in the vigilance work, but still the majority were Black. Boston's 1842 George Latimer case may represent the first significant public intervention of elite white abolitionists in cooperating with Black activists to attempt to block someone's rendition by any means necessary. Still, only after 1850 did the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act bring more whites into

insistent opposition to the reenslavement of Black people who'd successfully escaped the South. While mythology depicts an organized "Underground Railroad" staffed by upstanding middle-class white people eager to hide Southern-born Black folks in their secret cellars and tunnels, documented white participation is scanty and does not compare to the massive numbers of freedom-seekers that Vigilance Committee leaders could count.¹⁰²

White historians have sometimes put forward immediatists' emergence as evidence that across the arc of US history, white people have made progress against their own racism. This sense of a usable past could admittedly sustain hope for one's own lifetime. But despite real transformations in the direction of moral responsibility that for some, like Garrison, entailed even physical risk, (white) historians' elevation of a pantheon of middle-class white abolitionists has long obscured their real limits.¹⁰³ Perhaps none were more difficult to surmount before, during, and since the 1830s than many white abolitionists' persistent desire for safety. This included reluctance to assume the kind of physical, emotional, and social hazard that Black people assumed as soon as they joined a rescue crowd and put themselves at risk of imprisonment or worse. Or which they assumed when they tried to escape slavery. Or, if they were a little girl named Matty, when they stepped out through their grandmother's front door.

In recent years, a centrist backlash against Black critique of white self-congratulation re: white abolitionism has, in the most generous reading, demanded public reaffirmations of faith in the American political-legal system's eventual procedural justice. The need to silence critique of the allegedly morally-exceptional character of white-dominated American institutions comes across as desperate. The aggrieved (or complacent) insistence that white Northern support of fugitives was common would have been news to Black freedom-seekers who crossed the line in the years after 1820. They did not know which white people deserved trust, and often whites behaved in such a way as to respond: *none of us*. On the road in Indiana a group of men carrying an advertisement describing William Wells Brown and his mother spotted their prey walking north. Caught, bound, taken to the house of one of the men for the evening, Brown and his mother listened while he "read a chapter from the bible" to his family, and then prayed. One

Aaron escaped the slave states and traveled north through New Jersey and New England. He asked one Massachusetts man who claimed to be “antislavery”—in return for digging the man’s potatoes for a day—a place to get a night’s rest. The man “told me he could not let me sleep in the house. I asked him if he could not give me a pallet in the kitchen, and he told me he could not, but says he I will fix you a place in the barn.”¹⁰⁴

There are many other such proof texts, and by contrast, these same narratives showed Black solidarity in the North as crucial and reliable, with exceptions facing consequences and repercussions from other Black folks. Meanwhile, considering the dangers that Black activists faced when they supported freedom-seekers in clandestine, vigilant operations, the risk-taking of middle-class and working-class Blacks alike was remarkable. Some individual whites did help fugitives—especially when no other whites could see them. The woman of the house that Henry Bibb approached gave him meat and bread, refused to take money, and burst into tears because she knew—as did so many other whites—that he was running from something terrible, something from which she profited directly or indirectly. Such acts could remain furtive. In a few cases, however, the risk taken launched a white person into even riskier acts of opposition to slavery. Working as a river boatman in 1837, white Calvin Fairbank helped a freedom-seeker cross the Ohio River. Within a few years, he and white schoolteacher Delia Webster were helping Lewis Hayden and his family to escape Kentucky slavery. Fairbank spent nineteen years in the state penitentiary for that and similar crimes.¹⁰⁵

The story I am telling chronologically leads into and underlines those recently told by Kellie Carter-Jackson and Jesse Olsavsky. The latter argues for the radicalizing effect of participation in vigilance-committee activities. The former, meanwhile, in *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, shows that Black abolitionists had to fight a long struggle within interracial abolitionism to educate white abolitionists about the need for direct and even violent resistance to slavery’s power. Both note the dialectical role of direct action against slavery, including that of protecting freedom-seekers from rendition and re-abduction, in driving the history of both proslavery and antislavery politics towards confrontation. That

confrontation would unleash Black freedom-seeking in the South on a new scale, one that would eventually result in emancipation.¹⁰⁶

One antithesis, however, could not find resolution. Solidarity-effectuated Black claims to the sovereign right to defend the lives of self and kin from policing-violence triggered white response. Even white immediatists could not readily stomach the challenge that Black direct action raised to the assumption that white people were individually and collectively the sovereign wielders of police power over non-white people in North America. This was not driven by such allies' conscious embrace of that power. But challenges to it struck at the heart of white American identity: more than the individual psyche, that means the structure and ideological assumptions undergirding white-run policing systems, to the national bargain. White abolitionists were deeply fearful that other white people would see them as supporting Black people's use of sovereign violence (even in defense). This, they assumed, would threaten other whites so fundamentally as to galvanize the destruction of any hope for peaceful abolition. Such fear was reasonable. What they feared was bound to happen. If they broached the possibility of a future in which whites did not have plenary authority to arrest, imprison, move by force, and impose capital punishment instantly at will, they were going to face painful struggle against other whites. White allies perceived that to go on a journey to build a completely different world would expose them in the end to the constant threat of individual and state violence upon which had been built first settler colonialism and now, a growing empire. Perhaps that tension can't be resolved as long as there are white people, per James Baldwin's famous aphorism.

Of course, political structures and alignments can and have changed over time. They may one day shift the balances of power that punished or permitted different kinds of sovereign violence. In the meantime, the state in the 1830s was unable to prevent Black rescue attempts. It was unable to calm the destruction wrought by mobs exerting the deeply held "rights" of white sovereign violence against Black people and perceived traitors-to-whiteness. Black trespass on white powers and rights that depended for their value on their exclusivity had to stop. And at the same time, the state needed order. Those property-owning beneficiaries of the emerging

American capitalist order who benefited most from the state, including those I've described as "the parastate," needed order. So they collectively worked to expand the state's capacity to hold and deploy "police power." Scholarship has identified the mid-19th century as the period of emergence for "police power" legal thinking and regulatory practice in the US. Much of that focuses on municipalities' extension of regulatory power to govern markets, public health, and moral "nuisances." Yet this period is precisely when professional "police" forces appear in Northern cities. Those forces clearly served the purpose of maintaining order against not only the daily chaos of urban crime in a profoundly unequal environment full of deracinated rural people undergoing a chaotic process of expropriation and remobilization as urban proletariats. A professional police force could be and was repeatedly in the years to come deployed to prevent direct action against the state, and mass chaos and violence in the streets.¹⁰⁷

Scholars and activists have proposed two main genealogies for this emergence, which has gone a great but incomplete distance towards making real Weber's dictum for the vast American state. Indeed there are few modern states that deploy as much deadly force inside or outside their borders, although who is subject to that deployment is massively variable. One account traces the New York Police Department in the 1840s to the establishment of a professional, uniformed, ostensibly depoliticized police force in London a decade earlier. Another account notes that Southern cities like Charleston and New Orleans, or for that matter rural counties with institutionalized slave patrols, deployed forces whose missions and practices had much in common with later professional forces.

Northern cities created police forces in a wave that began with New York in 1844, and then continued, replacing old "night watch" and constable systems with professional, uniformed forces: Philadelphia, 1850; Baltimore (in slave-state Maryland), 1853; Boston, 1854, Chicago, 1855; Pittsburgh, 1857; Newark, 1857; Cincinnati, 1859. Those who founded the police departments did not name the Southern cities' model, and they explicitly drew on the London and then New York examples. Yet they built on a North American foundation of white commitments to policing Black movement and being. Evidence suggests that white Northern

policing continued to respond to demands from Southern fellow police-citizens (and the voice of the parastate) to coerce Black freedom-seekers and the Northern Blacks linked to them in solidarity. We should also see new departments as part of a rethinking, redeployment, and expansion of the police power by the state, with the full support of politicians and social thinkers affiliated with both proslavery and antislavery alliances—the parastate, in other words. Over time, police forces continued and even enhanced their role as especially focused on regulating Black people. The forces became important vehicles for integrating European recent-immigrant population into full membership in American whiteness. Whites who had been foot soldiers in white riots now got to be cops. Wielding deadly force—sovereignty—over Black people, they retraced at first hand or virtually, through members of their own identity community, the paths followed by white-becoming generations before them. Even before the NYPD professionalized that highway of assimilation, racialized policing had been opening a Gaelic door into white American civic identity. In 1834, reporting that Black people had “forcibly rescued” a man from constables who were trying to jail him for Southward rendition, the intensely antiBlack Albany *Argus* noted “one circumstance” that “gratified”: “A number of our Irish citizens . . . assisted the officers with all their power, to maintain the supremacy of the laws in this state.”¹⁰⁸

What have we learned from this story, of the contest between emergent “American” parastate and Black solidarity? First, we have learned that these were unequally matched combatants, in terms of access to the powers of this world. And yet the Northern whites’ educated, high-social capital elite felt in the 1830s the fracturing effect of Black refusal to comply with mass expulsion, demographic engineering by “colonization.” At least one chip broke off the white American elite under the pressure of Black solidarity: free Black with enslaved, enslaved with enslaved, free Black with free Black. Was this split permanent? Did the history of confrontation, response, and acceleration that led to the Civil War, emancipation, and Reconstruction? Or if we are discussing the long arc of racialized policing’s history—and for that matter, of Black resistance to it—are we actually talking about continuity. Or if we look at the

long arc of US history, and note that somewhere in December 1871 the federal government abandoned the whatever protections of Black life it had built up in the wake of emancipation, perhaps we may conclude that continuity, not change is the dominant feature.

Thus we might also close by thinking about how this so-called “Age of Democracy”—typically depicted as such via accounts of the incomplete democratization of white male electoral politics—could also be rendered as a contest between two different concepts of power and authority. Perhaps the parastate and its white immediatist abolitionists had more in common with each other. Indeed the white reformers who extended, in a wide-spectrum wave, the concept of police power throughout daily and civic life, both via professional departments on permanent patrol but also through an array of other regulatory elements, sometimes opposed slavery but still believed deeply in the constant surveillance of free Black people. More broadly still, most white elite Americans, along with their policing, whiteness-claiming working-class accomplices, all believed that some American should have the power to force lesser Americans to comply for the sake of order. Order exceeded freedom, as Cedric Robinson pointed out in a larger critique of European political theory.

By contrast, Black solidarity built on a firm recognition of linked fate. Differences ran between wealthy (few though they were) and poor, those who worked with hands (most) and those who worked with words and paper, men and women, street-life or proper, Southern-born and running under a changed name or Northern, born free. But everyone was vulnerable to abduction. Everyone could count on retaliatory, community-focused mass white violence if they asserted their own or their kinfolk/skinfolk’s rights, especially if they hinted at deployment of sovereign violence akin to that which undergirded by whiteness and citizenship in an independent nation whose constitution ostensibly rested on popular sovereignty. And yet, they did it anyway, on many occasions. Proslavery critics’ blamed white abolitionists for rescues. But Black organization lay behind Black crowds. Crowd members told each other of kidnappings; showed up on time, took the risks together. Their actions were of massive consequence.

Down into the alley opening onto School Street the strong woman saw the getaway coach. Charged toward it, carrying her gift. Someone opened the door. She thrust the Baltimore woman inside. The other Baltimore woman clambered in too. Someone shut the door. The driver whipped the horses. And she stood, breathing hard; watched Polly Ann and Mary careen down School Street. They turned onto Beacon Street. They rattled over the Milldam, across Back Bay's remaining waters, to the far side leaving old Boston's narrow streets behind.¹⁰⁹

At 11 AM, a Worcester-bound train eased to a scheduled stop just west of Boston. A party of "colored" people boarded. A white man later reported that he he'd noticed their irritatingly joyful animation. On the new modern modes of transportation, white people were already trying to force Black people into segregated spaces—cars of trains, to sleep on the decks of steamboats and not in staterooms. They did the same with passports, a technology of the new national borders of which they were so proud. Thus they tried to deny Black people the perquisites of even second-class citizenship. Thus they also tried to restrict Black stories' mobility as well as their persons, making it more difficult for Black Americans to speak about slavery to Europe's potentially vast pro-abolition audience.¹¹⁰

Not knowing that a force too powerful for a few constables to contain had just ruptured a Boston courtroom, this white passenger did not raise an alarm. His surveillance instincts remained reflexively in place, but he did not activate a more vigorous mode of police-citizenship among his peers. At Worcester, newspaper reports later told it, the women and several others deboarded the train. Allegedly, they went to a safe house, where someone supposedly helped them disguise themselves as men. Then, they disappeared.

APPENDIX: IDENTIFIED RESCUES & RELATED CROWD ACTIONS, 1801-1842

Year	Location	Goal	Approximate number involved	Outcome
1801	New York, NY	Liberate two women from French enslaver who wants to sell them south	Unknown, in at least one place described as "French blacks"	Women rescued
1810	Boston, MA	Protect Black man, when that fails they cut ears off his betrayer	Unknown, described as a "mob of Negroes and mulattoes"	Man returned "Southward," traitor maimed
1819	New York, NY	Liberate Thomas Harlett from jail, so he won't be returned to Southern slavery	40 Black rescuers	Briefly freed, he's recaptured
1819	Boston, MA	Liberate John Howard	20-30 Black rescuers	He is remanded south, while 14 "rioters" are indicted
1824	Philadelphia, PA	Liberate a man being remanded to jail, accused of being a fugitive from slavery	150 Black rescuers	They do not succeed in rescuing him
1825	Harrisburg, PA	Liberate a man who's being remanded to enslaver by the court	16 or more Black rescuers	Unknown if man escaped, of rescuers, 16 arrested and tried, 12 convicted, 6 sentenced to 1 year in Dauphin county jail, 5 to 6 months, one skips bail.
1826	New York, NY	Liberate Ben Washington	"large mob"	He is recaptured and remanded; multiple multi-year prison terms for "rioters"
1830	Philadelphia, PA	Liberate a man arrested as a runaway	60 Black rescuers	Rescue fails, and several "ringleaders" are arrested
1832	Boston, MA	Liberate man named Worthington, who's being remanded to Maryland	Large crowd of Black Bostonians	They verbally confront the judge but are unable to reach the prisoner
1832	New York, NY	Liberate two men accused of being runaways	"Mob" of Black rescuers, unknown #, organized by wife of one of the men	Rescue fails, several rescuers arrested
1833	Detroit, MI	Liberate a man named Blackburn, accused of being a runaway	"A large assemblage of blacks."	A woman seized with Blackburn had already escaped from the jail. Now Blackburn escapes, and the sheriff is shot in the belly by someone in the crowd
1834	Albany, NY	Liberate an alleged "runaway," who is in the process of forcible remand to the South	Black Albany residents	Crowd rushes the constables as they bring the man back to the jail, seize him, put him in a wagon and drive him out of town
1834	Philadelphia, PA	Liberate a man who has allegedly run from Maryland to PA	A "crowd of colored persons"	After a fight, court officers manage to get the prisoner

				into a coach that carries him south to slavery
1835	Albany, NY	Liberate a man alleged to be a fugitive from VA	"great crowd of colored and white people," overnight crowd is Black	The jail is besieged for nearly 24 hours, so authorities call out the local militia to escort the prisoner to a river boat.
1835	Brookville, PA	Unknown but multiple "fugitives." Event may in fact have happened in 1836	Black rescuers	Several Black people charged fines to pay for rescued "fugitives," few other details available
1835	Buffalo, NY	Free the Stanfords, a formerly enslaved couple eif their six-year-old child, who had escaped to Canada but then were kidnapped by slavetrader Bacon Tait	Fifty armed men including self-liberate Black man William Wells Brown	After a gun battle with a sheriff's posse, Brown's party is able to get the Stanfords back across the river into Canada
1835	New York, NY	Liberate Richard Spicer and punish his betrayer	Large crowd assembles near the Old Bridewell	Unable to rescue, but Spicer's counsel gets court case delayed. Several arrested for beating a Black informer
1835	Palmyra, NY	Liberate woman from private house where she was locked up pending transport south	50-60 Black people who have come from Rochester	They don't succeed in rescuing her; several in crowd are shot, several arrested
1835	Philadelphia, PA	Liberate two alleged "fugitives" from constables	"immense crowd" of Black women and men	They cannot free the abductees
1835	Philadelphia, PA	Punish "Mrs. Congo," the informer whose testimony gets Mary Gilmore enslaved	300 Black people "of both sexes"	They invade the house and beat multiple people. 12 are arrested, 9 convicted
1836	Boston, MA	Free "Eliza Small and Polly Ann Bates" a.k.a. Ann Patten and Mary Pinckney	Many rescuers, perhaps 100-200 in all	Successful rescue
1836	Burlington, NJ	Free Severn Martin	Crowd (Black and white) eventually grows to 500	After attacks on constable, the mayor intervenes and threatens all with arrest, Martin remanded
1837	Swedesboro, NJ	Free family that has been seized by slave catchers and imprisoned in a house	"Mob" of 40 Black locals attacks house	Attack delays rendition, judge intervenes and frees the family
1837	Utica, NY	Free Harry Bird and George	Male crowd, both Black and white	Successful rescue from judge's office
1837	New York, NY	Free man who is allegedly an escapee from Virginia	Black crowd of ~500	Attempt to free man in transit between jail & court. Temporarily escapes, recaptured. Some rescuers prosecuted
1837	Niagara (Canada side)	Liberate a man from Kentucky who has been arrested by Canadian government at behest of ex-enslaver	40 Black people (from NY or CN side, unclear which or perhaps both)	He escapes, five are shot by sheriff and posse, several are killed.

1839	Philadelphia, PA	Man arrested as “runaway slave”	Crowd of several hundred Black people attacks informant	Informant eventually rescued from crowd
1839	Marion, OH	Bill, allegedly self-liberated from Virginia	A mostly white crowd, it seems, fights with knife-wielding Virginian bounty hunters	Sam manages to escape in the confusion and is not heard from again.
1839	Detroit, MI	Woman, allegedly enslaved in MD, is seized by bounty-hunters	A group of a dozen or Black men attack the bounty-hunters’ carriage	She escapes. One of the rescuers shot to death
1841	Lancaster, PA	A woman from MD, who has been living in PA	A group of Black people stop the wagon in which she’s carried	
1841	Niagara Falls, NY	Woman who escapes enslavers who are traveling	Black hotel employees	They help her get over the border to Canada
1842	Boston, MA	George Latimer	A Black crowd attempts to free him	He is not freed, several watchmen are injured, elite whites get involved, try (but fail) to prevent rendition.

The focus of the entire chapter from which this is drawn: How the policing of Black movement and bodies in the North in 1800-1860—and the resistance to it—laid groundwork for Black solidarity and identity; the future of modern racialized policing, and helped to cause the Civil War. Along the way, it also begins the story of the baked-in weaknesses of white reform movements that oppose forms of oppression but which concede the ultimate supremacy of whiteness in this land.

¹ Salem; *Salem Gazette* (Salem, Massachusetts), August 5, 1836: "Outrageous Violation Of Justice." *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, Massachusetts), August 5, 1836; cf. Nina Moore Tiffany, *Samuel Sewell: A Memoir*, (Boston, 1898), 61-66. One scholarly account is Leonard W. Levy, "The "Abolition Riot": Boston's First Slave Rescue," *New England Quarterly*, 25.1 (1952), 85-92; another is Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*, 57; cf. Carol Wilson "'Active Vigilance Is the Price of Liberty' Black Self-Defense Against Fugitive Slave Recapture and Kidnapping of Free Blacks," in *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America*, ed. John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold, (Knoxville: Univ. of Tenn. Press, 1999), 108-127.

² See summary in Stephen Lubet, *Fugitive Justice: Runaways, Rescuers, and Slavery on Trial*, (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 11-22.

³ Christopher Cameron, *To Plead Our Own Cause: African Americans in Massachusetts and the Making of the Antislavery Movement*, (Kent, OH, 2014); Kate Masur, *Until Justice Be Done: America's First Civil Rights Movement, from the Revolution to Reconstruction*, (New York, 2021); Elliott Drago, *Street Diplomacy: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom in Philadelphia, 1820-1850* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2022); Stephen Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom: Fighting For Black Citizenship in a White Republic*, (New York, 2012), Van Gosse, *The First Reconstruction: Black Politics in America From the Revolution to the Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, 2021); Kerri Greenidge, *Boston's Abolitionists*, (Beverly, MA, 2006); Julie Winch, *The Elite of Our People: Koseph Willson's Sketches of Upper-Class Black Life In Antebellum Philadelphia*, (State College, PA, 2000), 26-28.

⁴ The *Newburyport Herald*, in a hostile account, reported that Samuel H. Adams had applied for the writ. That story claims that a Black man in Baltimore was involved, the intended husband of Small/Pinckney. Though not on the boat he allegedly had persuaded the women to run in this way, and somehow word had reached Boston to apply for this writ even before the ship reached the wharf. The man was allegedly listed on the writ. Suffolk County (MA)

Sheriff's records, Criminal Calendar, Vol. 5 (1835-37), original at MA State Archives, viewed at <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1058281>, [Image 527] says they were taken into custody on 8/1 by the deputy sheriff, and that the superior court's judge had not been available at the time to rule on the writ of habeas corpus. Cf. *Boston Patriot & Daily Mercantile Advertiser*, January 19, 1820

⁵ *Boston Recorder*, August 5, 1836; *Boston Patriot & Daily Mercantile Advertiser*, January 19, 1820

⁶ Levy "Abolition Riot," discusses this; cf. Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom*, 66 ("body.")

⁷ Levy, I believe, attributes this to the Post; but the language is reprinted verbatim in "Mob Law." *Daily Atlas* (Boston, Massachusetts) XIX, no. 197, February 19, 1851—which also recounts an 1801 rescue not found in other sources as yet.

⁸ *New-Bedford Mercury*, August 5, 1836. Later that evening a mob surrounded a hall that had been booked for an abolition meeting, which the proprietors then canceled: *Boston Recorder*, August 5, 1836

⁹ *Columbian Centinel*, August 5; Aug. 5, 1836; Levy "Abolition Riot," 89-90; *Boston Recorder*, August 12, 1836.

¹⁰ *Columbian Centinel*, Aug. 5. 1836; Levy, 89

¹¹ *Columbian Centinel*, August 3, 1836, in Levy, 89

¹² Levy, "Abolition Riot," 90-91; quoting *Liberator*, Aug. 6, 1836; Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing*; Cf. Stanley Harrold; Sinha; also note that Garrison opposed all forms of direct action, which helped lead to his break with Douglass and some other prominent Black activists. Meyer, *All on Fire*, Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*.

¹³ Stewart, *Holy Warriors*; Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *AHR* 100.2 (303-34); Sinha, *Slave's Cause*.

¹⁴ Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 70-71; White, *Somewhat More Independent*; David Gellman, *Emancipating New York*, (Baton Rouge, 2006), 171-80.

¹⁵ Leslie Harris, *In The Shadow of Slavery*; Tamika Nunley, *At the Threshold of Liberty*, for DC schools; African Americans in Boston also created one.

¹⁶ *New York Public Advertiser*, April 4, 1808

¹⁷ Petition of Absalom Jones and Others — People of Color and Freemen of Philadelphia — Against the Slave Trade to the Coast of Guinea; 12/30/1799; (HR 6A-F4.2); Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, RG 233, USNA; Cf. Dunbar, *Never Caught*; Thomas Morris, *Free Men All: The Personal Liberty Laws of the North, 1780-1861*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975)

¹⁸ "Baltimore, May 6." *Daily Advertiser* (New York, New York), May 11, 1801: Supplement; Carol Wilson, *Freedom at Risk*; David Fiske, *Solomon Northup's Kindred: The Kidnapping of Free Citizens Before the Civil War*, (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2016); Rick Bell, *Stolen*; Daniel Meaders, "Kidnapping Blacks in Philadelphia: Isaac Hopper's Tales of Oppression." *JNH* 80.2 (1995): 47-65.

¹⁹ Meaders, *Kidnappers*, 309-11. New York's Black population rose ten times over, to 10,368 in those years.

²⁰ For Philadelphia, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/community/text5/negrosocietiesphil.pdf>; for New York, Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 86-89; Cf. Porter, *Early Negro Writing*, 6, 42; cf. Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*, (Chapel Hill, 2002); Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge, MA, 1988)

²¹ There is now an extensive historiography noting the fear of Black anti-marronage energies exported from St. Domingue and Haiti to the North as well as the South. One might begin, most recently, with Leslie Alexander, *Fear of a Black Republic: Haiti and the Birth of Black Internationalism in the United States*, (Urbana, IL., 2023); This would soon be a major issue in Philadelphia: *New York Gazette*, August 6, 1801; *New York Gazette*, August 4, 1801. For Alberti, see *Salem Gazette*, January 3, 1826. Carol Wilson is one of the few historians to discuss George Alberti, *Freedom at Risk*, 50-53.

²² Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors*; "English" from Hallowell (Me.) *American Advocate*, June 2, 1812; cf. Elizabethtown *New-Jersey Journal*, October 6, 1812; Wilmington (DE) *American Watchman*, June 10, 1812; cf. Green-Mountain Farmer (Bennington, Vermont), October 14, 1811:

²³ "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings." *Morning Chronicle* (New York, New York), December 10, 1806:

²⁴ Wilson, *Freedom at Risk*; Bell, *Stolen*; Andrew Diemar, *Politics of Black Citizenship*, 51; Winch "Philadelphia and the Other Underground Railroad," *PMHB* 111.1 (1987), 3-25; Meaders, ed., *Kidnappers in Philadelphia*, 103-4; *New York Daily Advertiser*, May 11, 1801

²⁵ Eric Bedell Smith, "Notes and Documents"; Julie Winch, "Philadelphia and the Other Underground Railroad," *PMHB*; Enslavers impugned Black claims to have been born free as self-interested falsehoods. Of course they lied:

who wouldn't want to claim that they were free. (On the other hand, who wouldn't want to claim that they owned valuable property?) And, they insisted, many self-identified kidnapping victims had been "seduced" into making such claims by interfering northern fanatics who were jealous and anti-Southern hypocrites; Bell, *Stolen*; cf. Wells, *Kidnapping Club*; Carol Wilson, *Freedom At Risk: The Kidnapping of Free Blacks in America, 1780-1865*, (Lexington, Ky., 1994); Adam Rothman, *Beyond Freedom's Reach: A Kidnapping in the Twilight of Slavery*, (Cambridge, Ma., 2015); Carol Wilson, *The Two Lives of Sally Miller: A Case of Mistaken Racial Identity in Antebellum New Orleans*, (New Brunswick, 2007); Pauli Murray, *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*, (New York, 1956) "Notes and Documents" 327-28. Patty Cannon, a well-known kidnapper, was arrested and held in 1829 for unrelated homicide charges. She committed suicide in jail while awaiting trial.

²⁶ Wilson, *Freedom At Risk*.

²⁷ Lubet, *Fugitive Justice*; Polgar, *Standard-Bearers of Equality*, 108-111. Linda Myrsiades, "Legal Practice and Pragmatics in the Law: The 1821 Trials of John Reed, 'Fugitive Slave'," *PMHB* 138.3 (July 2014), 305-338; Thomas D. Morris, *Free men All.: The Personal Liberty Laws of the North, 1780-1861* (Baltimore, 1974); Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 130-45; Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 176-77; for a Pennsylvania judge's interpretation of the necessity of cooperation, see Drago, *Street Diplomacy*, PP.

²⁸ "To the Editor," *New York American Citizen*, August 28, 1800; "Mr. Poulson." *Philadelphia Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, July 2, 1801; Meaders, *Kidnappers in Philadelphia*, 97-100. "Communication." *Boston Commercial Gazette* (Boston, Massachusetts), March 4, 1802:

²⁹ Meaders, ed., *Kidnappers in Philadelphia*, 11-12, 104; Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class In African-American Politics*, (Princeton, 1994).

³⁰ Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 122-127.

³¹ Masur, *Until Justice*, 19 ; Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, 20; Forten, *Letters of a Man of Color*, pp ; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 177-181 Drago, *Street Diplomacy*, 25-29; Thomas Branagan, *Serious Remonstrances to the Northern States*, (Philadelphia, 1805); Beverly Tomek, 'From motives of generosity, as well as self-preservation': Thomas Branagan, Colonization, and the Gradual Emancipation Movement, *ANCH*, 6.2 (2005) 121-147

³² Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart*; Eric Burin, *The Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville, 2005); P.J. Staudenraus, , *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865*, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1961); Beverly C. Tomek , *Colonization and its Discontents*, (New York: NYU Press, 2011); Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic*, (Chapel Hill, 2008) ; *New Directions in the Study of African American Recolonization*, ed. Beverly C. Tomek and Mathew J. Hetrick (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2017); white emancipationists' discourse here exemplifies the deceptions squarely addressed by Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, 1997).

³³ Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*, 33-39; James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*, (New York, 2005); Claude Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia*, (Chapel Hill, 2004); James Forten to Paul Cuffe, Jan. 15, 1816, Paul Cuffe Papers, New Bedford Free Public Library, https://www.westport-ma.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf7356/f/uploads/583.1817_from_james_forten.jpg [Although labeled as 1817, the date on the letter says 1816, and is postmarked January 15]; Van Gosse argues Forten and Cuffe backed the first ACS push for colonization; Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 189-91 is less definite on Forten's early support.

³⁴ Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: a History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*, (Cambridge, UK, 2018); Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 191-95; for James Forten's advocacy of Haitian emigration, cf. Winch, *Gentleman*, 209-20.; Ousmane Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 56-58.

³⁵ This history still awaits a sustained academic investigation, but the transition from enslaved Virginians, to Merikens, to Spiritual Baptists would be a rich subject for study for the right scholar or scholars. *Boston Commercial Gazette*, August 11, 1814; *Clinton Ohio Register*, August 30, 1814; *New York National Advocate*, April 8, 1815; Bridgeton, NJ, *Washington Whig*, August 28, 1815; "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings," *Worcester Massachusetts Spy*, December 17, 1828 reveals that in 1828 enslavers' agents in Congress were still trying to get the US government to extract payment from the British for the 1814-1815 escapees.

³⁶ Gellman, *Emancipating New York*, 220; Shane White, "It was a Proud Day: African-Americans, festivals and Parades," *JAH* 81 (1994), pp; Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*, (Chapel Hill, 2002); Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, [ch 5-6, pp]; Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, New York, 1993); Jenna B. Gibbs, *Performing in the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular*

Culture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Jasmine Nichole Cobb, *Remaking Black Visuality in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York University Press, 2015), p. 198.

³⁷ Gene A. Smith, *The Slaves' Gamble: Choosing Sides in the War of 1812*, (New York, 2013); Nathaniel Millett, Nathaniel, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff and Their Quest for Freedom in the Atlantic World*, (Gainesville, 2013); Matthew J. Clavin, *The Battle of Negro Fort: the Rise and Fall of a Fugitive Slave Community*, (New York, 2019); cf. Sylviane A. Diouf, Sylviane, *Slavery's Exiles: the Story of the American Maroons*, (New York, 2014); Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, (Urbana, 1999); Larry E. Rivers, *Rebels and Runaways: Slave Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Florida*, (Urbana, 2012). Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816*, (Cambridge, 1999), argues for a much lower death toll.

³⁸ "Meeting at Washington City, on the Colonization of Free Blacks." Wilmington (DE) *American Watchman*, December 28, 1816 Egerton," "Its Origin Is Not A Little Curious": A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *JER* 5.4 (Winter, 1985), 463-80. P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865*, (New York, 1961) [Randolph quoted in newspaper transcripts of earliest meeting] Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 163; cf Spooner, *Slavery and Abolition* 2013 Cf. Brandon Mills, "Situating African Colonization Within the History of U.S. Expansion," Tomek and Hetrick, eds., *New Directions in the History of African American Colonization*. Finley specifically argued against a western plan.

³⁹ *American Watchman*, Dec. 28, 1816; cf. Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, for "geography of containment."

⁴⁰ "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings." *Republican Star* (Easton, Maryland), February 13, 1821. Note the echo of the 1782-83 British evacuations.

⁴¹ Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*, (Cambridge, MA: 2009), 23-49.

⁴² I've considered the "parastate" a species in the genus "civil society" but compared to the house cat implied in that latter term, the parastate is the lion. Think not the state bar association, think the Federalist Society—or even the Yale Law School alumni network. One is committed to building civil society, the other to organizing, shaping, and directing the power of the state from a position that does not need to accept popular direction.

⁴³ "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings." Newark (NJ) *Centinel Of Freedom*, February 11, 1817; "Weekly Summary," *Albany Plough Boy*, November 20, 1819; Diemer, *Politics of Black Citizenship*, 25.

⁴⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, Feb. 22, 1817. A third effort, driven in part by Robert Wright as a MD state legislator who pushed a resolution to Congress, failed narrowly in 1821: Easton (MD) *Republican Star*, Feb. 13, 1821; Bridgeton (NJ) *Washington Whig*, Jan. 28, 1822.

⁴⁵ *Scioto Gazette*, February 8, 1827; Polgar, *Standard-Bearers*, 276-307; Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 165-175; Jesse Torrey as an example of one who chooses colonization: *Boston Recorder*, June 16, 1818; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 193-94; "Advertisement." *New York Commercial Advertiser*, Feb. 22, 1817 Clay, "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings." *Boston Recorder and Telegraph*, December 9, 1825: 200; *Scioto (OH) Gazette*, February 8, 1827; Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, 17; see G. Barnes, *Anti-Slavery Impulse*, 36.

⁴⁶ "From the National Register." *National Advocate* (New York, New York), January 20, 1817.

⁴⁷ James Forten to Paul Cuffe, Jan. 15, 1816, Paul Cuffe Papers, New Bedford Free Public Library, https://www.westport-ma.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif7356/f/uploads/583.1817_from_james_forten.jpg [Although labeled as 1817, the date on the letter says 1816, and is postmarked January 15]; Van Gosse asserts that Forten and Cuffe did so; Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 189-91 is less definite on Forten's early support for colonization. 1821 constitution: "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings." *Spectator* (New York, New York), October 12, 1821.

⁴⁸ For Cuffe's life, see Lamont D. Thomas, *Rise to Be a People: a Biography of Paul Cuffe*, (Urbana, IL, 1986).

⁴⁹ *Poulson's American Advertiser*, January 10, 1817; Winch, *Gentleman*, 190. Even thinkers as precocious as W.E.B. DuBois, still young when he wrote the *Philadelphia Negro*, depicted Philly's free Black masses as a kind of criminal lumpenproletariat. James Forten to Paul Cuffe, January 28, 1817, Paul Cuffe Papers, https://www.westport-ma.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif7356/f/uploads/582.1816_from_john_cuffee_and_1817_james_forten.jpg

⁵⁰ Van Gosse argues that Black voting in Philadelphia declined not because of direct impediments to their presence at the poll, but because of elite Black accommodation of white racists. Yet Philadelphia's numerous instances of mass white violence in the first four decades of the 19th century seem to complicate this argument, and other scholars like Winch see a different picture. White hostility to the kinds of public political activity in which Black people had been able to engage in Northern cities in the late colonial era—for instance, the "Negro Election Day" festivals which led to the choosing of a "king"—was increasingly violent across the North.

⁵¹ Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 191; cf. Nash and Quarles.

⁵² First quote from Winch, 191; cf. Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 1-2, quoting from the *Emancipator*, June 30, 1835.

⁵³ Quoted in Egerton, “Its Origin,” 470; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 4-5.

⁵⁴ Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 190-195; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 1-4; Van Gosse is much more critical of Forten et al; cf. Richard B. Newman, *Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*, (New York, 2008)

⁵⁵ For the document text: *Minutes of the Proceedings of a Special Meeting of the Fifteenth American Convention For Promoting the Abolition of Slavery...* (Philadelphia, 1817), 69-72, cf. <https://www.blackfacts.com/fact/1817-j-forten-amp-russel-perrott-an-address-to-the-humane-and-benevolent-inhabitants-of-the-city-and-county-of-philadelphia> (accessed October 6, 2023); Quarles *Black Abolitionists*, 5. Quarles argues that the resolutions “An Address to the Humane and benevolent Inhabitants of the City and County of Philadelphia” come from the August 10 meeting at the Green Street Courthouse. His cites for that are a bit distant; the first is to a November 1819 issue of Niles’ National Register.

⁵⁶ Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Black: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*, (Cambridge, MA: 2005), 67-71.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 191.

⁵⁸ E.g. Winch, *Gentleman of Color*; 198-99; Wilder, *Covenant With Color*, 70-71; Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 2; *Providence Gazette*, Nov. 27, 1819; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 5-7; Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 141-142;; Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 240-42.

⁵⁹ Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*; Sinha, *Slaves’ Cause*; Harris, Hodges, others...1820s

⁶⁰ Wilder, *Covenant With Color*; Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*; Hodges, *Root and Branch* are among the essential works here; see P. Gabrielle Foreman, “Black Organizing, Print Advocacy, and Collective Authorship: The Long History of the Colored Conventions Movement,” 23-71 (qu. 58) and her rich list of citations form a comprehensive introduction and analysis of the convention movement. Spires, *The Practice of Citizenship: Black Politics and Print Culture in the Early United States*, (Philadelphia, 2019).

⁶¹ Cf. Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolition*; Susan Zaeske. “‘The South Arose as One Man’: Gender and Sectionalism in Antislavery Petition Debates, 1835-1845.” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12.3 (2009): 341–68; cf. Camp, *Closer to Freedom* on enslaved people’s potential access to antislavery materials. Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, argues that (white) abolitionists post-1831 agreed on two end goals: abolition of slavery and racial egalitarianism. This, in the long run, united them. We may be skeptical that all of them held the first as an end goal, but Kraditor also notes that means, the tactics and strategy for achieving the end, divided them. Such disagreements provided the basis for nearly endless schisms.

⁶² Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, and Caleb McDaniel, “The Bonds and Boundaries of Antislavery,” *JCWH* 4.1 (2014), 84-105 who contextualizes scholarship on antislavery, citing historians who’ve emphasized abolitionism’s Black mainstream. More recently cf. Sinha, *Slave’s Cause*, and Kellie Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, (Philadelphia, 2019) starts the story later but demonstrates that Black abolitionists consistently argued for direct action against slavery. One could argue that they won the argument, because starting after 1843 and especially after 1850, more and more white abolitionists began to agree with them. Cf. Charles H. Wesley, “The Negroes of New York in the Emancipation Movement,” *JNH* 24.1 (Jan. 1939), 15-40.

⁶³ See table in appendix, and *Boston Patriot & Daily Mercantile Advertiser*, January 19, 1820; *Niles’ Weekly Register*, Sept. 11, 1824; *Salem (MA) Gazette*, September 26, 1826; *Boston Saturday Morning Transcript*, April 5, 1834; *New-Bedford (MA) Mercury*, April 21, 1837; Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 120; Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 189-90 ; Gilje, *Road to Mobocracy* [??] 151. The history most focused on rescue attempts as a phenomenon is Churchill, *The Underground Railroad and the Geography of Violence*, 40-48. He has located some 35 “rescues” prior to 1838, many of which are among in the twenty I discuss here. Others are smaller-scale, or primarily involved whites in rural, often “upper North” settings, outraged by the high-handed and violent behavior of bounty hunters and kidnappers. Other historians who note these rescues include Drago, *Street Diplomacy* and Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*—while in neither case are the rescues their focus, their interpretations of Black activist abolitionism are far from antithetical to his one.

⁶⁴ *New York Commercial Advertiser*, Sept. 8, 1806; *New York American*, June 25, 1833; Horton and Horton, *In Hope*, 234-35; also cf. a family in Swedesboro, NJ that was not immediately freed by the attack of 40 Black men, but a judge did eventually set them free: *Philadelphia Freeman*, Dec. 17, 1836.

⁶⁵ This is the 1837 NYC case again: *New-Bedford (MA) Mercury*, April 21, 1837; *Boston Patriot & Daily Mercantile Advertiser*, January 19, 1820; *Niles Weekly Register*, Sept. 11, 1824; *Salem (MA) Gazette*, November 16, 1832; Suffolk County (Mass.) sheriff’s records; Criminal calendar: vol. 1 1814-1820 ; v. 2 1820-1823 (<https://tinyurl.com/3yuwhcmp>)

⁶⁶ See table in appendix.

⁶⁷ New-Bedford (MA) *Mercury*, April 21, 1837; Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 120.

⁶⁸ Salem (MA) *Gazette*, November 16, 1832; New York, *American*, June 25, 1833 (Detroit); Albany *Argus*, July 25, 1835 "From the Philadelphia Enquirer of Tuesday." New-Bedford (MA) *Mercury*, August 19, 1836 (Burlington); "A Grievous Outrage," Worcester *Massachusetts Spy*, September 18, 1839, Usually I wouldn't recommend Wikipedia, but Eddie Elliott, an undergraduate student of mine was inspired by hearing of the Marion "rescue" or "riot" and created a deeply researched entry for the case: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1839_Marion_riot.

⁶⁹ Munday: *Quarterly Abstracts of Seamen's Protection Certificates, New York, NY, 1815–1869*. Microfilm publication M2003, 2 rolls. Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36, NA; Jolley *Albany Argus*, August 4, 1835 [Jolley found in ancestry.com records1; the rest are from the Boston 1820-21 record cited above

⁷⁰ Brown, *Narrative*, (London, 1849), 115; Albany *Argus*, July 21, 1835.

⁷¹ Brown, *Narrative*, 118-24.

⁷² New York *Evening-Post*, Sept. 20, 21, Oct. 17, 1826; quoted: Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 189-90; Gilje, *Road to Mobocracy*, 151. Rioters got: one, 9 months; two, one year; and another, three years' hard labor.

⁷³ Erica Ball, *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politic and the Antebellum Black Middle Class*, (Athens, GA, 2012); Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*.

⁷⁴ Salem (MA) *Gazette*, Nov. 16, 1832.

⁷⁵ New York *American*, June 25, 1833; Salem (MA) *Gazette*, August 5, 1836; New-Bedford *Mercury*, April 21, 1837.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Narrative*, 110-123.

⁷⁷ *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), June 3, 1801; Worcester *Massachusetts Spy*, or *Worcester Gazette*, August 29, 1810; Albany *Argus*, August 4, 1835; Eventually, even a Richmond, Va. newspaper would admit Congo had helped frame the young woman. Richmond *Enquirer*, July 7, 1835. Grinstead, *American Mobbing*, 74; Alexandria (VA) *Gazette*, June 20, 1835. [cited source in this *AG* is Phil. *US Gazette*] At the same time on the same night "an immense crowd of colored people of both sexes" in the Northern Liberties was trying to free "two blacks [who] had been arrested as runaway slaves." Indeed they almost succeeded, and "were with great difficulty beaten off in their attempts to rescue the prisoners." *Alexandria Gazette*, *ibid*. Lengthy account in Drago, *Street Diplomacy*, 113-134.

⁷⁸ My tracking comes from ancestry.com searches, which gets censuses in particular. I'm still trying to parse through PA prison records, but have found no trace of these sentences.

⁷⁹ One of the contributions of this text could be to provide both support and a prequel to two works that showcase the shift, driven above all by Black abolitionists, towards an endorsement of antislavery force (and, if necessary, violence) to destroy slavery: Kellie Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, (Philadelphia, 2019); Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*.

⁸⁰ Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, argues that (white) abolitionists post-1831 agreed on two end goals: abolition of slavery and racial egalitarianism. This, in the long run, united them. We may be skeptical that all of them held the first as an end goal, but Kraditor also notes that means, the tactics and strategy for achieving the end, divided them. Such disagreements provided the basis for nearly endless schisms. Meyer, *All On Fire*, remains a sympathetic but comprehensive account of Garrison's conflicts, contradictions, and solidarities.

⁸¹ *Liberator*, Dec. 29, 1832; *ibid.*, July 6, 1833; New York *Emancipator*, May 20, 1834.

⁸² "Shock" reprinted in New York *American*, June 25, 1833; Newburyport (MA) *Herald*, Dec. 4, 1832; Albany *Argus*, July 25, 1835; *ibid.*, July 31, 1835

⁸³ New York *American*, June 25, 1833

⁸⁴ Reprinted in "The Negro." Washington (Pennsylvania) *Review and Examiner*, August 29, 1835.

⁸⁵ Richards, *Gentlemen of Property*, 26-30; Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 194-195; Lott, *Love and Theft*; Policing-by-mob protected white privileges, including privilege to define Black sexuality as white men's indulgence, to be kept under white authority. For instance, the *Courier and Enquirer*, *Gazette*, *Standard*, *Sun*, *Commercial Advertiser*, *Herald*, *Tribune*; quote from New York *American*, April 24, 1834; Churchill, *Underground Railroad*, 39-42

⁸⁶ New York *Spectator*, July 14, 1834; Harris, 197-98; Richards, 116-120; New York *Spectator*, July 14, 1834; Harris, 197-98; "Riot at Newark." *Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, July 14, 1834.

⁸⁷ Amber Moulton, "Closing the 'Floodgate of Impurity': Moral Reform, Antislavery, and Interracial Marriage in Antebellum Massachusetts." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3.1 (2013), 2–34; G. Smith Wormley, "Prudence Crandall," *JNH* 8.1 (1923), 72–80; Taylor, *Transportation Revolution*; Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*; Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor;

Kabria Baumgartner chapter in *Colored Conventions Movement*, 233-34; Cf. Richards, *Gentlemen*, 38; *Connecticut Journal*, 9/20, 1831-11/1/1831; Henry Taylor, *Race and the City*, 45-46

⁸⁸ *Washington Review and Examiner* (Washington, Pennsylvania), August 29, 1835

⁸⁹ Richard Bell, "'Principally Children': Kidnapping, Child Trafficking, and the Mission of Early National American Antislavery," *JAH* (June 2022), 46-67.

⁹⁰ Richards, *Gentlemen*, 117-19; *New York Spectator*, July 10, 1834.

⁹¹ "Incendiarism." *New York American*, July 10, 1834

⁹² *New York American*, July 13, 1834. Even some Black abolitionists felt forced to recant their participation in active antislavery efforts: Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., his church and home destroyed, publicly resigned from the executive committee of the AASS after saying that he'd only joined in order to slow down its efforts because he was worried that they might be going too fast for white public opinion to bear.

⁹³ Some texts get at these issues: Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy*, (Baton Rouge, 2010); Nell Irvin Painter, "Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth's Knowing and Becoming Known," *JAH* 81.2 (Sept. 1994), 461-92; Steven Kantrowitz, "A Place For Colored 'Patriots': Crispus Attucks Among the Abolitionists, 1842-1863," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 18 (2016), 190-212.

⁹⁴ P. Gabrielle Foreman, "Black Organizing, Print Advocacy, and Collective Authorship: The Long History of the Colored Conventions Movement," 23-71 (qu. 58) and her rich list of citations form a comprehensive introduction and analysis of the convention movement.

⁹⁵ Bonner, *Black Citizenship*; Drago, *Street Diplomacy*, 110-14

⁹⁶ Drago, *Street Diplomacy*, 156-65; Gosse, *First Reconstruction*; Eric Ledell Smith, "The End of Black Voting Rights in Pennsylvania: African-Americans and the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1837-1838," *PH* 65.3 (Summer 1998), 279-99; Wood, "Sacrifice on the Altar of Slavery," *JER* 31.1 (Spring 2011), 75-106; the to-be-published work of Sara Gronningsater is also anticipated.

⁹⁷ *New-York Morning Herald*, April 21, 1830; *Philadelphia Gazette*, April 5, 1834 [date?]; Boston Recorder, June 26, 1835; Grinstead, *American Mobbing*, 74; Drago, *Street Diplomacy*, 161-62, Nicholas Wood, "A Sacrifice on the Altar of Slavery," *ROC*; Eric Ledell Smith, "The End of Black Voting Rights in Pennsylvania: African-Americans and the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1837-1838," *PH* 65.3 (Summer 1998), 279-99.

⁹⁸ Drago, *Street Diplomacy*, 156-65; Gosse, *First Reconstruction*; Ledell Smith; Wood, "Sacrifice on the Altar of Slavery," *JER* 31.1 (Spring 2011), 75-106.

⁹⁹ Parker: 1830 census, also *Pennsylvania Freeman* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), May 10, 1838. Cf. Edward Magdol, *The Antislavery Rank and File: a Social Profile of the Abolitionists' Constituency*, (Westport, Conn, 1986).

¹⁰⁰ Dorothy B. Porter, "David Ruggles, an Apostle of Human Rights," *JNH* 28.1 (1943), 23-50; Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, 150; Wilson, *Freedom at Risk*, 111-14; Graham Gao Hodges, *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City*, (Chapel Hill, 2017), 63-165; Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, 211-12; Jamila Shabazz Braithwaite, "The Black Vigilance Movement in Nineteenth Century New York City," M.A. Thesis, CUNY, 2014, <https://bit.ly/3WeBcoo> (accessed Dec. 12, 2022); Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, (1855), 337-340; Jesse Olsavsky, "Runaway Slaves, Vigilance Committees, and the Pedagogy of Revolutionary Abolitionism, 1835-1863." In *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism, 1600-1850*, edited by Marcus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty, and Matthias van Rossum, 1st ed., 216-34. University of California Press, 2019.

¹⁰¹ Linda Brent [Harriet Jacobs], *Incidents in The Life of A Slave Girl*; Dorothy Porter, "David Ruggles: An Apostle of Human Rights," *JNH* 28.1 (1943), 23-50 ; Hodges, *David Ruggles*; for numbers cf. Boromé, "The Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia," *PMHB* 92.3 (1968), 320-5; Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*; see "Record of Cases Attended to for the Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia by the Agent." <http://www2.hsp.org/collections/manuscripts/v/VCPAm3375.html>;

¹⁰² Andrew K. Diemer, *Vigilance: the Life of William Still, Father of the Underground Railroad*, (New York, 2022) is a new Still biography; Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad*, (New York, 2015); Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*; Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom*, on William Cooper Nell; Jacqueline Jones, *No Right To An Honest Living*; Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen*, (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

¹⁰³ Antislavery history could just as easily offer context for how white participants in activist movements have crashed into internal barriers akin to those that blinded pre-Civil War white abolitionists: anticipation of leadership roles, unexamined racist expectations of Black people, reflexive denial of Black testimony, demands for statements in favor of white innocence, demands for comfort and praise.

¹⁰⁴ Bibb, 54; Brown, 1849, 72-73; Aaron, 14; Israel Campbell, 195-99.

¹⁰⁵ Harrold, *Border War*, 122-23.

¹⁰⁶ Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*; Kellie Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, (Philadelphia, 2019) starts the story later but demonstrates that Black abolitionists consistently argued for direct action against slavery. One could argue that they won the argument, because starting after 1843 and especially after 1850, more and more white abolitionists began to agree with them. Cf. Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*, and Caleb McDaniel, “The Bonds and Boundaries of Antislavery,” *JCWH* 4.1 (2014), 84-105 who contextualizes scholarship on antislavery, citing historians who’ve emphasized abolitionism’s Black mainstream. More recently cf. Sinha, *Slave’s Cause*; Wesley, “Negroes of New York.”

¹⁰⁷ Mark Neocleous, *A Critical Theory of Police Power: The Fabrication of Social Order*, (2d ed.: London, 2021); Markus Dirk Dubber, *The Police Power: Patriarchy and the Foundations of American Government*, (New York: Columbia UP, 2005; Novak, *People’s Welfare*; Wilbur R. Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870*, (2d ed., Columbus, OH, 1997). cf. Laura Edwards, *The People’s Peace*; Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*; Grégoire Chamayou, *Manhunts: A Philosophical History*.

¹⁰⁸ Quote from *New York American*, April 24, 1834; Churchill, *Underground Railroad and the geography of Violence*, 39-42; Harris, *Shadow of Slavery*, chapter on Irish and Black in antebellum New York, e.g.

¹⁰⁹ Salem (MA) *Gazette*, August 5, 1836, for this and the next two paragraphs.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor, *Colored Travelers: Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, 2016); Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, (Durham, 2013); cf. accounts of Black travel to commune with abolitionist allies in Europe, e.g. Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (New York, 2013).