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The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century

Sara C. Fanning

This article argues that Haiti played a far greater role in the cultural and political activities of northern free blacks than historians previously credited. The evolving political, economic and social makeup of Haiti during its first three decades of independence spurred African-American interest in the island-nation. Relying on American newspaper reports, sailors' accounts, messages from the state of Haiti, and where possible, African-American voices, this work demonstrates the emigration of the 1820s was not the first wave of African-American interest in the black republic but the culmination of decades of interaction and exposure to the Haitian black nationalist project.

The standard version of the genesis of American black nationalism rests on the white American Colonization Society's (ACS) aggressive efforts from 1817 onwards to send African Americans to Africa. Many historians argue this exclusionary action pushed northern free blacks from identifying with Africa to identifying with the United States, because they realized a connection with America when confronted with de facto deportation.¹ Certainly, the northern black community began replacing the formerly prevalent 'African'² moniker with 'colored' or 'black' in the wake of the ACS's efforts in the late 1810s.³ This position, however, assumes that the embrace of America was an offshoot of the rejection of Africa, thereby missing another cultural and political force at work at this early stage in the black-nationalist movement's formation – namely, Haiti.⁴

Between 6,000 and 13,000 African Americans from throughout the northeastern United States migrated to Haiti in the 1820s, the largest migration of African Americans up to this point in time.⁵ Haiti had long appealed to northern free blacks as

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an independent nation that espoused republican values of citizenship, equality and liberty; sought respect on the world stage; celebrated the blackness of its citizens; and publicly avowed black racial pride. The nation actively courted American free blacks, offering universal education, economic advancement, suffrage, religious freedom, and a society with a republican ideology.

Black Americans' identification with the free Republic of Haiti at the turn of the nineteenth century is obvious from demonstrations, speeches, parades, in the naming of institutions and, ultimately, in the mass emigration movement to the island. Popular references to the Haitian Revolution reveal a consciousness of the island-nation's affairs from its inception.⁶ These invocations suggest the deep links between Haiti and the black-nationalist project which embraced a black nation state rather than a return to Africa.⁷ Haiti, in many ways, was the black nation underpinning early American ideas of black nationalism.⁸ For African Americans, Haiti was a model of black military power, a defender of racial rights, and a land that opened its arms to them.

Much of the scholarly research on the intersection of Haiti and American blacks at this time looks from the Caribbean to the United States, rather than vice versa. One approach has been to trace influences of the Haitian Revolution on American slaves at this time.⁹ Scholars have linked the major slave rebellions of the era to the events in the Caribbean: *Ponte Coupee Conspiracy* (1795), *Gabriel's Conspiracy* (1800), *Charles Deslondes Revolt* (1811), the *Denmark Vesey Conspiracy*, (1822) and *Nat Turner's Rebellion* (1831) have all been sounded out for echoes of the *Black Jacobins*.¹⁰ Historians have demonstrated how news carried by refugees fleeing the revolution and sailors engaged in the carrying trade between the island and the United States found its way to slave populations along the eastern seaboard.¹¹

Eugene Genovese argues that by abolishing slavery and overthrowing the French army in a violent and protracted war from 1791 to 1804, the Haitian Revolution created a new era in which slaves 'increasingly aimed not at secession from the dominant society but at joining in on equal terms'.¹² The republican ideas brought forth and articulated – of equality and liberty for all – revolutionized the possibilities of life after freedom for slaves and for descendants of Africa throughout the world.¹³ I would extend this argument: when they fought for and won freedom from slavery, Haitians directly challenged ideas of white military supremacy and the notion that freed slaves and free people of color were incapable of sustaining independence. They changed the possibilities not only for militant slaves, as Genovese has posited, but for politicized free blacks.¹⁴

This propensity to focus on the antislavery legacy of the Haitian Revolution and its significance to the slave system has caused historians to overlook another group of descendants of Africa in the Americas – the growing free black population of the United States. The final chapter of the revolution, Haitian nationhood, was a radical precedent for this group, too. For free blacks, the establishment and progress of Haiti as an independent black nation marked a political and cultural milestone, just as the Haitian Revolution did for rebelling American slaves. Formerly, the only available form of advancement, or route to power, was secession from the western world of independent

nation states and return to 'primitive' Africa; Haiti represented a chance to compete in the same hemisphere as the western nations on an equal footing.¹⁵

Recently, historians have dismissed Haiti's influence in the northern African-American community's social and cultural development.¹⁶ Haiti, they argue, had little to offer the project of black advancement because the revolution was too grotesquely violent a legacy for northern African Americans to embrace in political agitation against slavery. But for northern African Americans who were already free or in the process of negotiating their manumission, the Haitian Revolution went beyond the aegis of abolitionism. Many free black northerners observed the island republic with a sense of pride in its accomplishments, using the island as a rallying cry in their own increasingly separatist causes. Some even finally joined the Haitians in the 1820s, seeking to bring the project of black nationalism to its full realization – a black nation state for all descendants of Africa.

In the United States, northern African Americans faced a society that was unprepared to respect their rights once free. Many northern free blacks subscribed to American republican sensibilities but were faced with a society retreating from its own revolutionary promises. This retreat took place throughout northern cities during the first decade of the 1800s, characterized by open hostility towards free blacks evident in street violence, the loss of suffrage rights, and the enactment of laws to curb freedom of movement.¹⁷ In Pennsylvania from 1805 to 1814, state legislatures repeatedly attempted to pass laws restricting free blacks from traveling into the state, proposed all free blacks be required to register freedom certificates, and even discussed auctioning free blacks convicted of crimes as slaves in order to give 'compensation [to] the people they may have plundered'.¹⁸ Although these proposals never passed into law, the African-American community felt the rising tide of racial persecution acutely.

Both as a response to the rising racism and the violence that accompanied it, African Americans of this period gravitated toward exclusive community institutions such as schools, churches and Masonic lodges. These institutions sprang up throughout the northern and mid-Atlantic port cities of Philadelphia, Boston, Newport, New Haven, New York and Baltimore. As people withdrew into black communities, they refused to be passive victims of the developing racial language but chose to embrace the language of color and increasingly defined themselves by the color of their skin. By designating themselves by the color of their skin, they hoped to unify against white oppression and racism.¹⁹

This emerging black identity was not based on an essentialist or biological notion of difference but was characterized by shared political and cultural goals – autonomy, independence, and freedom of movement unrestrained by a white majority.²⁰ Some African Americans believed these goals could only be fulfilled through the establishment of a black-ruled dominion. As Haiti increasingly identified and advertised itself as a home for displaced African people and a refuge from racial prejudice, African Americans took notice.

Newspapers were a major source of information for the African-American community and they were filled with reports about Haiti and Haitian leaders. As Jeffrey Pasley

asserts, newspaper content was widely circulated, because the papers were often read to large groups of people in taverns, coffee houses, oyster bars, dance clubs and hotels.²¹ In these settings, news about Haiti would have passed to African Americans previously thought to have little exposure or opportunity to learn about Haiti. Public proclamations, discussion of prominent figures, description of the 'progress' of the island, and the amount of trade made up primary subjects of discussion in the news reports of the island. Even reports that focused on trade offered accounts of Haiti's government and current events as context.

After the international stir created by its bloody birth, the world kept an eye on the island in the Caribbean. For many blacks and whites, St. Domingue/Haiti became a litmus-test experiment for the capabilities of the African race. Haitians themselves saw their independence and nationhood as proof of 'African regeneration', of racial uplift, and of racial equality.²² Aware that their activities were under scrutiny and would affect their billing on the world stage of nation-states, Haitian leaders publicized the nation-building progress to the 'family of nations' in Europe and the United States and made extensive use of public forums in a decades-long media campaign, which extended to newspapers that circulated among the African-American community.

Even before the declaration of Haitian nationhood, northern African Americans took an interest in the affairs of the island. The earliest surviving example comes from Prince Hall's famous *A Charge to African Masons* delivered to his Boston African Masonic Lodge. The Lodge became the leading black community institution in Boston. It provided mutual aid – a form of cooperative insurance – as well as funerary services to its members. The Boston African Lodge later became the Grand Lodge of African Freemasonry that chartered branches in Providence, Philadelphia and New York City. In *A Charge*, Hall identified himself and his audience strongly with the island of Haiti, foreshadowing black-nationalist ideas of the common bonds of the African diaspora. In this address, Hall linked the struggle for racial uplift to the freedom struggles of Haitians in terms that imply his audience was familiar with the fortunes of the slaves in the Caribbean:

My brethren, let us not be cast down under these and many other abuses we at present labour under: for the darkest is before the break of day. My brethren, let us remember what a dark day it was with our African brethren six years ago in the French West Indies. Nothing but the snap of the whip was heard from morning to evening . . .²³

Here Hall uses the uprising in St. Domingue to steel his fellow black Bostonians against the insults they were 'daily met with in the streets of Boston.'²⁴ He reminds his fellow Masons and his wider Boston audience (for his speeches were published) that not only could circumstances be worse, they could improve overnight, as was the case in St. Domingue. This codified message may have been a salve to a black community confronting an increasingly hostile Boston environment that had given them freedom from slavery but little else.²⁵

The palpable connection with Haiti felt by some African Americans was soon expressed – loudly – in Philadelphia. Unlike Hall's message, however, the Haitian

lesson cited this time was one not of passive patience but of armed militancy. On at least one occasion in Philadelphia in 1804, African Americans responded to racist abuse in American streets with collective violence. During the July 4th celebration, in the same year Haiti declared its independence, a few hundred black Philadelphians gathered in the Southwark district, formed into military units, elected officers, and armed themselves with bludgeons to march through the city's streets in a counter-celebration of July 4th. When a white person crossed their path they gave 'rough treatment' to that person, according to one account. One unit even entered a household of white men and 'pummeled' them. The next day, July 5th, the marchers gathered again, 'damning' any white person who came near them and declaring, 'they would shew them St. Domingo'. By using St. Domingue as their rallying cry, these black Philadelphians showed that the Haitian Revolution had taken on an emblematic role for the nascent black-nationalist movement.²⁶

As Haiti developed from a state of upheaval to fully-fledged sovereignty, its attractions for the free black community went beyond the symbolic to the material. Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haitian independence in 1804 and with the writing of the Haitian Constitution in 1805 created the first 'black republic'. With an executive, legislative, and judicial branch, Haiti's governmental forms resembled the United States' system of governance – a fact that would not have been lost on African-American observers.²⁷

Through its constitution, Haiti explicitly defined itself as a universal black homeland. By issuing his Constitution, Dessalines established a direct link to the French and American governmental traditions of a written set of rights for his nation. In the Constitution, all citizens of Haiti would be known henceforth as blacks – *noirs*, regardless of the color their skin. Dessalines' decision to equate being white with being French, or an enemy of the state, conferred the honorific *noir* or *negre* on Poles, Germans and other Europeans who had fought for Haiti or were considered friends of the new regime.²⁸ The Constitution also precluded all whites from owning land or running a plantation again in Haiti, so that it was, *de jure*, a black nation. Dessalines' axiom of Haitians as black fell in line with the prevailing idea of how nations were constituted, and helped him wage an ideological battle against white supremacy.²⁹ In an era of increased racial consciousness, Haiti's assertion was the most aggressive stance taken by a nation-state towards a racialized identity.³⁰

Pragmatically, Dessalines attempted to bring all descendants of Africa under the racial banner of blackness, seeking to find common ground between two contentious social groups. The tensions and outright armed conflict between mulattoes and blacks threatened independence and the rule of law from the beginning of his tenure. His most famous 1804 'Liberty or Death' Proclamation addresses the false divide between 'Blacks and Yellows', blaming Europeans for the split and demanding the differences were settled among 'you, who are now consolidated, and make but one family'.³¹ He spoke directly about the need for the island's factions to unite together and to live harmoniously. Unity, he said, was 'the secret of being invincible'. The new 'blackness' of the population has been read as Dessalines' attempt at universalizing Haiti's national identity and abolishing the color divide permanently.

It subverted the light supremacy that had prevailed in Haiti in intellectual and philosophical thought, used in the past to justify racial slavery. Unity across shades and classes was a subject that also concerned African Americans, who would have read or heard discussed excerpts of Dessalines' speeches in the newspapers.

American policy towards the new republic in the Caribbean shifted dramatically once Thomas Jefferson became President. Jefferson, whose ideas of black inferiority were well known, at first believed the island held great promise for the United States, especially to southern slave states as a place to exile insubordinate slaves.³² Eventually, however, Jefferson feared that a powerful black nation in the Caribbean would become a rival and perpetuate a race war in the United States, resulting in the 'extermination of one or the other race'.³³ Determined to eliminate American exposure to Haiti, Jefferson imposed a general embargo against all trade with Haiti, two years before the passage of the Embargo of 1806. Scholars who study Jefferson debate his true motive in destroying the relationship between the United States and Haiti. Some argue that the specter of large-scale slave resistance, like Gabriel's Conspiracy, brought home to Jefferson how dangerous the St. Domingue example could be to American slave masters.³⁴ Others believe that Jefferson's overriding ambition to secure Louisiana and Florida drove him to embrace Napoleon's friendship and his abandonment of Louverture and Haiti.³⁵ But he may have had less generous motives. Perhaps the writer of the Declaration of Independence, who once referred to the blacks of Haiti as 'the Cannibals of the terrible republic', was uncomfortable with Africans possessing the same republican ideology and philosophical outlook as the white republic.³⁶ Jefferson recognized the connection between black nationalist thought in the United States with Haiti and feared it. The attention of the United States' most influential statesman of the time is testament to Haiti's politicization of African Americans.

Jefferson's ban on trade with the island brought a tremendous outcry from merchants and sailors alike. American merchants made tremendous profits outfitting Louverture's military with arms, ammunition and food supplies. Throughout the 1790s, the United States' willingness to trade without reservation allowed the revolutionaries under Louverture to consider independence from France. In one year alone, more than 600 American ships were involved in the trade between the island and the United States and throughout much of this period, Haitian trade was considered a valuable market for American finished goods and raw commodities. Haitian markets continued to be of great importance to Americans as British colonial ports in the Caribbean remained off limits to American traders until 1830.³⁷

With the restoration of commercial ties between the two nations in 1810, American merchants resumed brisk trade with Haiti. In those four years, however, the British merchants had negotiated favorable trading terms that continued even after the opening of the American market. Americans watched impotently as British traders enjoyed substantially lower trading duties on products. As one writer complained, 'they [the British] are obliged to pay only one half the duties that are extracted from our merchants'.³⁸ In an effort to win the same concessions, American merchants and their agents showered newspapers throughout the northeast with news and information about Haiti, arguing for the United States to recognize the Caribbean nation or

treat the black nation's governments with proper respect.³⁹ They hoped these public discussions would persuade Haitian leaders to provide trade concessions that would match those given to British merchants.

Inadvertently, the white traders were extolling Haiti's virtues as a black nation.⁴⁰ One noted how Haiti's expansion into Santo Domingo would 'enhance the Government of the country ... in the estimation of all nations'. Another commentator noted how the Haitian government's legislation offered 'the protections afforded to persons and property ... [found] in the oldest, the most commercial, and best ordered governments of the *white* world'. Another editor stated, 'blacks of this island so increase as to take a rank among nations, with talents, skill and force to cause their rights to be respected'.⁴¹ Of course there was negative coverage of Haiti, but it may have been outweighed by American merchants advocating for Haitian recognition in the major newspapers of the day.⁴²

In 1807, the first cracks in the young nation's image emerged in newspapers when Dessalines' assassination was reported. Tensions between mulattoes and blacks in Haiti boiled over into a civil war. Battles ensued between the two camps, one headed by black-skinned Henry Christophe, Dessalines' successor, and the other by the mulatto Alexandre Petion, a military hero and wealthy planter, culminating in a stand-off where each leader declared himself the 'true' leader of Haiti. In reality, two Haitis coexisted after the conflict: the Kingdom of Haiti under Christophe's rule in the north; and the southern and western Republic of Haiti under Petion.⁴³

Like Dessalines before them, Christophe and Petion sought the most legitimizing forms of government to connote dignity and inspire respect for each half of the new nation. Both Petion and Christophe based their constitutions on Dessalines' version but included laws and rules specific to their own conception of Haiti's national spirit and the situation each encountered as rulers. Petion specifically modified his Constitution in 1816. Culturally, Petion gravitated towards French customs and manners while Christophe leaned towards the British. Separately, they affirmed the constitutional provisions that made Haiti a black nation – decrees that no white man could own property or land in Haiti.⁴⁴

Few institutions from the colonial era survived into the national period.⁴⁵ To move the society towards equality and liberty for all as the revolutionaries pledged, the first-generation leaders – Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Alexandre Petion, and Henry Christophe – had to build institutions of their own, from scratch. In addition to the new governing system, institutions such as custom houses, schools, public presses, and the establishment of a national guard were part of the new leaders' to-do lists. For a black person of that period, this nation building must have appeared a particularly worthy and exciting enterprise. Christophe and Petion framed nation building in terms of choice of governance, education as racial uplift, and independence from the great powers, making Haiti a political paragon and an attractive destination for African Americans frustrated with the United States.⁴⁶ With their constitutions duly declared, Christophe and Petion set about establishing the necessary components of nationhood and securing their hold on power. They both had to find trading partners, roll out institutions and government structures, continue the land reforms proposed by

Dessalines, and arm the country in preparation for a potential future French attack. Militarily, both leaders amassed standing armies and created navies – to defend themselves against foreign invasions and against each other. Despite seconding and reiterating the assurances made by Dessalines to foreign powers that Haiti had no desire in ‘making of conquests’ or ‘troubling the peace and the internal regime of foreign colonies’, foreign powers continued to distrust the motives of Haitian leaders, especially when foreign sailors were actively recruited to man Haiti’s naval ships.⁴⁷

In what could be described as the first black-nationalist initiative, Haitians actively worked towards moving African Americans to Haiti for both political and economic reasons. American sailors were on the front lines of the recruiting efforts, which started in newspapers throughout the northern United States. Dessalines publicly offered American ship captains forty dollars for every African American they brought to Haiti. Realizing he needed to repopulate Haiti in the wake of wars that killed as much as a quarter of the island’s inhabitants, Dessalines believed an emigration scheme of blacks from the United States would be good for Haiti and its future. It would bolster Haiti’s population and secure skilled manpower and military personnel against a possible foreign invasion. Although no data suggests any African Americans were transported, Dessalines’ proposal suggests he held an expansive notion of Haiti’s national identity that encompassed other blacks from other countries.⁴⁸ Dessalines offered to buy African slaves bound for Jamaica from British slavers to set them free.⁴⁹

Following Dessalines’ example, Petion and Christophe saw African Americans as a resource for populating the island, strengthening the economy, and manning its naval ships. Both made several efforts during their decade-long battle for supremacy over the island to attract African American sailors to their shores and offered some favorable incentives. Christophe used his agent Joseph R. E. Bunel, formerly Louverture’s treasurer, to recruit sailors in Philadelphia and used both British and American sailors to sail his first ships. Petion offered black sailors, whether British or American, citizenship if they moved to the island, on the condition that they served aboard his naval ships.⁵⁰ Looking abroad for American sailors to man naval ships was both practical and ideological as enslaved and free African Americans were deeply involved in the maritime trade of the United States. As many as 750 black American seamen sailed to Haiti in one year alone, and a disproportionate number of these sailors came from northern cities, where maritime work employed more than 40% of male African-American workers.⁵¹

American black sailors were suspected of manning Haitian ships to attack Spanish, French and Portuguese slave ships engaged in clandestinely importing slaves from Africa into their South American and Caribbean colonies. American sailors served as sailors on some of Christophe’s first ships in the early 1810s. African Americans, it was believed by both white Americans and Haitian politicians since Dessalines, would pledge allegiance en masse to Haiti and its project of defending the rights of black people.

Black sailors were also crucial conduits of nascent black-nationalist ideas, facilitating unmediated exchange of information with the island-nation.⁵² When Paul Cuffee, son of the famous black sea captain of the same name, traveled to Haiti from Boston in

1812, he did so to trade in the lucrative Haitian market and to see for himself the Haitian republic. While in port, one of the sailors on board Cuffee's ship marveled in his diary at a military procession led by General Jean Pierre Boyer. He wrote, 'They appeared to understand military tactics to perfection. They were elegantly dressed in red frocks and trousers, faced with blue and green . . . On the whole they were first-rate soldiers. Boyer was most superbly dressed and equipped, and on horseback made an elegant appearance.'⁵³ Haiti was militaristic in its national consciousness, and this too was impressive to the African-American audience who mounted military processions in their own public celebrations.⁵⁴

These military ceremonies were often remarked upon by observers and would have peppered the news about the island that sailors passed onto landlubbers. In a widely circulated newspaper, *Niles' Weekly Register*, a report of a parade celebrating the re-election of Petion to president describes how 'with grand military parade. . .10,000 men in arms officiated on the occasion.'⁵⁵ The militarized landscape of the two Haitis provided a sense of security to the Haitian people and may have impressed the black Americans. The thirteen-year war against France, the repeated warfare between rival chiefs and would-be leaders, as well as the persistent specter of French invasion contributed to this militaristic demeanor and were believed to be motivating forces in some African Americans' desire to travel to Haiti.

W. Jeffrey Bolster shows how black sailors benefited from Haitian policies. One policy that proved especially advantageous and doubtless stirred feelings of identification with the island among enslaved African-American sailors was that of recognizing the freedom of all black people regardless of nationality. It is unclear how many sailors saw Haiti as a haven to obtain their freedom. They often used Haitian policy to improve their working conditions – captains complained that many black sailors deserted to find better ships to work on while in Haitian ports.⁵⁶ African Americans who learned of the freedom afforded to black men would have looked upon the island-nation as a land where liberty was available to them in deed as well as word. The net result was that Haiti gained a reputation as a place blacks throughout the hemisphere could seek as a refuge in their fight to attain freedom and better living conditions.

As neither Petion nor Christophe was able to barter a recognition deal for Haiti from France, or from any other country, they focused instead on the internal organization of their dominions. They believed these internal improvements would prove their worthiness to join the family of nations.⁵⁷ An element of competition between the two leaders also underlay these efforts. During the 1810s, both Petion and Christophe erected public monuments, buildings and other public works; both men ennobled themselves with grand titles of state to project power and authority; and both men opened up national schools and public presses in large towns and cities that were translated and published in English-language newspapers in the United States and England.

Christophe, more so than Petion, took advantage of the public space of letters and sought out opportunities both for himself and for his administrators to publicize his nation-building activities in the African-American community. In a bundle of

documents published in Philadelphia in 1811, he defended the monarchy he established as the ‘mode of government, suitable to the people’s wishes’, and claimed that ‘the example of the United States, which are governed by a President, cannot change our opinion with respect to the insufficiency of the title.’⁵⁸ Similar debate in the United States surrounded the assurance of respect and dignity for the President.⁵⁹

Promoting the dignity of the kingdom on the world stage remained a goal of Christophe’s throughout his reign. Administrators in the kingdom were encouraged to publish material about the Haitian nation in the United States and in England on behalf of their king. Prince Saunders, one of the first northern African American civic and intellectual leaders to live in Haiti, had been a Bostonian schoolteacher before moving to Haiti to work as an education administrator in Christophe’s kingdom.⁶⁰ At the recommendation of London’s African Institute, Saunders began working in Haiti in 1816 and quickly found his footing as a publicist with the publication of *Haytian Papers* (1816), a collection of official proclamations and documents from Christophe’s kingdom. First published in London and then revised and published in a different format in Boston, this inside view of the kingdom of Christophe and of the Haitian people, economy and society was an act of public relations.⁶¹

Baron de Vastey, another public figure in Haiti who published books and pamphlets that were translated into English, defended Christophe’s kingdom, detailed the progressive treatment Christophe’s subjects received, and attacked the racist ideology that supported slavery and racial inequality.⁶² One of de Vastey’s works, *Reflections*, reviewed in English-language publications on both sides of the Atlantic, revealed his feelings about color prejudice: ‘All nations have their prejudices: we esteem black a handsomer colour than white . . . As to beauty, it consists in elegance of form, and regularity of features; and in this view of the subject we conceive of ourselves equally favoured with the white.’⁶³ His evident pride in being black and assertions that blacks were the equal of whites in beauty must have been welcomed by an African-American community defending themselves against racial stereotypes and the erosion of their right to citizenship.⁶⁴ De Vastey’s pride in Haiti was evident with statements such as ‘[the land] where the black man may lift his head’; and, ‘Let the enemies of the blacks tell if they can of a people situated as we have been, who have done greater things, and in the short time of one quarter of a century,’ which were widely quoted in American newspapers.⁶⁵ As the editor of the *North American Review* wrote in his review of De Vastey’s *Reflexions*, ‘Now we consider all this to be proof, which cannot be set aside or evaded, of the capacity of blacks for improvement; for however imperfect might be the national schools and colleges, the mere establishment of such institutions indicated good sense in the people . . . to be tokens of approaching civilization in Hayti.’⁶⁶ These remarks of improvement among Haitians would not have gone unnoticed by the African-American audience who were themselves living in a society who increasingly assumed African-American dependency was based on physical and mental inferiority.⁶⁷

As the De Vastey publication makes clear, the educational systems set up by Petion and Christophe were heavily publicized in the newspapers and publications of the day and surely a selling point among African Americans who as a community went to great

pains to educate themselves.⁶⁸ In a New Year's Day speech, Christophe publicized how highly he valued education: 'To form good citizens we must educate our children. From our national institutions will proceed a race of men capable of defending their knowledge and talents. . . .'⁶⁹ Preempting the sentiments of modern state founders, Christophe placed great emphasis on education for the nation's people and looked to education as a passport for Haiti into the family of nations.

As reported in the leading American newspapers, Christophe's educational programs pushed English as well as French reading and writing. In one paper's report on the progress of the Cape Henry school, the children's English was so proficient after three months they could already 'read the Bible in English.'⁷⁰ Christophe also flirted with changing the state religion from Roman Catholic to Protestant as well as with making the kingdom's official language English rather than French. The adoption of English would have mitigated fears of cultural alienation among prospective American emigrants. The move also suggests an internationalist bent, such as later black nationalists adopted, although Christophe's stated aim sounded more Anglophiliac: 'changing the manners and habits of my citizens, which until now preserve those of the French and replacing them with the manners of habits of the English.'⁷¹ Christophe's admiration for English culture and social structures derived in part from the antislavery activities of the English in abolishing the Atlantic slave trade and in part to the reality of the diplomatic situation.⁷² Many African Americans admired the British and characterized them as true liberators who eliminated the Atlantic slave trade in 1808, an enormous cause of celebration in the African-American community.

Petion also made education and cultural institutes a priority and was quoted as saying education 'raises man to the dignity of his being.'⁷³ In his 1816 Constitution, Petion, in Article 36, mandated that free primary-school education be available to all citizens. In an era when universal education was unheard of, both Christophe's and Petion's educational agenda were distinguishing marks for their dominions and an added attraction to African Americans who saw in Haiti similar efforts to uplift.

With the issuance and publication of his 1816 Constitution, a revision of the 1806 Constitution, Petion finally took his place in the public space of letters Christophe had dominated for so long. The Constitution was a great work of publicity and its effect was immediately apparent on the African-American community. The constitution, like so many other Haitian proclamations and publications of the time, was printed and published in the United States.⁷⁴ Petion's newest laws were the granting of citizenship rights to all Africans and Native Americans after 1 year (Article 44), religious toleration (Article 49), and free education (Article 36).

Overall, the changes taking place in the two Haitis throughout the 1810s in extending citizenship rights to Native Americans and Africans, offering religious tolerance, if not religious change, contemplating English as the official language, granting universal education to all citizens, as well as bold avowals of color pride and evident pride of nation may well have made American blacks consider the idea of Haiti as a possible future home even before emigration to the island was actively promoted formally by Haitian leaders.

Petion's Constitution was also explicitly advertised in the United States with the eye-catching 'For the Information of the People of Color' in a widely circulated newspaper, *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*. Printed by James Tredwell, who had recently traveled to the Republic and discussed the possibility of African-American emigration with officials in Petion's administration, the publication also included a bundle of documents that transcribed the meeting between Tredwell and Joseph Balthazar Inginac, Secretary-General of the Republic. The transcript and letters accompanying the Constitution stated clearly Haiti's commitment to being a refuge for African Americans.⁷⁵

Petion, under the mistaken belief that the ACS was forcibly transporting African Americans to Africa, offered Haiti 'with open arms'.⁷⁶ Africa, he writes, 'whence we all derive our origin', had been 'rendered altogether a foreign country' because of 'our civilization'. This letter, in addition to extracts from the republic's constitution, was reprinted in the *Niles' Weekly Register*.⁷⁷ Inginac urges the emigrants to 'abandon an ungrateful country' to come to a 'country firmly organized, and enjoy the rights of Citizens of Hayti, of happiness and peace'. Settling in Haiti would show 'white men that there yet exists coloured and black men who can raise a fearless front, secured from insult and from injury', and Petion promised the emigrants 'little difference in our manner of living from that of the places they shall leave'.⁷⁸

In addition to declaring what a political statement migrating to Haiti would make to the world, details of the economic opportunities in the republic were given with the weekly income a skilled worker (six to twelve dollars) and farmers (two to four dollars) could expect. Haiti's profile as an emigrant destination was rising and reached new heights and wider audiences with the 1816 Constitution and once Christophe decided to advertise directly to the northern black community through his agent, Prince Saunders.

Prince Saunders, dispatched on a speaking tour in the United States, was well versed in advertising the kingdom to a wider world audience through the publication of *Haytian Papers*. Proposed by Thomas Clarkson, the British abolitionist, as the best method to gain American recognition of his kingdom, Christophe's emigration scheme was conceived by its designers as a diplomatic feint rather than as a black-nationalist movement.⁷⁹ His abiding goal was the security, recognition, and uplift of his people, Haitians. Nevertheless, Saunders excelled at promoting Haiti and spoke to the Augustinian Society, a Philadelphia African-American elite group, about the Haitian progress under Christophe, and again to the American Convention for the Abolition of Slavery late in 1818, claiming hundreds were waiting to emigrate from New England and the Middle States.⁸⁰ Before Christophe's emigration scheme could be set in motion, however, the king committed suicide in the face of a rebellion, ending Saunders' formal plan of using Christophe's ships and \$25,000 to transport the emigrants to the island. In the meantime, Jean-Pierre Boyer had become President of the Republic of Hayti in 1818 after Petion died from natural causes and subsequently the President of a united Haiti after Christophe's death in 1820.⁸¹

Boyer was already a celebrated figure among African Americans when he acceded to the presidency. In 1812, the first New York African Masonic Lodge opened under the

name of the Boyer Lodge. When the New York Prince Hall Masons established the lodge, Boyer was a well-known general and leader in the Republic of Haiti in charge of the Port-au-Prince region; he may already have been a prominent Mason in Haiti.⁸² With this choice of lodge name, the cultural and political connection between northern black communities and Haiti become obvious. When New Yorkers and the rest of the African Masons chose to honor Boyer in 1812 it was a conspicuous public tribute to Haiti and the Haitian military leader.⁸³

Boyer, born in St. Domingue to a white father and an African slave mother, was educated in France and served in the French republican army fighting French royalist forces who rejected the rights granted to the free people of color by the French Republic. Boyer returned to Haiti to fight Louverture and his black army with General Rigaud's forces. Boyer fled the island with hundreds of mulattoes once Louverture became commander of the territory. En route to France, Boyer's ship was captured by American privateers and he spent time in the United States in the home of New England Quakers.⁸⁴ The links Boyer forged during his stay in the United States may also have motivated him in his emigration offers.

When he started advertising in US newspapers in 1820 and 1821 for emigrants to come to Haiti,⁸⁵ Boyer had two principal motives: he hoped the American emigration scheme would both stimulate the economy and win American recognition of his government.⁸⁶ In one newspaper article, Boyer emphasized 'the astonishing fertility of the soil, which makes it the garden of the western archipelago', where the laws of the country because of 'our wise constitution . . . insures a free country to Africans and their descendants.' Believing the guiding hand of 'Providence has destined Hayti for a land of promise, a sacred asylum, where our unfortunate brethren will, in the end, see their wounds healed by the balm of equality, and their tears wiped away by the protecting hand of liberty',⁸⁷ Boyer was selling Haiti hard to African Americans. This campaign failed to bring the expected number of emigrants and Boyer, preoccupied by French threats of an attack, lost interest.

Haiti's continued ostracism on the international stage – no country would recognize its right to exist and many nations hampered Haiti's right to demand prime rates of exchange – compounded the economic and social situation. In the decades of warfare and the internal discontent following independence, the loss of life and property stalled the island's economic growth and jeopardized its social stability. In particular, Boyer faced a tough diplomatic climate in his relations with France. Relations were at such a low point with the former colony that the American presses reported that an invasion of the island was imminent. Those who kept abreast of Caribbean affairs knew of the suspicions and rumors bandied about of Haitians agitating for slave insurrections in its neighboring island's societies. These suspicions reached an apex in the winter of 1823 when a threatened Martinique slave insurrection was blamed on the direct involvement of Haitian freedom fighters. France, believing Boyer and Haiti were meddling in its colony's affairs, swore military revenge. Boyer attempted in vain to dissolve the tensions diplomatically and denied any responsibility. These tensions came to a head in February 1824 when Boyer ordered his national guard to be 'completely organized without delay'. Further

reports on activities in Haiti noted that ‘new towns are built in the interior on the summits of the highest mountains for women and children; provision and ammunition are already stored there . . . in case the proposed treaty [with France] should only be a veil to conceal an expedition against them.’⁸⁸ Observers of the time believed the inexorable slide toward war with France enhanced the island’s attractiveness to potential emigrants: ‘there are, colored men who would glory in an opportunity . . . to be placed upon the bulwark that stood between Gallic oppression & Haytien liberty’. Since the earliest days of Haitian independence it was understood that black Americans would be willing to defend Haiti against outside invasion.⁸⁹

Believing African Americans relished the opportunity to defend Haiti against the French and battle white domination, one *United States Gazette* observer argued that participation in Haiti’s war would bolster free blacks’ claim ‘to share in all the advantages [in Haiti] which their valour and constancy insured.’⁹⁰ Through warfare African Americans could defend Haiti and demonstrate that they were worthy of becoming Haitian citizens. The potential French attack was avoided when Boyer opened up negotiations and reached a final agreement in April of 1825 to a treaty promising to pay France an enormous indemnity of 150 million francs that also granted trade concessions in exchange for French recognition of Haiti’s independence.

In negotiations with France, Boyer once again could focus on African-American emigration to the island. This time – emulating Christophe and Prince Saunders – he sent his emissary Jonathas Granville to the United States on a speaking tour in the summer of 1824.⁹¹ In his speaking tour, Granville spoke of Haiti as a refuge from America’s inequalities and racism, while highlighting the values the two nations shared.⁹² Boyer also promised land, agricultural tools, wages, and freedom of religion to the would-be emigrants. In order to help the process along, Boyer sent 50,000 lbs of coffee with Granville to be sold for money to fund transportation costs – Boyer was hiring ship captains to ferry emigrants to Haiti. Undoubtedly the idea of paying the emigrants’ passage was modeled on Saunders’ earlier plan under Christophe.

In the United States, Haytian Emigration Societies by groups of Quakers and others – both blacks and whites – were formed to support the emigration scheme.⁹³ Little is known about the black organization except for some of the prominent leaders – Richard Allen, Peter Williams, and James Forten. Among the white members were disillusioned former members of the American Colonization Society, who had become disenchanted with the failure of the society to send African Americans to Africa. These societies took notices out in newspapers about the new scheme, and news items featuring Haytian Emigration Societies popped up throughout the northeast in the major cities of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.⁹⁴ Outlets for the societies became the leading purveyors of information to prospective settlers, in addition to Granville’s public tour. Richard Allen, Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, allowed Granville to use his church to publicize Boyer’s offer.

Boyer and Granville both used evocative language that promised ‘descendants of Africans, who groan in the United States in misery and humiliation, an asylum, where [you] have the means of enjoying the invaluable rights of equal laws and

citizenship'.⁹⁵ Boyer pledged to African Americans they would be welcomed as 'brothers' and that Haiti was a 'mother' and an 'asylum' to all descendants of Africa. Combining the newspaper tracts about recognition and Boyer's appealing offers of settlement, the cumulative message was of a fiercely independent republican nation that welcomed blacks, and advocated abolition (Boyer re-emancipated Santo Domingo's slaves when he conquered the Spanish colony). Further, they promised freedom of religion, and unity under a popular ruler, President Boyer.⁹⁶

The descriptions of Haiti evoked by Boyer and Granville would have appealed to African Americans who were becoming an increasingly ravaged community. The 1820s brought even tougher economic times to the community as maritime jobs grew scarce thanks to South Carolina's laws against black sailors. In 1822 northern black participation in the maritime trades became circumscribed by events in South Carolina when Denmark Vesey, a freed slave, was accused of fomenting a slave rebellion. South Carolinian authorities believed black sailors were instrumental to the plot. To prevent any further contact between slaves and sailors, South Carolina required all black sailors to spend the duration of the ship's time in port in jail. They also required the sailors to pay the expenses incurred while incarcerated. After learning of the new law, a Haitian paper, described as an 'excellent Paper, for which several distinguished Officers are writers' 'severely censored' the law against free blacks.⁹⁷ This audit of American treatment of free blacks may have increased Haiti's stature as a defender of black rights.

African-American political rights were also shrinking as the 'universal' manhood suffrage movement swept the country and placed many free blacks in a political no-man's-land. In New York, the African-American community retained the right to vote but with the added requirement of \$250 worth of property; this law was enacted at the same time suffrage without property qualifications was granted to all white males.⁹⁸ African Americans were pushed into a corner and some preferred to leave. Within weeks of Granville's tour, 120 individuals left from New York, while 30 families embarked on ships from Philadelphia. Less than 6 months later, estimates of over 4,000 to 5,000 settlers had made their way to Haitian shores. In all, an estimated 13,000 African Americans sailed for the island in the 1820s.⁹⁹

Although many of the emigrants returned to the United States, the story of Haitian influence on African American social and cultural development remains important. Historians have blamed a combination of factors for the high rate of returning emigrants – homesickness, the language barrier, the religious and cultural isolation – and these issues probably did contribute significantly.¹⁰⁰ Another cause of the high return rate: France had recognized Haiti's independence in the interim; some African Americans may have felt their work in Haiti was completed.

Northern African Americans' invocations of Haiti underscore the range of influences operating on the community in the 1810s and 1820s. These invocations sowed the seeds for an internationalist project. To the emigrants embarking on their journey, Haiti represented the quintessence of black nationalism – a place where blackness was celebrated and not cursed, a place independent in the eyes of the world, a place where the tenets of republican ideology were respected, and a place

that protected and defended black people from around the Atlantic. Independent Haiti was the black nation that African Americans looked to as an alternative to Africa.

Notes

- [1] Stuckey, *Slave Culture*, 198–203; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 249; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 185.
- [2] The very terms ‘Africa’ and ‘Africans’ are European in origin. It was during the late eighteenth century that victims of the Atlantic slave trade began to reference themselves this way rather than by their ethnic identities. This transformation is encapsulated in Olaudah Equiano’s autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African, written by himself*; Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, chapter 2.
- [3] Stuckey, *Slave Culture*, 200; Foner, *History of Black Americans*, 303.
- [4] Stuckey, *Slave Culture*, Chapter 1; Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture*. Debates continue about how African American identity and culture are. Stuckey argues African-American culture is overwhelmingly African in origin. Mintz and Price argue that African Americans appropriated aspects of European culture quickly and became a creolized American culture created from African, American and European cultures.
- [5] The other major emigration movement occurred at the end of the American Revolution when the British took 3,000 former slaves with them in their retreat from New York. These men and women settled in Nova Scotia and eventually moved permanently to Sierra Leone. Walker, *The Black Loyalists*. The subject has not been completely neglected. The best of the works on this subject are: Winch, ‘American Free Blacks’; Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America*, 168–172; Jackson, ‘The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism,’ 78–117; Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, Chapter 1.
- [6] For the most comprehensive studies of the Haitian Revolution, see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; James, *The Black Jacobins*; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*.
- [7] Historians have assumed until recently that black nationalism took hold in the African-American community in the 1850s when Haiti and Liberia both became destinations for African Americans who chose to leave the United States. Historians have linked the essentialist ideas articulated among African Americans in the late 1840s and 1850s to the black nationalist projects dominating the political discourse of the period. Moses, in *Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, argues that black nationalist ideology claimed an essentialist or biological explanation for racial difference in the 1850s (25). Stuckey sees this sense of kinship and common identification as natural and timeless (Stuckey, *Slave Culture*, chapter 1). In the 1960s and 1970s, black nationalist thought as delineated by historians came to mean a cultural and political rejection of the United States by the African-American community. By aspiring to form a black nation, African Americans were declaring they no longer wished to integrate into American society or culture. Bracey *et al.*, *Black Nationalism in America*. Historians have moved beyond this dichotomy and have become much more attuned to the complex goals, forces, and ideas influencing the community’s idea of nation, separation and migration (Sidbury, *Becoming Africans in America*). Dickson Bruce posits that some people in the black community (such as Paul Cuffee) perceived nationalism and colonization as ideas that would allow African Americans and all descendants of Africa ‘to join a community of nations . . . [and that these ideas] had less to do with simple separation than with an effort to address both the demands of difference and the imputations of inequality (Bruce, ‘National Identity and African-American Colonization’).
- [8] Black nationalism as a concept has taken on many guises in historians’ hands (see Note 7). My definition of black nationalism: the desire for a nation governed by blacks, independent of white rule, and welcoming to all black people.
- [9] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 229–32; Mullin, *Africa in America*, 217–37; Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, Chapter 10–11; Sidbury, *From Ploughshares into Swords*; Egerton, *Gabriel’s*

- Rebellion*; Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*; Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*; Julius Scott, “‘The Common Wind’”; Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*.
- [10] Charles Deslondes, a St. Dominguan, led the largest slave revolt in the history of the United States in Louisiana. Geggus, ‘Preface,’ xiv. Historians have since suggested that contemporaries made up the Vesey conspiracy and the LA conspiracy. See Johnson, ‘Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators’; Roberts, ‘Slaves and Slavery in Louisiana’ for a discussion of the 1811 Louisiana revolt.
- [11] Scott, ‘The Common Wind’; Bolster, *Black Jacks*; White, “‘A Flood of Impure Lava’”.
- [12] Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, xx; Sidbury, ‘Saint Domingue in Virginia’.
- [13] The emphasis on ‘republican’ highlights Haiti’s place in the Age of Revolutions as a cultural and political ally of the French and American systems of government.
- [14] These free people of color included Alexandre Petion and Jean-Pierre Boyer, both future leaders of Haiti, as well as the lesser known Benoit Joseph Rigaud, the rival of Louverture for supreme control of the former colony.
- [15] Bruce, ‘National Identity and African-American Colonization’; Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*; Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans*. Literature on African American conceptions of Africa has highlighted how Africa was imagined, interpreted and understood by the community providing an important methodological model to understanding the developing sense of kinship and identification with Haitians and Haiti. (See n.7 on the concepts of nation and black nationalism.)
- [16] Dain, ‘Haiti and Egypt’; Bruce, *Origins of African American Literature*, 120–21. Dickson Bruce asserts that since few publications produced by the African-American community referenced Haiti, he assumes there was little interest in the island-nation. Relying solely on literary source material skews our understanding of the social and political activities the African-American community engaged in.
- [17] Horton, ‘From Class to Race in Early America’; Gilje, *Rioting in America*; Gellman and Quigley, *Jim Crow New York*; Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation*.
- [18] Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 180–82; quote, 182.
- [19] Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 4.
- [20] African Americans as a whole did not embrace racial notions of difference based on physical or biological characteristics, although increasingly some black individuals wrote of Africans’ physical and moral superiority to whites in the later nineteenth century. Moses, *Afrotopia*, chapters 2 and 3; Moses, *Golden Age of Black Nationalism*, 25.
- [21] Pasley ‘*The Tyranny of Printers*’. Newspapers frequently filched interesting news clips from a wide variety of papers throughout the country without fear, as they faced no copyright or intellectual property laws.
- [22] Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 5.
- [23] Hall, ‘A Charge of 1797,’ quote, 47.
- [24] *Ibid.*, 47.
- [25] Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, Chapter 5. Melish describes former slaves’ circumstances as more abject than they were during slavery.
- [26] Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 176; White, ‘It Was a Proud Day,’ 34. *Albany Centinel*, 20 July 1804. Little is known of the African American crowd’s social makeup. The next year, 1805, African Americans who assembled for the 4th of July parade were driven from the event (Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 177).
- [27] In practice, however, the nations both struggled with their new-found freedom. Dessalines crowned himself emperor and demanded the right to name his successor. Adams, the most famously aristocratic republican of the era, proposed referring to the President as ‘Majesty’ and enacted the Alien and Sedition laws that curbed individual rights laid out in the Constitution.
- [28] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, Chapters 12 and 14. Article 12: ‘No white, irrespective of his country, can land in this territory as a master and property owner and will not in the future

- be permitted to acquire any property.' Article 14: 'Haitians will be known henceforth by the generic name of blacks.' *Les Constitutions d'Haiti*. Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods*, 236.
- [29] Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, 159; *The Journal of the Early Republic*, Special Issue on Racial Consciousness and Nation-Building in the Early Republic, 19 (Winter 1999). This issue is devoted entirely to the question of the emergence of racial consciousness in the United States.
- [30] Haiti was not always set on the path towards a racially based national identity. During Louverture's reign, St. Domingue was the most liberal country regarding race in the world. Black, white and mulatto were all considered full citizens with equal rights and protection under the law. Louverture envisioned a multi-racial society that would continue the plantation system encouraging plantation owners, both mulatto and white, to continue the export economy the island had depended upon for decades. Bell, *All Souls' Rising; Master of the Crossroads; The Stone that the Builder Refused*. Bell's trilogy is a kind of eulogy to Louverture's vision.
- [31] Dessalines offered to have his son marry Petion's daughter to help put an end to rivalry. Yet with his 1804 Constitution, this call for 'one family' is ignored. Women were left out of the equation altogether with Dessalines' constitution even though he describes the nation in familial terms. The Constitution expressly stated: 'No one is worthy of being a Haitian if he is not a good father, good son, and a good husband and above all, a good soldier.' Quoted in Fick, 'The Haitian Revolution and the Rights of Man'; Sheller, 'Sword-bearing Citizens'.
- [32] Jordan, in *White Over Black*, discusses the reception of Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (441). After Gabriel's Conspiracy was averted, Jefferson proposed transporting all ex-slaves to the island as the simplest solution to preventing a race war that manumission would unleash. Before 1804 when Dessalines declared Haitian independence, Jefferson believed America could contain the black revolutionaries. For a discussion of Jefferson, nation, and colonization, see Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, 147-88; Zuckerman, 'The Power of Blackness,' 202; Hickey, 'America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti,' 365.
- [33] Quoted in Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, 'strength,' 179; 'extermination,' 150. After the British used emancipation as a chip in the American Revolution, Jefferson conceived of slaves as a captive nation willing to take any chance to eliminate their former masters, and was never reconciled to the peaceful coexistence of blacks and whites again (Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, 157).
- [34] Matthewson, 'Jefferson and Haiti,' quote, 227; Matthewson, 'Jefferson and Nonrecognition of Haiti,' 22. Matthewson's recent book, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy: Haitian-American relations during the early Republic*, also discusses the domestic influences working on Jefferson's foreign policy; Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, Chapter 5.
- [35] Egerton, 'The Empire of Liberty Reconsidered,' 324; Hickey, 'America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti,' 374; Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti*, 141-46; Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics*, 368; Brown, *Toussaint's Clause*.
- [36] Quoted in Matthewson, 'Jefferson and Haiti,' 217; On Jefferson and racial antipathy, see Zuckerman, 'The Power of Blackness,' 209-17.
- [37] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 145. 1830 was the year the British agreed to open its Caribbean colonies to American traders (Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 195).
- [38] *National Gazette*, 31 March 1821.
- [39] This was a modern media campaign that has been noticed by few historians. The exception is Logan's *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti*, 198-204; *National Gazette*, 31 March 1821.
- [40] Farmers also joined the fray, as they wanted more open and expanded markets for their grain and livestock. In Baltimore the price of a barrel of flour dropped every year between 1815 and 1820 when a barrel cost four dollars, almost a third of its 1817 value. Hargreaves, *The Presidency of John Quincy Adams*, 12.
- [41] 'Enhance,' *National Gazette*, 17 April 1822; *New York Mercantile Advertiser*, 15 April 1822; *Providence Gazette*, 1 Feb. 1817 and the *Columbian Centinel*; 'We are pleased,' *Niles' Weekly Register*, 4 Aug. 1821; 'Blacks,' *Niles' Weekly Register*, 22 Sept. 1821.

- [42] Christophe fared poorly in the newspaper reports of the early 1810s as a result of his seizing American merchants' goods valued at \$124,000 in 1811 in retaliation for a Baltimore firm's failure to repay him. Montague, *Haiti and the United States*, 48.
- [43] The color line was not sharply defined in the two dominions – black Haitians served in the administration of Petion, while mulattoes could be found in Christophe's. Herbert Cole claims Christophe moved towards being king to compete with Petion who had just been re-elected to President of the Republic of Haiti in 1811. Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 190. Other historians concede that Christophe's crowning himself king was modeled on the British model of a representative monarchy (Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 53). For a time a third region of Haiti existed, first ruled by Rigaud and then by General J.-M. Borgella, but was incorporated into the Republic in 1812.
- [44] Christophe was at first resistant to this law as it was prejudicial towards whites and thus treating them as they had unfairly treated people of African descent. Or as De Vastey concluded, such a law was 'not only far from reasonable, but unjust, impolitic, and contrary to the laws of polished nations' (Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 53).
- [45] Zuckerman describes how Cape François (Cape Henry or Haytian) supported 'royal society of the arts and sciences, a museum, botanical gardens, and academy of agriculture, a number of newspapers, and a playhouse' (179); McClellan, *Colonialism and Science*, describes the scientific institution, the Cercles des Philadelphes, founded in St. Domingue in 1784.
- [46] As for independence, the meaning of independence for a nation revolved around issues of trade, sovereignty, government administration, and internal finance issues. The United States fought the War of 1812 in an effort to work out the contours of the meaning of independence for a republican nation.
- [47] Quoted in Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 36. Petion later included more black nationalist policies in his 1816 constitution that granted citizenship to all descendants of Africa who lived in Haiti for one year.
- [48] His expansive notion of national identity also included Poles and Germans, French mercenary troops who deserted from the French colonial army.
- [49] Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 142.
- [50] Christophe's ship *Heureuse Reunion* had three American sailors aboard when it was captured in 1812 (Cole, *Christophe, King of Haiti*, 198; 176). For American sailors' aid to Louverture see Zuckerman, 'The Power of Blackness,' 179; Hickey, 'America's Response,' 365–69.
- [51] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 145.
- [52] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, Chapter 5; Scott, 'The Common Wind,' Chapter 4.
- [53] Cuffe, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Paul Cuffe*, 5; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 147.
- [54] Shane White, 'It Was a Proud Day,' 46.
- [55] *Niles' Weekly Register*, 9 Nov. 1816.
- [56] Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 145.
- [57] The two most valuable sources for Haiti's nation-building efforts: Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*; Trouillot, *Haiti, State against Nation*.
- [58] Christophe, 'The Formation of the New Dynasty,' 9.
- [59] Debates on what the appropriate title to give Washington took up more than a month of the Senate's first session of office. McCullough, *John Adams*, 405.
- [60] White, 'Prince Saunders.'
- [61] The London publication of 1816 includes the chapter, 'Reflections of the Editor,' that was deleted for the Boston edition. The chapter praises Christophe and castigates Petion as a traitor to the Haitian people since he had 'renounced real independence' – referring to the rumor of his negotiations with France (*Haytian Papers*, 192–93).
- [62] The writings of Baron de Vastey, a member of Christophe's administration, were especially well received and well regarded. *Political Remarks upon certain French Publications and Journals concerning Hayti*; also, *An Essay on the Causes of the Revolution and Civil Wars of Hayti*; Joseph

- Milligan, a book agent, advertised in *The Daily Advertiser*, 24 February 1820, he had just received de Vastey's *Reflexions* in his shop. See *The Daily Intelligencer* 24 Feb. 1820.
- [63] *Reflexions on the blacks and whites, remarks upon a letter addressed by M. Mazères, a French ex-colonist, to J.C.L. Sismonde de Sismondi, Containing observations on the blacks and whites, the civilization of Africa, the kingdom of Hayti*. London: J. Hatchard, 1817; 'Hayti,' *The Analectic Magazine*, May 1817; 'Hayti,' *North American Review*, 12(1) (1821) transcribed large portions of text from the book, *Reflexions sur une Lettre de Mexeres, Ex-Colon Francais, adressee a M. J. C. L. Sismonde de Sismondi, sur les Noirs et les Blancs, la Civilization de l'Afrique, le Royaume d' Hayti, etc.*
- [64] Evident in the public writings of Daniel Coker, 'A Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister' (1810) and James Forten, 'Series of Letters by a Man of Colour' (1813) in *Pamphlets of Protest*.
- [65] *Vermont Gazette*, 6 June 1818; *Poulson's Daily Advertiser*, 1 June 1818; *The Daily Intelligencer*, 24 Feb. 1820.
- [66] *North American Review*, June 1821, 133.
- [67] Gossett, *Race*, discusses how in the late eighteenth century the two racial theories overlapped for a time and how even Thomas Jefferson alternated between the two theories (chapter 3).
- [68] Northern free blacks established schools almost as soon as freedom from slavery was won. In 1795, Richard Allen established the first black Sunday school in Philadelphia (Nash, 204).
- [69] Quoted in Cole, *Christophe*, 241.
- [70] *Niles' Weekly Register*, 25 Nov. 1820.
- [71] Quoted in Racine, 133; 'Henri I,' *The Atheneum*, 1 May 1821, 98.
- [72] Many observers at the time debated what made Christophe so pro-British. Many commentators believed Christophe's birthplace was St. Kitts or St. Christopher's, which was an English colony at the time. Those close to Christophe, however, stated his birthplace was Grenada. Most historians today concur (Nicholls, 266, n.22). Blackett, in *Building an Antislavery Wall*, argues that American blacks saw the British as the true friends of African descendants and eagerly sought to travel there after the 1830s.
- [73] Quoted in Bellegarde, 'Alexandre Pétion,' 250.
- [74] *Poulson's Daily Advertiser*, 18 Aug. 1818.
- [75] The effect of his Constitution can be gauged in New York where African Americans requested permission of President Petion to emigrate to his republic in 1817 before the Tredwell publication.
- [76] As Tredwell explained in the packet of documents, Petion learned of the ACS and the American forced removal campaign 'through the captains of certain vessels' (*The Constitution of the Republic of Hayti . . .*, 7).
- [77] *Niles' Weekly Register*, 17 Oct. 1818.
- [78] *Constitution*, 5–6.
- [79] Griggs and Prator, *Henry Christophe and Thomas Clarkson*. Clarkson suggested Christophe should pursue African American emigration as an effective way of maneuvering the United States to buy the Spanish part of the island and perhaps even recognize the nation (124–25; 142–43; 149–50; 162–63).
- [80] Saunders, engaged to Paul Cuffe's daughter, was well connected in the northern African American community and appeared to have little trouble finding speaking engagements. Saunders, *Address delivered at Bethel Church*, in Porter (ed.), *Early Negro Writing*.
- [81] Petion's death was widely reported and his burial under the 'liberty tree' in Port-au-Prince confirmed Haiti's place in the revolutionary tradition of the American Revolution and honored the same accoutrements of the period.
- [82] During his presidency, Boyer acted as the 'Grand Protector of the Masonic Order in Haiti' (quote in Sheller, 'Sword-Bearing Citizens,' 254). The early history of Freemasonry in Haiti remains unclear. It is impossible to know how many St. Domingue Masonic lodges were maintained after the revolution or whether they had been open to free people of color. Racine notes

- that in 1806, the Grand Lodge of England established a branch in Haiti, 'Britannia's Bold Brother', n.6.
- [83] As a member of the Prince Hall Masons, the Boyer Lodge received its charter and approval for its name from the Boston Prince Hall Grand Lodge and from other African Masonic Lodges in Boston, Philadelphia and Providence.
- [84] Baur, 'Mulatto Machiavelli'.
- [85] *Niles' Weekly Register* and *National Gazette and Literary Register* both published information about Boyer's offer. The *National Gazette* more so than *Niles'* debated the merits of the plan, 24 March 1821; 25 Aug. 1821. There was even a report that a Maryland Haytian Society was formed in Baltimore by free blacks to 'enquire into the propriety of emigrating to Hayti'. *Niles' Weekly Register*, 17 Feb. 1821.
- [86] When the United States recognized the South American republics, Boyer sent letters of complaint to American newspapers. *National Gazette and Literary Register*, 17 Feb. 1824.
- [87] *Niles' Weekly Register*, 1 July 1820.
- [88] 'delay', *United States Gazette*, 16 Feb. 1824; 'new towns', *New York Daily Advertiser*, 31 May 1824; *National Gazette*, 3 June 1824.
- [89] Cole, *Christophe*, 146; *New York Literary Journal*, May 1820; *National Recorder*, 25 Nov. 1820.
- [90] *United States Gazette*, 5 Nov. 1824.
- [91] Information on the Philanthropic organization can found in Jackson, 'The Origins of Pan-African Nationalism,' 54–55. After Christophe's death, Saunders served in Boyer's cabinet as Attorney General and may have helped with formulating the organization of the emigration scheme.
- [92] *Biographie de Jonathas Granville par son fils*. Much of this biography is made up of newspaper clippings published in the United States during his tour.
- [93] There is little information on these societies available except what can be ascertained from the newspapers and the two publications – *Correspondence relative to the Emigration to Hayti of the Free People of Colour* and *Information for the Free People of Colour who are Inclined to Emigrate to Hayti*. Letters have been found that indicate Thomas Eddy, Mathew Clarkson, Peter Augustus Jay, and Theodore Dwight were among some New Yorkers organizing to endorse Haitian emigration (see letter from New York dated 10 July 1824, Quaker Collection, Thomas P. Cope Collection, Haverford College).
- [94] Unlike the American Colonization Society, whose branch activities were coordinated by the central office in Washington, DC, the Haytien Emigration Society seems to have been made up of local societies. The exception: the Baltimore Haytien Emigration Society considered itself under the control of the New York group (*The American*, 23 July 1824). More societies were expected to form all along the eastern seaboard: Jersey City, New Jersey; New Castle, Delaware; Alexandria, Norfolk and Wheeling, VA; Wilmington, NC; Charleston, SC; Savannah, GA; St. Augustine and Pensacola, FL; Huntsville and Mobile, AL; Natchez, MS; New Orleans, LA; Town of Arkansas, AR; St. Louis, MO; Knoxville and Nashville, TN; Louisville, KY (*Genius of Universal Emancipation*, Nov. 1820, 18).
- [95] *Niles' Weekly Register*, 14 Aug. 1824, 400.
- [96] They were re-emancipated because Toussaint had previously abolished slavery in Santo Domingo when he conquered it in the revolution.
- [97] *Poulson's Daily Advertiser*, 27 Aug 1823.
- [98] This eliminated almost all eligible African-American voters. By 1825, only 68 out of 12,259 African Americans in the city could vote. Walker, *The Afro-American in New York City*, 116.
- [99] Benjamin Hunt estimated that as many as 13,000 emigrated. Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a place of settlement*, 11.
- [100] There was also a record-breaking drought that hit the Port-au-Prince region that compounded the emigrants' dislocation. Rev. Loring Dewey mentions this drought in series of letters to the *New York Observer* that were published in the winter and spring of 1825 detailing the conditions of the emigrants in Haiti.

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