"I Began To Realize That I Had Some Friends:
Hardship, Resistance, Cooperation, and Unity in
Hartford's African American Community,
1833-1841

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“I Began To Realize That I Had Some Friends:” Hardship, Resistance, Cooperation, and Unity in Hartford’s African American Community, 1833-1841

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25 April 2016

American Studies
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*******

Dedicated to Tommy Turiano (1993-2016)

“Love will see you through.”
Maps and Illustrations

1842 African American City Map:
Prudence Crandall:

![Prudence Crandall](via connecticuthistory.org)

James Lindsay Smith:

![James Lindsay Smith](via docsouth.unc.edu)
David Ruggles:

(via ctfreedomtrail.com)

Cinqué:

(via thehistoryblog.com)
Lewis Tappan:

(via ohiohistorycentral.org)

Andrew Judson:

Image courtesy of The Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
James Pennington:

(via pursuitoffreedom.org)
Introduction

*How hard a thing is life to the lowly and yet how human and real is it? And all this life and love and strife and failure, -- is it the twilight of nightfall or the flush of some faint-dawning day? The answer lies in each of us.* - W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

In the antebellum South, racial hierarchy was clear and universally understood. Whites were able to enjoy the trappings of citizenship; they could participate in the economy, own land, move about as they pleased, vote, and rest with the knowledge that the law protected them against violence. African Americans by and large had none of these privileges. They did not have agency over their own labor, could not own significant property, marry, move about, or legally protect themselves from violence; they were enslaved. Should a child be born to parents of different races, their status would follow that of the mother. These rules were widely understood and legally encoded.

African Americans in the North during the same time, however, found their situation far less clearly defined. With a few exceptions, gradual emancipation had largely run its course in the North by the early 1830s, leaving virtually no slaves in most New England states, Connecticut included (although Connecticut would not officially ban slavery until 1848). However, black Northerners were excluded and persecuted by a range of legal and extralegal factors, including disenfranchisement, segregation, exclusion from public amenities, as well as intimidation and violence with minimal public protections. In the absence of public welfare and protection, black individuals relied on one another and established communities to provide for themselves and contribute to the public good. As Stephen Kantrowitz writes in *More
“Excluded from public life in many of its forms, [African Americans] created what some scholars have dubbed a ‘black counter-public,’ in which they looked to one another for support and affirmation. They practiced citizenship as a matter of survival.”¹ This meant that individuals within the community contributed their time and talents in a variety of ways, taking up tasks such as education, healthcare, employment, religious and social life, and protection internally. Beyond this, however, these communities managed to fight for the freedom of those enslaved in the South, protect those who were fleeing enslavement, and protest against the injustices they faced at home. The Hartford community, and other Northern free black communities, tremendously influenced antebellum activism. This occurred both locally through community uplift work, and on a broad scale in national abolitionist movements.

Since Kenneth Stamp’s 1956 *The Peculiar Institution* turned the image of the paternalist, benevolent enslaver on its head, academic perception of abolitionists has slowly shifted from seeing them as deranged warmongers to viewing them as the selfless heroes that we now recognize. Historians first came to recognize the most outspoken, typically white, antislavery advocates, including William Lloyd Garrison, the Tappan brothers, John Brown, and their peers—with the antislavery influence of blacks essentially being limited to Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth. In the 1960s and 70s, however, groundbreaking historians such as Leon Litwack, William and Jane Pease, Fredrick Cooper, and Benjamin Quarles began to transform the conversation toward a focus on African American

antislavery activism within the free North.\(^2\) In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s historians such as James and Louis Horton, Gary Nash, and Julie Winch built upon this work in an important way, studying black communities and the activism within them. Since then, historians such as Eric Foner, Stephen Kantrowitz, Manisha Sinha, David Blight, Patrick Rael, Mia Bay and many others have continued in this direction, using new research to illuminate the important roles of the working class within Northern black communities.

Hartford was in many ways an important urban center of the 19\(^{th}\)-century Northeast, and yet its antebellum black community and antislavery activism have received less study than Boston, New York, Philadelphia, New Haven, and other urban centers.\(^3\) Hartford was a hub of New England’s trade and economic activity throughout the century, and was an important transportation crossroads. Furthermore, in the late antebellum period, Hartford was an important site of antislavery and abolitionist activism. This project represents a small step toward a deep understanding of Hartford’s antebellum black community. The heroic and prolific work of individuals such as James Mars, Amos Beman, and Augustus Washington demand more complete attention. The fights for enfranchisement and for the eventual ban of slavery in the state should also be a site of additional study.


\(^3\) This is most likely due to the fact that, unlike the rest of these cities, Hartford is not home to a large research university.
Hartford’s black community was subjected to 16 instances of racial violence between 1833 and 1837; this will also need to be taken up by future researchers.

This thesis is structured to investigate notions of community, and the trials and issues that surround it, through four case studies in the Hartford area between 1833 and 1841. The first chapter of this thesis centers on the case of Prudence Crandall and her attempt to open a school for African American girls in 1833 in Canterbury, Connecticut, a small village outside of Hartford. It shows how Crandall, a white Quaker, was drawn to black activism not simply through the immediatist rhetoric of Garrison (as historians have previously established), but through the free black individuals she came in contact with. These women and men taught her, and other white activists, about the plight of free blacks in Connecticut and about the needs of the black community. The chapter will also show the tremendous prejudice and exclusion faced by free black communities in Connecticut. Due to the complicated legacy of gradual abolition in Connecticut, the fear of amalgamation among whites, and other factors, blacks were effectively cut off from broader society. This exclusion was enforced by legal codes, intimidation, and violence. It is under these conditions that it was necessary for the black community of Hartford, and black communities throughout the North, to cooperate and subsist by any means necessary.

Chapter Two looks at the role of the Hartford black community, and other similar black communities, in resistance style activism, specifically immediatist abolitionism and Underground Railroad resistance. It argues that the origin of

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immediatism is found not in evangelicalism or white abolitionist rhetoric, but rather in black communities, enslaved and free. Slave rebellions, free black militancy, and responses to conditions faced by free blacks in the North as well as to the colonization debate all inspired immediatist abolitionism. One of the most important acts of resistance—simultaneously representing a catalyst of and a response to immediatism—was slave flight. The escape of slaves created tension between the North and the South, illuminated many Northerners as to the plight of the enslaved, gave the abolition movement some of its finest figures, and led to the Fugitive Slave Law—a piece of legislation that in many ways set the nation on course for the Civil War. This chapter will look at the Underground Railroad as a network of dedicated activism located in individual and free black community resistance. It examines the typical profile of fugitives and the ways in which new research has broadened the scope of this profile.

Chapter Two also highlights the epic story of John Lindsay Smith’s escape from enslavement in Virginia. Smith’s journey took him by land and by sea, travelling at times with companions and at other times alone. He benefitted from the assistance of many Northern blacks, including the prolific Underground Railroad “conductor” David Ruggles and the black community in Hartford. Smith’s narrative gives us insight into the factors that motivated slave flight, the trials that fugitives faced in their passage North, and the ways in which assistance from brave individuals along the way was indispensible on the flight to freedom.

Chapter Three examines the case of the slave ship *Amistad*. It demonstrates how white abolitionists, activists within the free black community, and the ship’s
captives all contributed to the eventual freedom of the Africans. The chapter elaborates on how these three groups form a community of resistance. The Amistad case is a starting point to discuss the benefits and tensions surrounding interracial activism during this time period. This chapter will look at the trials faced by the Amistad captives as well as at their courage, poise, and wisdom in the face of these struggles. Lewis Tappan as a leading advocate and organizer in the abolitionist support of the Africans is examined in the chapter. It focuses on the tension between Tappan and Reverend James Pennington—over the movement to utilize the Africans as part of a Christian mission to West Africa—to illuminate the distrust and paternalism that often made interracial activism difficult. But it simultaneously highlights the ways in which interracial activism offered unique advantages and was critical to the abolitionist movement.

Finally, Chapter Four will examine the motivations and philosophies behind localized community improvement activism, through the lens of Reverend Pennington’s early work in Hartford in 1840-1841. It attempts to place Pennington’s work within the black activist tradition of the period, and to open a dialogue about the integrationist versus separationist motivations within self-improvement activism while simultaneously placing Pennington on that spectrum. Pennington’s experiences with enslavement and his writing to reveal the motivations behind his work in community-based activism are central evidence. This chapter will also discuss the ways in which the racism and exclusion outline in Chapter One necessitated strong, insular, self-sustaining black communities in the North—often gathered around churches such as Pennington’s Talcott Street Church.
The common thread that unites these four moments is that they all represent community responses to systemic injustice. The courage of a Quaker schoolteacher in the face of racial fears and intimidation, the selfless resistance of Underground Railroad agents against the institution of slavery, the laborious cooperation between white and black activists in a legal battle against the federal government, and the tireless work of a young fugitive slave to uplift the Hartford black community all display the power of marginalized communities to not only sustain themselves in the face of exclusion, but also to affect national change.
Chapter One: HARDSHIP
Prudence Crandall, Racism, and the Legacy of Slavery in Connecticut, 1833

“There are three classes of people in Hartford—the rich whites, the poor whites, and the blacks...so much for Connecticut liberty and Christian equality.” -Anonymous, The Liberator, 26 February 1831

The black community in the Hartford area faced tremendous racism, inequality, and violence during the antebellum period, to a degree that was in many ways more severe than that faced by their counterparts elsewhere in New England. The tobacco industry and other agrarian pursuits had given slavery an economic viability in southern New England that could not be found elsewhere in the North. This deeply complicated the process of Connecticut’s gradual abolition. These factors were part of a complex puzzle that produced a uniquely high level of exclusion from general society for the African American communities of Hartford and other communities throughout the state. Prudence Crandall’s doomed effort to operate a school for African American girls in Canterbury, Connecticut reveals the severe degree of racial tension present in the state in the 1830s, and also illuminates the fear of amalgamation as a leading cause of this racism as well as the incredible resolve and courage of the antislavery community in the state.

Canterbury, located about 50 miles to the east of Hartford, was a wealthy, quiet, largely insular village in the 19th century. The town was home to thriving wheat agriculture, which most likely availed of slaves, through the late 1700s. The

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townspeople devoted much concern and money toward improving the town, and it was in this interest that they asked Prudence Crandall, a 27-year-old women of Quaker sensibilities, to open a private school for girls to add to the roughly 15 schools already in the town (it was commonly accepted that public schools were too advanced for girls).

The goals of the small town and those of Crandall diverged however, when an abolitionist impulse was awakened within Crandall. One factor in this process was the early circulation of William Lloyd Garrison’s *The Liberator* in Connecticut in 1831. Reading Garrison’s words and being informed as to the plight of African Americans had a profound impact on Crandall. The paper also helped her see the pitfalls of colonization schemes, a topic that she was particularly interested in because of its local connections. Several prominent citizens of Canterbury, including Andrew Judson—whose daughter Crandall would be teaching—were active and outspoken member of the American Colonization Society. Garrison’s words illuminated what Crandall would soon come to discover firsthand: many colonization advocates in the North found their motivation in a desire to exclude blacks from free society in the North. This newfound knowledge ignited a fire within Crandall and opened her eyes to the deeply seated racism in American society. She wrote, “I contemplated for a while, the manner in which I might best serve the

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people of color. As wealth was not mine, I saw no means of benefiting them, than by imparting to those of my own that were anxious to learn, all the instruction I might be able to give however small the amount.”

While historians have previously looked to Garrison as a primary, or even sole, instigator of activism from individuals such as Crandall, it was the black community that perhaps was most influential on her. Crandall’s motivation for helping black Americans stemmed in no small part from her relationship with Marcia Harris (née Davis), her household help and assistant in managing the school. Marcia helped Crandall to see that the horrors of racism and slavery were much closer to Canterbury than she’d initially believed, and showed her many of the ways that Northern racism and indifference to the black condition harms free black communities. Garrison’s writing could show an individual like Crandall the injustices that African Americans faced, but from a detached journalistic perspective. For someone like Crandall, personal advocacy from within the black community made a tremendous difference in humanizing the struggles of the community.

Given the importance of Marcia to Prudence Crandall’s cause, it is only fitting that Crandall’s breakthrough in terms of activism came in the form of a letter from Sarah Harris, daughter of Marcia and Charles Harris, an activist closely involved with The Liberator. Sarah was impressed by the reputation of the Canterbury Female Boarding School and expressed a great deal of ambition; Crandall was

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10 Marvis Welch, Prudence Crandall: A Biography, 22.
moved by her desire to learn and her goals of someday serving as a teacher for the black community.12

Crandall did not immediately accept Harris to her school as she was aware of the controversy that it would precipitate, but eventually was moved to accepting her, telling her that, “If I [am] injured on [your] account I will bear it.”13 The fallout from Harris’ admission among Canterbury residents and among the parents of students was as could be expected, with most white students withdrawing within a semester of Harris’ enrollment in the winter of 1833. Crandall was not deterred, however, having caught the flame of abolition. She began to correspond with Garrison, who pledged his support for her efforts to run a school entirely for African American girls in Canterbury, which would be called the Academy for Little Misses of Color.14

PRUDENCE CRANDALL returns her most sincere thanks to those who have patronized her School, and would give information that on the first Monday of April next, her School will be opened for the reception of young Ladies and little Misses of color. The branches taught are as follows:—Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, History, Natural and Moral Philosophy, Chemistry, Astronomy, Drawing and Painting, Music on the Piano, together with the French language. The terms, including board, washing, and tuition, are $25 per quarter, one half paid in advance. Books and Stationary will be furnished on the most reasonable term.15

This advertisement, first published by Garrison on March 2, 1833, proved to be the breaking point for an intolerant Canterbury community. Almost immediately angry townspeople started to organize and issue threats to Crandall and her

13 ibid.
15 “Prudence Crandall,” The Liberator, March 2, 1833.
school.\textsuperscript{16} Crandall, in her words, "was informed by several persons that she must be removed, or my school would be greatly injured."\textsuperscript{17} The citizens of Canterbury held a town hall meeting on March 9\textsuperscript{th}, just one week after the advertisement appeared in \textit{The Liberator}. The meeting involved the introduction of a resolution that the foundation of a school for black children in Canterbury "[is met] with our unqualified disapprobation, and it is to be understood, that the inhabitants of Canterbury protest against it in the most earnest manner," and that the town government had the intention of “pointing out to [Crandall] the injurious effects and incalculable evils resulting from such an establishment within this town, and persuade her to abandon the project."\textsuperscript{18} A great deal of this perceived “incalculable evil” appears to have been the fear of amalgamation. Philip Foner writes that, “A major charge against the school was that it was part of an abolitionist plot to further the amalgamation of the races. The fact that Crandall tried to have her black pupils attend the local church, contrary, it was charged, to her promise not to do so, strengthened this fear.”\textsuperscript{19} This charge of amalgamation was not one that caught Crandall by surprise; when Crandall was required meet with the school board of Canterbury and they broached the subject of racial mixing as being problematic, Crandall is said to have calmly and curtly replied: “Moses had a black wife.”\textsuperscript{20}

This fear of interracial sex was not unique to Connecticut, however, as interracial sexual relations were a pervasive cause of concern throughout the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] \textit{The Liberator}, April 6, 1833.
\item[20] Welch, 24.
\end{footnotes}
antebellum white North. Leslie Harris argues that it was in this setting that the word “amalgamation” began to take on a negative perception. “In Europe and the United States, amalgamation described the blending of any two or more distinct groups of people through intermarriage or nonsexual cultural exchanges.” This changed, however, “by the mid-1830s in the United States, [when] “amalgamation” connoted negative attitudes about black-white sexual and social relationships.” Harris, in her essay on the Five Points neighborhood in New York City—which was primarily populated by free blacks and poor Irish immigrants for most of the nineteenth century—argues that proslavery advocates and journalists found amalgamation to be the central cause of urban poverty and moral decay.²¹

These fears seemed to rise to the surface as a response to the organization and expansion of immediate abolitionists in the early 1830s, as the conversation that this movement forced begged the question of blacks gaining further political and social rights in American society. It was at this time that increasing numbers of graphic and derogatory images and descriptions of interracial sex began to appear.²² This imagery began to be used by proslavery activists to undermine the efforts of abolitionists, especially as integrated societies and meetings became increasingly common. For example, in 1834 the Courier and Enquirer accused Lewis and Arthur Tappan, white New York City abolitionists who also worked prolifically in Hartford (this work is profiled in Chapter Three), of inciting the zeal of abolitionists in their


American Anti-Slavery Society “by the doctrines of abolition and amalgamation.” This led to an enraged mob putting a halt to the Society’s proceedings, a mob that snowballed into the worst violence seen by New York City until the draft riots of 1863.23

This base fear of amalgamation served as a divider in many ways between mainstream white antislavery and those “radicals” who fought for not only abolition but also an increase in political and social rights for free African Americans. Many who wished to end enslavement in the United States were appalled and disgusted by the notion of interracial sexual relations. In her text Miscegenation, Elise Lamire points to the writings of Boston revolutionary patriot Josiah Quincy, an outspoken critic of the slave system. Following a tour of the Carolinas, Quincy wrote in his journal that “it is far from uncommon to see a gentleman at dinner, and his reputed offspring a slave to the master of the table,” a sight that he believed to be a “strange perversion of terms and language!”24 While his writing points primarily to the backwardness of an institution that would condone the enslavement of one’s own children, it also speaks to the “perversion” of the sexual acts that created such circumstances.

However, the more radical end of the antislavery spectrum—occupied by Tappan, Garrison and their immediatist colleagues—did not perceive such relations as being perverted and in fact fought for the rights of interracial couples to marry in the North. While conservative Northerners who fought to preserve the social order argued that laws forbidding interracial marriage were colorblind in that they

23 Elise Lemire, Miscegenation, 59.
24 ibid., 11.
affected both blacks and whites, their social impact disproportionately impeded African Americans. They legally encoded the social inferiority of blacks, and provided yet another way in which race could be affirmed as a legal category in the self-proclaimed “free society” of New England.\textsuperscript{25}

Further evidence that legal and social roadblocks to interracial marriage were structured against African Americans can be found in the disparity between treatment of white-Native American relations versus white-black relations. Lamire explains that throughout the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, rather than being perceived with disdain, many individuals viewed the intermarriage between whites and Native Americans as being an opportunity to civilize a people who they viewed as sharing the “whiteness” that they had constructed. This disparity can be observed not only in American social order but also in legal statutes. While Connecticut did not prohibit interracial marriage involvement blacks by the 1820s, it was one of only six states to do so, while all but seven states expressly permitted marriage between whites and Native Americans by this time.\textsuperscript{26}

It is entirely unsurprising that this pervasive societal fear of racial mixing manifested itself in the realm of education. Throughout nearly the entire American Civil Rights struggle we see a close association between integrated childhood interaction and fears of amalgamation and miscegenation. In fact, it was over 120 years after the events in Canterbury that President Dwight Eisenhower reported to Chief Justice Earl Warren that the “horror of adolescent miscegenation” was the

\textsuperscript{25} Lemire, 58.
\textsuperscript{26} ibid., 47.
biggest roadblock facing the integration of public schools in the South.\textsuperscript{27} Given this deeply rooted belief in the collective consciousness of American whites, the disgust with which Crandall’s plan was met is unsurprising.

Meanwhile, in Canterbury, the pressure and rage against Prudence Crandall and her girls was mounting at an exponential rate. Her ally and friend Reverend Samuel J. May, an organizer of both the New Haven Antislavery Society and the American Antislavery Society,\textsuperscript{28} wrote in a March 1833 journal entry that he and a friend, George W. Benson, had travelled to Canterbury to assist Miss Crandall, explaining that, “when we arrived at her house we learnt that the excitement against her had become furious.”\textsuperscript{29} Once, however, Crandall’s opponents came to realize that she would not be deterred by intimidation alone, they pursued legal avenues to stop her. Crandall was arrested by Sheriff’s deputy George Cady on June 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1833 because, according to her writ of arrest, she “willfully and knowingly did instruct and teach and assist in instructing and teaching, certain colored persons, who at the time when so taught and instructed were not inhabitants of any town in the state,” an action that the Connecticut state legislature had very recently banned.\textsuperscript{30}

Word spread quickly, and the streets were quickly lined with citizens of the town, adults and children alike, who jeered, heckled, and cat called Crandall as she was led to the court house. She was quickly ruled to be guilty and was sentenced to be taken to the county jail in Brooklyn, CT if $150 bond could not be furnished.

\textsuperscript{29} Welch, 30.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{ibid.}, 67.
While Reverend May or any of her other allies could have easily provided this bond money, Crandall knew that being imprisoned as a woman—especially one who was previously well respected in the community—would cause a great deal of outrage. And thus she refused to have her bond paid and spent that night in a gray jail cell, eight by eight feet, closed off to the outside world aside from a seven inch opening in one of the walls of the cell.\(^\text{31}\)

The court battle that ensued was long and arduous; stretching across the long, hot summer of 1833.\(^\text{32}\) The prosecuting attorney, Andrew T. Judson, was the father of one of Prudence Crandall’s original pupils, and this familial connection added a personal rage to his attacks. Arthur Tappan was the lead financial backer of Crandall’s legal defense.\(^\text{33}\) Judson’s case in this trial, as well as in the appeal trial the following summer, would come primarily from two fronts: that policies too generous to African Americans would bring the state of Connecticut to ruin, and that Crandall’s girls did not enjoy the privileges of American citizenship. On the first point, he explained, “The consequences [of the principles advocated by Crandall] will inevitably destroy the government itself, and this American Nation.”\(^\text{34}\) While he does not elaborate on how exactly the education of a score of black girls would “destroy the government” of the United States, there is little doubt that his view was widely shared.

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\(^\text{31}\) Welch, 68-70.
\(^\text{32}\) \textit{ibid.}, 84.
\(^\text{33}\) \textit{ibid.}, 82.
\(^\text{34}\) \textit{Report of the Arguments of Counsel in the Case of Prudence Crandall, Plff. in Error, vs. State of Connecticut, before the Supreme Court of Errors, at Their Session at Brooklyn, July Term, 1834.} (Boston, MA: Garrison & Knapp, 1834) 20-1.
The other main argument that Judson made—that the black pupils did not earn the right to education because they were not citizens, is one that was in many ways reminiscent of Chief Justice Taney’s opinion in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, almost 25 years later. In a similar style to Taney, Judson distinguishes citizens from both Indians and Africans, saying that, “The African race, as a body, were then *slaves*, and held in bondage by those who made the constitution.”35 This argument implicitly invokes the language of Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution, which distinguishes between “citizens” and “all other persons”—who are to be represented as three-fifths of a person in Congress.36 He also debates the Constitutional framers’ intents. He relegates the opinion in favor of educating blacks to that of “a few madmen or enthusiasts,” and argues that, at the time of the Constitution’s signing, “The *best men* bought and sold slaves, without a scruple.”37 Ultimately, that summer’s legal proceedings would eventually turn up a guity verdict, one that did not daunt Crandall in the slightest. She decided immediately to appeal the decision and to continue to maintain the school in the interim.38

Unable to deter Crandall by way of intimidation or legal proceedings, her enemies turned to violence. On January 27th, 1834, a fire was discovered within the school in the early afternoon hours. Fortunately, Crandall, her pupils, and some kind neighbors were able to extinguish the flame before the damage became too

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35 *Report of the Arguments of Counsel in the Case of Prudence Crandall, Plff. in Error, vs. State of Connecticut, before the Supreme Court of Errors, at Their Session at Brooklyn, July Term, 1834*, 22.
36 U.S. Const. art. 1 sec. 3.
37 *Report of the Arguments of Counsel in the Case of Prudence Crandall, Plff. in Error, vs. State of Connecticut, before the Supreme Court of Errors, at Their Session at Brooklyn, July Term, 1834*, 23.
38 Welch, 84.
significant. Mr. Olney, an African-American ally of the school who had delivered firewood to Crandall and the students earlier that day, was quickly arrested by town officials and charged with arson (by March he had been quietly acquitted). Many of Crandall’s opponents spread the rumor that she had started the fire herself in an attempt to gain media attention and public sympathy. Crandall’s allies, however, refused to let these rumors prevail. Garrison wrote on the matter in the February 8th edition of the *Liberator*, stating, “Base and desperate as her persecutors have shown themselves to be—lost to decency, honor, and intelligence—still we dare not believe that they were accessories to a deed so truly diabolical. It is beyond the turpitude of those whose infamy shall thicken upon them with the increase of days and years.”

Garrison and other vocal friends of Crandall forced the Connecticut public to face the glaring reality that citizens of Canterbury may very well have been willing to put the lives of over a dozen people—mostly young girls—in jeopardy, out of a fear and hatred of black Americans. To properly understand the racism faced by, and the hardships of, the Connecticut black community in the 1830s, it is necessary to look back at the complicated history of slavery and gradual emancipation in New England—particularly southern New England, where tobacco and other agrarian endeavors made human enslavement more economically viable. When looking at the legacy of gradual emancipation in Connecticut and in New England, one notable constant is the disparity between the rhetoric and the realities of abolition, freedom, and citizenship.

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39 Welch, 87.
40 *ibid.*
In *Disowning Slavery*, Joanne Pope Melish notes that, due to ambiguity of legal statutes that freed slaves, people of color in Connecticut and elsewhere in New England largely ignored their emancipation. While these laws prescribed freedom at a certain age for those born into enslavement, and freed much of the next generation of black New Englanders, very little was changed in terms of the labor freedom and self-agency of these African American communities. Melish takes this argument one step further, saying “gradual abolition actually inscribed the practices of slavery itself in what was quite arbitrarily defined as the ‘free society’ to which it gave birth.” The inscription of *de facto* enslavement in a legally “free” North served several purposes. It allowed whites to feel secure about the preservation of the present racial hierarchy in the United States. Furthermore, it mitigated white fears that a truly free North would incentivize high levels of black migration into Connecticut and the rest of the North. As Judson elaborated in the 1834 appeals trial, after all, theirs was a “nation of white men,” and many harbored a real fear that it would be “taken from us, and given to the African race.” Finally, the passage of legal statutes allowed New Englanders to proclaim their own progressive nature, and to contrast their “free society” against the backward, regressive, slaveholding South.

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42 *ibid.*, 87.
43 *Report of the Arguments of Counsel in the Case of Prudence Crandall, Plff. in Error, vs. State of Connecticut, before the Supreme Court of Errors, at Their Session at Brooklyn, July Term, 1834*, 20-1.
However, as Melish argues, viewing antebellum New England as a “free society” is somewhat of a misnomer because, as she writes, “In the view of most whites, since even the act of being freed represented the exercise of the owner’s power over the slave, an emancipated slave could never become a ‘free’ person but only a ‘freed’ one—a person acted upon, not acting.” Thus, what emancipation in New England accomplished what not a removal of “enslaved” as a legal and social status but rather the creation of the third, ambiguous status of “freed”—not enslaved, but far from being free in the way that white New Englanders were.

This distinction between white New England and “freed” New England was constructed for many reasons. One important one is that many whites perceived freed blacks as being inherently helpless and reliant on society, incapable of working for themselves or for society without being overseen by whites. Melish writes, “Assumptions that manumitted slaves would be dependent and thus require relief, and would surely disturb the public peace by being disorderly and riotous, became more powerful and widespread with each passing year.”

These fears of the effects of blacks upon society, fears that had been pervasive throughout Connecticut’s history, were responded to with oppressive legislation known as Connecticut’s black code. This began with 1690 legislation that forbade slaves from leaving the towns in which they resided without a written pass from their enslaver. In 1703 it was made illegal for innkeepers and other purveyors to serve alcohol to slaves. In 1723, de facto martial law was imposed upon slaves in

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45 Melish, 81.
46 ibid., 98.
the state, with 10 lashes of the whip being imposed upon any slave found outdoors after 9pm without the express consent of his enslaver.\textsuperscript{47}

As emancipation began to take hold in the state, this legislation shifted to grapple with the fears of disturbances caused by free blacks that Melish identified in her text. As early as the 16\textsuperscript{th} century Connecticut legislators were passing codes that legally obligated former enslavers to ensure the economic stability of their former chattel property, and in the absence of their support required the town to do so and gave the town permission to sue former enslavers to recover costs.\textsuperscript{48} Not only did these laws rest upon the belief that blacks were fundamentally unable to support themselves and be productive members of society, but they also served to disincentivize enslavers from manumitting their slaves.

The fear and hatred of African Americans that had been long written into the collective consciousness of Connecticut’s residents eventually proved to great for Crandall and her school to overcome. The school had managed to win a mistrial in their appeals process in the summer of 1834, but by September her opponents decided to take matters into their own hands, issuing a wicked brand of vigilante justice upon Crandall and the girls. Around midnight of September 9\textsuperscript{th}, Crandall and the girls were rattled awake by the screams of a hysterical mob of men and by the sounds of their school and home being destroyed. Although the men retreated after a short period of time, Crandall and the girls remained awake for the rest of the night, fearful that the mob may return seeking to cause greater violence. Crandall


\textsuperscript{48} ibid., 10.
and her pupils spent the entirety of the next day sweeping up broken glass while Reverend May, Crandall’s father, and other allies were summoned to Canterbury. All agreed, with heavy hearts, that the building was damaged beyond repair and that the girls faced far too great a risk to continue living in Canterbury. Crandall couldn’t bear to break the news to the girls, so it was Reverend May that told them that they would be returning to their homes.\(^{49}\)

Reverend May would write in his *Memoirs* that, as these events transpired, he “felt ashamed of Connecticut, ashamed of my state, ashamed of my country, ashamed of my color.”\(^{50}\) Crandall, now bound to a husband and thoroughly disheartened by the actions of Connecticut’s citizens, would leave the state and spend the rest of her days in Elk Falls, Kansas, where she eventually succumbed to complications of asthma in January of 1890.\(^{51}\) The story of Crandall’s bravery against a citizenry that was apathetic and best, and violent at worst is a cross that the state of Connecticut should forever bear. It is also a stark indicator of just how daunting of a task survival and acceptance would be for black communities in Hartford and elsewhere in the state. The simple act of existing, of trying to improve ones condition, would be an act of great courage of Connecticut’s black women and men for decades to come.

\(^{49}\) Welch, 107.
\(^{50}\) Weld, 22.
\(^{51}\) Welch, 213.
Chapter Two: RESISTANCE
The Rise of Radical Abolitionism, the Underground Railroad, and the Flight of James Lindsay Smith, 1838.

“Although it was some time...before I took the decisive step, yet in my mind and spirit, I was never a Slave.” - Reverend James W. C. Pennington, The Fugitive Blacksmith, 1849

“I began to realize that I had some friends.”52 When James Lindsay Smith, and enslaved man from Virginia, reached the safe harbor of Hartford, he found a black abolitionist community willing to provide him with support. Though his realization did not strike until Connecticut, he had been positively impacted by “friends” throughout his escape. In Hartford, Smith encountered individuals who supported the immediate abolition of slavery. The fugitive was unaware that like-minded communities had sprung up throughout the North in the 1820s and the 1830s.

A range of motivations and injustices spurred the development of immediate abolition—and the rise of immediatism can be traced to broad ideological shifts, such as religious awakening and the market revolution, as well as individual actions, such as William Lloyd Garrison’s found of The Liberator or Fredrick Douglass’ rise as a public figure. As slave runaway, James Lindsay Smith represented a vital wellspring of immediate abolition activism. His arrival in Hartford placed him in the midst of another. Black communities and black individuals, both enslaved and free, played incredibly important roles in initiating immediate resistance to human

enslavement. Enslaved African Americans inspired abolition by rebelling against the institution and by taking flight. These actions forced Northerners, black and white, to grapple with the ugly realities of the institution. Free blacks embraced radical abolitionism in response to injustices faced at home, the colonization debate, and a number of factors that blurred the status of enslaved and free. Furthermore, white antislavery, from radical abolition to Republican Party politics, was inspired by the activities of the enslaved. According to John Ashworth, “Behind every event in the history of the sectional controversy lurked the consequences of black resistance.”

The Underground Railroad, a “clandestine, poorly understood” network of abolitionists and “individuals of conscience” that facilitated the flight of fugitive slaves to the northern United States and Canada, was simultaneously a cause and a product of the immediate abolitionist movement. The presence of fugitives such as Smith, James Pennington, Fredrick Douglass, and thousands of others in the North brought the horrors of Southern enslavement to the fore of Northern consciousness decades before Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin would. Virtually all who identified with the abolitionist movement would at some point or another assist fugitives in some capacity. This included everyone from Fredrick Douglass, who would shelter dozens of fugitives in his Rochester home, to Reverends James Pennington and Samuel May,

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55 Cheryl LaRoche, Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014) 43.
who aided numerous fugitives, to political figures such as William H. Seward and Thaddeus Stevens—both of whom assisted fugitives at some point.\textsuperscript{56}

The Underground Railroad, particularly operations centered in New York City, were central to the presence of fugitive slaves in the Hartford community and other black communities in Connecticut. The majority of individuals travelling through Underground Railroad networks into New England fit a narrow profile: typically they were young men escaping independently, as travelling in groups or with one’s family proved far too conspicuous and dangerous.\textsuperscript{57} They also typically had origins in Border States such as Maryland and Kentucky;\textsuperscript{58} slaves in the Deep South had far more daunting prospects and would usually attempt to exit by ship in New Orleans or Charleston, flee to Mexico, or attempt to travel out West.

As the Underground Railroad receives renewed interest and scholarship, however, these models of the typical fugitive or self-emancipator have begun to look somewhat limiting. Firstly, while the solitary escapee was in fact the most common sight, due to the practicality of it, it is important to note that familial connections were frequently a motivation for escape. Many who escaped would work to purchase, or facilitate the escape of, their family members. This was a process that often cost them lifetimes of labor and fortune, but was a fight that many fought so that they may share the fruits of freedom with their loved ones.\textsuperscript{59} On the note of purchase, Cheryl Janifer LaRoche makes a case for self-purchase as a much greater

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{ibid.}, 5.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{ibid.}, 16.
\textsuperscript{59} Cheryl LaRoche, \textit{Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad}, 127.
factor in self-emancipation than has been accepted previously by the historical record, noting that formerly enslaved including slave insurrection leader Denmark Vesey and the father of William Still, a Pennsylvania abolitionist, Underground Railroad agent, and author, purchased their way to freedom.\textsuperscript{60} And while the Border States did provide the most logistically feasible escape routes—whether into New England or into the free West of Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana—Eric Foner’s recent analysis of Sydney Howard Gay’s meticulous records of fugitives moving through New York City into New England shows a surprising number of slaves as having originated as far south as Virginia and North Carolina.

James Lindsay Smith was born into enslavement in Northern Neck, Virginia. As a boy, he sustained a serious injury to his knee when it was crushed under the weight of a large log. His mother pleaded to their enslaver for a physician to be called on James’ behalf. As he recalls, “he said he had [slaves] enough without me; I was not worth much any how, and he did not care if I did die. He positively declared that he should not employ a physician for me.” Smith would be lame in that leg for the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{61} Growing up within the institution, and seeing the misery it caused his parents in the late years of their lives, Smith grew to deeply resent his enslaved status and began to seek out means of subversion. He once intentionally struck his injured leg against a stone and managed to feign a broken bone.\textsuperscript{62} However, he eventually came to realize that there would be no true reprieve from

\textsuperscript{60} LaRoche, 115.
\textsuperscript{61} James Smith, \textit{Autobiography of James L. Smith}, 1-3.
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{ibid.}, 21-2.
the oppression of enslavement other than that which would come from running away.

Each slave naturally had their own individual reasons for risking their wellbeing and their lives by fleeing to the North, but they can be bulked into two major groups, which Foner eloquently explains, using two famous fugitives as examples: “Some, like Douglass, planned for months; others, like Pennington, decided to run away because of an immediate grievance—in his case, his owner’s threat to whip his mother for insubordination.” LaRoche further argues that many of these more “impulse” fugitives fled in direct response to impending sale, or the threat of sale, into the deep South—a fate that almost always brought the reality of far greater cruelty and of a lifetime of enslavement.

Smith’s break for freedom unfolded in the summer of 1838, following roughly six months of plotting and preparation. He and two other enslaved men commandeers a small boat upon which they intended on sailing as close to freedom as they could. After three days on the Chesapeake Bay they landed near Frenchtown, Maryland, and continued their flight on foot. According to Smith’s autobiography, it quickly became apparent that his damaged knee would preclude him from keeping pace with his fellow escapees, at which point they told him, “We shall have to leave you for our enemies are after us, and if we wait for you we shall all be taken; so it would be better for one to be taken than all three.” In Smith’s case we see confirmation of the suspicions that led the majority of fugitive slaves to flee alone,

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64 LaRoche, 36.
despite strong desires to maintain familial and fraternal connections: the impracticality of group escape proved insurmountable. Once Smith lost sight of the other two he “sat down by the road-side and wept, prayed, and wished myself back to where I first started. I thought it was all over with me forever.”

Smith decided to not let himself succumb to this despair, however, and pushed north as darkness fell, following what he would learn later in life were train tracks. During the night Smith first heard the bone-rattling rumble of an oncoming train, and he was convinced that he was being pursued by the devil himself. He dove off the tracks and hid from the massive beast, resuming his walk with a heart full of fear. When the terror returned just after sunrise he was able to observe it, coming to the realization that the infernal beast had wagons attached to him, carrying what he presumed to be souls en route to hell. He writes, “I looked through the windows to see if I could see any black people that he was carrying, but I did not see one, nothing but white people. Then I thought it was not black people that he was after, but only the whites...and I for the first time took a long breath.”

After another day or so of travels he eventually reached New Castle, Delaware, a town along the Delaware River, at which point he was by chance reconnected with the two runaways with whom he had first escaped. The three men boarded a boat bound for Philadelphia, and at the dock in Philadelphia Smith once again parted ways with his compatriots; they had decided to board a ship for Europe, and Smith opted to forge off into the city without a plan or a known ally. He wandered, looking for work as a shoemaker among Philadelphia’s free black

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66 Smith, 43.
67 ibid., 45.
communities, and before long found himself in the caring hands of some black Underground Railroad agents who advised him to continue his voyage North, writing a letter on his behalf and instructing him to carry it via steamboat to David Ruggles in New York City.68

While history has given David Ruggles far less credit and acclaim than some of his more outspoken counterparts in the abolitionist movement, such as Fredrick Douglass, his work with the Underground Railroad made the escapes of Douglass, Smith, and countless other fugitives possible. Ruggles—born in Lyme, Connecticut in 181069—would regularly scour the docks of New York City in search of fugitives (this is how he discovered Douglass; Smith would be found by an ally of Ruggles who was performing a similar duty.) Ruggles biographer Graham Russell Gao Hodges writes, “In addition to his service as the key conductor of the Underground Railroad in New York City in the 1830s, Ruggles was a tireless, fiery, pioneering journalist, penning hundreds of letters to abolitionist newspapers, authoring and publishing five pamphlets, and editing the first African American magazine, the *Mirror of Liberty*.”70 If the Underground Railroad was not the structural, organized institution than many in the 19th century feared or the literal railroad that many in the 21st believe, it was a string of heroic individuals within free black communities such as Ruggles and his allies that offered innumerable fugitives security and guidance as the treaded into unfamiliar territory on the road to freedom.

As Smith’s steamboat approached New York City, he was struck with fear and uncertainty regarding his prospects of finding Ruggles and of navigating a city that was notoriously dangerous for fugitives and free blacks alike. He was met with good fortune, however, encountering a woman on the dock who knew Ruggles and agreed to lead Smith to his home. Ruggles allowed him to stay in his home for a few days, giving him instructions the following Monday to board a boat toward Hartford via canal,\textsuperscript{71} with instructions to take a letter to a Mr. Foster.\textsuperscript{72}

Once he reached Hartford, Smith—at this point familiar with docking in cities foreign to him—found a man of color on the dock and asked him if he knew a man by the name of Mr. Foster. The man was able to direct Smith to the home of Henry W. Foster, a black tailor who lived on Bliss Street in Hartford.\textsuperscript{73} Up to this point, every time that Smith had found assistance—in Hartford with Foster and his allies, in New York City with David Ruggles and others, and in Philadelphia with the black Underground Railroad operatives—it had been within the free black community. What’s more, Smith had entered multiple times into unfamiliar Northern urban environments, and with increasing confidence he sought respite each time with blacks that he came across. The racial identification that had been a mark of enslavement in Smith’s old home was now serving as a mark of resistance.

Once Smith arrived at Henry Foster’s home and presented him with the letter from Ruggles he heartily congratulated Smith, introduced him to many of the

\textsuperscript{71} According to Kim Silva of the Farmington Historical Society and the CT Freedom Trail, canal routes through Connecticut were perhaps the single most important means of Underground Railroad transit in the state.

\textsuperscript{72} Smith, 50.

abolitionists in the Hartford community (presumably including individuals mentioned in this paper), and gave him money so that he might continue his voyage on to Springfield, Massachusetts. It was at this point that Smith finally realized that he “had some friends” in a nation that otherwise seemingly only harbored hate for him and for all African Americans.\textsuperscript{74} In 1842 he settled down in Norwich, Connecticut, about 40 miles from Hartford, and it was here that he would live out the bulk of his remaining years as a minister, a family man, and an activist, publishing his autobiography in 1881.

Its important to note that the number of slaves who fled the institution was negligible in terms of its direct effect on the institution; somewhere between 1,000 and 5,000 slaves fled per year between 1830 and 1860, and the slave population in the United States in 1860 was nearly 4 million. However, the political significance of the act of fleeing cannot be understated. Firstly, the mere presence of fugitives in the North facilitated numerous political discussions, firstly ones that led the nation to the War and later ones that fostered emancipation.\textsuperscript{75} Pennington and Douglass are just two of scores of abolitionists and important political voices that fled enslavement. Scholars have very recently begun to explore the ways in which both self-identification and interpersonal relationships between former slaves in free society can be defined as a “fugitive class” a unique identity within free black communities.\textsuperscript{76} These sub-communities not only had an impact on the fugitives who

\textsuperscript{74} Smith, 52.
\textsuperscript{75} Eric Foner, \textit{Gateway to Freedom}, 223.
\textsuperscript{76} LaRoche, 45; Susanna Ashton, “A Plausible Man: The Storied Life of Fugitive Slave and Transatlantic Agitator, John Andrew Jackson” (Brown Bag Lecture, Gilder Lehrman Center, Yale University, October 28, 2015).
found place and camaraderie in them, but also influenced the larger communities they existed within.

The presence of fugitives in the North marked an increase in fluidity and chaos of free and enslaved status for African Americans. This proved to be a major spur of immediatist abolitionism. Sinha writes that the line between slavery and freedom “was blurred by runaway slaves, kidnapped free blacks, a vigorous domestic slave trade, and African American churches and schools feeding antislavery activism.” Sinha, 199. Slave flight also held political significance in another important way; it created tremendous alarm in the South, forcing enslavers to reckon with the fallibility of their “sacred institution” and creating tension between the North and the South. 

Regardless of the numerical impact of slave flight, it is well confirmed that individuals in the South were deeply concerned with the impact of the Underground Railroad. According to Foner, journalists of the late antebellum period “credited the underground railroad with far more organization and impact than it actually enjoyed.” As evidence of this fear of the Underground Railroads size and structure, we can look to Ohio politician James Loudon, who in June of 1850, three months before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, called for consideration to be given to the use of military power against the forces of the Underground Railroad.

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law severely compounded the tensions between the North and the South. This law was simultaneously a direct response to

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77 Sinha, 199.
78 Eric Foner, Gateway to Freedom, 4.
79 ibid., 6.
80 LaRoche, 6.
fears of slave escape and “the single most important legislation responsible for pre-
Civil War African American migration through escape and the growth of the
Underground Railroad.”\textsuperscript{81} While the law—which charged the federal Government
with facilitating the return of fugitive slaves in the North to their enslavers—was
designed to deter escape and to limit the influence of fugitive abolitionists in the
North, its effect was far different. Firstly, it necessitated an increased level of
organization and efficiency within escape networks. LaRoche writes, “With the law
came more formalized, organized, institutional efforts to assist escapees; moving
them through the landscape became more efficient, enabling ever greater numbers
of escapes.”\textsuperscript{82}

Furthermore, the Fugitive Slave Law awoke a tremendous amount of
antislavery sentiment in the North, allowing, “some of the most repugnant features
of slavery into the heart of Northern cities and towns” and “push[ing] both Black
and White abolitionists” toward increased resistance and defiance.\textsuperscript{83} The law
inspired a longtime resident of Forest Street in Hartford, Harriet Beecher Stowe, to
write \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin}, a novel that infuriated thousands of white northerners that
were otherwise impervious to the atrocities of enslavement. As the preeminent
figurehead of both slave flight and abolitionism, Fredrick Douglass described the
law as one that made the nation into “the enslaver’s hunting ground,” and he later
said that the law caused him the greatest personal crisis of his religious life.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{81} LaRoche, 118.
\textsuperscript{82} ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{83} ibid.; Jane Pease and William Pease, \textit{They Who Would Be Free} (New York:
Atheneum, 1974) 217.
\textsuperscript{84} LaRoche, 120.
The 1850 Fugitive Slave Law was both draconian in nature and a source of daily anxiety and agony for fugitives and free Blacks alike in the North; the law provided little protection for free black against kidnapping, it applied to many women and men who had been law-abiding residents of the North for decades, and it overrode scores of state and local laws throughout the North. However, time has now illuminated in many ways the indirect value of the law as a “gadfly” of sorts that precipitated a better structured Underground Railroad, as well as many of the public debates that would lead us on the road to federal emancipation.

James Lindsey Smith profoundly and dramatically experienced the effects of the Fugitive Slave Law. At the time of its passage he had lived in Norwich for nearly 8 years. During this time he worked as a shoemaker and was an active lecturer on the southern New England antislavery circuit. Following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, he began to have incredibly vivid nightmares of being captured by his enslaver and returned to Virginia. The next day, while at his shop, Smith observed none other than his former enslaver, exiting the Norwich-Worcester train. The man—to Smith’s horror—disappeared through a door leading to the U. S. Marshal’s office; Smith was at this point entirely convinced that he was to be returned to enslavement. In his own, understating words, “I could do no more work that day.”

The silver lining of Smith’s harrowing ordeal shines in the response of the citizens of Norwich. After he saw the man he believed to be his former enslaver, Smith passed along his description to all of us customers who came into the shop for

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86 Strother, 104.
87 Smith, 91.
the rest of the day, and they all kept watch in town vigilantly. One of the customers was the town crier, and he went to each hotel in the town in search of a man fitting the description provided by Smith, but found no one. Smith even went to the U. S. Marshal, who assured Smith that he would rather resign his post than turn Smith over to his former enslaver. Finally, another citizen of the town gifted Smith with a revolver, as “death was preferable to slavery, now that I had tasted the sweets of liberty.” Finally, the horrible dreams began to trouble Smith less frequently, and eventually they ceased altogether, due in no small part to the solace provided to Smith by his fellow townspeople.

The best place to close this chapter is a celebration of the tremendous virtue of Smith, and of his friends and neighbors. No greater testament can be given to the Norwich community than that given in a story that Smith included in his autobiography:

It was not till after the Emancipation Proclamation, that a man who is living in Norwich today, told me that after I left the South, and had settled here, he went to Heathville, to the very place where I used to live, saw my master, who asked him whether, in his travels North, he had ever come across a man who was lame, shoemaker by trade; that he would give him two hundred dollars, cash, for any information which would lead to his discovery. He returned home, said nothing whatever to me, for fear that I would be alarmed, sell out and leave the place; said nothing to any one about it till after January 1st, 1863, when freedom was proclaimed throughout the land.  

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88 Smith, 91.
89 *ibid.*, 91-2.
Chapter Three: COOPERATION
Lewis Tappan, James W. C. Pennington, the Amistad, and Interracial Abolitionism, 1839-1841

"Brothers, we have done that which we purposed, our hands are now clean for we have striven to regain the precious heritage we received from our fathers. I am resolved it is better to die than to be a white man's slave..." -Cinqué, 1839

They were being imported to Cuba illegally. And yet, Spanish law gave them no free status. Would they be treated as fugitives, as former captives, or as pirates? On board the Amistad in the summer of 1839, none of these questions registered with much importance to Cinqué and his fellow enslaved women and men. When they asked the chef what was going to happen to them, he said that they were to be killed and eaten.90

The jest intended in this statement was lost over the multipartite translation process, and this poorly chosen chef humor proved to be the final straw for the Amistad captives. Under the cover of darkness in the early hours of July 2, 1839, Cinqué and three other captives—Faquorna, Moru, and Kimbo—killed the chef, and managed to frighten two sailors overboard. At this point, Captain Ramón Ferrer engaged against the 4 men, killing one and fatally wounding a second, but he was eventually killed with the assistance of four or five additional captives. The newly liberated then locked their enslavers, José Ruiz and Pedro Montes, below deck.91

The former captives of the Amistad decided that they would keep these men alive for the purpose of their navigating abilities, and, with the coerced help of the

90 Strother, 67.
Spaniards, they intended to return to their homes in southern Sierra Leone. However, Pedro Montes was able to use his experience as a merchant ship captain to undermine the plans of the Africans: by day he sailed east towards Africa, but by night he navigated to the northwest, with the hopes that the ship would be intercepted near the coasts of the Americas. His hope was realized after eight weeks, when a U.S. Naval vessel boarded the Amistad off the coast of Long Island and arrested the Africans.\footnote{Marcus Rediker, \textit{The Amistad Rebellion} 2.}

It was at this moment that the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter came to the fore. Spanish diplomats, as well as Montes and Ruiz, were insistent that the Amistad prisoners be returned to Cuba for trial—a trial that would almost certainly result in their execution. This opinion was supported by the Van Buren administration, who wanted to maintain positive relations with Spain and who did not want to establish a precedent of federal action against slavery. In fact, the only reason that Van Buren and his Secretary of State, John Forsyth of Georgia, allowed the Amistad case to be decided in court was that they feared that arbitrary action from Washington would hurt Van Buren’s popularity in the North (he would go on to lose the 1840 election regardless). In place of executive intervention, Van Buren and Forsyth placed their faith in Federal District Court Judge Andrew Judson.\footnote{Bertram Wyatt Brown, \textit{Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery} (New York: Atheneum, 1971) 208.} Judson, who had led a vicious persecution of Prudence Crandall in 1833 (as discussed in Chapter One), was an avid supporter of colonization, an opponent of black education, and held a noteworthy detest for racial amalgamation. Since the
events in Canterbury he had served as a congressman, and President Andrew Jackson appointed him to his court position in 1836.\textsuperscript{94}

On the other side, abolitionists throughout the North seized upon the \textit{Amistad} case as an opportunity to dismantle the credibility of enslavement from within the American legal system. They asked, in Marcus Redicker's words, “Had [the Amistad rebels] not asserted their own natural rights by killing the tyrant who enslaved them?”\textsuperscript{95} The fight for the Africans' freedom came from many angles: the \textit{Amistad} rebels themselves influenced their own freedom tremendously, quickly adapting to and working within American legal and cultural structures. Furthermore, the American abolitionist community worked tirelessly toward this aim, with assistance coming from both white and black abolitionists in Connecticut. The \textit{Amistad} case fostered both cooperation and tension within the realm of interracial activism.

Among white abolitionists, no individual devoted themselves to the cause more wholly than Lewis Tappan. Tappan's interest and involvement in the \textit{Amistad} affair began almost immediately upon learning of the prisoners. He was alerted of the case by a letter from rank-and-file New Haven activist Dwight Janes.\textsuperscript{96} Tappan reached out to Simeon Jocelyn and Joshua Leavitt—an editor of the \textit{Emancipator}, and an occasional opponent of Tappan on this issue of political emancipation—for the purpose of forming the “Amistad Committee.” He then went to meet with the \textit{Amistad} Africans in their New Haven jail, where he decided that the most important

\textsuperscript{94} Rediker, 97.
\textsuperscript{95} \textit{ibid.}, 2.
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{ibid.}, 104.
order of business would be to give them an Evangelical Christian sermon—which they had no way of understanding. He then decided that the Africans would need religious instruction, which he charged a group of Yale Divinity students with undertaking before even finding a translator. He also set to work on a publication that would present the Amistad prisoners in a positive light, for the purpose of gathering allies and raising funds.97

According to Lewis Tappan biographer Bertram Wyatt Brown, one of Tappan’s most important successes in his initial mobilization in favor of the Amistad Africans was his ability to make their case a “safe cause.” Wyatt Brown writes, “Gentlemen who were silent about more pressing questions of slavery, gentlemen who for years had muttered about the Tappans’ subversive activities, congratulated themselves on their liberality in supporting the Amistads.”98 This vital accomplishment of aligning mainstream Northern sentiments behind an abolitionist cause was accomplished in a number of ways. First, Tappan managed to largely unite the abolitionist community behind the cause and his leadership of it, with even the staunchest Garrisonians leaving behind their opposition to him. He also was sure to keep the activities of the Amistad Committee distinct from those of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which helped to encourage more widespread Northern support. Perhaps most importantly, however, he managed to lead the Northern public to the realization that the actions of federal officials were quite often impacted by their prejudices. Wyatt Brown explains that, “Tappan was able to

97 Bertram Wyatt Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery, 206-7.
98 ibid., 209.
enlist the sympathy of the northern public by straightforward reporting of the facts without too much editorial embellishment, a means rather uncommon in antislavery agitation.” The popularization of antislavery within mainstream Northern sentiment was a vital step in the long, difficult demise of the institution, and Tappan’s role in the Amistad affair played no small part in that process.

It quickly became apparent to the abolitionists that finding a way to communicate with the Amistad prisoners would be both an extremely arduous and a very necessary task. Tappan took the task upon himself, bringing in just two days five different Africans to the jail. He faced a great deal of public and professional ridicule for this work, with the New York Morning Herald reporting that Tappan went to the jail with a “black tail.” This was not the only public resistance that Tappan would face for his committed work to abolition. As referenced in Chapter One, Tappan’s New York City home was sacked in the summer of 1834 in response to accusations from the anti-abolition press that the American Anti-Slavery Society—which was at that point fronted by Lewis and his brother Arthur—promoted amalgamation of the races. The mobs that attacked Tappan’s home and their meeting at the Chatham Street Chapel would constitute the worst riot seen in New York City until the draft riots of 1863.

The effort to communicate with the Amistad Africans was next taken up by the Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, a pioneer of deaf education in America and a founder of the American School for the Deaf in West Hartford. During their

99 Wyatt Brown, 209.
100 Rediker, 119.
101 Lemire, 59.
time in Hartford, Gallaudet met with the prisoners for several consecutive days, spending hours a day with them. He hoped to use sign to reach some form of a universal common language. His relative success may have come from the fact that the highly secretive West African Poro Society, of which Cinqué and other males in the group were suspected to be members, featured an advanced system of sign language.\textsuperscript{102}

It was Yale linguistics Professor Josiah Gibbs who finally was able to achieve the most notable breakthrough in communicating with the Africans. He spent hours with three of the young girls in the group—Margu, Kagne, and Teme—and they taught him to count from one to ten in the Mende language. Gibbs then took this newfound skill to the bustling ports of New York, where he walked up and down the piers counting loudly in the Mende language. Eventually, he caught the attention of two West African sailors, Charles Pratt and James Covey. Both of these men were sailors aboard the British naval ship \textit{Buzzard}, which patrolled the West African coast in an effort to halt the slave trade. This ship was captained by James Fitzgerald, who held strong antislavery beliefs and gladly lent the services of Covey to the cause when Lewis Tappan approached him. James Covey was the perfect candidate to assist as a translator because—aside from being fluent and literate in both English and Mende—he had experienced enslavement in West Africa and had been intercepted by the British antislavery forces en route to Cuba.\textsuperscript{103} In sharing both common language and common experiences with the \textit{Amistad} prisoners, James Covey represented an ideal ally to their cause.

\textsuperscript{102} Interview with Kim Silva, March 3, 2016.
\textsuperscript{103} Rediker, 135-7.
Once given a voice through Covey’s services, Cinqué and the other prisoners became virulent and effective self-advocates. Cinqué and some of the other powerful orators among the group, including Grabeau and Fuli, were able to give extensive and compelling legal testimonies that showed their kidnapping from Africa as having been both recent and illegal. They also spoke at length about the horrors of the Middle Passage, their incarceration in Havana, and the abuses that they suffered aboard the Amistad. Cinqué went as far as to sit on the floor of the courtroom, “[holding] his hands together and show[ing] how they were manacled.”104 The testimony of the Africans served to prove to Judge Andrew Judson that the Amistad prisoners had in fact been very recently taken from Africa. Furthermore, it humanized the prisoners, elicited a great deal of public support and sympathy, and showed them to be victims of injustice rather than pirates or murderers.

The Amistad Africans also managed to positively influence their own fate by quickly and carefully learning a great deal about American culture, and using this knowledge to leverage Tappan and other abolitionists as allies. For example, the prisoners were able to grasp the fact that their allies—many of whom, including Tappan, held evangelical sentiments—would be opposed to polygyny, which was widely accepted in Mendi societies. While it is almost certain that several of the men had multiple wives, only one, Fabanna, admitted to having two wives. Another important example of Cinqué and the other prisoners using a profound understanding of American culture to their advantage came with the death of one of the Africans, Tua, in September of 1839. The other prisoners stood watch while

104 Testimony of Cinqué. January 8, 1840, U.S. District Court, Connecticut, NAB.
Leonard Bacon, an abolitionist minister, performed a funeral service. The Africans then performed a service of their own, with one prisoner, Shule, leading the group in a prayer while the rest of the group responded with short phrases “in the communal African style, with great feeling.” While the abolitionists assumed that this was an African burial rite, the prisoners would later explain that this was an attempt to recreate the Christian services as they had observed them.\textsuperscript{105}

The influence of the prisoners’ testimonies, as well as that of the tireless abolitionists and the public sympathy they drummed up, would ultimately pay off. Judson ruled that Captain Thomas Gedney, who was in charge of the naval vessel that intercepted the \textit{Amistad}, was entitled to the ship due to salvage laws, but that the prisoners could not be considered property under Connecticut law, and were thus free. Tappan wrote that Judson, who lived in New Haven and saw the activism in favor of the Africans firsthand, “felt the pressure of public sentiment.” The prisoners would have to endure further time in court through a federal appeals process, but would ultimately prevail, at which point their next challenge became finding passage home to West Africa.

This effort to find a way home would usher in what would perhaps be the most potent piece of cultural adaptation from the \textit{Amistad} prisoners: their expressed interest in learning and spreading Christianity. Lewis Tappan was first and foremost and evangelical Christian, and he had made it clear from his first contact with the \textit{Amistad} Africans that introducing them to Christian faith was of the utmost importance to him. By 1841, toward the end of the Africans’ time in

\textsuperscript{105} Rediker, 158-9.
Connecticut, he felt confident that he had converted some to Christianity and was satisfied that the rest were willing to be taught the faith. As Rediker writes, “It is impossible to tell to what extent Christian language was a matter of belief and to what extent it was a matter of strategy... All that can be said with certainty is that the *Amistad* Africans understood the importance of Christianity within the worldview of the abolitionists and acted to accommodate it, within the larger context of their own main object: to go home.”

The final step in this process of using Christianity towards their aim of returning to western African came in their enthusiasm toward being part of a Christian mission to African. The notion of sending a Christian mission with the prisoners arose from a meeting of abolitionists in May 1841 that included Reverend Theodore Wright and Lydia Maria Child. They perceived an opportunity to form a mission that would be sharply distinguished from those of the American Colonization Society. Wright, Child, and their colleagues detested the ACS, seeing them as an organization designed to remove blacks from the United States at the benefit of racists, and as having “joined hands with the slaveholder” for having accepted copious funds from Southern enslavers. Child described a dream of a “pure mission” that “not a cent from those who bought or sold human beings would ever be allowed to pollute.” They brought the idea to Tappan, who worked to mobilize organizational and fundraising efforts for the Mendian Committee.

While these plans began to come to fruition, similar goals were discussed within the black activist community in Hartford and elsewhere, under the

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106 Rediker, 159.
107 *ibid.*, 208-9.
leadership of Reverend James W. C. Pennington. Pennington would go on to have a prolific and heroic career in community and antislavery activism, and was an integral factor in uplifting and unifying the Hartford black community (his work on this front is discussed at length in Chapter Four). The national attention garnered by the Amistad case was a major factor in Pennington’s decision to accept an offer from the Talcott Street Church in Hartford the previous summer. For two years, Pennington had publically expressed an interest in missionary work. He firmly believed in the importance of self-improvement for the good of the black community and for the aid of God. Richard Blackett defines Pennington’s beliefs, “The God of the oppressed, who intervened to eliminate inequalities through his word, only came to the rescue of those who were determined to help themselves. It was therefore essential that blacks support the U[nion Mission Society].” If the free black North could show their ability to create and sustain a movement of the magnitude Pennington hoped for, then it would globally reinforce the humanity of blacks and “redound their benefit at home.”108 It was in this spirit that Pennington held a meeting of 43 delegates, with the congregants including five of the Amistad Africans, to found the UMS in August 1841.

The delegates met at Pennington’s Talcott Street Church in Hartford. As declared by Augustus Hanson at the meeting, they had been called by, “The undeniable truth, that we are here for some purpose...not in the dim shadows, but

distinctly, to every reflecting mind.” The black community recognized their collective call to action as being not that of a secondary, support role. They rather believed that black activists such as themselves should be the vanguards of an effort in “the land which our fathers loved as the land of their nativity.” In this way, the Union Mission Society perhaps represented a prelude of the Black Nationalist movement that would emerge decades later; blacks of the United States and of Africa came together to embrace solidarity and to resist oppression in a communal, revolutionary fashion.

The biggest hurdle faced by the UMS—as with most organizations built within black activist communities—was that they had to rely entirely on their own strained budgets and limited community fundraising capacities for financial support. Most black communities put virtually all of their hard fought earnings into providing for themselves and their neighbors. As discussed further in Chapter Four, the lack of publically provided social infrastructure for Northern black communities during the antebellum period meant that they had to rely on themselves, their neighbors, and their informal and formal social organizations such as Churches for welfare, education, healthcare, and all other types of support. At the end of the day, this left very little surplus income to donate to a cause such as the Union Missionary Society.

The UMS Executive Committee began by asking that each of the roughly 100 black churches in the country attempt to raise $100 each. This call was met with

110 ibid.
very little response. Reverend Pennington sold a plot of land he owned in New Haven and donated the proceeds to the Society. This, unfortunately, did little to make a dent in the expenditures of the UMS. Despite primarily appealing to black members, the Society had been open to white membership—a necessary source of revenue. Pennington and his colleagues found, however, that white abolitionists were more interested in donating to Tappan’s Mendian Committee.111

The Union Mission Society and the Mendian Committee were both consistent of likeminded individuals working towards a common goal, yet with different motivations. Pennington and his cohorts saw the UMS primarily as an opportunity to uplift the race while proving the organizational mettle of African Americans. Tappan and other members of the Mendian Committee, on the other hand, saw the mission as a chance to spread their evangelical pursuits to a continent otherwise largely untouched by Christianity. These differences in opinions played out in a strained relationship that at points boiled over into outright conflict. Tappan believed that Pennington’s actions in forming the Society were irrational and premature, and believed that they could harm the cause or, perhaps even worse, be a competitor to his Mendian Committee. Pennington offered Tappan a role as an Auditor in the Union Mission Society—an invitation that was probably extended with condescension—and Tappan scornfully declined and responded by suggesting that perhaps Pennington would be an ideal choice to join the Amistad Africans as a missionary. The two organizations continued to jostle for power while simultaneously supporting the Africans; the Society could not raise funds to the

same capacity as Tappan’s Committee, and the Mendian Committee couldn’t organize itself and attract grassroots black support nearly as well as Pennington’s organization.\textsuperscript{112}

The power struggle and distrust that manifested itself around the \textit{Amistad} missionary scheme was not unique. It was a tension that often manifested itself—as in this case—on superficial and logistical levels. However, just under the surface, interracial activist relationships were often fraught with racial anxieties. Perhaps the most famous example was the volatile relationship between Fredrick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, once fast friends and allies whose relationship fractured over ideological differences, but was no doubt strained by Douglass’ distrust of paternalist white abolitionists.\textsuperscript{113} John Stauffer’s \textit{The Black Hearts of Men} examines the tightly bound interracial friendship and alliance of Douglass, Gerrit Smith, John Brown, and James McCune Smith. Stauffer is careful to point out, however, that these men were “in no way ‘representative’ men in antebellum America” or even in the abolitionist movement.\textsuperscript{114}

While the interracial abolitionist relationship was in many ways difficult to sustain, it also had very tangible benefits to the movement, pooling together strengths, ideologies, and best practices. Manisha Sinha writes that, “Interracial immediatism brought together the moral and religious sensibility of white reform and the antislavery tactics of early abolitionists in Britain and the United States with

\textsuperscript{112} Blackett, 24-5.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{ibid.}, 3.
the black tradition of protest.”115 Lewis Tappan was the “most effective manager” of what Sinha described as an “influential evangelical wing” to the abolitionist movement that also included the likes of his brother Arthur, Theodore Weld, Elizur Wright, Joshua Leavitt, and William Goodell, among many others.116 White abolitionists also brought a great deal financial strength to the movement, as well as bringing the message to more public venues. African Americans in the movement conversely provided guidance about the needs of black communities, brought strength in numbers, and provided the irrefutable evidence of the humanity of blacks that was inherent to their activism. William Lloyd Garrison was, for example, a supporter of the African colonization movement until persuaded otherwise by black activists James Forten and Robert Purvis.117 So while the relationships between black and white activists were often fraught with a tension inherent to the times, as seen in the Amistad case, the fight to maintain said relationships in many ways brought out the best in all involved in the movement.

Eventually, under Tappan’s primary organization, five missionaries were selected to join the Africans, who boarded the Gentleman on November 26, 1841 en route for Sierra Leone.118 The two organizations would continue to jostle for power for nearly another year before eventually uniting their strengths under the UMS name with Reverend Pennington as President, with Tappan filling the roles of Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary.119

115 Sinha, 195.
116 ibid., 224.
117 ibid., 219.
118 Rediker, 215.
119 Blackett, 25-6.
“But thanks, thanks in the name of humanity and justice to you.” John Quincy Adams’ words to Lewis Tappan were not given lightly; his expertise and effort from an administrative front, as a law expert, and as a disseminator of information was by all accounts pivotal to the freedom of the prisoners. His efforts would have surely been in vain, however, if it weren’t for the interracial nature of the fight to free the Amistad prisoners and to return them home. The roles played by individuals such as James Covey, Cinqué and the other Africans, Pennington, and countless ground-level black actors in the struggle were absolutely indispensable to its success.

\[120\] Wyatt Brown, 212-3.
Chapter Four: UNITY
Reverend James W. C. Pennington and Community Improvement
Activism, 1840-1841

“A little learning, indeed, may be a dangerous thing, but the want of learning is a calamity to any people.” -Frederick Douglass, Commencement Address at The Colored High School, Baltimore, Maryland, June 22, 1894

The plight of Hartford’s black community, a product of their exclusion from larger society, resulted in a great deal of economic hardship. It was this lack of community resources that made Reverend James W. C. Pennington, a pastor working in Newtown, Long Island,¹²¹ wary of an 1840 offer to serve as pastor and headmaster of the Talcott Street Church and its North African School. Pennington had grown comfortable on Long Island and quite liked being near New York City.¹²² As the famous case of the Amistad rebels unfolded and black activists in Hartford attracted national attention, however, the Connecticut parishioners persisted. Soon, the church’s offer began to look more attractive and Pennington moved to the vibrant New England city.¹²³ In his first couple of years as a Hartford minister, Pennington undertook a wide variety of projects, including work with the women and men of the Amistad and involvement in the black national convention movement. But the core of Pennington’s engagement focused on Hartford. This effort was motivated by the needs of the local black community and it situated the minister within a tradition of urban New England black activism.

¹²¹ Now known as Elmhurst in Queens County, NY; Christopher Webber, American to the Backbone (New York: Pegasus Books, 2011) 78.
¹²² Christopher Webber, American to the Backbone, 120.
¹²³ Ibid., 124.
When the members of Hartford’s Talcott Street Church contacted Reverend Pennington, they were a congregation accustomed to transient, unqualified, and indifferent leadership. Pennington biographer Christopher Webber notes that “the Talcott Street Church had been ‘making do’ with short-term pastorates from the beginning” and that its clergy had been “mostly white.”124 The African School, which resided in the basement of the church, and of which Pennington was now headmaster, had fallen into disorganization and disrepair. African-American children did not have a dedicated school of their own until 1833, and the conditions had remained dismal since that time.125 Pennington’s time in Long Island made him far and away the most experienced teacher the school had ever had.126 This experience would come to serve him well.

In Northern urban black communities, religion and the community it fostered were central to local identities. Outside of the solace and guidance that religion provided to oppressed communities such as these, the black Church was an important site of community organization. It trained leaders, educated the young, and offered a place where individuals of lower social status could share political and social ideas.127 All of this was in some ways a benefit of the black community’s isolation, segregated within a white urban center. Black men and women in Hartford, as in most Northern cities, did not have access to the economic,
educational, social, and cultural infrastructure of their white counterparts. The Talcott Street Church presented one of the best, and often only, outlets for the black community in Hartford.

Pennington’s work in many ways fits logically into the tradition of black activism during his time period. In her family history of black New Yorkers in the nineteenth-century, Carla Peterson shows that, as of the late 1830s, New York City black activists devoted their time primarily to the establishment of community organizations. New York activists held both education and political enfranchisement in high regard, seeing the former as the best route to the latter. Pennington also believed firmly in the connection between education and garnering rights and respect. In 1832 he was placed in charge of drafting the Annual Address for the Second Annual Convention for the Improvement of Free People of Color in These United States. In this address he proclaimed that prejudice and oppression could best be eliminated by acquiring “that classical knowledge which promotes genius, and causes man to soar up to those high intellectual enjoyments and acquirement, which places him in a situation, to shed upon a country and a people, that scientific grandeur which is imperishable at this time.”

This focus on education and community improvement, rather than on abolitionism, in the late 1830s and early 1840s also fits into the broader historical

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130 ibid., 126.
131 Blackett, 9.
narrative of black activism. In his 1972 essay “Elevating the Race,” Fredrick Cooper argues that, from as early as the beginning of the 1820s, black activism was primarily focused on internally improving the black American condition, with the abolition of slavery and the promotion of rights for free blacks taking decidedly secondary roles. Cooper draws his evidence from the writings and speeches of a range of activists (Pennington included), from the resolutions drafted at regional and national black conventions, and from the rhetoric of popular black publications. For example, Cooper points to the prospectus of Freedom’s Journal (published from 1827 to 1829) as being a useful summary of this strain of thought, especially in its earliest years. It reads, “We believe, that a paper devoted to the dissemination of useful knowledge among our brethren, and to their moral and religious improvement, must meet with cordial approbation of every friend to humanity.”

This specific sentiment—that the improvement of the black community would necessitate the respect of whites—is an important point as black activism throughout American history has often been characterized as “integrationist” or “separationist.” While at times stifling, these labels can form a useful framework to understand black community and black identity in northern urban centers. Placing self-improvement advocacy on this spectrum is a complicated task. Cooper, on one hand, frames advocacy for self-improvement as being unilaterally integrationist, explaining that advocacy for moral reform revealed a “wholehearted acceptance of

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the moral values of white middle-class America.”¹³⁴ Peterson, however, recognizes that it can be approached from both integrationist and separationist ideologies. She explains that many New York black activists pursued community improvement because they viewed the main issue facing black Americans as “one of perception.” She cites the particularly violent portrayals of the Haitian slave upheaval and the falsified 1840 census data, which claimed that slaves had higher quality of life than free blacks, as being roots of the misperceptions that black Americans attempted to counteract.¹³⁵

She presents this evidence in contrast, however, with that of black activists building community institutions for purely separationist aims. She explains it as a way that many attempted to distance themselves from wealthy white allies who provided “paternalistic benevolence” and “who demanded gratitude, obedience, and worst of all humility as a reward for their largesse.”¹³⁶ In reality, this tension over the motivations of self-improvement advocacy in terms of relations with the white community reveals that there was no single correct approach. Integration with the white community, especially white activists, presented pragmatic and financial benefits to the cause. However, it often stripped black activists of control within their cause and often came with “too many strings attached.”¹³⁷ Also, asking this question in the sphere of activism beckoned the question of whether a separate or integrated society was the end goal, which certainly had no easy answer.

¹³⁶ ibid., 120.
¹³⁷ ibid.
Pennington had firsthand experience with this tension within black activism over self-improvement advocacy and abolition work, and in these cases proved wholeheartedly his commitment to community improvement when it was most necessary. In the late 1830s Pennington witnessed the rise of the American Moral Reform Society, which turned focus from specific community-level reform within northern black communities toward more vague abolitionist aims. Pennington reflected on this in an anonymous Letter to the Editor in *The Colored American* in 1840, at which point he saw the move towards abolition as being premature and as fracturing a community that had not adequately strengthened itself internally. He writes that, “I do not hesitate to say, that the fever of 1834, which so suddenly turned our people from their noble work of improvement, and set them in chase after shadows fleeting in the wind, has thrown us twenty-five years in the rear.” Pennington showed tremendous wisdom in his long-term vision for the communities which he devoted himself to, and it was this vision that prompted him to focus on community-based activism in Hartford as well.

Attempting to unpack the tensions between integrationist and separationist thought reveals the restrictions of these labels. At the heart of such formulations is a blackness crafted in relation to the ideas and activities of urban whites. Cooper’s suggestion that black self-improvement advocates often yielded to white community leaders is problematic. Indeed the life and work of Reverend Pennington in Hartford demonstrates the limits of such a relational dualism in the antebellum North. Pennington was not as concessionary to the white community as Cooper and others

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138 Blackett, 12.  
frame most self-improvement advocates. His public pleas for school improvement are directed with equal frequency and similar rhetoric to both black families and largely white school committees. His language in warning and censuring these white school committees is frank, honest, and stinging. Pennington diverges from the narrative set by many historians in another important way. Cooper argues that an influx of fugitive slaves into the Northern black activist community shifted much of the focus from self-improvement to abolition,¹⁴⁰ and yet Pennington himself fled enslavement.

One way in which we can confidently place Pennington on the spectrum of integration versus separation is through looking at his stance on segregated schooling. In “James W. C. Pennington: A Life of Christian Zeal”, Richard Blackett points to evidence that, throughout his career, Pennington firmly held a conviction that African American children could be more effectively educated in black schools than through a reliance on the white community. Blackett writes that Pennington insisted “that blacks open their own seminaries and manual-labor and normal schools until such time as white America decided to provide its black citizens with equal educational opportunities.”¹⁴¹ Pennington believed that, in the absence of social and educational infrastructure that could equally support black children, African Americans had to take control of their children’s education and actively fight to improve it. This belief often put him at odds with ideological integrationists within black activism; however, it is important to emphasize that Pennington’s separationism in this situation is practical rather than ideological. It was, based on

¹⁴⁰ Cooper, 67.
¹⁴¹ Blackett, 17.
his rationalization, the best means of improving the community given circumstances that would provide black children with substandard opportunities if left to the white community.

Pennington’s 1850 autobiographical work, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, gave him the opportunity to purposefully draw important connections between his childhood under enslavement and his passion for uplifting the black community, especially its children. Pennington was born James Pembroke in 1807, a slave in Hagerstown, Maryland whose parents were owned by two different enslavers. In writing of his own sufferings and the general sufferings of children within slavery, he highlights community, welfare, and support as essential to child’s upbringing. He writes, “The social circle, with all its heaven-ordained blessings, is of the utmost importance to the tender child.” Pennington’s conviction that an attentive, loving “social circle” is such a vital part of a proper childhood helps us understand how and why he undertakes and sustains such trying labors in the African School, the Talcott Street Church, and the Hartford black community.

At roughly 12 years old, while enslaved, Pennington was trained in the art of blacksmithing by a fellow slave and spent most of his final decade of enslavement specialized in this trade. While growing up he displayed his intellectual curiosity and his tremendous potential. He spent many of his Sundays and evenings copying texts and attempting to teach himself to read from his overseer’s journal. He made use of feathers and berry juice for his writing instruments, and eventually upgraded

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143 *ibid.*, 4.
to a steel pen that he forged for himself.\textsuperscript{144} In \textit{The Fugitive Blacksmith}, Pennington describes a life of enslavement that was marked by cruelty at the hands of his enslaver, his enslaver’s children, and his overseers. However, he makes specific note of the fact that the horrors he experienced are not the product of exceptionally cruel individuals, but rather of an institution that rested upon brutality. He writes, “The reader will observe that I have not said much about my master’s cruel treatment; I have aimed rather to show the cruelties incident to the system.”\textsuperscript{145} Pennington makes clear that his intention in sharing his experiences within slavery is not to elicit sympathy or to exact revenge upon his enslaver, but rather to shed light on the realities of life for enslaved people.

At the age of 21, Pennington decided that he could no longer endure life within slavery, deciding to “take flight” alone and with limited plans.\textsuperscript{146} He struck out full of fear and uncertainly, travelling “under cover of night, a solitary wanderer from home and friends; my only guide was the \textit{north star}, by this I knew my general course northward, but at what point I should strike Penn[sylvania], or when and where I should find a friend I knew not.”\textsuperscript{147} He walked all night while seeking out hiding spots during the day, some of which were so precarious that they required him to spend the entire day in the squatting position.\textsuperscript{148} His journey was perilous, and on the road to freedom he relied on both acts of individual courage and on the selfless assistance of others to successfully make his way to freedom. At one point,

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{144} Blackett, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{145} J.W.C. Pennington, \textit{The Fugitive Blacksmith}, 9.
\item \textsuperscript{146} \textit{ibid.}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{147} \textit{ibid.}, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{148} \textit{ibid.}, 16.
\end{footnotes}
after following a road that a friendly passerby had warned him against, he was
stopped and captured in a small town near Reistertown, Maryland, upon being
unable to produce free papers. He was only able to escape after a series of cunning
lies and a daring flight on foot.\footnote{149} In southern Pennsylvania, Pennington was
boarded for six months by a Quaker couple, William and Phoebe Wright, who gave
him paid work on their farm and helped him perfect his reading and writing
skills.\footnote{150} He put these skills to work for the rest of his life. It was with the Wrights
that he changed his name; he took the middle name William in honor of his
benefactor.\footnote{151} The high regard with which he upheld good moral character helps
illuminate his activist work in Hartford. He believed so firmly, due to his personal
and religious convictions, that building oneself into a good, morally sound individual
is perhaps the noblest pursuit one can undertake. With this in mind it makes perfect
sense that he devoted so much energy to helping community members, especially
children, to establish good habits and lead moral lives.

Pennington proved throughout his career that he was wholly and selflessly
devoted to teaching. On his first day as a teacher in New York, in 1831, he battled 7
miles of snowy conditions on foot only to find that the school building had not been
cleaned since its construction, at which point he cleaned the building himself.\footnote{152} We
can, however, see this passion for education in more depth through his writing. One
tremendous resource for exploring his experience as headmaster of the North

\footnote{149} Blackett, 4.
\footnote{150} Eric Foner, \textit{Gateway to Freedom}, 3.
\footnote{151} Blackett, 5.
\footnote{152} \textit{ibid.}, 10.
wide, and institutional levels is his writings in *The Colored American*, a black newspaper published out of New York between 1837 and 1841. Pennington was a frequent contributor to *The Colored American*, and most notably wrote a 14 article series over the course of 1840 and 1841 titled “Common School Review.” In the first of these, Pennington outlines his goals and intentions for the series, explaining that he would draw on his previous teaching experience in Long Island as well as his time in Hartford to tell stories of how the profession has “alternately tried and delighted [his] soul in the course of nine years.” He also explains that the purpose of writing these pieces and telling his stories is to speak to, and hopefully instruct, two distinct groups. The first is parents, who he believes are the most foundational influencers of the next generation of the community. The second group is the primarily white “school committees” that make the administrative and bureaucratic decisions for the African School. The rhetoric in his articles aimed toward the school committees, in its direct and confrontational language, provides a refutation of Cooper’s implication that community-improvement advocates were always concessionary to white individuals.

In his pieces of advice and warning to parents, Pennington identifies problems in the classroom and draws connections to how these problems can become pervasive on a societal level. For example, in November of 1840 he published a piece deriding parents who spoil, or “make a pet” of their children. He begins by explaining the sorts of problems that this can cause in the classroom, but

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153 Accessed through *Accessible Archives* database
155 *ibid.*
sends his most important message at the end of the article in connecting the
problems to issues seen within the larger community. He writes, “I do not know that
I have the right to approach the family circle, but I have a right to pass strictures
upon what emanates from that circle. And a case like this shows the beginning of
that evil under which society groans, and which results from a want of regard to
rule, order, and law.” He makes clear that he does not wish to insert himself into
family matters simply for the sake of himself and other school teachers, but rather
to stunt the development of bad habits that he believes contribute down the road to
the breakdown of “rule, order, and law” within the community.

He draws similar connections in his next article, which chastises parents who
permit the habit of their children arriving to school late. Again he says that he is not
being selfish in requesting that this practice ends, explaining to parents that they
“do not impose on the teacher only. This evil is very pernicious to the habits of
children themselves. They learn to disregard punctuality in every thing. Seeing that
you are not punctual in sending them, they learn to linger in the streets and lanes
when they go.” He shows here that he understands that the example set by
parents is the primary foundation of children’s upbringing, and he is attempting to
do everything in his power to improve the support network available to children
that he felt he was denied being raised within slavery.

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156 J.W.C. Pennington, “Common School Review No. VII,” The Colored American,
November 28, 1840.
157 J.W.C. Pennington, “Common School Review No. VIII Errors of Parents II,” The
Colored American, March 20, 1841. (On Accessible Archives this citation is listed, in
error, as also being No. VII.)
In equal part to his chastising of parents, however, Pennington utilized the “Common School Review” series to take issue with the school committees who served as the administrative and bureaucratic foundations for the African schools.

His language in these article advocates—with frank, biting language—for the rights and welfare of teachers, as he recognizes that schools need to pay and treat teachers fairly if they hope to hire and retain talented, dedicated individuals. He writes, for example, that:

It is unjust and cruel as death, to send 30, 60, or 100 miles, and invite a young man to come and take charge of your school, parade him before a committee six months’ arduous labor, turn about and tell him you cannot pay. This is robbing a man of his time—it is an unceremonious way of cheating him out of the fruit of his labors.158

Pennington’s writing is very revealing of, not only his passion on the subject of education, but the general plight of African School teachers. Pennington was certainly underpaid during his tenure with the African School in Hartford, and for his first years in Hartford drifted around various meager living situations, often relying on the kindness of friends and parishioners who put him up in their homes.159 He goes on to explain, however, that he again makes these pleas not for his own sake, but for the sake of providing children with the educations they need to be moral and productive members of their community. He writes, “Education is so desirable that every effort and sacrifice ought to be made by every one to diffuse it into the mass of our needy people every where. But this can never be done by

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159 Webber, 135.
robbing teachers.” His conviction is clear; Pennington was remarkable in his ability to devote every shred of his being to his community and left a profound and impactful mark, especially in these first couple of years he spent in the city.

Despite Pennington’s tireless efforts, the change that he sought to affect in the education of Hartford’s black children was far from immediate. Without additional funding, Pennington was able to do little to improve the state of the North African School, passing it off to the young and brilliant Augustus Washington in 1844 after four frustrating years as headmaster. He was able to, however, with his constant advocacy, ignite a wave of activism toward black school reform in Hartford, which eventually forced the school committee to provide better salaries and funding. Furthermore, his activism opened the eyes of black Hartford adults to the importance of education to the advancement of the community, and, as he had predicted, they flourished once taking agency over the education of their own children. The Hartford school committee gave the African American community the choice of attending white schools in 1852, and they instead opted to continue attending the African schools until Connecticut education was fully desegregated in 1868.

The rest of Pennington’s career and life saw him continually growing, transforming, and giving, as he made profound impacts both in the United States and abroad. In 1843, the Connecticut Anti-Slavery Society selected Pennington to

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161 Blackett, 16
162 ibid.
represent them in London at the Second World Anti-Slavery Convention.\textsuperscript{163} This time at the Convention was not the last that he spent in overseas, however, as the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 forced Reverend Pennington to leave the United States and culminated in a dramatic saga for his freedom. Pennington remained in Hartford until 1848 and then returned to New York City, all while continuing to be a religious leader and prolific activist, devoting increasing amounts of his time to the Antislavery cause. However, Pennington, who had recently remarried and begun to start a family,\textsuperscript{164} became increasingly uneasy with his station as a fugitive slave in the public eye. New York City left him very vulnerable to slave catchers and far more exposed to the public eye, unlike Hartford which had provided some shelter.\textsuperscript{165}

Pennington’s fear of recapture eventually compelled him to return to England in 1849, and once the Fugitive Slave Law was passed he was forced to remain in Europe. His saga created a stir in the United States when he finally sent word to friends, supporters and parishioners of his fugitive status and his inability to return to the United States. An article in Fredrick Douglass’ paper says that the editors had learned, “that the reason of the protracted absence of this eloquent and distinguished clergymen in Europe is that he fears that, should he return, he would be seized and carried into slavery, under the operation of the fugitive slave law.”\textsuperscript{166} The article goes on to describe Pennington’s efforts to consult his friends and allies

\textsuperscript{163} Webber, 186.
\textsuperscript{164} ibid., 258.
\textsuperscript{165} ibid., 256.
\textsuperscript{166} “Rev. Dr. Pennington an Exile from His Native Land,” Fredrick Douglass’ Paper, April 10, 1851.
in Hartford and New York for help and legal guidance, and ends with lament at the absence of Pennington at the hand of a cruel and unjust law. “What must the Savior think,” it reads, “of a law, or an article in the Constitution as generally interpreted, which delivers up one of his ministers as a prey to the oppressor.”167

Pennington was finally able to return to the United States in the summer of 1851 when John Hooker, a friend and ally that he had met in Hartford, purchased him from his original Maryland enslaver and executed a deed of manumission.168 While having been free in heart and free in practice for about 25 years, Pennington was finally a free man in the eyes of the law. He spent most of the final years leading up to his 1870 death169 living in New York, but did spend some time beginning in 1856 living in a rental home in Hartford, on a small street that was then called Baker Street in the new, blue-collar community of Frog Hollow.170 Baker Street is now called Ward Street and is just four blocks north of Trinity College’s campus.

Pennington, who left indelible marks everywhere he went and was a vital piece of abolitionist history. From leading the fight to desegregate New York City public transit,171 to marrying Fredrick Douglass to his wife in the home of an abolitionist who was harboring Douglass along the underground railroad,172 Pennington will long grace our history books and be remembered for many great

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167 “Rev. Dr. Pennington an Exile from His Native Land,” Fredrick Douglass’ Paper, April 10, 1851.
169 Blackett, 6.
170 Webber, 383.
171 ibid., 327.
172 Eric Foner, Gateway to Freedom, 3.
deeds, but it is important that his contributions to Hartford's black community in the opening years of the 1840s are not soon forgotten.
Epilogue: SACRIFICE
The 29th, 30th, and 31st (Colored) Regiment Connecticut Volunteers, the Hardships of War, and the Fight for Liberty, 1863-1864

“For surely it will be conceded that when a man has bought his adopted country by his blood, it is his own. While as a race, the Negro race, this is our adopted land, yet as individuals, it is our native land.” - Alexander Newton, Commissary Sergeant, 29th (Colored) Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Infantry

“It is war times now and Some Body has got to do some thing For their Country.” When Joseph Orin Cross, an African American born free in Griswold, Connecticut, sent these words to his wife in December of 1864, he expressed a sentiment widely held by men of the black communities of Hartford and of towns and cities throughout the North. Cross represented one of over 1,600 men from Connecticut to enlist in the 29th, 30th and 31st Regiments in the closing months of 1863. Others hadn’t waited this long, with some joining the 54th Massachusetts Regiment early in 1863 and others enlisting in several of the more than 150 United States Colored Troops regiments. These men were all called to a common cause, but enlisted for many different reasons. These reasons are important to examine because of the question they help answer, as asked by Chandra Manning: “Why would more than 180,000 black men fight for a government that, for its entire existence, had smiled on the enslavement of members of their race?”

The motivations for enlistment held by black Connecticut soldiers varied greatly, but shared a common thread of selflessness. Some men, like Cross, fought

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out of national patriotism. Others risked their lives for liberty, which they saw “as an intangible and broadly applicable ideal, not a privilege or possession restricted to a few.”175 Black soldiers did not only seek liberty for enslaved African Americans in the South however; they hoped that the success of the Union, and their contribution to it, could improve their condition at home in the North. After all, as noted by troops of the 14th Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, enslavement still cast a “baleful shadow over the whole land from Maine to Texas,” despite abolition in the northern states.176 Rather than harboring resentment against the Union because of this historical and ongoing oppression, African American men seized an opportunity to influence change through their service and sacrifice.

Leonard Percy embodied this aspiration. For Percy, a 50-something black man from Granby, Connecticut, the pivotal key to liberty lay in the right to vote. According to the writings of William Case, a white man from Granby, Percy overheard him and another man discussing the fact that they believed that a war over emancipation could lead to the eventual enfranchisement of African Americans. At this point Percy interjected, saying: “Do you believe that? I would die to have that day come.” Percy’s words would prove prophetic. He enlisted in the 30th Regiment, alongside his three sons Earl, Alfred, and Charles, and died while in the service.177

Aside from fighting to end enslavement and to achieve equal rights in the North, black soldiers fought in the Union Army in an attempt to dispel perceptions of racial inferiority among white Americans and to “earn” their place in the

175 Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, 126.
176 *ibid.*, 5.
American citizenry. Manning argues that an important aspect of this was the fight for the “manhood of the race.” Enslavement “robbed black men of man of the nineteenth century’s hallmarks of manhood, including independence, courage, the right to bear arms, moral agency, liberty, of conscience, and the ability to protect and care for one’s family,” all of which could theoretically be restored through combat.\textsuperscript{178} Tangential to this desire to earn the trappings of manhood was the yearning for a sense of place in, and ownership of, the United States. Alexander Newton of the 29\textsuperscript{th} Regiment expressed this sentiment in his autobiography, writing, “While it had always been said that this was a white man’s country, we were determined that the black man should share in this honor of ownership. And the best way that this ownership could be established was through the loyalty of the black man on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{179}

For the reasons outlined above, and for scores of others, black northerners from Connecticut and from throughout the Union were ready to take up arms from the outset of the war. It would take upwards of two years, however, for the federal government, Connecticut state officials, and the white public to warm up to the idea of black Union soldiers. Initially, broadly accepted theories of racial inferiority precluded African Americans from service. Many individuals believed that black soldiers would flee at the first sound of gunfire. According to James Oakes, even President Lincoln “wondered whether men reared in bondage could become good soldiers.”\textsuperscript{180} Lincoln and the federal government also held political reservations

\textsuperscript{178} Manning, 129.
\textsuperscript{179} Ross McCain, 14.
about arming African Americans. Throughout the war Lincoln was extremely cognizant of the vital importance of the Border States that had remained in the Union. In August 1862, Lincoln told a group of visitors that the Union could not lose Kentucky to the Confederacy, and that he believed that arming African Americans “would turn 50,000 bayonets from the loyal Border States against us that were for us.”

However, in the War’s third year, as casualties mounted and the Union Army became increasingly desperate for enlistments, the need to call upon willing and able African Americans became apparent. According to Oakes, “[Lincoln and the Republicans] realized that they could not destroy slavery if they did not win the war, and they eventually concluded that they could not win the war unless they reversed decades of federal policy and enlisted tens of thousands of African Americans in the Union Army.” Black soldiers proved far more beneficial to the cause than could’ve been anticipated. As Lincoln wrote in a letter to General Grant in August 1863, the arming of African Americans “works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us.” The mere presence of armed black soldiers undermined the cornerstone of black inferiority upon which the Confederacy rested. On the other side of this coin, black combat did a great deal to sway the opinions of the white men they fought alongside in terms of racial inequality and the importance of ending the institution of slavery. According to Manning, “Black soldiers’ obvious bravery and

184 See Alexander Stephen’s 1861 “Cornerstone Speech”
effectiveness in battle made an impression on white troops at every level of the Army from top to bottom.”

Despite these accomplishments and triumphs, black Union soldiers experienced stinging injustice from their own army in the form of unequal pay. Black soldiers received a salary of only ten dollars per month, and from that had three dollars deducted monthly for clothing and supplies. Their white counterparts received sixteen dollars each month and were given an allowance of three dollars and 50 cents for clothing. The pay discrepancy was not only insulting but also brought hardship upon the poor black families that soldiers had left behind. John H. B. Payne, a soldier from Ohio, wrote: “If the white many cannot support his family on seven dollars per month…I cannot support mine of the same amount.” In May of 1864, on what was supposed to be the first pay day for the 29th Connecticut, Alexander Newton wrote that the regiment was “disgusted with this failure on the part of the Government to give us a decent compensation for our work as soldiers.” Despite the economic hardships, many black Union soldiers altogether refused their wages, choosing to boycott on payday in an effort to send a message to the federal government and to display the “disharmony in the ranks” that was being produced by the wage gap. Many members of the Connecticut black regiments considered participating in this protest, yet all except for I. J. Hill of the 29th accepted pay when promised by officers that next month’s pay would be the full 16 dollars.

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185 Manning, 123.
187 Ross McCain, 16.
Hill recalled his anger at the injustice, writing, "No, as I have given my life I will become a martyr and die before I accept that sum." Two days later, officers brought the good news that the state of Connecticut had decided to make up the difference in pay, and all men were given the full salary of 16 dollars.\textsuperscript{189}

Connecticut’s black regiments were exemplary of bravery, and the types of wartime peril that necessitated it. The trials of military life struck the 29\textsuperscript{th}, 30\textsuperscript{th}, and 31\textsuperscript{st} Regiments before they even saw combat. The men found rations to be heinously inefficient; Joseph Cross wrote home, “I know what it is to go hungry, but I have Learnt how to steal for a living.”\textsuperscript{190} Once in combat, however, the men would come to learn a whole new level of suffering. The 29\textsuperscript{th} would spend over a month participating in the Siege of Petersburg, suffering 178 casualties. I. J. Hill of the 29\textsuperscript{th} Regiment recalled overhearing a white soldier saying, upon seeing them: “Well, they are taking those colored men to their slaughter pen in front of Petersburg.” Tragedy would strike the 31\textsuperscript{st} Regiment at the Union fiasco that was the Battle of the Crater in July of 1864. The battle was an attempt by the 49\textsuperscript{th} Pennsylvania Regiment—led by an engineer and primarily consistent of coal miners—to plant explosives beneath Confederate fortifications and strategically attack in the chaos that followed. The plan backfired, however, and Union troops found themselves at the bottom of a crater they had created, unprotected from a barrage of Confederate firepower. More than half of the 31\textsuperscript{st} Connecticut would be killed or wounded, including all of their officers and totaling 136 men. The men of Connecticut’s black Regiments experienced all of the trials and horrors that the War could bring.

\textsuperscript{189} Ross McCain, 17.
\textsuperscript{190} ibid., 18.
The hundreds of black men who fought for the Union cause represented a great deal of individual courage, selflessness, and initiative. However, their service also represented the legacy of those who came before them. By the time the War came, Prudence Crandall had fled Connecticut, a state that would celebrate her in the future but that offered nothing but scorn during her lifetime. She spent the War years in Mendota, Illinois, remaining actively involved in anti-slavery activity, and maintaining contact with William Lloyd Garrison. She continued, however, wishing in vain that she might someday be able to return to her calling of educating black children in her home state of Connecticut.

During the years of the war, James Lindsay Smith kept a shop in Franklin Square in Norwich, Connecticut. He wrote at length, and with great pride, on the 29th Connecticut Regiment. He saw black combat as one of the best opportunities for black Americans to unequivocally, and permanently, assert their freedom. In his autobiography, Smith wrote, “The black man went into the war with but one determination: that once learning the use of arms, he would never again be made a slave. Whether he ever enjoyed the blessed privileges of freedom himself it mattered little to him so that his race derived the benefits.” Smith affirms the selflessness and the ambition of those Connecticut men who fought for the freedom of their enslaved brothers and sisters; a selflessness and ambition that was in many ways not dissimilar to that shown by those who had aided Smith in his flight from enslavement some 25 years earlier. David Ruggles had passed away several years

192 Welch, 161-4.
193 Smith, 82.
194 ibid., 114.
earlier, falling ill and dying in 1849 at the age of 39, but his legacy lived on in the freedom of Smith and scores of other former fugitives.\textsuperscript{195}

Less is known about the fates of the Amistad Africans by the time the Civil War came. Relatively few remained committed to the establishment of a Christian mission, and those who did established themselves by 1843 on a plot of land on the West African coast roughly halfway between Freetown, Sierra Leone and Monrovia, Liberia. Cinqué would spend the rest of his life splitting time between the mission and his familial duties. Many others involved themselves in wars against the slave trade. James Covey, born Kaweli, had returned to West Africa along with the mission, took part in this fighting and was killed in Mperri within a few years of leaving the United States.\textsuperscript{196} Lewis Tappan had voted for Gerrit Smith rather than Lincoln in the 1860 election, having lost faith in the authenticity of the Republican Party’s antislavery rhetoric. It would take the Emancipation Proclamation to turn Tappan towards trusting and supporting the President. The summer of 1865 would prove bittersweet for Tappan, marking the end of the Civil War but also the death of his brother and activist colleague Arthur. Lewis Tappan would pass away in 1873.\textsuperscript{197}

The War years found Reverend James W. C. Pennington aging—but still active and contentious. He spent parts of the War living in New York City and others living in Poughkeepsie, New York. He was an prolific voice in activist pursuits, including abolition, the effort to raise black troops for the War, the fight over colonization, and others. He consistently fought to maintain black voices in these

\textsuperscript{195} Graham Gao Hodges, \textit{David Ruggles}, 196.
\textsuperscript{196} Rediker, 221-2.
\textsuperscript{197} Wyatt Brown, 336-42.
arenas, and in doing so maintained feuds with Tappan, Garrison, Henry Garnet, and other white antislavery advocates. He died in 1870.

With Pennington’s death, however, did not come the death of his legacy. His work, and the work of all those toiled in the 1830s and 40s to affect positive change on the community and the national level, has proven to be a pivotal foundation for the fight for racial equality in the United States—a fight that carries on today. The women and men remembered in the preceding pages serve as a lasting reminder that history is not only driven forward by those who wield power, but by those who act courageously and selflessly from positions of social marginalization.

198 Webber, 405-14.
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