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ABSTRACT

Racial Radicals: Antislavery Activism in the Old Northwest, 1830-1861

Dana Elizabeth Weiner

In the Old Northwest, networks of activists across dispersed communities took controversial direct action against prejudice and slavery. By largely eschewing the growing cities that disproved the Old Northwest rule, this is a study of reform as it would have impacted most people, at the local level in the smaller communities of the territory that would define the future of the young nation. For these reasons, the oft-neglected states of the Old Northwest are essential to understanding the history of racial politics in antebellum America. The extraordinary activists of the region were determined to face down slavery in its hostile borderlands.

The battles over slavery and the "Black Laws" in the Old Northwest were not merely of local concern, for the region was the central battleground in the extended antislavery campaign. Old Northwestern reformers defended their values in the face of constant attacks—both ideological and physical—from the supporters of the slave system. The "peculiar institution" obeyed no state boundaries, and these racial radicals formed a distinctive movement in response to the singular challenge of living as literal and cultural neighbors to slavery. There, often-isolated individuals found both enthusiastic support and enraged mobbing. Few people maintained neutrality, and their ideological differences often emerged in legal and physical battles. Discussion of race and slavery ignited this region in a particularly explosive fashion, impacted organizations, gender roles and expectations, and generated new ideas about rights, especially freedom of speech.

As stalwart reformers struggled against the northward-reaching tentacles of slavery, the social and political culture of the Old Northwest assumed national importance. The region became a stronghold of political anti-slavery by the 1850s, and increased in prominence as the nation approached the final battle over slavery in the political—and ultimately the martial—realms. What Old Northwest activists had been experiencing for decades—intense and inescapable clashes over slavery—became the national experience. Inspired by a human rights vision that mandated direct action for racial justice, they advocated the free produce movement and fought the "Black Laws." As sectionalism increased, the Republican Party rose to prominence, and the Civil War began.

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Introduction

> "When I drew up the Ordinance, I had no idea the states would agree to the article prohibiting slavery." Nathan Dane, July 1787.[1]

From the date of the creation of the Northwest Territory in 1787, the region became a battleground for ideas about the future of race and rights in the new nation. After over a year of squabbling between northern and southern delegates in the Continental Congress, Nathan Dane of Massachusetts took over as leader of the committee on the western territory and pushed through the Northwest Ordinance. A compromise measure, Article VI of the Ordinance stated, "there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory." As an inducement to the southern delegates, it only applied to the lands east of the Mississippi River, south of the Great Lakes, and west of the Ohio River, and contained a fugitive slave clause permitting southerners to retrieve escaped slaves from the territory. The Congress approved the measure on July 13, 1787.[2]

While many of the delegates regarded the Ordinance as having settled the issue of slavery in the territory, they may not have realized either the extent to which slavery already existed there, or, as Dane suggested, quite what they were getting into. In reality, they left the way open for considerable debate over the status of slavery in the new nation. Subsequent residents and lawmakers of the Old Northwest struggled to mold the provisions of the Ordinance to their own purposes. Many people who already owned slaves retained them, and claimed the law only

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[1] Nathan Dane to Rufus King, July 16, 1787 in Edmund Burnett, ed., *The Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, vol. 8 (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1936), 621-22.

[2] Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 9. Historians have debated whether Dane deserves the credit for this clause. Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 6, no. 4 (Winter, 1986): 350.

forbade them from bringing more slaves into the region.[3] They clashed with abolitionists, advocates of African American rights, and free soilers. With this provision, the Continental Congress introduced rather than settled a struggle over slavery and race relations in a region whose national prominence would only increase over the next century. In the process, they set the precedent for continued debate over the relationship between the expansion of the nation's territory and the future of slavery. This quarrel escalated with the extension of the abolition movement into the Old Northwest in the 1830s.

Though ostensibly settled by Article VI, slavery remained controversial in the new territories in no small part because of the presence of a dedicated cadre of abolitionists and advocates for racial equality, the racial radicals. The environment of the Old Northwest shaped the nature and local efficacy of their activism, organizing principles, beliefs, and goals. Although communities throughout the region fostered outspoken foes of slavery and proponents of African American rights from 1830 to 1861, their struggle is a little-understood aspect of reform history.[4] In Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio—all new states carved out of the Northwest Territory—activists persisted in organizing against slavery and racism in the face of intense opposition. During their rapid growth from the 1830s through the 1860s, these states became sites of acrimonious and often violent debate over slavery and the rights of their residents. The white settlers of this region included migrants from the East and South with

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[3] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 11, 17.
[4] The Old Northwest developed from the Northwest Territory that the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had established. It encompassed the entirety of present-day Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, as well as a portion of Minnesota. This study omits the Old Northwest states of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, as activism was more vibrant in the other four states, and violence was greater. Robert R. Dykstra, *Bright Radical Star: Black Freedom and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). Ohio and Illinois were more thoroughly settled by 1840, in contrast with what James Davis calls the "stalled frontiers" of Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri. James Edward Davis, *Frontier Illinois*, *A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 280.

disparate views on race relations. Despite these states' free status and their very small African American populations, racial discrimination and anti-abolition sentiment ran rife. Directly north of the slave region, they experienced both significant fugitive slave traffic and wrenching transitions in local racial norms.[5] Even though slavery was nominally illegal in all of these states, legislators enacted so-called "Black Laws" that denied African Americans essential legal rights.

In the Old Northwest, networks of activists across dispersed communities took controversial direct action against prejudice and slavery. The focal towns of this study are mostly small, like Noblesville, Indiana and Raisin, Michigan. In most such places, free African Americans represented a tiny, beleaguered minority that often worked with sympathetic whites across racial lines to improve their circumstances.[6] Many community studies of reformers focus on the northeast, especially its cities, but this did not reflect the experience of most Americans, who resided in "rural settings or small villages until the Civil War."[7] By largely eschewing the growing cities that disproved the Old Northwest rule, this is a study of reform as it would have impacted most people, at the local level in the smaller communities of the territory that would define the future of the young nation. For these reasons, the oft-neglected states of the Old

[5] Following Barbara Fields, David Roediger, and Joanne Pope Melish, among other historians, I treat race as an ideological construction, particular to place and time. Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181 (1990), Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), Joanne Pope Melish, "The 'Condition' Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (1999), David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Revised ed. (New York: Verso, 1999 (1991)).
[6] Dykstra, *Bright Radical Star: Black Freedom and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier*, viii.
[7] John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 4.

Northwest are essential to understanding the history of racial politics in antebellum America.[8] The extraordinary activists of the region were determined to face down slavery in its hostile borderlands.

The battles over slavery and the "Black Laws" in the Old Northwest were not merely of local concern, for the region was the central battleground in the extended antislavery campaign. As they fought the clutches of the slave system at home, activists debated the broader national questions of the future of freedom of expression and the status of African Americans. Old Northwestern reformers defended their values in the face of constant attacks—both ideological and physical—from the supporters of the slave system. The "peculiar institution" obeyed no state boundaries, and the racial radicals of the Old Northwest formed a distinctive movement in response to the singular challenge of living as literal and cultural neighbors to slavery. There, often-isolated individuals found both enthusiastic support and enraged mobbing. Few people maintained neutrality, and their ideological differences often emerged in legal and physical battles. Discussion of race and slavery ignited this region in a particularly explosive fashion, impacted organizational efforts, gender roles and expectations, and generated new ideas about rights, especially that of freedom of speech.

As stalwart reformers struggled against the northward-reaching tentacles of the slave system, the social and political culture of the Old Northwest assumed national importance. The region became a stronghold of political anti-slavery by the 1850s, and increased in prominence

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[8] Robert K. Dykstra's study of racial debate in Iowa proves the relevance of another marginalized state for national politics and activism of people against conservative social trends. Dykstra, *Bright Radical Star: Black Freedom and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier*, 270. Historian Gilbert Hobbs Barnes first drew attention to the Old Northwest heritage of abolition, and began to expand the understanding of the religious component of the movement. Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York, London: D. Appleton-Century, 1933).

as the nation approached the final battle over slavery in the political—and ultimately the martial—realms. What Old Northwest activists had been experiencing for decades—intense and inescapable clashes over slavery—became the national experience. As sectionalism increased, the Republican Party rose to prominence, and the Civil War began.

The Old Northwest's ambiguous relationship to slavery contributed to local turmoil as racial limitations on rights became the subject of fierce contestation. As a way station between slavery and freedom, the Old Northwest was the site of both struggle over fugitive aid and militant resistance against racist legislation.[9] Traveling north, many newly freed and self-liberated people journeyed from the southern states to Canada, passing through this volatile and vital region, rather than making their homes there.[10] While Old Northwesterners frequently hosted fugitive slaves for varying lengths of time, there were few incentives and many impediments to the formation of a large local African-American population in this time period. In the ensuing years and through the Civil War, the region saw fiery debate over the presence and rights of free African Americans, whose small populations suffered from extensive *de jure*

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[9] On militant resistance and the Underground Railroad, see Merton Lynn Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority*, *Minorities in American History* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975), 184-87, Charles A. Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," *Illinois Historical Journal* 80 (1987): 183, James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 257. On the "Black Laws," see Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 2.

[10] Keith P. Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 6-7, Carol Pirtle, *Escape Betwixt Two Suns: A True Tale of the Underground Railroad in Illinois* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), John Michael Vlach, "Above Ground on the Underground Railroad: Places of Flight and Refuge," in *Passages to Freedom: the Underground Railroad in History and Memory*, ed. David W. Blight (Washington: Smithsonian Books in Association with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2004), 115.

and *de facto* discrimination.[11] They faced inequity in the form of limited slavery, indentured servitude, and the "Black Laws."[12] In a case that illustrates overt slavery in the Old Northwest, the United States Census of 1840 recorded 331 slaves and over 400 indentured servants as resident in Illinois.[13] The 1818 Illinois Constitution legalized this seemingly incongruous presence of slaves in a "free" state.[14] The censuses of 1810-1840 also recorded small numbers of people held as slaves in all of the Old Northwest states.[15]

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[11] Whites had superseded most of the Native American population of this portion of the Old Northwest by the 1830s, and had become the majority. In later years, legislative impediments to African American presence and rights remained stringent, with a few minor exceptions of states along the Atlantic. Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 3, 5, Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 70-71.
[12] Sandra Anne Baumgartner, " The Legal Status of the Negro in Illinois as Determined by State Legislation and State Supreme Court Decisions, 1818-1853" (Masters Thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1966), iii-iv, 21-22, 48, James H. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," in *The History of Indiana Law*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 38, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 2.
[13] Bureau of the Census 1975. This number compares with census findings in other years thus: 1820: 917 slaves; 1830: 747 slaves; and in 1850, none recorded. For the numbers of free blacks and whites, see Appendix A.
[14] It protected extant relationships between "master and slave or servant," but forbade the contracting of further such relationships. A long history of legislative wrangling accompanied the issues of slavery and race relations in Illinois. For example, a fevered legal battle ensued in 1823-1824 over introducing slavery into the state, and ultimately, the antislavery faction prevented this, but their victory was far from absolute. John D. Barnhart, "The Southern Influence in the Formation of Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 32 (1939): 373, Baumgartner, " The Legal Status of the Negro in Illinois as Determined by State Legislation and State Supreme Court Decisions, 1818-1853", 16. The Illinois law also permitted incoming Southern migrants to bring their slaves with them, provided owners granted them the "chance to choose freedom, or years of service and bondage for their children till they should become thirty years of age." These choices were not of equal plausibility or desirability, for the law required those African Americans who chose freedom to leave the state in sixty days or face being sold as fugitives. It is difficult to imagine that slaves would have made their "choices" in the absence of coercion by slaveholders who wished to preserve their cheap or unpaid labor force. *History of Madison County, Illinois. Illustrated. With Biographical Sketches of Many Prominent Men and Pioneers*, (Edwardsville, Illinois: W. R. Brink and Co, 1882), 33-34. Bills of sale dating as late as 1848 indicate that African Americans continued to be sold and transferred in Illinois. Norman Dwight Harris, *The History of Negro Servitude in Illinois and of the Slavery Agitation in that State, 1719-1864*, Illinois Sesquicentennial, ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1968), 105, 53. In Indiana, where the state constitution did not protect previous arrangements of servitude, many slave owners claimed that the law did not apply to them and kept people in bondage regardless. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," 38, 41.
[15] See appendix A; Clayton E. Cramer, *Black Demographic Data, 1790-1860: A Sourcebook*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 110-13.

The "Black Laws" impeded both the legal rights and daily individual freedoms of slaves, indentured servants, and free African Americans, and closely resembled southern slave codes.[16] Advertisements for runaway slaves and servants regularly appeared in newspapers in the region, demonstrating an aggressive presence protecting slavery.[17] Even formally free African Americans encountered imposing barriers to recognition of their civil status in the Old Northwest, including the illegal practice of kidnapping into southern enslavement. They lacked the legal rights of public personhood whites possessed: the rights to own property, vote [white men only], testify in court, hold public office, attend most schools, and marry across racial lines.[18] Far from improving, race-based restrictions grew more severe over time, as seen in the continual denial of African Americans the right to vote until after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, although *de facto* disfranchisement remained in place much longer in many areas.[19]

Nonetheless, the tiny African American populations and their white allies across the region had ample weapons to fight back, and made their mark locally. Interracial activism against inequality in the Old Northwest took the forms of both anti-"Black Law" efforts and

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[16] In Illinois they dictated that African Americans must carry passes either certifying their freedom or indicating that their masters had countenanced their travel farther than ten miles from their place of residence. Baumgartner, " The Legal Status of the Negro in Illinois as Determined by State Legislation and State Supreme Court Decisions, 1818-1853", 21-22, 37.

[17] Advertisements for runaway slaves and indentured servants appeared in the *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer* on numerous occasions while it was under the editorship of Whig Samuel H. Davis. See *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*: April 21, 1838; July 14, 21, 28, 1838; August 4, 11, 1838; September 8, 15, 1838; August 24, 31, 1839; September 7, 14, 21, 28, 1839; November 2, 1839; July 30, 1841. As would be expected, such ads did not appear in newspapers with an abolitionist or Liberty Party affiliation, but they did appear in Whig and Democrat Papers.

[18] Pirtle, *Escape Betwixt Two Suns: A True Tale of the Underground Railroad in Illinois*, 10.

[19] Baumgartner, " The Legal Status of the Negro in Illinois as Determined by State Legislation and State Supreme Court Decisions, 1818-1853", 32, Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy*, 36, H. L. Ellsworth, *Illinois in 1837; A Sketch Descriptive of the Situation, Boundaries, Face of the Country, Prominent Districts, Prairies, Rivers, Minerals, Animal, Agricultural Productions, Public Lands, Plans of Internal Improvement, Manufactures, &c. of the State of Illinois: Also, Suggestions to Emigrants, Sketches of the Counties, Cities, and Principal Towns in the State: Together with a Letter on the Cultivation of the Prairies, by the Hon. H. L. Ellsworth. To Which Are Annexed the Letters from a Rambler in the West* (Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell, 1837), 50, Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, 92.

other radical anti-racist collaborations. Old Northwest reformers' work against the "Black Laws" was a concrete manifestation of their desire to revolutionize race relations in their communities, a project they saw as continuous with the struggle to abolish slavery. To be an activist under these laws entailed willingness to not only resist abstract mores and distant institutions, but also concrete laws.

Notwithstanding the hostile environment, both local and national reformers used abolition and egalitarian policies to pursue racial liberation in the Old Northwest. Local women and men who embraced the battle against slavery and for African American rights encountered formidable, often violent, resistance. I argue that the fight in this region differed from contemporary northeastern struggles, most importantly in its combatants' experience as dispersed activists under siege, but also in their willingness to blur the factional lines that divided abolitionists elsewhere as the 1830s drew to a close. Other scholars of antislavery, in treating the Old Northwest as a remote, fragmented outpost of the northeastern agenda, have missed the fundamental fact that the trials of transforming this region shaped local activists into unusually dedicated reformers. Whether as newspaper editors or meeting attendees, Old Northwest abolitionists displayed an extraordinary commitment to social and political change, regardless of the personal cost.

Racial radicals, whether African American or white, sought to eradicate both slavery and racial prejudice through their quotidian conduct and reform activism. As progressive agents, they collaborated for the full racial, social, and political equality of African Americans, and

sought to create a more just society through the interconnection of ideas and social practice.[20] They demonstrated this uncompromising devotion as they faced ostracism, financial ruin, and physical danger, but remained singularly committed to enacting egalitarian principles. Even as their opponents sought to destroy them, ideals of transcendent morality and universal human rights sustained activists.

The agenda of racial radicals—to abolish slavery and the "Black Laws"—was bound up with the central problem of the Old Northwest in their era, that of building community in a region undergoing dramatic transformation. Activists and their foes fought over who would mold and who could participate in local politics, culture, and public life in a time when none of these questions were settled. Racial radicals crafted what sociologist Joseph R. Gusfield calls a "relational" community, one that extended beyond the basic parameters of their immediate geographic areas, and which was defined by its constituent "human relationships." Relational reform communities could span distances and arose out of the mutual values and risks of activism.[21]

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[20] In keeping with Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease's usage, I use the term "radical" not to impose a twenty-first century evaluation upon the behavior of these nineteenth-century actors, but rather to demonstrate their ability and willingness to anticipate the mores of a later era. In their explanation of their usage of the term radical, Pease and Pease write: "Most of the radicals, however, stood outside the political process and would destroy or revamp it basically before they would work through it. The use of current terminology is intentional, but it is designed to illuminate parallels, not to create them, to increase understanding of the past, not the present." Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, "Confrontation and Abolition in the 1850s," *Journal of American History* 58, no. 4 (1972): 925. My definition is also informed by Ronald Walters' definition of a radical as a person who wants "to change the structure of society…to overturn the present order." Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 1st ed., *American Century Series* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), xii.

[21] I am indebted to Stanley Harrold for developing this framework in his 2003 book on Baltimore, Washington, and their surroundings as a border region that fostered direct action against slavery. Craig J. Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828-1865*, *Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 37-38, Mary P. Ryan, "Civil Society as Democratic Practice: North American Cities during the Nineteenth Century," in *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234.

In the Old Northwest, local residents experienced longstanding tensions between their emergent regional identity and the fluid transmission of ideas both within the area and between the East and West. Racial radicals at the local level were a diverse group, representing a range of occupations, religions, and backgrounds, from Quaker entrepreneurs to fugitive slave farmers. Local firebrands were not necessarily professional agitators, and many racial radicals were homegrown grassroots activists. Whether they were from southern pro- or anti-slavery communities, reform-rich western New York, or New England, as they forged their communities, Old Northwest people attempted to blend their ancestral cultures with those of their fellow citizens.[22]

While Old Northwesterners knew they lived in a critical region, eastern abolitionists also saw the West as important beginning in the 1830s, before the region's increasing centrality to national politics converted the rest of the nation to that opinion in the 1850s and 1860s. Eastern support played an important role in shoring up western activism, and the eastern old guard benefited from the introduction of the movement into new terrain. Organizations in the east sponsored lecture tours, and newspapers in both regions exchanged information, tactics, and activist energy with one another. Newspapers—and the concurrent press revolution of the era—were central tools to help activists and politicians cross the miles that separated them. As Benedict Anderson argues, papers helped create a sense of "imagined community" by facilitating

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[22] Richard Franklin Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870*, *Midwestern History and Culture Series*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3. This southern-born population included a substantial number of Indiana Quakers. Jacquelyn S. Nelson, *Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1991), 4-5, Ruth Ketring Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, *Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society. Series XXV* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), 33-34.

commonalities and bonds among people who were not in direct contact with one another, but who shared values.[23]

Community and ideological boundaries were hotly contested, and activists frequently faced both hostile words and weapons. Avowing rights and resisting white privilege, both in their region and nationally, local activists operated in a period of shifting and solidifying racial categories.[24] They labored in a new universe of possibilities, challenging the valuation of whiteness as it was in the process of becoming politically entrenched, and refusing to grant it the appearance of natural fact. Many of the residents of these newly settled polities expressed exceptional hostility to antislavery ideas. Their pervasive public resistance to abolition—which extended well past the few previously studied incidents—demonstrates that recently founded communities sought social unanimity. In the face of this intense local opposition, Old Northwest abolitionists sought support elsewhere, uniting with national reformers and forming networks across vast western distances. While their experience as activists differed from that of their peers in northeastern states, they were unusually connected with one another over the miles. Whether

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[23] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 11.

[24] On white privilege, see Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class.* On contemporary shifts in racial thinking, see James Brewer Stewart and Joanne Pope Melish. They argue that older patterns of racial prejudice shifted from 1790 to 1840 to bring about a largely hegemonic "white man's democracy." Concurrent activism by free people of color and white radicals fought this process, but also aided in its implementation through an effort to uplift African Americans from their "degraded" condition. This more firmly bound the conception of race to the body through a shared language. Arguments for increasingly stable categories of black and white in the early nineteenth century defined race as an immutable and heritable biological essence. The resultant shifts impacted contemporary racial understandings, and the developing ideological category of black rapidly took on a punitive character over the course of the 1820s and 1830s. Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860*, 192, Melish, "The 'Condition' Debate and Racial Discourse in the Antebellum North," 657-58, James Brewer Stewart, "Modernizing 'Difference': The Political Meanings of Color in the Free States, 1776-1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (1999), James Brewer Stewart, et al, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North, 1790-1840," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (1998): 197, 236.

mobile or stationary, they became hardened to opposition and resolute in their determination to obtain a public voice in the budding national political culture.

In the Old Northwest, racial radicals departed from the typical trajectories of the national antislavery movement and political parties. Nonetheless, as occupants of the same reform milieu their contemporaries provide the national context for local level reform. Beginning in the eighteenth century, activists across the nation found inspiration in the work of early African American abolitionists. Free African Americans saw and decried the indisputable connection between the obstacles to their own full citizenship and the condition of their enslaved brethren. Their demands for civil and social rights paved the way for racial radical activism. African Americans protested against the colonization movement, claimed full American citizenship and directly demanded civil rights including the elective franchise. White reformers in the early 1830s had a growing capacity to hear these protests, and began to perceive the limitations of colonization and early abolition strategies.[25]

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[25] Such pamphleteers as Richard Allen and Prince Hall in the 1790s originated immediatist abolitionism, but these ideas lacked a large audience until the 1830s when David Walker and his African American and white successors publicized this approach. A wealth of historical scholarship lays out the contributing factors that led to the birth of the organized antislavery movement. Timothy McCarthy and John Stauffer write that historians have detailed the influences of "religion, humanitarian reform, and the market revolution," coupled with "Enlightenment philosophy, improvements in literacy, and democratic political revolution." The African American push for abolition and equal rights has increasingly been brought to the fore as a catalyst for the organized movement. Herbert Aptheker, *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement*, *Social Movements Past and Present* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*, Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, "Introduction," in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, ed. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: New Press, 2006), xviii, Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 86, Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

As the abolitionist movement expanded, ideological divisions increasingly cleaved eastern organizations, although Old Northwesterners often avoided these controversies.[26] Such tensions transformed the first major abolitionist association, the American Anti-Slavery Society. Founded in 1833, it provided the chief national antislavery voice until its schism in 1840, which resulted partially from disagreement over women's right to vote and assume leadership positions in the society. The abolitionist movement then split into what historians usually describe as two main factions: the Garrisonians and the political abolitionists.[27] The most path breaking antislavery organization, the Boston-based group led by the fiery *Liberator* editor William Lloyd Garrison, retained the organizational title of the American Anti-Slavery Society. They were also known as the immediatists, or the "Old Organization." Their radicalism lay in their advocacy of immediate abolitionism, racial egalitarianism, woman suffrage, anti-clericalism, and their refusal to pursue abolition through electoral politics.[28] They argued that partisan politics was necessarily corrupt, and advocated the indirect means of moral suasion as the only pure antislavery method.

The second main faction was the political abolitionists, who were based out of New York, and which incorporated a smaller, moderate evangelical faction. Frustrated with Garrisonian anticlericalism, they founded the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society,

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[26] The historiography of the movement is itself fascinating, as abolitionist scholarship has been influenced by its environment, as exemplified in the reactionary attitudes on race in the first half of the twentieth century that spawned scholarship that assessed abolitionism as a pathological movement. Michael Fellman, "Foreword," in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, ed. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: New Press, 2006), ix, McCarthy and Stauffer, "Introduction," xiv.

[27] As do Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, I question the utility of the political/immediatist divisions, as well as those between African American and white abolitionists, women and men. McCarthy and Stauffer, "Introduction," xix, xx.

[28] They advocated a "come-outer" position, wherein they argued people should depart from the corrupt churches, political parties, and other associations and only join groups that had become purified, as they saw their own. Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and his Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 17-18, Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Fourteenth Annual Report Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (1846)), 55.

colloquially known as the "New Organization."[29] They engaged in direct political action, and used electoral means to advance the antislavery cause. From 1840 to 1861, political abolitionists successively organized through the Liberty, Free Soil, and Republican Parties. Each party found substantial support in the Old Northwest.

While the Liberty Party initially shared many of the anti-racist goals of the immediate abolitionists, by 1842, most members had shifted their rhetorical emphasis away from rapid emancipation and equal rights for blacks and toward concerns with the impact of slavery on whites. The mainstream political parties—Whigs and Democrats—sought to avoid the divisive

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[29] The American Society's position on gender equity had alienated many of its former members who sought to maintain gender relations untouched. Consequently, political abolitionists feared the radical challenge to the social order that consideration of the emerging "woman question," and especially woman suffrage, might have entailed. Blanche Glassman Hersh, "'Am I Not A Woman and a Sister?' Abolitionist Beginnings of Nineteenth Century Feminism," in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Louis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 272, 74, Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 10, 26, Ronald G. Walters, "The Boundaries of Abolitionism," in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Louis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 13-14. Some historians claim there were three factions, including the evangelicals, the most moderate among the abolitionist factions, for they worked within established religious and political institutions. They returned to moral suasion as their fundamental principle, and disdained the other causes the American Society took up. They are difficult to separate from the political abolitionists. Over time, the distinctions between the evangelicals and the political abolitionists blurred even more. Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 135. The American and Foreign Society never obtained much of a foothold in the West.

issues of race and abolition, but were deeply enmeshed with them.[30] Some individual Liberty activists, male as well as female, bucked this trend and advocated racial equality.[31] In 1848 the Liberty Party dissolved, and the Free Soil Party rose in its place. It united former Liberty Party advocates with former Whigs and Democrats, along with other previously apolitical abolitionists. Despite some significant overlap in leadership with the Liberty Party, this new party had a less racially progressive agenda.[32] The main plank in its platform was opposition to the extension of slavery, a stance immediate abolitionists saw as insufficient to eradicate the institution.[33]

In 1854, the old political party system of Democrats and Whigs collapsed, and enthusiastic partisans organized the new Republican Party. Its adherents argued for the

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[30] Partisans sought to maintain a delicate balance upon the blurry line between the North and the South. Michael F. Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development: From the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 30, 27-28, Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, 10. In the 1830s and 1840s, the Democratic Party's main agenda was national unity and loyalty to a pro-Southern, pro-slavery agenda. The party's moderate permissiveness on slavery to court southern voters risked antagonizing their Northern supporters. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 388. By the end of the 1830s, Southern Democrats had obtained an increased influence in national policy formation. Over time the fragile alliance between Northern and Southern interests within the party broke down, and Northern Democrats met Southern demands for "positive congressional action" on their behalf with scorn and refusal. Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority*, 24-25, Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development: From the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln*, 57-58, 87. The national Whig Party, while less permissive toward slavery, also displayed a firmly entrenched ideology of white racial superiority and attempted to avoid the divisive issue of abolitionism. Formed in 1833, the Party remained viable only as long as they could convince voters that there existed important differences between their agenda and that of the Democrats. Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 388, John Ashworth, *'Agrarians' and 'Aristocrats': Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837-1846* (New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1983), 222. Over the course of the late 1840s and early 1850s the positions of the two major parties converged, most notably with their mutual acceptance of the Compromise of 1850. Holt, *Political Parties*, 244.
[31] James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 103-04,10.
[32] Theodore C. Smith, *Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), 2.
[33] The Free Soil Party did not push strongly for emancipation, nor did it fight the Fugitive Slave Law with much vigor. While immediate abolitionists' critique of their insufficient attention to anti-black prejudice was well documented, the Free Soil Party was instrumental in the 1849 repeal of some of the Ohio "Black Laws." However, Ohio's Party's opposition to these laws included a provision looking toward a future in which African Americans would no longer flee into the North and render the population "non-homogenous." Richard H. Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 155-56, 70, 80-83, 87.

economic and social superiority of free over slave labor.[34] Free labor ideology brought slavery to the northern public in a language that they could not ignore, and one that often emphasized the perils slavery posed for white privileges. The Republicans' distinctive ideology melded personal and sectional interest with morality so effectively that the party overcame its numerous political obstacles and rose to electoral dominance in 1860.[35] While the racial radicals labored in this organizational and political universe, their solutions to the nation's discrimination did not neatly lie within factional lines.

This new look at the understudied region of the Old Northwest and its little-known figures allows us to synthesize and update a wide range of scholarship. It intervenes in the historiographies of abolitionist divisions, interracial collaboration, universal rights, freedom of expression, the relationship between gender and politics, and mob violence. Racial radicals, from small-town female abolitionists to anti-"Black Law" fighters, lacked eastern counterparts and cannot be located through an institutional, structural research strategy, for they blurred the usual categories of anti-slavery activism. With notable recent exceptions, historians have attempted to divide activists by categories such as "immediate abolition" or "moderate political

[34] According to the Republican definition, free labor empowered the worker to select work terms, and even ultimately promised the chance to progress to the landholding class, with the assumption that land held the key to economic advancement. This view contributed to sectional conflict in the 1850s over territorial expansion of slavery, for northerners wanted to preserve these lands for free laborers, often presumed to be white men. In free labor ideology, the expansion of slavery represented a threat to Northern laborers' fundamental right to achieve economic independence. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10, 12-14, 16-17, 28, 56.
[35] Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*, 308-10.

abolition," by organizational affiliation or along racial and gender lines.[36] In the process, they have overlooked instances that demonstrate the fluid borders between different types of activism, and between politics and lived experience. The very fact that individuals often changed their allegiances over their life course is telling evidence of this limitation.[37] Local actors often had mobile identities and varied activist trajectories that led them across and through several of these groups.[38] Racial radicals' very complexity of identity and motivation, and the violence that they risked and experienced, demand an approach that takes their singularity into account. As it examines activists at the crossroads of pro- and anti-slavery cultures, this study questions the boundaries of institution and movement, and transcends the inflexible categories prevalent in much of the historiography of abolition and reform.

This dissertation intervenes in a debate over the racial views and activist practices of white abolitionists, both leaders and the rank-and-file. Historians have revealed the failure of white abolitionists to push for sufficient social change and combat their own deeply_imbedded

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[36] Examples of this tendency are found in Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*, Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*, Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and his Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850*, Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). In explaining his near-total omission of African American abolitionists, Walters argues that his reasoning is that he wished to explore how people "firmly embedded in a particular culture" could come to see the necessity of eradicating a well-established institution and practice. In effect, he argues that whites had less immediate reason than African Americans did to embrace it. More recent integrated studies of reform are Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*, John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: The Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[37] One notable example of this phenomenon is Frederick Douglass, who grew closer to political involvement in the 1850s. After splitting off from the Garrisonians in the 1840s and establishing his own newspaper in Rochester, he came to advocate political abolitionism. David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 26.

[38] These people could simultaneously occupy multiple salient categories of identity that motivated their activism. Reading Jane Dailey helped me arrive at this formulation. Jane Elizabeth Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: the Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia*, *Gender and American culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 8.

racism.[39] While evidence of prejudice among many white abolitionists is incontrovertible, the claim that white activists possessed an inevitably limited racial vision remains open to question.[40] While race affected social and political relations nationally, ignoring its local effects on rights was impossible in the Old Northwest. Racial radicals' actions belie arguments that white abolitionists were largely ignorant of African American problems. Historians also claim that white activists in the North had abandoned the broader struggle for racial justice by the 1850s, and only focused on the distant issue of slavery. This contention does not fit the racial radical perspective, nor does it reflect the conditions in which they labored in the Old Northwest. It only applies to moderate political abolitionists like Free Soil partisans of the 1850s, for local radical activists in fact maintained a larger agenda until 1861.[41] Eastern organizations sent lecturers west until the Civil War, representing a continued effort by those at the country's political center to transmit the antislavery and anti-prejudice gospel over the networks that linked the nation. While many bold African Americans confronted white racism both within and outside of reform

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[39] There are many notable instances in which this was the case, even among some people who presented themselves as radicals, such as Lydia Maria Child. Merton Lynn Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and Their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 174-75, Chris Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 129, 7. In other cases, these historical arguments are specious. Pease and Pease provide minimal evidence of paternalism on the part of Angelina Grimké toward her African American friends and colleagues, describing Grimké, despite much evidence to the contrary, as "an abolitionist who was comfortable with Negroes only under cover of night." Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, "Antislavery Ambivalence: Immediatism, Expediency, Race," *American Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1965): 693, 95. Stanley Harrold acknowledges white racism but he does not believe it kept "them from cooperating effectively with African Americans" in interracial settings. Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828-1865*, 263.

[40] Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth Century America*, 7, 34-35, 130.

[41] Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 45, 84. One example of this tendency was the "slave power" argument, a conspiracy theory that centered on fear of expanding slaveholder hegemony depriving whites of their rights. Larry Gara, "Slavery and the Slave Power: A Crucial Distinction," *Civil War History* 15 (1969): 6, 9.

movements, they did not fight this battle on their own.[42] Unlike the majority of their contemporaries, their white allies in the Old Northwest controverted the conventional wisdom of African American inferiority and necessary segregation.

Studying reform in the Old Northwest reveals that historians have underestimated the prevalence and longevity of grassroots interracial activism. Scholars have recently begun to uncover interracial activism in a variety of settings, but most studies of such amity characterize it as limited, and focus on eastern leaders.[43] John Stauffer, for example, documents instances of such collaboration among the best-known figures in the abolitionist movement. He focuses on the interactions of Frederick Douglass, John Brown, James McCune Smith, and Gerrit Smith in New York in the 1850s.[44] While he demonstrates the presence of significant cooperation among abolitionists of different stripes, such as the political abolitionist Gerrit Smith and the immediatist Brown, this personal approach gives the untenable impression that interracial activism occurred infrequently, and mainly among famed leaders. While the gleaming stars of social reform have a place in this inquiry, it is more concerned with the lesser constellations and orbits of human collaboration, rather than with exemplary individual achievement. Certainly the influence of leaders is important, but also essential are the grassroots activists of the era, who took risks and sought change without the rewards of fame.

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[42] Stanley Harrold's work on direct abolition action in the borderlands between slavery and freedom provides a model applicable to the unstable region of the Old Northwest. Stanley Harrold, "John Brown's Forerunners: Slave Rescue Attempts and the Abolitionists, 1841-51," *Radical History Review* 55 (1992): 94, Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828-1865*, 12, Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 115.

[43] See the excellent recent collection, Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism* (New York: New Press, 2006).

[44] As Stauffer casts his net narrowly, he does not address collaboration among less prominent individuals. Stauffer encounters a scarcity of interracial partnerships, and finds that few whites or African Americans were willing to pervade racial boundaries. Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: The Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*.

Ordinary people such as Peoria abolition pioneer Mary Brown Davis could call for reform in ways that were barred to the more prominent. The social vision and actions of antebellum activists in the Old Northwest reveal that such progressive levels of interracial friendship and empathy were not in reality confined to the very few.[45] The unsettled environment of the Old Northwest meant that activists had more space to push against the boundaries of masculinity and femininity. Even as gender stereotypes hardened in the wider culture, women and men strategically deployed ideas about their proper roles in society to justify their public reform work. In the Old Northwest, the tenacious grass-roots fighters for political and social rights reveal that the region always had a counter-narrative to the race riot, the "Black Laws," and the manipulation of racism for political gain. While not without peer, Old Northwesterners' organizing work in the context of this politics of exclusion warrants scholarly attention for the interracial collaboration and gender diversity it reveals.

As they engaged in interracial collaboration, nineteenth-century racial radicals drew on the language of rights in a period when the very meaning of the term was contested and changing. Indeed, activists developed many new ideas of rights in the antebellum period. Radical activism occurred in the context of a new willingness to attach the language of the

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[45] Mary Brown Davis of Peoria, Illinois held strong abolitionist views as early as 1837, and engaged in organizing activity for the cause. *Western Citizen*, January 4, 1844; February 8, 1844. See also Chapters 2 and 5. In another well-considered study of the antislavery movement in the United States—in this case, its early years—Paul Goodman promises to unite the study of white and African American abolition, yet nevertheless confines its interest to leaders. Chiefly concerned with the economic and religious impetuses that drove whites to abolitionism, Goodman returns African Americans to their rightful place at the center of the struggle for abolition and civil rights, and the awakening of whites to their own biases. While he professes an interest in exploring the rank and file, the profiles that Goodman sketches are of the leaders and their activist identities, at the expense of their actions, arguments, and quotidian interactions. Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*, xvi, 45.

American Revolution to "customary, everyday tyrannies."[46] Reformers in this era focused their critiques upon forms of human domination largely outside of the domain of the state: the socially constituted relations of the household, workplace, or of master and slave. Following this logic, anti-slavery activists adopted the language of "inalienable rights" for slaves' rights to the fruits of their labor.[47]

These arguments, among others, proved unpalatable to many Old Northwesterners' sensibilities. While some of their notoriety was not of their choosing, racial radicals often consciously aroused an explosive response from their communities with their rhetoric and actions. Indeed, they took part in a highly contested effort to expand African American rights and freedom of speech for all.[48] Old Northwest abolitionists crafted innovative arguments for their right to voice unpopular sentiments, and chose to risk their personal safety by advocating divisive positions in hostile situations. Advocates who stirred up "rights consciousness" in the 1830s and 1840s melded liberalism, republicanism, and evangelical religion into a larger rationale for universal rights.[49] As a component of this, abolitionists helped create a new conception of the right to be free from suffering, using shifts in theology to redefine pain and punishment as unnecessary and exceptional.[50] Across organizational lines, they harnessed these

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[46] Daniel T. Rodgers, "Rights Consciousness in American History," in *The Bill of Rights in Modern America After 200 Years*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and James W. Ely (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 9.
[47] Rights claims themselves are, in their very nature, necessarily adversarial claims against other persons or entities. These claims can also be made on behalf of others, and thus contestation over rights is not merely between "self and others," as Daniel Rodgers states, but rather can take less self-interested forms. Rodgers, "Rights Consciousness in American History," 16, 8-9.
[48] Rodgers, "Rights Consciousness in American History," 3-4.
[49] James T. Kloppenberg, *The Virtues of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[50] The liberalization of Protestantism concurrent with the Second Great Awakening ushered in a new scriptural interpretation that all people were entitled to a life "free of physical coercion and deliberately inflicted pain," and to sympathy for their trials. Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (1995): 463-64, 71.

new ideas to further their message. Beyond the discourse of suffering and pain, abolitionists made overt political arguments claiming the common humanity of all people.[51]

On the front lines of direct action against slavery, activists in the Old Northwest continually faced violence, battles over freedom of speech, and local manifestations of white supremacy. At stake in these conflicts were community regulation and social control. Local residents fought over what ideas could enter a public sphere informed not only by partisanship, racism, and social stratification, but also expanding economic and trade systems that enmeshed the region in southern commerce. While not always identifiable, their opponents in these struggles ranged from community leaders, to party stalwarts and prominent tradesmen.

The extant historiography of mob violence treats periodization and sectional divisions in an overly broad manner. For over thirty-five years, historians have maintained an interest in antebellum violence, including incidents contemporaries called mobs, riots, and lynchings, and scholars term vigilantism and extralegal violence. Central to all was the concept of local community control. Historian David Grimsted defines a riot as a group seeking "to enforce their will publicly by threatening or perpetrating physical injury to persons or property extralegally, ostensibly to correct problems or injustices within their society without challenging its basic

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[51] Most of Clark's attention veers away from the topic of rights, *per se*. Her focus is largely on calls for sympathy in religious narratives by white abolitionists, not on the arguments of people of color or former slaves. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," 486-87.

structures."[52] People performed mob actions with town sanction, guided by their perception of the best interest of the community.[53] In such attacks, local residents who sought social control implemented vigilante justice.[54] Although historians have established that extralegal violence was widespread in the antebellum period, they have tended to isolate anti-abolitionist violence both chronologically and regionally. In his landmark 1970 study, for example, Leonard L. Richards argues that most incidents of mob violence against abolitionists occurred in response to initial organizational efforts in the 1830s.[55]

Old Northwestern abolitionists certainly encountered both resistance to their organizing labor and efforts at community control. Indeed, lines of community could be particularly troubled in the Old Northwest, and force was a means of enforcing these boundaries, albeit one that abolitionists refused to sanction. This study uncovers a hidden history of the popular, extralegal violence that racial radicals faced in ample measure as they challenged the burgeoning

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[52] David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), xii. Paul Gilje defines a riot as a gathering of "twelve or more people attempting to assert their will through the use of force outside of the normal bounds of law." This force is not always literal, for it can be the implication of violence. Historians of mob violence encounter problems in determining the boundaries of permissible conduct in a particular place and time. These borders were particularly fuzzy in "frontier" areas such as the Old Northwest. Under these circumstances and in places where the legal system was rudimentary, referring to violence correctly as either legal or extralegal becomes difficult. Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 1, 4.

[53] Opponents of abolition and antiracist action acted rationally, and found clear motivations in their political and economic milieus. Christopher Waldrep argues that extralegal violence—specifically, lynching—was a category created through both discussion and action. In the early nineteenth century, lynching meant a violent act that was "sanctioned, endorsed, or carried out by the neighborhood or community outside of the law." Sanction of this violence grew out of an "intellectual environment" that originated in the South but spread to the North and West. Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 12.

[54] This often happened in anti-abolition riots, whose proponents argued that they preserved popular sovereignty. Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 80-81.

[55] In his view, anti-abolition mob activity peaked in 1835 and diminished as antislavery organizational activity declined after 1837. Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 15. See also Russel B. Nye, who erroneously argues that violent oppression of abolitionists largely ended after 1840, due to the gradual withdrawal of the "sanction" of public opinion for mob violence. Russel Blaine Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964), 175.

prejudice of their era and the concerns that the region's increasing economic integration aroused. In river towns in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, many local residents engaged in economic exchange with the South and consequently sought to stifle abolitionist discussion. The Mississippi River Valley hosted an expanding market system, which sent crops or processed commodities to market towns and then downriver to St. Louis or New Orleans.[56] Geography and crop choice assisted in pushing residents of Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio toward this economic exchange, while Michigan's location made this trade less essential to them.[57] In all of these states, activists found people who wished to silence them with fists or bricks. Across the Old Northwest, many mob members acted not only out of economic interest, but also because they feared that anti-slavery and anti-racist activists sought to entrench an African American presence in their towns.[58] Indeed, their worst fears, that abolitionism would bring about heterogeneity, racial mixing, and egalitarianism, coincided with the goals that racial radicals set forth.[59]

While the experience of abolitionists in the social and political climate of the Old Northwest confirms existing notions about the causes and functions of vigilante violence, it also differs from that of the national picture and that of the other sections.[60] The region remained the site of vital antislavery organizing and racial radicalism throughout the 1840s and even into 1861. Further, despite what Richards characterizes as a decline in anti-abolition mobs after 1837

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[56] Davis, *Frontier Illinois*, 17, 170, Susan Sessions Rugh, *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest*, *Midwestern History and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 21.
[57] Historian John Quist argues that this did not inspire much of the anti-abolitionist sentiment in Michigan, as fewer of them had links of "business, consanguinity, or friendship" with southerners. At the same time, Quist argues that abolitionists (along with benevolence and temperance advocates) often promoted growth and increased interaction with the "market economy," so they did not resist trade in the abstract. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan*, 454.
[58] Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860*, 201.
[59] Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870*, 2.
[60] I have encountered no study that captures the unique patterns of violence in the Old Northwest.

due to fears of loss of white liberties, such crowds continued their efforts to silence activists in the Old Northwest through the beginning of the Civil War.[61] The North in the antebellum period was far from unified, and analytical schemas that only divide North from South do not allow for the differences in advocating abolition in the Old Northwest versus in the Northeast.[62] While controversial throughout the nation, questions of race and slavery were particularly explosive in the political and social environment of the Old Northwest, which impacted the frequency and severity of local anti-abolitionist violence.

This dissertation has drawn upon a broad research strategy to follow the expanding ripples of activism racial radicals left in their wake. My research drew me into archives across the Midwest, where I found deep veins of letters, diaries, organizational records, newspapers, printed speeches, pamphlets, and autobiographical accounts. This study of individuals in motion and growing communities posed unique challenges, for this cohort did not leave centralized records. Nevertheless, I located richly documented accounts of racial radicals' daily lives and struggles as they sought to reform their society. I have made comparative use of newspapers from the west and east to determine their patterns of correspondence, and to gauge the

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[61] Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 3. Richards find that antebellum mobs were often composed of men of social and economic prominence, who bore "little fear of indictment or public censure." Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 5, 16, 77, 158-59.

[62] Historian David Grimsted claims that northern mobs focused on property, while southerners attacked both people and property. Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War*, 13-14. In an otherwise well-substantiated argument, he makes implausible generalization about abolitionists. In several places it is unclear which people he intends to discuss, and in what era. The most flagrant example of this is a passage where he claims, with no citation, that all antislavery people accepted complete African American equality. Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War*, 38, 41. This was an unusually progressive stance even among abolitionists. Advocates of abolition faced easier circumstances in the North than in the South, but they nonetheless had to battle for their right to be heard. Grimsted claims that this sectional division emerged as riots became a tool of partisan politics, for in the 1830s northern Democrats used rioting to appease southerners. He treats abolitionists as catalysts for this increasing sectionalism, for attacks on them also persuaded many northerners of slavery's dangers. Anti-abolition mobs made it difficult for them to ignore the effects of the system of slavery. Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War*, 34, 82.

impressions easterners had of western circumstances. Combining individuals' personal papers with institutional records uncovers the history of activists' behavior as a matter of public and private record.

Part One introduces the place of the Old Northwest as an activist region, and brings to light how its reformers used both local and national resources to create their communities. Chapter One moves into the Old Northwest reform milieu through the case study of the "One Hundred Conventions" lecture tour of 1843. The eastern itinerant lecturers of the tour undertook this arduous feat of racially integrated reform, proving contemporary opinion that the hostile terrain of the Old Northwest was the crucial field for the antislavery battle. Whether directed outward at visitors or inward at transforming their own towns, Old Northwesterners, too, enthusiastically took part in abolitionist and anti-prejudice organizing beginning in the late 1830s. The overlapping reform circuits they built demonstrate that the antislavery struggle in the region was inseparable from national battles. Chapter Two argues that beside being central to the national antislavery cause, the Old Northwest is important for how it changes the national picture of abolition. Local organizers had unique stances on the factional disputes prevalent among eastern abolitionists. In this region, the organizational and logistical labor of local activists catalyzed conflicts over social control.

Part Two focuses upon the space of the Old Northwest. There, local abolitionists and itinerants fought for platforms and for the right to speak publicly. Women in this region participated in both separate female and mixed-gender organizations, and Chapter Three contends that their activism troubled the relationship between gender and politics. In the face of substantial logistical and cultural obstacles, they carved out a space for their reform work.

Though formally excluded from politics, they took partisan stances and pushed for a larger public role than their eastern contemporaries, demonstrating that in their local context, they could make a powerful case for women's reform potential. Chapter Four claims that itinerant lecturers and organizers traversed the Old Northwest and confronted extensive resistance to build an antislavery public sphere for a diffuse population. Without their tenacious efforts, the expansion of the antislavery message would have been impossible in this region. In these four states, so hostile to open expression of abolition convictions, they fought for speaking locations, freedom of speech, and publicity. Proslavery culture thus represented a formidable enemy locally.

Part Three reveals how the Old Northwest was not only the essential antislavery combat zone, but also the battleground over other ideas. Freedom of the press, the right of all people to work without coercion, and full citizenship for African Americans all had their advocates among the racial radicals. Chapter Five introduces the troubled newspaper history of the Old Northwest. There, activists' efforts to reform their society enmeshed them in ongoing controversies over appropriate editorial stances on slavery and race relations. Men and women in the Old Northwest fought to protect this vital component of the antislavery publicity machine against challenges that were unique to their combative culture. Anti-abolitionists suppressed press freedom through violence and economic pressure, while reformers expanded contemporary understandings of this as a guaranteed right. Chapter Six enlarges the political project of racial radicals by examining how Old Northwest activists took up the free produce movement and the anti-"Black Law" campaign out of their human rights vision, a conviction that they must take direct action to bring racial justice to their society. As neighbors to the institution of slavery,

racial radicals saw its direct local impact on African Americans, which drove many to seek a practical means to combat the slave labor system and the "Black Laws."

While we have the benefit of seeing that the racial radicals' vision of equality took decades of effort to realize, they lived and fought in a moment of possibility. Their hopes and convictions carried them forward, even if they did not reach their destinations rapidly, or at all. Their visions of racial egalitarianism—as forged on the field of their ideological and physical battles in this arena of pro-and antislavery clashes—deserve a place on the social reform spectrum of this period. Taken on their own terms, they made extraordinary efforts against slavery and prejudice in the combat zone of the Old Northwest. A close look at one itinerant tour, the "One Hundred Conventions" Tour of 1843, indicates the central place of the Old Northwest not only on the map, but also in the minds of antislavery and anti-prejudice activists.

Chapter 1: Warm Hearts and Cold Mobbing Hands: The "One Hundred Conventions" Tour of 1843

Incensed, an invading mob expelled two abolitionist agents from their meeting in the courthouse at Noblesville, in central Indiana, on September 25, 1843. Countenanced by the sheriff and prominent citizens, this small, vociferous mob from a nearby town quickly silenced visiting African American abolitionist lecturer Charles Lenox Remond and his white counterpart Sydney Howard Gay. While the abolitionist cause had few local supporters, Noblesville's other citizens had resolved to protect their gathering in the face of advance mob threats.[1] Before the meeting, the anti-abolitionists marched "up and down the street of the village," in sight of the courthouse, "two by two, and in regular order." They paraded the town, brandishing "heavy hickory clubs" and loudly proclaiming their views.[2] Their outrage centered on their perception that the abolitionists opposed religion—for some immediatists prioritized antislavery over established religious doctrine—and on Remond's presence in their place of governance; "they had sworn that no 'nigger' should speak in *their* building."[3] They based this right of possession on their status as "citizens of the county."[4]

The mob entered the courthouse, demanding that the antislavery meeting disperse.

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[1] Sydney H. Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843; James Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843. Sydney Howard Gay was a schoolteacher born into the Massachusetts elite and a latecomer to the abolition cause. Following the tour, he relocated to New York City and became the managing editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the organ of Garrisonian abolitionism. Raimund Erhard Goerler, "Family, Self, and Anti-Slavery: Sydney Howard Gay and the Abolitionist Commitment" (Ph. D Dissertation, Case Western University, 1975). Born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1810 to a prosperous free family, Charles Lenox Remond was subsequently educated in the public schools which his father had led the effort to desegregate. Charles joined the abolitionist cause as a "founding" member of the American Society, and began his public lecture career in 1838. He remained active in reform until 1867, when he retired from public life. C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 5 vols., vol. 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 318-19.

[2] Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.

[3] Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843; Edwin Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843.

[4] Sydney H. Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.

Although the attendees presented some initial resistance, the majority quickly lost their resolve and departed. They left the small group of abolitionists "to the tender mercies of the rabble."[5] Remond railed against the local people as cowards for succumbing to unjust pressure. The men's effectiveness at silencing the abolitionist message particularly infuriated him, and he decried the local residents as spineless. While they suffered no injury or true physical danger, larger principles were at stake for Remond; "liberty was murdered by the cowardly surrender of unquestionable rights on the part of those in peaceable assembly."[6] The abolitionists found themselves alone with the mob and the sheriff, who refused to enforce their right to speak. In fact, the sheriff effectively backed the invaders by calling them "*honorable men*, [who] would keep their word, *and not hurt us*" as long as the abolitionists left expediently.[7] Disgusted, Remond and Gay exited the courthouse, only to witness their opponents proudly assembled in the streets.[8]

Remond and Gay's fellow traveling lecturers James Monroe and Edwin Fussell arrived in the afternoon. The anti-abolitionists remained true to their word, permitting the afternoon meeting in the Methodist meetinghouse to proceed undisturbed. They claimed that their ire had only been raised by the location of the first meeting in the courthouse, and had departed

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[5] Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843.

[6] Charles L. Remond to Isaac and Amy Post, 27 September 1843, Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 417. Isaac and Amy Post were white Quakers, with whom Remond and Frederick Douglass had recently stayed when the tour passed through Rochester.

[7] Sydney H. Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843; James Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843.

[8] Edwin Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843. Accounts differ as to whether Noblesville's citizens aided in facing down the mob. Gay wrote that they either bowed in the face of or supported the mob. Sydney H. Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843. Edwin Fussell claimed that a citizen of Noblesville had physically stood up to the mob, striking a man and precipitating their departure. Edwin Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843.

Noblesville once this was no longer a threat.[9] Despite this peaceable outcome, the itinerants were disturbed. Remond named it the pinnacle of mob tyranny, and found particularly offensive the fact that the interlopers were not even town residents, but nevertheless "drove the people of Noblesville from their own quiet meeting."[10] Noblesville was but one of Remond, Gay, and Monroe's stops on their extended 1843 lecture tour, and but one place where they fought for a hearing.

A strenuous campaign to instill and expand anti-slavery sentiment, the "One Hundred Conventions" lecture tour traversed Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana in the latter half of 1843. The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and their affiliated societies in the Old Northwest sent seven men across these five states; African American speakers Charles Lenox Remond and Frederick Douglass; and white lecturers John A. Collins, George Bradburn, James Monroe, Jacob Ferris, and Sydney Howard Gay. In the minds of the tour organizers, both East and West, the Old Northwest represented essential yet forbidding terrain for fighting slavery. From the eastern perspective, the antislavery war encompassed this essential and underserved region, and the western reformers welcomed the intervention. The battlefield was belief, the weapon the spoken word. Setting out from Vermont in early July, the tour continued across New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania, and ended in Philadelphia in December,

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[9] Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843. Born in Plainfield, Connecticut, James Monroe became a lecturer for the American Society in 1841. He later attended and taught at Oberlin College before taking up politics, first in the Ohio legislature. He later served as United States consul to Brazil and in the United States Congress. He died in 1898. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 422-23. A founding member of the Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society, Edwin Fussell had moved to Indiana from Pennsylvania in 1838. He served on the board of managers of both the 1842 and 1843 annual meetings of the American Society. *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 19, 1842, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 18, 1843, Thomas A. Hendrickson, "Sheltering a Famous Fugitive Slave, Part I," *Black History News and Notes* (2001): 4, William Still, *The Underground Railroad*, *The American Negro, His History and Literature* (New York: Arno Press, 1968 (1872)), 111, 303, 748-50.

[10] Remond to Post, 417.

1843. This five-month crusade represented a feat of unprecedented magnitude among reform endeavors, in terms of time, number of participants, and towns reached.[11] With this campaign, both people and ideas spun into motion, blurring the distinctions between national and local activism.

These journeys west and east reveal the presence of trans-regional partnerships in itinerant abolition, and the dedication of all concerned to the cause of expanded western activism. Not only an impressive demonstration of logistical acumen and fortitude, this tour also highlights the major contributions of an Old Northwest focus to scholarly understanding of the expanding antislavery movement. The tour illustrates both that this region was central to the national reform struggle, and that activists faced specific challenges in this singular environment. These included both violent and non-violent efforts to silence the lecturers, and the fatigue of advocating abolition across a large region with few allies. Both local and national abolitionists advocated this unpopular cause and traveled to popularize it, in the process working in symbiosis with stationary individuals, each providing necessary services to the other. The compatriots who

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[11] "John A. Collins and Co," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle*, July 4, 1843. The Newport, *Indiana Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle* printed a brief biography of the main participants in the tour in a promotional piece published July 4, 1843. George Bradburn, a Unitarian minister, was born in Attleboro, MA, and had attended the 1840 world anti-slavery convention. He fought for women's rights, temperance, peace, and against capital punishment and the Massachusetts anti-miscegenation law. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 422. John A. Collins, born 1810 in Vermont, was the general agent for the Massachusetts Society. As early as 1840 he was a polarizing figure, willing to preach his outspoken message to opposing factions of the antislavery movement. He became taken with utopian ideas, and ultimately left the Massachusetts Society to found a utopian community in 1843. C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The British Isles, 1830-1865*, 5 vols., vol. 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 88. Frederick Douglass, the famed antislavery lecturer, writer, news editor, and leader, was born a slave in Maryland around 1818. His life in slavery and escape have been well chronicled in his three autobiographies and other accounts. He began his public career in 1841 as a lecturer for the Massachusetts Society. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 421-22. The lesser-known Jacob Ferris was a lecturing agent for the American Society in New York and points west, and later for the Ohio Society. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 423. William Abijah White was another New Englander who extensively involved himself in other reforms. He had studied law prior to becoming an abolitionist agent, and also worked for temperance. In 1854, he moved to Madison, Wisconsin, and became the chair of the Republican state committee. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 422.

lived in the region offered open hospitality and transportation assistance, and the itinerants left behind both scandalized and impressed audience members.

In pursuing their itinerant campaign, abolitionists relied on the human networks that connected them across the region and linked the Old Northwest and the East. By focusing on the tour's jaunt through Ohio and Indiana, this chapter follows touring organizers as they created networks to spread reform ideas across the country. They exemplify how mobility made the dispersion of views possible, through both traveling people and the print media that circulated their plans and actions. This motion across space enabled the national sharing of ideals and ideas, which in turn impacted local moral and political cultures and highlighted regional differences.

The particularly hostile environment of the Old Northwest shaped the local expression of antislavery and anti-prejudice principles. The itinerant lecturers of the "One Hundred Conventions" tour and those who battled by their side demonstrated the radical commitment to often-unpopular beliefs—including abolition and racial equality—necessary for activism in this region. The interactions traveling antislavery lecturers had with their host communities reveal that their right to speak was always highly contested on the ground. Across the region, itinerant lecturers engaged in a fateful dialogue with their opponents, as they planned and held meetings, and provoked both opposition and support for their cause. They crossed racial boundaries, and their collaborations enabled their activism and stirred up a wide spectrum of local reactions. These cooperative relationships sustained them through adversity and mob violence.

As abolitionists insisted on their right to be heard in the Old Northwest, their foes denied the legitimacy of antislavery discussion and public contestation. Conflict arose from this refusal,

as it pushed debate to the margins, and advocacy of abolition arguments became an offense punishable by forced silence, violence, or death. Debates over permitted speech hinged upon ideas about social structure, expected deference toward organized religion, economic stability, and partisan politics. Anti-abolitionists sought to regulate the topics of discussion in these communities.[12] Abolitionists linked their defense with larger issues, including their rights to freedom of speech and assembly.[13] Their antagonists stifled antislavery expression with threats of extreme violence. The harsh conditions of the Old Northwest could challenge even hardened reformers to become flexible in their non-resistant principles and take up arms in their own defense.[14] Despite this opposition, many activists continued to struggle in this region of blurred boundaries and cultural conflicts, well beyond 1843.

I: Origins

Beginning in Vermont, traversing the west, and ending in Pennsylvania, the "One Hundred Conventions" tour was literally interregional. It joined East and West as the product of existing abolition cultures that crossed the miles, as did burgeoning cooperation between activists of the respective regions. Prior to this tour, eastern activists had not entirely ignored the West or their Western brethren. Indeed, some contemporaries readily saw the artificiality of regional boundaries. The lecturers of the "One Hundred Conventions" tour had precursors in the

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[12] James Edward Davis, *Frontier Illinois*, *A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 17, 170, Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 80-81, Richard Franklin Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870*, *Midwestern History and Culture Series*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 2, Susan Sessions Rugh, *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest*, *Midwestern History and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 21.
[13] For more on this battle, see Chapter 4.
[14] Non-resistance was a doctrine of non-violence prevalent among many immediate abolitionists.

Old Northwest, including Theodore D. Weld, who had traveled extensively across the area in 1832 and 1835.[15] National and state reform organizations, including the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society [the Massachusetts Society], used the "agency system," a publicity technique in which organizations employed lecturers to travel a designated distance and stir up reform fervor in local people. It was one of the most formidable weapons of the antislavery movement from the 1830s through the 1850s. Their conversion-centered methods expanded out of the moral environment of the age. The Second Great Awakening, which ended in the late 1830s, left a legacy of a widely shared desire for human action to reform social evils.[16] Abolitionist lecturers and writers seized upon missionary, evangelical means to broadcast both their secular and religious arguments against slavery. Employing this inventive blend of critical thought and evangelical outreach, the "One Hundred Conventions" lecture tour was both more ambitious and more extensive than its predecessors.

Not only did the tour reach further than earlier campaigns, but it also arose in a context of interregional exchange and budding national communication. The tour emerged from both eastern and western pressures, for the Ohio American Anti-Slavery Society [Ohio American Society], the Massachusetts Society, and the American Anti-Slavery Society [American Society] called for and collaborated in planning the tour.[17] Six of the participants had already gained experience as lecturing agents for the Massachusetts Society and the American Society, and one,

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[15] Vernon L. Volpe, "Theodore Dwight Weld's Antislavery Mission in Ohio," *Ohio History* 100 (1991).
[16] Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 1st ed., *American Century Series* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 23-24, 37.
[17] Douglas A. Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West: Some Suggestions for Study," *Civil War History* 23, no. 1 (1977): 57, Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and his Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969). The American Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1833 in Boston, was the umbrella organization of the Garrisonian abolitionists in the 1840s. The Massachusetts Society was also a Garrisonian organization, as was the Ohio American Society after 1842.

John A. Collins, had recently gone west to make arrangements.[18] Throughout the tour, the activists also demonstrated their ongoing link with the East through a running correspondence with major national papers such as the *Liberator* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.[19]

The traffic in ideas for this abolitionist venture did not merely flow east to west, for the planning process involved people from both regions. At two 1842 meetings, the Ohio American Anti-Slavery Society asked the national executive committee of the American Society to send them prominent speakers.[20] At the annual Boston meeting of the American Society on May 9, 1843, abolitionists from the Old Northwest played a vital role in the arrangements for this major lecture tour.[21] A group of westerners, including Dr. Edwin Fussell of Pendleton, Indiana, had traveled east on a wagon that they called the "Liberator," a jaunt chronicled in abolitionist newspapers as publicity for interregional efforts.[22] Affirming the importance of local support to traveling reformers, Rebecca Lewis Fussell noted that on their ramble to Boston, her husband

[18] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Eleventh Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (1843)), 45, 56, Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 314. This included all of them but Sydney Howard Gay.
[19] Maria Weston Chapman, "One Hundred Conventions," *Liberator,* August 25, 1843; Maria Weston Chapman, "The One Hundred Conventions," *Liberator,* September 22, 1843; Sydney Howard Gay, "The Conventions. Letter from Sydney Howard Gay," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843; Sydney Howard Gay, "The Conventions. Letter from Sydney Howard Gay," *Liberator,* August 13, 1843; William A. White, *Liberator,* July 20, 1843; Maria Weston Chapman, "One Hundred Conventions," *Liberator,* July 14, 1843.
[20] They requested "Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Abby Kelley, Frederic Douglas, C. L. Remond." *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 30, 1842; *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* February 16, 1843.
[21] Rebecca Lewis Fussell in Graceanna Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces: The Mobbing of Frederick Douglass in 1843," *Friends' Intelligencer*, June 20, 1896, 399.
[22] Edwin Fussell, to Rebecca Lewis Fussell, 17 June 1843, Lewis-Fussell Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

and his compatriots "were frequently entertained at the residences of their anti slavery friends.'"[23]

II: "We send you these dear friends": Preparing for the Tour

The eastern tour planners toiled extensively to organize the journey and manage its logistics, revealing the central role of the Old Northwest in their reform vision. In late May 1843, the Massachusetts Society convention voted to sponsor the tour to exploit the "comparatively new field" of the Old Northwest, fresh ground for sowing abolitionist seeds.[24] The Massachusetts Society board of managers then rapidly obtained their stable of lecturers for the tour, and shortly thereafter published an address to their members acknowledging the centrality of the "Western and Middle" states to the pursuit of their anti-slavery goals.[25] In this new collaboration, they asked their allies for numerous favors and services that would prove vital to the success of the operation, chiefly "hospitality," "contributions," and publicity.[26]

The people of the Old Northwest also had their work to do prior to the tour's departure. That June, in a published address, Collins implored them to make vital preparations for the

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[23] Fussell in Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces," 398. This wagon reappeared throughout the 1840s, and at some times, also served as sleeping accommodations for the men. En route to Oakland Fussell made numerous stops and delivered lectures in Greensboro, Newport, Green Plains, Goshen, Indiana. Edwin Fussell, Oakland, OH, to Rebecca Fussell, 14 April, 1843, Ibid. Rebecca Lewis Fussell was born in West Vincent, Pennsylvania, to a family of outspoken abolitionists. She and her two sisters aided their mother in local antislavery and fugitive aid work. She and her husband Edwin were first cousins—and they found upon moving to Indiana that their customary outspokenness on abolition would face greater local challenges than had their work in Pennsylvania. They ultimately had seven children. Agnes Longstreth Taylor, *The Longstreth Family Records, Revised and Enlarged by Agnes Longstreth Taylor* (Philadelphia: Press of Ferris & Leach, 1909), 112-13.

[24] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (1844)), 33.

[25] "Address of the Board of Managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, to the Abolitionists of the Western and Middle States," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 22, 1843; Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 34..

[26] *Ibid*.

lecturers' arrival. He specifically requested local transportation, advance publicity, and speaking sites. He asked his readers to reserve halls and other appropriate venues, and even suggested organizational methods, including planning meetings and newspaper advertisements. He recommended that local people serve as an advance guard to bring out the masses. As Collins saw it, by the time the tour arrived, this local effort would have already awakened residents to the urgency of abolition, "if they would save their country and their posterity from ruin."[27] In Collin's view, the west could not shirk this essential duty.

Interregional collaboration was central to Collins's vision of the tour's success. He argued that abolitionists in the Old Northwest needed to seek out and communicate with Eastern anti-slavery groups and resources, claiming that they should behold this great enterprise as an "opportunity … for mutual counsel, information, and concert of action." They ought to subscribe to Eastern papers to enhance their understanding of abolitionism, and use them to spread the word about Old Northwest activists. His goal for this alliance was a mutual enhancement of their combined efforts.[28]

Local societies in Ohio and Indiana made preparatory arrangements, as Collins suggested, including calls for publicity, hospitality, and promotional calls to action. In the same month, the Ohio American Society's executive committee issued publicity statements in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the *Liberator*, and several western antislavery papers.[29] Society secretary Abraham Brooke revealed the schedule of Ohio meetings, and proclaimed his

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[27] John A. Collins, "GRAND ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT: *To the Abolitionists of New-York, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania,"* in *Ibid.*
[28] Collins, in *Ibid.*
[29] In one instance in August of 1843, a meeting at Greensboro, Indiana, which was affiliated with the Free Labor Association, organized the Indiana conventions. Edwin Fussell, "PROGRESS IN INDIANA," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 7, 1843.

expectation that Ohioans would accommodate all of the needs of the visitors, in a manner that was "befitting western hospitality."[30] As part of the newspaper publicity, Edwin Fussell echoed Collins' sentiments in seeking to increase the generosity and interest of the people of Indiana: "Let the friends of the slave in the neighborhoods in which they are to be held, spare no pains in getting ready for them…." Fussell pleaded with his fellow Old Northwesterners to house "friends from a distance," both the itinerants and the like-minded local folks who would travel to the conventions.[31] He also asked them to provide transportation, and bring out throngs of locals in order to "make these conventions overwhelming convocations of the people."[32]

The lecturers' hectic schedule meant that they had an urgent need for effective transportation. Local abolitionists readily took up the responsibility. Even before the lecturers set foot in the Old Northwest, five Indiana men had already planned their travel to Oakland, Ohio to meet the "Eastern Friends" and transport them into their state.[33] While their hosts were diligent in their preparations, they could not shield the itinerants from the trials and dangers of local activism. Chief among these was the hostility of local communities.

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[30] Abraham Brooke, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 10, 1843. Born in Maryland, Dr. Abraham Brooke moved to Ohio in 1831. In 1836, traveling lecturer Sereno W. Streeter converted him to Garrisonian abolitionism. Over the next few years, Brooke brought his extended family into the movement. Along with Joseph Dugdale, he headed the exodus of the Garrisonians from the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, and worked to form the Western Anti-Slavery Society, which was characterized by gender equality. He and his wife moved to Clinton County, Ohio in the later 1830s, where he became the postmaster of Oakland. In 1840 he involved himself in a fugitive rescue case. He also worked on the Underground Railroad and hosted abolition meetings in a designated building on his land. Thomas D. Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846*, *Religion in North America Series* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 40-42, 44, Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 422.

[31] Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 7, 1843.

[32] "Anniversary of State Society Great Conventions in Indiana," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 8, 1843; *Ibid.*

[33] These men were "Moses R. Wickersham, Edward Wickersham, Lillburn White, Joseph W. Young, and Micajah C. White." *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 8, 1843.

III: The Price of Old Northwestern Activism: the Tense Tour Environment

In a region rife with racial antagonism, the tour threw its participants and their allies against mounting anti-abolitionist opposition. They faced both overt and covert efforts to suppress their right to speak, false and actual cancellations of their meetings, refusals of meeting halls to allow their assembly, fierce verbal counterarguments inside and outside of their meetings, and, most notably, mobs. The lecturers wrote of town leaders, whether "priest or politician," who used their "malign influences" to catalyze efforts to stop the conventions.[34] After his return to the East, Gay summed up their ordeal:

> Tried friends have abandoned us, lives have been sacrificed on the bloody altar of American slavery, houses have been sacked and burned, printing presses have been destroyed, rewards offered for men's heads, loss of reputation has been cheerfully met, every species of wrong and obloquy has been suffered; and through all, anti-slavery has lived, and the ears of the people now everywhere tingle to hear upon the subject.[35]

Indeed, numerous communities that hosted conventions did so reluctantly, resisting the lecturers' message and attempting to suppress their speeches.

Among the less confrontational methods of local opposition were cancelled meetings and small audiences. The travelers decided to abandon two Ohio meetings, in Cleveland and Oberlin, where they had encountered insurmountable resistance and rumors of cancellation.[36] They also called off their October 5 meeting at Sand Creek, Indiana, due to lack of preparation.[37] Despite the advance guards' hard work, their hospitality networks did not always blunt others' efforts to refuse reformers the right to meet and speak freely.

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[34] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 35.
[35] Sydney Howard Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 7, 1844.
[36] Hannah Coates, "LETTER FROM OHIO," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 28, 1843.
[37] Sydney H. Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843: "No notice had been given to the friends there, and no arrangements made by them for a Convention."

Across the region, the lecturers had problems finding venues, which enmeshed them in local and national controversies and proved that anti-abolitionists were not their only opponents. Mansfield, Ohio hosted an outbreak of the national struggle for control of the antislavery movement. At the time of the 1843 tour, sponsored by Garrisonian-immediate emancipation-"Old Organization" groups, the political arm of the abolitionist movement manifested itself in the Liberty Party and in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the "New Organization" for short.[38] These groups had been feuding since 1840, both through newspapers and in personal encounters. In Mansfield, local resident Hannah Coates claimed that this factional pressure disrupted the meeting in her town on August 22 and 23. The resulting attendance at the local convention was "much smaller than it otherwise would have been."[39]

Despite the planning by sympathetic Mansfieldites, the local "New Organization" abolitionists stifled the gathering. Indeed, directly following the finalizing of local arrangements by the local immediate abolitionists, their opponents had denounced the meeting, noting that they extended no hospitality in their town to followers of Garrison. To compound the difficulties in Mansfield, only Ferris had arrived in town, as Collins and Douglass were both ill, and Bradburn had stayed in Oberlin. Unnamed residents of Oberlin had informed Bradburn that visiting Mansfield would be fruitless due to local hostility. The Congregational minister of Mansfield was away at Oberlin, and locals claimed they could not hold a successful meeting without his support.[40]

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[38] Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 88-90.
[39] Coates," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 28, 1843.
[40] *Ibid*. Coates does not explain why this logic did not stop Ferris from coming. Bradburn attended the Oberlin commencement rather than go to Mansfield.

Nonetheless, one congenial soul had keys to the Mansfield Congregational Church and let Ferris hold his meeting, despite some outcry from church members._ Coates found this resistance unremarkable, as the aforementioned minister had previously proclaimed his support for "the house to be used for anti-slavery, colonization, and all other moral purpose," but not for the "Garrison abolitionists." Thus this small town saw internecine conflict over the issues being debated at the national level. Coates characterized the subsequent meeting as small, with "profound attention" to Ferris's words despite community resistance.[41] Their audiences over the following two days grew ever larger, an impressive feat considering the virtual absence of anti-slavery people in town. Despite the "strict order" that the listeners inside the meetinghouse kept, "some rude ruffians outside the house" threw mud into the building, apparently aimed at Ferris, but they missed, and instead hit several women in the audience.[42]

As they traveled, the abolitionists found that rumors of their meetings' cancellation proved an elusive but persistent foe. When they reached Woodbury, Ohio, on August 25, Ferris and his companions found that someone had anonymously and falsely reported the cancellation of the meeting. Thus, the convention there was also small, although those present listened attentively for "three to four hours." The following day, Ferris's compatriot—Indiana abolitionist B. C. Gilbert—spoke to their opponents' motivations, the "spirit that was at work to thwart the conventions in this series."[43] This indirect sabotage, while surely frustrating, did not stymie the lecturers' efforts, or those of their local allies.

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[41] *Ibid*. They also faced down such a community reaction in Salem, Ohio, where "a large society of Orthodox Friends, and another of Baptists," both forbade use of their meetinghouses. They finally gained permission from the Methodists to use their space. Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843.
[42] Coates," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 28, 1843.
[43] *Ibid*.

Across the Old Northwest, the band of speakers also faced resistance in the form of local people's verbal counterarguments. These were generally milder in Ohio than in Indiana, where anti-abolition sentiment was stronger.[44] At Massillon, Ohio around August 20, they met their first verbal rebuttal in the region, from a lawyer and a Methodist preacher. Tour participant William A. White was unfazed by the experience: "Neither of their speeches were worthy of notice, and I believe the pro-slavery people who made them their cats-paws were ashamed of them before they finished...." White wrote in praise of their "warm friends," who sustained them in the face of this local challenge.[45] In Utica, Ohio, a Whig named General Warner pontificated in opposition to abolition, and claimed, as White wrote, that abolitionists were "the immediate successors of the Jacobins of the days of terror." This inflammatory remark did not daunt the itinerants, for Monroe and Gay both dismissed Warner's claims.[46] Thus, while the lecturers often made references to their verbal antagonists, this variety of opposition did not appear to cause them much pain.

A more troubling hazard of anti-slavery lecturing was the ever-present threat of violent attack by local anti-abolitionists who found their inspiration in racial bias, partisan politics, and preserving local rule and their social order.[47] The Massachusetts Society wrote that groups the lecturers termed "mobs" often had community leaders at their helms, including politicians,

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[44] Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, vol. 37, *Indiana Historical Collections.* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957).
[45] William A. White, *Liberator,* September 6, 1843. Interestingly, White had earlier written of Massillon indicating that he expected the meeting of this day to have been "very encouraging…." William A. White, "LETTER FROM OHIO," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 31, 1843.
[46] White, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 31, 1843; Sydney Howard Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 19, 1843.
[47] Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 80-81, Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870*, 2, Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 12.

throwing eggs and threatening the abolitionists and their friends with far worse.[48] Indeed, the Massachusetts Society reported that they seemed "at times" to be at the brink of "sealing their testimonies with their blood."[49] These risks escalated when the itinerants traveled in mixed-race groups, and grew worse in Indiana. Ohio was far from quiet, however.

Mob assaults even occurred when speakers traveled in racially homogenous groups, and were not merely incited by interracial contact. Early in the tour, in Wooster, Ohio, a partisan mob nearly attacked White and Monroe. Locked out of most venues, they could only obtain the town square for their scheduled meeting, and there White attempted to speak to a hostile crowd. A Democratic congressman named Benjamin Jones, whom White deemed "[a]n animal, (for I cannot call him a man,)" shouted contradictions throughout his speech. By the hour of the evening lecture, the townspeople had already begun to threaten an attack, but this proved to be a bluff, although someone egged a home during the night.[50] Bradburn found more animosity when he traveled alone in Dayton, a place noted for its violent past and "infamous for its pro-slavery mobs." Anti-abolitionists had previously attacked lectures by three other itinerants, so Bradburn was pleasantly surprised when three of his four lectures proceeded undisturbed. Even though the final lecture met with the resistance he had anticipated, a "shower of stones and eggs," the attendees remained, which he regarded as "great progress" for Dayton.[51] Bradburn would see far worse outrages in Indiana. Despite the violent and non-violent resistance of Ohio communities

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[48] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 35.
[49] *Ibid*.
[50] Their African American comrades Douglass and Remond were not with them. White, *Liberator,* September 6, 1843.
[51] He did not offer any clues as to the motivations of this mob. George Bradburn, "LETTER FROM GEORGE BRADBURN," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843. The three men mobbed earlier were James G. Birney, John Rankin, and Thomas Morris.

early in the tour, the abolitionists were not entirely prepared for the extensive trials they next faced in Indiana.

IV: "This was the most brazen, dare-devil mob I ever knew:" The Attack at Pendleton, Indiana

The "diabolical proceedings" at Pendleton, Indiana were not the only instance combining the silencing of abolitionists, extralegal violence, and miscarriage of justice on the "One Hundred Conventions" tour, but they were the most overt and serious.[52] On the third month of the tour, the lecturers were already well seasoned when they arrived at Pendleton, in central Indiana, where men claiming to defend party politics, racial stratification, slavery, and the structure of republicanism attacked them. So outrageous was the Pendleton throng's behavior on September 14-16 that it challenged White's perception of people as rational beings. Several days after the fracas, he wrote that he saw there men behaving "like devils in human form; men actuated by the passions of brutes …."[53] To the lecturers, the savagery they found was unwelcome, but not altogether surprising in this contentious area of Indiana. They knew that most local people would find the message they bore unpalatable.

White, Douglass, and Bradburn arrived in Pendleton anticipating trouble. The itinerants expected that local opponents would shut them out of the meetinghouses. Even in early September, the *Free Labor Advocate* predicted danger. It claimed, "the mob spirit begins to show his cloven hoof."[54] A small group of outspoken Quaker abolitionists lived near Pendleton, but local allies were very few.[55] Rebecca Fussell described her family as "the only anti-slavery

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[52] Edwin Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843.
[53] William A. White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[54] *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 8, 1843.
[55] *Ibid.* The author named "S. Fussell, Wm. Williams, and Joshua Simmons as sympathetic parties who lived outside of Pendleton and would "accommodate" abolitionists from abroad."

people in Pendleton," and she prepared for the convention by making accommodations in their household for the lecturers, as well as for the "numerous friends" from Fall Creek, a Quaker antislavery stronghold, who would dine with them.[56]

As the convention approached, the abolitionists heard increasingly direct warnings of violence. The travelers knew that they were locally outnumbered, and that "'certain lewd fellows of the baser sort,'" had threatened to stop the convention proceedings. White claimed that these aggressors lived in "Columbus, a miserable, rum drinking place," approximately six miles away.[57] Not to be halted in their purpose, the speakers nonetheless came to town and stayed with the Fussell family.[58] Shortly after their arrival, the trustees ejected the abolitionist meeting from the Baptist Church. Despite holding antislavery beliefs, the minister nonetheless "feared the church would be torn down by a mob." This anxiety for his physical safety and that of his property also prevented him from appearing at the convention. The minister's absence, Bradburn claimed, escalated the situation, as "had he been present, such is often the reverence of mobocrats for clergymen, all violence might have been prevented."[59]

Refusing to be dissuaded, the abolitionists and their audience met immediately outside of the church. There, their foes joined their ranks, and local resident Dr. John Cook acted as an intermediary, working to calm the crowd—in White's words, one inflamed by alcohol—that

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[56] Graceanna Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces: The Mobbing of Frederick Douglass in 1843," *Friends' Intelligencer*, June 20, 1896; John L. Forkner and Byron H. Dyson, *Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of Madison County, Indiana: A Detailed History of the Early Events of the Pioneer Settlement of the County, and Many Happenings of Recent Years, as Well as a Complete History of each Township, to Which is Added Numerous Incidents of a Pleasant Nature, in the Way of Reminiscences and Laughable Occurences* (Anderson, IN: J.L. Forkner, 1897).
[57] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[58] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[59] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843; *Ibid.*

threatened them with violence.[60] While he was not an abolitionist, Cook took these "prompt and strenuous efforts to protect the right of speech."[61] These actions, and the travelers' efforts to verbally engage with their accusers, resulted in the anti-abolitionists permitting Bradburn to speak until a rain shower interrupted them, when many fled indoors. The crowd remained outside of the church, but did not substantially harm the abolitionists: "The mobocrats retired without making any assault upon us, save tossing at us a single stone, and one or two 'evangelical eggs.'"[62]

That evening, the citizens of Pendleton took action to protect free speech in their town. They held a meeting where they unanimously passed a resolution denouncing the "conduct of the mobocrats" in harassing the abolitionists, and Bradburn and White spoke to the assembled audience.[63] White, pleased, "hoped we should have no more trouble."[64] Alas, the following day his hopes were dashed.

While the abolitionists and their allies in defense of free expression took direct, formal measures to protect their rights, their adversaries nonetheless struck as predicted the following day. Local organizer Dr. Edwin Fussell had anticipated that the convention would need a neutral space, and set up an open-air meeting facility in a grove near town, complete with seating and a platform.[65] The convention assembled in the woods, where White initially noted the presence of eleven anti-abolitionists, and a sympathetic audience of 100 men and thirty women. First White spoke, followed by Bradburn, for over one and a half hours. Bradburn was absorbed in his

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[60] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[61] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[62] *Ibid.*
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[65] Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces." This resembled an outdoor revival stage.

speech when Dr. Cook suddenly interrupted him, noticing that their opponents were descending upon them.

This group of about sixty men elicited strong invective from the abolitionists they targeted. Bradburn and White both noted the anti-abolitionists' slovenly, ungentlemanly attire, their level of preparation for combat, and their partisan identities. They marched around the grove, "in double file," prominently displaying their supply of "brick-bats, stones, and 'evangelical eggs.'"[66] The men were "coatless, with shirt-sleeves rolled up."[67] Local people identified one leader, shoeless, in sagging, disheveled clothing, to White as a Democrat, while the other leader, clad in a "coon-skin cap," was a Whig.[68] This fellow, whom Edwin's uncle and local Quaker Solomon Fussell later identified as "Devault [David] Crowl," evidently wore the cap with the tail in the front, lending what Bradburn thought was a ridiculous aspect to his proclamations and his "special exertions to appear peculiarly ferocious."[69] In their descriptions of their assailants, the abolitionists gave full vent to their scorn for their character. Bradburn referred to them in stereotypical terms, as "sundry unshaven, lantern-jawed, savage-looking loafers," who "saluted" them with "horrible mutterings of murderous threats, and blasphemous oaths, against abolitionists and 'niggers.'"[70] White was perhaps most oblique and tactful in referring to them as "a great number of men, such as do not usually attend our meetings."[71] The participants on both sides of the encounter appeared familiar with the discourse and gestural idiom within which they operated during the conflict. The fact that they had a vocabulary to

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[66] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[67] *Ibid*.
[68] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[69] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843; Solomon Fussell, Fall Creek Township, Madison County, Indiana, to "Nephue", 1 November 1843, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
[70] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[71] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.

discuss these events indicates that this local-level violence was a manifestation of familiar national disputes.

The situation quickly escalated into violence. Standing around the perimeter of the grove, this motley assemblage ordered the convention to "disperse."[72] Despite this proclamation, the abolitionists on the platform stood their ground. Much of the audience appeared on the brink of flight, but White asked them to keep to their seats. The women remained seated, attesting to their bravery, while some of the men departed. White claimed of the women, "throughout the whole they showed themselves the more courageous party, as they ever have done," and further argued that it was the Pendleton citizens' (presumably meaning the men present) refusal to assertively face their aggressors that led to their downfall and to mob rule.[73] These women, possibly relying on assumptions that their opponents would not harm them, demonstrated a remarkable collective cohesion in that choice of action, one that their male counterparts lacked.

As the anti-abolitionists began to throw their "chosen missiles," Dr. Cook and William White attempted to reason with their attackers. Bradburn amusingly reported that this frustrated their foes: "This would not do … the mob's work could not proceed if they allowed the matter to be talked about."[74] One anti-abolitionist, James Jackson, tried to seize control of the discourse with a speech focusing on the "'anti-republicanism and toryism' of abolitionists, in refusing to vote for slaveholders, and insisting on 'letting the niggers loose for nothing.'"[75] He made what White called a "most ridiculous spectacle, interlarding his speech with copious oath," but in the

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[72] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[73] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[74] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[75] *Ibid*.

end found that words could not convey his message with the efficacy of gesture and violence.[76]

Falling silent, Jackson began to physically mime his frustration. Bradburn equated his convulsions with the jerks of a cadaver attached to a galvanic battery.[77] His strange behaviors made the audience laugh aloud.[78] Quickly realizing that the situation was escaping his control, Jackson stated that "'he could not talk, but he could fight,'" and thus incited the crowd to further destruction.[79] Refusing to allow this shift in tone—their "tragedy…to turn out a farce"—the determined men began to break up the speaking platform and the meeting.[80]

Following the destruction of the platform, the physical fight began in earnest. The horde attacked the audience, pressing *en masse* and throwing them to the ground. They "knocked down" and wounded Micajah White, "a warm friend," along with two other men, Mr. Graham, and Dr. Vaughan.[81] Douglass, despite identifying as a Garrisonian non-resistant at that time, entered the fray with a club. He intervened on behalf of a man who was being beaten "with frightful ferocity," and whom he thought was William White.[82]

The attack at Pendleton is but one example of the tension between violence and non-

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[76] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[77] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[78] *Ibid.* This was not the only instance on the tour of a lecturer coping with oppression through humor. Gay had fun at the expense of a Portland, Indiana mob in mid-September. He wrote that local people had anticipated a mob, as a result of recent events in Pendleton. At another meeting, the "zeal displayed by one of these gentry…deserves honorable mention…He had…but a single cent in the world, and he used that in the purchase of eggs, to pelt the lecturer. Eggs being three cents a dozen, he bought four, and used them. Some of his ill-disposed neighbors insinuate that he saved the cent by stealing the eggs, but that no doubt is a libel..." Despite the fear of mobs, the meeting at Portland was well attended. Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 19, 1843.
[79] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843
[80] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[81] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843. Micajah White was a 24-year-old Quaker, born in North Carolina. The nephew of Levi Coffin, he himself was an Indiana anti-slavery organizer. David Heighway, "Micajah C. White: A Forgotten Victim of the Assault on Frederick Douglass," *Preserving Indiana* (2001): 5. Coffin later wrote that White sustained injuries, as he had "two of his front teeth knocked out by a brickbat, thrown by one of the mob." Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Arno Press, 1968 (1876)), 229.
[82] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843; Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces"; Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.

resistance that "mob action" elicited during the tour, and in the lecturers' later lives. Frederick Douglass was the most famous non-resistant on the tour, meaning that he embraced the Garrisonian practice of non-violence, but Gay also avowed these principles. As for White, he openly admitted to striking blows to protect Douglass. Bradburn praised Douglass for abandoning "his non-resistance not for himself, but for a friend," even though the man Douglass had saved was actually a stranger, not White.[83]

Following Douglass's defensive action, his opponents wrested the club from his hands and attacked him with fury. They flung their various weapons at him, and Rebecca Fussell claimed to have interceded by placing her baby in the way when a man attempted to strike Douglass with a club. She wrote that Douglass managed to flee for a moment after "Myself and baby saved him from that blow."[84]

Rebecca Fussell's move to protect Douglass has suggestive implications for the role of gender and even age in protecting certain activists from harm, and demonstrates the courage of select meeting attendees. She wrote in a nonchalant fashion how she and baby Linnaeus had saved Douglass a clouting. In making her decision to intercede between the angry men and Douglass, she relied upon the assumption that they would not hurt the baby, or hit her. She, not her husband Edwin, took charge of holding the baby at the meeting, as he was on the speaker's platform. In tandem with the other women at the meeting who kept to their seats when their

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[83] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843. Douglass later claimed that the Pendleton conflict "cured" him of his non-resistance. James H. Cook, "Fighting with Breath, not Blows: Frederick Douglass and Antislavery Violence," in *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America*, ed. John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 132.
[84] Fussell in Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces."

antagonists marched in, she proves that women both stayed in dangerous situations to protect the right to free expression, and actively resisted oppression.

The itinerant milieu thus had an active place for women and children. The lecturers and meeting attendees who wrote accounts of the conventions discussed the prevalence there of women with babies, and also the general age diversity of the audiences. White wrote of the benefits and the costs of this in a discussion of Ohio meetings, noting that unlike meetings in Massachusetts, "all the mothers bring their babies; and though sometimes when ten or a dozen set up a shout it is a little annoying, on the whole, it adds to the interest of the meetings from the desire it shows in the mothers to attend."[85] To White, the presence of these women boded well for action for the cause. This attendance implies that women were willing to risk their safety and that of their families to attend meetings that interested them.[86] At minimum, this speaks to Old Northwest women's desire to participate in the deliberative culture of antislavery politics, and willingness to risk their bodies to protect their principles.[87]

Chasing Douglass, the men shouted "'Kill the nigger, kill the damn nigger.'" White wrote of the scene that it exemplified Indiana's racist character: "I hope never to look on so fearful a sight, as poor Frederick flying before those hell-hounds, panting for his blood. It was a fearfully true picture of the flight of the fugitive slave, and it was fitting it should take place on the soil of this pro-slavery State."[88] One well-aimed stone hit Douglass on the head, knocking

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[85] White, *Liberator,* September 6, 1843.
[86] In some cases, this must have been a practical concern if there was no other person to watch the children at home. In the case of babies, women who traveled a significant distance may also have had to bring them in order to nurse.
[87] They did so on other occasions in this region, and occasionally in the East, although it is my contention that women were more integrated into Old Northwestern abolition than elsewhere. Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 50-51.
[88] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.

him down and creating a large lump. A circle of men quickly gathered around the fallen Douglass, aiming deadly blows at him, and wounding him on the hand and in the side.[89]

The several accounts of the mêlée name different men who intervened at this point, including Dr. Madison C. Walker, George Mingle, Neal Hardy, and Dr. Edwin Fussell.[90] White claimed to have done the rescuing himself, by flinging himself upon a man who aimed at striking Douglass a death blow. "One of the wretches" walloped the back of White's head with a stone, but his hat spared him the worst of the impact.[91] By intervening, White drew the wrath of the attackers to himself, and "was badly wounded and bruised."[92] Three stones also hit White's front, but left him unharmed. Others also interceded, and the violence ended.[93] For his part, Bradburn escaped without injury, but faced severe threats. He wrote, "I refused to leave the ground at the bidding of several of the scoundrels, who, flourishing brick-bats about my head, swore they would knock my brains out if I did not do so."[94]

After the abolitionists had halted Douglass's attempted murder, William Lukens placed Douglass in his "dearborn wagon" with the aid of Neal Hardy and Dr. Edwin Fussell.[95] They drove him to Hardy's home, approximately two miles away, unconscious all the while. Once

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[89] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[90] Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces"; Forkner and Dyson, *Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of Madison County, Indiana*, 751.
[91] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843. Even with the protection of the hat, he received a "gash in the scalp two inches long, and quite down to the skull." Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[92] F., "Mobs in Madison County," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* November 1, 1843.
[93] William A. White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843, October 13, 1843.
[94] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[95] Neal Hardy was one of several migrants from Chester County, Pennsylvania who lived in the "Quaker Settlement" several miles east of Pendleton. He married Elizabeth Fussell, Edwin's sister. Hendrickson, "Sheltering a Famous Fugitive Slave, Part I," 3-4. The Dearborn wagon, a type of farm vehicle pulled by one horse, was often used to transport fugitive slaves in rural areas, and might have had a special resonance for abolitionists who read the story. R. C. Smedley, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968 (1883)), 49, 138.

they arrived, Fussell and the Hardys cared for him.[96] Douglass recovered swiftly, and surprised his friends by speaking the following day, albeit with a bandaged head.[97]

The extraordinary circumstances of the attack at Pendleton naturally did not go without comment in the abolitionist press, or newspapers more generally. Many journalists and citizens saw it as an outrageous and blatant miscarriage of justice. The Whig-identified *Indiana Courier* wrote shortly thereafter to denounce the violence and censorship the attack had wrought. The convention had been "quietly and peaceably progressing with its business" in Pendleton, when the "gang of lawless and uncivilized ruffins, armed and disguised…proceeded to acts of wanton and wicked violence upon the persons there assembled." In the writer's view, mobs were expressions of low, unpleasant human emotions, without excuse, most particularly when their goal was to stifle "the right of *free discussion*--a right as sacred as life itself and secured to every citizen by the law and the Constitution." In response, all must rally to the protection of citizenship rights, deny mobs their approval, and prosecute their participants.[98]

Even as this bold attack inspired outrage across Indiana and the nation, the drama at Pendleton continued to unfold. The ensuing legal struggle had significant ramifications for both the Fussell family and the community. Ultimately, a grand jury indicted over twenty of the anti-abolitionists. One man, Morris Runnels (called Reynolds in most newspaper accounts) volunteered to stand trial in the county town, Anderson, as a test case, assuming he would not be convicted. The judge sentenced him to prison time. The throng outside of the court responded

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[96] Fussell in Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces."
[97] *Friends' Intelligencer*, June 20, 1896. This convention occurred in the congenial setting of Friends Meeting House in Fall Creek.
[98] *Indiana Courier*, quoted in "The Mob," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle*, October 13, 1843, "Mob at Pendleton," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle* October 6, 1843.

with outrage, threatened to tear down the jail holding Runnels, and even vowed to personally attack the judge and jury. The judge bowed to the men's pressure and suggested that they compose a petition to Governor Bigger, pleading for pardon. A messenger sped off to Indianapolis, where the Governor granted this request in short order. The legal consequences of the Pendleton incident thus vanished, along with the opportunity for justice and protection of rights in the case.[99] In Pendleton, the abolitionist presence brought to the surface substantial disagreements about social control and the right to access public space, and taught the lecturers that they could expect few guarantees of their rights in Indiana.

V: Indiana Tumult: The Trials of Itinerant Abolition in Hoosier Land

The hostile reaction most Indianans had to antislavery led to pervasive violence and press battles as the "One Hundred Conventions" tour continued beyond Pendleton. The dramatic events there were far from the last instance of Indiana mobbing that Douglass, Bradburn, and White would experience. Their October conventions at Richmond also tapped into extant political and religious controversies. During the Friends' Yearly meeting there in 1842, a group of antislavery Friends led by Hiram Mendenhall had presented a petition to visiting politician Henry Clay, asking him to free his slaves. Clay refused, and castigated Mendenhall "for lack of

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[99] "Triumph of Mob Law--A Governor Intimidated," *Liberator,* November 17, 1843. See Chapter Two for more details.

courtesy" in daring to approach him publicly concerning this controversial issue.[100] Many of Richmond's citizens supported Clay's mocking of Mendenhall, which local immediate abolitionists regarded as proof of their excessive moderation on the issue of slavery and willingness to follow the Whig party line. In his publicity for the tour, Edwin Fussell alluded to the willingness of local people to play politics with, even idolize Clay, and reminded his Indiana readers that at that same 1842 meeting, the Society had expelled four Friends for their abolitionist activities.[101]

Despite this history of religious and political tension, the first Richmond convention on October 28, 1843 proceeded smoothly. Douglass spoke, and Bradburn reserved special time to refute Clay's positions on slavery. The next day, following an effective morning meeting, a trustee of the church locked the convention out of the building. This man, J. McMinn, falsely claimed the support of another trustee, W. Lynde, for this exclusion. McMinn's diversionary strategy was short-lived, however, as Lynde openly responded in support of free discussion. Lynde's approval in hand, a man crawled in the window to let the masses into the building. White began to speak, while outside a crowd gathered. This throng had both anti- and pro-

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[100] Clay claimed that he hated slavery, but his slaves could not take care of themselves. He said he would free them if the abolitionists would raise $15,000 for their support. Jacob P. Dunn, "The Visit of Henry Clay to Richmond, Ind," Jacob P. Dunn Papers, Manuscript Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana. Hiram Mendenhall was born in North Carolina in 1801. A Hicksite Quaker who had moved north as a child to Clinton County, Ohio, he settled in Warren County as an adult. He moved to Indiana in 1835. Active in local and state politics, Mendenhall was a Whig until 1842, when this tumultuous meeting with Clay led to the Whig press severely mocking him. Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846*, 50-51, 30.

[101] Even as Fussell had promoted the Richmond convention in early September, he wondered whether Douglass would find in Richmond the same fawning hospitality as had Clay. He claimed if local people were "'no respecters of persons,'" then they would also bring Douglass out "for an admiring crowd to gaze at; and after meeting, occupy him for half an hour, in *shaking hands* with the 'elderly Friends.'" Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 7, 1843; *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 8, 1843; Dunn, "The Visit of Henry Clay to Richmond, Ind," The four Quakers in question were Benjamin Stanton, Jacob Grave, William Locke, and Charles Osborn. This was but one action in an ongoing controversy in the Society of Friends concerning the appropriateness of uniting with other causes. See Chapter 2.

slavery elements, but local lawyer James Green delivered an anti-abolition speech. While Green claimed to be "replying to Bradburn and Douglass," he chiefly used "the most severe invective" against them. Eyewitness and local abolitionist Kersey Grave heard Green use language he saw as calculated to raise the ire of his audience, including stating, "that the Abolitionists ought all to be driven out of town." As justification for this speech, Green claimed that someone was obligated to respond to the abolitionists' disgraceful claims, but, as Grave saw it, Green lacked the courage to participate in their meeting even when they extended him an unambiguous invitation.[102]

Green thus selected his location wisely, where he would have no need to face rebuttal. In the street, he could, as Grave wrote, incite "the rabble" to attack the meeting. In fact, shortly after his diatribe, "a dozzen or two of eggs were hurled through the window in the direction of the speaker's stand." White had nearly finished speaking, and only a few of the eggs struck him, for most of them hit the wall. In the egg-flinging crowd was the Wayne county senator, Lewis Burke, whom Grave called a "negro-catcher."[103] Grave used this fact to snipe at the mainstream Quakers, the "body Friends" who had expelled his brother the previous year for his anti-slavery affiliations:

> Is it possible that the people of Wayne county send such a vile egg-o-tist and violator of good order and decency, to the legislature to make laws for them? We shall see whether the 'body Friends' vote for him hereafter, and thus prove their opposition to slavery and their regard for law, order, and decency...[104]

Accounts of the Richmond attack repeatedly stated with outrage that the abolitionists had invited

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[102] Kersey Grave, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 4, 1843.
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] *Ibid.* "Body Friends" were Orthodox Quakers who interpreted their religious doctrine to mandate separatism from organized antislavery movements. Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 91, 130. His brother was Jacob Grave, one of the four expelled in 1842.

Green and Burke to take part in the meeting, and that they had refused, preferring to show their opposition from outside.[105]

Following their egging of the meeting, the anti-abolitionists paraded the town. Grave remained the subject of their continued attention. A group of approximately fifty men proceeded away from the church, along the main street, shouting Grave's name. He moved among them anonymously, unrecognized, and returned to his "lodgings." He discovered the following day that they had continued looking for abolitionists to attack, harassing and calling on several townspeople, "sometimes enquiring for me, and sometimes for friend White." Ever persistent, they assaulted one man's house with stones and bricks, breaking windows and dishes.[106] This anti-abolition group was thus also prepared to confirm their vitriol with violence.

The Richmond convention catalyzed a further level of controversy after the fact. The *Wayne County Record* printed a biased critique of Douglass's speech at Richmond, and among other insults and inaccuracies, it claimed that he was the speaker egged on October 29, and that the mob was after him for the content of his speech.[107] The editor called Douglass "impudent" in the course of ostensibly denouncing the throng's actions:

> 'As the conductor of a public journal, we feel it our duty to condemn such disgraceful proceedings. We do not do this ; because we feel a sympathy with the Negro abolition Lecturer. That he was impudent, and deserved all that he got, is perhaps true, but egging is not the way to meet such fanatics. Treat such persons with silent contempt.'[108]

Benjamin Stanton of the *Free Labor Advocate* printed this "exhibition of spleen and prejudice against colored people" and abolitionists with significant editorial commentary and correction of

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[105] "A Mob in Richmond," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle*, October 6, 1843.
[106] Grave, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 4, 1843.
[107] *Wayne County Record*, quoted in *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle*, October 6, 1843. The editor of the *Record* wrote: "'His slang so incensed the people, that at night when the meeting was still going on, he, and probably some of the Lecturers present, was egged, and the house of one Abolitionist in Town was stoned.'"
[108] *Ibid*.

errors.[109] He claimed that such articles added to the racist oppression of both slaves and free African Americans, and blamed abolitionists for their own mobbing. He saw the choice of the word "impudent" as demonstrating blatant racism: "No man in his senses would call a white man *impudent* for talking just as Douglas did, under precisely similar circumstances."[110]

Stanton used the biases of the *Record* to deconstruct racial prejudice through mockery. Douglass was out of town at the time of the Richmond incident, lecturing at Goshen nearly 200 miles away.[111] White was the actual victim of the violence: "And as his name is, so is he," wrote Stanton. Not content to stop there, he took his attack on skin prejudice to a personal level, noting that Mr. Stitt, the editor of the *Record*, was in fact rather dark skinned. As was a common technique of anti-slavery activists wishing to illustrate the ridiculousness of absolute racial categories, he wrote that "the difference in color" separating Stitt and Douglass is "not vastly greater than between him [Stitt] and Wm. A. White." Stanton claimed to intend no offense with this comparison, but instead to demonstrate equal rights. He claimed to reveal "the truth, and by telling it, to show the folly of estimating men's merits by the color of the skin. Friend Stitt is entitled to as much consideration as if he was as white as Wm. A. White, or as dark as Frederic

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[109] Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 424. Benjamin Stanton lived in Newport, Indiana, and worked as a merchant, publisher, as well an Underground Railroad activist and "free produce advocate." In the 1840s, he was very active in the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends. With Henry H. Way, a local Quaker doctor, he edited the *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle* in Newport from 1841-1848. Ripley wrote of the weekly *FLA* that it was "established to advance the free produce cause in the West," and that it "published antislavery news and consistently opposed racial prejudice." After the schism in the Indiana Society of Friends in 1842 [detailed in Chapter 2], this paper "became the organ of the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends." Interestingly, Holloway of the *Richmond Palladium* also joined Stanton in reprinting consecutively both the inaccurate account of the Richmond controversy from the *Wayne County Record* and the *Indiana Courier's* account of the mob in Pendleton. *Richmond Palladium*, October 7, 1843.
[110] Stanton was not the only person to condemn this editorial in print; a reader who signed his letter P. Q. R. also signaled his displeasure in a letter to the *Free Labor Advocate*. P. Q. R., "To John B. Still, Esq," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* October 13, 1843.
[111] *Ibid.*

Douglas, and no more."[112] In his view, Stitt had unmasked his prejudice with this erroneous attribution of White's speech to the allegedly "impudent" Douglass.

Stanton also saved some of his wrath for the editor of the Whig paper the Richmond *Palladium*, which he claimed only pretended to denounce mobs, and blamed abolitionists for their own mobbing. Despite noting the "wicked" nature of mobs, Stanton argued that editors generally ended articles "with a peace offering to the mob spirit, in the way of censure heaped upon the objects of mobocratic violence; thus in many cases throwing oil upon the flames they are pretending to extinguish."[113] Stanton's problem with the *Palladium's* account was that Holloway, the editor, claimed Green aimed to quell the mob with his speech in the street. In fact Holloway's evidence proved the opposite. Stanton wrote, quoting Holloway, that Green "'spoke in strong terms of *condemnation* of the…hirelings who perambulate the country defaming the character of Henry Clay and all those professors of religion who do not make anti-slavery, the most conspicuous and the almost only tenet in their creed.'" Stanton mocked this generalization sarcastically as "conciliatory language!" perfectly attuned to "the fury of a lawless rabble," anxious to protect the good name of party and church.[114] Holloway portrayed the abolitionists as chiefly making a partisan critique, not one against slavery.[115] He thus deflected attention away from the abolitionists' actual words, and was able to both denounce them for their attack on Whigs and claim to support their right to speak in the abstract.

Stanton argued that a speech such as Green's would not mollify a mob of people loyal to

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[112] *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle*, October 6, 1843. See also *Free Labor Advocate*, February 4, 1843, *Free Labor Advocate*, June 30, 1848.
[113] "The Mob," Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle, October 13, 1843.
[114] Benjamin Stanton, "The Palldium [sic]--The Record," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* November 8, 1843. Holloway had printed an announcement of the upcoming convention in the September 2, 1843 issue of his paper. *Richmond Palladium,* September 2, 1843.
[115] *Richmond Palladium,* October 7, 1843.

the Whig party and to mainstream churches, and asserted that community leaders contributed to mob violence. Green created a "public sentiment" that suppressed "liberty of speech," and made it difficult for anyone to openly discuss or fairly refute abolitionist arguments. Stanton claimed that mobs formed when "Men of reputed respectability and standing, give tone and character to public opinion, raise the mad-dog cry against the abolitionists, and the vulgar herd, whether titled or untitled are ready to assail them with their appropriate weapons, fists, stones, brickbats, and eggs."[116] In his regard, leaders were responsible for drawing others into such conflicts. Local temblors such as these press battles were but one form of upheaval that bore aftershocks across Old Northwest communities after the itinerants' departure.

In towns where they had good allies, the itinerants could hold more productive conventions, although they still lived under constant threat of violence. Traveling in a group, Remond, Monroe, Gay, and Fussell (who briefly joined the tour) moved on to nearby Westfield, where they found more numerous associates. Monroe named the presence of a group of "Anti-slavery Friends" among other reasons for their sunnier reception in this town.[117] Their second day there, men threatened to attack their meeting, but Westfieldites stood up for themselves, in Gay's words, "knowing that there was no law to protect men but the law in their own right arms." Despite his avowed non-resistant views, Gay approved of this bravery more than other Indianans' cowardice. Even when they disagreed with the violent tactics of their allies, the travelers could still acknowledge their appropriateness, given the context. In any event, the

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[116] Stanton, *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* November 8, 1843. The tension between Holloway and Stanton continued throughout the month, with Holloway continuing to impugn Bradburn's honesty and Stanton refusing to countenance this censure. *Richmond Palladium,* October 28, 1843. Leonard Richards echoed this point in his 1970 study. Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
[117] James Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843.

itinerants and their audience did not have to face any attack, although many of the local men had brought loaded rifles for self-defense. Gay qualified his sanction of their associates' brinksmanship by noting that it characterized both the pro- and anti-slavery people in this region of Indiana, which had a violent regional gun culture.[118] The resultant convention was, in Fussell's words, "Numerously attended, interesting, and orderly," but periodically interrupted by some "'pious church members'" whom he claimed "generally make the best mobocrats."[119] After this relatively successful meeting, the touring men used their communication networks to determine who could safely attend their next meeting in Indianapolis.

While their public lectures persistently pushed against the racial and anti-abolition biases of Indiana communities, the itinerants still chose the path of caution when they deemed it necessary. Their experiences with extralegal violence did not derail Remond, Gay, and Monroe's mission to advocate the cause in Indiana, but it did impact them. Remond chose to avoid speaking in Indianapolis as he had planned, for he had heard from his friends that this could imperil his life. Remond stayed at Westfield, and spoke there to an audience of pro-slavery Methodists.[120] In the wee hours of September 27, Gay and Monroe rode off to Indianapolis with Fussell and other local companions to fulfill their appointment for the following day.[121] The abolitionists derided Indianapolis as a "very fortress of pro-slavery in this State," and a "moral refrigerator."[122] Remond expected they would find trouble, for word had reached him of "two hundred men…drilling for the past week on horseback with the avowed

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[118] Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.
[119] As part of his ongoing critique of anti-abolitionist Christianity, Fussell included one of Douglass's Pendleton assailants, a "*Methodist class-leader!*" in this list of mob participants that claimed devoutness. Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843. [Italics in original].
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843. Monroe wrote: "To this place we were accompanied by our good friend Vaughn, Fussell & White, and by some of the friends from Westfield...Asa Bales and James Antrim."
[122] *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 8, 1843.

determination to burn, kill & distroy" any efforts to hold a local convention. He was far from shocked at these developments, and one explanation he had for "this horrid state of things" was the presence of Jesse D. Bright, a slaveholder, as the "second executive officer" of Indiana.[123] The abolitionists had expected no support, but were not to be dissuaded, for the brave few wanted to make an effort at local activism nonetheless.[124] Even in the seat of state government, public sentiment was so strongly opposed to abolition that authorities would not take action in support of abolitionists. Embedded into the very culture of the state was a presumption of the right to silence racial progressiveness.[125] In this city, they found that the only check on extralegal violence was that imposed by meeting attendees themselves.

Once the men approached the city, they sent an advance guard to "ascertain the state of affairs" and ensure their safety.[126] Despite all of the word of an impending ferocious mob, they found no immediate threats in Indianapolis; in fact, they felt "the dead calm which precedes the earthquake."[127] As Fussell had predicted, they were unable to find a building in which to speak, but they met on the steps of the State House, both morning and afternoon, with increasing attendance.[128] At this, the pioneer antislavery meeting held in Indianapolis, they drew an

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[123] Remond to Post, 417, 423. Bright served as Indiana's Lieutenant Governor from 1843-1845. He did not actually own slaves, but was a close friend of Henry Clay and John C. Breckenridge. He was elected U. S. senator from 1845-62, "but was expelled when suspected of disloyalty during the Civil War." Fussell, too, had heard of such an organized mob. Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 2, 1843.

[124] *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 8, 1843: "Local people made the abolitionists "a hissing and a by-word here; and I am not sure that they would not be mobbed in open day, if they were to attempt to hold a convention here in the *open fields*."

[125] Earline Ray Ferguson, "In Pursuit of Full Enjoyment of Liberty and Happiness: Blacks in Antebellum Indianapolis, 1820-1860," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays From Black History News & Notes*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993), 124, Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, 130.

[126] Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843,

[127] Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 2, 1843.

[128] Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843; *Ibid.* See also *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 8, 1843; Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 7, 1843.

audience of "elite" and "influential" people, although only five women attended.[129]

While the meeting was tense, the abolitionists spoke and obtained a hearing. Despite the incessant "threats of violence," peace prevailed, a development that Monroe credited to the calming "efforts of the more respectable portion of the citizens."[130] In fact, one attendee came so close to violence as to put a brick in his pocket, intending to hurl it at Monroe, but sympathetic audience members stopped him.[131] Fussell noted how nearly they approached a truly hostile reception: "Some of the people of the place came out…loaded with *provisions*--mostly eggs--which they intended to *present* to us," but a calming word from the meeting leaders quelled this desire, "and they quietly remained, and peacefully departed."[132] Having withstood these threats, the speakers regarded this as a successful endeavor, and evidently left Indianapolis abuzz. Fussell claimed that they left the city "in a great ferment … and inquiry is doing the work so well commenced … This was the great pro-slavery citadel of this State; and we 'shout, shout aloud,' that a breach has been made in its walls." After their departure, they reunited with Remond at Greenwood, where he had also found it necessary to refrain from public appearance due to

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[129] Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843; Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843.
[130] Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843; Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843.
[131] Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843.
[132] Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 2, 1843.

threats of attack.[133] While they confronted mobs and assorted other adversaries, and Remond chose to alter his agenda in self-defense, the travelers were not without solace. They responded to their opposition with dignified, nonviolent persistence, and would not abandon lecturing in the Old Northwest despite the immense challenges they faced.

VI: Western Itinerant Aid

Beyond their public lectures, the very presence of these interracial groups exposed Old Northwesterners to their collaboration. Apart from the tour's antislavery message, the lecturers' interracial camaraderie provided less receptive Old Northwesterners with cause for complaint—and impulse to mob. In the face of such hostility, solidarity across racial boundaries proved central to the travelers' ability to pursue their goals.

By virtue of their own demographics and those of the towns in which they stayed, hospitality often crossed racial lines. The two groups of abolitionists, which themselves were integrated, stayed with whichever sympathetic parties would aid them, typically people like Quaker farmer Seth Hinshaw of Greensboro, Indiana, near Richmond. Douglass, and likely White and Bradburn, stayed with his family when they spoke there in late September. Their

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[133] In Greenwood, they found a welcoming reception from "Dr. B. Noble and his wife," but small numbers in attendance at their meeting. A group of anti-abolitionists had held a meeting in the surrounding area earlier that month, and had composed resolutions denouncing antislavery. Notably, this group had constructed a banner that made reference to interracial sexuality; "blacks and whites were painted, in most loving proximity" upon it. They had flown this banner on a trip to Indianapolis, looking to expand the ranks of their mob, but had found little support for their cause, and had "returned rather crest-fallen to their den." They had all intentions of mobbing the Greenwood convention, but someone informed them that they would encounter violent resistance. Fussell created a medical metaphor that did not name who would commit this violence, or which "'physicians there'…would undertake the *treatment* of their *case*, and probably administer some *blue pills,*" or bullets. *Ibid.* By the 1830s, the term "blue pill" had come into usage as American slang for bullet. *"blue-pill, a." The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. 1989, OED Online* (Oxford University Press, [cited September 26, 2006); available from http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50024005. While the meeting was sparsely attended, the violence did not materialize, both due to severe rain and Remond's decision not to speak. Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.

numerous allies at times also simultaneously hosted both lecturers and escaped slaves.[134] This interracial hospitality and friendship extended back to the early days of the tour, when Remond and Douglass had stayed with Amy and Isaac Post of Rochester, New York.[135] Remond wrote of his pleasure in meeting local white allies and making new converts to the cause, even as he admitted the impediments that they all faced, particularly in Indiana. He stated that despite all of these "trials, he was still glad to have toured the state as it permitted him to meet "many of the members of the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society of Friends & I prize the acquaintances to a high degree…"[136] Throughout their correspondence, the tour participants manifested this appreciation for local support and for the aid they were able to grant one another.

The logistics of the lecturers' transportation and their consequent ability to form these ties would have proven formidable without the aid of local people. Numerous local allies lent horses, barouches, wagons, and other forms of transportation. Indeed, they conducted the entire western jaunt "in private conveyances, furnished freely by their anti-slavery hosts."[137] Local people paid their traveling expenses from Buffalo to Ohio, and a man named either Cyrus McWeely, Neely or M'Neely of Cadiz, Ohio particularly impressed White and Gay by lending them a wagon for the duration of their stay in his state.[138] The wagon called the "Ohio Liberator," that commodious machine the Western abolitionists constructed for their transport to

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[134] Thomas D. Hamm, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in Henry County, Indiana: A Study of the Local Abolitionists* (Henry County Historical Society Inc., 1975), 2. Gay also alluded to local people in Camden, Indiana who openly sheltered and aided fugitive slaves. Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 19, 1843.
[135] Remond wrote to them from the road, and closed his July 27 letter to the Posts with a wish to be "remembered to the several members of the dear family," along with "the kindred & congenial spirits" fighting for "the overthrow of the ever to be detested system of inequity…." He also named Douglass as "our mutually dear friend Frederick." In this same letter, Remond requested that letters be sent to him and Frederick care of Dr. Brooke, with whom they stayed in Oakland, Ohio. Remond to Post, 416; Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 35-36.
[136] Remond to Post, 417, 420.
[137] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 35-36.
[138] Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843; White, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 31, 1843.

the American Society's annual meeting, made another appearance in August. Then, B. C. Gilbert used it to drive Ferris and F. Taylor, lecturer from Pennsylvania, from Mansfield, to Woodbury, and then Oakland.[139] White and Monroe also entered Oakland in grand style. As they traveled from Utica, "a procession of ten carriages" flanked them, and they soon caught up with the "Liberator" wagon, which carried Ferris and Bradburn. Their caravan into Oakland ultimately consisted of "a procession of seven carriages and three horsemen."[140] From Austinburg to Salem, local people "forwarded them" in their own means of transportation.[141] This aid extended to Indiana, where a Quaker named Joseph Thornburgh transported them to Camden, over what Gay called "the worst road I ever traveled."[142] This incredible feat of support demonstrates local activists' effectiveness and commitment to facilitating a successful tour.

Not only the roads, but also the physical risks of itinerancy—including the fears of mobbing, endless motion, grueling schedules, and travel hazards—took their toll on the speakers. When Gay arrived in Milan, Indiana on October 5, he took a two day break, reveling in the "season of quiet relief from apprehension of murderous mobs, rest from fatiguing travel, and cessation from talking…."[143] In addition to the wounds Douglass and White sustained at Pendleton, Remond also hurt himself in falling off a carriage pulled by runaway horses.[144] Remond managed to escape, but he incurred injuries to the "head--shoulder & leg," and came close to breaking his wrist.[145]

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[139] Coates," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 28, 1843; Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 35-36.
[140] White, *Liberator,* September 6, 1843.
[141] White, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 31, 1843.
[142] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 19, 1843.
[143] Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.
[144] Remond to Post, 416-17, 419-20.
[145] Remond to Post, 416-16.

The crowds taxed the health of the hard-traveling lecturers. Even at the outset of the tour, Bradburn wrote to Maria Weston Chapman at the *Liberator*: "I have here seen the need of a goodly number of speakers; for the people desire to hear us almost from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof; and it happens that all our friends, saving Ferris and myself, have been and are suffering under bronchitis."[146] This reasonable outcome of their arduous schedule reveals a further benefit of the group lecturing strategy. They could, in Chapman's words, "relieve each other" when they became fatigued.[147]

The lecturers' health problems prompted local people to care for them. Monroe suffered from a severe sore throat at Austinburg, and resident Dr. O. K. Hawley wrote him a letter expressing concern about his health and longevity. While he wrote that his "soul burns in the cause in which you are engaged," he worried that Monroe's illness would have long-term effects. He suggested that the younger man should take a break, or risk "destroy[ing] your usefulnefs in future days." Hawley even invited Monroe to stay with him, noting that Monroe would not be able to refrain from speaking if he continued on the tour. [148] Monroe did not follow this suggestion, but omitted mention of the sore throat in any of his later letters. The easterners' extended itinerant endeavor would have been impossible without all of the varying services and kindnesses local people provided.

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[146] Maria Weston Chapman, "The One Hundred Conventions," *Liberator,* September 22, 1843.
[147] *Liberator,* August 25, 1843.
[148] O[restes] K. Hawley, [Austinburg, OH], to James Monroe, August 1843, James Monroe Papers, Oberlin College Archives.

VII: Old Northwestern Impressions of the Tour

Gauging the impact of a lecture tour is a challenging enterprise, but local newspapers published commentary on the speakers' abilities, and on their impressions of the itinerants' talents. James Monroe attracted attention for his verbal aptitude. At Salem and Newark, Ohio, local residents praised him. One Salem admirer wrote that his speech "was interspersed with many illustrative anecdotes, all well told, and some raised involuntary bursts of laughter. It … could not be sketched for a report, in justice to the speaker, unless taken entire."[149]

Douglass, the famed orator, also won his share of adulation in addition to mob opprobrium. Even people opposed to Garrisonian abolitionism, including the Reverend Dr. Samuel Crothers of Greenfield, Ohio, seemed unable to help praising his exemplary speeches. Crothers wrote of the meeting held in his city on October 19 and 20 that Douglass "is an extraordinary man. He has the talents of T. D. Weld … I think, upon the whole, that he did much good."[150] Less qualified praise of Douglass appeared in a New Lisbon, Ohio, *Advocate*, review of one of the last lectures on the tour. Douglass's speech to a rapt crowd pleased the

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[149] "The Anti-Slavery Convention on the 15th and 16th," *Liberator,* September 22, 1843. Another intriguing example from a meeting held at Albany, New York was discussed in the *Albany Evening Journal*. The author claimed James Monroe was of mixed race ancestry, while other sources on Monroe, including a recent biography, described him as a white man. Frederick J. Blue, "Oberlin's James Monroe: Forgotten Abolitionist," *Civil War History* 35, no. 4 (1989), Catherine M. Rokicky, *James Monroe: Oberlin's Christian Statesman and Reformer, 1821-1898* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2002). The *Journal* wrote: "Mr. Monroe is a young man, apparently of mixed blood, and a good and fluent speaker." While this observation appears to be erroneous, it nonetheless signals an audience expectation of multiracial speakers. This article also praises Remond's speaking abilities, while drawing attention to his race: "Mr. Remond is as black as ebony, an educated man, of more than ordinary talent, and of great eloquence. Indeed, so much so, that *at times* he burst forth in strains of impassioned eloquence, worthy of a Channing or an Everett, and inferior only to the great orator of Bunker Hill." *Albany Evening Journal*, quoted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, September 7, 1843; "Mr. Monroe's Lectures," *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.

[150] Crothers then switched directions, denouncing the methods of the Garrisonian abolitionists, including Douglass, noting that their actions will "overturn every good institution, human or divine," to the peril of the nation. Samuel Crothers quoted in Thomas E. Thomas and Alfred A. Thomas, *Correspondence of Thomas Ebenezer Thomas, Mainly Relating to the Anti-Slavery Conflict in Ohio, Especially in the Presbyterian Church* (Dayton, Ohio: 1909), 37-38.

author, and "Mr. D. gave proof positive, intellectual proof, that," despite being formerly enslaved, "and though he has not the orthodox constitutional skin, he is … a man of very extraordinary mental powers." Indeed, this author argued that advance praise of Douglass's oratorical talents had been accurately represented. He should not fear to meet any man in debate, even Henry Clay, for "if Mr. Clay had been there, and felt the force of some of the sarcasm and argument of this man, once a slave, he would have crept through an inch auger-hole to get out of hearing."[151]

While Remond and Douglass missed the large antislavery anniversary at Oakland in early September due to delays en route from Buffalo, they held a meeting of their own upon arrival, which made a significant impact and facilitated discussion of Ohio oppression. A Presbyterian minister and Liberty Party man extolled their "most thrilling exhibitions of human eloquence." He wrote:

> The being who could stand unmoved, under the bold and lofty bearing, the … burning indignation of Remond; or the keen, withering satire, the … soul-shivering sarcasms of Douglass-all poured forth, too, from the fullness of hearts overflowing with universal benevolence … must be less, infinitely less than man. What a loathsome, soul-sickening, ineffably contemptible thing is this American prejudice against color.[152]

At this impromptu meeting, the attendees composed resolutions denouncing the racial bias that denied Ohio African Americans "an equality of civil and social rights." In the process, they thanked Remond for raising their awareness of the "Black Laws'" sins.[153]

A meeting of free African Americans in Cincinnati also claimed Remond had a great

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[151] *New Lisbon Advocate* quoted in "Frederick Douglass," *Liberator,* November 17, 1843.

[152] "Humanity," *Liberator,* October 13, 1843. In Camden, Indiana, Remond's presence and eloquence had a significant positive impact. Local residents told Monroe that Remond's speeches "did much…towards dispelling the prejudice existing in the minds of many in regard to the colored race, and our cause generally." Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843.

[153] *Ibid.* They also passed a resolution condemning slaveholding Christianity and thanking Douglass for exposing their hypocrisy. Indeed, as Douglass was still a fugitive slave at that time, they extended to him their "protection whilst he sojourns among us," along with their intention to keep him and "such men as he" free from re-enslavement. He had not yet obtained his freedom via purchase.

positive impact locally. They widely praised his efforts in their city, and also linked African American oppression in the Old Northwest with that of Southerners. He made a stellar impression at this October meeting in the "colored Baptist Church on Baker-street." In their resolutions, the attendees thanked Remond for having "stood up, not only in the defence of his own rights, as an American citizen, but all those of mankind not dissimilar in condition." In their resolutions, they further pledged their continuing "devotion" to antislavery, and affirmed their responsibilities as free African American people suffering under "an unholy prejudice" to demonstrate their solidarity with their Southern enslaved sisters and brethren.[154] The tour thus spoke to and inspired African American audiences that grappled for rights on the local and national levels.

Apart from contemporary commentary in newspapers and letters, the impact of the tour can also be gauged by the size and tone of the audiences that the speakers drew. The lecturers' letters were full of discussion of their small and large audiences, and how their attendees ranged "from the faithful few, gathered from amid a perverse world, to the overwhelming and enthusiastic gathering at Oakland," where they found at least one thousand people, originating from all across Ohio.[155] Indeed, we can measure the numbers of attendees at that event in part by Bradburn's count of "four hundred and seventy horses, standing around the 'Liberty Hall…'"[156]

The conventions in several Ohio towns grew to such a size as to exceed the capacity of any available building. At Salem, the lecturers found enormous crowds, and the six hundred to one thousand people present necessitated a move to a nearby grove of trees, as they no longer fit

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[154] A. J. Gordon, "Testimonials of Respect to C. Lenox Remond," *Liberator,* November 10, 1843.
[155] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 35.
[156] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.

in the meetinghouse. Gay wrote of this grove: "[t]he people poured into it for the space of an hour, on foot and on horseback, in every possible vehicle, and of all possible ages…It was a glorious meeting…and a most stirring sight that, a thousand people though they looked small and few beneath those tall trees."[157] They even had to resort to the use of two separate churches to accommodate the throngs who wished to hear their speeches that evening.[158] In Marlborough Ohio, in mid-August, they again found themselves too numerous to fit indoors on the second day of the convention. White praised the openness of the wooded grove there, "Nature's temple, in which no priest can claim a proscription, or shut out any on sectarian ground."[159] Their later experience in Pendleton of course belied this lack of limitation. The open-air meetings drew diverse audiences, walking, riding, and driving wagons in "parties of from six to sixteen … women with new-born babes, and old men with one foot in the grave."[160]

While the antislavery audiences of Ohio impressed White, the itinerants observed other cultural and political differences in the region. They spilled much ink in defining perceived distinctions and similarities between the Old Northwest and the East. White wrote amusingly of the "appearance of Ohio towns." He could not fathom why, despite "the abundance and cheapness of land, the houses are crowded close together, and look as though they had been built in the woods, and, getting frightened, had rushed pell mell together, and stood in compact rows, both great and small."[161] This lighthearted commentary hints at itinerants' perspective that a substantial divide separated their usual milieus from that of the Old Northwest.

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[157] Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843.
[158] White, *Liberator,* September 6, 1843.
[159] *Ibid.*
[160] White, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 31, 1843.
[161] White, *Liberator,* September 6, 1843.

VIII: Outcomes

Executing the mission of the "One Hundred Conventions" tour transformed the individuals involved. Both the relatively seasoned lecturers (Douglass and Remond) and the near-novices (Monroe and Gay) forged a new solidarity and an expanded abolitionist consciousness that stretched from their homes in the East to the newer terrain they had just explored.[162] Their under-recognized actions concretely exemplify interracial collaboration in the pursuit of activism.[163]

While many abolition lecturers in the early 1840s faced down violent mobs, in their immediate observations and in the attendant press coverage, the men of the tour saw continuous heightened attention to the interracial nature of their project. This emerged in the most flagrant form in the Indiana incidents, but even accounts praising the speakers' talents rarely let their race pass unobserved. Southern Indiana was particularly confrontational. En route to Milan, "the pro-slavery spirit has continually shown itself … in repeated and gross insults to Remond." Gay wrote of the ugly "fiendish spirit" of local folks, who tormented Remond, and noted that the tenor of the place was such that he "may esteem himself fortunate if he escapes arrest on suspicion of being a slave."[164] Race and slavery in this region were indubitably inflammatory, and interracial friendships elicited community strife.

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[162] Monroe and Gay corresponded after the tour. Sydney Howard Gay, Monmouth?, New York, to James Monroe, 5 September [1844?], James Monroe Papers, Manuscript Collection, Oberlin College Library, Oberlin, Ohio. Douglass and Monroe remained in contact with one another for decades. Douglass wrote a letter to Monroe in 1880 in praise of his diplomatic work in Latin America. Frederick Douglass, Washington D. C. , to James Monroe, 17 April, 1880, James Monroe Papers, Oberlin College Library, Oberlin, Ohio.

[163] In contrast, see Stauffer, who focuses upon what he deems an "unprecedented" interracial bond among four friends in the antebellum period. This tour, among other events this dissertation explores, demonstrates that interracial collaboration occurred elsewhere. John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: The Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1.

[164] Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.

The lecturers' itinerant sojourn transformed their perspectives on the world and on the region they had visited. They offered observations from their tour on the character and prospects of Ohio and Indiana. Gay praised the "advanced" state of antislavery in Ohio, apart from its southern area, noting that its influence over and proximity to Kentucky had the potential to "abolish slavery there at no distant day."[165] Ohio also impressed White, who was pleased to see how the words "we are friends of the slave," would result in aid and well-wishes from local people, rather than the probing questions and sectarian squabbling he expected based on his

[165] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 7, 1844.

eastern experiences.[166]

Gay found little cause for hope in Indiana. There, he was concerned with "the social and moral character of her people,--being in some places not more than half-civilized," and how this indicated that abolition was not yet widespread. The enormous "power and influence" of slavery meant that Indiana "is now the mob State …." The violent character of Indiana society even extended to the antislavery people, who he denounced as being insufficiently non-resistant.

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[166] White, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 31, 1843. Gay, too, found that local allies "seemed to vie with each other in heaping upon us kindness and attention, not for our own sakes, but because we were abolitionists." Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843. John Collins had been instrumental in planning the tour, but quickly vanished once it began, claiming that he was too ill to travel beyond Syracuse. Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 34. The reality was far more interesting, as his departure was plagued by controversy. Collins had sought to use his speaking appearances on the tour to advocate Fourierist property reform. Under the Fourierist system, "All the evils of poverty, over-work, luxury, idleness, and competition were to vanish before a system which should make us all equally well off, and unite a maximum of culture and comfort with a minimum of constraint." In the droll language of historian Frederick May Holland, Collins had been "trying to ride two horses, or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that he had been carried off his feet by the tide of socialism, which was sweeping over the land." Collins precipitated a fight in Syracuse as he came in company with other advocates of communitarianism, and was so bold as to ask his fellow itinerants "to turn their convention into a No Property one." Frederic May Holland, *Frederick Douglass: The Colored Orator*., ed. Carlos Martyn, *American Reformers* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1895), 89. Collins advocated the Skaneateles community in a December 1843 meeting in Philadelphia as well. Martha Hampton, Philadelphia, to John Mott, December 18, 1843, John Mott Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. This distracting effort to change the agenda had so angered Douglass and Remond that they publicly denounced his behavior. The American Society responded with fury, and while they disagreed with Collins's actions, they adhered to racist conventions, and "reprimanded Douglass and Remond for publicly challenging a white colleague and considered docking their pay." John Stauffer notes this response as an example of white Garrisonians unwillingness to treat Remond and Douglass as true "social equals," even while employing them as lecturers. At minimum, this indicates the conformity to ideas of racial hierarchy among some eastern leaders. Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: The Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*, 159. When Collins left the convention at Syracuse, he soon founded his own commune at nearby Skaneateles, resigned as the general agent of the American Society, and refused to take his salary for 1843. The American Society never publicly admitted why he had left the tour, only alluding to a vague illness in their 1844 minutes. Indeed, they continued to praise his accomplishments and thank him for organizing the tour. Holland, *Frederick Douglass: The Colored Orator*., 90. Edwin Fussell and others affiliated with the tour agreed that it presented an opportunity to promote a communitarian agenda. Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 7, 1843. In the midst of the turmoil incurred by the Pendleton riot, Edwin Fussell continued his advocacy on behalf of the community movement. Edwin Fussell to Rebecca Lewis Fussell, 17 June 1843, Lewis-Fussell Papers. John O. Wattles, Valentine Nicholson, and Micajah C. White were other Old Northwestern activists interested in communal experiments, and they held separate meetings concurrently on this issue. Since Collins had left the tour prior to its arrival in the Old Northwest, the extent to which his allies actually discussed the issue at the later antislavery meetings is unclear. "Notice," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* January 1, 1844; Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846*, 91. Nicholson wrote to the *Free Labor Advocate* of his experiences in advocating the cause in Ohio, and that he had convinced people to take up the community movement using the same methods that abolitionist itinerants used. V. [alentine] Nicholson, *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* December 29, 1843.

They did not, as he would have preferred, "refrain from repelling force by force," and even armed one meeting against their opponents.[167] Gay revealed some specifics of the "Black Laws" and wrote that Indiana not infrequently saw slaveholders and their allies offering large sums in bounty for people who aided fugitives. There, "Slave law is the paramount law."[168] All was not bleak in "the mob state," however, as Gay saw signs of encouragement in Camden, Cherry Grove, Jonesboro, and most particularly, in Milan, which he described as "one of the best meetings on the whole route," despite its proximity to Kentucky.[169] Indeed, even the Pendleton mob had one positive benefit for the town culture, for it "has opened the eyes of many here, for, as one man said, they see which side the devil is on."[170]

Gay also developed impressions of the traffic and movements of escaped slaves while in the West. While he made the odd claim that the abolitionists of the "North" [meaning Northeast] did not engage in aiding fugitive slaves and "know little from experience" of the Underground Railroad, Gay nonetheless noted that its supporters did great work in the Western border regions.[171] He gave due credit to slaves' knowledge of escape possibilities, for they discussed the Railroad and its potential to help them liberate themselves. Gay praised the efforts of one unnamed fugitive helper, who had aided "nearly a thousand within a few years past." For Gay, this stirred up some chagrin at "the noisy anti-slavery of some of our eastern people, who make not … any sacrifice worth the calling so," especially in contrast to Old Northwest abolitionists,

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[167] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 7, 1844.
[168] *Ibid.* He observed that in both Ohio and Indiana, the law stringently punished such aid.
[169] *Ibid.*
[170] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.
[171] This work was in fact extensive in the East and Mid-Atlantic. Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828-1865*, *Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), Still, *The Underground Railroad.*

whose beliefs drove them "to bring all they had to the altar."[172] Nevertheless, the tour made some hearts swell with pride.

The "One Hundred Conventions" tour ended at the Decade Meeting, the ten-year anniversary of the American Society, at Philadelphia December 4, 1843. In the minutes of the following annual meeting, the Massachusetts Society proclaimed the tour an unqualified success. They had made antislavery history with their creation of an unprecedented "amount of wholesome agitation," and indeed, "at so small an expense, or accomplished in so short a time."[173] From this tour grew an augmented desire among the Easterners to do more of this local organization in small towns.[174] The Massachusetts Society argued that they should "send out able men over as large a portion of the free States as is practicable, to startle the stertorous nation with their warning voices."[175] With a cheering optimism, they declared this form of organization an effective means of combating their foes. Despite the "hostile influences" that at times kept meetings small, they nonetheless found it important to convey the truth to their audiences, which was possible even in a small assembly.[176]

Writing in March of the following year, Gay described the human drama that the lecturers experienced. On this exhilarating journey, they encountered the lows of danger, physical pain, unremitting labor, fear, and above all, the "loneliness" stemming from having the "murderous spirit of pro-slavery raging around them, and few or no friends to whom to look for sympathy, advice, or countenance …." The tour was not all gloom for Gay and his companions,

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[172] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 21, 1844.
[173] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 36.
[174] The Old Northwesterners knew that this had been happening since the early 1830s. See Chapters 2-4.
[175] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 37-38.
[176] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 38.

however, for he noted the numerous allies that they found, the "warm, true-hearted friends," who hosted both lecturers and escaped slaves. They also beheld "cheering signs of the time, of the noble and manly attributes of the people, bidding us work and hope."[177]

The traveling lecturers were well aware that some local people paid an even greater price for their support and activism. They knew that all of the "present sacrifices" that Eastern antislavery people made were "nothing, and less than nothing in comparison of those with our friends hereabouts."[178] Following the riot at Pendleton, they used Edwin Fussell's brave conduct to illustrate all that "the western abolitionists have to endure now," which White compared with the Eastern abolitionist struggles of 1840.[179] He—and other abolitionists who felt called to duty by their dire surroundings—used local organizations to face down their enemies in the Old Northwest battleground.

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[177] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 7, 1844.
[178] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[179] White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.

Chapter 2: "Stand firm on the platform of truth": Local Antislavery Organizations in the Old Northwest

> "As a state we influence the west, the west influences our nation, and our nation the world." –The Illinois Anti-Slavery Convention of 1838

Old Northwest anti-prejudice activists had a keen sense of the importance of their work and the myriad challenges they faced. People who made the antislavery movement their mission in this volatile region took on a substantial burden, but could nonetheless "stand firm on the platform of truth." When an abolitionist who called herself "Maria" wrote those words in the *Western Citizen* in May of 1844, she spoke to the internal strength that motivated local activists.[1] The antislavery movement looks different when our gaze begins in the Old Northwest and moves east and south. Local activists, from ordinary residents to leaders, individuals to organizations, typically hitched their stars to larger national bodies and agendas, but also differed from them. Their choice to embrace local organizing work was not one to take lightly, for it could lead to ostracism and danger within their communities. Nonetheless, they created local reform cohorts and incorporated diverse abolition views. Racial radicals were a querulous and opinionated bunch, and displayed a flexibility on the divisions among antislavery factions notable to both local and national reformers.

In the Old Northwest, conflicts over slavery and local social control made local organizers' task a difficult one. Whereas itinerants such as those on the "One Hundred Conventions Tour" certainly attracted their fair share of dramatic opposition, for them the

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[1] *Western Citizen*, May 30, 1844.

experience was fleeting. The repeated conflicts that abolitionists faced across the Old Northwest demonstrate that Elijah Lovejoy was not the only abolitionist whose reform struggle in a hostile environment transformed his life. He was the only one to die for this cause in the region, but local racial radicals' aid to lecturers and antislavery institution building threatened their neighbors' conception of community control sufficiently to elicit repeated violence.[2] Local activists asked itinerants for mobile reinforcement for reform action they had already begun in their towns by founding societies and acting directly against slavery. They provided essential support to itinerant abolitionists, demonstrating that the Old Northwest was central to their shared reform mission.

The people who lived in these Old Northwest communities faced constant challenges to their public professions of abolitionism. To understand the history of locally based activism in the region thus requires us to attend to the often-obscured sacrifices and consequences they faced. They brought the conflicts over race and slavery into their homes by opening them to travelers and facilitating their speaking tours. These hosts enabled public activism by their willingness to place the private spaces of their homes in the service of the larger reform cause.

Vibrant antislavery institution building began in the Old Northwest in the early 1830s. The daily work to overturn slavery and prejudice in the region presented activists with challenges that they faced together, drawing strength from one another. As Beth Salerno has written of women's antislavery activity nationally, reformers formed alliances between individuals and "the societies to which they belonged which resulted in the circulation of information, goods, funds,

[2] For more on Elijah Lovejoy and his 1837 death, see Chapter 5.

or moral support."[3] Linked by their travels, letters and newspapers, women and men in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio relied upon each other and eastern compatriots to build strength in their cause.

From 1830 onward, the Old Northwest witnessed an explosion of interest and action against slavery, the visible outcome of the work of racial radicals. While the activists were always in the minority and promoted unpopular positions, they nevertheless made significant progress in spreading the antislavery movement across this difficult terrain. The individual organizations in the region spanned the spectrum of ideological possibilities within the antislavery stance.

I: Old Northwest Antislavery Organizations

The antislavery movement in this region stood apart from the East in its chronology and in the possession of fewer rigid distinctions between abolitionist groups. While overlooked by previous scholars, local and state organizations (including those that advocated immediatism) remained robust in some areas, even well into the time when nationally-oriented political abolition was on the ascent.[4] The growing support for political abolition on the national level did

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[3] Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 214.

[4] Quoting Zebina Eastman's 1843 statement that local abolition societies were no longer viable, Merton Dillon characterized the heyday of local abolitionist organizations as prior to the mid 1840s. Then, "state and local antislavery" organizations were dwindling. In this argument, he implies that such organizations all advocated the political form of abolition, stating that the "few that remained were Garrisonian organizations." Merton Lynn Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority*, *Minorities in American History* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975), 127. Arthur Kooker, like Dillon, argues that moral abolition and its opposition to a political approach were waning in strength by 1840. Such local societies "had ceased to meet and were on the eve of dissolution." Arthur Raymond Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan, 1796-1840: A Study in Humanitarianism" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1941), 318. One example was the Michigan State Society. "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society Daybook, Vol. 4," 1853-1857, Harriet DeGarmo Fuller Collection, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

not necessarily entail the abandonment of abolitionists' former organizational strategies, at least in the Old Northwest. In this isolated environment, activists found that a wide range of tactics for opposing slavery remained viable options. Old Northwest societies also advocated both political and immediate antislavery, with widely varying levels of interest even within individual states. Radical activists created the burgeoning state and local antislavery movement across the region from 1830 to 1861.

The youngest state, Michigan, was the first to organize an antislavery society in 1832, five years prior to its statehood. Antislavery organization in Michigan had two peaks, in the late 1830s and in the mid-1850s. Although local level activism began in 1832 in Lenawee County, the State Anti-Slavery Society did not form until the autumn of 1836. Their members and itinerants organized seventeen societies across the state in their first year. From then until 1862, Michigan had advocates of both political and immediate abolition, women and men, although their respective public presences varied.[5]

Despite this early orientation, some members of the Michigan antislavery leadership embraced political abolition and engaged in national debates over tactics as early as 1840. In August, Emily Aldrich of Farmington attended an antislavery convention at Hopewell that had what she deemed a political focus, and "Miron [Myron] Holley and William L. Chaplin" spoke. While Aldrich did not call this a Liberty Party meeting, it probably was: Holley was an early leader of the Party and the father of abolitionist speaker Sallie Holley, while Chaplin was also a

[5] Merton Lynn Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," *Michigan History* 39, no. 4 (1955): 492, Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 137, 67. The Michigan State Society made clear statements favoring immediate abolition in 1838 and 1839. At their October 9, 1839 meeting, the minutes emphasized that political action would have to be a separate endeavor from the American Society, thus reiterating the Garrisonian position on politics. Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 318, Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the Second Anniversary of the Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society, Held at Ann Arbor, June 7, 1838* (Detroit: Harsha and Bates, Printers, 1838), 6.

Liberty lecturer beginning in 1840.[6] At the time, Aldrich noted the presence of conflict among Michigan abolitionists as "nonresistance & women's rights" had already obtained substantial sway in their ranks prior to the political abolitionists' arrival.[7] The Michigan State Society subsequently endorsed political antislavery in 1843, and many who favored moral strategies had little institutional foothold until a resurgence of immediatism in the 1850s.[8] However, the Michigan State Society left some room for flexibility, for at their January 1844 meeting, they debated whether third or main parties were their best option. Interestingly, both sides of this debate denounced voting, calling into question what locals thought was the definition of political abolition.[9]

Between 1844 and 1852 the Michigan State Society followed the Liberty Party and the Free Soil Party into obscurity and electoral compromise. Revived as a statewide organization by Lenawee County Garrisonians and the Michigan Central Committee as the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society in October 1852, it allied with the American and Western Societies.[10] The itinerant agents of the Western Society lectured in the state in the early 1850s.[11] This group held

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[6] William Birney, *James G. Birney and His Times* (New York: D. Appleton and company, 1890), 348, Sallie Holley and John White Chadwick, *A Life for Liberty. Anti-Slavery and Other Letters of Sallie Holley* (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1899), 18, C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 5 vols., vol. 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 230.
[7] Emily C. Aldrich, Farmington, to Lucian H. Jones, Grass Lake, Jackson Co., MI, August 9, 1840, Lucian H. Jones Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
[8] John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 375.
[9] Charles N. Lindquist, *The Antislavery-Underground Railroad Movement in Lenawee County, Michigan, 1830-1860* (Adrian, Michigan: Lenawee County Historical Society, 1999), 25-26.
[10] Lindquist, *The Antislavery-Underground Railroad Movement in Lenawee County, Michigan, 1830-1860*, 46, Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan*, 403.
[11] "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society daybook, Vol. 1," Harriet deGarmo Fuller Collection, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1854, the Michigan Society chose Benjamin S. Jones of Ohio as their lecturing agent, and pledged aid to Western Society agents Charles and Josephine S. Griffing, among others: "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society Daybook, Vol. 4," At their first meeting, they invited Stephen Foster, Abby Kelley Foster, Garrison, and Sallie Holley to visit and speak to them. Douglas A. Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West: Some Suggestions for Study," *Civil War History* 23, no. 1 (1977): 64, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society daybook, Vol. 1,"

to its immediatist views, for in 1855 they denounced Republicans as complicit with slavery, and at their October 1856 meeting, they radically disavowed national and local governments for their appeasement of slavery.[12] The Michigan State Society remained vital through 1861.[13]

While each state had its own share of debate over antislavery tactics, the activists of Ohio often overshadowed the others with their prolific writings and factional disputes. The history of antislavery organizations in Ohio reveals a stratified fate superficially similar to their Eastern equivalents, although in actuality they hoed their own row. The Ohio Anti-Slavery Society first met at Zanesville in 1835, and initially followed the leadership of the American Society. While many western abolitionists attempted to steer clear of factional squabbling and tried to ignore the events that led up to the abolitionist schism of 1840, the Ohioans nonetheless enmeshed themselves in the controversy that year. In October of 1840, the Ohio American Society withdrew from its affiliation with the American Society, which displeased the Clinton Country Anti-Slavery Society enough for them to pass resolutions on the subject.[14] A series of letters to the *Standard* from the outspoken and prolific Ohio abolitionist Abraham Brooke shed some light on the controversy. In September, Brooke wrote about his home society's support for the American Society and claimed the exceptional nature of Ohio perspectives on factions: "In reference to political action here, the old and new organizationists … will be found to be very much mixed up." Even those who called themselves "new organizationists" still did not

[12] "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society Daybook, Vol. 4,"
[13] In that year, a local mob broke up an Ann Arbor meeting, where Josephine S. Griffing, Parker Pillsbury, and Giles B. Stebbins had spoken. C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor," *Liberator* March 1, 1861. See Chapter 4.
[14] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 1, 1840.

necessarily advocate third party abolition, either due to Whig loyalties or other causes he did not enumerate.[15]

In keeping with this ambiguity, some openness did precede the Ohio Society's own split. In June of 1841, visiting lecturer Dr. Erasmus D. Hudson wrote that the Ohio Society strongly supported both the American Society and political abolition.[16] In 1841, Brooke wrote to the *Standard* in response, taking exception to Dr. Hudson's observations of Ohio activists. He wrote that they were not so readily compartmentalized: "The position of Ohio abolitionists in reference to the questions dividing their Eastern brethren, is a jumbled up concern…." Brooke's main clarification was that most of them favored the *"principles* of the American Society" but did not necessarily support its individual actors.[17]

Brooke continued to enmesh himself in the controversy over the abolition factions in the following year. In a letter to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* published July 7, 1842, he wrote to disagree with statements in the paper about the minimal effects in the Old Northwest of the Eastern debate over political abolition. In Brooke's view, despite his former claims of Western difference, this dispute was becoming increasingly relevant in the minds of some locals, who felt "a growing dissatisfaction…to the connection with politics." What separated them from Easterners was that they kept their eyes on the big picture, their goal of ending slavery. In Ohio,

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[15] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 8, 1840.
[16] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 17, 1841. Itinerant lecturer Dr. Erasmus D. Hudson left accounts of his travels that are replete with vital information about the Old Northwest. Born in Connecticut in 1806, Hudson became involved with reform in Bloomingfield, Connecticut, before accepting agencies with the Garrisonian immediatist organizations, the Connecticut and the American Anti-Slavery Societies between 1838 and 1849. Laura B. Gans, *Hudson Finding Aid: Hudson Family Papers, 1807-1963* (1983 [cited February 22 2006]); available from http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/umass/mu89.html.
[17] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, September 2, 1841. Also, in 1843, he made claims to distance Ohio activists from the eastern Liberty Party. Abraham Brooke, "Ohio Abolitionism." *Liberator,* October 13, 1843.

"we do not care to multiply issues, and get to wrangling about small matters."[18] These professed differences aside, the Ohio abolitionists nonetheless divided two years later.

Among other issues, the Ohio American Anti-slavery Society split from the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society in 1842 due to dissatisfaction with their moderate focus on political abolition. This group of Ohio abolitionists shared Garrison's disgust with church inaction on slavery, and also wanted to allow women a public role in their movement. Predominantly composed of Hicksite Quakers, the new Ohio American Society advocated moral suasion, the Free Produce movement, and non-resistance, among other reforms.[19] They held their first organizational meeting on June 8, 1842, and while they proclaimed their agreement with the American Society on the potentially divisive "woman question," "non-resistance," and the "duty of voting," they nonetheless vowed that they would not discuss any issue but that of slavery on their platforms, a less bold position from that of the eastern immediatist society.[20] They affiliated with the

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[18] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* July 7, 1842. Despite his growing divergence from their views, Brooke regarded the adherents of political abolition as nonetheless decent people, "as honest and conscientious as other abolitionists." Brooke also denied that he was present at the "Political Convention of Ohio," despite being listed in that paper as its secretary. He admitted that he had previously worked with the Liberty Party, but nonetheless he stated emphatically that he was not involved in the meeting. From this letter you can infer that Brooke had formerly affiliated with the political faction, but had grown dissatisfied with those methods. If this was the case, it also could explain his concern with the impression left when the political abolition meeting claimed him as their secretary. Further proof of a greater degree of congeniality among these abolitionists than those in other regions was evident in concrete financial terms: the minutes of the 1843 meeting of the Ohio Society announced that the Ohio American Society was providing some monetary assistance for expenses dating prior to the schism. To the Ohio Society, this help appeared "willingly and generously given." *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* July 20, 1843.

[19] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 30, 1842. The so-called Hicksites were the adherents to an offshoot branch of the Society of Friends under the leadership of Elias Hicks that, in 1828, split off from what were then called the Orthodox Friends over both theological and lifestyle differences. Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 47.

[20] John A. Collins was present at this meeting, where the members requested a tour of Eastern lecturers to visit them, and eventually obtained the "One Hundred Conventions Tour" the following year. *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 30, 1842.

American Society and elected women as officers, although not in the main leadership positions.[21] Interestingly, even after the split, the Ohio American Society was not entirely anti-voting.[22]

The Ohio American Society retained its immediatist mission when it adopted the more general name of the Western Society in 1846.[23] Women remained vital to its work. By 1856, the Western Society began to experience some conflict with Garrison himself, and with his circle. The *Anti-Slavery Bugle* of Salem, Ohio, edited by Marius Robinson, objected to Garrison's claims that African Americans were incapable of comprehending abolition strategy.[24] The Western and American societies grew increasingly separated ideologically, although the Western Society remained active until the Civil War.[25]

Indiana, Ohio's western neighbor, had its own uneven history of abolition. Despite the presence in the 1830s of antislavery pioneers Levi Coffin and Charles Osborn, the organization of antislavery societies proceeded slowly in Indiana, with the first such society forming in

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[21] Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West," 53-56. At their Oakland meeting on October 24, 1842, two of the four vice presidents were women, but none of the higher level officers: *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* February 16, 1843.

[22] Brooke also predicted another form of border crossing in October of 1842, when he anticipated that abolitionists of the Ohio American Society would vote Liberty and eschew Whigs and Democrats. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 6, 1842. Unlike the American Society, they would vote, he predicted, and vote in favor of political abolition. When they met at Cadiz on October 18, 1842, they declared in their resolutions that while abolitionists were responsible for voting their consciences on abolition, their members were nonetheless not required to take a stance on the Liberty Party, any more than on the major parties. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 1, 1842. The ability to hold an abolitionist meeting at Cadiz was one that abolitionists had to earn, for while on tour in the spring of 1836, immediatist lecturer James A. Thome had met with an eggy reception there. Since his local audience denounced this action, he maintained hope for the cause there, which the later abolitionist organization bore out. Gilbert Hobbs Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844, Vol. 1*, 2 vols. (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965 (1934)), 286.

[23] Its participants and officers were predominately from Ohio, with a few from Michigan. Its members elected Thomas Chandler of Lenawee County, Michigan a vice president in 1850. Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West," 62.

[24] *Ibid*., 60, 65.

[25] Historian Douglas Gamble sees this as evidence of westerners' increasing distance from the "cosmopolitan urban Bostonians" with whom Garrison associated, who grew out of touch with the "cultural milieu" of the West. At the same time, these rural activists grew closer to their counterparts in the New England countryside including Abby Kelley Foster, Stephen Foster, Parker Pillsbury, and Henry C. Wright. In effect, the rural New Englanders understood what Westerners needed better than did city folk. *Ibid*., 66-67.

1836.[26] September 1838 witnessed the foundational meeting of the Indiana Society, which passed resolutions in favor of political independence. Interest in the movement remained behind the pace of other Old Northwest states, but accelerated in the early 1840s with the founding of the antislavery newspapers the *Protectionist* and the *Free Labor Advocate*.[27] In 1840, the Indiana Society voted against granting support to the Liberty ticket.[28] Even without this aid, the movement for the Indiana Liberty Party had begun by 1840.[29]

After 1840, Indiana saw a flowering of both political and immediate action; representing a broad based movement, open to both men and women. The planners of antislavery meetings would at time join forces and hold several in close succession, with varying audiences. The Indiana Society met in February of 1840 and 1841, and had concurrent meetings with the Liberty Party.[30] Women were not active as officers in either meeting.[31] This incident aside, when conventions held offshoot meetings strictly dedicated to politics, women could find a place there at times.[32] Many women participated in the Indiana Society gathering on November 22, 1841. At this meeting, both sexes had the same voting rights throughout the mixed assembly, but the

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[26] Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Arno Press, 1968 (1876)), Charles Osborn, *Journal of that Faithful Servant of Christ, Charles Osborn, Containing an Account of Many of His Travels and Labors in the Work of the Ministry, and his Trials and Exercises in the Service of the Lord, and In Defense of the Truth, as it is in Jesus*. (Cincinnati: Achilles Pugh, 1854).
[27] John W. Lyda, *The Negro in the History of Indiana* (Terre Haute, Indiana: 1953), 48.
[28] Theodore C. Smith, *Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), 30, 43-44.
[29] *Proceedings Of The Indiana Convention Assembled To Organize A State Anti-Slavery Society, Held in Milton, Wayne Co., September 12, 1838*, (Cincinnati: Samuel A. Alley, Printer, 1838).
[30] The *Protectionist,* March 1, 1841; Smith, *Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest*, 51.
[31] The *Protectionist,* December 4, 1841.
[32] In nearby Ohio, a subset of the Ohio Society held a gathering immediately after their June 1842 meeting called the "Political Convention of Ohio," which affirmed the legitimacy of political abolition. In their meeting, they had a speech directed specifically at the women, in this case by "Mr. Barber, agent for the colored school societies." He refused to call them "ladies," as it to him seemed a name for a "soulless plaything," not suitable for the bold women likely to attend an antislavery meeting. *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 17, 1841.

women also held a separate gathering "for their own special action.[33] When the Indiana Society met in September 1842, they accepted both political and non-political abolition, and combined their different approaches harmoniously.[34] Their minutes expressed a desire to expand the reach of the local newspaper the *Free Labor Advocate* so that it would represent a variety of antislavery perspectives, including "Free Labor, Moral Suasion and Political Abolition."[35] The large annual meetings permitted an unusual degree of combination of resources across ideological boundaries.

Further north and west, Illinois activists witnessed and created turbulence when they moved into antislavery organization. They founded their State Anti-Slavery Society at Alton amidst bloodshed and turmoil in October of 1837.[36] It encompassed both the political and immediatist strands of abolition. The Illinois Liberty Party began to organize in the summer of 1840 in Princeton, Illinois, but did not make significant progress in terms of publicity and votes until after 1842.[37] The Illinois Society contained a significant Liberty Party faction by 1842, but its members were also open to immediatism, despite the fact that many of the highly religious

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[33] The *Protectionist,* December 4, 1841.
[34] John O. Wattles, "Letter from John O. Wattles," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 6, 1842.
[35] Benjamin Stanton, "Report of the Executive Committee to the Fourth Anniversary of the Indiana S. Anti Slavery Society," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* September 17, 1842.
[36] Illinois Anti-Slavery Convention, *Proceedings of the Illinois anti-slavery convention: held at Upper Alton on the twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-eighth October 1837* (Alton: Parks and Breath, 1838), 6. See Chapter 5 for further discussion of the divisive birth of this society.
[37] Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 97.

people among their number took issue with Garrisonian anticlericalism.[38] Both factions existed under the umbrella of the Illinois State Society. Indeed, as elsewhere in the Old Northwest, the division between the two factions was rarely clear-cut in Illinois.[39] Immediate abolition remained present in Illinois after 1840, for as late as 1844 the Galesburg Female Anti-Slavery Society stated its support for that tactic in the Chicago *Western Citizen*.[40] Over the following two years, the Liberty Party gained some small measure of support, polling three percent of the vote in the 1844 election.

With the creation of the Free Soil Party in 1848, the Liberty Party in Illinois, as in most of the nation, died away. The Free Soil Party did far better at the polls, earning twelve percent of the total vote in 1848. Beginning in 1854, the Republican Party took up the mantle of political antislavery organizing in Illinois and elsewhere, and continued in the moderate trajectory the

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[38] Hermann R. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 158-59. Muelder provides a discussion of the early Illinois abolitionist George Washington Gale's advocacy of the electoral approach to abolitionism in 1839. Support for the Liberty Party in northern Illinois dated from the party's founding in 1840, although party membership was initially very small. In 1841, William T. Allan wrote to William Lloyd Garrison arguing that most members of the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society avoided advocating third party abolition in their meetings. Allan claimed that "political action" could not take root there yet, since "moral action" was just becoming a force for local change. He thus portrayed Garrisonian/immediate abolition as a step en route to political abolition—an interesting position to take in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, August 5, 1841. Things had changed by 1843, when Allan stated that most Illinois abolitionists followed the Liberty Party, and still only a small number of immediatists, including him, resided there. William T. Allen, "From a 'Son of a Slaveholder'," *Liberator,* August 25, 1843.

[39] The relationship between the American Anti-Slavery Society and the Liberty Party in Illinois was often unclear. In 1879, well after the fact, Zebina Eastman claimed that abolitionism in Illinois was not factionalized, but rather plotted an independent course: "Antislavery men here were never divided or troubled with the divisions that characterized the East, under the stringent lead of Garrison, Gerrit Smith, or Greeley. They fellowshipped all these, but followed the lead of none of them." Zebina Eastman, "History of the Antislavery Agitation, and the Growth of the Liberty and Republican Parties in the State of Illinois," in *Discovery and Conquests of the Northwest*, ed. Rufus Blanchard (Wheaton: 1879), 672. Theodore Clarke Smith characterizes the issue differently, arguing that Midwestern abolitionists were simply not well acquainted with the Garrisonian approach. This argument has been superseded by research that demonstrated the Garrisonian presence in the region: Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West.", Douglas A. Gamble, "Moral Suasion in the West: Garrisonian Abolitionism, 1831-1861" (Ph.D Thesis, Ohio State University, 1974), Smith, *Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest*, 5. Salerno argues that the West was largely shielded from Eastern conflicts, but began to fracture with the advances of the Liberty Party. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 147.

[40] May 16, 1844, *Western Citizen*.

Free Soil Party had established. They grew to strength and electoral triumph in 1860.[41] To build their own following, racial radicals drew upon a range of organizing methods, including both the secular and the sacred.

Whatever its tactical orientation, antislavery sentiment in the Old Northwest spread through channels both personal and institutional. In a region of dispersed population, itinerant organizers proved instrumental to the propagation of reform.[42] Churches and organizations, both local and national, were also catalysts in this change. Living in a highly religious milieu, abolitionists commonly developed conceptions of duty based in faith.

Much as they defied political factions, abolitionists in the Old Northwest did not strictly belong to any one denomination. They often formed organizations that encompassed members of multiple churches. Quaker, Baptist, and Methodist clergymen all addressed the antislavery

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[41] Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics*, 101, 03, 11.
[42] For more on itinerant organizers, see Chapters 1 and 4.

convention at Granville in 1838.[43] The Michigan Anti-Slavery Society also combined a strong Quaker, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian influence.[44]

For many religious Old Northwesterners, the road to public abolition advocacy was rough. While religious ideology could motivate antislavery work, religious institutions could hamper activism. The Quakers of Indiana, for example, encountered serious obstacles as they attempted their reform work. Beginning in 1841, their state leadership refused to allow antislavery lecturers into their meetinghouses.[45] Approximately one hundred antislavery Friends left the denomination and formed a new Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends at Newport on February 7, 1843. The split in the Quaker church was at least in part motivated by the Friends' expulsion of Benjamin Stanton, Jacob Grave, William Locke and Charles Osborn at the October 1842 Yearly Meeting at Richmond for their refusal to give up their antislavery activism. The

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[43] Sarah Galbreath, New Lisbon, July 3, 1838, Nathan M. Thomas Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. This belies the generalization that visiting lecturer George Bradburn offered in 1843 about Baptists and Methodists as anti-abolition. George Bradburn, "LETTER FROM GEORGE BRADBURN," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843. Two years earlier, Granville had been the site of the Ohio Society meeting, and of a mob. The abolitionist meeting had sustained both direct attacks with eggs and stones, and the threat of the arrival of reinforcements. The abolitionists faced down the mob, and tricked them by finishing their business and dispersing on Thursday night, rather than Friday as the mob had anticipated. Some delegates felt a shower of eggs and stones again, and the mob shaved many of their horses' tails. Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844, Vol. 1*, 298-302, Julia Prat, Granville Seminary, to Susan Smythe, 30 April 1836, Wright-Smythe-Condon-Hosack Family Collection, Manuscript Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

[44] In the initial organization of the Michigan Society Presbyterians were central, but the Quakers of Lenawee were also very much involved from the early days: Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," 494, Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 148, Lindquist, *The Antislavery-Underground Railroad Movement in Lenawee County, Michigan, 1830-1860*, x. Presbyterians remained very active in Michigan through 1837, and pushed their denomination to stop turning a blind eye to slavery. Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 199-200. Methodists increasingly became interested in abolition from 1837 through 1839, even organizing a Methodist State Anti-Slavery Society in Michigan that, at minimum, met in 1839 and 1840. Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 283, William Sullivan, Jackson, MI, to Thomas Chandler, 24 December 1839, Elizabeth M. Chandler Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[45] The orthodox leadership of the Society of Friends nationally argued that abolition was divisive and that its members should not mix in societies with people who were not members of the faith or with non-Friend leadership. Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition*, 91, 130.

church also later expelled four others.[46] The membership of the Anti-Slavery Friends ultimately grew to about 2,000, about ten percent of the total number of Indiana Friends.[47]

Among the ranks of Old Northwest abolitionists were people who believed that the current religious structure was irrevocably tainted. Many chose to work within their existing religious bodies, but others called for separatism. The Illinois State Society made a "come outer" statement on October 24, 1843. They claimed abolitionists had a duty to leave the "Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian" denominations due to those churches' stance on slavery.[48] This was but one of the controversial positions abolitionists had that introduced them into local and national quarrels. Their work to aid itinerants, often across factional lines, also brought them great fellowship and significant conflict. The organizational lives of Old Northwest abolitionists extended outward from their own group agendas to their individual aid to travelers in need. They welcomed the itinerant presence and enabled their activist travels.

II: Forged in Conflict: Old Northwest Hospitality

Whether they had traveled only within the region, or had weathered longer journeys from the East, Old Northwesterners provided essential direct aid to itinerants, facilitating their missions in this contentious region. From the mid-1830s through the Civil War, local hospitality in private homes

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[46] Jacob P. Dunn, "The Visit of Henry Clay to Richmond, Ind," Jacob P. Dunn Papers, Manuscript Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana. The individuals who formed the Anti-Slavery Friends represented a respectable and substantial minority within the Society. The people of the antislavery offshoot were well established and rigorous in adhering to the other rules composing the Quaker Discipline, apart from their right to form and join antislavery associations. Further, they were also active members and office holders, not marginalized outsiders. Thomas D. Hamm, David Dittmer, Chedna Fruchter, Ann Giordano, Janice Mathews, and Ellen Swain, "Moral Choices: Two Indiana Quaker Communities and the Abolitionist Movement," *Indiana Magazine of History* 87 (June, 1991): 146-47.

[47] Other Quakers eventually took up a stronger antislavery position, and the denomination consequently reunited in 1857. Jacquelyn S. Nelson, *Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1991), 4-5, Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 423.

[48] *Western Citizen,* November 2, 1843.

was the often-invisible help that made itinerant activism possible across the region. Unlike the more densely settled East, the Old Northwest reform environment lacked a substantial commercial hospitality infrastructure outside of the larger towns. Travelers thus drew upon the network of local people for their essential services. In addition to the constant threat of mobbing and stress of frequent opposition, lecturers also faced dangers from the general conditions of life on the road. These ranged from the long exposure to poor weather while riding on horseback or in rickety carriages from place to place, to the sheer wear on their vocal cords from speaking several times daily without amplification.[49] In this harsh environment, human comforts became all the more important, and traveling lecturers welcomed local people's efforts to host them, and direct them to appropriate locales for action.

Providing temporary homes for their traveling compatriots proved one central task of local abolitionists, one that integrated their public lives as activists and their private spaces. As people crafted it in the Old Northwest, the itinerant system entailed close human interactions. As they traveled, lecturers required basic needs of food, shelter, support, and company. While some stayed in commercial establishments such as taverns, they usually relied upon the hospitality of strangers or known allies.[50] Local activists supported the travelers with camaraderie and professional assistance, feeding and housing them and their audiences. This "generous hospitality and cordial friendship," facilitated by shared values and priorities, kept their energy

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[49] Charles Robert Donaldson, "The Antislavery Career of Marius Robinson, 1834-1861" (MA Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1970), 37.

[50] One exception to the usual pattern was Benjamin Stanton, who stayed at "Case's Tavern" in his 1842 tour of Indiana. Benjamin Stanton, "Editor's Excursion," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* February 23, 1842.

and spirits elevated.[51] They bestowed cordial receptions in ample measure, joining and expanding a network of sympathetic friends by literally keeping close quarters with them.

The nomadic lifestyle of the itinerant lecturer often required speakers to find respite in rustic accommodations with local residents. During the "One Hundred Conventions" tour, the lecturers stayed in log houses, sometimes collapsing in fatigue "where bed-time found them, like tired soldiers." They even took their "welcome night's rest" at times "on heaps of straw--the fleas not counted…"[52] They moved over both land and sea, in carriages and wagons, and on the Ohio River.[53] They saw vast expanses of the Old Northwestern countryside, even as they eschewed the usual travel routes: "We avoided, generally, great public thoroughfares, and public conveyances, and public houses…and visited and stayed in little out-of-the-way villages and country neighborhoods, away from the artificial society of large towns…"[54]

Traveling lesser-known paths enabled itinerants to encounter the private, real lives and opinions of the residents of this area. In all of the "little country churches and school-houses," the 1843 band of lecturers met with both humble and exalted people and stayed in their homes. Indeed, this proximity placed them "as inmates into the bosom of families," where they "met the men and manners, the customs and peculiarities, face to face."[55] They relied on this companionship and aid for their sustenance.

While many traveling abolitionists' accounts made no mention of the logistics of their accommodations or their encounters with local people, a significant proportion of them did

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[51] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (1844)), 35.
[52] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 7, 1844
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] Gay rhapsodized about how they "were admitted to the household secrets of western life, and penetrated to the arcana of the temple where common tourists do not go..." *Ibid.*

address how regional systems of aid enabled itinerants to survive the hardships of the road. Local hosts worked tirelessly to make the sojourners' lives more comfortable. As did other antebellum travelers, itinerant antislavery lecturers also sometimes disparaged the paltry comforts available to them on the road, although the majority found something to praise in their treatment.[56]

While their time in Indiana was vastly more tumultuous than that in Ohio, the men of the "One Hundred Conventions" tour nonetheless remained impressed with the capacity of local organizers in that tense region to host them comfortably and with loving attention.[57] While in Indianapolis, several local people made their meeting possible despite the hostile environment.[58] The people of Camden, Indiana particularly pleased Gay with their extraordinary efforts to aid the lecturers. In contrast to the violent opposition that many Indianans had to show them, Camden's open abolitionists took them up and cared for them.[59]

Travelers from within the Old Northwest drew upon their locally based reform networks to enable their activism. The houses of western abolitionists proved a natural refuge for

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[56] Lewis Perry, *Boats Against the Current: American Culture Between Revolution and Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 178.
[57] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 19, 1843.
[58] Monroe thanked Dr. Achley, Dr. Munsell, and Charles and Lewis Beecher, the "sons of the Rev. Dr. Beecher," who lived in Indianapolis and "treated us with much kindness." James Monroe, *Free Labor Advocate,* October 29, 1843.
[59] They held a populous, three-day convention in this mainly Quaker community, and Gay was confident "that an impression was made which will long be felt." As soon as they arrived, he perceived the superior quality of local anti-slavery, for local people guided and hosted them despite inclement weather. *Ibid.*; Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.

wanderers such as Arnold Buffum.[60] In the summer of 1841, the then resident of Indiana and editor of the abolitionist newspaper the *Protectionist* undertook a speaking tour across the state. His wife accompanied him for a portion of the tour. Among the other hosts Buffum highlighted in the letters he wrote to his paper was their friend William Saunders near Indianapolis, with whom Mrs. Buffum stayed while he lectured in Mooresville and Monrovia. On their way home they stayed in Westfield with another ally, Asa Bales. While there, Buffum lectured in both Bales's barn and in nearby Noblesville, and found (in contrast to Charles Lenox Remond's 1843 experiences in that same town) that the citizens gave him their full attention. He wrote: "a door is fully open there, for the introduction of sound principles on the subject of slavery and abolition."[61] Buffum found a harmony that included the bridging of boundaries among abolitionists from different factions.

Racial radicals operated in a world where all aspects of life were deeply infused with politics and debate over affairs of state, and this prevalence of partisanship impacted their hospitality. Both Liberty Party advocates and those who favored anti-political immediate abolition found that they could not escape the reach of politics and disputes over reform techniques in the Old Northwest. Whether they debated the appropriateness of immediatism

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[60] Arnold Buffum was a Quaker of Rhode Island birth, and a founding member of the American Society. He helped the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society affiliate with the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in the 1840s. Thomas D. Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846*, *Religion in North America Series* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 53. An interesting figure, Buffum considered himself an immediatist who voted antislavery. Buffum only edited the *Free Labor Advocate* for one year, whereupon Benjamin Stanton took over. Oliver N. Huff, "Old Newport: A Paper Read By Dr. O. N. Huff. Before the Wayne County Historical Society," August 31, 1900, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

[61] Arnold Buffum, The *Protectionist,* August 7, 1841. In October of 1841 Edward Weed of Mount Vernon, Ohio, hosted Burleigh and Hudson: E. D. Hudson, "Letter from Richmond, Wayne County, IN," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 21, 1841. Indiana and Ohio abolitionist Levi Coffin also hosted Charles Burleigh while on tour, among other speakers. Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad*, 228.

versus political abolitionism, or fought to promulgate the Republican anti-slavery agenda, politics permeated their experiences in the region and impacted their ability to access public platforms. Local organizers joined other proponents of abolition in debate over the movement's priorities and affiliations. This tendency grew no less prevalent in the 1840s, with splits in the Society of Friends, the American Society, and the development of political abolitionism through the Liberty Party.

Whereas in the East, divisions within antislavery were often hard and fast, in the west, abolitionists who eschewed politics found warm collaboration and some common cause in the homes of political abolitionists.[62] In the Old Northwest, the bold antislavery and anti-prejudice activists faced a largely antagonistic population. There, the ratio of abolitionists to hostile neighbors minimized institutional competition. In effect, the presence of abolitionists of any stripe could elicit aid from local antislavery people, even if their personal chosen method differed from that of the visitor.

The itinerants of the "One Hundred Conventions" tour became the subjects of debate among local people over their views on eastern divisions. In light of the larger national trend toward factionalism within the abolition movement and conflict among political parties, discussions of the tour, either by participants or observers, often raised the question of its ideological orientation. The desire to pin a definitive affiliation on the participants haunted one writer from Salem, Ohio, who stated that a local newspaper of the previous week had claimed [correctly] that "the Convention had been got up by the 'anti-political' part of the American Anti-Slavery Society," but was confused, as it seemed "that a portion of the lecturers are political

[62] These divisions are explained in the dissertation introduction.

action men; whether any of them are third party men or not, I did not learn."[63] This author believed himself able to discern some sympathy for the standard political process among the lecturers, but not a definitive position on the Liberty Party.

While the executive board of the Massachusetts Society, a Garrisonian organization, had predictably strong opinions about the purity of abolitionism in the Old Northwest, the observations of the lecturers in the West and those of local people were considerably more nuanced. The Massachusetts Society's annual report for 1843 reveals the organization's ongoing preoccupation with abolitionist infighting.[64] As they saw it, from the eastern perspective, the "voting abolitionists" held too much sway in the West. Many Old Northwest people saw another picture.

The antislavery factions took a different slant in the West than elsewhere, and some Old Northwest activists pointed out the flaws of the Eastern Liberty Party. Writing of an 1843 meeting at Oakland, Abraham Brooke, himself not a Liberty man, wished for the Eastern antislavery people to understand why most Ohio abolitionists "have connected themselves with that party." He argued that the Ohio Liberty Party and the Eastern Liberty Party had important differences, and referred to the Eastern Party as characterized by "depravity," perhaps alluding to their extensive attacks on the character of immediate abolitionists.[65] During the 1843 tour, both participants and observers also declared a sense of regional distinctiveness by claiming that the Liberty Party in the Old Northwest was a different animal than that of the East. In the early days

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[63] "The Anti-Slavery Convention on the 15th and 16th," *Liberator,* September 22, 1843.
[64] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 36-37.
[65] Abraham Brooke, "Ohio Abolitionism." *Liberator,* October 13, 1843. Brooke stood by immediatist methods, arguing that lecturers, not political abolition, would transform their region for the antislavery cause. Even with such prodigious talents as Remond and Douglass on their side, still more time "would be necessary to lift our population into a moral elevation which would ensure their performance of duty."

of the tour, prior to Ohio, the lecturers had had to contend with what one ally called the "palsying influences of the…Liberty party," which much interfered with their goals and gave the tour bad publicity.[66] Their movement across the Ohio border led, in one witness's portrayal, to the immediate results of massive and successful meetings.[67]

Old Northwesterners did not value eastern distinctions highly, but some anticipated having ideological differences with lecturers. Prior to the visit of the "One Hundred Conventions" tour, editor Stanton of the Indiana *Free Labor Advocate* pled for a respite from intra-abolitionist tensions, which he expected the men to elicit. Stanton implied that itinerants should conform to the practices of Indiana abolitionists. He wished for these travelers to "come among us as ABOLITIONISTS in the broad sense of the term, and not as *old* organizationists or *new* organizationists…" Ideally, their work against slavery would avoid "reference to those questions which have divided the abolitionists…[which]…have not extended themselves into Indiana, and it is to be hoped they never may."[68] Stanton argued that Indiana abolitionists did not snipe at and censor each other in the fashion of Eastern abolitionists.[69]

In fact, in the West, antislavery people at times built a fellowship that transcended ideology. Itinerants commonly lodged and boarded with local organizers, even those whose approaches to abolition differed from their own. The cordial relations with antislavery politicians even extended to home stays, as when Liberty Party partisan and editor of the *Signal*

[66] E. Q. [Edmund Quincy?], "The Hundred Conventions," *Liberator,* September 29, 1843; Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843.
[67] E. Q., *The Liberator,* September 29, 1843.
[68] *Free Labor Advocate*, quoted in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 20, 1843.
[69] Gay, for one, felt tension in their actual interactions with some Indiana abolitionists. He wrote that the Jonesboro meeting of the Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society was well attended, but not "characterized throughout by the best spirit." Despite this strain, Remond, Bradburn, Douglass, and White participated in the meeting. Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843; "The Anniversary," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* November 1, 1843.

of Liberty Guy Beckley hosted immediatist Dr. Erasmus D. Hudson in Ann Arbor in October 1841.[70] In another such instance, U.S. Whig Representative Joshua Giddings and his family opened their Jefferson, Ohio home to the lecturers of "One Hundred Conventions" tour.[71] The Massachusetts Society called this "an instance of magnanimity and courtesy towards political opponents, highly honorable to that distinguished gentleman."[72] Further, Giles B. Stebbins, Benjamin S. Jones, and Abby Kelley witnessed this bridging of divisions when they toured Ohio in the summer of 1845.[73] They, too, stayed with Giddings. No immediatist, Giddings nonetheless offered them warmth and collaboration for the antislavery cause.[74] Stebbins retained positive feelings of Giddings even forty-five years later, for he wrote of Giddings in his memoirs that despite their differences, "He entertained us and others, and took part in our meetings, giving frank assent, and criticism as frank and fair."[75]

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[70] E. D. Hudson, "Letter from Oberlin, Ohio," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* December 23, 1841.

[71] Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 13, 1843; Gay, "The Conventions. Letter from Sydney Howard Gay," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843. Gay wrote to the *Liberator* regarding their first few days in Ohio, to proclaim their "thanks" to the Giddings, the Austin, Cowles, and Hawley families of Ashtabula County, and to the Kings of Warren County.

[72] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Twelfth Annual Report*, 35-36. In Milan, Indiana, they stayed "under the hospitable roof of Stephen S. Harding, the Liberty party candidate for Governor…." Gay, *Liberator,* October 20, 1843.

[73] Abby Kelley was born in Pelham, Massachusetts on January 15th, 1811 into the Quaker faith. Her first public career was teaching, and she initially favored the colonization movement until she heard William Lloyd Garrison speak in the mid-1830s. She became an immediate abolitionist, a non-resistant, and an advocate of racial equality. She took an agency for the American Society in the 1840s, and gained increasing notoriety as she traveled the country. Kelley took an active role in the woman movement from the late 1840s. She married outspoken abolitionist Stephen Foster in 1845, and they had one daughter. She lived until January 1887. Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Anti-Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 14, 27, 32, 110, 220, 42, 386. Giles Badger Stebbins was born in Massachusetts in 1817. He toured as an antislavery lecturer especially in the 1840s, and moved to Michigan in the 1850s. Giles Badger Stebbins, *Upward Steps of Seventy Years. Autobiographic, Biographic, Historic* (New York: United States Book Company, 1890).

[74] Stebbins, July 25, 1845. Abby Kelley, never one to mince words in public or private, directly criticized Joshua Giddings in an 1846 letter to her friend Betsey Cowles of Austinburg, Ohio. Kelley wrote that Giddings had "debased himself," and was unwilling to learn or act as though "the world is to be reformed." Giddings's daughter Maria was a friend of Cowles, and Kelley admired her more radical opposition to slavery, contrasting it favorably with her father's recalcitrance. Abby K.[elly] F.[oster], Jefferson, to Betsy M. Cowles, Austinburg, Ashtabula Co., Ohio, 29 June 1846, Betsy Mix Cowles Papers, Special Collections, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

[75] Stebbins, *Upward Steps of Seventy Years. Autobiographic, Biographic, Historic*, 89.

In some places, including Salem, Ohio, people who were not themselves opposed to slavery also housed convention attendees. In this place, they showed "decent respect…to those of different sentiment from themselves."[76] While at Salem, one man demonstrated particular generosity to convention attendees, "declaring...that he would give fifty a dinner, twenty a bed each, and feed as many horses as could stand on his premises."[77] He was only one of many openhanded souls.[78]

On their 1845 tour of Ohio, Stebbins, Jones, and Kelley devoted time on their lecture platform to denouncing the Liberty Party, but also learned of its local differences. The three nonetheless listened and debated their differences with Liberty Party adherents in Salem and Warren, Ohio. Stebbins and his companions were greatly impressed with the open-mindedness of the Warren party adherents, for these locals listened with greater care than their Eastern equivalents.[79] In his view, they had not been as completely indoctrinated with the rigid partisan boundaries he saw in the East. These eastern limitations, to Stebbins, interfered with antislavery collaboration; like other Garrisonians, he had often encountered the vitriol of the eastern Liberty Party.

Old Northwestern political abolitionists also made a positive impression on the "One Hundred Conventions" lecturers. Bradburn wrote from the tour claiming that in the region, they discovered the Liberty Party "to be worthy of its name." Indeed, he believed "Truer abolitionists one need not ask for." He even chastised the editor of the *Standard* for condemning this party

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[76] "The Anti-Slavery Convention on the 15th and 16th," *Liberator,* September 22, 1843.
[77] Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843.
[78] Gay also wrote the *Liberator* to thank the following Salem families that, among others, contributed to their comfort: the Hestons, Stantons, and Thomas.' *Ibid.*
[79] G. B. Stebbins, "Our Cause in Ohio," *Liberator,* July 25, 1845.

unequivocally. He was certain that it "is neither 'a lie' nor 'a sham,'" even if the founders acted unscrupulously.[80] He thus urged editor David Lee Child to separate certain easterners' egregious behavior from the party as a whole.

As if to bear out itinerants' general impressions that Ohio political abolitionists lacked the flaws of dishonesty and bias that they claimed of their Eastern counterparts, they collaborated openly. Even the occasionally acerbic Gay noted that Liberty leaders and rank and file "cordially met and acted with" them in Ohio. The Salem, Ohio meeting exemplified an occasion where both factions were represented on the dais.[81] Gay was struck by how the local Liberty Party was distinct from that of New England in being a "greater necessity." He did not explicitly say why, but gave westerners the benefit of the doubt in creating this party locally "not as with us, from a desire to hide the sins of their church, and in principles essentially pro-slavery and sectarian, but from a sincere desire to carry their anti-slavery principles to the polls." Here, Gay also alluded to the sparseness of any antislavery organization in the Old Northwest. He attributed a freedom from "the bonds of sect and party" to the fact that western culture was still in flux, and that "Society has not become petrified after any particular fashion." This local liberation made the Liberty Party a viable and rational choice for abolitionists in the Old Northwest.[82]

Gay later further refined these differences, noting that the western Liberty Party did not express the "spirit of new organization" as did its eastern counterpart, and in fact was more like Garrisonian, or Old Organization, abolition. Unlike in the East, the Liberty people had not "merged all their anti-slavery feeling and action in that party," and avoided the religious and

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[80] Bradburn, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[81] Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843.
[82] Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 7, 1844.

political controversies found there.[83] He stretched this point to mean that "Western abolitionism, then, and Eastern, 'old organized,' are, I think, as nearly identical in character as, under the differing circumstances of the two people, they can be at this day." Here, Gay made quite a controversial point for eastern papers that relied upon clear-cut (albeit irrelevant to Old Northwest) distinctions between political abolitionism and "Old Organization." Old Northwesterners' strong inclination toward political anti-slavery also led all "who are held to be true abolitionists" to abandon their old political parties and only vote for men who were "outspoken on the great subject of human rights."[84] Thus, Gay already beheld the weakening loyalties to the Whigs and Democrats among Old Northwesterners that would only become more pronounced with time, there and nationally, and lead to some success for the antislavery parties in the region.[85]

Stebbins echoed Gay in 1845, arguing that people in Ohio were more open to abolition principles due to their lower level of exposure to the "corrupting influence of a political organization" rife in the East.[86] In Stebbins's view, this greater degree of courtesy and acceptance would be transitory. The increasing strength of the political abolitionists over the course of the 1840s did not result in further hostility to immediate abolitionists or infighting, but the eventual domination of the political abolitionists in the Old Northwest meant that the immediatists had a smaller platform.[87]

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[83] Sydney Howard Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 21, 1844.
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] In 1854, the Second Party System collapsed nationally, but in the Old Northwest, antislavery political parties had already garnered their share of adherents. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[86] Stebbins, July 25, 1845.
[87] They still retained a presence in some places, such as in Michigan until 1861. Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West," 64, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society daybook, Vol. 1," , "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society Daybook, Vol. 4,"

Many Old Northwesterners swept aside divisive discussions and factional differences to welcome visiting itinerants. Regardless of their abolitionist methods, the Ohioans that Dr. Hudson met in 1841 impressed him with their willingness to greet the immediatists with a "hearty welcome, hospitable entertainment, and a patient, attentive hearing." In Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan, the travelers "impressed" their audiences, and also found some "mobocratic spirit."[88] Among people who embraced abolitionism, ideology did not dictate all. The American Society sponsored the October 1841 tour by Burleigh, Hudson, and Johnson, and yet the Ripley County, Indiana, Liberty Convention invited Burleigh and Johnson to attend and speak, along with Indianans Arnold Buffum and Andrew Spillard.[89] At least in part, this openness may have been due to the more harmonious operations of abolition there relative to their eastern counterparts.

Some Old Northwesterners did not neatly conform to either the political or the immediatist abolitionist faction as defined in Eastern terms. While on his 1842 tour of Indiana, John O. Wattles wrote that there was space for dissension and diverse approaches in western meetings. They could disagree without fragmenting: "They differ in love, and love in difference."[90] On the ground, abolitionists at times displayed greater flexibility in their

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[88] As he journeyed to the West, Hudson spoke on his overlapping reform interests of slavery and temperance, and worked to gather converts even while on board stages, railroad cars, and steamboats. Hudson noted when he stayed or dined with local abolitionists, and collected observations on the character of abolition in the Old Northwest. Hudson, "To The Editor," September 16, 1841; E. D. Hudson, "From Mt. Pleasant, Ohio," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 23, 1841, E. D. Hudson, "Letter from Richmond, Wayne County, IN," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 21, 1841.

[89] *The Protectionist,* October 1, 1841, 303.

[90] Wattles, "Letter from John O. Wattles," October 6, 1842. "Abolitionists in Ohio and several other states did their best to steer an independent course, believing and acting as if the questions dividing their Boston and New York colleagues were not beyond compromise." Ronald G. Walters, "The Boundaries of Abolitionism," in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Louis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 14-15.

collaborations. For many people in the Old Northwest, the Eastern anti-slavery movement's tendency toward separation and rigid bifurcation met its limits.

In other people's experiences, these regional differences were not so marked. On his 1844 tour of Ohio, William Wells Brown of Buffalo found the hospitality and collegiality of Ohio abolitionists to be infused with politics, like that of the Eastern activists he deplored. He wrote that they were "unwilling to make sacrifices," and inconsistent in their "anti slavery principles" because they refused fellowship to a free African American man, himself. While in Salem, he noted with dissatisfaction that when he had walked to a meeting with a local white woman, Mrs. Kirk, the previous Sunday, "it offended every one in the vilage even abolitionists." He credited this intolerance to the fact that the local abolitionists all took up the third party position, which many immediate abolitionists like Brown associated with disinterest in overturning racial prejudice. In Brown's view, local people were satisfied with the act of voting as encompassing all of their necessary abolitionist action, and believed they then had "done their duty."[91]

Brown also witnessed the politicization of religion; the local deacon's partisan prayer at one of his meetings astonished and further disappointed him. The deacon asked to pray before Brown's speech, in which he prayed to God that Brown only speak the truth, and that he avoid saying anything "that will hurt our feelings." Such tender topics included opposing Henry Clay, who evidently lay close to this man's heart. The deacon claimed, "Thou knowest that the

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[91] William Wells Brown, Salem, Ohio, to Amy Post, 3 September 1844. William Wells Brown was born in approximately 1814 in Lexington, Kentucky to a slave woman and a white man. He fled slavery in 1834, and took up work on a Lake Erie steamboat, which he used to aid fugitives. He moved to Buffalo in 1836 and labored in the abolition movement, becoming a speaker in the early 1840s. The Massachusetts Society hired him in 1847, and in that same year he published his *Narrative*. He had a prolific literary career and continued his activism until his death in 1880. C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, 5 vols., vol. 4 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 5-6.

abolitionists are trying to make the people believe that Mr. Clay is a bad man." Contrary to their reports that Clay is a "duelist and a gambler," he was, according to this man, a "good man … a better man than Mr. Polk." Also verboten were the churches, of which the Deacon argued, "Thou knowest Lord, that the churches have nothing to do with slavery."[92] By verbalizing this prayer to God and addressing His wishes, this man slyly attempted to close off any of Brown's potentially controversial avenues of discussion. Brown nonetheless spoke his piece and advocated abolition.[93]

Even such an outspoken opponent of political abolition as William Lloyd Garrison found hospitality and common cause with Ohio Liberty Party stalwarts when he lectured in the West in

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[92] William Wells Brown, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 2, 1844.

[93] Several weeks later, in Madison, Ohio, eighty-eight miles away, Brown discovered abolitionists who expressed sentiments and took actions more to his liking. He found both open ears among the people and clergy who were less "corrupt upon the subject of slavery as they are in New-York and the New England States." William Wells Brown, *Liberator,* September 20, 1844. Abby Kelley Foster of Massachusetts frequently denounced the local Liberty Party for its interference as she traveled the nation for the Garrisonians beginning in the 1840s. In her letters from her 1846 western tour with her husband Stephen S. Foster, and in witness accounts from her meetings there, her virulent opposition to this form of organization was obvious. While in the West, she wrote to her Ohio friend Betsy Cowles of the problems that she and Stephen encountered with Liberty Party activists monopolizing the antislavery discussion. She lumped Liberty Party and "the machinations of Whiggery" together as proslavery, drawing no distinctions between third party and mainstream political parties. In her view, immediatists and political abolitionists were in fierce competition: she wrote that political abolitionists were "trying to appropriate to themselves the entire fruits of our labors." F.[oster], to Betsy M. Cowles, Austinburg, Ashtabula Co., Ohio. See also her letter of 8 November 1846: F.[oster], to Betsy M. Cowles, Austinburg, Ashtabula Co., Ohio. Kelley Foster saw immediatists as under attack from all sides. While long-lived, this strategy of emphasizing abolitionist divisions was not always effective in convincing the political abolition faithful to convert to the immediatist cause. The Fosters spoke in Oberlin in February of 1846 to an audience of varied views, and focused much of their attention on the Liberty Party. Despite their efforts, they failed to persuade at least one audience member, Betsy B. Hudson, of the errors of political organization and church membership. Hudson, who was married to Oberlin professor Timothy Hudson, considered herself an adherent of the Liberty Party. As she demonstrates, contrary to Paula Baker's view that antebellum women developed a political culture separate and parallel to that of men, some antislavery women asserted a direct partisan identity. In this case, Hudson's politics meant the Fosters' perspective had no traction with her. B.[etsy] B. Hudson, Oberlin, to Betsy Cowles, 27 February 1846, Betsy Mix Cowles Papers, Special Collections, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio. As Chapter 3 illustrates, other antislavery women also allied with the Liberty Party. Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *The American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 622. Later examples of immediatist frustration elsewhere are the resolutions from the October 6, 1855 meeting of the Michigan Society, which named the Republican Party as complicit with slavery. The members assembled there reiterated their disbelief that the solution to the national problem of slavery lay in politics. "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society Daybook, Vol. 4,"

1847. In Madison, Ohio, Garrison and his African American lecturing companion Dr. David J. Peck found a warm reception in the home of Deacon Horace Ensign that August. Garrison wrote that this man, while a Liberty adherent, was "very kind and hearty in his feelings toward us, and his house is always open to anti-slavery lecturers and runaway slaves." Frederick Douglass joined Garrison and Peck in Painesville the following day, where General Paine, a "Liberty Lawyer," presided over the meeting. Paine showed further interest in reaching out to the immediatists, as he invited Garrison and a group of his compatriots to dine at his home that afternoon.[94] The cloud of controversy that surrounded Garrison did not prevent him from interacting with others who did not share his ideology. The local reactions to this immensely polarizing man best exemplify the factional blurriness that characterized Old Northwestern offers of hospitality and aid to traveling reformers.[95]

The hand of fellowship local people extended to itinerants also included their participation in gatherings the travelers led. At some meetings, local voices joined in harmony with those of the itinerants. When Benjamin Stanton toured Indiana in 1842, two young men he only named as Harris and Ward made rough but eloquent speeches in Jericho. He saw Harris as "manifesting great zeal in the cause." After Harris, Ward told the assembled audience of his recent conversion to abolitionism, and Stanton wrote that Ward would prove an asset to the

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[94] William Lloyd Garrison, "To the *Liberator*. Richfield, Ohio, 25 August, 1847," in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, ed. Walter McIntosh Merrill (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971).

[95] Despite some cooperation across divisions, itinerants nonetheless encountered and precipitated internecine abolitionist disputes. Frequently these took the form of griping about the influence of their opponents on local audiences. During his 1841 and 1842 tour, Dr. Hudson often explained his successes and failures in terms of his political abolition rivals, and vented his dissatisfaction with their approach. E. D. Hudson, "To The Editor," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 16, 1841. Conversely, when he obtained a large audience in Lexington, Indiana, despite the "sparse" population, he attributed this success to local desire to support immediatist methods. E. D. Hudson, "Letter from Oberlin, Ohio," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* December 23, 1841.

cause.[96] These young men enhanced Stanton's faith in the future of Old Northwestern reform with their participation in his itinerant tour.

When these local activists accompanied the itinerants and spoke along with them, they provided another form of support, at times across partisan lines. During the "One Hundred Convention Tour," Joshua Giddings lectured in Jefferson, Ohio prior to the arrival of Gay, White, and Monroe. Following his speech, the travelers dined at Giddings's home, and then gathered for another afternoon lecture at the meetinghouse with many of his constituents. Gay found joy in the "Ohio anti-slavery welcome, which, much as we expected, surprised and delighted us." The local farmers and town residents present listened in a "quiet and attentive" fashion, and Gay credited Giddings with the lack of party tension present. Giddings, both "beloved and respected by his neighbors," embraced the itinerants and brought them the attention and respect of the local community.[97] The following day, Giddings also accompanied the three as they lectured in nearby Austinburg. Not only Giddings, but also other Old Northwesterners spoke with them and joined the 1843 tour.[98] The aid that both Liberty Party and Whig antislavery people provided to immediatist itinerants complicates the picture of their unambiguous rivalries that emerges from only focusing on the East.

The work of local activists thus encompassed engaging in a lively organizing culture that extended from the 1830s to 1861, helping itinerants, and involvement in meetings. All of these forms of collaboration could have serious consequences when the activists came into conflict

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[96] Benjamin Stanton, "Editor's Excursion."
[97] Thanks to Giddings, "The people had come out to meet us, not in their party organizations, nor led by political or clerical demagogues, but as *men* who would gladly hear the humblest in behalf of humanity." Gay, "The Conventions," *Liberator,* August 17, 1843; White, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 31, 1843.
[98] In Mansfield, Ohio, a local person whom Hannah Coates named as "Marchall, of this vicinity" spoke along with Ferris on August 23. Coates," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 28, 1843. Edwin Fussell joined Remond, Gay, and Monroe for a stretch of Indiana, as did John Wattles. Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 2, 1843.

with recalcitrant local cultures unwilling to permit organization in their communities. While alliances emerged from unexpected quarters, racial radicals had to remain ready for anything, lest they find a lesser amount of cooperation than they had anticipated, or even outright hostility.

III: The Tempered Joys of Local Activism

Local organizing labor had its costs, and the conflicts that followed such activism impacted the parameters of speech and action in Old Northwest communities. Across the region, abolitionists found that their often-unwelcome message rendered them pariahs in their towns. The virulence of local reactions reveals another aspect of the singular nature of Old Northwest abolition: extending hospitality to visiting itinerants could prove so provocative that it could actually transform their lives. As the extreme case of Edwin and Rebecca Fussell exemplifies, this could happen almost overnight, even when they had already been notorious abolitionists in their communities. After the attack on the September 1843 Pendleton, Indiana antislavery meeting and the subsequent legal upheaval, the Fussell family suffered wide-ranging consequences for their itinerant aid.[99] Before the "One Hundred Conventions" tour, the doctor had a well-established medical practice, and the family had many friends in the region. Not only did they lose most of their material possessions and their prosperity as they fled their home in the night, they had to renounce the existence they had established in their early years of their marriage, and move to Pennsylvania.[100] Their lives vastly altered, they found themselves at the center of a struggle over local mores. Their ideologies and goals grew in the inhospitable soil of

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[99] See Chapter 1 for their role in the Pendleton incident.
[100] Rebecca Lewis Fussell in Graceanna Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces: The Mobbing of Frederick Douglass in 1843," *Friends' Intelligencer*, June 20, 1896, 398-99.

the Old Northwest, where resistance to abolitionism was inescapable. Fussell and his allies publicized their local tumult widely, in both local and national newspapers, and used this episode to raise awareness of the dire circumstances reformers in Indiana—and in the region—faced. In Madison County, the "One Hundred Conventions" tour left wounds in the community beyond the physical kind the abolitionists sustained.

The conflict at Pendleton—a battle over freedom of assembly and community control—spiraled out into a larger cultural and legal struggle at Anderson, the seat of Madison County, nine miles away. The attackers at Pendleton and the subsequent throngs at Anderson made no pretenses of subtlety, and no secret of their intention to silence the abolitionists—whether visitors or locals. Even after the touring abolitionists had departed, their opponents continued in their course of shutting down local reform. From the advance notice of the Pendleton mob's displeasure with what they deemed abolitionist interlopers, to the Anderson mob's blatant threats to tear down the jail in which one of their ranks was held, they conducted themselves with brazen confidence.[101] In Pendleton and Anderson, mob violence was a form of community control, used to stifle the divisive abolitionist presence.[102] Witness George Bradburn noted that the Pendleton mob acted in the most public way possible in silencing the abolition meeting. They "perpetrated their damning deeds before all the people, and in the light of the noon-day's sun; and then, before leaving town, paraded themselves on horse-back through its

[101] For more on the historiography of mob violence, see the dissertation introduction.
[102] Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 80-81.

principal streets."[103] Pendleton's residents were hardly subtle in their repeated resistance to the abolitionists' freedom of assembly and the local justice system.

The anti-abolitionists maintained a strong public presence after the meeting, indicating that they saw no need to obscure their effort to assert control. In this instance of vigilantism, they took action to root out all signs of local abolitionism.[104] The night of the Pendleton mob, they rode through the village, warning that they would reappear later with reinforcements to destroy the Fussell and Clark homes. Mr. Clark, not an abolitionist himself, had drawn the mob's attention for attempting to quell the disturbance. In response to the threats, townspeople sympathetic to the abolitionists took up arms for a return onslaught, but it was a bluff. While the mob did not return, Bradburn wrote that they were "yelping" in a wood within earshot.[105] The abolitionists at Pendleton knew they were not yet safe.

The itinerants had stayed at the Fussell home since their arrival in town, but as the threats mounted, they all decided to disperse in houses throughout Pendleton. Bradburn wrote of Rebecca and Edwin's flight from their home with much emotion:

> O, it was a painful sight to see, as I saw…the doctor's excellent wife, taking her leave of friends and relatives…and with an infant in her arms, accompanied by their two other little ones in his, hurrying stealthily out of their own house, in the evening's darkness, to avoid being buried beneath its ruins by an infernal mob.[106]

They fled to Dr. Madison C. Walker's house for safety.[107]

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[103] George Bradburn, "LETTER FROM GEORGE BRADBURN," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 18, 1843.
[104] Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 80-81.
[105] Bradburn, September 18, 1843; Fussell in Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces," 399. In another instance of Quakers debating violent means, Solomon Fussell critiqued the men of his faith among those who guarded the Fussell home the night of the mob, "refels in their hands." Solomon Fussell, Fall Creek Township, Madison County, Indiana, to "Nephue," 1 November 1843, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
[106] Bradburn, September 18, 1843.
[107] Fussell in Lewis, "Anti-Slavery Reminisces," 399.

Witnesses and victims of the anti-abolition attack struggled to identify their antagonists and attempted to place them outside of the local community. This strategy aimed to render mob efforts at community control illegitimate by turning the anti-abolition logic on its head, arguing that people from outside of the town had no right to shape its culture. They named some of the mob members in the letters they wrote, both privately and for publication. Nevertheless, they could not agree on their town of origin.[108] These abolitionists thus attempted to place blame for the conflict largely outside of the local area. Accounts of the mob that denied their local origins may have been influenced by the authors' intentions to garner sympathy. By this logic, they could potentially have absolved Anderson and its immediate environs of the stigma the mobs created by placing the responsibility elsewhere. In this manner, reformers attempted to build support for abolitionism in their town by attributing resistance to outsiders, much as anti-abolitionists spoke of "hirelings." This strategy would not ultimately prove successful, as they failed to rally significant community backing or outside support beyond mention in antislavery newspapers.

In a similar effort to highlight the differences of anti-abolitionists from their presumed readers, Bradburn and Edwin's uncle Solomon Fussell noted the religious affiliation of some of the mob's leaders. Bradburn combined a localist critique with a religious one, noting that the Pendleton mob left town singing spiritual songs and that many of them were Baptists and

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[108] Bradburn called them "strangers from abroad," itself an interesting description coming from an itinerant speaker. Bradburn, September 18, 1843. While some observers readily identified the men as locals, others claimed they were from Adams Township, also in Madison County, and from the northern part of Hancock County. John L. Forkner and Byron H. Dyson, *Historical Sketches and Reminiscences of Madison County, Indiana: A Detailed History of the Early Events of the Pioneer Settlement of the County, and Many Happenings of Recent Years, as Well as a Complete History of each Township, to Which is Added Numerous Incidents of a Pleasant Nature, in the Way of Reminiscences and Laughable Occurences* (Anderson, IN: J.L. Forkner, 1897), 750. Solomon Fussell had heard no definite identification of any men from Anderson on the second day of mobbing. Solomon Fussell to "Nephue," 1 November 1843.

Methodists.[109] He sarcastically used the phrase "pious mob" to evaluate the mob's actions as unchristian by implication, and drew attention to his view that violence was incompatible with religion. He called upon a larger abolitionist critique of pro-slavery Christianity, and of Christianity itself as irreconcilable with slavery. The anti-abolitionists themselves may have been celebrating having successfully broken up a meeting that they associated with opposition to the religious and political structure as they knew it.

In addition to questioning the devoutness of their attackers, critical observers charged that prominent local individuals lent implicit support to the aggression, and thus granted it an institutional footing. Such men "secretly winked" at the mobbing, White claimed, calling the mob members passive participants manipulated by "designing men," including Democratic Party leaders. This added a note of partisanship to their critique and another layer to the reasons behind the mobbing. He wrote that both religious leaders and Thomas McAllister, a Democratic state legislator, "secretly encouraged" the shenanigans. In truth, McAllister's approval was hardly a secret, as Edwin Fussell also named him as the leader of the Anderson mob in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.[110] White wrote that the "ignorant drunken mob" merely followed the "so-called *wise* and *good*" into the conflict.[111] Other agreed with White, including "F.", most likely Fussell himself, who claimed in a letter to the *Free Labor Advocate* that the Anderson mob was varied in terms of social status, "not merely the rabble but 'men of property and standing.'" "F's" quotation marks indicate his awareness that he was using a conventional phrase to describe mob composition, one that acknowledged the investment that community

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[109] Bradburn, September 18, 1843. Bradburn was a Unitarian. Bradburn, September 18, 1843; Solomon Fussell to "Nephue," 1 November 1843. See also William A. White, *Liberator,* October 13, 1843. Despite these inferences, both Baptists and Methodists did participate in the abolition movement in the Old Northwest. Galbreath.
[110] Edwin Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843.
[111] White, October 13, 1843. Also spelled McAlister.

leaders had in preserving the status quo, even if it entailed resorting to illegal means.[112] With this, he entered into a larger discourse about abolitionists' frequent encounters with mobs, and the prominent nature of their opponents.[113] Regardless of their foes' identity, the Fussells faced wide-ranging consequences for their antislavery efforts after that night, including their eventual forced move to Pennsylvania.

The anti-abolitionists had to face the judgment of the legal system, not merely that of their antislavery targets. In the trial, the grand jury indicted "some twenty" of the rioters. One, Morris Runnells, volunteered to be tried, assuming that he would receive a minimum sentence. If this happened, the other indicted men planned to step forward for trial; but they also announced that if the jury imprisoned Runnells, then they would demolish the jail. Local lawyers had offered Runnels free defense, which he had declined, indicating his confidence in a sympathetic verdict. Runnels pled guilty, and said, as Fussell paraphrased, "he *had* mobbed the abolitionists, and he would rather pay the judge to put him to jail, then not get in; for he had come *on purpose* to be imprisoned, and was going to be, and was coming out over the prostrate walls."[114] Contrary to Runnel's plan, presiding Judge Killgore sentenced him to twenty days of

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[112] F., "Mobs in Madison County," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* November 1, 1843. This letter contains many phrases identical to Edwin Fussell's letter published in the *Standard* of November 2, 1843. The language in the earlier letter is more florid. "F" wrote: "those who were willing, were hurrying to the expected scene of action, while the mob were pouring in from all parts of the county, and from other counties, in bands of fifties and hundreds. In the midst of this terror consternation and anarchy with the expectation that blood would soon begin to flow, the messenger arrived from Indianapolis *with a pardon* from the Governor and the prisoner was released!!!!"; while Fussell wrote: "Yet such as were willing, were gathering to the scene of action, while the mob were coming in crowds from all parts of the county, and from a number of adjoining counties. During this state of terrible excitement, the messenger arrived with a reprieve from the governor, and the prisoner was liberated." Some of these differences may represent editorial license in the respective papers.

[113] Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 5, 16, 77, 158-59.

[114] Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843. As Fussell did not hear this himself, this is second-hand evidence, but other sources also reported that Runnels admitted guilt to the judge.

jail time and a ten-dollar fine.[115] This news outraged the men waiting outside, who repeated their claims that they would free Runnels by force.

The local government summoned the militia in response to the mob's threats. Later that day, a throng described variously as over 200 and nearly 300 men on horseback, led by Thomas McAllister, rode into town.[116] They demanded Runnells's release, and again threatened to demolish the jail. They claimed to have left a pile of arms outside of the town, and thus implied that they had the means to carry out this destruction. They also threatened Judge Killgore, who responded by condemning the abolitionists for the events after the Pendleton meeting, and absolved himself of the blame for jailing Runnels. As Killgore claimed, Runnels had pled guilty, so the law forced him to convict. He begged the crowd to refrain from attack, for the militia would have to respond with a further escalation of violence. Instead, Killgore recommended that they plead with the Governor for pardon for Runnells.[117]

The mob finally scattered once the messenger had departed, petition in hard, en route to Indianapolis, but its members continued to threaten the abolitionists and the people who participated in the trial. Should the petition have been unsuccessful, they still claimed they

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[115] F., November 1, 1843; "To His Excellency Samuel Bigger Governor of the State of Indiana," [1843], Secretary of State Early Petitions, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana. "F.'s" account claimed the fine was twenty dollars, but the petition text is a more reliable source.
[116] "The Andertown Mob," *Liberator,* December 15, 1843.
[117] Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843. The judge also called up a local lawyer named Quarls to make another speech, which further demonized the abolitionists. In a private letter, Solomon Fussell disputed his nephew's claim that the judge had attacked the abolitionists. In fact, neither man was present, but Solomon's source, Elijah Williams, was close by and heard Killgore claim he would do the utmost to see justice fulfilled. Solomon did not quote what Williams reported Killgore as saying directly concerning the abolitionists. Solomon Fussell to "Nephue," 1 November 1843.

would destroy the jail. This left the people of Anderson, Fussell wrote, in "the utmost terror and consternation."[118]

Addressed to the Whig Governor Samuel Bigger, the text of the petition identified its signers as local residents, entitled to a voice in county affairs. These "citizens of Madison County" pled that Runnels had committed a youthful indiscretion, out of his ignorance: "said prisoner is young and inexperienced and the strong probability is that he was not conscious of having violated any law." Further, they argued that the penalty was overly harsh, given his lack of previous criminal behavior. There ended the substance of their argument; they concluded by asking that Runnels be released and the penalty removed. The petition signers represented a spectrum of the community.[119] This petition had 220 signatures, many of which are illegible, and several appear to have been signed by the same hand. On October 12, 1843, Bigger inscribed on the petition's reverse: "Pardoned as to the imprisonment in the county jail; Samuel Bigger.[120]

Madison County remained in a state of tension as it awaited the petition results. At this time, Edwin Fussell was away lecturing with John O. Wattles and Valentine Nicholson, having continued his itinerant activism. Pendleton had become uninhabitable for him, and it was impossible for him to maintain his medical practice.[121] He continued his lecturing out of town,

[118] Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843.
[119] *Ibid.* This included local Quakers, a population Edwin Fussell was surprised to see interested in suppressing abolition efforts.
[120] "To His Excellency Samuel Bigger Governor of the State of Indiana,"
[121] Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843

finding that the itinerant life typically provided him with a safer environment than Pendleton.[122] When he returned two days after the trial, the messenger had not yet brought back the petition. In the interim, Fussell's opponents in Pendleton committed further acts of harassment, including circulating erroneous reports of meetings near Pendleton where Fussell would be present. Despite the falsity of these reports, and Fussell's consequent absence, local people met them with mobs.[123] Meanwhile, law officers searched for men willing to protect the town buildings from the anticipated riot, but they found few takers for this risky enterprise. The few volunteers and their antagonists poured into the Anderson town center. Fussell claimed this third mob originated from throughout Madison County, and several nearby counties as well. As their numbers grew, the pardon arrived from Governor Bigger, Runnels went free, and the throng dispersed.[124] In the eyes of Fussell and his abolitionist allies, this sent them a definitive message regarding their freedom to practice their beliefs in Madison County.

Suffering persistent haranguing from his local opponents upon his return to Pendleton, Fussell and his friends debated whether his family should depart Indiana for more congenial surrounds. He had heard rumors of his own impending assassination and it was clear that they would never again be safe in town.[125] He saw correctly that the community blamed him for the meeting and the ensuing conflict. As Fussell paraphrased their argument: he had planned the

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[122] While the road was less fraught with danger than his hometown, Fussell's lecturing for the cause elsewhere in Indiana with his comrades Wattles and Nicholson led him into further confrontations. Fussell's former persecutors sometimes recognized him and his friends as they rode through the countryside. They passed anti-abolitionists en route and endured "curses" and threats as they attempted to quietly return home. While Edwin was away, Rebecca and the children stayed with local allies. Edwin wrote of his worry for them, "in the midst of that den of thieves, where anarchy is stalking about at noonday and receiving applause." *Ibid.*; Edwin Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* February 15, 1844.
[123] Edwin Fussell, February 15, 1844.
[124] Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843.
[125] Edwin Fussell, February 15, 1844.

convention, which led to the mob, which bore the responsibility for Runnels ending up in jail. Without these events, the second crowd would not have gathered to demolish the jail, and if they had not done so, the militia would not have come to quell them, and "'all this *expense, trouble*, and fearful disturbance, would not have taken place; *therefore*, Dr. Fussell is to blame for all which has occurred.'"[126] In this letter to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Fussell voiced his outrage at having the responsibility traced back to him in this convoluted fashion.

The doctor found that even his allies saw his continued residence in Pendleton as unwise, but he saw abolition as his only choice, even if it meant leaving town. He wrote that his family's relocation was necessary in order to assuage the worries of their families and friends. Despite his persecution, Fussell retained his faith that opposition to slavery was the "application of God's ever-enduring principles to the hearts of men," and thus the proper course. He wrote to the *Standard*'s readers of his trials, but used them to argue that slaves faced far worse circumstances. While the institution had:

> compelled us to leave our own home in the night…driven us through winter's snow, to wander far away from home, and leave all its fond recollections behind us…these things it hath done, and more, far more; but what are all these, when taken in comparison with what *they* suffer, who come in naked contact with the horrid monster's living form.[127]

The Fussells' hardships paled in "comparison" to those who faced slavery directly. In the weeks following the mob, he grieved at the violent turmoil in Madison County, pleading forgiveness even for his assailants. He called out to abolitionists to refrain from aggression, and his adherence to Christian nonviolence and empathy remained steadfast in the face of the full scope of the local opposition he—and his antislavery views—encountered.[128]

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[126] Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843.
[127] Edwin Fussell, February 15, 1844.
[128] Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843.

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The pardon was nevertheless a cruel blow to the Fussell family, whose lives had been so drastically altered by the mob attacks. "F" wrote that with this decision, the Governor had given what he termed "mobocrats" free rein. Now, "they may trample down, abuse, and murder abolitionists, whenever or wherever they please, and shall not be punished by the laws of Indiana."[129] While there was a mockery of a trial, the court took no further punitive action against the anti-abolitionists. In addition to revealing the shortcomings of the Indiana judicial system, this outcome drove the Fussell family out of the state shortly thereafter, demonstrating the dramatic, direct impact of the local tumult. They permanently relocated after a period of moving around the Midwest lecturing and searching for a Fourierist community in which to settle.[130]

Edwin learned from his family and friends still in Indiana that the other indicted men did not stand trial. The next court term was six months after the riot, and the remaining men appeared when summoned. The prosecuting attorney only called in witnesses sympathetic to the mob. Fussell wrote of the men in pejorative terms, claiming that these "loafer rowdies testified they saw the persons on the ground," [the men injured at Pendleton] but that they had not seen

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[129] F., November 1, 1843. Again, his uncle Solomon disputed the extent of local sympathy for the mob. As evidence, Solomon claimed that the mob had to lie to their recruits to obtain their support, writing that "the abolitionists had got Reynolds [Runnels] and put him in jail." Solomon Fussell to "Nephue," 1 November 1843.

[130] Despite his uncle Solomon's urging, the Fussells left Pendleton for Ohio with the plan to later move to a community. Ultimately this did not transpire, for they instead moved to Philadelphia. Solomon Fussell, Fall Creek Township, Madison County, Indiana, to "Nephue", 1 November 1843, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Historian Thomas D. Hamm says their leaving Pendleton "marked the end of Edwin Fussell's association with universal reform," or the community movement. While they did leave the state, they remained active. Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846*, 99. In 1844, Fussell wrote to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* that he was organizing in Chester County, and that he had visited the community at Skaneateles affiliated with Collins. Edwin Fussell, "Extract from a Letter from Edwin Fussell," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 3, 1844, Edwin Fussell, Edwin Coats, and John Thomas, "Chester County Conventions," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 28, 1844.

the indicted men "*do anything wrong*." Despite the presence in the room of other witnesses, ready and able to provide damning evidence against the men on the stand, the judge did not call them, and dismissed the case "for *want of testimony against them !!!*"[131] There ended the legal adventures of the Pendleton anti-abolitionists.

Fussell saw this as a transparent instance of politics and intimidation trumping the justice system. The prosecuting attorney was running for "reelection," and he required the favor of the mobbed individuals and positive public opinion in order to win. He thus selected ignorant or dishonest witnesses. Of the coercion, Fussell wrote that the mob held the community in such a grip that no one would dare contradict the false witnesses: "None of those who would have testified the truth ventured to volunteer evidence against the murderous mob--indeed, for any one to have done so, would have been to invite the rifle ball of the assassin to his heart.[132] Fussell saw the path of justice for the suppression of his freedom of expression and his persecution as utterly obstructed in Madison County, and that his family had made the correct choice in relocating to avoid further violence. Their opponents in the town regarded the events as the necessary silencing of a voice outside of community norms that had continued to speak even after the provocative itinerants had left town. For Fussell, his opponents' objective of silencing him by force trumped their own freedom of assembly to express their disdain for his views. The

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[131] Edwin Fussell, "Extract from a Letter from Edwin Fussell," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 3, 1844. [Italics in original]. Despite having reasonable grounds for disappointment, Fussell did not place all of the blame for the rioting on the mob, for he regarded "Church" and "State" as performing the work of the devil in this instance. He scorned them as "those *two great evils*," a position consistent with his participation in the community movement. It eschewed both as morally corrupt. Edwin Fussell, November 2, 1843.

[132] Edwin Fussell, October 3, 1844. Anderson remained a place resistant to racial progressivism even into the next century. A case in point was the fact that his race prevented the famed gradualist African American leader Booker T. Washington from obtaining a hotel room in town in 1900. James H. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," in *The History of Indiana Law*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 49.

violent means were all that mattered, and gathering with the intent to intimidate, even harm, was a different enterprise than congregating to voice dissent.

Fussell demonstrated the finality of their move in March of 1844 by granting power of attorney to his brother-in-law Neal Hardy, and directing him to dispose of his assets. In Philadelphia, Fussell remained outspoken, continuing his antislavery agitation and work against the "miserable competition system" through speaking in favor of the community movement.[133] In 1848, upon his first return visit to Pendleton, he wrote to his wife Rebecca of his visit to their former house, "where we have loved, & loved much & been so happy-home it is not now! the spirit of the place has gone…." Tangled remnants of wildly growing honeysuckle and roses filled their garden, while their former home was itself decrepit: "the ruin is complete and all trampled down under the feet of the heathen."[134] Fussell thought the decayed condition of his house reminded the other residents of the town of the repression of local abolitionism, and yet proved that their wild yard lived on, as did his family.[135] Their lives irrevocably altered, the Fussells nonetheless maintained their activist legacy.

Not only Fussell, but other Old Northwesterners also had great difficulties in local abolitionist organizing. At stake for them, too, were the local right to freedom of expression and legal consequences for its violation, as well as community resistance to abolition discourse. Across the region in the 1840s, local abolitionists fought in myriad other skirmishes for their right to local activism without interference. Elsewhere in Indiana, Luke Munsell of Indianapolis

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[133] Edwin Fussell, Philadelphia, to Neal Hardy, 18 March 1844, Lewis-Fussell Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
[134] Edwin Fussell, Pendleton, Indiana, to Rebecca Fussell, 15 May 1848, Lewis-Fussell Papers, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. [Italics in original].
[135] *Ibid*. The town did not become any safer for abolitionists after they departed for Pennsylvania.

shared the burden of reform in that difficult state. In 1843 he was one of the few to support the "One Hundred Conventions" tour in their brief stay in his town, but his antislavery history extended further into the past. A resident of Kentucky in the early to mid 1830s, he joined his neighbor James G. Birney in advocating abolition in that slave state. They both suffered from persecution and interminable threats from locals. Deciding to move north, Birney headed for Cincinnati and Munsell for Indianapolis, each mistakenly expecting, according to Munsell, to find their woes at an end. Some five years later, Munsell had found the difficulty of his work little diminished, due to pervasive "pro-slavery" opinion. He found reasonable success and acceptance as long as he remained in the Whig Party, but his departure in 1840 for the Liberty Party led to an abrupt decline in his fortunes. When he embraced this third party, he was "visited with unmitigated, untimely, and almost total withdrawment of professional patronage," even, he reported to his outrage, among religious people. This, despite the fact that political abolition was the more moderate antislavery position to take in 1840. Munsell steadfastly continued his labor for the cause, writing to other abolitionists in April of 1845 to gather interest in an Indiana Liberty Convention.[136] The community isolation and economic difficulties did not diminish the enthusiasm of dedicated devotees of antislavery, for they regarded it as a priority worth the risk.

In Illinois, the struggle could be equally arduous, involve substantial risk of violence, and require creative use of private space for political purposes. The Reverend Levi Spencer's 1840's diaries exemplify the difficulties immediate abolitionists had in organizing in Illinois. Spencer wrote of the 1843 struggle to hold meetings of the Mclean County Anti-Slavery Society in

[136] L [Luke] Munsell, Indianapolis, Indiana, to N. R. Chapman, Fayetteville, New York, April 1845, African-American History Collection, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Bloomington, Illinois.[137] There, one hundred men armed with clubs stood guard over a church to prevent a meeting of fifteen abolitionists. In response, the abolitionists relocated to a private home, where, followed by the mob, they boldly held their meeting. Their foes did not enter the house, but they did damage the building.[138] They openly demonstrated their contempt for the abolitionists with this persistent opposition.

Abolitionists and their opponents could not reach a consensus on the appropriateness of antislavery and anti-prejudice organization in Bloomington, as elsewhere. Despite the discouragement they faced in their efforts to organize a county society, the people of Bloomington tried to organize a town antislavery society in 1844. They issued a public notice, which some local ministers refused to read. They met, and their opponents joined them in the meeting hall.[139] Spencer wrote that the abolitionists peacefully completed their preliminary business at the meeting, but that their foes interrupted him when he subsequently gave an address. Those outside threw bricks at the building, and all made noise, but Spencer finished his speech. He wrote in triumph of what he saw as the downfall of his antagonists, for they had asked permission for one of their faction to speak at the meeting, which the abolitionists granted.

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[137] The experiences of immediate abolitionist L. N. Ransom of Springfield, Illinois are also illuminating. He wrote to Garrison in May of 1843 about the state of his local struggle. He was particularly piqued by the presence of nine churches in his town, only one of which critiqued slavery. In this environment, Ransom's immediatist views drew cries of "crazy infidel." To Ransom, Springfield was a dire, doomed place, of the "sectarian, man-killing" kind. While Ransom saw southern and central Illinois residents as among the worst citizens in the nation, the northern part of the state gave him more hope. Nonetheless, the incredible strength of political abolition there tempered his joy. In his view, that strain of abolitionists lacked the bravery to take their convictions "to their fullest extent." L. N. Ransom, "State of Things in Illinois," *Liberator,* May 26, 1843. Ransom himself had no such fears of cutting ties, for he had changed from an Old School Presbyterian to an individual who eschewed all parties and religions due to their corrupt policies on slavery and war. William T. Allen [Allan], "From a 'Son of a Slaveholder.'"

[138] Levi Spencer, 13 December 1843, Levi Spencer Diaries, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

[139] Spencer had been advocating antislavery in two churches in Bloomington for two years, but still found the extent of opposition distressing and dangerous. Jonathan Blanchard, *Memoir of Rev. Levi Spencer: Successively Pastor of the Congregational Church at Canton, Bloomington, and Peoria, Illinois* (Cincinnati: American Reform Tract and Book Society, 1856), 97.

Unfortunately for the anti-abolitionists, this man, Mr. Hunt, had actually been converted to the cause in the course of the meeting. He stood, said so, and sat down. The meeting concluded quietly.[140]

As the prominent local organizer, Spencer himself remained a focal point for anti-abolitionist aggression, as local people held him accountable for the upheaval in their community.[141] In June of 1846, a group of men, including volunteers for the Mexican War, attacked his house. They tried to get Spencer outside, intending to tar and feather him. Upon failing, they threw eggs and bricks into the windows. These missiles forced Spencer's family, including his elderly mother, to flee into the corners of the house and away from the broken glass. The men outside threatened to burn down the building, but refrained. Spencer finally managed to get help from a neighbor in the wee hours of the morning, whereupon the men departed, not wanting more witnesses to their actions.

In this onslaught, the mob also attacked some of Spencer's abolitionist neighbors, but they directed their only persistent and personal assault at Spencer. The following day, he assessed the damage to his house: "the carpet is covered with broken glass, bricks & eggs, window curtains hang in strings & the outside of the house, in front besmeared with eggs. Neighbors call to see us and sympathize." That night the military campaign left, restoring quiet to the town, in Spencer's view. Mrs. Spencer stayed in bed all day recovering from the strain.

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[140] Spencer Diaries, 13 February 1844.

[141] In May 1846 Spencer had also witnessed an attack on a meeting where Owen Lovejoy spoke in Bloomington, and that was not the end of his trials that year. This incident is detailed in Chapter 4.

Levi Spencer was able to identify many of his assailants (which he saw as the reason that some consequently left town), but even with this evidence, he opted not to prosecute.[142]

Spencer's resolute activism in Bloomington remained a provocation to his opponents throughout 1846. On June 13, he departed on a brief lecture tour around Illinois as previously planned, despite the recent tumult. As he believed his presence provoked the mob, he thought his family would be safer in his absence. This reasoning proved largely sound. When Spencer returned June 21, he received immediate mob threats. "Persons prowling about" had terrified his wife and mother while he was away, but committed no actual violence.[143] The threats continued, at least through July of 1846, including those from a man Spencer identified as "a leading member of the M. E. Ch." [Methodist Episcopal Church.] The Spencer family suffered great apprehension of violent attack, and the constant threats made them miserable.[144]

Despite Spencer's scapegoating for the unpopularity of his antislavery ideas, the county antislavery society successfully held a meeting in Bloomington in April of 1847. While this represented progress, the last day in May of that year the Justice of the Peace also warned

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[142] Earlier that month, Spencer noticed with agitation mob members from the throng who assaulted the Lovejoy meeting in the militia that drilled in Bloomington's streets. Spencer did not reveal why he chose not to face his attackers in court, but it may have been as he knew he would be unlikely to face a jury of his peers when his views were so unpopular. Spencer Diaries, 12-13 June 1846. Attacks on the homes of antislavery activists were not without precedent in the Old Northwest. In September of 1841 a group of men attacked the house of John Rankin, antislavery minister of Ripley, Ohio, claiming to be provoked by his aid to fugitive slaves. When they attempted to set the barn and house on fire, one of Rankin's sons and his nephew defended the home with pistols, and gave chase to their assailants. Rankin wrote to the Ripley *Telegraph* [reprinted in the *Liberator* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*] to justify his defensive actions: "…I feel it my duty to defend my HOME to the uttermost; and that it is as much my duty to shoot the midnight assassin in his attacks, as to pray. I therefore warn all persons, to beware lurking about my house and barn at night. When I am put upon the necessity of standing guard over my family and property, I shall not do it in vain." John Rankin, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* December 9, 1841.

[143] Spencer Diaries, 21 June, 1846.

[144] An acquaintance of Spencer's even notified him that some local residents had planned a public meeting to coordinate ejecting "the abolitionists" from town. Spencer Diaries, 23 June, 2 July 1846. Throughout all of this misery, the only other direct attack Spencer sustained was from a man named Colonel Gridly/Gridley in February of 1847. This man whipped Spencer in a "public street" in town for visiting his wife and sister-in-law to discuss religion. Spencer Diaries, 25 February 1847.

Spencer that he should not speak locally on abolition.[145] In October of 1848 Spencer decided to move to Peoria, as he thought there he could perhaps escape the strong bias he had encountered in Bloomington for pioneering the antislavery issue.[146]

As Spencer's thinking about these towns in Illinois and Indiana reveals, the choice to embrace antislavery organizing in the Old Northwest was not one local activists took lightly. Nonetheless, they generously assisted traveling abolitionists and added their own spirited voices to gatherings. In this region of fiery opposition to abolition, they heeded their own conception of antislavery factions, distinct from that of the East and revealing the impact that their environment had on their activism. Still, they did more; despite substantial risks they organized meetings and asserted their own right to public action for their cause. Women made a central contribution to this vibrant Old Northwest reform culture through their organizational labor and claims for a political role

[145] Spencer Diaries, 7 April, 31 May 1847.

[146] His reason for thinking this is unclear, given Peoria's own violent history. See Chapter 3 and Chapter 5. Spencer Diaries, 21 October 1848.

Chapter 3: "An Almost Irresistible Power": Woman Abolitionists in the Old Northwest

Activist women made claims for a public presence in the face of attacks on their right to speak. While such antagonism followed women's public action across the nation in the antebellum period, in the Old Northwest the ideological and physical landscape women faced was unparalleled in both its reform fervor and its hostility. As women fought to obtain a public voice, they found their places and made their views known in this unsettled polity. Their activism raised the question, who counted as a political person in antebellum America? Female abolitionists pushed the boundaries of political action with their publications, meetings, and petitions. Antislavery women whose work spanned the early 1830s through the Civil War wielded great power for social change, enabled activism in the Old Northwest, and resisted the limitations that their social norms prescribed. The regional context of female activists and organizations meant that their actions and social critiques often flowed outside of easily determined parameters.

From 1832 to 1855 women's participation in the anti-slavery and anti-prejudice movement blossomed nationally. In those years, women formed over 200 female antislavery societies across the United States.[1] Historians have struggled to characterize the relationship women had with the different abolition factions, for some women considered themselves immediatists, avoided political abolition, and affiliated with the Garrisonian societies.[2] However, the organization of separate female societies also did not mean eschewing partisan

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[1] Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 3.
[2] Douglas A. Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West: Some Suggestions for Study," *Civil War History* 23, no. 1 (1977): 60.

politics.[3] Neither tendency was absolute in the Old Northwest, where political abolition had obtained a significant foothold by the early 1840s. As was the case with male abolitionists, Old Northwest women had more options for organization—and for opposition—in their strife-filled realm.

I: Origins

The women of Lenawee County organized the first antislavery society in Michigan territory and the first female society in the Old Northwest, the Logan Female Anti-Slavery Society, in early October of 1832. The effort of antislavery propagandist Elizabeth Margaret Chandler was the main catalyst for this development. This remarkable woman spent her young adulthood in pursuit of slave liberation and other reforms. Raised a Quaker in Philadelphia, she was active in the local Female Anti-Slavery Society. Chandler began writing for the Mt. Pleasant, Ohio newspaper the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* in 1826, and took charge of its "Ladies Repository" in 1829.[4] She accepted a similar position for the Liberator in 1832.[5] She reached great fame among her readers for her writing on "humanitarian issues," including Indian rights and women's oppression.[6]

In 1830, Elizabeth moved with her brother Thomas and aunt Ruth Evans to a farm outside of Tecumseh in Lenawee County, in the Michigan Territory. Elizabeth continued her

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[3] Salerno separates women's involvement in Liberty and Free Soil politics from their female societies, an approach that misses that the former was at times a component of the latter. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 149.

[4] Merton Lynn Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," *Michigan History* 39, no. 4 (1955): 484-85, Arthur Raymond Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan, 1796-1840: A Study in Humanitarianism" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1941), 97.

[5] Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 22-23.

[6] Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," 488, Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 97.

editing work from the Old Northwest, despite her remote location. She remained well read, at least in part due to her Quaker neighbor Darius Comstock, whose massive library contained many antislavery books.[7] Like many other eastern migrants to rural Old Northwest communities, the Chandlers and some of their neighbors retained a strong interest in intellectual pursuits.[8]

Elizabeth Chandler argued that antislavery labor was a Christian necessity, and that God required people to accept this fight, no matter where they lived. To take proper action, concerned individuals—women chief among them—needed to form societies and directly oppose slavery.[9] Chandler proved her own commitment to these convictions in 1832 when she co-founded the pioneering Logan Female Society.[10] This society affiliated with the American Society upon the latter's formation in December 1833.[11] Chandler died after a brief illness on November 2, 1834, at the age of twenty-seven. After her early death, Lenawee County remained a center of antislavery activism, due to the efforts of another vibrant activist.[12]

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[7] Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," 488, 89, Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 97. Exemplifying this richness, when George Evans stayed with the Comstocks on May 21, 1839, he wrote to his friends in Indiana that Comstock had a room with an astounding amount of abolitionist propaganda: "Darias [Darius] appears to be a man of wealth, he has...[a] chamber stowed with books and prints of the day, abolition tracts abounding so that we have almost literally to wade amongst them." George Evans, near Adrian, Michigan, to Friends, Spiceland Indiana, November 21, 1839, George Evans Letters, Manuscript Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

[8] They transmitted "the goods, the ideas, and the institutions" of eastern life to their new location. Exemplifying this, the Chandler family bought a share in the new Adrian Library Company upon its formation in 1832, and they and other local activists subscribed to, and shared, antislavery newspapers. Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," 482.

[9] Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," 487. Chandler claimed that women's work for slaves grew out of their other "benevolent activities." She took as a given women's draw toward moral reform and anti-sin work. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 9, 21-22.

[10] Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 97. Beth Salerno omits this society from her history of female antislavery societies. She claims the first female society in the West was the Economy Society of Indiana. She defines the West as Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, but places Ohio in the East. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 120, 43, 75.

[11] Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and his Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 5.

[12] Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 97.

Like Chandler, the Western New York-raised Laura Smith Haviland determined at an early age to take action against slavery and racial prejudice. Married in 1825, she, her parents, and her husband Charles moved in 1839 to Michigan Territory. In addition to helping found the Logan Female Society, Haviland also took up other leadership roles.[13] She served as secretary of the Female Benevolent and Antislavery Society of Lenawee, founded in August of 1846. Among their actions, they petitioned the legislature to remove the word "white" from the state constitution, and asked other women throughout Michigan to join their effort.[14] In her later years, Haviland sheltered numerous fugitives, and became quite notorious among slave catchers for her tenacity. She had an itinerant existence throughout her life, and engaged in activism and educational efforts in Cincinnati and Windsor, Ontario.[15]

Chandler and Haviland were but two of the many female abolition leaders who reached out to women as propagandists for the cause. With their writings, their meetings, and their action, they led the way into social reform for legions of women. They shared their proud activist status with a cohort of less famous women in Illinois as well as Ohio and Indiana who justified their reform action in the name of right and the will of God, and took the step into direct reform activism and partisan politics.

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[13] Born into the Quaker faith, and thus entitled to automatically access the privileges of that church, Haviland [along with her family and fourteen others] nonetheless left the Society of Friends in the early 1830s over the national body's refusal to permit antislavery discussion. Quakers other than the Smiths and Havilands also withdrew from the faith over the issue of slavery in 1834. Shortly after she departed the Society, Haviland became a Wesleyan Methodist. She and Charles opened the Raisin Institute in Raisin, Michigan in 1837. It was the first interracial school in Michigan, and it also admitted students "regardless of sex." Laura S. Haviland, *A Woman's Life-work: Labor and Experiences*, *The Anti-slavery Crusade in America* (New York: Arno Press, 1969 (1881)), 12, 14-15, 32, Charles N. Lindquist, *The Antislavery-Underground Railroad Movement in Lenawee County, Michigan, 1830-1860* (Adrian, Michigan: Lenawee County Historical Society, 1999), 4.

[14] Formed to work against slavery and help fugitives, this organization publicized the cause with "tracts, periodicals, and lecturers." In 1846 they had 32 members. Ardath Hagaman, "Women of the Old Northwest in the Antislavery Movement" (Unpublished Paper, University of Michigan Department of History Student Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1941), 42.

[15] She passed away in 1898. Haviland, *A Woman's Life-work: Labor and Experiences*, 78, 106, 30.

In the Old Northwest, women regularly participated in antislavery and Liberty Party political activity, and boldly called for abolition and the rights of free African Americans. The complexity of women's antislavery activism in the Old Northwest contributes to the revision in gender history that has shifted the focus of inquiry from the small, outspoken minority of Garrisonians to a larger spectrum of ordinary women's grassroots antislavery work.[16] By associating women's political activity exclusively with woman suffrage, some historians of women have focused upon Garrisonian abolitionists and ignored women active in what they refer to as "conservative" political abolitionism, or whose activism is difficult to categorize.[17] The greater local strength of the political abolitionist parties and smaller numbers of local immediatist organizations inspired Old Northwest women to take a larger role in political

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[16] Some historians of women in electoral politics have claimed the Garrisonian abolitionists as ideological foremothers due to their advocacy of woman suffrage. In the late 1960s and 1970s, historians searched for the origin of the women's rights movement in female abolitionist activity. In consequence, they often excluded non-Garrisonian women who eschewed suffrage from the classic narratives of women and abolitionism. For example, Gerda Lerner argues that abolitionism's significance lay in its contribution to the development of a cohort of female leaders who transferred their political reform efforts to the suffrage movement. Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of An Independent Women's Movement In America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 19, 22, 31-52, Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 4, 10, 25-26, Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 126, 28.
[17] Hersh argues that political abolitionists maintained conservative gender views. Blanche Glassman Hersh, "'Am I Not A Woman and a Sister?' Abolitionist Beginnings of Nineteenth Century Feminism," in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Louis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 258. Pierson moves toward a revision of this argument. Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics*, *Gender and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), Michael D. Pierson, "Gender and Party Ideologies: the Constitutional Thought of Women and Men in American Anti-Slavery Politics," *Slavery and Abolition* 19, no. 3 (1998).

abolitionist activism than did their eastern counterparts.[18] As activists and journalists, they also put themselves in the thick of partisan politics to a larger degree than those in the East.[19]

The particular circumstances of life in the Old Northwest enabled a cohort of women to enter public life through a distinctive gender and race-based appeal, one that included pioneering journalism. For example, the women of the female antislavery societies in Illinois remained largely unconcerned with pursuing woman suffrage, and did not usually speak on their own behalf. They suggest that abolitionist women were not merely the precursors to modern feminists: the character and meaning of their political activity merits study in its own right.[20]

The public political activism of Old Northwest abolitionist women encompasses a wider definition of the political, unveiling the limitations of what earlier historians conceived of as

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[18] This evidence offers a different perspective than that of Lori Ginzberg, who argues that political abolitionism drove women from the movement. Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 100. Ginzberg claims that non-Garrisonian women retreated from abolitionism after the schism, and that the ascent of political abolitionism by the late 1840s led to women's diminished presence in the movement. Michael D. Pierson argues against her, making a case for change over time. He claims that Liberty women were often on the fringes of action in the early years of the party, but by the mid to late 1840s they became more prominent, and party papers grew more ambivalent about women's status. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics*, 35-37. As evidenced below, I saw support for women's action in earlier Liberty Party papers. In a 2002 article focusing on postbellum sources, Stacey Robertson alludes to the presence of women in third party politics in the Old Northwest as a suppressed history. She argues that women wrote about their Underground Railroad action as a counterpoint to men's reminisces of the Old Northwestern movement. Women placed attention on their work within the household in response to men's suppression of female political participation in third party politics, which the men at the same time elevated as the only significant antislavery action in the region. Stacey Robertson, "Remembering Antislavery: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest," *Proteus* 19, no. 2 (2002): 69-70.

[19] This seems to stand in stark contrast to women in the East, but there may be more on women's politics in that region that we do not yet know. Like Susan Zaeske, I argue that women did not merely work "at the margins of the bourgeois public sphere," as defined by Jurgen Habermas. Instead, they not only—as Zaeske argues—used petitions to collectively access the platforms of the Congress and the newspaper, but also made individual claims in newspapers directly and developed an extensive organizational culture. Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 5. For more on the public sphere, see chapter 4.

[20] Ginzberg articulates the problems created by limiting the definition of women's politics to the suffrage campaign: "The historical focus on the radical demand for the vote as women's only significant political act … has had the effect of both foreshortening and distorting the history of women's participation in the political process." Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, 69.

narrow definitions of public and private.[21] Over the past decade, historians have highlighted the flaws in the canonical concept of separate spheres by demonstrating women's involvement in public life and electoral politics.[22] Some have insisted that women publicly and directly participated in electoral, partisan politics through the Whig Party in the 1840s and the Republican Party in the 1850s.[23]

Abolitionist women's public labor contradicted the idea of domestic ideology prevalent at the time. This ideology dictated that women had to be at home to avoid the corruption of

[21] Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 2-3, 165, Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina," *Journal of American History* 78 (1992): 1245. The women Jeffrey studies expressed their commitment to abolition through fundraising, creation and dissemination of antislavery propaganda, signing and circulating petitions, and lobbying their legislatures.

[22] Older historiography such as Paula Baker's influential 1984 article on American women's politics and culture does not recognize "women's sphere" as an ideological construct. She maintains that the trope of separate spheres represented a reality, and argues that women "fashioned significant public roles by working from the private sphere." Baker argues that nineteenth-century politics was divided fundamentally and exclusively, not by race or class, but by gender: women were politically involved through the private sphere, while partisan politics remained a male bastion. Baker further argues that women took advantage of a separate woman's sphere and integrated a new element of domestic responsibility into politics. Her emphasis on female difference caricatures the political activism of both women and men, and bore little resonance for many abolitionist women in the Old Northwest. Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *The American Historical Review* 89 (1984): 620-25, 28, 29.

[23] Laura Edwards, for example, argues that the "public" and the "private" are linked ideological categories that are influenced by race, class, and gender. Laura Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction.* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1997), 3, 10. See also Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, 1, 9, 69, 79, 97, Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: the Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988). Influenced by Kerber's important article, Ginzberg explicitly argues against taking the trope of "women's sphere" as a transparent representation of women's quotidian lives. In her study of middle-class women in the Gilded Age, Rebecca Edwards demonstrates the problems with the loose usage of the term "political culture," which she finds can reify the public versus private dichotomy, or leave definitions of power so broad as to be useless. She states that political appeals to antebellum women found their strongest expression in third parties, but does not specify to which third parties she refers, or in what region. She mentions women's petitions to Congress and aid to fugitive slaves through the Republican Party in the 1850s, but did not examine women's third party activism in the 1840s. Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in American Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era (*New York: Oxford University Press, 997), 4, 8, 172; n. 11, and n. 13, 175; n.15, 28. Elizabeth Varon advocates an expansion of the definition of meaningful political activity, arguing that women themselves, not just men, "embraced … and were embraced by parties," and that historians have "underestimated the extent and significance of women's partisanship in the antebellum period." She notes that after 1840, the Whig Party sought out women's partisan involvement and called for women to serve as "both partisans and mediators in the public sphere." Elizabeth Varon, "Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 494-95, 517, 19.

commerce and politics. An outgrowth of the expansion of capitalism in the first half of the nineteenth century, this ideology prescribed that women's and men's worlds should be utterly separate, demarcated by the public and the private. Further, it defined women by their biological roles as mothers and social positions as wives. Women and men were different, and women had license to rule the private with their moral superiority. In turn, men had to take on the filth and bustle of the world.[24] In theory, marriage offered women protection from the hardships that public interactions imposed.

Activist women claimed a public role in their communities, and the focus on the Old Northwest extends the knowledge of women's partisanship to include the Liberty Party and back in time. In Illinois at least, women participated in Liberty Party discourse in the early 1840s.[25] Over time, women made public entrance into the debate over slavery with increasing frequency.[26] Through their emphasis on the sin of slavery, Old Northwest women insisted that abolitionism lay squarely within the realm of socially acceptable female activity. Old Northwest female abolitionist organizations at the local level faced particular challenges and created path-breaking arguments against racial prejudice.

A focus on local-level leaders reveals the vital activist labor women performed in smaller communities across the Old Northwest. Julie Roy Jeffrey's ambitious survey of female

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[24] Naturalizing to all women this concept applicable to some white Northeastern middle-class women's experience, this ideology served to place outside of social norms women who had to work or who chose a public role. Not all had the economic security to access this lifestyle, and not all wanted it. Despite noisy claims of the home as refuge, it remained the locus of much production and work in the antebellum period, among women of all classes. Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 15, Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 252. A key text in understanding the development of domestic ideology is Nancy Cott's classic book: Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 8.
[25] Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 142-43.
[26] Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 8, 37, 40-41, 52, 69, Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 75.

abolitionist activism presents an effective argument for the centrality of the grassroots work of the many ordinary women who sustained the abolitionist movement.[27] This acknowledgment has been largely absent from the flourishing historiography of abolitionist women over the past thirty years, which has focused upon a famous few.[28] [29] Jeffrey's organizational approach renders it difficult to evaluate the impact of western women's activism, as her larger historiographical point is that, in their time, all abolitionist activism by women was intrinsically radical political behavior.[30] This emphasis erases distinctions of place and time, and conflates vastly different contexts. This study allows us to see that women were able, in the particular circumstances of the Old Northwest, to claim a role in politics and in public life.

Old Northwest women took part in both separate female organizations and mixed organizations. Publicity for new mixed antislavery societies often made explicit appeals to women and calls for their participation. On February 26, 1839, the editor of the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* wrote, "Every one-the aged and the young-male and female-may *do*

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[27] Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 2-3, 11.
[28] DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of An Independent Women's Movement In America, 1848-1869*, Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America.*
[29] While Jeffrey emphasizes white abolitionist women in the rural areas and small towns where she found the strongest commitment to abolitionism, she also studies African American abolitionists, and argues for different commitments to and experience of the antislavery movement. She claims African American women abolitionists inextricably tied their efforts to improve conditions for African Americans in the North, and felt most keenly a claim of racial responsibility, rather than the "moral duty" that their white sisters experienced. Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 4, 36, 41. While Jeffrey notes that white abolitionist women at times focused narrowly on the abolition cause to the exclusion of the larger battle for African American rights, she also argues that most white abolitionists recognized the problem of racism. Jeffrey thus claims a more sympathetic view of the motivations of white abolitionist women than is advocated by Linda M. Perkins, who regards white abolitionist women as motivated by boredom rather than a moral imperative. Linda M. Perkins, "Black Women and Racial 'Uplift' Prior to Emancipation," in *Black Women in American History*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1990), 1082-83. Jeffrey's analysis of women's different approaches to abolitionism is in part shaped by Nancy A. Hewitt, "The Social Origins of Antislavery Politics in Western New York," in *Crusaders and Compromisers: Essays on the Relationship of the Antislavery Struggle to the Antebellum Party System*, ed. Alan M. Kraut (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983).
[30] Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 7, 26, 54.

something to aid in pushing forward the good work."[31] In Illinois, mixed antislavery societies also cited ideals of women's special abilities that were grounded in a tradition of female activism. In April of 1839, the La Salle County Anti-Slavery Society expressed their desire to enlist women in the mission. They listed "Roman matrons" as models for noble female activism, in addition to the work of both ordinary and famous women to aid this cause.[32]

Women participated with enthusiasm in the western Garrisonian movement, embracing both local and regional organizations. At the Ohio Society meeting held at Mount Pleasant on June 4, 1841, the leadership welcomed both sexes to join them in membership, and one speaker, Thomas Morris, emphasized the importance of women's action in the struggle.[33] The Economy Society in Wayne County, Indiana in 1840 also opened its membership to both women and men. Women were among its directors and executive committee members.[34]

Lest the vision of inclusiveness be overstated, the reality was that in the 1840s in Illinois at least, men retained the influential positions in mixed organizations. The Chicago *Western Citizen* never listed women as officers or speakers in Illinois, except in female antislavery

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[31] The writer continued with a further appeal for all to take part in the cause: "All orderly persons—old and young—male and female—should be invited, that they may be made acquainted with our principles and measures." See *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, February 26, 1839.
[32] *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, June 28, 1839, *Western Citizen*, October 26, 1843. The Tazewell County Antislavery Society affirmed in September of 1843 that women had a role to play in the fight against slavery: "The anti-slavery cause calls loudly for the influence of woman; and that every one who names herself an abolitionist is bound to do what she can." See also *Western Citizen*, May 2, 1844; October 26, 1843; May 2, 1844.
[33] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 17, 1841.
[34] In October of 1840 their conscious effort to involve women even extended to gender parity on a committee to obtain subscriptions for the antislavery paper, *Northern Rights.* Economy Anti Slavery Society, "The Economy (Wayne Co.) Anti Slavery Society. Auxiliary to the Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society. Organized First Month 27th 1840. Minute Book.," 1840, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. These examples counter the perspective of Ardath Hagaman, who wrote of women in mixed societies that they played the role of more of a silent partner to men. Hagaman, "Women of the Old Northwest in the Antislavery Movement", 7.

societies.[35] As the case of Illinois makes clear, despite this type of exclusion, Old Northwest women pressed for involvement throughout the abolitionist movement—including its political strata—and in their own organizations.

II: Women as Organizers

In her 1843 "Address to Females," Lydia S. Lewis of the Putnam County, Illinois, Female Anti-Slavery Society expressed great confidence in antislavery women's ability to change society through direct and indirect influence. The concept of influence was a persuasive justification for female activism in antebellum America, one that women used to assuage anxieties about their public participation. This rationale, conventional at the time, enabled women to claim moral influence to make the leap into politics.[36] This particular form of assertion focused on the "passions rather than reason," and urged people toward change rather than forcibly changing their minds.[37] Lewis argued that women should work tirelessly by reading and distributing antislavery materials, attempting to sway the opinions of their male

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[35] *Western Citizen*, July 26, 1842; *Western Citizen*, August 26, 1842; *Western Citizen*, January 6, 1843; *Western Citizen*, February 9, 1843; *Western Citizen*, March 16, 1843; *Western Citizen*, April 20, 1843; *Western Citizen*, July 6, 1843; *Western Citizen*, July 13, 1843; *Western Citizen,* July 20, 1843; *Western Citizen*, July 27, 1843; *Western Citizen*, September 14, 1843; *Western Citizen*, March 21, 1844; *The Liberty Tree*, Volume III, No. 9 (July 1, 1846), 135-36.

[36] Lori Ginzberg argues that, despite many women's claims that seeking influence over others was not a political act, they did exert their "influence in decidedly political ways toward clearly political ends." Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, 9, 66, 69. Elizabeth Varon claims that the Whig Party of the 1840s was the first and only antebellum party to "systematically" incorporate women into its public events and partisan culture, justifying women's partisan participation as an extension of their domestic duties. She argues that what was exceptional about "Whig womanhood" was its effort to reconcile "female patriotism with partisanship." She also argues that Whig newspapers called for women to both exert their powers of influence over men, and to more directly seek to affect the political process through public presentations. She notes that women participated in the creation and consumption of a "partisan material culture." Varon, "Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia," 499, 500-01, 02-03, 06, 12, 14. In her analysis, Varon only distinguishes Whigs from Democrats, and omits northern third parties.

[37] Lori Merish, "'The Hand of Refined Taste' in the Frontier Landscape: Caroline Kirkland's 'A New Home, Who'll Follow?' and the Feminization of American Consumerism," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 4: 501.

relatives, and compelling church and government to do away with slavery. Lewis wrote in the Liberty Party newspaper the *Western Citizen* that female abolitionists drew their purpose from and stood for lofty principles of equality; "justice, universal justice, and humanity." She continued with an exposition of their potential clout: "Did women place a just estimate on their influence, they might wield an almost irresistible power."[38] This was no misplaced conviction, for the women she addressed played a substantial role in Illinois abolitionism between 1843 and 1848.[39] A cohort of female abolitionists across the state labored to aid African Americans, both slave and free. Their work provides insight into the arguments, actions, and goals of local level abolitionist organizations. Along with women in the neighboring states, they challenged their exclusion from politics and expanded the justification for their public action to encompass partisan behavior, all in the process of fighting slavery.

The activities of female abolitionists in Illinois catalyzed debates over antislavery tactics and who had the right to participate in an increasingly politicized movement. Most of the Illinois abolitionist organizations of the 1840s—mixed, male, and female—identified with the Liberty Party, the main national antislavery third party. As a result, Illinois women's antislavery efforts, in addition to stretching gender roles by taking on public action, often integrated them directly into partisan politics.

Illinois activist women worked against slavery in a state that exemplified the conflicts reformers faced in the Old Northwest. The local social climate was rife with racial and political tension in the late 1830s and the 1840s. Although Illinois had been a free state since 1824,

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[38] *Western Citizen*, April 6, 1843.

[39] Beth Salerno argues that Illinois women's strong stance on their right to fight slavery grew out of attacks on their public action after 1845, when in fact they had used these arguments since at least 1843. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 146.

slavery influenced local life regardless. As elsewhere in the Old Northwest, free African Americans encountered discriminatory conditions there that extended well beyond the Civil War. "Black Laws" circumscribed African Americans' mobility, and also required them to carry papers stating their freedom. The ever-present threat of kidnapping and return to slavery kept many free African Americans anxious and socially subordinated. As a relatively new state populated by migrants from across the East and South, Illinois lacked regional cohesion on the issues of slavery and civil rights. A majority of the settlers of southern Illinois were of southern origin and of proslavery views, while New Englanders made up the plurality of those who migrated to the central and northern portion of the state.[40] Not all New Englanders held antislavery views, however. Abolitionists' organizing efforts in this tense climate catalyzed debates about slavery and over African American social and political rights.

Emerging from this strained environment, Illinois activists contributed to the strength of the national antislavery movement, especially through their efforts to elect Liberty Party candidates in the 1840s.[41] The behavior and rhetoric of Illinois abolitionists, male and female, indicates that they embraced the efficacy of moral suasion in addition to political action.

Illinois abolitionist women typically formed their organizations in mid-sized towns. These towns, with the exception of Jerseyville in the south, were located in a cluster of counties in northwestern Illinois. Women seeking to organize against slavery in southern Illinois

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[40] Mary Van Vleck Garman, "'Altered Tone of Expression': The Anti-Slavery Rhetoric of Illinois Women, 1837-1847" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1989), 63. See also 67, where she further expanded upon this regional component: "After 1824, the pro-slavery forces were gradually outnumbered, especially in the central and northern portions of the state. Despite this, there remained a fundamental imbalance in the prevailing attitudes of white Illinoisans toward slavery."

[41] Ronald G. Walters, "The Boundaries of Abolitionism," in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Louis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 15.

communities encountered more significant obstacles than their northern counterparts.[42] One such northwestern town was Galesburg, home to Knox College, a coeducational stronghold of abolitionist sentiment.[43] Local female antislavery societies multiplied in Illinois in 1843, beginning with the Putnam County Female Anti-slavery Society on January 30, 1843, and six others soon followed.[44] Elsewhere, the years 1835 to 1836 saw the organization of nineteen female societies across Ohio, while 1840 to 1842 witnessed a similar flowering in Indiana.[45] In Michigan, after the early founding of the Logan Society in 1832, there was a lull until the creation of four additional societies in 1846.[46] Beyond their geography, women often had common circumstances that drew them into activism.

The leaders of female abolition in the Old Northwest frequently shared similar social and religious roots. Many western female antislavery fighters, especially in Indiana, had Quaker backgrounds. Like male abolitionists, there were also many Presbyterians, Baptist, and

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[42] Lydia S. Lewis wrote a letter to the *Western Citizen* on August 15, 1844, asking for women to attempt to recruit more women to join their beleaguered antislavery sisters in southern Illinois. In that same issue, Irene B. Allan also made a similar claim upon women's abolitionist energies. *Western Citizen*, August 15, 1844

[43] The coeducational policy of this college was unusual but not unprecedented, for Oberlin, founded in 1837, was both coeducational and interracial. Julia Blanchard, *Blessed Memories: The Life of Mrs. Mary A. Blanchard, by her daughter Julia*. (Wheaton: 1890), 58, Hermann R. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 1, 82., *Genius of Liberty*, July 24, 1841, *Western Citizen*, September 2, 1842.

[44] The Jerseyville Female Anti-slavery Society organized on April 20, 1843, followed by Peoria and Princeton in July 1843. Galesburg organized a Female Society on September 1, 1843, and lastly, Elk Grove organized in May of 1845. *Western Citizen*, May 16, 1844; *Western Citizen*, January 30, 1845; *Western Citizen*, October 23, 1845. Salerno also found a Bureau County Female Society, founded in 1842 or 1843. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 175. All of these—with the exception of Jerseyville—were in the northern half of the state.

[45] In Ohio: December 1835: Oberlin Female and Young Ladies Societies; 1835: Middlebury; March 1836: Canton; 1836: Elyria; Geneva; Madison; Portage; St. Albans; Wayne; Abbeyville; Elyria Juvenile; July 1837: Bloominburgh; February 1838: Cincinnati and Unionville. Hagaman, "Women of the Old Northwest in the Antislavery Movement", 15-16.. In Indiana: before November 1840: Economy Female Anti-Slavery Society; after January 1, 1841: Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society; February 1842: Newport. The *Protectionist,* January 16, 1841; Economy Anti Slavery Society, "The Economy (Wayne Co.) Anti Slavery Society. Auxiliary to the Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society. Organized First Month 27th 1840. Minute Book.,"

[46] Beth Salerno omits the Logan Society but lists the Michigan Female Societies as of 1846: Highland Township Female Anti-slavery and Benevolent Society; Lenawee County Female Anti-slavery Society; Van Buren County Female Anti-slavery Society; and Salem Township Female Anti-slavery and Benevolent Society. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 180.

Methodists in their ranks. Whether married or single, these white women frequently had kinship or marriage ties to prominent male ministers and educators. The majority of their husbands held strong abolitionist sentiments. Peoria, Illinois is a case in point, for many of its activists—such as Eliza Chappell Porter—had histories of reform work. Both Porter and her husband, the Reverend Jeremiah Porter, zealously supported religious and benevolent activism.[47] Peoria women partook in abolitionism with great enthusiasm, and Jeremiah Porter's church, the Main Street Presbyterian Church, formed a center of their activism.[48] These examples aside, this community was far from united on slavery, even inside the marriage bond.

Women's politics were not always the same as their husbands,' for the divisions over slavery ran right through some marriages. The Peoria newspaper publishers and reformers Mary Brown Davis and Samuel H. Davis were one exception to ideological unity within couples. The Davis family arrived in town via the Illinois River in 1837, and began publishing the *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer* in April. Born in Fauquahar County, Virginia, Mary came from a family that owned at least forty-five slaves, while northern-born Samuel himself claimed

[47] The couple moved to Peoria shortly after their 1835 marriage, where they joined a small but expanding antislavery community. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 130. Eliza Chappell Porter also taught school in Chicago's first day school prior to her marriage. Mary H. Porter, *Eliza Chappell Porter, a Memoir* (Chicago: F.H. Revell Company, 1892), 100-01, 19-21.

[48] During and after the Civil War, Porter had a career in other benevolent enterprises, such as the Sanitary Commission. In the ensuing years, the Porters were highly mobile. After the war, together with her husband, Eliza Chappell Porter opened a school for freedmen in Memphis, Tennessee. In the late 1860's she established the Rio Grande Seminary in Brownsville, Texas. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 173, Porter, *Eliza Chappell Porter, a Memoir*, 162, 70. Another active woman was Mary Avery Bent Blanchard of Galesburg, married to Jonathan Blanchard, the president of Knox College beginning in 1847. Her history of antislavery activism began in the 1830s when she worked as secretary of the Ohio Ladies' Education Society for the education of free people of color. This society sought to improve the circumstances of free African Americans and to aid them in overcoming the legal obstacles to their equality. Prior to moving to Galesburg, she also served as secretary of the Ladies Anti-Slavery Society of Cincinnati. Blanchard, *Blessed Memories: The Life of Mrs. Mary A. Blanchard, by her daughter Julia.*, 35, 44.

in print until at least March of 1843 to own two slaves in Virginia.[49] Prior to marriage, Samuel had worked as a printer in the East and the upper South.[50]

Samuel H. Davis involved himself in many aspects of the community, but avoided an abolitionist stance until late in life. As the editor of one of the two Peoria newspapers, he maintained a strong public voice in other arenas, including the Peoria Temperance Society, Lyceum, and Colonization Society.[51] In the realm of direct politics, he served as the Peoria County delegate to the Whig State Convention in Springfield in 1841.[52] He thus became a pillar of the community through his activism in numerous non-abolitionist organizations.

In marked contrast to her moderate husband, Mary Brown Davis held strong abolitionist views as early as 1837, and organized extensively for the cause. She was a founding member of both the Illinois Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Peoria Female Anti-Slavery Society. The most published abolitionist woman writing in Illinois in the 1840s, her first antislavery journalism appeared in the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* on June 28, 1839. She used the newspaper as a platform to claim that women must act against slavery and argue for racial equality.

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[49] Ernest E. East, Essay on Samuel H. Davis, Untitled and Undated, Samuel H. Davis File, Peoria Public Library.
[50] He worked in Utica, Albany, New York City, Trenton, Wilmington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C., and Alexandria. Most recently, Samuel and Mary had published the weekly newspaper the Winchester *Republican* in Winchester, Virginia. Ernest E. East, "untitled essay on Samuel H. Davis," n.d.. Samuel H. Davis File, Peoria Public Library Collection, Peoria, Illinois. The Davises had five sons: Southwick, James Scott, Henry Kirk White, Robert T. and R. McKee. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 172. For more information on the Davis sons, see Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 187, 306, 10, "Samuel H. Davis File," Peoria Public Library. James Scott, Oberlin-educated, later became a minister in Kentucky, supported by the American Missionary Association. He encountered strong opposition from pro-slavery forces, and became an antislavery propagandist in Illinois after being forced to leave Kentucky; Southwick and Henry Kirk White became newspaper editors; and R. McKee was killed in action in the Civil War on July 22, 1862.
[51] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, March 10, 1838; December 8, 1838; January 28, 1842; *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, August 31, 1839; July 10, 1840: Mob members William F. Bryan and E. N. Powell served as active members of the Peoria Colonization Society in 1839 and 1840, along with Samuel H. Davis.
[52] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, November 12, 1841; December 24, 1841; April 22, 1842.

In her early columns, Mary Brown Davis typically addressed her audience in a tone of supplication. As she explained her antislavery goals, she rhetorically requested a public forum from the newspaper editors and their readership. In Davis's first column in the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* in 1839, she thanked the editor for granting her the "privilege" of "lending my feeble aid, through the columns of your paper, to the cause of the oppressed."[53] Several years later, she contributed to the *Western Citizen* what she called some "imperfect remarks" about slavery. Not demanding publication, she wrote that editor Zebina Eastman could use them if he found "them worthy a place in your paper."[54] This tone of deference in initially addressing the reading public corresponded with the hesitation evinced by some antislavery women as they formed their societies.[55]

Despite her initial deferential tone, Davis declared the newspaper an appropriate venue for women's contribution to the movement and proclaimed her expertise on slavery. In an early column, Davis wrote that she chose journalism as one forum for her activism since publishing her first-hand accounts could "expose some of the horrors of slavery."[56] Davis also repeatedly claimed that her tales of southern decadence and horror were strictly accurate: "I will send some

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[53] *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, July 26, 1839; See also the close of that column: "I have already been so lengthy that I fear…I have trespassed on your patience, as well as that of your readers. I will therefore draw this number to a close, and hereafter, with your permission, endeavor to present other facts...with regard to that cause which is so near to my heart, and in which I shall never cease to pray and labor...."

[54] Born in Vermont, Zebina Eastman had taken up the antislavery cause by 1837, when he attended a meeting that Ichabod Codding addressed. After living briefly in Ann Arbor, he moved to Illinois, for a short time working with the Davises on the Peoria *Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*. He then moved to Lowell, Illinois, and produced a paper there with Benjamin Lundy. After Lundy's death in 1839, Eastman took over the paper. Paula Glasman, "Zebina Eastman, Chicago Abolitionist" (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1968), 10, 12, 19.

[55] *Western Citizen*, August 12, 1842; *Western Citizen*, April 6, 1843. For example, as the antislavery women of Putnam County sent their constitution to the *Western Citizen*, they carefully noted that they had previously met to "consider the propriety of forming a Female Anti-Slavery Society."

[56] *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, June 28, 1839.

facts in my next article…they are presented just as they occurred….”[57] Davis argued that her personal knowledge of the depravity of the South gave her a special insight into the antislavery cause.[58] She presented herself as a birthright expert on the evils of slavery, and like the famed immediate abolitionist Sarah Grimké, Davis explained that her upbringing led her to abhor the institution.[59]

Davis's initial caution soon yielded to assertive anti-racist convictions. In contrast also with other women involved in journalism in the Old Northwest, Davis's columns were outspoken on racial equality and abolition.[60] In addition to her work editing and writing for the *Register,* Davis became a regular columnist in the *Western Citizen* from 1842 to 1849.[61] In the *Western Citizen*, Davis argued for African American women's advancement, and that female abolitionists sought to "elevate the colored woman to a level with ourselves."[62] She also claimed in that paper that the mental and emotional capabilities of African American Americans justified abolishing

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[57] *Western Citizen*, September 16, 1842. This was a manifestation of the larger mandate for authenticity that critics applied to abolitionist speakers and writers. See Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 139.
[58] *Western Citizen*, August 12, 1842.
[59] *Western Citizen*, September 2, 1842. Sarah Grimké also wrote as a southerner wise to the evils of the slave system. See Ruth Bogin and Jean Fagan Yellin, "Introduction," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 9. Davis noted that she had sympathized with slaves since her early childhood, and was anguished that slaveholders claimed other people as property. *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, June 28, 1839;*Western Citizen*, August 12, 1842
[60] Sylvia Ann Hoffert and Michael D. Pierson portray Jane Grey Swisshelm, editor in Pittsburgh and St. Cloud, as a moderate on antislavery and on women's rights Sylvia D. Hoffert, *Jane Grey Swisshelm: An Unconventional Life, 1815–1884* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics*, 48. See also Chapter 5 for further discussion of Davis's antislavery journalism.
[61] Davis drew attention to her own direct aid to fugitive slaves and overtly stated her support for their flight: "I espied a company of way-farers making for my gate, which, thank heaven, has never been closed against the poor and needy, the stranger, or the outcast." *Western Citizen*, January 4, 1844; February 8, 1844.
[62] *Western Citizen*, August 17, 1843.

slavery and establishing equal rights.[63] In this venture, her agenda diverged from that of her life partner.

As the Davises exemplify, women did not necessarily follow their husbands into abolitionism or agree with their views. Samuel Davis lacked his wife's candid devotion to the abolitionist cause, and continued to support the Whig Party into the late 1840s.[64] Mary eventually exerted some influence over Samuel, as he converted to abolitionism over time, and grew more outspoken for the cause with age. He served as president of the State Liberty Party convention in July of 1846. Mary Brown Davis remained active in journalism and social reform into her old age.[65] These personal details of abolitionists' lives and their underlying arguments uncover the material soil in which their activism grew to fruition. Local and regional adversity also fertilized this blooming of reform, as Illinois exemplifies. There, many antislavery people—whether male or female—found concrete proof of the necessity of their action in the violent resistance that they met in the initial push for abolitionist organization. This opposition strengthened their convictions.

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[63] *Western Citizen*, September 16, 1842; January 6, 1843; April 6, 1843; June 6, 1844; June 20, 1844; August 8, 1844.

[64] In 1844, Zebina Eastman publicly expressed his disappointment with Samuel Davis for his persistent Whig affiliation, and refusal to shift his allegiances to the Liberty Party. *Western Citizen*, July 4, 1844. In her news coverage of the Whig convention of 1844, Mary Brown Davis also revealed the distance between her political beliefs and those of her husband. She noted the impressive pomp and ceremony that the Whigs exhibited, but made clear her opposition to "the object for which all this display was made." *Western Citizen*, July 11, 1844.

[65] The Davis family moved to Galesburg after Samuel's death of cholera on June 19, 1849. Mary Brown Davis continued her radicalism and promotion of reforms, supporting temperance through organizing female auxiliaries to the Sons of Temperance in 1850. She advocated the dress reform that Amelia Bloomer created, and wrote approvingly of Galesburg women who adopted that style. She contributed to the Oquawka *Spectator* and the Galesburg *Free Democrat* throughout the 1850's, and continued her journalism even after the abolition of slavery. Late in life, she also served as a Chicago police matron and social worker. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 132-33, 72.

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On the evening of February 13, 1843, a resolute mob disrupted a meeting aimed at organizing an anti-slavery society in Peoria, Illinois. Morally compelled to eradicate the problem of slavery, the women and men of the Main Street Presbyterian Church gathered in their humble church building. Upon convening, the abolitionists met determined opposition. A mob composed of many prominent Peorians stifled the nascent society, stating that "antislavery principles were illegal, unconstitutional, and disorganizing, and that if [the abolitionists] would not peaceably dissolve the meeting, they would do it by violence."[66] In Peoria, the anti-abolitionist faction blatantly silenced discussion of the nationally controversial issue of abolitionism.

The two bitter factions presented competing narratives of the meeting. John S. Zieber, the editor of the local Democratic newspaper and a member of the mob, later claimed that they had allowed the meeting to proceed after voicing their objections to local abolitionism.[67] He stated that all present listened for a few moments to the Reverend William T. Allan's speech, until Allan "declared one of the objects of the society to equalize the Blacks, in the social and political relations, with the whites, &c., when there was one simultaneous shout of Enough! Enough!! And the meeting refused to hear him further."[68] The "fierce and violent noises," shouts, and an escalating "spirit of violence" in the room led the abolitionists to adjourn. They realized the futility of proceeding in the mob's presence, and feared for their safety. Representatives of the abolitionists who wrote to the *Western Citizen* argued that while they had

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[66] James Taylor, Moses Pettengill, John Reynolds, A. T. Castle, and Theodore Adams, "Freedom of Speech Suppressed," reprinted in Samuel H. Davis, *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria* (Peoria, Illinois: 1843), 3-4.
[67] The fascinating debate with their opponents that ensued will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five.
[68] *Peoria Democratic Press*, February 15, 1843.

escaped "*personal* injury," the mob had "*rudely* and *violently*" abrogated their "INALIENABLE RIGHTS."[69] The anti-abolition faction culminated their disruptive efforts by sending the Reverend Allan's buggy careening into the nearby lake.[70]

This riotous anti-abolition mob attacked a meeting convened to organize a mixed-gender Peoria Anti-Slavery Society, and manifested clear concerns with control over the social and political culture of their town.[71] By attacking unresisting abolitionists, including women, in a church, the Peoria mob transgressed abolitionists' views of the boundaries of justifiable conduct. In actuality, the attack conformed to patterns of anti-abolition violence historians have observed; that most incidents of mob violence against abolitionists occurred as a response to initial organizing efforts. However, in the Old Northwest, these hostile reactions continued much longer, even through 1861.[72] These mobs were often well-planned, and composed of men of social and economic prominence who bore "little fear of indictment or public censure." Like those in Peoria, these men cited fears that abolitionism would bring about racial mixing and

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[69] Taylor et al, "Freedom of Speech Suppressed," in Davis, *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria*, 3-4. [Italics in original].

[70] Charles Ballance, *History of Peoria, Illinois* (Peoria: N. C. Nason, 1870), 110.

[71] The anonymous author of an account in the *Western Citizen* noted that the majority of those who were present at the meeting may have been women: "There were not over twenty individuals of both sexes present who were abolitionists…besides those whose names are attached to the communication, it is probable that most of them were females." The absence of the phrase "female anti-slavery society" in this article indicates that it would have been open to both sexes. *Western Citizen*, February 23, 1843.

[72] Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 159. Historian Leonard Richards argues that anti-abolition mob activity diminished as antislavery organizational activity declined after 1837. While that may have been the case in other areas of the country, Illinois remained a site of vital antislavery organizing throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Abolitionists in Illinois and across the Old Northwest indeed met with mobs upon organizing, but activists in communities that already had vibrant local movements did so as well. C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor," *Liberator* March 1, 1861. For a different perspective, see David Grimsted, who argues that usually "attacks on speakers precipitated local organizations," the reverse of Richard's pattern where mobs increased as local organizing efforts grew in strength. However, he cites Alton as the example for this point. In Alton in 1837, the riot at least partially arose out of community resistance to extant organizing activity: the effort of Elijah Lovejoy and his cohort to advocate abolition and form the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society. Lovejoy's martyrdom did help raise attention, but it was not what caused the society to be organized. David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 293, n. 14. For more on the Alton riot, see chapter 5.

egalitarianism.[73] In the *Western Citizen*, the antislavery authors stated that the Peoria abolitionists offered no physical rebuke to their antagonists: "Over these defenseless females, and Christians, who will not resist evil with evil…the 'respectable citizens' secured a glorious triumph!"[74] These authors thus constructed the attack on the Peoria abolitionists as unwarranted due to their passivity, but the reality was more complicated. While the neophyte abolitionists did not meet the mob with violence, their organizing efforts meant that they had in fact moved from a passive to an active role.

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The mob action at Peoria had a galvanizing effect on Illinois abolitionism among both women and men. Illinois activists convened a meeting at Farmington on March 9, 1843, to discuss what they construed as suppression of the abolitionists' right to assemble.[75] The attendees denounced the silencing action, and praised what they saw as the noble conduct of the much-abused Peoria abolitionists, including their lack of violent resistance. Later in March of that year in the Chicago *Western Citizen*, Mary Brown Davis also responded to the local attack, vehemently arguing that the antislavery cause continued to move forward in Peoria despite community resistance. She asserted that the "gentlemen" of the town were hypocrites for violently assaulting their fellow citizens. In her view, the mob saw the abolitionist gathering as

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[73] Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 5.
[74] *Western Citizen*, February 23, 1843. Even when their meetings met with a peaceable reception, antislavery people still at times had opinions about anti-abolition violence. After the first annual meeting of the Michigan State Society in June of 1837 at the Detroit Presbyterian Church, Warren Isham attributed the lack of mob pressure there to Detroit's moral temper—in marked contrast to events at Peoria. He claimed the quiet was "to the credit of our city." He continued with an explanation that Detroit's residents knew too much about proper conduct and "good manners" to take part in mobbing. Further, they understood the rights to which people were guaranteed: they "have more respect for the rights of man" than to interrupt people in the process of exercising them. Warren Isham quoted in Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 190. [Emphasis in original.]
[75] See Chapters 4 and 5 for further discussion of the related struggles for freedom of speech and press in the Old Northwest.

presenting a significant threat, despite their "comparatively small" numbers. She mockingly referred to the conduct of their attackers, calling them "*honorable gentlemen*." Davis also could not resist noting that local interest in antislavery had vastly increased since the attack on the meeting, as had sympathy in the surrounding area.[76] Not dissuaded by this obstacle, she continued upon the path of local organization, as did her compatriots elsewhere.

Even without the sanction of their fellow townspeople, Illinois women would not be put off of their reform mission. They began to establish separate female antislavery organizations after the Peoria mob attack in 1843. These organizations were inclusive of all women, as in Putnam County, where the new Society welcomed any "friendly to the anti-slavery cause" to join with them in their fight. As they established their societies, the newly organized women lost no time in setting up their infrastructure.[77] Such immediate efforts to formalize their organizations demonstrate these abolitionist women's commitment to action despite community disapproval.

In Peoria, women met on July 27, 1843 in the Main Street Presbyterian Church to create a Female Anti-Slavery Society. Due to the mob opposition that they faced, the men of that municipality had yet to form an abolitionist organization. Davis organized the meeting, and she provided the minutes for the *Western Citizen*. Male abolitionists were present for the Reverend William Allan's opening address, but they then departed and the "ladies" conducted their business. Allan had recently moved to Peoria, and his wife Irene took active part in the society. The women chose this male Illinois Society agent to speak to their first meeting, possibly out of

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[76] She affirmed the progress throughout Farmington, Galesburg, and "many other portions of the state," and maintained that the antislavery cause continued to grow in strength. *Western Citizen*, March 23, 1843. [Italics in original].

[77] In one such case, the final act of the initial meeting of the Putnam County Female Society on January 30, 1843 was the election of officers to run the organization. *Western Citizen*, April 6, 1843.

a desire to adhere to gender conventions about female public speech. By having a male abolitionist deliver the lecture, they tried to avoid controversy at their point of initial organization.[78]

Upon convening, the women of Peoria set to work immediately to create an antislavery agenda for their community. They held an election for officers, and chose Davis as secretary.[79] In this first meeting they also sought to delineate their role in the town at large. They wondered about *"the position we occupy in this community, as friends of the Slave and advocates of Liberty ... What shall be the course pursued by us, under such circumstances?"* One answer to this question that Laura B. Coleman immediately offered was submission of antislavery petitions to the state and national legislature, which they later carried out at the state and local level.[80]

Abolitionist women employed the contentious political climate in Peoria as a rhetorical vehicle to spread the antislavery message. Davis used the occasion of the organization of the Peoria Female Society to write a column in the *Western Citizen* discussing their actions and asking other women to form female antislavery societies. She entitled her article "Character of Peoria in some degree retrieved," and noted with pleasure that the women's meeting had proceeded undisturbed, in contrast to that of February 13. The anti-abolitionists left the women alone, but did attack Mr. Allan and his carriage in retribution for his participation in the gathering. Nevertheless, the women were unharmed, a fact which Davis mocked with her characteristic wit:

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[78] *Western Citizen*, August 17, 1843. For other such incidents see the *Western Citizen*, February 22, 1844, Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 147.
[79] *Western Citizen*, August 17, 1843.
[80] *Western Citizen*, August 17, 1843. [Italics in original].

> Whether because they were ashamed of the chivalrous deeds of the memorable 13th or from respect to the 'gentler sex,' or because the election is so near, I know not; but we have organized without molestation…But although we were unmolested, Mr. Allan, who was entirely unconnected with us except that 'by request' he deliver an address, had the wheels taken from his carriage and thrown into the river, and was threatened with…'tar and feathers.'[81]

Davis was careful to state that Mr. Allan did not plan or take an active role in the meeting, which left the impetus for organizing and agency in female hands. Illinois women, as did their sisters elsewhere, took the lead in abolitionism when men faced excessive mob danger.[82]

At least in July of 1843, the Peoria mob displayed a reluctance to physically harm female abolitionists; just one manifestation of activist women's potential to employ gender protections to their advantage. This female society formed with more immediate success than their male counterparts, for the effort to create a mixed or male Peoria abolitionist organization faltered until 1844 in the face of mob opposition. In this town, antislavery women reversed the gender norms by leading the vanguard action that anti-abolition mobs forbade to local men. The western perspective brings to the fore women's participation in physical abolition battles, and how they stepped further outside of sanctioned social roles.

Not content with local level organizations, on May 23, 1844, the female abolitionist societies of Peoria and Galesburg united with other women as the Illinois Female Anti-Slavery Society, a state organization affiliated with the Liberty Party and plagued with controversy from the outset. On April 25, 1844, the prominent women of the Peoria Female Antislavery Society (Lucy Pettengill, Irene B. Allan, Sarah Nurse, M. W. Pierce, Martha Tuttle, Frances Coleman, Laura B. Coleman, and Mary Brown Davis) placed an advertisement for the first convention of

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[81] *Western Citizen*, August 17, 1843.
[82] For examples of this elsewhere in the nation, see Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*.

the Illinois Female Society in the *Western Citizen*. They did not exclude men from this convention, for they invited "all friends of the slave, whether male or female."[83] Irene B. Allan argued that a state society would provide the antislavery cause with strength in numbers and a better way to distribute their resources: "It combines our efforts, and will enable us to use the power we have in one part of the state to benefit another."[84] Not all Illinoisans agreed with this benign characterization of the new organization.

A newspaper debate over women's public role preceded the organizing convention at Peoria, and this controversy gives a window into the social consequences critics saw in women's public action. This debate also has broad implications for separate spheres ideology and practice, as the women responded to an attack on their public action by incorporating elements of this restrictive ideology in a libratory way. They shut down opposition by taking it on directly, and arguing that women had an essential role to play in activism. In this incident, the Chicago Whig Party paper, the *Daily Journal*, harshly criticized the Peoria women for their abolitionist activities. In May, the editor used the formation of the state Female Anti-Slavery Society as grounds to castigate women for stepping outside of the household:

> Shut up your 'little responsibilities,' ye mothers-initiate your husbands into the mysteries of your kitchens and larders, ye wives-and hasten to Peoria to look after the concerns of the Nation. Pay no regard to your domestic duties—they are minor considerations.

Editor Zebina Eastman quoted the above from the *Daily Journal*, noting that this editor disparaged women's political activism and implied it was gender inversion. In so doing,

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[83] See also Irene B. Allan. *Western Citizen*, April 25, May 2, 1844: "We shall expect to see the true friends of the slave, with their husbands, brothers, and fathers."
[84] *Western Citizen*, August 15, 1844.

Eastman, as the voice of the *Western Citizen,* expressed his own support for women's active role in the antislavery quest.[85]

Mary Brown Davis did not allow the *Journal's* attack on women's forays into the political world to go unanswered. "The article," she wrote to the *Western Citizen*, "demands from me an explanation … Anti-slavery women are the best wives, the best mothers, and the most useful part of the community."[86] She argued that antislavery principles provided the most reliable foundation for a solid home. In her view, activism did not interfere with women's domestic obligations.[87] At the same time that Davis embraced these traditional responsibilities, she did not back down from the public work she found morally necessary.

Davis was not the only Illinois woman who addressed this gender controversy in the *Journal*. Another woman, calling herself simply "Maria," composed a longer and more eloquent reply.[88] In her letter, "Maria" expressed her anger and frustration with the editor for mocking women's abolitionist efforts. She decried "the 'gallantry' that can sport with woman's most

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[85] *Western Citizen*, May 2, 1844. Eastman raised the issue again in August 1844, as he discussed women's efforts to become active in antislavery politics in other states. He mocked the *Journal* for its "great consternation" at Illinois women's decision to organize against slavery. He noted that women's decision to become active in partisan politics had spread to the Whig Party: "What will the bachelor Editors of the Journal do at this intrusion of ruffles and silks into their party—at this dangerous influencer so near at home?" Eastman mocked the women by noting that they posed no real threat to their detractors, but he simultaneously denigrated the Whig Party for alienating their interests. *Western Citizen*, August 8, 1844.

[86] *Western Citizen*, May 23, 1844.

[87] When she wrote about the Whig Convention of 1844, Mary Brown Davis took advantage of that opportunity to settle her score with Mr. Norris, editor of the *Journal*. With a light mocking tone she expressed sympathy for his single status, noting that he had to attend the convention solo: "Having neither wife nor 'little responsibilities' [he] was *forced to come alone*." She met him and "had quite a sociable call and chat." While she referred to him as "that belligerent knight of the quill," she was pleasantly surprised at his amiable nature and decided to "bury the hatchet." She declared a truce, implying that she would not further pursue the debate, although she never made any admission of fault: "A truce to Mr. Norris, and to my own quill, dearly as I love it, for a long time to come." *Western Citizen*, July 11, 1844.

[88] It is also possible that "Maria" was Davis writing under a pseudonym. Eastman printed her reply with an amusing comment: "The bachelors who nominally conduct the Journal may thank their stars that they don't calculate to marry in this country." In that one sentence, Eastman questioned both the masculinity of the editors and their professional effectiveness.

sacred emotions, her grief at her outraged sister's wrongs." She refuted the editor by proving—in his language—women's resilience in the face of mockery:

> As to 'shutting up our little responsibilities,' true Anti-Slavery ladies have no idea of shutting up responsibilities of any size, or any nature. It is their peculiar views on the subject of responsibilities that compels them in the face of sarcasm, of contempt, of ridicule...to stand firm on the platform of truth.

As did other female abolitionists in the Old Northwest and nationally, "Maria" noted that women's sensitivity to the travails of female slaves provided the incentive for their interest in abolition, despite the opposition of their churlish critics, as she perceived them:

> You *delicately* refer to the 'delicacy of our sex.' Oh, what view of the 'delicacy of our sex' must those be, which could ridicule any attempts sincerely put forth by any woman…to aid in relieving her sister woman, from the power of such an indescribably indelicate system as that of American slavery.[89]

She could rationalize in this way women's labor for others. In this debate, as in their response to anti-abolition mobs, Davis and "Maria" manipulated the editors' gendered language of sex difference, and used it to justify their antislavery action. Female abolitionists in Illinois used language that avowed a commitment to conventional domesticity, but also discursively accommodated and enabled a range of actual political activity.

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[89] *Western Citizen*, May 30, 1844. These women were not the only people to justify their activism in terms of the plight of female slaves and gendered moral obligation. The argument was widespread, including in 1843 at the formation of the Putnam County Female Anti-Slavery society. Their leader, Lydia S. Lewis, argued that they had a moral mandate equal with that of men to fight slavery. Just as they aided men in "every benevolent and virtuous cause," they also must take this one up, for the sake of all slaves but especially those of their "own sex." Lydia S. Lewis, *Western Citizen,* April 6, 1843. In their constitution of March, 1836, the Canton, Ohio Ladies Anti-Slavery Society justified their work as being altruistic on behalf of other women, and thus no violation of women's roles. Canton Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, "Records," 1836, Canton Ladies Anti-Slavery Society Records, Manuscript Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. The Henry Country Society joined them in this argument in April 1848. April 1, 1848, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society," 1841-1849, County Manuscripts Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana. The persuasiveness of these arguments for Old Northwestern women is in line with Dee E. Andrews's discussion of how the horrors of slavery awakened "once sheltered women" to the need to fight the institution. Dee E. Andrews, "Imagining Emancipation: Recent Writings on American Antislavery," *The Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (2002): 123.
The 1856 meeting of the Michigan State Society also decried the plight of these women, and noted their dual oppression as people living under absolute power and as women who suffered men's "debasing passions." As a result, free women had to fight slavery and its denigration of femininity on their behalf. "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society Daybook, Vol. 4," 1853-1857, Harriet DeGarmo Fuller Collection, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

This newspaper debate did not drive women away from the notorious 1844 Illinois Female Society convention at Peoria. Forty-five women attended, and there read and unanimously adopted a constitution. They elected Lydia S. Lewis of Putnam County as president, Mary G. Kellogg of Galesburg as vice president, and Irene B. Allan of Peoria as secretary and treasurer. The meeting included sessions to plan business for the upcoming year and to elect a board of officers. Both Davis and Mary G. Kellogg wrote accounts of the meeting for the *Western Citizen*, further publicizing their actions. With pleasure, Davis announced that the meeting went very well and remained largely undisturbed, despite the mob activity of February, 1843: "Truly, we may say, "*Peoria is redeemed*."[90] The women resolved to continue to hold their meetings at the same time and place as "the Male Anti-Slavery Society," for the Illinois Society had also held its meeting in Peoria that weekend.[91] Abolitionist women—in Illinois as in the neighboring states—engaged in a range of public action.

Illinois was not alone in hosting a cohort of dedicated female abolitionists, and women's societies' chosen actions brought them into public life and overlapped state boundaries. In Indiana, the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society first met on April 4, 1842, when they proclaimed their acceptance of all women as members, and claimed they all had the right—as

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[90] *Western Citizen*, June 6, 1844.

[91] *Western Citizen*, June 20, 1844; *Western Citizen*, August 8, 1844. See also Zebina Eastman, "History of the Antislavery Agitation, and the Growth of the Liberty and Republican Parties in the State of Illinois," in *Discovery and Conquests of the Northwest*, ed. Rufus Blanchard (Wheaton: 1879), 660. The *Western Citizen* of April 24, 1845 contains further discussion of the separate and parallel women's and men's annual meetings of Illinois Society and the Illinois Female Society at Alton in June, 1845. Irene B. Allan announced the Illinois Female Society annual meeting in the *Western Citizen* with the usual ceremony, intended to induce more women and men to attend the meeting. The female society planned its meeting with hours that did not overlap extensively with those of the Illinois Society meeting. Allan assumed that this arrangement would result in expanded attendance for both men and women: "If the sisters are interested in going, the brethren will be much more likely to think that they can." At the meeting, the women also heard a three-hour talk by the Reverend Ichabod Codding, and took up a collection in response to the request of a "colored woman" by the name of Mrs. Wiltslow to purchase her daughter, a slave in Louisiana. *Western Citizen*, June 20, 1844; *Western Citizen*, August 8, 1844.

women—to speak out on slavery. The women of Putnam County, Illinois, later did the same.[92] In their minutes, the women of Henry County set out an ambitious program of antislavery goals. For one, they sought to fight slavery by revealing its true evils, and asked all churches to expel their slaveholding members. The Henry County women further vowed to support the Free Produce movement, and claimed that it was their duty to practice its principles.[93] In both Indiana and Illinois female activists decided to aid fugitives, and the Henry County society made clothes for fugitives throughout their existence as an organization.[94] In one such case in December of 1847, the Henry County Society responded to the state "Black Laws" by resolving to aid all the fugitive slaves they encountered, following the mandates of the Golden Rule.[95] Not merely interested in helping the enslaved, some antislavery women also took an interest in free African Americans.

The abolitionist women of Indiana and Illinois demonstrated a commitment over time to fighting racial prejudice, which indicates that, to them, abolition meant a more path-breaking agenda than scholars have previously acknowledged. At their first meeting in 1841, the Henry County Female Society resolved to take direct action against prejudice and fight racist assumptions in their communities. They also did outreach in their local African American community by providing women with money and advice for schooling or employment. Their anti-prejudice claims included the frequently cited antislavery trope that God accepted all

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[92] Lewis, April 6, 1843.
[93] June 6, 1841, September 20, 1841, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society,"
[94] In 1843 the Indiana State Legislature enacted a law that outlawed integrated schools, and in 1851 the new state Constitution contained an exclusion clause in reference to African Americans. Earline Ray Ferguson, "In Pursuit of Full Enjoyment of Liberty and Happiness: Blacks in Antebellum Indianapolis, 1820-1860," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays From Black History News & Notes*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993), 127, John W. Lyda, *The Negro in the History of Indiana* (Terre Haute, Indiana: 1953), 32-34, 35.
[95] Lewis, April 6, 1843; December 7, 1847, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society,"

without regard to race. All were equal and of the same ancestry, "all nations of the earth are of the same blood."[96] They not only spoke of abstract equality, they also took action against racism. In July of 1843, they again argued to combat prejudice against color, claiming that those who refused to associate with African Americans were not "true Christian[s]."[97] In Illinois, the Putnam County Society also adopted opposition to discrimination as an object equal with that of fighting slavery.[98] In 1845, they recognized the denial of the true humanity of African Americans as a major factor in the delay of emancipation.[99]

The pointed radicalism of Old Northwest antislavery women's anti-racist views also appeared in their public proclamations and in their newspaper writings. In her articles, Davis affirmed repeatedly the essential humanity of African Americans and their right to justice: "Who can consistently deny to the negro those noble traits of character which so adorn human nature? … They possess all those qualities of mind and heart which the white man claims as peculiarly his own."[100] They also expressed these convictions on the institutional level. The structure of the Illinois Female Society allowed women relative local autonomy.[101] Its members argued that their group of women engaged in activism due to a conviction of equal rights: "the equality and

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[96] April 4, 1841, June 6, 1841, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society,"
[97] July 23, 1843, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society,"
[98] Lewis, April 6, 1843.
[99] May 31, 1845, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society,"
[100] *Western Citizen*, September 16, 1842.
[101] *Western Citizen*, September 19, 1844.

brotherhood of man is the foundation of abolitionism." Davis's columns often echoed the Illinois Female Society's commitment to egalitarianism on a practical level.[102]

In her newspaper columns, Mary Brown Davis argued that the mental and emotional capabilities of African Americans justified abolishing slavery and establishing equal rights. In a column from June of 1844, Davis asserted the equal potential of people of color: "The colored race, so far from being inferior to the white, would with the same advantages, not only equal, but surpass them in intellectual acquirements."[103] She explicitly disputed claims of African American mental deficiency, arguing "their natural capacities are not at all inferior to those blessed with a fairer complexion."[104] Davis used emotional language to argue that slaves, like free whites, formed lasting, affectionate ties with their kin, in contrast to proslavery arguments that they lacked these bonds.[105] She claimed that, for the sake of their fellow women, Illinois activists needed to defy their exclusion from public speaking roles, and work to uncover and root out slavery's wickedness.[106]

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[102] *Western Citizen*, June 20, 1844; *Western Citizen*, August 8, 1844; *Western Citizen*, April 6, 1843; *Western Citizen*, January 25, 1844; *Western Citizen*, September 2, 1842. Davis demonstrated her racial views in a column describing a freed slave who prospered in the North, and thus realized his equal potential for success. In this account, Davis reversed the conventional scenario of a white Samaritan helping a destitute African American. In her story, her newly wealthy hero came to the aid of a helpless white man. Now a "respectable looking man of color," the former slave took the young man in and gave him "the means to seek…independence…." *Western Citizen*, September 16, 1842.

[103] *Western Citizen*, January 6, 1843; *Western Citizen*, June 6, 1844.

[104] *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, July 26, 1839; *Western Citizen*, October 14, 1842. See also *Western Citizen*, January 25, 1844: "They are susceptible of as high a state of mental and moral cultivation as the white race."

[105] *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, July 26, 1839; *Western Citizen*, July 25, 1844. Davis affirmed the depth of the love that slaves felt, referring to "strong and devoted attachment between them," implicitly asserting their similarity to whites. *Western Citizen*, December 30, 1842. Davis thus claimed her readers' attention on the basis of the slave system's very personal offenses, especially trying to appeal to the sympathy of women. *Western Citizen*, August 17, 1843. *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, June 28, 1839. She wished especially to rectify the situation of "the unhappy female slave," deprived of the ability to carry out the duties of wife and mother.

[106] Mary Brown Davis, *Scenes of Oppression in the Refined Circles of the South; Addressed to the Women of Illinois by Mrs. M. B. Davis* (Peoria County Anti-Slavery Society, 1846), 5-6, 8.

These positions on African American rights and capabilities were unusually progressive for people affiliated with the Liberty Party, and even on the fringes of immediatism for their awareness of the wide-ranging effects of discrimination. Women did not find it sufficient to merely set out and enact their agendas, for they also had to create a leadership corps and explain their presence in worldly affairs to a skeptical public.

III: Leaders and Petitioners

In crafting an activist role for themselves, female abolitionists embraced arguments that justified their public work, including gendered moral obligation, God's will, and a version of republican motherhood. These arguments for women's obligation emerged, in part, from adulatory discussions of female leaders. Among others, Lydia S. Lewis, Mary Brown Davis, and Irene B. Allan took up the mantle of leadership and sought to inspire other antislavery women.

Mary Brown Davis was an avid propagandist who took pride in her leadership. She expressed approval at the increase in abolitionist ranks and at the dedication of the "men and women of ardent piety, talents, and influence" to the cause.[107] In February of 1843 she wrote with pleasure of her influence on fellow citizens of Peoria, whose abolition numbers had grown from two to approximately 30. In a February 1843 column reflecting upon the local progress of the cause, Davis identified her pioneering work as a leader, and highlighted her success in bringing the message to the community. In thinly veiled self-reference, she wrote of her central role in arousing abolitionist sentiment: "One of our prominent sisters, a woman of intellectual power, piety, and decision of character…espoused it…the fire began to kindle, and…we were

[107] *Western Citizen*, August 12, 1842.

cheered by the reflecting brightness around us."[108] By recognizing and publicizing the virtues of abolitionist activism, Davis aimed to awaken an antislavery consciousness in what she saw as unenlightened Illinois residents.[109] While Davis, even in 1846, continued to cajole and encourage her readers to maintain their interest in abolitionism, she and other abolitionists at times offered an even loftier rationale.[110]

As was logical for a movement with so many devout adherents, chief among female abolitionists' arguments were also religious issues, which were persuasive to God-fearing members of a deeply spiritual culture. After observing the inability of previous emancipation movements to end slavery, the women of Putnam County, Illinois determined that they must themselves work to overturn the institution of slavery and enact an immediate recurrence to the immutable principles of justice and equality," or else face the wrath of God."[111] Christian women of knowledge had incurred an obligation to instill "correct principles and the encouragement of virtuous conduct," which they could do through the abolition movement.[112] This rationale was not confined to Illinois, for their compatriots in Indiana also made similar arguments.

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[108] *Western Citizen*, February 9, 1843.
[109] *Western Citizen*, November 9, 1843; *Western Citizen*, January 25, 1844.
[110] "We must talk, write, pray, give of our substance, deny ourselves that we may be able to give, and with *all* our powers help to push forward the car of emancipation." *The Liberty Tree*, Volume III, No. 11 (September 1, 1846), 170; *Western Citizen*, August 12, 1842, Bogin and Yellin, "Introduction," 9. Other antislavery women also engaged in publicity work. Irene B. Allan of Peoria wrote of the progress of abolitionism in the face of formidable opposition. Allan proclaimed: "I believe that the antislavery women of Illinois have done more in the past year than any year previous … Women have done much for this cause. From the days of Elizabeth Meyrick [Heyrick] (the woman with whom the idea of immediate emancipation originated) to the present time, they have contributed to the tide of public sentiment which has done the anti-slavery work of the past fifty years." Female abolitionists thus recognized and drew attention to their successes. *Western Citizen*, May 16, 1844; *Western Citizen*, April 10, 1845.
[111] Lewis, April 6, 1843.
[112] Lewis, April 6, 1843.

A flexible interpretation of religion allowed women to enter the public and engage in political work. At their October 23, 1841 meeting the Economy County [Indiana] Female Society wrote to justify their involvement in the antislavery movement, using their religiosity—which contemporary ideology ascribed to all women—as the explanation.[113] Similar to the Putnam County women, they argued that they were not "out of their proper sphere" when they did this work, for they were strictly obligated by God to perform these duties. Should they not aid slaves, they would have to "answer therefore" on Judgment Day.[114] Religion made the sphere issue void, but this argument relied upon the belief prevalent at the time that women were especially religious.[115]

In a closely related argument, antislavery women claimed the moral necessity of educating themselves on issues of vital national importance. In January of 1841, the women of Cadiz, Ohio addressed their U. S. Senator, Benjamin Tappan, concerning the role of women in abolition. With their petition, printed in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, they called for the end of slavery, and specifically, abolition in the District of Columbia, but they spent the majority of the petition's text justifying women's action and political intervention. Drawing on the strength of local female activism reaching back at least four years, these women used deferential language in claiming to "most respectfully solicit" the attention of their senator, but they also

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[113] Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*, 43.
[114] Lucinda Swain, and H. M. Spillard, "Female A. S. S. at Economy, Report of Executive Committee," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* February 16, 1842.
[115] Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*.

adopted stronger words in "urg[ing] appropriate action" regarding their claims.[116] The women of Cadiz claimed that all people, not least women, had the obligation to inform themselves of their nation's workings, and to work for positive change through their contact with others. They qualified their activism by placing it among the activities permitted to women. Women who sought to reform America were acting on "pure patriotic principles," not entering "their unappropriate arena." To provide further evidence for these claims to escape their implied proper sphere, the authors presented an argument rooted in the concept of republican motherhood. By this logic, as each woman was responsible for her children, she must be informed concerning "the institutions and laws of her country" in order to inculcate in them the proper patriotic affection for America.[117]

The ideology of republican motherhood accorded women a place in the new republic, aimed at guaranteeing the transmission of virtue to the next generation. In effect, it was a political role in the domestic realm. While this ideology brought to motherhood a new political meaning, women remained excluded from government, and motherhood and citizenship existed in an "ambivalent relationship."[118] Other contemporary women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton

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[116] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 13, 1841. Marius Robinson wrote of his encounters with outspoken female abolitionists in Cadiz in February 1837. Among them was Rebecca Updegraff, who had been working toward women's involvement with the Ohio Association. She had already formed the Cadiz Female Anti-Slavery Society, and he attended one of their meetings. Marius R. Robinson, Cadiz, Ohio, to Emily Robinson, 7 February 1837, Marius R. Robinson Papers, Manuscript Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

[117] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 13, 1841.

[118] Linda K. Kerber argues that this conception of women's role was a response to the development of a new conception of the republican male citizen growing out of the American Revolution. This new equation of manhood with citizenship entitled men to vote by virtue of their independence and capacity to make autonomous decisions. Basing their government largely on the philosophers of the Enlightenment, the founding fathers offered women no basis for inclusion in the polity. In consequence, women had to devise their own political ideology, and argued that the republican mother needed education to become an effective mother of the men who would run the future government. Women advocated combining the "domestic domain of preindustrial women" with the "new public ideology of individual responsibility and civic virtue," despite the enmity to which this exposed them for the impracticality of women's education and their supposed lack of "political significance." Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, 288, 69.

saw, in historian Linda Kerber's words, the dangers of the concept since it mandated that woman "fulfilled her civic obligation through her service to her family, substituting private choices for public obligation."[119] Antebellum Americans employed this loaded ideology for both liberatory and reactionary purposes.

The Cadiz petition authors also used republican motherhood to justify their educational claims by equating enhancement of knowledge with freedom. In their words, "ignorance can be the mother of *slavery* but not of *liberty*." They emphasized their nurturing female role by calling themselves "mother," and linking their intellectual enrichment with their claimed desire to overturn slavery, which received scant mention in the actual petition text.[120] These women claimed their potential to "influence" others as justification for their expanded education on political subjects. The Putnam County Female Anti-Slavery Society drew on similar ideas of republican motherhood in their September 1844 declaration that women were obligated to learn about politics to teach their subordinates proper moral principles. They further resolved that women ought to directly influence their enfranchised relatives to follow through on these principles.[121]

The political culture of the Old Northwest transformed as women received infusions of inspirational leadership from near and far. Austinburg, Ohio hosted famed activists Abby Kelley Foster and Stephen Foster when they attended an antislavery meeting and stayed with local antislavery activist Betsy Mix Cowles.[122] In that town in Northeast Ohio, Cowles had a vibrant

[119] Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship*, 305.
[120] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 13, 1841.
[121] *Western Citizen*, October 3, 1844.
[122] Betsy M. Cowles and Martha [Cowles], Austinburg, to Cornelia [Cowles], February 3, 1846, Betsy Mix Cowles, Papers, Special Collections, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

public career that spanned her sixty-six years of life. Born in 1810, her family migrated to the Western Reserve in her infancy.[123] She taught school in her young adulthood, and entered Oberlin College at age twenty-eight. Following her graduation, Cowles became a pioneer among female school administrators, and founded numerous schools throughout Ohio and one in Illinois. While she gained significant professional success as an educator, she also labored for years as an activist against slavery and women's oppression. In 1835 she was a founding member of the Ashtabula female anti-slavery society that advocated immediate emancipation, and she worked to gather new members in the county. She also worked for abolition on the state level, as a speaker and a singer, and a writer for the newspaper the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*.

Cowles's work extended out into causes beyond abolition. She published a paper in 1846 and 1847 that argued for the repeal of the Ohio "Black Laws." The local presence of these objectionable laws inspired Old Northwest women to take a racially progressive stance.[124] She was an early leader in the Ohio women's rights struggle, taking part in the first Ohio Women's Convention, the 1851 Akron Women's Rights Convention, and the Ohio Woman's Rights Association.[125] She died in Austinburg in July of 1876.[126] Cowles, as an independent woman situated outside of conventional domesticity, exemplified the expanded public potential women began to display in this era. Some also used their possession of education and stereotypes about women's particular aptitudes to rationalize their involvement in politics.

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[123] Linda L. Geary, *Balanced in the Wind: A Biography of Betsey Mix Cowles* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1989), 13, 16.

[124] While Cowles remained an immediatist, she asked abolitionists of all stripes to join her in this effort. In 1848-49 she continued her objections to a new law barring African American children's access to many schools. Geary, *Balanced in the Wind: A Biography of Betsey Mix Cowles*, 58-59, 69. Ohio repealed many of its "Black Laws" in 1849, but not all of them. See Chapter 6 for more information.

[125] Betsy Mix Cowles, in Oberlin College Archives, *Papers of Other Individuals (Group 30)* ([cited June 23, 2006); available from http://www.oberlin.edu/archive/resources/women/group30.html.

[126] Geary, *Balanced in the Wind: A Biography of Betsey Mix Cowles*, 95.

A related justification for women's public action came from an unsurprising source, Abby Kelley Foster, a woman herself notorious for public speaking. Putting her own unique spin on the republican motherhood idea, Kelley Foster offered to her friend Betsy Mix Cowles her views on women as actors in the public arena. While on their speaking tour in Ohio in early February 1846, Kelley Foster and her husband Stephen Foster attended the Ashtabula female society meeting that Cowles helped lead. Kelley Foster, true to form, wrote to Cowles of her outspoken views on women's potential to enact change. She extended her praise and encouragement to all people battling for the overturn of oppression, reserving special praise and hope for "woman." Kelley Foster argued that "woman" could "do more than man for the extension of righteousness." She did not draw on essential female qualities for this claim, stating that the issue was "not that they are naturally better or wiser," but rather argued that "the customs of society" have molded men into "preverted" creatures. Specifically, she decried commerce and political entanglements for making many men unsuitable for "the work of purifying the world." As she saw it, women were largely "situated" outside of these tainting influences, and thus capable of making more accurate moral determinations.[127] In the process, Kelley Foster inverted the tenet of domestic ideology that claimed women's natural lack of fitness for the public realm of politics and commerce.

Kelley Foster used assumptions about purity, corruption, and exposure to the world to explain why women were better suited than men for moral reform. The work she advocated for

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[127] Abby Kelly Foster, Pulaski, Mercer Co., PA, to Betsy M. Cowles, Austinburg, Ashtabula Co., Ohio, 28 January 1846, Betsy Mix Cowles Papers, Special Collections, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio. As a national figure that interacted extensively with westerners, Kelley Foster represented one connection between eastern and western female abolitionists. Salerno argues that apart from correspondence and newspapers, western female abolitionists were not well connected on the organizational level to Eastern women's societies. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 144-45.

women was certainly public action, an arena in which she herself was an active participant. Her argument spoke to contemporary concerns with women, politics and the tainted modern world.[128]

As Kelly and Cowles demonstrate, antislavery women's vision went beyond exerting influence in the family, for some argued that they must become general agents of change. Lydia S. Lewis wrote to the *Western Citizen* to affirm a wide range of women's obligations. She hoped that the impact of "female action may be more extensively felt, and its efficiency more generally acknowledged, and that women may be encouraged to think that they can do more than weep, sigh, and mourn." In noting that women "can do more," she affirmed that women should exceed an influential role.[129] In this view, antislavery women's propaganda, organizing, and petitioning were all interconnected, and collectively strengthened the movement.[130]

One way that Old Northwest antislavery women resolved to influence their legislators was through petitions, which enmeshed them, as it did abolitionists nationally, in a First Amendment battle.[131] In her study of national antislavery women's petitions, Susan Zaeske writes that by petitioning, women pushed beyond the usual boundaries of petitions as a

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[128] Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*, 8, Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship*, 15, Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, 252.

[129] *Western Citizen*, August 15, 1844.

[130] Dating back to feudal France and Russia, the petition was the traditional means for a "subordinate" population to claim rights without violating the parameters of her/his social role. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*, 114, 17, 23-25, 27, James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 63, Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven, "'Let Your Names Be Enrolled:' Method and Ideology in Women's Antislavery Petitioning," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 184-87, Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*, 3. Lori Ginzberg states that abolition petition drives from 1835 through the 1840s were the "single most effective tool" in grassroots organizing among women. For further discussion of the importance of antislavery petitioning, see also Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, 18, 82, Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 65-66, Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 5, 12.

[131] *Western Citizen*, September 7, 1843.

deferential form and used them to "justify" their "collective exercise" of this political form.[132] As in the East, petition campaigns became a common technique among female [and male] abolitionists in the 1830s. In 1836, the volume of petitions to Congress had become so high that proslavery senators pushed through the first "gag rule," which ordered the tabling of all petitions to the House of Representatives that addressed slavery. Congress followed this law with others, and blocked most antislavery petitions until 1844. Among other senators, John Quincy Adams put up a spirited fight to obtain a hearing for petitioners, male and female.[133] Abolitionists did not allow this limitation of their freedom of expression to proceed without extensive commentary and claims that the "gag rule" violated their First Amendment rights.[134] The gag rule also violated the tenet of natural law that leaders had the obligation to take delivery of and address petitions from their constituents.[135] They continued to submit thousands of petitions, but the actual power of this right was consequently very limited at this time.

By circulating and signing petitions, women attained independence from the political agency of their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. Petitions provided an apt forum for women's political voice, as their gender deprived them of other official means of political

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[132] In this nationally oriented study, Zaeske traces out the development of women's demand of the petition right, and how it impacted their later struggles. Her chief concern is with arguing that through their use of petitions, women developed an "identity of national citizenship." She writes that female abolitionists began what became a trend of women expanding the use of this right to other reform movements, including temperance, the anti-lynching struggle, and the vote. Old Northwest women who used petitions to contact their national and local governments did not always use the preprinted petition forms that Zaeske argues characterized the petitions emanating from centralized antislavery organizations, thus demonstrating individual initiative. Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*, 2, 6, 48, 50-51. For more on antislavery struggles for freedom of speech and press see chapters 4 and 5.
[133] Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 64-65.
[134] Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 186.
[135] Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*, 3.

participation.[136] The gag rule posed more of a problem for female than for male abolitionists, as they lacked the vote.[137]

With their petitions, antislavery women in the Old Northwest articulated a direct relation to the state. Women did not choose the petition form lightly: their delimited circumstances and few political rights drove them to it.[138] In 1841, prior to initiating their direct claim, the female petitioners of Cadiz, Ohio first wrote to explain why slavery was their legitimate concern, and in the process justified their political action with both moral and legal claims.[139] While it was "called political," these women declared the slave question "also highly moral and in that aspect of its character we principally take interest." However, while claiming an ethical focus, in the next sentence they proceeded to hard political arguments: "We have a constitutional guarantee to appear as petitioners, which right we consider as an important duty for us to exercise in this interesting question." Not merely were they asking for favor with this petition, they also drew upon "constitutional *authority*." By this argument, the fact that the Constitution guaranteed [white] women equal representation with men in Congress entailed that they had as much entitlement to a hearing as did men. Legislators were also accountable to women: "The members

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[136] Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*, 114, 17, 23-25, 27, Van Broekhoven, "'Let Your Names Be Enrolled:' Method and Ideology in Women's Antislavery Petitioning," 184-87.. Kerber wrote of the petition as an expression of "a deferential political role" to which women were limited. The women she studied did not overtly assert their independence in their claims for the petition right. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, 287.

[137] Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates*, 82.

[138] The subjects of Salerno's research also used an expanded definition of citizenship, including women and others who also lacked the vote. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 2. See also Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 80, Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates*, 12, 84, 85. With this demand for participation as citizens, they went beyond Portnoy's claims of their demands for "participation in the political arena" on the basis of gender specific arguments.

[139] These extended, elaborate arguments from the early 1840s belie the timing Zaeske sets forth of the decline in petitions by women after the split in the American Society in 1840. Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*, 48.

of Congress are our constitutional representatives, consequently we have a right to instruct our representatives respecting our grievances, and demand their removal."[140] Their compatriots in Union County, Indiana relied on similar reasoning.[141]

In their 1841 petition, the antislavery women of Cadiz used a pro-petition rationale based on exclusion from their rightful participation in society. They made their claim to the necessity of the petition right in the face of doctrine "from high places" which reserved for men access to government, purely on the basis of male "physical strength." They refuted this allegation of might equaling right to exclusive leadership, noting that the Bible belied this restriction of power to men.[142] Regardless of the identity of their leaders, these women claimed, as humans, the rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."[143] As such, they and their compatriots argued that women deserved a way of informing their leaders of their opinions on such important matters.

Indeed, their sisters in Putnam County, Illinois also argued for the seemliness of their use of the petition in 1843. In a confident speech delivered to her female compatriots, Lydia S. Lewis argued that women could petition Congress and their state legislature, with no fear of violating propriety: "If we commence early to circulate petitions … our neighbors will be

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[140] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 13, 1841. This use of the Constitution to justify women's political action on slavery complicates Michael D. Pierson's discussion of a decade later, and of the "gender distinct rhetorics" advanced by women and men active in the Free Soil Party and in the Republican Party. Pierson argues that anti-slavery people took advantage of gendered expectations produced by the increasingly rigid categories of male and female behavior over the course of the mid-nineteenth century. Women continued to advance more radical antislavery arguments with the move toward more conservative abolitionism following the absorption of the Liberty Party into the Free Soil Party. Further, he claims that party thinkers relied upon readers' preconceived notions of male and female priorities—women morals, men legal and constitutional concerns—in order to continue their advocacy of a broad platform over time. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics*, 35-37, Pierson, "Gender and Party Ideologies: the Constitutional Thought of Women and Men in American Anti-Slavery Politics," 47, 59. Even in the peak of Liberty Party organizing in 1841, the women of Cadiz used constitutional and legalistic justifications for their own public action—if not for the overturn of slavery.

[141] Their Female Society passed a resolution on September 17, 1842 to explain why they petitioned the government. They noted that slavery, as a "creature of law," must thus be fought with "legal" methods. Union County Female Anti-Slavery Society, *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* October 15, 1842.

[142] They did not cite where in its passages they found this proof.

[143] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 13, 1841.

convinced of the *safety and utility* of this manner of expressing our sentiments …”[144] Writing in an assured style, these women claimed a central role in American society, even as they used a form that could affirm their weakness and disfranchisement.[145]

Refusing to be relegated to the margins of life, the women in Cadiz boldly demanded that their senator acknowledge their importance. They queried: “When does man encounter oppression or difficulty of any kind, in which woman is not directly or indirectly involved?” Their influence was not limited to the role in shaping their children’s character, for they claimed women also aided in crisis resolution.[146] Their significance thus merited access to the ears of power.

As agents capable of action, the Cadiz Female Society vowed to work tirelessly to overturn slavery. They declared that they would use all means at their disposal, all “instrumentality and influence,” with whatever importance is attached to us in any way” to get rid of slavery and permit the country to reach the untrammeled “character to which she lays claim.” As further justification of their right of petition, they implied that their concerns were well founded, and that Senator Tappan would doubtless insist upon aiding them once he knew of them. They claimed that as a legislator interested in positive action, “you will consider it a pleasure, of being the instrument of removal of any grievance of any individuals, however humble a station they might occupy.” In the end, their optimism proved misdirected, as Senator Tappan failed to put this petition before Congress. Despite claiming to agree with them, he

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[144] *Western Citizen*, April 6, 1843. [Italics added].

[145] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, 63, Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women’s Political Identity.*

[146] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 13, 1841.

would not present it, arguing that his fellow legislators would merely table and ignore the petition.[147]

Illinois abolitionist women, like their counterparts in Indiana and Ohio, used petitions to directly express their political opinions. The women of the Putnam County Society enthusiastically signed petitions that followed the contours of the Liberty Party platform. They printed an antislavery petition to Congress and the Illinois State Legislature in the *Western Citizen* of October 15, 1843, which reflected the goals of the Liberty Party at that time, and demonstrates that these women followed its agenda. Its language and goals resemble contemporaneous petitions published by male political antislavery organizations, including those opposing the "Black Laws," and they circulated it successfully.[148] The Putnam County women confined their petitions to abolition issues that could be strictly constructed as constitutional, a stance consistent with the methods of political abolition. They directly claimed that the free states should clear themselves of "local, and as far as consistent with the constitution, all national laws" that uphold slavery.[149] They also voted to petition Congress regarding the annexation of Texas, and to demand the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. They stated that they would submit further petitions to abolish all laws that "strengthen the hands of the slaveholders."[150] Petition efforts did not end there, for in 1847, the Illinois Female Society made a concerted effort for a statewide women's petition to repeal the state's "Black Law." Davis

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[147] *Ibid*.
[148] *Western Citizen*, October 15, 1843. *Western Citizen*, April 6, 1843: "The board of managers report: The petition to our State Legislature was circulated, and 163 names procured and forwarded."
[149] Lewis, April 6, 1843.
[150] *Western Citizen*, April 6, 1843.

took on the role of chief proponent of this project.[151] Their sisters in Indiana also joined in a similar effort in their state. These petitions exemplify the more radical anti-racist action women took that grew out of Old Northwest antislavery activism, by defying the restrictive racialized laws endemic across these states. This emphasis on transforming local racial laws was a progressive local development, not, as Salerno claims, a sign of the decentralization, even declension, of a national movement.[152]

Some antislavery women justified their public action by explaining that their rights of public address and of petition were under siege in the seats of government. In one such case, the women of Henry County drew on the Declaration of Independence, beginning their petition: "When in the course of human events it occurs that the rights and privileges of Females in a civilized and professedly Christian nation are called in question, and the conduct of those who exercise such rights assailed in the Legislative halls."[153] In the face of this challenge, they had to take action. Their self-regard and their sense of the importance of those "rights and privileges" necessitated their public resistance. To explain the foundation of these rights, they revealed their conviction that the government had "sacredly guaranteed" them the rights of speech and petition. They thus had the freedom to express this "moral influence" due to their status as Americans,

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[151] Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 182-83.

[152] Salerno claims that over the 1840s nationally, women's petition efforts to Congress became increasingly individualistic or involved signing mixed petitions, and were less catalyzed by centralized women's organizations. However, they did increase petitioning their states on "local issues," including Ohio educational efforts. She sees this as resulting from the lack of national organizational structure from the American Society or the Anti-Slavery Conventions of American Women. Without that, the majority of women's societies shifted to an emphasis on "petitioning on racial issues within their own states." Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 127.

[153] September 20, 1841, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society," Other contemporary women also adopted the technique of using the language of the Declaration of Independence to add rhetorical strength to their claims of a political role. These included the "Ladies Declaration of Independence" at Sarah Pierce's school in Litchfield, Connecticut in 1839, and, famously, Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the "Declaration of Sentiments" in 1848 at Seneca Falls. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, xii, 278.

and as "intelligent and accountable beings." This group of women timed this especially strong defense of their public rights in response to North Carolina representative "Kenith" [Kenneth] Rayner's attack on women's petition efforts. In the *Congressional Globe* of June 15, Rayner had resolutely denied women's right to enter into public life.[154]

Despite their choice to invoke the linguistic heavy hitter of the Declaration in response to Rayner, these women did not expect full participation by their sex. They qualified their boldness in stating that women should not involve themselves in men's imperial battles or "political strifes." They nonetheless reserved the right to temper men's "stormy and angry passions," and to remind them of the consequences of dominating other people. As "the great principals in the declaration of American Independence," were currently under proslavery siege, they claimed it their "duty" to "influence" men to do away with the corrupting influence of slavery.[155] This was no mere rhetorical desire for a means to facilitate indirect change, for they also overtly told men of their expectations and suggested how they should use their vote.

The concept of women's influence could also encompass a more direct relation with formal and electoral politics. The Henry County women soon after wrote an address "to the men only" which they intended to read at the July 1842 meeting of the general Henry Society. In this speech they requested that the men present adopt the Liberty Party as their own. They couched their assertiveness in veiled terms, writing that they hoped the men would not "consider us dictatorial" for asking that they use their vote in that specific way.[156] These women took on the

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[154] September 20, 1841, "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society,"
[155] *Ibid.,* 22-23.
[156] "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society,"

task of overtly instructing the men present how to vote.[157] This was not the most assertive of women's attempts to influence politics, for they also took direct action.

Illinois female abolitionists candidly addressed the issue of women's subtle and overt involvement in politics. In the indirect sense of the concept, abolitionist women in Illinois argued that women should, at minimum, influence their male relatives to vote for abolition. They maintained that women must inform themselves about the political situation of their locality and the country as a whole, since the issue of abolition was inseparable from politics. Proving that they were some distance from Garrisonian abolitionists, they did not argue for slavery's eradication through non-electoral means. Their efforts to affect the franchise place them squarely in the antebellum political system. Illinois women affiliated with the Liberty Party in the 1840s claimed partisan identities and participated in abolitionist politics. In June of 1843, for example, the Putnam County Female Anti-Slavery Society created an expanded conception of such influence in one of their resolutions: 'Resolved, That if women consign to their duty in the antislavery cause, their influence will be deeply felt, not only in private circles, but in legislative bodies."[158]

Antislavery women were not only active petitioners, rather they performed a variety of political acts in antebellum Illinois, including offering press commentary on party actions. Mary Brown Davis was more outspoken than many of her Illinois sisters on the issue of partisan, electoral politics. In one such case, she directly took a political stand in an 1839 column that denounced Henry Clay, the Whig Party presidential candidate, based upon his slaveholding

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[157] The republican mother as Kerber conceived of her did not "tell male relatives for whom to vote," but these Henry County women exerted this direct influence. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, 283.

[158] *Western Citizen*, September 7, 1843.

status: "I deprecate the fact that a free and enlightened Republic is to be governed by a man who holds so many of his fellow-men in bondage."[159] The Putnam and Princeton County female antislavery societies also explicitly demonstrated a partisan identity in their support of the Liberty Party. They asserted that a portion of their time ought to be spent in garnering further support for the party: "Resolved, That as the *Liberty party* makes the unchanging principles of truth and justice their object, we will use our influence to further their progress."[160] The expansion of the boundaries of women's political activity to encompass endorsements and denouncements did not proceed unchallenged, and they even met with resistance from a cautionary voice within their own ranks.

Irene B. Allan of Peoria wrote to the *Western Citizen* in August 1844 to discuss the progress of female abolitionism in Illinois and dampen women's zeal for public recognition. She argued that women working for the antislavery cause should remain anonymous if circumstances so demanded. In her regard, theirs was a holy calling beyond earthly glory: "Surely in laboring for such a cause, we may be willing to be unknown—we *can* work and make sacrifices, and let our names perish."[161] The members of other female antislavery societies interpreted this as a statement against the direct political ambitions of women. They believed Allan meant that the anonymous advocate for the slave should be without aspirations for her own glory. The Putnam County Female Society resolved to follow Allan's lead and acknowledge that they did not belong in formal politics: "Resolved, That ambition for office with anti-slavery females is incompatible with their purity of motives; and, should it be *found in our ranks*, we receive sister Allan's

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[159] *Western Citizen*, July 11, 1844.
[160] *Western Citizen*, October 3, 1844; *Western Citizen*, November 9, 1843.
[161] *Western Citizen*, August 8, 1844.

rebuke as being in time and appropriate."[162] Their interpretation of Allan's words did not, however, involve them refusing public action.

Indeed, Allan's caution about female political acts belied the fact that the women of the Illinois Female Society were already enmeshed in partisan politics. As the spokeswoman for the Illinois Female Society, she likely found herself at the center of controversy over women's politics. By requesting that antislavery women remain anonymous in their labor, Allan echoed abolitionist women's privileging of the goal of immediate emancipation, rather than women's activism toward that end. She placed her emphasis on the message rather than the women's conduct as its medium.

Despite these prudent concerns for propriety and the opposition they faced, many abolitionist women found a sense of purpose in civic action. By 1845, the women of the Putnam County Female Society reported slow and steady progress in the changing of opinions in their environs, and voiced pleasure at the coalescence of other female antislavery societies.[163] Women grew as individuals and as a group when their opponents and their social norms pushed them to justify their activism. Irene B. Allan herself argued that their work in the face of adversity benefited the cause, for it strengthened their convictions: "To be set at naught—to be persecuted and mobbed, is often a great blessing to us. We identify ourselves more closely with the truth—we learn more clearly the beauty and strength of our principles."[164] Illinois abolitionist women articulated a strong sense of righteousness, and argued that their activities for a higher cause rendered them immune from criticism. The women of the Putnam County Female Anti-Slavery Society stated: [w]e will do the work which we may be called upon to perform,

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[162] *Western Citizen*, October 3, 1844.
[163] *Western Citizen*, April 10, 1845.
[164] *Western Citizen*, September 19, 1844.

unterrified by the threats or warnings of our self-constituted judges."[165] Old Northwest abolitionist women developed a unique sense of female strength, firmly rooted in their activism on behalf of others, and manipulated, challenged, and disregarded the mores of their era.

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The moment of female societies in the West was fleeting. For example, while female abolitionists had some significant exposure for a few years in the antislavery papers, they did not maintain such extensive access to the press indefinitely. Writing on September 18, 1845, Mary Brown Davis made the observation that women were becoming scarce in the columns of the *Western Citizen*. She asked Eastman to explain the withdrawal of "the female correspondents who in former times were wont to lend the influence of their pens to aid the cause of the down-trodden slave?"[166] Davis was correct, for columns written by women and articles covering their activities had peaked in 1844 and declined thereafter. This initial flurry of journalism pertaining

[165] *Western Citizen*, September 7, 1843.

[166] While this is the case, it is difficult to gauge whether this meant that women's actual participation in these societies was changing. She may have been overstating the problem. In 1842, nine issues of the *Western Citizen* covered these topics; 1843, sixteen; 1844, twenty; 1845, eight. Mary Van Vleck Garman argues that the participation of Illinois women in the antislavery movement began to wane as the Liberty Party superseded immediatist organizations. The state women's organization met in 1846 and 1847, but with diminished attendance. She argues that as the Illinois population became more settled and urbanized with its rapid expansion in the 1830s and 1840s, cultural expectations that women would attend solely to domestic issues increased. Garman, "'Altered Tone of Expression': The Anti-Slavery Rhetoric of Illinois Women, 1837-1847", 142, 50-51, 53. Salerno follows along these lines, claiming that as of 1845, the Illinois Female Society was beginning to fracture over women's public role with the growth of the Liberty Party. In effect, the growth of political abolition shut women out. The growing need to justify their action drove women from the antislavery movement in the late 1840s and distracted them from the focus on slavery to one on women's rights. Salerno argues that this was symptomatic of broader developments in antislavery in the west, and that there, people had not suffered earlier fractures "mostly due to geography and disorganization." They were preserved from conflict until Eastern eyes turned their way, and then began to split. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 146-47. This argument places no agency in the hands of abolitionists in the Old Northwest, and only looks at them as a less advanced form of their eastern counterparts whose organizations followed in their footsteps. They did squabble over these issues from the time of the schism in 1840, but they had reached less consensus in their outcomes and attitudes on the issues. Salerno's organizational study argues that following some sporadic activism in 1846 in Michigan and up to 1849 in Indiana, the evidence for female antislavery societies in the west vanished by 1852. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 147-49. They carried on their work in other forums, including the public lecture and the newspaper.

to female abolitionism may have been a result of the 1843 spike in the formation of female abolitionist organizations in Illinois, and their members' subsequent desire to publicize their activities. In this column, Davis exhorted women to remember their "interest in this holy effort," and to not abandon the task of antislavery writing to "*male* writers." She reminded her readers that political women had a long and glorious history: "I would point to you the many women of ancient and modern time who have by their talents, their energy, their labors, effected so much." Among her examples of well-known and powerful women who wrought social change were Elizabeth I of England and, closer to home, the abolitionist author and editor Lydia Maria Child.[167] Through explicitly highlighting a history of public female activism, Davis herself furnished powerful evidence that Old Northwest women had an outspoken place in public life.[168]

The racial views of Davis and her Illinois sisters mark them as radicals for their gender and their party affiliation. Their willingness to address equal rights for African Americans counters other scholars of abolitionist women who claim that most white abolitionist women were not concerned with the post-emancipation fate of former slaves. Julie Roy Jeffrey argues, for example, that white abolitionist women typically voiced few concerns with racism. However, Illinois abolitionist women displayed more interest in racial issues than Jeffrey's research reflects.[169] Old Northwest women's racial views placed them beyond the party platform of the Liberty Party. By 1842, the party had shifted its rhetorical emphasis away from immediate emancipation and equal rights for African Americans and toward expounding fears of a southern

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[167] *Western Citizen*, September 18, 1845.

[168] Women's participation in organized abolition in Michigan declined as electoral politics obtained greater sway and the antislavery press focused on men's activities. One exception to this trend was a small upsurge from 1845-47 in calls for women's participation in the Liberty movement. John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 423-25. This latter development was concurrent with the era when women established the most female societies in the state. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 180.

[169] Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 4, 7, 36, 67-68.

conspiracy to subvert "northern political economy." Despite this trend, some individual Liberty activists, male as well as female, continued to advocate race equality.[170] Illinois abolitionist women's advocacy of racial equality resembles the views usually associated with Garrisonian abolitionists, providing further evidence of the inadmissibility of the Eastern ideological distinctions between factions of abolitionists in the Old Northwest.[171] Some also promoted immediate emancipation, as did the women of Galesburg in 1844.[172] This female antislavery activism proves that the Liberty Party was decentralized enough to permit a spectrum of political activity within its boundaries.

The rhetoric and political activity of antislavery women in the Old Northwest complicates the understanding of female public action in the antebellum era. These women, while they did not seek the vote, behaved in ways outside of the conventionally stated norms of female passivity and non-partisanship.[173] Their most groundbreaking actions and words raise important and different questions about the relation between women and politics. Over time, abolitionist women found that their moral commitment to eradicate slavery required them to contest gender norms. They eschewed the suffrage issue, but nonetheless spoke out in a variety of settings, confronted authority, and broke laws that they regarded as unjust, such as fugitive slave legislation. Complicating their outspokenness, their moral stance allowed them to claim their

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[170] "National elections in the 1840s invited white Liberty men to de-emphasize their racial egalitarianism." James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 103-04, 10.
[171] Walters, "The Boundaries of Abolitionism," 14-15.
[172] *Western Citizen*, August 12, 1842; *Western Citizen*, May 16, 1844. This is a position more usually associated with Garrisonians. See also Chapter 2.
[173] Nancy A. Hewitt, "On Their Own Terms: A Historiographical Essay," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 24-25, Hewitt, "The Social Origins of Antislavery Politics in Western New York," 205-06, 27, Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*, 25-26, 54.

activity as appropriate for women, while still relying on conceptions of women as the moral center of society, thus reinforcing gender norms.

In this region, women's antislavery activism demonstrates that non-suffrage politics, far from being stagnant and staid, could have radical potential for improving the racial order. Their struggles were part of a larger battle to control access to the political. Old Northwest women grant us a new perspective on antebellum politics, informed by the experiences of the ranks of those ostensibly on its margins but claiming, nonetheless, to wield "an almost irresistible power." Much as women faced challenges to their claims of a public place in the realm of local organization, itinerant men and women in the Old Northwest also grappled for legitimacy as they spread the antislavery message.

Chapter 4: "An odd place for navigation": Itinerant Lecturers

John O. Wattles of Ohio toured Indiana in September of 1842, crossing the north-central portion of the state, seeking out compatriots, attending and holding meetings, and observing the local progress of antislavery.[1] In Grant County, he found and worked with "firm friends of humanity." The local activists he met had "run up the [antislavery] flag at mast head, and nailed it fast." He rhapsodized about their mission and its importance:

> The abolition ship has weighed anchor, spread her sails, and, borne on by the fresh breezes of heaven, her broad banners waving in the winds, and her pendant streaming from her… topmast; she plunges over the billows, veering her course for freedom's port. Some of our eastern friends who dwell by *the sea*, may think it an odd place for navigation, out here in the woods, but they must like to know that abolition can go across the land, as well as across the ocean.

No mere pleasure sailors, the abolition mariners were prepared for a spiritual battle against an unholy system: Wattles noted that "[t]he friends of freedom are mailed in the might of principle, and Jehovah backs their purpose." Those in Grant County did not have to fight alone, however, for Wattles subsequently switched his metaphors of traveling progress from the watery to the fiery, noting that their neighbors were also "moving in the cause of the slave. The 'incendiaries' and their firebrands have set the prairies on fire."[2]

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[1] Connecticut-born John O. Wattles came to Ohio in 1839. He began his adult life as an adherent of orthodox Congregationalism, but his time in the West while he attended Lane Seminary in Ohio brought him into the abolition movement and away from orthodoxy. He grew increasingly interested in broad social reform and communal living over the course of his life. He took up Garrisonian activism in 1839, moved to anti-sabbatarianism and non-resistance by 1840, and worked as an itinerant lecturer for a time. In 1845 he and his wife Esther moved to Cincinnati where John worked for a female antislavery society as a teacher and lecturer, and Esther worked for an African American elementary school. In 1849, they moved to West Point, Indiana, and lived there until John relocated to Lawrence, Kansas in 1855 at the peak of local controversy over slavery. In 1857 Esther and their daughters joined John in Kansas. Thomas D. Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846*, *Religion in North America Series* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 4, 7-8, 221, 23.

[2] John O. Wattles, *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* October 15, 1842. He dated this letter September 17, 1842.

As he wrote this letter to the Newport, Indiana based *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle*, Wattles targeted both local and national audiences for his commentary. First, the letter clearly spoke to the largely western readership of the *Advocate* and affirmed the importance of their work. With his words he validated their struggle and their successes with literary flourishes, using his perspective as a resident of a nearby state to affirm that abolition was indeed moving, and doing so rapidly. Newspapers in this era, even small, local ones, also widely quoted from each other and reprinted one another's articles, so Wattles could have anticipated that his words might appear elsewhere.[3] Itinerants also expanded the readership of antislavery newspapers, as many sold subscriptions at their meetings.[4]

Like other participants in the western abolition struggle, Wattles recognized that the majority of the membership and the organizational apparatus of his chosen movement lay in the east. To inform eastern-based readers and others who knew less of regional circumstances, or Indianans who had yet to be awakened to the local struggle, he claimed that the activist work of antislavery people in the Old Northwest was both vital and arduous. By writing, Wattles also reported on the progress of the cause to those who saw themselves at the center of the campaign, while noting that the focus of their reform energy indeed must expand across the miles to the west. As a former easterner, Wattles was keenly aware that his contemporaries often regarded

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[3] For a detailed discussion of the newspaper exchange system in the Early Republic, wherein editors would widely reprint each others' content without cost or concern for copyright infringement, see Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 8-9, 173.

[4] Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 163. An itinerant was a person who traveled for the purpose of converting people to the cause or enhancing their existing commitment. The issue is somewhat complicated by the particular circumstances of life in the Old Northwest, where general mobility and population expansion meant that people were moving into these towns at this same time. Most residents could not claim multigenerational occupancy of the same place, but they nonetheless rapidly developed a sense of local entitlement after settlement.

the Old Northwest as a backward, amoral woodland dotted sparsely with hamlets. He nonetheless asserted that this region represented fertile, strategically essential terrain for the cultivation of a new vision of American racial liberation. Hardly "an odd place for navigation," he indeed foretold that these battleground states would instead prove central to the fight against slavery, and for civil rights and freedom of speech.[5]

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The abolition ship did not sail uninhabited, for a dedicated cohort of traveling activists like Wattles staffed it, creating and expanding networks to disperse the antislavery message. As advocates for the slave moved within and into the Old Northwest, the operations and outcomes of their lecture tours demonstrate the transitory, maturing state of Old Northwestern culture and society. When they sought to spread the word across the region, they found their surrounding milieu unusually contentious. Their presence and their provocative labor brought out community strife.

Recognizing that the Old Northwest was of vital importance to national reform, racial radicals fought to constitute an antislavery public sphere for its dispersed population. Reformers faced myriad challenges in building this activist public sphere in the region, a necessary step to spreading their message. In states hostile to abolition and African Americans, activists had to construct a means for a scattered population to acquire the organizational skills and vocabulary to make their views politically meaningful and socially resonant. Unlike the public sphere the

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[5] The following week, Wattles again praised Indianans in a letter dated September 27, 1842 from Marion, Grant County, addressed to the New York-based *National Anti-Slavery Standard.* Therein, he claimed that the Indianans' character resembled that of their landscape, "grand, broad, bountiful." Like their weather, they could be "mild, and beautiful" when becalmed, "but sublime and terrific, when on fire!" When he attended the meeting of the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society in Newport, Indiana the first week of September, the local activists truly impressed him with the "tremendous power" with which they had already taken up the abolitionist struggle. John O. Wattles, "Letter from John O. Wattles," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 6, 1842.

foundational theorist Jurgen Habermas imagined, this public sphere was bounded on one side by politics and on the other by networks of action, and did not necessarily exclude religion. The persistent violence that abolitionists encountered—on the surface a violation of rational discourse, although anti-abolitionists at times justified their actions in pragmatic terms—infringed upon their ability to construct an open space of public discussion.[6]

To build this sphere, itinerants needed access to speaking space, freedom of speech, and publicity to gather an audience. In the process of obtaining these necessities, they had to fight not only anti-abolition mobs, but also against local and national limitations on which people had the right to use public space. For itinerants, even the obvious need of finding an open public platform to spread their message could prove difficult. While many lecturers wrote with approbation of thronged halls and effective meetings, local residents also met their requests for speaking space with proprietary disdain. Further, the itinerant system depended on an often-unreliable publicity machine. Between deliberately obstructive strategies and human error, the word of an impending lecture often did not reach the targeted community. Without itinerants and their willingness to accept these challenges, organizing in this region would have been impossible.

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[6] Craig J. Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), Mary P. Ryan, "Civil Society as Democratic Practice: North American Cities during the Nineteenth Century," in *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234. The public sphere in antebellum America was the site of significant conflict and debate. As Mary P. Ryan has written, public life in this era focused on both the local and the municipal levels. By the 1830s, the "public meeting" had become a regular form of gathering, in theory accessible to all. This "democratic public space," coupled with the expanded voting population to include all white men, permitted individuals of various backgrounds to partake in political debates. Mary P. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Feminism, the Public and the Private*, ed. Joan B. Landes, *Oxford Readings in Feminism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 199, 203, 17-18. In practice, in the Old Northwest this "open access to the political sphere" often faced significant challenges, and thus was not always as open as in theory.

The disruptive presence of itinerant lecturers created significant conflict in Old Northwestern communities that were hostile to antislavery organizing. Travelers encountered the depths of loathing that some reserved for people they disparagingly called "hirelings" and unwelcome "outsiders." As mobs roiled towns across the region in response to abolitionist action, men and women expressing widely variant views on slavery and race relations stepped outside of culturally sanctioned gender roles. Some women interceded to protect itinerant men from violence, or endured it themselves while traveling, while still others were among the first to sling eggs in fury. Passionate individuals of both sexes also fought over the right of itinerants and their local allies to freedom of speech. In the process, some revealed a preoccupation with a conception of assertive masculinity, and others challenged gender roles themselves with their activist work. Activists ranging from Marius R. Robinson in Berlin, Ohio in 1837 to Josephine Griffing in Northeast Indiana in 1861 vehemently claimed the right to raise their voices to denounce slavery and its underpinnings. This chapter reveals these challenges of itinerancy in this hotly contested and little known reform realm, so vital in the eyes of antislavery organizers, both East and West. In the process, it shows that older accounts of the timing and location of itinerant abolitionist organizing have underestimated the influence of proslavery culture locally—and the consequent difficulties activists faced.

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Itinerant lecturing as an organizing technique had a long and vibrant history in the Old Northwest, and it remained a vital strategy from the late 1830s until the advent of the Civil War,

well after historians of northeastern activists claim the practice to be moribund or dead.[7] Traveling lecturers, both local and eastern-based, joined the Old Northwest antislavery struggle from the early 1830s, when Theodore Dwight Weld traversed Ohio extensively and organized numerous societies across the young state.[8] Indeed, itinerant organizing predated the antislavery movement; numerous other causes and reforms implemented it in the Early Republic.

From the 1830s onward, as the Western population expanded, traveling individuals made vital links between new settlements and the East. The numbers of itinerant lecturers boomed from the end of the eighteenth century onward, and their methods and style grew increasingly sophisticated over the decades.[9] As the transportation infrastructure improved over the first decades of the nineteenth century, it became easier for lecturers advocating diverse platforms to reach people across the newly sprawling nation. In this era, technological advances also facilitated production of affordable printed materials, which travelers brought with them on their tours. These "colporteurs"—whether they were peddling goods or selling reform newspapers,

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[7] In one such case, historian Ronald G. Walters characterizes the strength of immediatist [anti-slavery] itinerancy as depleted by the end of the 1830s, as by that point "immediatism had passed into the hinterland." Thus, "the agency system had served its purpose." Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 1st ed., *American Century Series* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 81.
[8] Vernon L. Volpe, "Theodore Dwight Weld's Antislavery Mission in Ohio," *Ohio History* 100 (1991). Itinerants organized in Michigan and Ohio from the early 1830s, and by the middle of the decade in Indiana and Illinois. Gilbert Hobbs Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844, Vol. 1*, 2 vols. (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965 (1934)), 260-61, Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland from George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1969* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1972), 12, Merton Lynn Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," *Michigan History* 39, no. 4 (1955): 481, 83, 90-91, Arthur Raymond Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan, 1796-1840: A Study in Humanitarianism" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1941), 93. Outside of the Old Northwest, Richard S. Newman studies the "agency system" that the New England Society and the Massachusetts Society initiated in Massachusetts in 1832-33. He reveals how speakers spread out across the state to convey the abolitionist message to a wide range of people through lectures, pamphlets, and organizing. The use of these methods themselves had a transformative effect, for they enabled a shift to "rural, grassroots" action, including helping form local auxiliary societies and distributing abolitionist newspapers. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*, 163, 52-53.
[9] Donald M. Scott, "Print and the Public Lecture System, 1840-1860," in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. William L. Joyce, et al. (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1983), 281.

aiming for religious conversion or awakening others to injustice—all developed and relied upon new patterns of mobility.[10]

Evangelical religious organizations pioneered the structures that later enabled abolition lecturers and other reformers to propagandize widely. In this system, "parent societies" would send out agents to form local auxiliary societies, which would operate in their scattered communities, reuniting *en masse* with periodic conventions. National societies often provided publications to these local auxiliaries, and sent agents across the country for further communication and expansion of their agendas. These religious endeavors that originated between 1810 and 1825 honed itinerant techniques.[11] Later reformers thus owed a significant debt to the methods that evangelical religionists first developed. Many antebellum collective reform efforts shared common methods: presses issued meeting notices to call attention to impending events; at these public meetings people composed and approved resolutions; and then broadcast their results. Abolitionists and other reformers relied upon these new methods to spread their message.[12] This expansion of the agency system, coupled with the fact that many Old Northwestern towns only obtained religious attention from traveling preachers, meant that residents of the region quickly grew accustomed to sojourners in their midst. Whether they were

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[10] Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 6.
[11] Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860*, 32-33.
[12] Ryan, "Civil Society as Democratic Practice: North American Cities during the Nineteenth Century," 237.

self-motivated men, "professional revivalists," evangelical preachers, or employees of home missionary societies, a multiplicity of voices rang across the prairies.[13]

I: A Space from which to Speak

Abolitionist navigators in the Old Northwest fought to claim access to lecture platforms, the physical space they needed to present their views to the public. For itinerants, a main staging ground in the battle for abolitionist expression in this essential region was the fight to obtain speaking forums. One of the means that anti-abolitionists in the Old Northwest (and elsewhere) employed against local agitation was the steadfast refusal of space to advocate their message.

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[13] Much as itinerancy in the Old Northwest did not begin with antislavery activism, it also did not end there. Circuit courts and traveling lecturers also familiarized Old Northwesterners with the new mobile services and communication methods necessary for establishing civic infrastructures in areas with sparse populations. In smaller towns with no resident legal structure, circuit courts and their attendant courthouse days were one more manifestation of people in motion who performed a scarce service that could unify the community. Agents sold newspapers or magazines in a similar way to peddlers; they both traveled and hawked their product. Lewis Perry, *Boats Against the Current: American Culture Between Revolution and Modernity, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 177-79. As the population in the Old Northwest expanded, many local residents prioritized cultural institutions, and itinerants had a role to play there as well: by the early 1840s, numerous towns organized lecture societies soon after settlement. Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 66, no. 4 (Mar., 1980): 791. These societies both developed a corps of homegrown speakers and brought in itinerant lecturers from elsewhere. In this same time period, traveling lecturers moved around the region to raise funds for other allied causes, such as African American schools, and to work against local "Black Laws." *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 22, 1840, James O. Bond, *Chickamauga and the Underground Railroad: a Tale of Two Grandfathers* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1993), 58-62, "Records of the Young Men's Antislavery Society, Recognized Sept. 14th, 1851, Oberlin, Ohio," Robert S. Fletcher Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio. Anti-"Black Law" itinerancy was extensive and often informally allied with antislavery activism. M. M. Clark, Cleveland, to Prof. H[enry] Cowles, Oberlin, 9 January 1837, Robert S. Fletcher Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio. See Chapter 6 for more on this repeal battle. John Malvin, *North into Freedom: The Autobiography of John Malvin, Free Negro, 1795-1880*, ed. Allan Peskin (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1988 (1879)), 66-67. Some travelers had a different intention for their itinerancy, such as James Leander Scott's religious tour, but ended up having an antislavery effect regardless. Scott, a minister of a Seventh-Day Baptist Church in Richburg, New York, wrote a journal of his 1842 Midwest journey. The home missionary society of his umbrella church asked him to travel on a religious mission, aiming to "distribute tracts, convert unbelievers, and establish churches, where possible, in the new settlements." He found himself mobbed in Ashland, Ohio, and mistaken for an abolitionist: "A club of coxcombs pounced upon me by guess, saying they would "egg" a man of that character." In response he took up the rights of the slave, and enmeshed himself in an argument with these enraged men. Despite his "unflinching" advocacy of slave rights" and their threats, these ruffians did not actually egg him in retaliation. James Leander Scott, *A Journal of a Missionary Tour*, *March of America Facsimile Series* (Ann Arbor Mich: University Microfilms, 1966 (1843)), I, 19, 50-52.

Whether couched in terms of objections to the individual itinerant, antislavery lectures as inappropriate for the space in question—a technique often used in churches—or in a more generalized opposition to any sort of abolitionist argument in their town, this pressure forced activists to be creative in order to find speaking platforms. Local residents treated buildings in a proprietary fashion, thus attempting to control the flow of ideas through restrictions on their usage. Old Northwest people battled over who dictated the messages conveyed there, determining who had cultural ownership of the specific space, or who could access the public sphere. The itinerant presence also brought about conflict within communities, even, on occasion, within congregations. Many of the determined abolitionists in the Old Northwest would not relinquish their right to hold local meetings, despite dire consequences.

When Marius R. Robinson embarked on his tour of Ohio in 1837, he intended to cover a large expanse of the state, including numerous small towns infrequently served by itinerant abolitionists, with few like-minded residents. He arrived in Berlin, Ohio in June, and asked permission to use the schoolhouse—among other buildings—to hold a meeting. Joseph Holt, a school district trustee, refused.[14]

Since he had been denied use of churches, schools, and public halls, Robinson opted to hold his meeting in a private home. In resorting to holding meetings in private houses—or in ambiguously public spaces like churches—he and other abolitionists politicized spaces that

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[14] Marius R. Robinson was born in Dalton, Massachusetts on July 29, 1806. A minister, he attended seminary in Tennessee. He was a confirmed abolitionist by the time he moved to Ohio in the early 1830s. He married Emily Rakestraw and lectured for the American Society in the West beginning in 1836. He became editor of the Salem, Ohio, *Anti-Slavery Bugle* in 1851. Over the course of the next twenty-four years he had a varied career interspersing lecturing and editing with bouts of quiet private life. Charles Robert Donaldson, "The Antislavery Career of Marius Robinson, 1834-1861" (MA Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1970), 27, 32-33, 48, 95. Emily Robinson became the publishing agent of the *Bugle* in 1851, and publicized women's rights. She evidently influenced Marius in that direction as well, for he came to support woman suffrage in print. Arthur D. Lersch, "Marius Racine Robinson: The Life and Beliefs of a Radical Abolitionist" (M.A. Thesis, Kent State University, 1988), 59.

prevailing ideologies defined as domestic.[15] In Berlin, Quaker merchant Jesse Garretson and his wife offered to let Robinson use their house. On June 2, he held his first meeting there with no opposition. Robinson then scheduled a second meeting two days later to discuss how the Bible did not justify or support slavery. This proposed theme, and his persistence in organizing in the community, incensed some town residents, and rumors of mobbing began to circulate, what Robinson deemed "some buzzings of disapprobation," for their willful decision to meet regardless of the "well-known wishes of the nobility of Berlin."[16] He and his opponents claimed the dispute was over his opinions on religion and reform.

Robinson depicted his trials in the New Lisbon *Aurora* of June 15, 1837. He wrote that he did not seriously regard the rumors and threats of violence, until he beheld their veracity through his personal experience. The eve of his second meeting, Robinson sat in Garretson's store and chatted with him, his wife, and J. F. Powers. Local anti-abolitionist Mordecai Hughes burst into the store at approximately ten o'clock at night, and grabbed Robinson by the arm. He attempted to pull him out the door, claiming "'you have got to leave town tonight. You have disturbed the peace of our citizens long enough.'" At that point, Mrs. Garretson rose to his defense, intervening and claiming, "'If you take him, you must take me too.'" A second man, following in Hughes's footsteps, pulled Robinson by his other arm, both aiming all the while to get him outside. Mrs. Garretson continued her valiant efforts in Robinson's defense, and tried to prevent the rest of the men crowded outside the entry from coming in. The mob entered the store

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[15] Like that of antislavery women, their resourceful activism troubles the boundaries between public and private that historians have probed. Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: the Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988).
[16] Holt himself told Garretson that "if the meeting was held the inevitable result would be a mob." Marius R. Robinson, "Free Discussion," June 15, 1837, Marius R. Robinson Papers, Manuscript Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

regardless, and continued to pull Robinson toward the exit, delayed by the "vigor and firmness" of Mr. and Mrs. Garretson's effort.[17]

While they struggled, Hughes commanded that Mr. Garretson "dismiss" Robinson from his property. Garretson would not, and asked the crowd to "stop and reason the matter. 'No reason here' was the reply," and so it was. Robinson disparaged his foes, noting that "brute force" ruled this encounter, and made particular note of the fact that the mob gave Mrs. Garretson no special handling on account of her womanhood. These "chivalrous advocates of slavery" made their consideration evident in "the treatment" that they "were pleased to deal out to Mrs. Garretson in their zeal for the peace of the neighborhood." In Robinson's telling, the attack on Mrs. Garretson made the crowd's savagery apparent. This incident would perhaps look different were her perspective available, for she evidently volunteered to enter the affray in Robinson's defense. Did she look for chivalry, or just act strongly in the defense of a friend under siege without expecting different treatment as a woman?

Mrs. Garretson, as a married woman, could not escape town evaluations of her behavior. Her antagonist Hughes even had the temerity to chastise her on the spot for her violations of propriety, which he also coupled with an attack and a threat. He sternly told her "she was 'acting very imprudently,'" then "ordered her to desist." Not yet finished with Mrs. Garretson, Hughes told her "he 'would remember her for this;' and once pushed her with some violence." She defied stereotypes of passive, retiring femininity, for despite the threats, wounds, and actions of her fellow town residents, she refused to abate her defense of Robinson until the crowd had bodily forced him into the street. After the crowd had departed, she found herself with the marks

[17] *Ibid.*

of two bruising "blows" on her body. One resulted in a sprained wrist, while a second left her breast with "considerable pain and soreness."[18]

Once they had removed Robinson from the protection of the Garretsons and their store, the men pulled him around the town, beating him as they forced him on a trek out of the town limits, making him walk at least a mile. Three men dragged, harassed, and jabbed him along the way. Nonetheless, they stopped outside of town to tar and feather Robinson, all the while insulting and threatening him. After completing their ministrations, they took him ten miles out of town. There, they left Robinson, "about an hour before day, near the center of Canfield," a place he knew no one.[19]

Robinson learned that his assailants planned to prevent him from returning to Berlin to hold his meeting the following day. They thus aimed both to punish Robinson for his transgression of town norms, and to make it impossible for him to deliver his planned speech. In Canfield, he found shelter with a kindly family named Wetmore, who cleaned him up and tended his wounds. In the course of the attack, Robinson had received burns from the hot tar, and two serious cuts, including a deep one in his hip, incurred as the men pulled him across "a rack of scythes in the store."[20] The Wetmores also lent him clothes, and he was able to attend two church services in Canfield that day, and give an antislavery address in the evening. It was

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[18] *Ibid*.
[19] Hughes tried to lessen the severity of the beating, and prevented the others from mortally wounding Robinson. Loading Robinson into the back of a wagon, two men held on to him and another drove until they deemed him no longer a threat, as he was unarmed. They then loosened their grip on their quarry, but continued to drive him away. Charles Galbreath, "Anti-Slavery Movement in Columbiana County," *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1921): 366.
[20] *Ibid*.

Sunday, and even grave insults and injuries could not keep Robinson out of church and off of the lectern, although he did not speak again in Berlin as planned.[21]

Robinson's assailants made no effort to hide their identities, and were well known in Berlin. He did his part to make their names known by publishing them in his account of the incident.[22] He entitled the extended narrative of his trials "Free Discussion," reiterating his view that lecturers' struggles frequently embroiled them in battles over what he defined as this fundamental right.[23] The sheriff later confronted the mob, but pressed no charges.[24] No member of the crowd was ever prosecuted, while local authorities indicted Robinson for "inciting a mob," but did not convict him.[25]

Robinson wrote that he was motivated to write his account of the attack neither out of desire for revenge nor out of "resentment," but because he wished to reveal the hold that slavery had over the nation. Further, he regarded the incident as a "gross violation of my rights, in common with those of my fellow citizens." Robinson argued that this demonstrated that "the spirit of slavery" exists in the North as well as the South, and that the "spirit is identical in character wherever found." Indeed, this spirit only had respect for "physical force," none for "reason truth nor right." Perhaps one of Robinson's attackers said it best: "'Don't you see we have the power?'" Robinson saw this as a local expression of the same sentiment that slaveholders felt.[26] Thus, Robinson, along with other itinerants, regarded the mob's effort to

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[21] Robinson, "Free Discussion,"
[22] *Ibid*.
[23] Robinson, "Free Discussion," He had earlier stated this perspective after being forcibly extracted from a church in Hartford, Ohio.
[24] Donaldson, "The Antislavery Career of Marius Robinson, 1834-1861", 43.
[25] Galbreath, "Anti-Slavery Movement in Columbiana County," 368-69, Marius R. Robinson, Roscoe [state?], to Emily Robinson, Cincinnati, Ohio, 29 January 1837 Marius R. Robinson Papers, Manuscript Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.
[26] Robinson, "Free Discussion,"

keep him off of Berlin's platforms as part of a larger national system of oppression and suppression of potential controversy.

Robinson maintained few illusions about the goals of his attackers; that of silencing him at any cost. He saw in their actions a reckless indifference to his safety. This impression was further substantiated by a conversation a Berlin "citizen" had with two men who had participated in the attack. This man asked the mob participants what they would have thought if the encounter had resulted in "a corpse found in the store the next morning." One man, merchant William Ripley, Jr. retorted: "'We went prepared to take him, let the consequences be what they would.'"[27]

In the face of this rancor, Robinson left the area and recuperated for a month at the home of his in-laws in Guilford, Ohio. He was well enough to return to the itinerant life in August. His health remained impaired for some time, but he continued to tour through the end of 1837. Ultimately, it took a lengthy hiatus from speaking to recover his full strength.[28]

Robinson's travails were hardly anomalous, for people who claimed the right to control spaces would at times formally issue prohibitions on their use, with public assertions of violent backup for their claims. Churches and other interior spaces bore more restrictions than did courthouses or public squares, due to membership issues and clerical reluctance to address slavery. In Pontiac, Michigan in February 1837, antislavery lecturer and Oberlin professor John P. Cowles encountered a mob as he spoke in the local church. Taking on a spokesman role,

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[27] *Ibid*.

[28] Donaldson, "The Antislavery Career of Marius Robinson, 1834-1861", 46. In September 1849 the convention of Ohio Anti-Slavery Young Men and Women met at Berlin, Ohio. The author of a report on the meeting noted that the town was not capable of drawing and supporting an "immense gathering," in contrast to the violent attack on Robinson over a decade previously. Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Eighteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (1850)), 69.

Samuel N. Gantt, the editor of the Democratic *Pontiac Balance*, told Cowles that he would not be permitted to speak on abolition in this space, and that he would have to leave town. Cowles ignored him, and asked the audience for permission to continue, whereupon most asked him to do so. Gantt then drew his knife, while his comrades outside of the church began to hurl "a volley of stones and snow balls" into the church windows. For a few tense moments, this attack appeared likely to result in a battle between the friends and foes of abolition in the church. The parties approached each other and drew weapons and fists, but before blood was shed, the sheriff entered with a posse and calmed the situation. Cowles delivered his lecture "in quiet." Other Michigan newspapers, apart from Gantt's own, denounced this attack on free discourse and restriction on speaking.[29] This was but the beginning of the struggle to use clerical facilities in the Old Northwest.

Anti-abolitionists frequently stymied itinerants by prohibiting their usage of churches, politicizing and rendering contested these spaces that abolitionists relied upon as a public platform. At times, church authorities sided with abolitionists in the battle to access spaces, with both trustees and ministers taking action. On one extended jaunt through Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan on behalf of the American Society, Dr. Hudson corresponded with the *National Anti-*

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[29] Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 173, 75. For further discussion of this tour, see the letter from his traveling companion John R. Lawler to Monroe organizer Darius Comstock: J. R. Lawler, Monroe, Michigan, to Darius Comstock, February 16, 1837, Elizabeth M. Chandler Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1839, an antislavery convention was unable to meet in the Presbyterian Church at Pontiac as planned. Before they could even begin their meeting, they confronted a throng of adversaries who told them they were trespassing. Their foes threatened a mob attack if they did not disperse. The attendees met outside and resolved to move their gathering to the following evening in Rochester, a nearby town. Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 285. Michigan was changing, however. Nathan M. Thomas wrote to his father Jesse that, as of December 1837, an abolition lecture had never been delivered in his town, Jackson. A mob had prevented the delivery of one such lecture there approximately two years earlier. Thomas believed an abolition speech possible at the time of his writing, for local sympathy had grown enormously: "the publick feeling has undergone such a change upon the subject that I doubt whether a mob could now be raised for such a purpose." Nathan M. Thomas, Schoolcraft, MI, to Jesse Thomas, December 12, 1837, Nathan M. Thomas Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Slavery Standard as he traveled from late August 1841 through March 1842, often accompanied by Charles C. Burleigh.[30] At times Hudson also overlapped in schedule with Oliver Johnson, another agent for the American Society.[31] At Smithfield, Ohio in 1841, local people refused to publicize Dr. Hudson's meeting, and a faction in the community tried to lock him and his modest audience out of the church building. Hudson did get in, however, with the aid of the trustees, and he wrote that they had a "profitable meeting." Almost as an afterthought, Hudson wrote that some anti-abolitionists also presented them with airborne "addled eggs."[32] Hudson's casual attitude toward this attack indicates a willingness to stand firm in the face of frequent challenges.

In this era, congregations and towns divided on slavery, and advocated disparate positions on the issue. Itinerant abolitionists consequently at times enmeshed themselves in religious debates. In addition to whether or not they could access the churches, they also observed whether or not these churches had—as they viewed it—cleared their consciences of complicity with slavery.[33] Even those itinerants who advocated uncompromising positions on

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[30] *The Protectionist,* October 1, 1841. Charles C. Burleigh was born in Plainfield, Connecticut in 1810. An early convert to Garrisonian abolition, he lectured and wrote extensively beginning in the late 1830s. Throughout the antebellum period, he labored for racial equality, women's rights, and against capital punishment. C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 5 vols., vol. 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 224.

[31] Oliver Johnson was born on December 27, 1809 in Vermont. Also an early ally of William Lloyd Garrison, he helped with the editing and printing of Garrison's papers, and published his own newspaper against the universalist movement. Johnson helped found the American Society and served as its traveling agent. He edited and contributed to other antislavery papers including the Salem, Ohio *Anti-Slavery Bugle* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. He continued his news editing and reform activism after the Civil War. He also worked in the women's movement and the peace movement, and wrote an 1880 biography of Garrison. William Lloyd Garrison and Louis Ruchames, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), xxv-xxvi.

[32] In this letter, he left unclear where and when in Smithfield he encountered this "pro-slavery argument." Hudson, "From Mt. Pleasant, Ohio," September 23, 1841.

[33] Hudson, "Letter from Oberlin, Ohio," December 23, 1841; Hudson, "From Sherman, St. Joseph's County, Michigan," November 25, 1841; William Lloyd Garrison, "to the *Liberator*. Richfield, Ohio, 25 August, 1847," in *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, ed. Walter McIntosh Merrill (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971).

slavery and politics found that they had to hold their tongues on some aspects of their arguments in order to gain this essential access.[34]

Even when itinerants behaved with caution, certain towns became notorious for their hostility and refusal to allow abolitionists access to their public spaces. Alabama-born lecturer Reverend William T. Allan, who traveled Illinois in 1841 as the agent of the state antislavery society, found that Alton remained dominated by the "spirit of pro-slavery violence," even four years after the riot that ended with Elijah Lovejoy's death.[35] When he visited there in May 1841, Allan successfully preached one Sunday evening sermon. His victory over the town's historic pro-slavery and anti-free discussion sentiment was short-lived, however, as he saw when he tried to hold more meetings. The following day a group of local people petitioned the mayor, begging him "to exert his influence to prevent" Allan from speaking again. The mayor, in turn, wrote to the trustees of the church, asking them to refuse permission for Allan's planned second speech. The trustees complied, and locked Allan out. The Cincinnati *Philanthropist* reported that "a mob assembled," but they found the house closed and no abolitionists present to attack.[36] Allan conceded the space to his opponents, having no alternative platforms in this hostile town once

[34] When itinerants did access the pulpit, some individuals regarded them as obligated to speak well of the churches that had lent them their rostrums. Many flatly refuted this claim, noting their obligation was to please God, not to avoid offending sinful church members. In August 1841, Dr. Erasmus D. Hudson was the first antislavery lecturer to obtain use of the Methodist Episcopal church in Leesburg, Ohio. After he denounced the sins of the Methodists from their platform, he wrote "some thought it was almost too bad, after they had opened their house for me, to expose the Methodists as I did." Hudson did not regard his critique as having diminished his impact locally, for he claimed to have opened some new ears to the cause, in addition to the doors of the Methodist Episcopal house. Hudson, "To The Editor," September 16, 1841. There does not appear to be a correlation between any particular denomination and these negative responses.
[35] For more on Alton, see Chapter 5.
[36] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 27, 1841. Reverend Allan's name was variously spelled Allan and Allen, but there was only one William T. Allan/Allen born in Alabama who served as the agent of the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society in the 1840s. See also Allan in *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 29, 1843.

the mayor and trustees rallied against him.[37] Local civic officials could thus assert their right to close even religious facilities.

Local people were at times more protective of their churches than of their places of governance, and abolitionists were thus able to hold meetings in courthouses when churches were barred to them. In June of 1845, Giles B. Stebbins held his meeting in the courthouse at Warren, the county seat of Trumbull County, Ohio, when locals forbade him all other places.[38] In a more dramatic case from April 1844, Ichabod Codding encountered problems in securing a venue when he lectured in Springfield, Illinois.[39] He first tried churches, and then resorted to the State House. While authorities granted him permission to use this space, community sentiment was evidently less decided. Levi Spencer, Codding's fellow Illinois antislavery minister who attended the talk, wrote in his diary that Codding was in the process of speaking, when a "tremendous and hideous noise" rang out from the lower level of the hall, which made it impossible for him to continue.[40] Their opponents egged them, but as Spencer noted, "not much harm done." They decided to reschedule the meeting for the next day. Spencer expressed his

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[37] Burleigh and Hudson found similar issues in Columbus, Ohio later in 1841, when they arrived in town too late to hold their scheduled meeting. Local antislavery people approached the mayor and other city government officials in an attempt to secure another speaking place for the two itinerants that evening. These civil authorities refused, and even warned these friends that unnamed "consequences" might ensue if they tried to hold an antislavery meeting. E. D. Hudson, "Letter from Richmond, Wayne County, IN," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 21, 1841. October 21, 1841.

[38] G. B. Stebbins, "Our Cause in Ohio," *Liberator,* July 25, 1845.

[39] Codding, a New York-born Congregational minister, attended Middlebury College before becoming an anti-slavery lecturer. He relocated to the West in 1842, and became a political abolitionist in Illinois. Norman Dwight Harris, *The History of Negro Servitude in Illinois and of the Slavery Agitation in that State, 1719-1864*, Illinois Sesquicentennial, ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1968), 151.

[40] Born January 30, 1812, in Otsego County, New York, Levi Spencer was active in Illinois abolition during his short life. He married Minerva West in January of 1836, and subsequently underwent a Christian conversion in winter 1837. They moved to Galesburg, Illinois in 1839, where he studied for the ministry at Knox College and took up a Sabbath school. He formally began to preach in 1841, and he later worked in Bloomington and Peoria. In 1853, he died at age 41 in Peoria, where he then lived and worked. Jonathan Blanchard, *Memoir of Rev. Levi Spencer: Successively Pastor of the Congregational Church at Canton, Bloomington, and Peoria, Illinois* (Cincinnati: American Reform Tract and Book Society, 1856), 16-18, 20, 35-36, 42.

outrage that this "Capital of a free state" could produce such injustice.[41] In his eyes, the seat of Illinois government should have made space to accommodate the antislavery perspective.

Other communities presented significant resistance to itinerants' use of public spaces such as courthouses. On May 27, 1846 the sheriff of Bloomington, Illinois refused to allow the abolitionists whom Levi Spencer called the "tax paying citizens" of the town to use the courthouse for their meeting, where Owen Lovejoy had planned to address them. Spencer and other abolitionists had been battling to speak on abolitionism in this, his hometown, since 1843.[42] Two days previous, Spencer noted that he and his few allies were "threatened publicly & privately" if they proceeded with their plan to hold the meeting. The predicted mob did, in fact, materialize.[43] On that day in May, Spencer wrote in his diary that the "crowded streets" were full of "oaths, threats" and "eggs." They could not get any public building, so they held their meeting in a "Mechanic's shop," where Owen Lovejoy spoke about the need to dismantle slavery. While he lectured, they heard the rhythmic smacking of eggs hitting the walls of the house, and entering in the windows. The attackers were holed up nearby, for the eggs flew in from "adjoining buildings," with no resistance from "the officers of the peace (so called) & some leading members of our churches."[44] The anti-abolitionists of Bloomington, like those elsewhere, did not leave off with their resistance to allowing abolitionists access to their buildings, but continued to persecute local organizers.

The pressure on abolitionists to keep clear of certain types of buildings drove them to use unusual locations for their meetings, including lofts, warehouses, private homes, fields, groves,

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[41] Spencer Diaries, 13 April 1844.
[42] Then, a throng of men with clubs had broken up their County anti-slavery society meeting. See Chapter 2.
[43] Spencer Diaries, 13 December 1843.
[44] Spencer Diaries, 25, 27, 30 May, 1846.

and even barns. In their diaries, memoirs, and correspondence, itinerants reported the myriad places where people had gathered to hear their words, whether with hostility or open ears. In a letter dated October 3, 1841, Hudson revealed that he and Burleigh had, over the course of several weeks, spoken in a courthouse, a private home, Methodist meeting houses, a Friends meeting house, an Associate Reformed Church, and a public hall, and had conducted multiple outdoor meetings.[45] Itinerants sought out various venues until they found one that would accommodate them and integrate them into the public sphere.

When locked out of some buildings, itinerant lecturers would seek out others, often with success. In the winter of 1839, the Reverend Marcus Harrison of Jackson, Michigan, attempted to hold antislavery lectures in the Ann Arbor Presbyterian Church, but the church administrators refused the abolitionists the right to use the building. The civil authorities also denied the activists the use of the courthouse, but the trustees of the Baptist church finally allowed them to meet there.[46] Churches were not always consistent from one denomination to another in whether they permitted abolitionist meetings to occur in their spaces. Hudson exhibited substantial ingenuity in finding a speakers' stand in Barnsville, Indiana, a place he and Burleigh knew in advance would boast a strong pro-slavery element. While they did not there meet the "addled-egg arguments" that Hudson had expected, they were unable to find any public space to speak. Their allies, Dr. Judkins and an unnamed fellow doctor, allowed them to hold a meeting in their home that Hudson estimated as including thirty to fifty people.[47]

This was by no means the only time that itinerants circumvented their exclusion from public buildings by relying upon friends who owned property suitable for meetings. In

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[45] Hudson, "Letter from Richmond, Wayne County, IN." October 21, 1841.
[46] Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 285-86.
[47] *Ibid*.

Delaware, Ohio in January 1842, Hudson called upon local ally Milo D. Pettibone, who owned a stake in a hall that was large enough to permit "well-attended" meetings.[48] Illinois abolitionist lecturer Levi Spencer, too, found privately owned space his salvation. He lectured in May and in June 1846 in Peoria, and met quite different results in his two visits. For his May meeting, with all other venues closed to them, organizers resorted to using the informal space above the store of Moses Pettingill, which they named "Liberty Hall"[49] A mob broke up this meeting and viciously attacked some of the attendees, including Spencer and Reverend Nehemiah West. They saw this as an infringement on their right to meet.[50] In June 1846, Spencer returned for another meeting, and also stayed in Pettingill's home. This gathering proceeded without disturbance, in Spencer's view likely due to "shows" in town "which called off the rabble."[51] Even in locales where itinerants expected conflict due to past attacks, such unrelated distractions could smooth the way for their meetings.

Another unorthodox forum, the outdoor grove, also had the advantage of accommodating more people than any building's capacity in these small towns. By September of 1854, the famed lecturer Frederick Douglass could speak to an audience of more than 1,500 people in

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[48] In addition to their willingness to aid him, Hudson deemed Pettibone and his wife "noble-hearted" for their moral purity, for they taken the step of forsaking the four churches in town that were closed to abolitionist discussion. Hudson, "From Delaware, Ohio," February 17, 1842.

[49] Earnest E. East, "History of Peoria," c. 1950-1965, Peoria Public Library Collection, Peoria, Illinois. Moses Pettingill remained an avowed abolitionist despite the risks this entailed to his business and his person. A wealthy merchant, he opened Peoria's first hardware store in 1834. Pettingill clung to his temperance beliefs and never sold liquor in his store. He ran, unsuccessfully, as the Liberty Party candidate for State Senate in 1848. Earnest E. East, "History of Peoria," 1946, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

[50] Local activists Samuel H. Davis and Jonathan Blanchard, the president of Knox College in Galesburg, used the Chicago *Western Citizen* to strongly protest this attack. *Western Citizen*, May 20, 1846, June 3, 1846. See also Blanchard, *Memoir of Rev. Levi Spencer: Successively Pastor of the Congregational Church at Canton, Bloomington, and Peoria, Illinois*, 117.

[51] Spencer Diaries, 15 June 1846.

Chicago's Metropolitan Hall.[52] In smaller places like Newport, Indiana, Douglass had no choice but to resort to places like Cowgill's Grove, a commodious outdoor area where—one audience member claimed—he addressed 6,000 spectators in 1844.[53] To house outdoor crowds, meeting organizers in Ohio and across the Old Northwest extensively used the large tent Oberlin College owned. This tent traveled the country and was so spacious, according to an attendee writing in the Massachusetts Society's 1850 annual report, that 5,000 to 6,000 people could fit inside.[54] While abolitionists appreciated these locations that could muster such large crowds, not all towns offered such opportunities.

Itinerants' persistence in organizing in the face of refusals of space could incite long running disputes in communities. On September 29, 1841 Hudson, Burleigh, and Oliver Johnson

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[52] M. B. D., "Correspondence: Letters from the West Side," *Galesburg Free Democrat,* November 4, 1854.
[53] Gwendolyn J. Crenshaw and Indiana Historical Bureau, *"Bury me in a free land": the Abolitionist Movement in Indiana, 1816-1865: the Catalog* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1986), 38. This attentive throng was a marked improvement over his reception in Pendleton, Indiana a year earlier, and a mere forty-seven miles due east. This incident is detailed in Chapter 1.
[54] Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Eighteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers*, 69. The tent, paid for by New York evangelicals, arrived with Charles Grandison Finney when he took up the college presidency in 1835. The college population rapidly expanded in that era, and the tent provided a space sufficiently expansive to accommodate large numbers. The tent was "circular," Finney wrote, and further described its accoutrements: "A hundred feet in diameter, furnished with all equipments…When the weather would permit, we spread it upon the square every Sabbath; and several of our earliest commencements were held in it. It was used … for holding protracted meetings in the region round about, where there were no churches large enough …." Charles Grandison Finney, *The Original Memoirs of Charles Grandison Finney* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 284-85. The tent was widely renowned, and its utility meant that people frequently requested to borrow it from Oberlin. Dr. Charles V. Dyer of Chicago [an abolitionist, although this request appears irrelevant to his activism] made one such appeal in May of 1847 on behalf of the North Western Harbor Convention. He offered to pay $100 for its use. Charles V. Dyer, Chicago, to Mr. Gillett, 22 May 1847, Correspondence, Treasurer, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. It was well used at the Great North-Western Liberty Convention held in Chicago in June of 1846 and at the Berlin, Ohio, Convention of the Anti-Slavery Young Men and Women in September 1849. "Abolition Convention of the Northwest," *Philanthropist,* July 16, 1846. It also appeared in such diverse places as the 1846 University of Michigan commencement and the 1849 celebration of the Northwest Ordinance held by the Free Soil Party in Cleveland. A Stranger, "University of Michigan," *New York Evangelist,* September 10, 1846, "The Celebration of the Passage of the Ordinance of 1787," *National Era,* July 26, 1849. In August 1847, the tent preceded Garrison's arrival in Munson, Ohio and was well used there in sheltering a large crowd. William Lloyd Garrison and Walter McIntosh Merrill, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 519.

met for a three-headed assault on slavery in Richmond, Indiana, a town that was notorious among abolitionists for virulent attacks on the freedom of speech. Barred from "all the public houses, convenient for public meetings," they did obtain a small room, Warner's Hall. Their audience did not all fit inside the space, but they were "respectable" and "attentive," even those who listened from outside. That evening they procured the Associate Reformed Church for their meeting, and Burleigh spoke there. A failed attempt to stop the meeting with a false fire alarm interrupted him, but the speakers continued.[55] The anti-abolitionists of Richmond used subterfuge to attempt to break up the meeting, but could not.[56]

After the trio left Richmond, a local newspaper, the *Richmond Palladium*, denounced them and called their behavior—meaning their delivery of antislavery lectures— "disgraceful." Arnold Buffum, the editor of the *Free Labor Advocate* of nearby Newport, reprinted this denunciatory piece shortly thereafter, and noted that the *Palladium's* editor was clearly trying to turn his readers against the travelers. "He takes pains to excite the feelings of the community against them," Buffum wrote, with "contemptuous language, and odious epithets." The *Palladium* called the men "imported lecturers," "missionaries hired by the anti-slavery societies in the East, to awaken us to a sense of our sins," and "itinerant demagogues."[57] Thus, having

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[55] Hudson, "Letter from Richmond, Wayne County, IN." October 21, 1841.

[56] In their meeting two months later, the Indiana State Society wrote of this conflict, attributing the actions of Burleigh's opponents as to fear of the "truth" he intended to speak. *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* December 30, 1841. In 1843, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* also revisited the poor welcome that Richmond provided Burleigh two years earlier. There, citizens had treated him "with indignity, with utter contempt," for at his meetings, he found that even the Friends participated in locking he and his companions out of the buildings. A hostile mob attacked him "in the open street," while he was attempting to speak. "SOCIETY OF FRIENDS IN INDIANA," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 23, 1843. See also Chapter 1.

[57] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 11, 1841, Holloway, "Abolition Lecturers--Disgraceful Conduct &c," *Richmond Palladium,* October 9, 1841. Holloway was perhaps frustrated with the abolitionists, for as he claimed in March of 1841, a meeting at Newport, Indiana had called for the attendees to cancel their subscriptions to his paper as it would not advocate abolition. "Abolition-Palladium," Richmond *Palladium*, March 6, 1841.

failed to prevent the meeting, the people who opposed the antislavery message nevertheless derided the lecturers when they were no longer present to defend themselves.

As exemplified in Richmond, one common technique that opponents used to exclude antislavery lecturers from the public sphere was to claim that they were hired outsiders. Editor Holloway of the *Palladium* wrote "we will not by our presence, or other means, countenance *hirelings*, who travel from one community to another, exciting and disturbing all, without the least benefit to any."[58]

At the same time as the *Palladium's* editor denounced meddling outsiders and noted that they should be silenced, he also claimed to oppose slavery and to favor liberty of expression. Buffum responded that it was futile for the editor of the *Palladium* (or similar respectable others) to denounce anti-abolitionist "mobs and riots," while they simultaneously singled abolitionists out as "objects of public contempt and indignation." Antislavery itinerants faced the additional discrimination of having people "exclude them" from churches and other civil institutions, and "other buildings erected for public purposes … as wretches unworthy of the countenance and common civilities of society." He argued that community leaders were to blame for the contempt abolitionists repeatedly encountered.[59] They also contributed to the violence that the poorer elements, the "unprincipled and vicious," wreaked upon itinerants.[60] This was both an appeal to community leaders to uphold free speech and an excuse for the people who were susceptible to mob justifications, and actually carried out the attacks.

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[58] Holloway, "Abolition Lecturers--Disgraceful Conduct &c," October 9, 1841. Arnold Buffum had directly addressed this common tactic of alienating outsiders in August of 1841 as it applied to him on his lecture tours. Arnold Buffum, *The Protectionist,* August 7, 1841, 237.
[59] See also Catherine Stebbins in 1861. C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor," *Liberator* March 1, 1861.
[60] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 11, 1841.

The key to stopping mob action, in Buffum's view, lay in community leaders extending to abolitionists respect and even acknowledgement that they are the "real advocates of the true principles of republican liberty." The editor of the *Palladium* had instead used language of "hirelings" merely to "render them odious."[61] Buffum met efforts to place abolitionists outside of Richmond's community with feedback and suggestions for more just resolutions of future conflicts, including fulfilling an egalitarian government model.

People in antislavery circles widely reviled this incident of silencing in Richmond. The Indiana Anti-Slavery Society and the Union County [Indiana] Anti-Slavery Society both denounced the poor hospitality of the town in November 1841. The Indiana Society noted that Burleigh's attempt to speak publicly presented such a threat to the people of Richmond that they silenced him. In their words:

> The only means whereby they could shut out conviction from the minds of the people, and secure the favor of slaveholders, was to shut the advocate of truth from their houses; thereby inviting the mobocrats to drive him from his stand, by the use of their best argument, to wit: eggs.

They argued that this would, in the end, prove ineffective as it only revealed the conspiratorial understanding of the need to silence abolitionists that existed between "the aristocracy of the North" and southern owners of men. Rather than permitting open debate and the free transmission of abolitionist ideas, these collaborators depended on "a league of power, with the vile passions of the mob, to stifle discussion and smother the truth."[62] Indiana abolitionists saw how they could use evidence of their exclusion from spaces to denounce and weaken their enemies.

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[61] *Ibid*.
[62] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 30, 1841, *The Protectionist,* November 16, 1841.

Shortly thereafter, Hudson again found conflict in Indiana when he visited Pendleton and Anderson in early October, and he used his reception there to state his views on freedom and tyranny. As a precursor to the riotous activities in 1843, he met and worked with Edwin Fussell.[63] In Pendleton, he spoke to a meeting at the Baptist meeting house. While he found attendance good, certain residents gave him an unfriendly reception and showed their contempt for abolition by hurling eggs, or "pro-slavery, rotton arguments," against the building, although no one was hurt.

Having connected free speech to liberty, abolitionists could link its denial to tyranny. When Hudson and Fussell attempted to hold their scheduled meeting the following day at the local Anderson courthouse, they found themselves locked out, with a "chuckling" audience of "slaveocrats" near at hand, continually shooing interested audience members from the area. When these anti-abolitionists raised the clichéd question "what have we [the North, Indianans] to do with slavery?," Hudson had the ready evidence of the locked courthouse door to document that slavery was, even there, restricting the rights of all people.[64] In this case, he could illustrate repression of their assembly directly with their exclusion from the hall, but the very presence of a throng in the square to stifle abolitionist organizing in Anderson also proved its relevance.

Sometimes more was at stake in exclusion than the mere topic the itinerants wished to discuss: the identity of the individual in question, beyond their antislavery content, could provide an additional obstruction. In September 1853, lecturer Sallie Holley found her status as an

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[63] Hudson noted that, even then, local activist Dr. Edwin Fussell's outspoken abolitionism entailed serving as "a noble example of self-sacrifice to the cause of impartial freedom" in this town. Hudson, "From Sherman, St. Joseph's County, Michigan," November 25, 1841

[64] *Ibid*.

alumna of Oberlin College little help in securing a platform there.[65] She attempted to speak in the college chapel on the invitation of "some friends." The faculty of the college refused, claiming "that it was improper and unscriptural for a woman to address a promiscuous audience."[66] Holley's supporters in the "'Ladies' A. S. Society' and 'The Young Ladies' Literary Societies'" then asked for a woman-specific lecture. The faculty first denied permission out of fear of appearing to support women's rights, but they finally relented. Their obstructions and slow decision-making left Holley and her friends with little time to publicize the meeting. Holley spoke regardless, and ultimately some "gentlemen" of Oberlin foiled the faculty's plan to keep the talk a single-sex affair. As a small parade of men entered the audience throughout her lecture, the end result was "after all, a 'promiscuous audience'!"[67] Even at the coeducational institute of Oberlin a woman's presence on the official lecture platform remained controversial.[68]

In a different case of contentious identity, one particularly notorious abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, found his reputation barred him from some places that other abolitionists could enter. He was a white male, with all of the privileges and access of one, but his religious and governmental unorthodoxy rendered him so infamous that some congregations had no qualms about outlawing his presence. When in Michigan in October 1853, he was unable to speak in the

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[65] Sallie Holley was born in Canandaigua, New York on February 17, 1818. She attended Oberlin beginning in 1847, and while there refused to bow to the racial prejudices of some of her fellow students. She became an abolitionist lecturer in 1851, immediately following her completion of college, on the personal invitation of Abby Kelley Foster. She obtained a lecturing commission from the American Society, and traveled with Charles C. Burleigh, Parker Pillsbury, Sojourner Truth, Marius Robinson, and the Griffings, among others. Sallie Holley and John White Chadwick, *A Life for Liberty. Anti-Slavery and Other Letters of Sallie Holley* (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1899), 18, 45, 51, 59-60, 62, 65.
[66] This meant a mixed-sex crowd.
[67] Sallie Holley, "Anti-Slavery at the West," *Liberator,* September 30, 1853.
[68] Abby Kelley Foster also found Oberlin inhospitable to her as a female speaker upon her 1846 visit. Helen M. Cowles, Oberlin, to Miss A. Y. Hawkins, Hobartstown, Van Diemens Land, 3 March 1846, Robert S. Fletcher Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

Methodist meetinghouse in Battle Creek, where Sallie Holley had recently held a successful meeting.[69] Garrison backed down, seeing no further options in this instance.

The Battle Creek Methodists silenced Garrison, but as the political abolitionists saw a successful election in 1860 with the Republican Party, and the war began in 1861, ministers were increasingly unable to exclude discussion of abolition and politics from their churches. In 1861, many ministers still discouraged mention of it from their pulpits, but congregations in places like Bourbon, Indiana, nonetheless pushed the issue. There, at least one church voted to amend the Constitution to abolish slavery.[70]

While touring Northern Indiana in February and March of 1861, Josephine Griffing found related opposition, as she was unable to obtain permission to speak in the churches in Plymouth and Franklin. Prior to Griffing's arrival in Plymouth, the Methodist church had witnessed a dispute when the minister had asked for a prayer for President Lincoln. In response, the Democrats in the congregation had threatened to leave the church, *en masse*. Having quelled that uprising, that minister told Griffing he was reluctant to court further "disturbance." The Franklin minister not only denied Griffing access to his church, but aired his own racial proscriptions in claiming he "would take up arms sooner than abolish slavery, and allow the '*niggers'* to come to Indiana." In Franklin, Griffing instead obtained a large schoolhouse for a speaking location, and filled it with an attentive audience.[71] Like Griffing, itinerants faced

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[69] William Lloyd Garrison, Battle Creek, Michigan, to Helen Garrison, Boston, 15 October 1853, in Garrison and Ruchames, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, 269-70.
[70] Griffing, "The Western Field," April 12, 1861.
[71] Griffing, "The Western Field," April 12, 1861. Other ministers also refused to upset the proslavery people among their congregants.

another significant challenge to their public organizing as they wrestled with local people for their freedom of speech.

II: Freedom of Speech

Much as sailors battle unpredictable storms, itinerants fought their own tempests to obtain the freedom of speech essential for the promulgation of their ideas in the Old Northwest seas. Repeatedly, strong-minded local people rebuffed their attempts to speak in churches and halls across the region. From at least 1835, in their lectures and writings, anti-slavery speakers and their supporters continually constructed their work as a part of a larger effort to ensure the free public expression of all sentiments, however unpopular.[72] They quickly realized that their quest for liberation of enslaved people would have to involve preserving their ability to be present, well-advertised, and vocal in public. While women played an unusually proactive role in the rough and tumble struggle for the right to advocate abolition, activists of both genders had to fight to claim this intellectual space in the public sphere, locally and nationally.[73] The Old Northwest was different, and even more difficult, territory than the East, because of repeated,

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[72] This awareness began with James G. Birney's attempts to publish in Kentucky and Cincinnati and continued with Theodore D. Weld, John W. Alvord, and James A. Thome's efforts to organize abolition in Ohio in 1836. Their subsequent mobbing has been well documented. Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844, Vol. 1*, 260-61, Russel Blaine Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964), 99-100, 06-07, 38.

[73] Richard S. Newman wrote of the "transformation" of American abolition in the 1820s and early 1830s, growing out of specific larger shifts, in the form of the market revolution, religious revivalism, expanded print culture, and democratization. He argued that radical abolitionism was linked to the development of a more inclusive and democratic public sphere encompassing new agents, including African Americans and women. His democratic public sphere in Massachusetts also had its later descendant in Old Northwestern abolitionism, although the latter was substantially more hard won. This new radical abolition also took up the anti-colonization struggle, and used the expanded public forums of the newspaper, pamphlet, and podium to influence a movement toward more direct and egalitarian abolition measures. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*, 8, 11, 104.

persistent efforts to silence abolitionists and the specific geographical challenges of organizing the scattered population into a reform body.

Throughout the Old Northwest, anti-abolitionists worked constantly to restrict abolitionist speech and shore up the structures of white supremacy. Many attacks on abolitionists aimed at destroying the substantial networks they built, for most anti-abolitionists only organized on the local level, and thus were unable to network across large distances as did reformers. Their choice to use mob violence to silence the antislavery presence—through personal attack or destruction of property—was a means of breaking down the coordinating systems the abolitionists had put in place.[74]

Abolitionists confronted free speech challenges by creating their own expanding conception of this right, and even defined it as such. Prior to the Civil War, which is usually understood to mark the beginning of individual claims on the federal government for rights, the abolitionists articulated an understanding of federal rights that transcended those granted on the local level.[75] From the 1830s on, outside of the boundaries of extant law, they pushed for a "broadly protective understanding of free speech," meaning one in which they had expansive

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[74] Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 44.

[75] Their effort to claim this right was a new creation. English Common Law had left the American colonists with few protections for their freedom of the press and speech. Works could be censored or banned after publication in the eighteenth century. Even in the mid-eighteenth century, printers in the colonies nevertheless fought in court for the right to print controversial material. In the Revolutionary Era, many Americans came to value freedom of the press, including it in nine of the eleven state constitutions they passed, but it was not introduced into the federal Constitution until the Bill of Rights. Lyrissa Barnett Lidsky and R. George Wright, *Freedom of the Press: A Reference Guide to the United States Constitution* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004), 5.

rights to expression without encroachment.[76] They made this push so that they could continue speaking even while their rights were under siege. Legal scholar Richard Curtis argues that this effort was the primary check on northern infringements on "abolitionist speech, press, and petition." They responded to attacks on their liberty of expression with the construction of this new right as a national, federalized right, universal, "basic and inherited."[77] Abolitionists successfully changed the terms of the discussion over the First Amendment from merely addressing violations of their own rights to instead an impending threat to all Americans' "civil liberties."[78] Curtis periodizes a shift in the target of abolitionists' requests for help beginning in the early 1830s when they invoked state law in their defense. After an anti-abolition mob in Alton, Illinois killed Elijah Lovejoy in 1837, discussion of free speech often relied upon invoking the "rights or privileges of American citizens," as claims for federal rights.[79] By so doing, abolitionists claimed a right that the First Amendment had not actually created [as it was aimed at securing peoples' rights from government interference, not that by their fellow citizens], helping to bring it into being by invoking its power as though it already existed.[80] In terms of actual court action, the First Amendment lacked regulatory muscle until the passage of

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[76] Michael Kent Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege:" Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 4-5. An early example of this understanding resulted from the Lane Seminary debates, when the antislavery population of the student body left in 1834 to protest the seminary trustees' efforts to stifle their activism in Cincinnati's African American community and their immediate abolitionism. The vast majority enrolled at Oberlin College after the faculty there guaranteed them freedom of expression and interracial admission to the college. Lawrence Thomas Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelicalism and Antislavery in Antebellum America*, *Studies in Evangelicalism no. 2* (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980), Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860*, 88-90.
[77] Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege:" Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History*, 12-13.
[78] They used the terms "rights," privileges," and "liberties" interchangeably. Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege:" Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History*, 144, 231.
[79] An anti-abolition mob shot Maine-born editor and minister Elijah Parish Lovejoy in Alton, Illinois in November of 1837. His story is explored in more detail in Chapter 5.
[80] Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege:" Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History*, 250-51.

the Fourteenth Amendment, and even that was not used to enforce the First Amendment on the states until the 1920s.[81] Nevertheless, abolitionists repeatedly called upon this new conception of a federal right to freedom of expression, in local cases and also in their opposition to the "gag rule" as implemented in the House of Representatives in 1836.

Itinerant antislavery lecturers in the Old Northwest confronted physical opposition as they sought public forums, and many responded by invoking citizenship claims in their defense. In early 1837, prior to the Berlin incident, Marius R. Robinson encountered hostile townspeople in a church at Hartford, Ohio. They interrupted his meeting, and demanded that he be silent, abandon the pulpit, and let them speak. When he refused, they pulled him out of their church, and held him in the town square by pinioning his arms for half an hour. They removed him to a public space before pillorying him. After the fact, Robinson drew strength from the argument that his citizenship required him to stand true to the conviction that he had a right to speak.[82]

Marius R. Robinson remained a lifelong combatant in the free speech fight. After taking a hiatus from speaking, he reemerged with an October 1853 address to the Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society in Adrian, Michigan. He ascribed such great power to "free speech" and "free thought" that he claimed they could be the tools used to dismantle the slave system. In his view, the origins of slaveholder's opposition to public abolitionist speeches and published writings lay in their awareness of this link.[83] Pro-slavery people had to suppress antislavery discussion, for permitting free discussion would be akin to allowing the abolitionists to make further converts.

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[81] Lidsky and Wright, *Freedom of the Press: A Reference Guide to the United States Constitution*, 5.
[82] Marius R. Robinson, Granville, Ohio, to Emily Robinson, Cincinnati, 25 January 1837, Marius R. Robinson Papers, Manuscript Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.
[83] "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society Daybook, Vol. 4," 1853-1857, Harriet DeGarmo Fuller Collection, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

This was but one of the theories which abolitionists developed about efforts to stifle their free speech.

In their self-defense, itinerants of both sexes active in the Old Northwest explicitly linked their struggle for the right to speak to a gendered concept of manliness. In 1838, Jacksonville, Illinois abolitionist Albert Hale wrote to his compatriot Asa Turner concerning Turner's fitness for the position of Illinois antislavery agent. Hale thought that Turner lacked the mettle to face the volatility of Illinois's "great battle field on which the anti slavery question is to be settled." In Hale's view, perhaps neither of them actually possessed the mental fortitude for the "thorough manly & deep discussions of the principles of freedom, the rights to conscience, the freedom of speech and the press and the freedom of the slave which would be indispensable in one who is to undertake the work in this state."[84] Thus Hale explicitly expressed the need for strong masculinity—a man who could forcefully argue the abolitionist position—to face likely challenges to their freedom of expression, a right that he assumed they possessed, without stating the source. As abolitionists had to fight for a free and open forum for their ideas, some relied upon a projection of masculine force—as centered in then-prevalent ideas of proper manhood as independent and powerful—to center their local opposition.[85] Without this vigor, the agent would lack sufficient leverage to bring about slave liberation.

In practice, literal manhood alone could not ensure free discussion or itinerant safety. Following one peaceful meeting in the Pontiac Courthouse in February 1856, Garrisonian lecturers Richard Glazier of Ann Arbor and Aaron M. Powell of New York encountered a hostile

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[84] Albert Hale, Jacksonville, Illinois, to Asa Turner, 26 January 1838, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.
[85] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

mob when they attempted to speak a second time.[86] While Powell and Glazier obtained the courthouse for their first lecture, the local officials locked them out the following day, fearing "free discussion." They moved their meeting to another local facility, the "National Hall." While they "*filled*" the hall, the relocation did not grant them universal local acclaim. While Glazier spoke, loud voices proclaimed their disapprobation of his message, and a group of youths flung beans and corn at them, which Glazier referred to as being "treated to a rather crude dish of *succotash*."[87]

In Pontiac's hostile community, even the people who provided space to abolitionists could become the targets of attack. Glazier's lecture the following day proceeded under threat of violence to Mr. Drake, the hall's owner. Someone anonymously wrote Drake a note indicating that if he permitted the abolitionists to use his hall again, he would risk both "the property" and "his head." Even so, the meeting proceeded without disturbance. As a most interesting safeguard, a phalanx of "very kind and firm lady friends" accompanied Glazier and Powell home. Their presence, in Glazier's view, afforded the men "protection from insult, perhaps injury" from town residents who resented their efforts to impact local culture. Here as in other places in the Old Northwest, women served as defensive corps against violence in threatening

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[86] Glazier wrote from Ann Arbor that their jaunt to Pontiac followed in the footsteps of Parker Pillsbury, who had abandoned his local meeting in 1850 after failing to find a speaking venue. Born in Massachusetts in 1809, Parker Pillsbury was raised in New Hampshire. He obtained a clerical education before taking up an agency with the American Society in 1839. He continued in this capacity well into 1861. Shortly after beginning his agency he married Sarah H. Sargent, who did not accompany him on the road. They had one child. After the Civil War, he stood nearly alone among the male antislavery leaders in calling for woman suffrage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Ann D. Gordon, *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, vol. 1: In The School of Anti-Slavery, 1815-1902 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 341, n.4.

[87] Aaron M. Powell, a New York Quaker activist, was born in 1832. In addition to his antislavery lecturing, he later took up woman suffrage, temperance, and the anti-prostitution campaign. Captain Franklin Ellis, *History of Columbia County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts and Ensign, 1878), 346-47.

situations.[88] In Illinois, an antislavery woman protected male abolitionists against anti-abolition mobs. In 1844, Irene B. Allan of Peoria published in the Chicago *Western Citizen* an anonymous letter detailing this woman's actions in the early days of Illinois antislavery organization. This woman defended her fellow abolitionists: "I stood sentinel at the kitchen door myself, and can answer for it that none came in without a pass." She was thus instrumental in the repudiation of anti-abolition mobs.[89] Her reference to the "kitchen door" also reveals that this meeting took place in the ostensibly private space of a home, blurring the lines of public and private even as she acted outside of gender norms. With their physical assertiveness, these female bodyguards complicate the repeated invocations of manhood as necessary to resist mob action.

Female abolitionists, for their part, faced distinctive free speech challenges stemming from their various social positions at the time and from their susceptibility to arguments that they had no rightful place speaking in public. In 1858, former slave Sojourner Truth undertook a solo tour of Northern Indiana, where she met a mixed reception. Sojourner Truth—birth name Isabella—was born into slavery in New York State around 1797. Illegally kept in bondage beyond the 1827 state emancipation laws, she fled to New York City and freedom in 1829. After

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[88] R. Glazier, Jr., "Chapter II. From My Note Book," *Liberator,* March 14, 1856. The effectiveness of this strategy in the Old Northwest should be viewed in the context of the burning of Pennsylvania Hall at Philadelphia in 1838, where a violent mob attack on attendees of the second national convention of antislavery women demonstrated that women were not immune to anti-abolition violence. See Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 3.

[89] *Western Citizen*, August 8, 1844. See also *Western Citizen*, July 25, 1844, where Laura B. Coleman discussed a speech by the Reverend Ichabod Codding in McDonough County. The women refused to leave upon the request of the mob members that sought to attack the present men: "We told them that we had no idea of leaving yet." Instead Codding continued as planned and lectured for two hours. This female defense work also occurred in the upper South. In October of 1837, Elijah Lovejoy's female relatives defended him from an invading mob in St. Charles, Missouri. Elijah Lovejoy quoted in Henry Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971 (1881)), 130-32.

a religious conversion, she renamed herself and became a traveling preacher across the Northeast and the West.[90]

Truth spoke in Silver Lake, Indiana shortly before October 1858, and found that pro-slavery hostility there took a partisan form. Local anti-abolitionists had claimed prior to her arrival that she was a man in women's clothing, and that she secretly worked for the Republican Party.[91] Local resident William Hayward attributed this rumor to local Democrats, whom he called "the border-ruffian Democracy of Indiana." In his eyes, they were unwilling to permit antislavery discussion, and thus spread this falsehood about Truth's alleged manhood widely. At one meeting in the United Brethren meeting house, well attended by Democrats, pro-slavery persons, and Truth's allies, a Democrat named Dr. T. W. Strain demanded that Truth prove her womanhood by showing her breast to the ladies present.[92] Despite the uproar that ensued, Truth complied. She dramatically bared her breast to all, proudly noting to her detractors that her body had nourished numerous white babies whose "manhood" now exceeded that of her hecklers.[93]

With her deft reply, Truth denied her hecklers the ability to shame her. Historian Nell Irvin Painter links this refusal to accept Truth as a woman to the discrediting tactic of denying the womanhood of other female activists who seized the platform, including Frances Ellen

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[90] Beginning in 1851, Truth spent two years in Ohio, frequently working with Marius R. Robinson, before she moved to Battle Creek, Michigan in 1856. Truth remained an activist throughout her life, involved in antislavery, the woman movement, desegregation efforts, and freedmen's aid after the Civil War. Olive Gilbert and Frances W. Titus, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, *The American Negro, His History and Literature* (New York: Arno Press, 1968 (1878)), ii-iii, 136.

[91] This is an amusing accusation when coupled with her famed 1851 speech at the Akron Woman's Rights Convention where [Frances Dana Gage wrote ten years later that] she stated, "Ar'n't I a Woman?." In that speech Truth also troubled gender, but did so in the service of women's rights and to question the racial views of the woman movement. Augusta Rohrbach, "Profits of Protest: The Market Strategies of Sojourner Truth and Louisa May Alcott," in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, ed. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: New Press, 2006), 251-52.

[92] William Hayward, "Pro-Slavery In Indiana," *Liberator,* October 15, 1858.

[93] Crenshaw and Bureau, *"Bury me in a free land": the Abolitionist Movement in Indiana, 1816-1865: the Catalog*, 39.

Watkins Harper. In Silver Lake, Truth's antagonists claimed she lacked "authenticity," as had been claimed of other African American public figures, including Frederick Douglass on his early speaking tours."[94] In this effort to paint her as unnatural, Truth's detractors claimed she represented improper womanhood, a statement that could be both related to her unusual height and stature, and to her choice to speak publicly. They thus critiqued the inversion of the social order the abolitionists enacted by placing women and African Americans on the rostrum.

This fantastical incident of a woman being asked to publicly expose her body with intention to discredit and humiliate cannot be separated from Truth's identity as an African American woman and a former slave. Even her advanced age did not protect her from this attempt to mortify her. Truth had bared her arm to reveal her musculature in her well-known speech at Akron in 1851, but Strain nonetheless made what was a shocking demand of a public speaker in the antebellum age.[95] In this strife-filled region, Truth's opponents attempted to derail her expression of abolitionist views by focusing on her alleged partisan masquerade, and on her physical body. This taboo act reveals the amount of latitude proslavery people in the Old Northwest had to dominate public speech.

Women's battles for freedom of speech frequently required challenging internal or external conceptions of womanhood. Sojourner Truth was not the only female itinerant who found that her gender presented her with unique obstacles in obtaining the verbal freedom to

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[94] Nell Irvin Painter notes that Truth's response "turned on the tensions between infancy and adulthood, black motherhood and white motherhood, and the madonna-whore imagery of the black female breast." She critiqued all of these dynamics with her adroit word choice and actions. Truth both directly questioned the manhood of her critics, and symbolically did so as she "infantilizes them" by inviting them to suck her breast. Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 139-40.

[95] Gilbert and Titus, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 132-36. Even more appalling, also included in Hayward's account, among others, was a heckler's comment about Truth's breast resembling "an old sow's teat." Painter notes that contemporaries widely recognized this "puerile little comment" as vile, and some of Truth's friends deleted it from accounts of this incident. Hayward, "Pro-Slavery In Indiana," October 15, 1858; Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol*, 142.

fight slavery in public. Another was Ohio antislavery lecturer Josephine S. Griffing, whose letters made serious reports of her progress and the determined resistance that she faced, and also mocked the local people she encountered.[96] In one letter to the *Liberator* in March of 1861, Griffing ridiculed small-town Indiana life and mores as she detailed how she, as a female lecturer, encountered controversy concerning her public speaking capability. Griffing poked fun at the ignorance of one woman she met in her sojourn across Indiana. Near the town of Warsaw, her hostess asked quietly "whether I was a *woman*. 'They say,' said she, 'no *woman* ever talked as she talks, and I never knew one to talk at all.'" In this place, the novelty of a female lecturer led this woman to doubt Griffing's gender identity. Unrelenting in her demonstration of the narrowness of this woman's worldview, Griffing closed the anecdote with her assessment that her hostess was "terribly religious."[97] Griffing equated this woman's piety with a kind of silent, obedient womanhood that she herself did not practice. She demonstrated with her own transgressions that there were multiple possible forms of female behavior, and that women faced distinctive challenges as activists. She exemplified this, as one of a cohort of Old Northwest abolitionists who faced conflict as they refused to allow their foes to silence them.

Abolitionists suffered increasing attacks from the Democratic Party as the Republican Party organized in 1854 and began to present a viable political threat by 1856. The introduction

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[96] Josephine Sophie Griffing was born in 1814 in Hebron, Connecticut. She married fellow abolitionist Charles S. S. Griffing, moved to Litchfield Ohio around 1842, and bore five daughters. A Garrisonian abolitionist, she sheltered fugitive slaves in her homes in Salem, Ohio and Angola, Indiana, and became an itinerant lecturer. From 1851-55 she was a paid agent for the Western society in Ohio and nearby, lecturing with H. C. Wright, Parker Pillsbury, and Abby Kelly Foster, among others. By 1850, she had taken up the woman suffrage movement, and in 1853 she was chosen president of the Ohio women's rights convention. Increasingly unhappy with orthodox religion, she joined the Ohio Friends of Human Progress, a radical religious group, in the late 1850s. As the war approached, Griffing took up with the Women's National Loyal League, and she labored extensively in freedmen's aid after the war. Edward T. James, *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 92-93.

[97] Josephine S. Griffing, "The Western Field," *Liberator,* April 12, 1861.

of the antislavery platform into mainstream politics with the birth of this new party and its subsequent growth hardly stifled the impulse to egg and maim, at least in the Old Northwest. In fact, some abolitionists found that efforts to stifle them escalated with the growth of political abolitionism. The increasing prevalence of antislavery ideas did not render abolitionists safe.[98] Immediate abolitionists, including Marius R. Robinson and Griffing, maintained separate lecture circuits throughout the 1850s and even into 1861.[99] Robinson wrote in February 1860 that he believed that the election that autumn, with the Republicans standing for office, might interfere with his work for the cause. This was the election that saw Lincoln's successful candidacy, and thus the elevation of an antislavery party to national office, but the national success of the Republican Party did not convince immediatists that their work was superfluous, for they saw this party as too gradualist to actually aid slaves.[100]

The connection between free speech and abolitionist expression arose repeatedly in the chaos surrounding two particularly tumultuous days of abolitionist meetings in 1861 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The political and reform climate of the Old Northwest grew increasingly polarized, along with the rest of the nation, following the secession of South Carolina in

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[98] Anti-slavery lecturers confronted fierce partisan opposition from the Democrats, even when their tactics were not overtly political. When African American itinerant C. S. Depp came to Monmouth, Illinois in March of 1856, he found hostile throngs willing to fling eggs at him to force his silence. The Monmouth *Atlas*, writing of the incident, identified his assailants as "the Pierce Party," meaning the Democrats. Depp spoke in the Baptist Church his first night in town without disturbance. This peace did not last, for the following night when he convened another well-attended meeting, people began to throw eggs and "other missiles" at him. One of them struck him in the mouth, wounding him severely enough to force him to leave the building. Born a slave in Virginia, Depp obtained his freedom at the age of twenty-one, and by 1856 he was a professional lecturer with at least ten years of experience. "Border Ruffianism in Monmouth: A Colored Speaker Mobbed," *Galesburg Free Democrat,* March 13, 1856. Some Monmouth Democrats saw Depp's appearance as a partisan salvo into their public space, and thus claimed this attack as a necessary defensive measure. "Eggs *vs.* Argument," *Galesburg Free Democrat,* March 13, 1856. This left aside the question of whether Depp had such a partisan intention for his speech.

[99] Marius R. Robinson, "Extract of a Letter from Marius R. Robinson," *Liberator,* February 24, 1860.

[100] That same year, Illinois African American abolitionist H. Ford Douglas provided another strong critique of the Republican Party and political abolitionism in general. C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1859-1865*, 5 vols., vol. 5 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 88-91.

December of 1860. Abolitionists continued to face massive opposition as advocates of their unpopular yet increasingly inescapable cause in 1861. Griffing, Parker Pillsbury of New Hampshire, and Giles B. Stebbins of Michigan nonetheless spoke at the annual convention of the Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society on January 27 and 28. This incident refutes historians such as Leonard Richards who argue that anti-abolitionist mobbing was largely a product of initial organizing efforts in the 1830s, for people met the antislavery message with violence even after decades of public agitation.[101]

Violent threats circulated throughout the growing college town in the days leading up to the meeting. Mr. Rogers, owner of the hall where they had planned to convene, learned of these risks in advance but waited until the meeting day to revoke permission for the use of his space. He said he favored "free discussion," but feared that the city authorities would afford him no *"protection*" from damage to his property. After Mayor Barry also refused the use of the courthouse, the abolitionist group turned to the Free Church of the Friends of Human Progress, a radical Friends organization.[102]

On the first evening of scheduled meetings, a throng of "drunken 'roughs'" filled the church and kept up a steady partisan roar as the itinerants attempted to speak.[103] Griffing persevered, as her touring companion Giles B. Stebbins remembered in his 1890 memoir: "I can see her on that plain, low platform, with only a little space around her vacant, and she, fearless,

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[101] Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860*, 175, Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 159.
[102] C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor.", Jacob Walton and Catherine A. F. Stebbins, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* February 16, 1861. The Friends of Human Progress, also known as the Progressive Friends, advocated non-resistance, woman suffrage, spiritualism, and abolition. Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol*, 144. Ann Arbor had a mixed history of allowing abolitionists meeting space. In 1836, the Presbyterian Church welcomed the Michigan State Society, but in 1839 that same church, along with the Methodist Church and the courthouse, all forbade them entry. John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 364.
[103] Walton and Stebbins, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention."“

erect, radiant, speaking clear tones that conquered wrath and even won a hearing part of the time."[104] In her speech, Griffing faced the present threats by defending abolitionists' right to appear and speak in the strongest possible terms, as the "necessity of our guarding free speech and our own personal rights here at the North."[105] With this call for fortitude, Griffing demanded that they face the immediate turmoil of their meeting in Ann Arbor by confronting the present threats head-on.

The danger remained, for the crowd's deeds did not end with noise. This mob, "one of the fiercest" that ever confronted the much-mobbed Pillsbury, assaulted the abolitionists and their assembled audience. Pillsbury's florid language vividly depicts this attack by a "most ferocious and savage throng, composed of collegians, clerks, drunken Irish boys, lawyers, and plug-uglies . . . all mingled in a disgusting, irresponsible mass, sweeping all before it." As they reached the point of violence, the anti-abolitionists damaged the hall severely, tearing up the benches as they vented their fury. Local activist Richard Glazier suffered kicks and blows to the face, as did other attendees.[106] The meeting organizers determined that continuing their gathering that night would jeopardize the safety of all concerned, and declared the assembly over. After the foes of slavery had departed, the invading throng destroyed the windows, tore up the desk, and pulled the stovepipe out of the wall.[107]

The abolitionists could not rely on local law enforcement to protect them, for the "city authorities" took little action against the mob. Pillsbury deemed the attack "worthy of

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[104] Giles Badger Stebbins, *Upward Steps of Seventy Years. Autobiographic, Biographic, Historic* (New York: United States Book Company, 1890), 115.
[105] Walton and Stebbins, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention."
[106] Parker Pillsbury, "Pro-slavery Mob at Ann Arbor," *Liberator* February 8, 1861.
[107] C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor," Ibid. March 1, 1861.

Boston"—a city rife with anti-abolition violence since 1834—in its ferocity.[108] While Mayor Barry had promised "protection" to Giles B. Stebbins and Glazier, he was conspicuously absent from the meeting, claiming the necessity of attending a concert. Other officers did come but took no action to help the abolitionists.[109]

The anti-abolitionist attack did not extinguish local antislavery fire, for the trio of itinerant lecturers still worked to reach their local sympathizers. The following day, the abolitionists and their allies conducted rudimentary repairs on the hall, enough to permit them to hold their second day of scheduled meetings. They cleaned up, swept away the broken pieces of wood and glass, and reassembled the stove. The hall again became "well filled" with anti-slavery people.[110] They proceeded with the annual meeting's business, including choosing their officers. Pillsbury, Griffing, and Giles B. Stebbins all obtained a hearing, despite continual interruptions.[111]

The attendees directly linked the attack to their presumed rights. Ann Arbor resident Catherine A. F. Stebbins claimed that they found common ground in the face of these trials: "We were all united in one thing, at least—viz., free expression of opinion."[112] Giles B. Stebbins, in his speech, placed responsibility for community hostility on the local Democratic newspaper, the *Michigan Argus*. He too argued that the mob represented community "determination to crush free speech." Several Michigan abolitionists, including Richard Glazier, also spoke at the

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[108] Pillsbury, "Pro-slavery Mob at Ann Arbor"; Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 3.
[109] C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor."
[110] *Ibid.*
[111] Walton and Stebbins, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention."
[112] C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor."

meeting. Glazier asserted that the mayor and other prominent citizens should have stopped the mob, but that they had refused.[113]

In the resolutions that the Michigan Society offered that day, they presented the mobbing as wholeheartedly a free speech issue. Indeed, they saw this as a critical moment, an "hour of peril to the cause of free institutions in this young and hitherto promising nation." Their task at the moment was to protect and use their "divinely given and most inalienable rights," regardless of the risk to their "reputation, property, or life." Only thus could they ensure the individual and collective liberty. At this meeting, as did people elsewhere in the region, the Michigan Society drew upon language that linked their struggle to larger battles the nation faced. Rather than citing existing legal precedent, these abolitionists, as did those Richard Curtis observed in his study of free speech, instead used as their resource and justification the "God-given rights that state and federal constitutions secured but did not create."[114] The Michigan Society made these claims to their right to free expression, despite the continual community resistance that they faced.

Indeed, the anti-abolitionists remained an outspoken presence at the meeting, and they focused their greatest hostility on Pillsbury. When he spoke for a second time that afternoon he faced "noisy demonstrations," but he persevered. Following the overt provocation of the previous day, Pillsbury invoked the sacred nature of freedom of expression, also linking it to masculinity. He argued that free speech lay at "the very foundation of free institutions." He cited both mobs in the ancient world and contemporary ones, to demonstrate that activists must

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[113] Walton and Stebbins, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention."
[114] Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege:" Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History*, 209.

"resist manfully" when attacked, to prevent dominance by their enemies.[115] In a letter written five days later, Pillsbury characterized their Michigan meetings, in general, as "orderly," despite the several confrontations. He slyly mocked the mob's inability to stop their assembling, indicating the abolitionists' strength by comparing their Michigan trials to well-known experiences in the East: "An occasional riot, like that at Ann Arbor, [can] relieve the monotony, clear the atmosphere, and remind us of New York State and Boston."[116] Discussing mobs as a familiar, even a comforting presence could deflate their capacity to undermine the antislavery mission, and affirm for others the potential power of reform.

Eight days after the itinerants had left town, Catherine Stebbins wrote of the conflict to the *Liberator*. She voiced her surprise, given that the college made them the "educational center of Michigan," that such depravity could be found in Ann Arbor.[117] She did admit that local activists had expected trouble. Prior to the arrival of the travelers, people ranging from "college students" to "merchants and business men" had issued warnings that "*the meeting ought not to be held*." They claimed that the Mayor should intervene and prevent the gathering, referring to

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[115] Walton and Stebbins, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention." Pillsbury, too, took time to rebuke the mayor. C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor."

[116] Parker Pillsbury, "Convention at Livonia," *Liberator,* February 15, 1861.

[117] Accounts differ as to the role that the local college students played in the attack on the meeting. Pillsbury noted that their numbers were overwhelming, close to 800, and he saw it as remarkable that "only a minority committed the outrages." Pillsbury, "Pro-slavery Mob at Ann Arbor." Catherine Stebbins argued that the students did their part in adding to the disorder, but did not originate it. They constituted a varied throng. She elaborated: The "Southern students with slaveholding 'principles,'" and the "Northern students with no principle," along with the "drunken rioters who frequent low haunts" acted to crush the meeting with violence. These "low haunts," she argued, were the places where mobs recruited their masses, and from which they took action. C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor." Jacob Walton, a local eyewitness, observed that the students formed part of the "very disorderly" audience, but he described them as generally among the victims rather than the instigators of the attack. He noted that the anti-abolitionists struck and injured some of the students as they vandalized the hall. Walton and Stebbins, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention." Historian James M. McPherson presents a picture of a more culpable student body, arguing that those young men were among the unruly, and indeed central in the attack on the meeting. James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality; Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 41, 45.

that time as "such an hour of peril and excitement," presumably alluding to the tense partisan moment and the threat of impending war.[118] As the sectional conflict deepened, local fights over abolitionist discourse gained even more relevance to national politics, and an increasingly heated tone.[119]

Michigan tested the mettle of the trio of lecturers, for anti-abolitionist action followed them elsewhere in the state. From Ann Arbor, Griffing, Pillsbury, and Giles B. Stebbins continued to Detroit, and then to Northville. In both places, they faced mob threats, but remained resilient and continued to agitate for "freedom of speech" and "the right of the slave to emancipation."[120] At their Farmington, Michigan meeting shortly thereafter, an anonymous enemy wrapped a match in cayenne pepper and other noxious substances in an attempt to prevent their assembly. Even this did not drive them out of their meeting, for Griffing noted that they held their ground with resolve; they opened the windows and coughed their way through the proceedings. This was the end of their tour as a group, for Pillsbury culminated his western journey in Plymouth, Michigan and returned east.

As Griffing prepared for the next phase in her tour, she reflected on the rapid escalation of mobbing and muzzling of abolitionists notable in Michigan, seeing it as proof that the nation's regions were linked. At that moment of transition, Griffing wrote from Plymouth to the *Liberator* that over the previous two weeks, "the spirit of daring violence and assassination" had

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[118] C. A. F. S., "Pro-Slavery Mob at Ann Arbor." She dated this letter February 8, 1861.
[119] *Ibid*. The strain on Ann Arbor had not ceased after the itinerants departed. At a concert where Catherine Stebbins and her husband had been present the weekend following the contentious meetings, "the mobocratic students and 'roughs' in the back" of the hall greeted their arrival with "a shower of hisses." The mayor then arrived and the same men had nothing but cheers and jubilation for him. With this anecdote Stebbins insinuated that Mayor Barry drew his popularity from the low sort of people and not respectable ones, thus providing further evidence for his culpability, even his complicity, with the mob of the previous week.
[120] Josephine S. Griffing, "Letter from Mrs. J. S. Griffing," *Liberator,* February 15, 1861., Pillsbury, "Convention at Livonia," February 15, 1861.

assumed increasing prominence in the Old Northwest. While she could not decide whether to ascribe this increase to "secret league, the force of ignoble example, or the absolute command of Southern tyrants, who rule them," she nonetheless saw "the mob" (phrased as a singular entity) as determined to overthrow orderly society and place slaveholder priorities at the pinnacle of government. Rather than the center of tyranny only residing at the South, she found that their adversaries in fact surrounded them. Griffing saw abolition's foes as deeply enmeshed with "corrupt and corrupting politics and religion."[121] Only four months later, Griffing faced another serious challenge to freedom of expression in the Old Northwest.

In June of 1861, Griffing and Sojourner Truth lectured across Northern Indiana, and the turmoil that they left in their wake exposed the links among racial prejudice, the Indiana "Black Laws," free speech, partisan politics, and mob action.[122] While Truth had faced disruptions and interruptions to her Indiana meetings in 1858, she had toured in the West for twenty-five years without encountering the extreme degree of persecution that she found in 1861 in Angola, Indiana. At this time a resident of Battle Creek, Michigan, Truth had visited and spoken in Steuben County four years previously "without opposition." Her attempt to travel with Griffing after the beginning of the Civil War in April reveals how pro-slavery Indianans used the "Black Laws" that restricted movement of African Americans into their state to silence itinerants who advocated controversial positions.

While on tour in Indiana, Truth made public her support for the Union war effort. Truth, as a Garrisonian, had eschewed politics until the Civil War. At that time, she became a Union

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[121] She argued that the South then faced a battle against the problems the slave system raised, while the North in turn must work "in defence of the right to establish a government based upon HUMAN FREEDOM." Griffing, "Letter from Mrs. J. S. Griffing."

[122] See the dissertation introduction and Chapter 6 for detailed discussion of the "Black Laws."

advocate even before African American men won the right to take up arms in the endeavor.[123] After hearing of her support, the Home Guard, a pro-Union group of the citizens of Steuben County, invited Truth to address a meeting at the Angola courthouse. Truth's friends in the area, the Unionist "ladies" had dressed her up in the colors and patterns of the stars and stripes. This martial style made Truth nervous; it frightened her to appear as if she was "going into battle." She rode to the courthouse in a carriage full of the men of the Home Guard, armed to protect her from arrest under the "Black Laws."[124] Located in the northeast corner of Indiana, this town was the capital of Steuben County, and a "Copperhead" stronghold. Angola had a large resident population of those Democrats who opposed the war and African American rights, and vilified abolitionists as the cause of the conflict with the South. There, speaking for the Union was a hazardous act.

Truth did not deliver her speech in peace. She was in the very act of proclaiming her enthusiasm for the Union cause and calling for a role for African Americans in the campaign when a throng of loud, angry men rushed into the building, drowning out her voice in the melee. They threatened her with "tar and feathers, eggs, rails, shooting, and a general blowing up," and closed down the meeting. These boisterous men used "threats and mobbing" to attempt to force Truth to leave Indiana. When this proved ineffective, they then charged her with violating the statute that stated, "'No negro or mulatto shall come into, or settle in, or become an inhabitant of the State.'" Using the "Black Laws," proslavery forces attempted to stifle Truth and silence abolitionism.[125]

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[123] Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol*, 179.
[124] Gilbert and Titus, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 140.
[125] Josephine S. Griffing, "Treason in Disguise," *Liberator,* June 21, 1861.

The aftermath of the Steuben meeting did not end with Truth's first trial, however, for the courthouse walls soon rang with related legal actions. Griffing noted that both the "Black Laws" and the Dred Scott decision entered into the prosecutions of eminent locals for having the temerity to host Truth in their homes. Griffing argued that these men were outraged at these prominent citizens of the town for acknowledging that Truth had "the rights of a human being." In response, they continued after Truth, haranguing and threatening her for ten days. The anti-abolitionists even served papers to the Steuben County sheriff for allowing Truth to speak in the courthouse.

Griffing characterized their foes in Steuben county as exhibiting strong determination: they tried all available tactics to close off Truth and Griffing's attempts to speak. "No dog ever hung to a bone as have these hungry hounds to Sojourner, under the cover of law," Griffing wrote. They unrelentingly pursued Truth with tactics ranging from the violent to the legal, "they have resorted to every possible expedient." First they arrested her for being African American, then a mulatto, for coming to, then tarrying in, the state. Truth, Griffing, and their allies faced and vanquished all of these attempts.[126] After her 10 days of persecution, Truth ultimately departed Angola without legal consequences. The legal system did not substantiate their opponents' claims, indicating that conviction of a visiting lecturer under the "Black Laws" was not as easy as was interrupting her speech, delaying her in her travels, and harassing her for her views.

Town residents informed Truth and Griffing that a pile of guns lay in the back of a grocery store, and that a secret league of men planned to use these arms against them. Griffing, a

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[126] Josephine S. Griffing, "Shameful Persecution," *Liberator,* June 28, 1861.

resident of the region, argued that the local "secessionists"—as she termed them, the "Copperhead" Democrats—not only held much of the blame for this county's flaws and Truth's persecution, but were also deeply involved in what she decried as the extensive (and in her words "accursed") liquor trade in the region. She referred to all of these opponents as "the old line pro-slavery Democrats," and attributed their devotion to the "Black Laws" to their disloyalty to the Union.

Griffing noted the base hypocrisy of Truth's persecutors, who used legal language against her and yet did not permit the free speech that she saw as guaranteed by the United States Constitution and Indiana State law. They couched their opposition to Truth in terms of "devotion to the Constitution and laws of the State," while at the same time flouting "its highest requirements and provisions." Here again, Griffing drew upon the implicit understanding of the First Amendment as guaranteeing free speech.

Truth, with her usual verbal dexterity, would not allow the cold racism of her foes to pass without comment. She said in the courthouse to her mobbing audience, "'it seems that it takes *my* black face to bring out *your* black hearts; so it's well I came.'"[127] How can we understand Truth's comment about "black hearts?"[128] She saw her foes in Angola as showing her their deepest beliefs and prejudices when provoked by her presence. While Griffing demonstrably saw politics as relevant to the situation, she presented Truth's travails in Steuben County as a race-based issue. When Griffing argued that the anti-abolitionists implemented the "Black

[127] Griffing, "Treason in Disguise."
[128] My reading of Griffing's responses to Truth's oppression differs from that of Nell Irvin Painter, who writes that Griffing depicted the conflict as an issue of politics. Juxtaposing Griffing's commentary with Truth's retort about their "black hearts" reveals, Painter argues, that Griffing missed the racial dimensions of the situation that Truth beheld: "Where Griffing saw politics, Truth saw race." Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol*, 181. Painter's account of Steuben is based on Griffing's letters and Truth's 1878 edition of her narrative, sources I also consulted for this chapter.

Laws" at least in part out of their unwillingness to acknowledge Truth's humanity, she revealed understanding that the effort to silence this African American woman stemmed from her race. Here, Griffing and Truth revealed that they saw beyond the ideas of race prevalent in Indiana and the nation, while also recognizing their impact.

In denouncing the incidents at Steuben, Griffing herself conjoined the issues of manhood and mobbing. She wrote that this county was, in fact, one of the most "intelligent and loyal counties in the State," and thus not wholly anti-Union. The problem with Steuben County was that it lacked the "proper authority" to stifle such attempts at oppression. Griffing placed the blame for this lack of backbone on her assessment that for thirty years, mobs had "thoroughly subjugated" northern men, so that they had "almost lost the identity of manhood," and they were largely afraid to obtain the "authority" required to put down a mob.

In the face of these mobs and their repressions, Griffing argued that the advocates of freedom must exercise masculine strength to redeem the nation, and in the process she blurred the lines of gender identity. Whether the struggle would take place in military channels or in battles over freedom of speech in a county town, Griffing argued that the conflict was then inevitable. She wrote: "When manhood shall assert itself, as it must and will do, whether on marshaled or unmarshalled battlefields, by President Lincoln or Sojourner Truth, the line will be drawn, speedily and unmistakably, between Liberty and Slavery, Victory and Defeat."[129] Thus Griffing claimed that Truth could also assert manhood, which complicates abolitionists' other usages of the term. What were the ingredients of manhood if Truth could exert it too? Not only did Truth's enemies question her womanhood in 1858, but also her friend Griffing betrayed a flexible conception of Truth's gender identity in 1861 in calling on her manhood. As a fighter

[129] Griffing, "Treason in Disguise."

for racial justice and freedom of speech, Truth could enact the masculine power that Griffing demanded. The contemporary reform vocabulary may have lacked a term for the female equivalent of the force implied in the term "manhood," assertiveness that the abolitionists regarded as vital to their freedom of expression.

To Griffing, the courtroom battles themselves represented the struggle between silence and liberty of expression. The right to speak, with freedom on its side, confronted slavery, which has "made a conquest in this country by the suppression of free speech." Presenting the conflict in these lofty terms allowed these two determined lecturers to reap the publicity benefits of notoriety. The previous fall, antislavery organizers could not safely hold a meeting in the Steuben county seat, but Griffing saw how this uproar had roused "a hundred" local men who would act in their defense. She called this valiance "manhood," and credited her and Truth's " persistent agitation" of what she termed the "negro" question with rousing it. In the previous two weeks, Griffing had found that a new and spirited fighting force was willing to come to blows to guarantee the right of all to speak. Not the men alone had an active role to play, for Griffing also drew attention to the "most influential and noble-hearted women" whose attendance in the courtroom brought Truth and Griffing a sense of the strength of their local support.

As a result, in Angola, Indiana and the surrounding area, Griffing saw that the freedom of speech battle had brought them great results for their past month of work. While "very small majorities" closed the churches to them in the ensuing weeks, nevertheless they held successful meetings outside. Under these tense circumstances, their gatherings drew masses of brave young men and a diverse array of other people, from ancient military veterans to nursing mothers.

Griffing argued that this town and this region were working toward freedom of speech and to open all places to "discussion."[130]

As Griffing wrote on June 20, "the battle of Sojourner" approached its ending, but she saw ahead for herself a continued life of conflict. Still to come was the remainder of "this war of the negro," to be followed by a fight for the "rights of woman." In this incident of Indiana race and speech oppression, Griffing linked all of her priorities, from the local battles to win herself and her friend the right to speak, to the larger Civil War, to the future struggles for complete freedom for African Americans and all women.[131] Griffing closed this letter to the *Liberator* with a declaration that, following these victories, she would then cease her activism and be still, but only when she reached "the quiet of the grave."[132] These freedom of speech skirmishes were part and parcel of the struggle to reform the Old Northwest. They reveal that participants in the struggle found freedom of expression an essential component of their reform fight—and that both they and their opponents knew that their effort to organize in the region depended on it. Their effort to claim this freedom would have been useless without an audience, and they consequently also fought to gather listening crowds for their meetings in these dispersed communities.

III: Publicity

Mobile mariners relied upon a variety of imperfect publicity techniques to obtain their audiences in the Old Northwest and expand the antislavery public sphere. Lecturers employed

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[130] Griffing, "Shameful Persecution."
[131] There were historical antecedents for this issue: freedom of speech had been linked to women's right to speak in public since Angelina Grimké stepped on the platform in the early 1830s. Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[132] Griffing, "Shameful Persecution."

several such methods, including word of mouth, handbills, newspaper announcements, published letters, and informal mentions of meetings. In June of 1837, prior to being mobbed in Berlin, Ohio, Robinson made an informal announcement that he would hold antislavery meetings in that town.[133] When Thomas Morris, antislavery Democrat and former Ohio senator, spoke in Dayton in January of 1841, he used handbills to publicize his presence, and was also greeted by a mob.[134] In Monmouth, Illinois in 1856, African American itinerant C. S. Depp came to speak, and issued handbills to announce his lecture in advance. These helped him to obtain a large audience in the Baptist Church. In his second day of meetings he drew a larger audience —and a mob.[135]

The traveling lecturer and the antislavery press both played vital and intersecting roles in the struggle to convert the Old Northwest. The Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society wrote that papers, with their frequent arrival at the home of the reader, could be powerful "levers … to detach the system of slavery from its stronghold in the indifference or selfishness of the northern hearts." With their regular publication, they could "prepare the way for the lecturer, and to confirm and finish his work." Thus, they each had an integral part to play. Of necessity, the lecturers could not be constantly present in any one place, but papers could spread their influence across a larger geographic area.[136] Itinerants wrote letters about previous events for newspaper publication. Much as newspapers relied upon the collaboration between local and distant ideas and people for their dissemination, itinerants needed them for community building and publicity.

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[133] Galbreath, "Anti-Slavery Movement in Columbiana County," 366.
[134] Thomas E. Thomas and Alfred A. Thomas, *Correspondence of Thomas Ebenezer Thomas, Mainly Relating to the Anti-Slavery Conflict in Ohio, Especially in the Presbyterian Church* (Dayton, Ohio: 1909), 27.
[135] "Border Ruffianism in Monmouth," March 13, 1856.
[136] This can be considered a mission statement from an eastern organization active in publishing national papers, aiding western papers like the Ohio *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, and in sending lecturers to the Old Northwest. Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Fourteenth Annual Report Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (1846)), 57-58. For more on the antislavery press, see Chapter 5.

Another published advertising method that itinerants used widely were lists of their scheduled meetings in local and national papers. In this way they awakened local activists to their impending arrival, and alerted friends at home where they could write to them. Organizers of the "One Hundred Conventions" tour in 1843 used this technique, as did Arnold Buffum, to reveal his whereabouts when he toured Indiana in 1841.[137] In his September 1844 letter from Salem, Ohio, William Wells Brown wrote to Amy Post: "I will send you a paper with my meetings advertised in it."[138]

Newspaper publicity also took the form of overt demands for general attention to the region. Abraham Brooke wrote to the *Liberator* in March of 1843 and asked the paper to take greater notice of Ohio and the larger western abolition movement. He called for the region, and its activism, to receive greater publicity and coverage in this national paper. Brooke did not place the entire blame for this silence on Eastern papers, for he made allowances for the role of Old Northwesterners in neglecting to send promotional material to the east.[139]

Much like shipping blockades prevented ships' passage into ports, itinerants' local foes controlled audience size and access to public forums through repression of publicity. Among the instances of deliberate stifling of information about antislavery lectures were occasions where itinerants found themselves locked out of halls, and without the publicity they had expected to gather a sympathetic audience. Such was the case in Smithfield, Ohio in August of 1841, when E. D. Hudson had to struggle to get into the scheduled hall with his small group of like-minded

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[137] Hudson, "Letter from Richmond, Wayne County, IN." October 21, 1841; *The Protectionist,* July 1, 1841, Edwin Fussell, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 2, 1843, Abby Kelley Foster, Chester Cross Roads, to Lucy Stone, Oberlin, 15 August [1845-46?], Robert S. Fletcher Papers, Manuscript Collection, Oberlin College Library, Oberlin, Ohio, "'Sifting in.'" *Liberator,* September 1, 1843.
[138] William Wells Brown, Salem, Ohio, to Amy Post, 3 September 1844.
[139] "Letter from Dr. Brooke, of Ohio," March 24, 1843.

locals.[140] A similar instance arose when Hudson arrived in Detroit in November of 1842 to find that a meeting had been publicized, but that someone had claimed that it was to advocate political abolition, not the Garrisonian-Immediatist strand that Hudson in fact practiced.[141] Thus a meeting of his leanings could not be accommodated there simultaneously.

As they traversed the Old Northwest, abolitionists speculated about and commented on the contradictory characteristics of their local reception. In some places where they expected warm greetings, their supporters could not be found. Hudson wrote of west-central Indiana that he, Burleigh, and Johnson had expected many local allies due to the large local population of members of the Society of Friends. Despite these favorable numerical trends, Hudson and his companions nonetheless had trouble finding meeting space and encountered mob dangers in that region.[142] In November of 1841, Hudson found even the pro-slavery people of Michigan willing to listen to the advocates of the cause. There, he saw the fewest "indications of anger" and mobs of all of the states he had visited.[143] Local reactions in the Old Northwest were often unpredictable, which posed an additional challenge to traveling lecturers.

Discussion of flaws in promotion could lead itinerants to reveal their larger fears and hopes for the Western area—and how important they thought it was. In Peru, Ohio, in September 1841, Hudson found that no one had publicized his list of meetings, and he encountered local apathy. There, "no one felt interested enough to help in getting up a meeting." He thus chose to give up, interpreting the cause in Peru as hopeless without local help. There, as elsewhere in Northern Ohio, he found that "intemperance, rank covetousness, and slaveocracy"

[140] Hudson, "From Mt. Pleasant, Ohio," September 23, 1841.
[141] Hudson, "Letter from Oberlin, Ohio," December 23, 1841.
[142] Erasmus Hudson, "From Sherman, St. Joseph's County, Michigan," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 25, 1841.
[143] Hudson, "Letter from Oberlin, Ohio," December 23, 1841.

played an excessively large role in local culture. Hudson attributed this to the growing local influence of large numbers of Southern migrants. He feared that they would come to dominate the region, which he regarded as "holding the hopes of our country." In his regard, the Old Northwest was of immense importance to the national quest to remove slavery and other evils.[144]

Often the reasons for poor publicity were more benign, including human error. Hudson's letters often referred to more neutral instances such as his difficulties in Belmont, Indiana in 1841 in getting the word out locally, which resulted in a relatively small audience.[145] Sometimes meetings did not receive any publicity at all, as happened in Coldwater, Michigan in October 1841. In other cases, there was a mistake in issuing notice of meetings, and insufficient time to publicly announce them after local people reached the decision to meet. That was Hudson's experience in Granville, Ohio in 1841, but he nonetheless was able to hold a large meeting.[146] Myriad causes could thus lead to unintentional lack of advance notice for meetings.

At times local structures overcame publicity problems. In Lexington, Indiana, a town with a small population, Hudson was unable to issue any advanced announcement of his lecture. He nonetheless obtained a decent attendance at his meeting due to word of mouth.[147] Such was also the case in Conneaut, Ohio in January of 1842. As Hudson and Burleigh toured the area, the local people did not receive the notice of the expected meeting. Regardless, these friendly souls

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[144] Hudson, "From Sherman, St. Joseph's County, Michigan," November 25, 1841
[145] Hudson, "Letter from Richmond, Wayne County, IN." October 21, 1841.
[146] Hudson, "From Sherman, St. Joseph's County, Michigan," November 25, 1841; Hudson, "From Delaware, Ohio," February 17, 1842. In both Branch County and Ann Arbor Michigan, he found similar difficulties. One friend to the cause in Branch County, the intended recipient of the advance notice of the meeting, was away at the time, and thus did not issue the local announcement that they had anticipated. In Ann Arbor, the postmaster's "having mislaid the notice" led to the cancellation of the local meeting which Hudson and his Michigan lecturing companion Dr. Graham had intended to hold. Hudson, "Letter from Oberlin, Ohio," December 23, 1841.
[147] Hudson, "Letter from Oberlin, Ohio," December 23, 1841.

succeeded in gathering "quite a large audience" through verbal communication.[148] While itinerants certainly preferred to maximize their exposure, lack of promotion was not always fateful.

As they worked to build their public sphere through touring and lecturing, the itinerant system unified antislavery people from across the spectrum of beliefs, and they reached audiences that ranged from inspired to infuriated. Traveling lecturers exemplify the bridging of those categories, and their work in crossing the miles within the Old Northwest and back to the East created a national reform culture. The immense effort that activists put into transforming the region affirms the great importance contemporaries ascribed to its future. Racial radicals' struggle to determine the parameters of public speech and action in the face of violence in the Old Northwest also pervaded one of their other favored means of circulating their message, the newspaper.

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[148] Hudson, "From Delaware, Ohio," February 17, 1842.

Chapter 5: "The palladium of our liberties:" Freedom of the Press in the Old Northwest

> "I have long regarded the conductors of the public press, as a class of persons who have assumed upon themselves a fearful responsibility; next to the ministers … their influence is powerfully seen and felt, for weal or for woe to the human family."
>
> –Arnold Buffum in *The Protectionist,* January 1, 1841.

In the antebellum era, the newspaper was a central tool for transforming the nation. The members of the Ohio American Anti-Slavery Society who gathered at Cadiz in October of 1842 proclaimed abolitionist periodicals a vital means to awaken others to the ills of slavery. Newspapers could publicize both slavery's true "nature and influence" and the human and material costs of its continuance.[1] The newspaper comprised an integral part of the public expression and expansion of the antislavery agenda in the Old Northwest, and its editors indeed took on a "fearful responsibility." Abolitionists of both sexes took advantage of this burgeoning forum, and relied upon the newspaper as both a tool for conversion and a justification for their public action.

The antislavery publication became the locus of struggles for freedom of expression and human rights in the Old Northwest. As the battleground of ideas, the region was rife with conflict over the right to publish abolitionist arguments and advertisements in newspapers. Deeply enmeshed with the politics of the era, the debate over press freedom in these states was no abstract discussion of citizenship privileges, for anti-abolitionists saw that journalism could undermine the slave system. For abolitionists in this isolated region, newspapers played a key

[1] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 1, 1842.

role in the transmission of a shared sense of identity, and of membership in a community.[2] As such, newspapers were vital cohesive tools people used to connect their networks across great distances, determine strategy, and debate underlying principles. They also received funds and support from outside sources and sympathetic audiences regardless of vociferous opposition. Thus linked with one another and able to buoy one anothers' spirits, abolitionists continued with their mission of organization and conversion.

I: The Press and the Abolitionist Public Voice

The press was of vital importance to abolitionists as it helped them aid itinerants in extending and sustaining their movement across the miles. For this reason both they and their opponents fought fiercely to control publications in this time of immense expansion of the press and of literacy in the United States. From 1801 to 1833 the number of newspapers in the United States and its territories increased by 600 percent. In 1830, the total daily news circulation was approximately 78,000. By 1840, this number had ballooned to 300,000.[3]

Among the contributions to the revolution in the press in the Old Northwest and nationally were technological innovations that enabled the growth of the public abolitionist presence. The successive developments of the iron press and the expanded use of the steam driven press made printing an easier task, as did improvements in papermaking technology. Transportation developments—railroad infrastructure and, after 1844, the telegraph—also

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[2] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[3] Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer, "Introduction," in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, ed. Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (New York: New Press, 2006), xxi, Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 4, 13. Among the papers consulted for this dissertation were the Salem, Ohio *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, the Newport, Indiana *Free Labor Advocate* and *Protectionist*, the Galesburg, Illinois, *Free Democrat*, the Boston *Liberator*, the New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the Peoria *Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, and the Chicago *Western Citizen*.

accelerated the distribution of news across the nation.[4] Abolitionist editors had both itinerants and subscription agents disperse their papers. Typically listed in the interior of newspapers, agents would collect money and issue subscriptions for both local and national papers in the Old Northwest.[5]

The abolitionist press connected local antislavery people with their counterparts across the nation. Old Northwesterners read eastern papers, and vice versa. Expanding numbers of partisan and abolitionist newspapers emerged to push particular agendas. After 1830, the abolitionist press played a central role in the circulation and promulgation of antislavery ideology in the Old Northwest. These local and national newspapers soon served as tools for both determining strategy and debating underlying principles. Antislavery papers gathered new support for their cause, and formed a vital component of the communication between local, state, and national reformers.[6]

The newspapers' increasing prevalence and efficiency of distribution in this era allowed for rapid exchange of essential information, often of a partisan nature. While antislavery newspapers drew disproportionate wrath, the presence of overtly ideological content in their pages was hardly anomalous in the press of the time. Antebellum American newspapers and news editors often adopted partisan affiliations, and papers provided the most convenient and

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[4] Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*, 43.
[5] Sallie Holley and John White Chadwick, *A Life for Liberty. Anti-Slavery and Other Letters of Sallie Holley* (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1899), 94, E. D. Hudson, "From Delaware, Ohio," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* February 17, 1842, Erasmus Hudson, "From Sherman, St. Joseph's County, Michigan," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 25, 1841, Arthur Raymond Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan, 1796-1840: A Study in Humanitarianism" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1941), 200, Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*, 16, Benjamin Stanton, "Editor's Excursion," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* February 23, 1842.
[6] Russel Blaine Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964), 94.

accessible source of political information for an often widely dispersed population.[7] In one such case, the Chicago *Western Citizen*, which was widely read by the Old Northwestern Liberty Party, made no secret of its partisan affiliation: the list of congressional candidates for the election of August 1843 listed the Liberty ticket in large type, while the Whig and Democrat candidates appeared in smaller type under the heading "Pro-Slavery Ticket."[8] Some papers were open to printing antislavery perspectives even when they did not share them, as we shall see in the case of Samuel H. Davis of Peoria.

An editorial commitment to progressive reform aided in the expansion of local papers in the Old Northwest. Zebina Eastman of the *Western Citizen* was one such editor who influenced abolition in the region. In 1842 he brought antislavery pioneer Benjamin Lundy's former paper to Chicago on the invitation of a committee of Chicago Liberty Party men. Eastman, then only twenty-seven years old, began to run the new *Western Citizen* as a Liberty Party paper. This newspaper did not win immediate acceptance from the surrounding community—he faced both verbal contempt and open hostility.[9] However, the paper did have many supporters, including a

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[7] William E. Gienapp, "'Politics Seem to Enter into Everything': Political Culture in the North, 1840-1860," in *Essays on American Antebellum Politics, 1840-1860*, ed. Stephen E. Maizlish and John J. Kushma (Arlington: University of Texas at Arlington Press, 1982), 41-42, Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 3-4. See *Western Citizen*, September 16, 1842, for a compelling statement of the efficacy of the newspaper as a propaganda device: "The newspaper may be destroyed at night; it may light a cigar, or it may curl a lady's hair; but the thoughts that are in its columns may influence ten thousand for good, and produce effects which volumes of essays, sermons, or narratives, could not effect, and especially where they could never reach."
[8] *Western Citizen*, July 27, 1843.
[9] In the 1840s, anti-abolitionists threatened to kill Eastman, and claimed they would like to destroy his office and press. Paula Glasman, "Zebina Eastman, Chicago Abolitionist" (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1968), 10, 12, 19.

significant subscriber base, which extended beyond Illinois into northern Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa.[10]

Eastman used his editorials to not only promote political abolition—and argue against slavery in general—but also to proclaim the doctrine that all men were created equal and should have equivalent rights, regardless of race. Eastman was certain that African Americans deserved full citizenship, and frequently argued in his pages for the repeal of the Illinois "Black Laws."[11] Moving beyond rhetoric, Eastman also employed free African American H. O. Wagoner in his printing office shortly after Wagoner's arrival in Chicago in 1846.[12] Eastman's own arguments

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[10] After the Liberty Party folded, Eastman shifted the political orientation of the paper to its replacement, the Free Soil Party. *Ibid.,* 20, 65. The *Western Citizen* continued publication until October 1853, but Eastman was not without a paper for long. In December of that year he began to publish the *Free West*, which billed itself as a regional paper, rather than one focused on the slavery issue. In its columns, Eastman nonetheless continued to make antislavery and anti-prejudice arguments—including statements against the Illinois Black Laws and against political parties that propped up the slave system. Editors frequently composed prospectuses for their newspapers. They could take different tones, but all aimed at justifying their paper's necessity, explaining its goals, and setting out its fundamental ideologies. When he established *The Protectionist* in Newport Indiana in January of 1841, Arnold Buffum wrote in the paper's first issue that his new periodical would reveal to his fellow northerners the influence of what he called the "Slave power" upon "our rights, our liberties, and our prosperity." His goal was to draw the attention of all to the risks that slavery posed to their independence and prosperity. As slavery continued to encroach upon their freedoms, he declared that *The Protectionist* would be one means for them to push back. In the prospectus Buffum also asserted what his paper would not do. He wrote that he would avoid the internecine disputes then so prevalent among abolitionists, and used a harsh tone in expressing his differences from them. He may have also been aiming to counter abolitionist criticisms by quelling readers' fears that the paper would promote a divisive agenda. *The Protectionist,* January 1, 1841.

[11] Lerone Bennett, *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000), 320-23, Glasman, "Zebina Eastman, Chicago Abolitionist", 36-37.

[12] In a letter he wrote in September 1884, late in his life, Wagoner reminisced about his work as a compositor in Eastman's office in "H. O. Stowe's building, on Lake Street, near State," in downtown Chicago. H. O. Wagoner, Denver, CO, to Hon. S. H. Kerfoot, Chicago, IL, 27 September 1884, Manuscript Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois. Eastman also worked actively on the Underground Railroad. In Chicago he was in good company, for local resistance meant that it was difficult for any slave catcher to successfully convey fugitives out of the city and south. The citizens of Chicago frequently overlooked the Fugitive Slave Law, and flagrantly violated it as well. Glasman, "Zebina Eastman, Chicago Abolitionist", 51-52. The *Free West* merged with the *Chicago Tribune* in July of 1855. Eastman lacked the platform of his own newspaper and became less prominent in local abolition, but still worked with the Republican Party and made antislavery speeches that revealed his former radical positions. *Ibid.,* 85-86. He kept up a communication with other prominent abolitionists into the 1850s, including Ichabod Codding, who also contributed to his paper, and wrote to him in March of 1854. Zebina Eastman, Chicago, to Ichabod Codding, 15 March 1854, Ichabod Codding Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois. He wrote to Codding in April of 1857, proclaiming his nostalgia for the days of the Liberty Party, and telling a declension narrative implying that the Republican Party represented a step backward, rather than progress for the abolition cause. Eastman, to Ichabod Codding.

and actions for racial equality help explain his willingness to publish other authors, including Mary Brown Davis, who agreed with this stance.

Western antislavery publications included women as active participants and female abolitionist journalists contributed to them. Mary Brown Davis of Peoria represents the pinnacle of the achievement of these women. She used newspapers to broadcast her views, including the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* and the *Western Citizen*. Davis was the leading female abolitionist writer in the Old Northwest in the 1830s and 1840s, and her publications continued into the following decade. In contrast to other newspaper editors of the period, Eastman embraced female journalists, expecting that they would appeal to women and attract them to the abolitionist cause. He wrote, "The article on our first page, headed Mary Brown Davis, "The Cruelty of Slavery," will be particularly interesting to our female readers."[13] Thus Eastman made explicit his acknowledgement that women as well as men read his political abolition newspaper.

Davis's articles typically appeared on the first and second pages of the *Western Citizen*, and the prominence of her columns from 1842 to 1849 indicates that the public took her seriously as a journalist. In the four page weekly paper, Davis's columns shared the first two pages with local, national, and international news, and her writing was equally prominent with

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[13] *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, July 26, 1839. For a characterization of the abolitionist press as anti-feminist, see Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 62.: "Though the press took women seriously enough to report their efforts in the news sections, it proceeded for the most part to lash out at them in the editorials." These attacks revolved around their transgression in stepping outside of their assigned sphere.

that of male journalists.[14] Davis's articles, and those of her male counterparts, brought them into conflict with their many anti-abolitionist neighbors.

II: A Weighty Battle: Press Struggles and Local Abolitionist Suppression

Like their fellow activists the local organizers and traveling speakers, antislavery publishers and journalists tenaciously fought to protect their freedom of the press, for the newspaper was central to the expansion of the antislavery ranks. No minor battle this, the very vitality of their movement and its principles were at stake. When mobs and fellow newspapers attacked antislavery print organs, they endangered not only the exchange of abolitionist information but also the movement's ability to be nourished and to expand. On both the local and national levels, the progress of ideas, individuals and collectivities would have been impossible without the press and its expanded capacity to organize, coordinate, and extend antislavery networks.

While antebellum people expected partisan commentary in their newspapers, many nonetheless drew the line at abolitionist perspectives, as the attempts to stifle controversial voices in the Old Northwestern press reveal. Seen this way, local efforts to maintain an abolition-free public print discourse emerge as part of the larger national trend to silence the struggle over slavery and criticism of the major national parties. For abolitionists, freedom of

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[14] Pages three to four typically contained paid advertisements, and page four was often the least news-oriented page, with sentimental fiction, poetry, and temperance stories, although news items occasionally appeared on page four due to constraints of space. Mary Van Vleck Garman, "'Altered Tone of Expression': The Anti-Slavery Rhetoric of Illinois Women, 1837-1847" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1989), 104. The *Western Citizen* was similar to contemporary papers of which Michael Schudson writes, which were daily and four pages in length, with extensive advertising content on the first and fourth pages. The second page contained editorial columns, politics, and short news items often cribbed from other papers. The third page and often the second contained commercial news regarding ship arrivals and trade. Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*, 14-15.

the press became more than a means to convey their message; a parallel cause for which they fought fiercely.

Old Northwestern citizens' efforts to protect the press were intimately tied to the increasingly expansive use of the First Amendment that antislavery people implemented in self-defense in the antebellum period. This concept appealed to an ever-growing constituency, especially after the national controversy over the "gag rule" in the House of Representatives that began in 1836, and the mobbing and killing of antislavery editor Elijah Lovejoy at Alton, Illinois in 1837.[15] The Alton incident clarified that freedom of expression was under threat from ordinary citizens and not only from such entities as proslavery southern state governments. This outbreak of extralegal violence put shadowy concerns with freedom of the press under a glaring spotlight.[16] As was the case with freedom of speech, abolitionists and their allies conceived of these new rights as variously both federal/constitutional rights and as a "basic human right that state constitutions protected."[17] A range of ordinary people grappled their way toward a sweeping definition of guaranteed constitutional rights.[18] When abolitionists' right to expression came under fire, they found themselves with many new recruits to the cause and supporters for this new understanding of their rights. Antislavery people came to understand that they could use mob attacks strategically as evidence that slavery itself threatened "democratic principles,"

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[15] Michael Kent Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege:" Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 4, 250-51, Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 186, Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3. See also Chapter 4.
[16] Curtis, *Free Speech, "The People's Darling Privilege:" Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History*, 217, 28, 32.
[17] *Ibid.*, 251.
[18] *Ibid.,* 5-6, 117. Freedom of the press was of course also a highly volatile subject in the Old South. See *Ibid.,* 164-65, 71, 76.

and some resorted to physical means for self-protection.[19] The history of conflict in Alton reveals a provocative example of Old Northwest antislavery persistence and self-defense, and that anti-abolitionists, too, beheld the press as central to the expansion of antislavery sentiment.

Gathering Clouds: The Escalating Tension at Alton

The murder of editor and Presbyterian minister Elijah Parish Lovejoy formed the final event in a chain of conflict extending back to his initial efforts to print his religious newspaper the *Observer* in Alton, on the Mississippi River. As itinerant efforts to protect free expression also revealed, the experience of advocating unpopular positions in a hostile environment could have a radicalizing effect on individuals. Elijah Lovejoy was not initially an abolitionist when he began his efforts to publish in St. Louis with only a vague opposition to slavery. His views had transformed by early 1837 with increasing exposure to the realities of slavery and its effects, and he increasingly incorporated immediate abolition arguments into his paper.[20] Lovejoy was not alone in this trajectory of conversion, for across the North repression of "civil liberties" and abolitionist freedom of the press won over people who were opposed or indifferent before the crisis.

Lovejoy moved to Alton, across the river from St. Louis, in July of 1836. His reputation preceded him, and upon his arrival, citizens unwelcoming to abolition immediately dumped his

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[19] Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860*, 155. See also Waldrep, who writes that attacks on Lovejoy and on James G. Birney persuaded people in the North that permissiveness toward slavery could be costly. Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 45.

[20] Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860*, 115-16.

press in the river, making their opinions on his freedom to print immediately evident.[21] He ordered a new press, certain in the correctness of persisting in printing the paper in his new town. The young minister was determined to pursue his chosen path, regardless of the consequences, and his allies supported this position.

Local opposition to abolition was strong. The Upper Alton Lyceum, which Lovejoy joined upon moving to town, added to this contentious atmosphere, debating in January 1837 the question, "Does the principle of Right require the immediate emancipation of the Slave?" This topic proved too inflammatory for their president, John W. Collett, who resigned on account of "feeling some delicacy" in supervising discussion of this issue. The lyceum selected a new president and debated the question for the following three meetings. Lovejoy himself weighed in

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[21] Following his college education, the Maine-born Elijah Parish Lovejoy came to St. Louis to work as a schoolteacher and a newspaperman. In 1832, Lovejoy converted to Christianity and attended Princeton Theological Seminary. After his 1833 ordination as a Presbyterian Minister, Lovejoy returned to St. Louis in 1833 and became the editor of the St. Louis *Observer*, a religious paper. His views on slavery gradually shifted over time; in February of 1834 he wrote in a letter to his mother a condemnation of abolitionists as "the worst enemies the poor slaves have." Elijah Parish Lovejoy, to Elizabeth Lovejoy, 14 February 1834, Elijah Parish Lovejoy Papers. Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University. He regarded himself as a "gradual emancipationist," but his views eventually radicalized. Missouri slaveholders always saw him as an abolitionist, and over the course of 1834 and 1835 that description became increasingly accurate, for Lovejoy began to decry the sin of slavery as he beheld it from his new Western home. By the summer of 1835, despite his "moderate" position on the issue, the slaveholders of St. Louis grew intolerant of any discussion of slavery. The rising tide of anti-abolition sentiment threatened to engulf him, and his allies counseled Lovejoy to desist or leave. Henry Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971 (1881)), 40, 51-52. Even before departing St. Louis, Lovejoy steadfastly defended his right to press freedom through the forums of his paper and public meetings. Eventually, his opponents forced him to leave St. Louis in the aftermath of his virulent editorial critiques of a lynch mob that burned Francis McIntosh to death. McIntosh was a free man of mixed race ancestry who had killed an officer in the process of resisting arrest, and Lovejoy's denouncement of the murder led to local residents expelling him to Alton "under the threat of personal injury." Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860*, 115-16.

on the issue on the side of immediatism at the February 2 meeting, and his faction ultimately lost.[22]

Lovejoy later wrote in the Alton *Observer* extolling the correctness of his path in the language of universal rights, and his notoriety aided in the recruitment of other Illinois abolitionists. He wrote that if the right of "FREE DISCUSSION" was taken away, then "we have nothing left to struggle for."[23] Deciding that Illinois needed a state organization, he issued a call in the *Observer* on July 6, 1837 for an Illinois State Anti-Slavery Society. Despite a positive reception among other abolitionists, many of his fellow residents of Alton abhorred this move. On July 11, his opponents convened a town meeting to oppose his organizing efforts, and demanded that he cease local abolitionist activity.[24] Then, as later, Lovejoy refused to back down.

In August and September, Lovejoy encountered further problems in his new home. First, a mob composed of eight to ten "respectable" Alton men attempted to give him a treatment with tar and feathers. The minister was returning from the chemist with medicine for his ailing wife Celia Ann. When confronted, he asked his accosters to do with him what was God's will—as long as they would bring her the medicine without revealing his violent fate. In Lovejoy acquaintance and biographer Benjamin Tanner's view, the editor's nonresistance overcame them,

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[22] "Journal of the Upper Alton Lyceum," October 20, 1836-March 17, 1839, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois. Not afraid of other controversial issues of the day, the lyceum took up the issue of white woman suffrage, decided in the affirmative, and returned to the subject of abolition in the District of Columbia, with much resultant debate over the course of the next two meetings. They had to pass new rules to prevent interruptions and outsiders from voting in their resolutions.

[23] Alton *Observer*, September 27, 1837.

[24] They regarded his arguments as objectionable, despite his moderation on some issues. For example, he argued that abolitionists opposed "amalgamation" of the races, and did not advocate equality of rights for blacks. Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 108, 10, 17-18. This conception of abolition as omitting a call for civil rights clashed with that of other abolitionists, such as Mary Brown Davis.

and they released him unharmed. Nonetheless, that night the anti-abolitionists destroyed his press for the second time.[25] Lovejoy continued to print about abolition, and the next month, the mayor himself witnessed while a "quiet and gentlemanly mob" destroyed a third press. The mob politely refused the mayor's order to disperse, claiming that they were "busy," and cast the press into the river without further interference.[26]

Alton at the time had a new charter with an ill-realized government and law enforcement provisions.[27] Law enforcement in the era was rudimentary, but abolitionists repeatedly demanded assistance in protecting their rights from the authority figures they could access. The system itself was hardly well structured or impartial, for governments did not typically pay locally elected constables to stop crimes in progress or to maintain "public order." Municipal authorities thus had small motivation to take such actions, in particular, as was the case with abolitionists, "when the victims of crime or disorder were unpopular minorities."[28] Control over community norms thus often fell into the hands of the people themselves; in this town, with disastrous consequences.

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[25] *Ibid.,* 71-72.
[26] *Ibid.,* 128-28. These extraordinary events did not go without notice in other communities, and sympathetic onlookers and readers of the paper replied to them. Lovejoy received supportive letters from Illinoisans in other towns following the destruction of the first three presses. William L. Stewart to Elijah Parish Lovejoy, July 20, 1836, Lovejoy Papers; Romulus Barnes to Elijah Parish Lovejoy, September 11, 1837, Lovejoy Papers; Isaac Gallard to Elijah Parish Lovejoy, October 5, 1837, Lovejoy Papers. The *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer* of January 27, 1838, reported that James M. Rock was tried for the destruction of this press, but acquitted. This man also took an active part in the later riot, and some observers believed that he killed Lovejoy. Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 231.
[27] Mark Allen Cyr, ""I would not be a master": Democracy and the Political Culture of Mastery in Illinois, 1837-1858" (Ph.D Dissertation, Washington University, 2003), 21. Christopher Waldrep argues that in areas that at the time lacked formal legal institutions ("frontiers"), westerners—whether Illinoisans in the 1840s or Californians at mid-century—relied on vigilante justice. Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America*, 47, 50.
[28] Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 110-11.

October of 1837 proved an eventful month both in the life of Lovejoy and in Alton. In early October, while Lovejoy was visiting his wife's family in St. Charles, Missouri, just twenty-three miles northwest of St. Louis, another mob attacked him. After he had preached twice against slavery in a local church, angry residents entered his mother-in-law's house and beat him severely, despite the efforts of his wife, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law to defend him.[29] Back in Alton, on the twenty-fourth, a group of prominent citizens met in the Presbyterian Church to form a colonization society, a position calculated to oppose any local abolition efforts. They complained in their resolutions of recent "unchristian and abusive epithets against the slaveholding community" circulating in the town, implying that Lovejoy was a divisive influence. They described colonization as beneficial "because it tends to unite men in all sections of our country, in philanthropic feeling."[30] This effort failed to quash the state antislavery society.

On October twenty-sixth, the State Anti-Slavery Convention held its inaugural meeting in Alton as planned, a public display of the solidarity that the community of Illinois abolitionists had with Lovejoy's ongoing efforts. The members called themselves the "friends of *free discussion*" in their published proceedings, and thus explicitly grounded their right to organize in the struggle for liberty of expression. On the first day of the convention "a number of disorderly

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[29] Elijah Lovejoy quoted in Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 130-32.: "While they were attempting with oaths and curses to drag me from the room, she [Celia Ann] was smiting them in the face with her hands…and telling them that they must first take her before they should have her husband." Following this demonstration of physical might, she fainted as soon as the assailants had departed. See also Cyrall Cady, Bradford, to Julius A. Willard, 15 November 1837, Samuel Willard Papers, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

[30] *Human Rights*, December 1837, Volume III, No. 6.

persons" stymied their efforts, and they adjourned until the next day.[31] When they reconvened, they found themselves again thwarted by the anti-abolition people who infiltrated the meeting and advanced pro-slavery resolutions. The abolitionists realized that they were outnumbered and decided to clandestinely reconvene their meeting at the home of the Reverend Theodore B. Hurlbut.[32]

There, the new antislavery society finally managed to hold its organizing meeting in peace. They voted to support Lovejoy in the continued publication of the *Observer* in Alton. They argued for absolute equality of rights for all men, who should be "treated by all, and all times, as an intelligent, rational, moral, accountable, and immortal being,--in other words, as a MAN." The Illinois Society also argued against bias, with the stated goals of "removing public prejudice," and denied that slaves had the right to use "physical force" for their liberation."[33] They claimed for themselves, for the moment, the same standards of non-violence that they advocated for slaves. The circumstances in Alton soon brought their principles into question.

At the Alton meeting, it became clear that Lovejoy was not the only person who adopted the cause of freedom of the press as an outgrowth of efforts to organize against slavery. Much as Lovejoy's trials had radicalized him, the members of the new society claimed that they had not been firmly convinced of the necessity of a society until they viewed the virulence of their opposition. Indeed, they had "not at all resolved" to create a society "until the violent proceedings of the mob opened every eye to see that some organized systematic effort, was

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[31] Illinois Anti-Slavery Convention, *Proceedings of the Illinois anti-slavery convention: held at Upper Alton on the twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-eighth October 1837* (Alton: Parks and Breath, 1838), 6, 3. [Italics in original].
[32] *Ibid.,* 10.
[33] *Ibid.,* 14, 22.

absolutely necessary to save our own liberties from the ruthless hands of unprincipled men."[34] They were aware that a fourth press for Lovejoy's *Observer,* funded by sympathetic allies both in the community and abroad, would soon arrive. In their proceedings, they also stated that the press would be safe in the warehouse of merchants Godfrey and Gilman, due to the "high standing of the firm" in the community."[35]

Concerned with both civil liberties and the national stain of slavery, the newly organized society combated attempts to silence abolitionism, and justified the formation of an immediatist society by arguing that the entire country had a stake in these issues. No matter the costs of such an outspoken position, they argued against what they called "fetters" of the mind. They wrote: "As a nation, we are one; and by slavery we are affected in all our interests, political commercial, social intellectual, moral and religious." They saw a sectional division in the action required to overturn slavery. They wrote that Southerners had the "duty…to give up" the institution, but the North had no such duty "to relinquish the principles of freedom."[36] They further acknowledged the complicity of the northern states in enforcing slavery through fugitive slave laws and through trade with slave states. Anticipating their future difficulties, they claimed the legality of their public abolitionist actions. They were even so certain in their expectation of violence as to write bluntly: "No one has any right to hinder us by law or by force."[37] This assertion would not go unchallenged.

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[34] *Ibid*., 10.
[35] Illinois Anti-Slavery Convention, *Proceedings of the Illinois anti-slavery convention: held at Upper Alton on the twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-eighth October 1837*, 9, Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 135.
[36] Illinois Anti-Slavery Convention, *Proceedings of the Illinois anti-slavery convention: held at Upper Alton on the twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-eighth October 1837*, 20.
[37] *Ibid., 22*, 28-29, 31, 34.

Several days later, on October 30, Lovejoy's fellow Illinois Society organizer, the Reverend Edward Beecher of Princeton, spoke at the Alton Presbyterian Church. Anti-abolitionists threw a stone into the meeting, but the abolitionists were prepared for such an assault. William Tanner called to attention the assembled members of an informal abolitionist protection company. Henry Tanner remembered that "in a few moments the church door was flanked…by a row of armed men, whom it was not safe for a mob to attack."[38] Beecher finished his speech without further violence, one small victory for the abolitionists. This granted a modicum of legitimacy to their brinksmanship by demonstrating that their threat to defend themselves was sufficient to stop an attack.

The anti-abolitionists maintained their own vocal public presence in debate with Lovejoy and his allies. On the second of November, a large meeting at the counting room of John Hogan and Company continued to debate the issue of "free communication of thought and opinion in Alton." Hogan, the vice president of the colonization society, argued against Lovejoy and his antislavery compatriots. Edward Beecher, Winthrop S. Gilman, and Lovejoy himself defended abolition and press freedom. Gilman declared that every citizen has the right to "speak, write, or print his opinions on any subject." John Hogan subsequently presented a disingenuous argument

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[38] Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 136-37. Born in 1830, Beecher was the third child of Lyman and Roxana Beecher, and the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catharine Beecher. Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York: Norton, 1976), 330 n. 7. In 1832, he became president of Illinois College in Jacksonville, where he served 14 years. In this pro-southern area, he nonetheless argued for "free speech and free press." Active in the organization of the first antislavery meeting at Alton, he also helped guard Lovejoy's press the night before his death. In 1844 he resigned the college presidency, and became pastor of Salem Street Church, Boston. In 1855, he returned to Illinois, taking the pastorate at the First Congregational Church, Galesburg, where he labored until 1871, when he moved to Brooklyn. "Proceedings of the Illinois State Convention of Colored Men, Assembled at Galesburg, October 16th, 17th, and 18th. Containing the State and National Addresses Promulgated by It, With a List of the Delegates Composing It, October 1866. Published by Order of the Convention.," in *Proceedings of the Black National and State Conventions, 1865-1900*, ed. Philip Sheldon Foner and George E. Walker (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986; reprint, Chicago, 1867).

that Lovejoy had agreed to cease advocating abolition upon moving to Alton.[39] Hogan himself later admitted that Lovejoy had made no such promise, but Lovejoy's opponents repeated this claim nonetheless. Many local residents would have preferred that this had been the case, and it allowed them to denounce him as a meddling outsider and as a man who failed to keep his word.[40] This was a specious claim, but they repeated it all the same.

At that same meeting Lovejoy eloquently defended his course of action, basing his choices on universal rights and asking for protection from the community. He revealed his and his family's fears for their safety, but noted that he would not stand down even if it entailed dying for the causes of abolition and press freedom.[41] As he constructed it, his individual right to publish his views embodied the community, even the national, value of freedom of the press. The civil authorities at the meeting argued that they could not stop mobs from silencing Lovejoy with the tools that lay at their disposal. The mayor himself stated his disapproval of Lovejoy's actions, and implied that the newspaperman still held outsider status as he decried "persons and editors abroad" who brought slavery, abolition, and press freedom into public discussion in Alton.[42] With their continual persecution of Lovejoy and his publishing efforts, Alton's anti-abolition faction refused to recognize his arguments that he was entitled to print his views because of his invocation of "universal, abstract rights" and adherence to the religiously based higher law doctrine.[43] In the mayor's acquiescence and willingness to blame Lovejoy for local

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[39] Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 138-39.
[40] *Human Rights*, December 1837, Volume III, No. 6.
[41] Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 146-47.
[42] *Ibid.,* 138-39.
[43] Cyr, ""I would not be a master": Democracy and the Political Culture of Mastery in Illinois, 1837-1858", 67.

tensions, both prominent and lowly anti-abolitionists found license to act to control Alton public discourse.

Riot at Alton, 1837

Elijah Parish Lovejoy's fourth printing press arrived at Alton late in the evening of November 6, 1837, on the steamer *Missouri Fulton*. The supporters of the embattled minister and printer placed the press in Godfrey and Gilman's warehouse under their own armed watch. By ten, they could no longer ignore the swelling crowd outside of the warehouse. Their numbers soon expanded to 150 to 200 rioters, of whom 50 to 80 were armed. From inside, merchant and warehouse-owner Winthrop Gilman proclaimed that the defenders of the warehouse would stand their ground, "protect their property, and that serious consequences might ensue" should the mob attempt to enter the warehouse. In his post-riot letter to the Democratic Party paper the Alton *Spectator,* mayor John M. Krum remembered the members of the mob as stating that they wanted the press, and that although they "did not wish to injure any person," they *would* destroy it.[44]

The mayor and unnamed other "civil authorities" made weak, ineffective efforts to stop the mob. Mayor Krum claimed that they were unable to separate the crowd due to the assailants' superior numbers: "No means were at my control…by which the mob could be dispersed and the loss of life and the shedding of blood prevented."[45] Apart from this meager effort, the civil

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[44] John M. Krum, letter to Alton *Spectator*, November 8, 1837; reprinted *Human Rights*, December 1837, Volume III, No. 6; *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, December 16, 1837. Samuel Willard wrote a description of the events at Alton in 1879 that gave in depth information about all of the occupations of the "defenders" of the warehouse and all he remembered twenty-five years later. Samuel Willard, "The Riot in Alton Ill. Nov. 7. 1837.," December 25, 1879, Manuscript Collection, Chicago History Museum, Chicago, Illinois.
[45] Krum, letter to Alton *Spectator*. Krum was also a Democrat. *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 6, 1841, 224.

authorities made no other attempt to help the men under siege in the warehouse. Gilman believed them to "sympathize with the mob."[46]

The mob fired upon the warehouse and attempted to force entry into the building. A young carpenter in the crowd outside, Lyman Bishop, was the first to meet his demise, taking a bullet in a defensive counterattack. Following Bishop's death, there was a short lull followed by the mob's renewed, allegedly drunken onslaught.[47] The mob set the roof of the warehouse afire, and Lovejoy met his death with four bullets. Even after the voice of abolition had been extinguished, the crowd was not satisfied and did not disperse.

After Lovejoy died, the defenders of the warehouse fled, and the mob destroyed the press. A large crowd of men entered the building, and "threw the press upon the wharf, where it was broken in pieces and thrown into the river." Contented with this attack, the mob left the other property in the warehouse unharmed. They then departed without further incident, not acknowledging in their actions that two men and the freedom of the press had met their demise

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[46] Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 155-56.

[47] Winthrop S. Gilman later described the mob as assailing them with "arms and hootings, with tin horns blowing and plenty of liquor flowing among them." During the attack and gunfire, Mrs. Frederick Graves rang the bells of the city. Mrs. Graves was married to the Presbyterian minister, and eyewitness Henry Tanner referred to her as a "slender and delicate woman" who "opened the church in her husband's absence, and rang the bell with all her strength." The Reverend Frederick Graves later served as Lovejoy's temporary replacement as corresponding secretary for the Illinois State Anti-Slavery Society, but had moved to New York by 1839. Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 149-50, 55, 56.

that night.[48] No person was ever tried or convicted for Lovejoy or Bishop's deaths, although individuals on both sides of the conflict were indicted for the crime of rioting.[49]

After the incident at Alton, abolitionists both locally and nationally had a ready example of where heady conflicts over their right to freedom of expression could lead. Many chose to tell a narrative of martyrdom and of the brutality of one town in that particular region. Others saw a new universal story of the influence of the slave system in this river town as symbolizing that slavery, which relied on silencing dissent, dominated the nation.

The Alton incident forced many abolitionists to question their attitudes to violence. Lovejoy was not the first immediate abolitionist to reject the common precept of passive non-resistance. Among his predecessors were the abolitionists at Pendleton, and some participants in an 1836 meeting of the Ohio Society at Granville, who used clubs to drive away a mob that attacked them. In effect, the position of non-resistance was rarely absolute in practice, especially among a population so frequently assaulted. Most abolitionists were ambivalent but respected

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[48] Krum, letter to Alton *Spectator*; Hermann R. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 135, 37.
[49] See William Sever Lincoln, *Alton Trials of Winthrop S. Gilman, who was indicted with Enoch Long, Amos B. Roff, George H. Walworth, George H. Whitney, William Harned, John S. Noble, James Morss, Jr., Henry Tanner, Royal Weller, Reuben Gerry, and Theodore B. Hurlbut; for the crime of riot, committed on the night of the 7th of November, 1837, while engaged in defending a printing press, from an attack made on it at that time, by an armed mob. Written out from notes of the trial, taken at the time, by a member of the bar of the Alton Municipal Court. Also, the trial of John Solomon, Levi Palmer, Horace Beall, Josiah Nutter, Jacob Smith, David Butler, William Carr, and James M. Rock, indicted with James Jennings, Solomon Morgan, and Frederick Bruchy; for a riot committed in Alton, on the night of the 7th of November, 1837, in unlawfully and forcibly entering the Warehouse of Godfrey, Gilman, and Co., and breaking up and destroying a printing press. Written out from notes taken at the time of trial, by William S. Lincoln, a Member of the Bar of the Alton Municipal Court* (New York: J. F. Trow, 1838), Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 231. Dr. T. M. Hope and Dr. H. Beall both claimed to have fired the shot that killed Lovejoy, but many Alton residents also suspected James M. Rock, a drayman later convicted of a violent crime in Ohio. Even four years after Lovejoy's death, the Ohio State Convention of abolitionists who met at Cincinnati [among other groups] resolved to aid Celia Lovejoy and her child. In 1841, she was running a boarding house in that city. *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 6, 1841.

Lovejoy's choice to arm in his own defense, even as some condemned and others lauded his actions.[50]

Lovejoy's death forms a justifiably maligned chapter in Illinois history. Its significance is not under dispute here, but its usual interpretation is, for even recent accounts of the events at Alton privilege a glorification of the individual man as martyr at the expense of exploring the reasons behind Lovejoy's death. Myths of the Lovejoy murder do little to illuminate the local political culture in which this episode of anti-abolitionist violence occurred.[51]

Omitted from virtually all readings of Lovejoy's "martyrdom" is any sense of Alton's particular social or political climate.[52] When contrasted with related events a mere six years later and upstate in Peoria, Alton reveals that in the Old Northwest, geography determined neither institutions nor ideology. While Illinois was a northern free state, the relationship between place and political climate was complex, for support for human bondage did not reside solely in the South. The ideological border between an anti-slavery North and a pro-slavery South lacked definition in the young states of the Old Northwest, and the idea of clear sectional division emerges as both arbitrary and unsatisfactory upon closer analysis. Any attempt to explain

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[50] Lawrence J. Friedman, "Antebellum American Abolitionism and the Problem of Violent Means," *Psychohistory Review* 9 (1980): 29, 31, 32.

[51] Leonard L. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[52] In an 1838 memoir written by his brothers, they refer to Elijah Lovejoy as "The first American Martyr to THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, AND THE FREEDOM OF THE SLAVE." Joseph C. Lovejoy and Owen Lovejoy, *Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy; who was murdered in defence of the liberty of the press, at Alton, Illinois, November 7, 1837* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970 (1838)), 12. For later examples of this argument, see John Gill, *Tide Without Turning: Elijah P. Lovejoy and Freedom of the Press* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958), Paul Simon, *Freedom's Champion: Elijah Lovejoy* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994). Contemporaries also wrote of him in these terms, in antislavery newspapers, and ordinary people in the region also wrote about the events at Alton extensively in their private correspondence. Less than three months after Lovejoy's death, E. Russell of Oquawka, Illinois lamented the incident as a great loss of "a man of rare talennts [sic] … will probably be remembered as long as liberty has any friends in the this country to remember him. Cady, to Julius A. Willard, E. Russell, Oquawka, IL, to Mr. John Bachelder, 19 January 1838, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

conflict over abolition in antebellum Illinois requires consideration of local political operations. The efforts by the prominent citizens of Alton and Peoria to suppress abolitionist speech were but two instances in a history of conflict over the right to promulgate abolition in Illinois, and these stories represent a pattern of local contestation over the right to a public presence that continued through the 1840s and beyond.

Mob Suppression of Peoria Abolition

> The Peoria Anti-Slavery Society will hold a meeting in the Main Street Presbyterian church on Monday evening the 13th … for the purpose of organizing and electing officers.
>
> The nascent Peoria Anti-Slavery Society
> *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, February 10, 1843.

> We will oppose the public organization of any anti-slavery society, in the town of Peoria, and that however desirous we may be that this our opposition should be confined to reason and argument alone, yet, in case it shall become necessary, in order to prevent the catastrophe that force should be used (how much soever we may regret that necessity), we shall feel ourselves bound to resort thereto, when all other measures have proved unsuccessful.
>
> "The Citizens" of Peoria
> *Peoria Democratic Pres*s, February 15, 1843.

In 1843, a faction of the prominent citizens of Peoria, Illinois sought to stifle the antislavery presence in their midst, a conflict that subsequently exploded into another fiery press freedom battle. This community lacked anything approaching consensus on the contentious issues of abolition and the racial basis of civil rights, and wished to suppress dissent. When the abolitionists gathered in a church there, their opponents shut down their meeting and attempted to stifle any local organization against slavery. The debate in this Illinois River town arose out of the antagonistic cultures in the state—and in the region—in the 1830s and 1840s. This embattled place uncovers debates about abolition and racial equality in this state bordering the

South and sharing in its commercial fate. This local contestation over antislavery rights was but one flare-up in an extended Illinois controversy, dating back to Lovejoy's pioneering efforts in the state in the late 1830s. Analysis of the violent muzzling of the abolitionist press foregrounds several crucial community struggles in Peoria in the 1840s, all resolved without fatal violence, and these conflicts prove that activists who lived in the antislavery battleground fiercely resisted this silencing.

In Illinois, as in other parts of the Old Northwest, national fights about slavery, abolitionism, and party politics were played out on the local level through arguments over freedom of expression. In Peoria, the contest over slavery molded the agenda of local politics, and party lines mandated the suppression of abolitionist discussion. The demands of the national political parties to stifle divisive abolitionism exacerbated local discord. Notwithstanding the efforts of prominent citizens to filter local-level discourse, evidence of contestation and dissent on the issues of race and abolition leaked through. This conflict of interests contributed to confrontation and violence. In the Old Northwest, concern for party messages, localism, social order, racist ideology, and the call of commercial profits created a permissive attitude toward extralegal violence, which hampered individuals' abilities to avert such attacks.

When considered in the light of the better-known case of anti-abolitionist violence—the 1837 incident at Alton—the forcible stifling of abolitionism in Peoria appears restrained, as it did not involve fatalities. While the Alton incident culminated in an armed standoff and the deaths of Lovejoy and one of his attackers, the mob victories of Peoria's anti-abolitionists were largely without bloodshed. This contrast speaks to the disparate levels of abolitionist assertiveness in the two towns, and to significant differences in the resulting levels of violence. The incidents at

Peoria in the 1840s belie the findings of historians who claim that gradual withdrawal of the "sanction" of public opinion for mob violence led to a drastic decrease in violent oppression of abolitionists after 1840.[53] Such mob violence continued in the Old Northwest, for people maintained stark disagreements about the validity of abolition throughout the antebellum era, and were willing to support these positions with their fists.

A focused look at Peoria deepens our understanding of the particular trajectories and resolutions of violent mob action in the Old Northwest. In Peoria in 1843, as earlier in Alton, abolitionism opened up a chasm in the community, releasing conflict over the right to print antislavery statements. Abolitionists acted as willing provocateurs in these hostile environments, seeking to promulgate their message despite the risks this caused.

From the outset, the anti-abolition faction in Peoria used the press to convey their disapproval of abolition. They first held a public meeting at the courthouse on February 12, 1843. The local antislavery people had stated that they would form an abolition society the following day, an agenda their neighbors gathered in the courthouse could not countenance. Expressing their "entire disapprobation of the views and principles" of abolitionists, they argued that antislavery doctrine directly conflicted with federal and state law. They claimed that abolitionism would create sectional and interstate animosity, and "produce discord and disunion." They raised the issue of violence, resolving to embrace the use of force, "*when all other measures* have proved unsuccessful."[54] The anti-abolitionists publicly announced their goal of silencing their opponents by publishing their meeting minutes in the Peoria *Democratic*

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[53] Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860*, 175. Michael Feldberg makes a closely related point, arguing that the "most violent phase" of what he characterizes as an era of riots had ended along with the 1830s. Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America*, 52.

[54] Peoria *Democratic Press*, February 15, 1843 [Italics added].

Press. With this act, they implicitly warned the local antislavery people in print of the possibility of violent confrontation.

The anti-abolitionists at the courthouse resolved to attend the meeting at the Main Street Presbyterian Church to stop their opponents from organizing. As planned, they invaded the meeting on Monday evening. The abolitionists were vastly outnumbered, but nonetheless attempted to conduct their business, without success. Following a prayer led by the Reverend William T. Allan, the abolitionists proceeded with their organization, until their adversaries interrupted with their own resolutions. Allan presented a counter-argument, from which the mob quietly dissented, until he raised the issue of African American rights. Then, the mob interrupted Allan with "loud and boisterous yells and stamping." When he attempted to read further, the crowd cut him off with more noise.[55] Allan characterized the evening, and the public abolition effort in Peoria, as a "fiery ordeal."[56]

The Peoria mob continued their effort to curtail freedom of expression without community opposition. With their vocal protests, the mob made it clear that the productive portion of the meeting was over, and they remained in the church until all of the abolitionists had left in disgust. Their mission accomplished, they "then gave three cheers and retired in quiet." The anti-abolitionists thought that their show of strength had banished this menace from their town, and proven the "determination of the citizens of Peoria, that its fair fame shall not be tarnished by a public organization of a nest of negro stealers."[57] They thus called their

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[55] Peoria *Democratic Press*, February 15, 1843.
[56] William T. Allan, "Letter from Illinois," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 29, 1843.
[57] Peoria *Democratic Press*, February 15, 1843.

adversaries thieves of human property, and charged the abolitionists with involvement in illegal activity.

Unable to find a local paper willing to publish their account of the incident, the abolitionists used a letter to the Chicago *Western Citizen* to articulate their frustration with the representatives of law and order—the sheriff, peace officers, and established citizens present at the meeting—who had refused to intervene.[58] By their inactive presence, they granted an air of legitimacy to the silencing of the antislavery people. Despite abolitionist claims that this was repression and that it conflicted with the ideas about the right to free expression that they were in the process of expanding, extralegal violence found both a significant following and political legitimacy in this town on the Illinois River.[59] In post-Lovejoy Illinois, abolitionists could counter such acts with strong arguments in favor of their own civil liberties.

The conflict in antebellum Peoria was a local manifestation of a contentious national political environment. The two major political parties sought to silence discussion of abolitionist opinions, and to stifle efforts for African American rights, to prevent either of these divisive positions from expanding. In brief, both the Democrats and the Whigs had vested interests in maintaining a neutral or accommodating stance on slavery, fearing sectional discord and the fracturing of their own political structures.[60] In the early 1840s, they faced the additional threat of the Liberty Party in the Old Northwest. The major parties could only suppress discussion over slavery in the arenas that they controlled, however, such as the U.S. Congress and national party

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[58] James Taylor et al., “Freedom of Speech Suppressed,” in *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria*, ed. Samuel H. Davis (Peoria: 1843), 4.
[59] Curtis, *Free Speech, “The People’s Darling Privilege:” Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History*, 250-51.
[60] Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 388.

platforms. Dissent and contestation in other venues, such as the newspaper and local political structures, proved more difficult to contain, although party men did try to do so through their participation in some anti-abolition mobs.

In Peoria, newspapers expressed national and local partisan contestation. The local conflicts were not only battles of Whigs versus Democrats, but also the agendas of the established parties versus that of the immediate abolitionists and the Liberty Party. Returning to the publishing history and public lives of Mary Brown Davis and Samuel H. Davis provides one window into the local operations of partisanship. Their paper, the *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, had a neutral political agenda from its inception in 1837 to 1840, when Samuel H. Davis began to run it as a Whig Party Paper. As an impartial newspaper, the *Register* provided facts on Peoria and the surrounding area, focusing especially on agriculture and business.[61] To some degree, the partisan switch stemmed from the 1840 founding of a local Democratic paper, the Peoria *Democratic Press*.[62] Subsequently, Davis published advertisements for Whig party events, as well as increased partisan content.[63]

As did other editors of the time, Davis took direct political stands in his pages, but he believed in the free circulation of ideas and did not restrict his paper to those that he himself held. Davis advocated a strong Whig agenda in his editorial commentary at least through 1843, and claimed that he had no taste for abolition and found it a troubling question. He nonetheless granted abolitionists their say and their right to organize. On several occasions, he pointed out to

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[61] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, May 13, 1837: Samuel H. Davis intended some of this information for an Eastern audience. In the prospectus for the paper in its first issue, he wrote of his awareness of the "great interest which prevails throughout the Atlantic States in regard to information from the West."

[62] John S. Zieber, the editor of the Peoria *Democratic Press*, was a Southerner. Born Somerset City, Maryland, he came to Peoria and edited the paper from February 20, 1840 through his sale of it on June 1, 1846. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 149.

[63] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, May 13, 1837; July 14, 1840; April 21, 1838; August 14, 1840.

his readers that he still owned slaves in Virginia as if to show his own interest in the subject, but argued that he would not censor discussion of the institution.[64] Despite holding a dim view of abolitionists and of the Liberty Party, he printed announcements for their activities.[65] His explanation was simple and universal, for despite his personal dislike of abolitionism, Davis remained loyal to the ideal of a free press. As he construed these rights, he was obligated as an editor to ensure the unhindered circulation of ideas: "Our views of the freedom of the press and the right of free discussion often compel us to publish things … we individually disapprove of."[66] Controversy over the publication of antislavery information haunted the *Register* from its early issues, but Samuel H. Davis made press freedom a priority.

As a demonstration of Davis's commitment to open public discussion, and despite his allegedly neutral stance on the issue of abolition, the *Register* occasionally published pieces that represented all sides of the issue, including opposition to slavery. He printed advertisements for antislavery societies in the paper, which caused much consternation for some anti-abolitionist readers.[67] In defiance of his stated impartiality on slavery, he also editorialized on June 4, 1841

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[64] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, September 8, 1838; December 16, 1837. Davis wrote of Lovejoy's death in December: "We may possibly be the only slave owner connected with the press in this state-owning as we do two slaves in Virginia-and yet we hesitated not to lift our feeble voice against the outrages the moment we heard of them."
[65] When the abolitionists entered electoral politics in 1840, he wrote columns about the many similar views that the Whig and Liberty Parties held, apart from that of abolition. At that time he claimed that the Liberty Party was a diversionary device the Democrats had created to win the election by siphoning off potential Whig voters. *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, July 17, 1840; July 29, 1842.
[66] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, July 29, 1842.
[67] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, July 14, 1838; September 11, 1838; October 6, 1838; January 19, 1839; February 29, 1839; July 20, 1839; June 12, 1840; January 22, 1841; January 29, 1841; February 5, 1841; October 14, 1841; May 14, 1841; June 9, 1841; July 17, 1841; February 12, 1842; June 17, 1842. See *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, December 14, 1839; February 1, 1840: Some readers expressed great displeasure with Davis's willingness to publish abolition information without providing strong editorial criticism. Interestingly, these advertisements and editorials would sometimes appear in the same issue as advertisements for runaway slaves. One possible explanation for this could be financial expediency: Davis also published advertisements for liquor, despite being a strong advocate of temperance: *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, April 21, 1838; July 14, 21, 28, 1838; August 4, 11, 1838; September 8, 15, 1838; August 24, 31, 1839; September 7, 14, 21, 28, 1839; November 2, 1839; July 30, 1841.

that he regarded it as a "moral, social and political" evil, but that the South could control its circumstances within the states where it already existed.[68] When news of the 1837 Alton riot reached Peoria, he supported Elijah Lovejoy. Davis argued that Lovejoy merely acted to protect his property—his press—and to enact his right to speak his opinions.[69] Davis was one of only three Illinois editors to rebuke the Alton aggressors, and he did so despite his own status as a slave owner. He grounded this position in the correctness of law and the protections that the right to a free press afforded the American citizen.[70] On April 2, 1841, Davis advocated the unqualified right of all citizens to petition Congress, a position many opponents of abolition wanted to deny antislavery people in this age through the continuation of the "gag rule."[71]

While her views were less ambiguous, Samuel's wife Mary Brown Davis also found participation in the abolitionist press complicated. While she composed outspoken pieces for the *Western Citizen*, published 175 miles from Peoria, she wrote most of her articles for the *Register* on more conventional antebellum women's issues. Close to home, she focused on sentimental poetry and stories, temperance, love, the importance of being a good wife, Christianity, the

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[68] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, June 4, 1841. Samuel H. Davis later restated his editorial policy on abolition publication. He printed on February 1, 1840 that he would publish accounts of the formation of new societies, and proceedings of conventions of moderate length.
[69] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, September 27, 1837; December 2, 1837; December 9, 1837; December 16, 1837; January 27, 1838; August 31, 1839. Davis also printed an article by Lovejoy detailing his mobbing at St. Charles, Missouri, in September of 1837. See *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, October 14, 1837.
[70] Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 152.
[71] Among other issues, during the furor over the *Amistad* case from 1839 to 1841, Samuel H. Davis also reprinted material supporting the former slaves and their right to free themselves. *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, December 16, 1837; April 2, 1841. Unsurprisingly, Mary Brown Davis also wrote articles supporting the crew. *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, March 19, 1839; September 21, 1839; November 2, 1839; November 25, 1840. Samuel also argued that he had the right to discuss problems with the institution, but would grant anti-abolitionists the last word. Davis saw this as just since the abolitionists had forced the public discussion of the issue and had antislavery newspapers available, and therefore he had the right to set these parameters as he had established the paper "for other purposes." *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, June 4, 1841. Samuel H. Davis later restated his editorial policy on abolition publication. He printed on February 1, 1840 that he would publish accounts of the formation of new societies, and proceedings of conventions of moderate length.

nature of "woman," and motherhood.[72] When contrasted with her bold writing elsewhere, this may indicate that she found her local context threatening, for all of her organizational bravado, and that she had greater press freedom—and it was easier to make radical arguments—at a greater distance from her person, or the person of her husband.

Female abolitionist journalists played a leading role in the antislavery newspaper culture of the Old Northwest, and these papers were vital to the dissemination of the views of women and making their voices heard.[73] They drew upon concepts of female gender identity to speak to and on behalf of other women and their families, and claimed the newspaper as a public forum for their propaganda against slavery. They boasted of their successes in expanding the movement, and made cutting-edge arguments for racial equality and against the sexual oppression of slave women. [74]

Despite adhering to some traditional elements of women's role and special virtues, Mary Brown Davis and her fellow female journalists experienced sufficient freedom to advance a radical racial agenda in their public antislavery writings. Davis appealed to her readers' sense of common humanity, and conveyed the urgency of the cause of freedom. Not content to merely

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[72] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, December 9, 1837; May 13, 1837; May 5, 1838; June 7, 1838; July 7, 1838; August 4, 1838; October 20, 1838; April 20, 1839; May 25, 1839; May 1, 1840; June 16, 1841; October 16, 1841; November 19, 1841; January 14, 1842; April 15, 1842; March 15, March 25, 1842; September 2, 1842; October 7, 1842; February 10, 1843; February 25, 1843. For more on her views, see Chapter 3.
[73] "Newspapers…did more than any other institutions to carve out a political niche for women." Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, *Gender and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 6.
[74] In her publications outside of Peoria, Davis rhetorically demonstrated her deep personal commitment to abolition and willingness to go to great lengths to abolish slavery, including efforts to assert political leverage. She wrote: "I can sacrifice myself if needs be, to rescue them from bondage, and free my country from this foul stain." To her, the liberation of her "oppressed brethren" was an urgent matter. *Western Citizen*, September 2, 1842. Women had to take action of behalf of "slave wives and mothers" to eradicate this plague. She claimed that women had the power to influence their male relatives and persuade them of the necessity of considering slave welfare while voting. This "great work" could extend out of the family and encompass "all with whom we have intercourse." In an 1846 pamphlet Davis directly addressed voting, advancing electoral means and the Liberty Party as the most efficient techniques for abolition. Mary Brown Davis, *Scenes of Oppression in the Refined Circles of the South; Addressed to the Women of Illinois by Mrs. M. B. Davis* (Peoria County Anti-Slavery Society, 1846), 1, 5-6, 8.

perform a propaganda function and agitate for abolition in the abstract, she concretely argued for African American rights, and claimed former slaves would become productive members of society upon attaining their freedom: "The colored man or woman, when thrown upon their own resources, are competent to take care of themselves, and become independent and good citizens."[75] This provides but one telling example of female abolitionist journalists' progressive racial vision as Mary published it outside of Peoria, and one distinction from the mildness of Samuel's arguments.

Despite her more traditional tone in the *Register*, and her husband's reluctance to discuss the topic, Mary Brown Davis did write a few antislavery pieces for the Peoria paper, introducing her radicalism into the local print milieu. Shortly after moving to Peoria in 1837, she wrote an editorial describing her joy at leaving the South. She was happy to escape the "blighting, withering, desolating influence" of slavery, and offered publicly a "fervent prayer" for its destruction.[76] She gloried in escaping daily contact with the institution and sought to alleviate the suffering of people caught in its grip. Davis's efforts to do so, in combination with other like-minded souls who sought to organize locally, brought Peoria into a state of turmoil.

Following the riotous disturbance at the Peoria antislavery meeting, Samuel H. Davis immediately sought to distribute a condemnation of "these outrages" on the grounds of the freedom of the press. His pamphlet "Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria" argued against extralegal violence, served as an important piece of abolitionist propaganda in Illinois, and even

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[75] *Western Citizen*, January 25, 1844. She stated: "The manumitted slaves will become useful and respectable citizens, and that it is entirely safe to emancipate and permit them to remain in our midst."
[76] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, July 1, 1837; April 14, 1838.

reached a national audience.[77] Davis sent the pamphlet east with H. H. Kellogg, who planned to distribute it along the way to gain publicity for the cause. The pamphlet reached New York by April 13, for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the organ of the American Anti-Slavery Society, published excerpts from his argument. In May, the *Standard* wrote again of the Peoria conflict as a battle for "free discussion," and drew attention to "S. H. Davis" as the "one noble exception" to the acquiescence to the mob's will. He gained adulation from the national antislavery leadership for his choice to place "himself openly in the ranks of the friends of free discussion."[78]

Despite being accustomed to partisan commentary in their newspapers, residents of Peoria placed controversial abolitionist content beyond the pale, and attempted to stifle it in their midst. Davis sold his press to William H. Butler and Samuel G. Butler in September of 1842, but for a time continued to edit the paper as the new owners were ill.[79] After the *Register*'s new publishers refused to condemn the events of February, 1843, or even allow neutral discussion of the issues, Davis decided to sever all contact with the paper. The Butler brothers feared publishing Samuel H. Davis's rebuke of the mob, for their advertisers had threatened a boycott if they circulated abolitionist information. The anti-abolitionists who met at the courthouse imposed direct economic pressure on the owners of the newspapers, forcing them to refuse

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[77] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 13, 1843; Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 152.

[78] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 11, 1843. News of the troubles at Peoria also reached abolitionist Julius Willard at Jacksonville, Illinois. Willard wrote to William T. Allan in March that he too was suffering under threats of violence and efforts to silence him. He argued that his trials had been the source of "[m]uch good," as they awoke the previously ambivalent to the need for the cause. Julius A. Willard, Jacksonville, to William T. Allan, 10 March 1843, Samuel Willard Papers, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

[79] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, September 23, 1842; Samuel H. Davis, *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria* (Peoria, Illinois: 1843), 2.

publicity to abolition societies.[80] They baldly stated this intention in their resolutions: "If any of them refuse to comply with such request, [we will] withdraw our support and patronage from such newspaper press."[81] The new editor of the paper, the Whig lawyer Lincoln B. Knowlton, also had actively condemned the Peoria abolitionists at the "citizen" meetings.[82]

The local gag-rule imposed by the anti-abolitionists proved too much for Samuel H. Davis's moral code. He argued that a publisher ought to print notice of "all public meetings of whatever sort." He claimed that attacks on the "right of free discussion" would have serious consequences. Davis wrote that the smothering of press freedom in other communities had inevitably led them down the path to civil and economic ruin.[83] As evidence for this point he presented the stifling of Lovejoy's freedom and its impact on once-thriving Alton, currently in a state of real estate depreciation and stagnant trade.[84] As a counter-example, Davis offered

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[80] Davis, "Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria," 4.

[81] Zieber, as editor of the *Democratic Press*, presented himself as a shining example of a press uncorrupted by abolition doctrine: "We have never … published either the proceedings of or a notice for an abolition meeting, though repeatedly requested to do so …." Peoria *Democratic Press*, February 15, 1843.

[82] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, March 13, 1843.

[83] Davis, "Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria," 6: "Wherever free discussion has been tolerated, and a spirit manifested to maintain the supremacy of the laws, there has been prosperity.…"

[84] Prior to these disorderly and disruptive events, Alton had been encroaching upon the commercial prosperity of its older rival, St. Louis. Following the problems of 1837, the financial panic, stalling of railroad plans, and the Lovejoy murder, the subsequent business prosperity of Alton declined: "Trade was stagnant and property depreciated, while many of the most enterprising business firms met with financial ruin." A significant portion of business returned to St. Louis, and Alton's potential to surpass that city soon seemed like a frail memory. The authors argue that the town regained some prosperity after 1842. *History of Madison County, Illinois. Illustrated. With Biographical Sketches of Many Prominent Men and Pioneers*, (Edwardsville, Illinois: W. R. Brink and Co, 1882), 389, Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 231-32. Alton's degeneracy became an accepted topic of discussion in antislavery newspapers. In an 1841 account of a duel there, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* wrote, "'Bloody Alton' belongs to the south, of course, though geographically north of the line." Further, in the *Standard* of June 1, 1843, an account of the suppression of antislavery discussion at Shurtleff College, a Baptist school at Alton, claimed it was "so well known as 'bloody Alton.'" *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* March 25, 1841; *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 1, 1843, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* May 11, 1843.

Chicago, "the very hot-bed of abolitionism," as the home of flourishing expansion and business opportunity.[85]

In the pamphlet, Davis based his argument on the stance that all people, equal with him, had the right to think for themselves, print and discuss whatever issues and subjects interested them. Citing the First Amendment and Illinois legal codes, he argued both that the abolitionists had every right to meet and that their antagonists had acted contrary to law.[86] Davis quoted a letter from a group of Peoria abolitionists, which laid out the local suppression of their rights. Both of the Peoria papers, Whig and Democratic, had refused to publish this letter, and only the *Western Citizen* and Davis's self-published pamphlet finally granted it public circulation. The abolitionists themselves cited God and the "law of love" to justify their meeting. They claimed the mob's actions were inexplicable, for they had not broken any laws by assembling.[87]

At the courthouse the evening following the antislavery gathering, February 14, the anti-abolitionists led another meeting to condemn the local reformers, and to assert the need for town unity. Samuel H. Davis noted that there were 200 to 300 people present, but stated that only forty-four actively voted for the resolutions. Davis thus emphasized that mob sentiment did not, in fact, represent the majority, who were "friends of law and order."[88] In contrast to Davis, the anti-abolitionist voice in the press, John S. Zieber of the Peoria *Democratic Press*, argued that there were present "probably over four hundred persons," and that they shared great unanimity on the issue of slavery.[89] At that meeting, the committee of prominent lawyers, merchants, and industrial entrepreneurs prepared deliberately non-partisan resolutions setting forth their

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[85] Davis, "Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria," 6.
[86] *Ibid*., 2-3.
[87] *Ibid*., 3.
[88] *Ibid*., 5.
[89] *Peoria Democratic Press,* February 15, 1843.

positions.[90] They stated that abolitionist arguments were unconstitutional and fostered sectional tensions, and alluded to the presence of outside interlopers in the community by making reference to "a very small minority of our citizens and others" attempting to organize an abolition society in Peoria.[91] By this, they could have intended to imply that either the female abolitionists or people they identified as foreign agitators in their cohesive community were acting out of place.[92]

While claiming high regard for the principle of freedom of assembly, the anti-abolitionists restricted this to their own faction and to ideas that they found palatable. They boldly silenced those who sought to introduce to their town what they regarded as destructive abolition activity. Their resolutions from the February 14 meeting read like a laundry list of classic anti-abolition fears, including runaway slaves,

> free negro loafers, practical amalgamation, treason, disunion, civil war, the destruction of all those civil rights of 'life, liberty, and property' (to which we have at least an equal claim with negroes) and other evils, necessarily resulting from the establishment of abolition principles.

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[90] Simeon De Witt Drown, *Drown's Record and Historical View of Peoria from the Discovery by the French Jesuit Missionaries, in the Seventeenth Century, to the Present Time. Also, an Almanac for 1851, Calculated for the Latitude and Longitude of Peoria, Illinois* (Peoria: E. O. Woodcock, 1851), 160-62.; *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, April 7, 1837; Charles Ballance, *History of Peoria, Illinois* (Peoria: N. C. Nason, 1870), 119, 29-30. The occupations of the leaders of this meeting are as follows: W. F. Bryan, [attorney and investor in early banks; Andrew Gray, Esq. [attorney and merchant]; William R. Hopkins [early industrialist, metal castings]; E. N. Powell, [attorney]; N. H. Purple [attorney and judge]; John Rankin [owned and operated flour mills].

[91] Peoria *Democratic Press*, February 15, 1843: "Resolved, that so long as the great mass of our population is utterly opposed to the principles and practices of modern abolitionists, and regard them with abhorrence, as revolting to all those sentiments of pride and self-respect which white men ought to possess, and to all the lessons of patriotism and veneration for the constitution and laws of our country, which we have received from our fathers, we will not submit to the introduction among us of a society avowing those principles."

[92] They claimed in a later resolution that the Reverend William T. Allan was a foreign agitator and a "disturber of the public peace." Allan was only arguably "foreign," for while he was born in the South, he lived in town and was the minister of Peoria's Main Street Presbyterian Church from 1842 to 1844. He traveled as the "general agent and lecturer" for the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society from 1840-1846, but nonetheless held a legitimate position in the community of Peoria. Drown, *Drown's Record and Historical View of Peoria from the Discovery by the French Jesuit Missionaries, in the Seventeenth Century, to the Present Time. Also, an Almanac for 1851, Calculated for the Latitude and Longitude of Peoria, Illinois*, 149, Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 53, 90-91, 93-94, 96.; "Putnam County," *Western Citizen,* February 22, 1844. Allan was in Jacksonville in 1846. Cyr, ""I would not be a master": Democracy and the Political Culture of Mastery in Illinois, 1837-1858", 7, 21, 37, Samuel Willard, College Hill, to Almyra Willard, 12 March 1846, Samuel Willard Papers, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

In this view, abolitionism would turn their orderly society upside down. They further demonstrated their scorn for African Americans and their focus on interracial sex with the statement that they did not want "the negro race … in our bed chambers and around our tables."[93] The African American population in Peoria at the time was very small and did not participate in these abolition debates.[94] The anti-abolitionists saw the importance of maintaining social and racial stratification as self-evident, and directly advocated censorship of press and meetings that opposed their ideas.

In his writings, Samuel H. Davis staunchly maintained his ignorance of the ongoing local abolitionist efforts, a stance surely duplicitous given the prominence of his wife in this organizing. He wrote in his pamphlet:

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[93] Peoria *Democratic Press*, February 15, 1843. This concern over interracial sex was borne out in an 1829 Illinois law that forbade interracial marriage. Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 36. Laws against interracial sexuality and marriage remained on the books through the 1960s. Barbara C. Cruz and Michael Berson, "The American Melting Pot? Miscegenation Laws in the United States," *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no. 4 (2001). See also Chapter 6.

[94] Norman Dwight Harris, *The History of Negro Servitude in Illinois and of the Slavery Agitation in that State, 1719-1864*, Illinois Sesquicentennial, ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1968), 226-27, Adade Mitchell Wheeler, *The Roads They Made: Women in Illinois History* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1977), 24. In the early period of Illinois abolitionist organizing under study here, free African Americans did not take an active role in the struggle. Their small numbers and significant legal disabilities blocked the creation of a strong public voice. The very insecurity that many people faced in constantly having their freedom come under suspicion likely proved formidable. This did later change, for Peoria newspapers reveal significant free African American activism in that town beginning in the 1850s. Between August 4, 1859-August 4, 1864 the *Peoria Democratic Transcript* published at least eleven articles related to local African American rights and discrimination. I have found no indication that they played a direct role in the anti-abolitionist conflicts of the previous decade. Formal African American political activism did not accelerate in Illinois until after 1847, and then centered on repealing the restrictive "Black Laws" for free African Americans in Illinois, not on abolition of Southern slavery. There were some exceptions to this general pattern: one being that Nimrod Jones of Chicago attended the 1843 National Convention of Colored Citizens held at Buffalo, New York. National Convention of Colored Citizens, *Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens: Held at Buffalo, on the 15th,16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August 1843*. (New York: Piercy and Reed, 1843), Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861*, ed. August Meier, *Blacks in the New World* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 156.

> Of the proposed anti-slavery meeting also I had thought nothing and cared nothing. Of the principles, views, and objects of the anti-slavery men (and I may add women,) I had never sought to inform myself, the study thereof not being in accordance with my inclination.[95]

Here, Samuel slyly alluded to the presence of women organizers, while reserving comment on their identity. He thus skirted mention of Mary's abolitionist activism, despite the public evidence of her newspaper columns and prominent role in the local and state anti-slavery movement. Indeed, he claimed that he did not learn of the riot until the day after it occurred, highly unlikely for a man living in the same house as someone who attended the meeting.[96]

One reason for this deceit may have been that Samuel H. Davis wanted to retain his Whig affiliation, which in this partisan environment entailed withholding endorsement of abolitionism. He claimed that the Democrats instigated the riot, and that they had convinced some Whigs to join to take the blame for the disorderly conduct.[97] Seeking to preserve their good name, he denied that these Whigs represented the "true" spirit of that party; the defenders of liberty of expression and action.[98] In case there remained any question as to his views, he also baldly stated that his objections to mob rule did not mean that he had embraced antislavery: "There are some ignoramuses in this community who think, because I condemn these disgraceful proceedings, that I am therefore an abolitionist!"[99] Samuel did take up the cause by the late

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[95] Davis, *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria*, 2.
[96] *Ibid.,* 4.
[97] *Ibid.,* 7.
[98] *Ibid., 8.*
[99] On March 9, 1843, concerned local abolitionists held a convention at Farmington, Illinois to discuss the suppression of freedom of assembly that was engendered the previous February. The abolitionists present denounced the mob action, and noted the lack of violent resistance and noble conduct of the much-abused Peoria abolitionists. Samuel H. Davis spoke to affirm the importance of freedom of the press, and largely excerpted his speech at that convention from his pamphlet, *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria*. *Western Citizen*, March 16, 1843; July 13, 1843; August 3, 1843; Davis, *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria*, 7.

1840s, and joined in related anti-racist action by signing an 1847 petition against the "Black Laws."[100]

Controversy over press freedom and over the political culture of Illinois in the 1830s and 1840s demonstrate that slavery and institutionalized racism were woven into the fabric of the entire nation, and not merely the South. Anti-abolition arguments often revealed the influence of ideas of national unity, racism, and party discipline, as well as a pro-slavery stance. This hostile racial climate conforms to larger patterns of discrimination prevalent at the time across the North.[101] When contemporaries witnessed this, they saw how it meant that the institution had a national reach, and this affirmed the importance of converting the region to the antislavery position, and of removing widespread prejudice. The Old Northwest held the key to improving the nation's moral landscape.

In this region still in formation, efforts to shape political speech in radical directions, such as abolitionism, could not be sanctioned by "respectable" elements in the community. When abolitionists and their allies made claims about a universal humanity, one that went beyond race, region, and systems of power, their opponents equated this with sectional conflict and the dissolution of the nation, including their valuable commercial ties with the South, and attacked them. For their part, abolitionists did not lack weapons, and they deftly maneuvered the censorship of antislavery discussion into advantageous claims for freedom of the press. By

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[100] Peoria abolitionists petitioned the Illinois General Assembly in February of 1847 for the repeal of the State Black Laws. Thirty-nine people signed, including five women, among them Mary Brown Davis, the once recalcitrant Samuel, and their son James Scott. Samuel H. Davis died of cholera June 18, 1849. Muelder, *Fighters for Freedom: The History of Anti-slavery Activities of Men and Women Associated with Knox College*, 132-33, "To Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Illinois," February, 1847, Samuel H. Davis File, Peoria Public Library, Peoria, Illinois.

[101] In his study of northern African Americans, Leon F. Litwack observed widely prevalent antebellum "discrimination against the Negro" and beliefs in white supremacy. Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), vii.

defending themselves with the right to free expression, they tied press freedom to the principles underlying the American polity.

In Peoria, as in Alton, the participants in extralegal violence intended to silence the problematic voice of abolitionism within their society, and promote social stability. Anti-abolition mobs often voiced fears of undermining their precarious societal balance, predicated on racial, gender, and economic domination. In Peoria and Alton, the men appeared terrified by the civil disruption that abolition and racial equality could bring to the social order of their river towns, and that of the nation as a whole.[102] Vocal activism against slavery violated the "tacit consensus" that town leaders in early Illinois believed was necessary for the populace to remain orderly.[103]

In both Illinois towns, many men who took an active role in opposing abolitionism had significant economic and political clout in their community. Some used their lofty positions to publicize their intentions of shutting down the abolitionists.[104] The people in the Alton mob represented a wide range of occupations and social distinction, from prominent merchants, doctors, lawyers, and ministers, to ordinary mechanics, workmen and laborers.[105] In Peoria, the mob drew on both major parties, and its main leaders were distinguished attorneys, including

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[102] Historian Michael Feldberg uses the name "preservatist" for the riots that represented the effort of people with "some degree of economic, social, or political power" to prolong their "privileged position over groups below them on the social ladder." Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America*, 34.

[103] James Edward Davis, *Frontier Illinois, A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 287, David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), xii. The abolitionists themselves declared no wish to be a part of this consensus, aiming to question the social structures they found unjust.

[104] See also Leonard Richards, who claims that prominent mob actors published the records of their meetings, and let their intentions to assault their opponents become public knowledge in advance of their attacks. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 5, 16, 77, 158-59.

[105] Tanner, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, an account of the life, trials, and perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, who was killed by a pro-slavery mob at Alton, Illinois, the night of November 7, 1837. By an eye-witness, [Henry Tanner]*, 138-39.

several who held political office.[106] Samuel H. Davis noted the presence among their members of prominent legal men such as Norman H. Purple, then candidate for a judgeship.[107] In their number were less eminent lawyers, as well as wealthy merchants, capitalists, and more than one banker.[108] A fear of sectionalism animated their arguments, and they vehemently stated their desire to retain national unity. Some of the anti-abolitionists had direct commercial ties to the South, such as Andrew Gray, a merchant in partnership with a Virginian, and Henry Stillman, a steamboat owner.[109] Their economic associations added to the mandate for silence on slavery prevalent in many parts of the North.[110]

As their southern links indicate, attitudes to abolition were intimately connected with peoples' lived experience of the economy. Over the course of the 1830s and 1840s, Peoria experienced rapid expansion and commercial volatility. Illinois joined the Union as a state in 1818, but settlement remained scattered into the 1830s and 1840s, with most people distributed

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[106] Norman H. Purple was a prominent lawyer at the local and state levels. He served as a State Supreme Court Judge and Circuit Judge from 1844 to 1848. William L. May was an attorney who served one term in the legislature and two terms in Congress as a Democrat prior to coming to Peoria. Francis Voris was a pioneer merchant of Peoria who was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1836 as a Democrat. Lincoln Brown Knowlton was a Whig who ran for local office in 1847, against Moses Pettengill [the Liberty candidate.] Ballance, *History of Peoria, Illinois*, 210-11, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Illinois of the Nineteenth Century*, (Philadelphia: Galaxy Publishing Company, 1875), 354-55, David McCulloch, ed., *History of Peoria County* (Chicago and Peoria: Munsell Publishing Company, 1901), 134, James M.. Rice, *Peoria City and County Illinois, A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress, and Achievement, Illustrated.* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), 367-68, 72-75.

[107] Davis, "Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria," 2.

[108] Drown, *Drown's Record and Historical View of Peoria from the Discovery by the French Jesuit Missionaries, in the Seventeenth Century, to the Present Time. Also, an Almanac for 1851, Calculated for the Latitude and Longitude of Peoria, Illinois*, 160-62, *History of Peoria County Illinois*, (Chicago: Johnson and Company, 1880), 527. Other attorneys included George Metcalfe, Elihu N. Powell, and William F. Bryan. *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, August 31, 1839; July 10, 1840: Bryan and Powell served as active members of the Peoria Colonization Society in 1839 and 1840, along with Samuel H. Davis.

[109] *Peoria Register and Northwestern Gazetteer*, April 7, 1837; Ballance, *History of Peoria, Illinois*, 119, 29-30, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Illinois of the Nineteenth Century*, 189, *History of Peoria County Illinois*, 527.: Another merchant was Francis Voris, mentioned above; Lewis Howell was a banker, and William F. Bryan also invested in banks; and Isaac Underhill was a "capitalist" who invested in the pork industry, internal improvements, and hotels.

[110] Merton Lynn Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority*, *Minorities in American History* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975), 26-27.

in towns along its numerous waterways.[111] Local struggles over political power informed those that took place on the state, regional, and national levels. With the diffusion of transportation improvements throughout the Old Northwest, much of the economic fortune of the nation as a whole had become directly or indirectly linked to slavery.

Peoria exemplifies conditions in developing Illinois towns that increasingly depended on South-bound river commerce. The chief local industries in the 1840s included farming the surrounding countryside, with an emphasis on wheat, corn, and hogs. Entrepreneurs processed these commodities into flour, meat, beer, and whiskey for exchange.[112] These products all took advantage of, and fed into, the expansion of a burgeoning southern trade. Peoria's steamboat traffic began in December of 1829, with the ship the *Liberty*. By 1833, as was a development across the entire Ohio River valley, this river already saw significant southern interchange,

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[111] The laudatory book *Illinois in 1837* enumerated Illinois's most impressive waterways as Lake Michigan and its tributaries on the North, the Mississippi on the West, the Ohio on the South, and the Illinois and Kaskaskia winding through the "centre" of the state. The author continued to state the wonders of Illinois's natural transportation: "Such is the intersection of Illinois by these waters, that no settlement in it is far from a point of boatable communication, either with Lake Michigan, the Mississippi, the Ohio, or the Illinois." European settlement of Peoria began in the 1690s with the French, and following statehood, "Americans" organized the village that later became Peoria City in 1825. The builders of Peoria chose to locate themselves on the Illinois River, "the most considerable tributary of the Mississippi above the Missouri." By 1844, the town had a population of 1,619. Earnest E. East, "History of Peoria," 1946, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, H. L. Ellsworth, *Illinois in 1837; A Sketch Descriptive of the Situation, Boundaries, Face of the Country, Prominent Districts, Prairies, Rivers, Minerals, Animal, Agricultural Productions, Public Lands, Plans of Internal Improvement, Manufactures, &c. of the State of Illinois: Also, Suggestions to Emigrants, Sketches of the Counties, Cities, and Principal Towns in the State: Together with a Letter on the Cultivation of the Prairies, by the Hon. H. L. Ellsworth. To Which Are Annexed the Letters from a Rambler in the West* (Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell, 1837), 28, 49, 31.
[112] Earnest E. East, "History of Peoria," c. 1950-1965, Peoria Public Library Collection, Peoria, Illinois.

especially with St. Louis and New Orleans.[113] Peoria merchants and entrepreneurs could thus argue that disruption of this traffic would have had significant economic consequences. The economically prominent anti-abolition residents of Illinois used what they saw as the permeable boundary between North and South as but one justification for their actions. Coupled with their partisan identity, fears of social disorder, the influence of outsiders, and racial leveling, all created an environment where they felt comfortable using extralegal violence to stifle press freedom. The anti-abolitionists sought to preserve their social order in the face of these threats. They did not vanquish the local abolition spirit, although Peoria saw such violence repeated throughout the decade.

Peoria's determined abolitionists faced violent opposition through the late 1840s, despite moments of relative calm. One such time was May of 1844, when the Illinois Society held its

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[113] Until 1848, the majority of Peoria's trade focused on St. Louis, but following the completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, Peorians began to take advantage of Chicago's new availability as a market. A wider array of consumer products became available as a result of this innovation, and commerce boomed in Peoria. See *Peoria Register and Northwestern* Gazetteer, December 11, 1840; Drown, *Drown's Record and Historical View of Peoria from the Discovery by the French Jesuit Missionaries, in the Seventeenth Century, to the Present Time. Also, an Almanac for 1851, Calculated for the Latitude and Longitude of Peoria, Illinois*, 107, East, "History of Peoria," , Ellsworth, *Illinois in 1837; A Sketch Descriptive of the Situation, Boundaries, Face of the Country, Prominent Districts, Prairies, Rivers, Minerals, Animal, Agricultural Productions, Public Lands, Plans of Internal Improvement, Manufactures, &c. of the State of Illinois: Also, Suggestions to Emigrants, Sketches of the Counties, Cities, and Principal Towns in the State: Together with a Letter on the Cultivation of the Prairies, by the Hon. H. L. Ellsworth. To Which Are Annexed the Letters from a Rambler in the West*, 34. As of 1837, a stagecoach line also linked Peoria with the other Illinois towns of Galena, Chicago, Springfield, and Knoxville. The state legislature in 1837 and 1838 was "fired with zeal for building railroads—on paper," and made many ambitious plans to connect the state. Shortsighted planning ensured that funding for these measures soon ran out, and the railroad did not come to Peoria until 1854. Ellsworth, *Illinois in 1837; A Sketch Descriptive of the Situation, Boundaries, Face of the Country, Prominent Districts, Prairies, Rivers, Minerals, Animal, Agricultural Productions, Public Lands, Plans of Internal Improvement, Manufactures, &c. of the State of Illinois: Also, Suggestions to Emigrants, Sketches of the Counties, Cities, and Principal Towns in the State: Together with a Letter on the Cultivation of the Prairies, by the Hon. H. L. Ellsworth. To Which Are Annexed the Letters from a Rambler in the West*, 126-27. William T. Allan wrote in 1843 that both the Illinois and the Mississippi Rivers also contributed to commercial traffic with the South, further proving the entanglement of Illinois's residents with the slave system. William T. [Allan?] Allen, "From a 'Son of a Slaveholder'," *Liberator,* August 25, 1843. Across the entire Ohio River valley, division over slavery was sharp. Southern Indiana also engaged in substantial trade with the South. Richard Franklin Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870*, *Midwestern History and Culture Series*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 80.

annual meeting at Peoria with no riotous disturbance.[114] However, persecution of abolitionists continued into 1846. In May, after other citizens of Peoria broke up their meeting at the courthouse and "unmercifully egged" several abolitionists, they had to hold their gathering in Moses Pettingill's storeroom.[115] After sustaining repeated anti-abolitionist attacks, including threats to tar and feather Ichabod Codding, they debated the proper course of action for their self-defense. They decided to call for armed, protective reinforcements, and keep Codding safe in Pettingill's house. This militancy displeased attendee Levi Spencer, yet he saw the necessity of safeguarding Codding. Demonstrating aid from the town authorities missing from the 1843 incidents, the mayor of Peoria came to Pettingill's house and stayed with them. This collaborative effort dissuaded their intended attackers.[116] Even this was not the end of their local challenges.[117]

Later in 1846, Samuel H. Davis himself suffered from a brutal anti-abolitionist attack intended to silence his voice in the press. He remained a polarizing figure locally, and a scapegoat for anti-abolition wrath. His assailants claimed to be angered by an antislavery article in the *Western Citizen* that they erroneously believed Davis wrote. These men attacked and beat Davis in daytime on a busy Peoria street, and he sustained serious injuries, as did his son who attempted to help him. Even a magistrate was unable to stop the assault, until two private citizens intervened and took Davis home. That same day local authorities fined one of the assailants, while the other fled the vicinity. Despite the severity of his wounds, Davis used this

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[114] Chicago *Western Citizen*, June 20, 1844.
[115] *Missouri Republican*, May 11, 1846, reprinted in East, "History of Peoria."
[116] Spencer Diaries, 7 May 1846. See also Chapter 2.
[117] When Reverend William T. Allan brought a former slave his father had freed to Peoria in the process of helping him settle elsewhere, the local authorities arrested Allan and gave the elderly man to the sheriff to be sold in accordance with the Illinois Black Laws. Spencer Diaries, 6, 7, 20 May 1846. For more on this incident, see Chapter 6.

situation to his advantage. He agreed not to press charges in exchange for a future promise of non-interference with the Liberty Party in Peoria, as well as the use of the courthouse for antislavery meetings.[118] This was one more sign of how Davis's commitment to freedom of the press led him along the path to full-fledged abolition.

Under close examination, early Peoria and Alton appear to have teetered on the precipice of explosive violence, and Alton went over the edge. Extralegal conflict emerged under distinct circumstances in these two towns, and brought them to significantly different end points. The armed opposition that the Alton abolitionists and their allies presented to their adversaries raised the level of violence to murder. One reason historians have given that the Alton riot escalated so far was due to the resistance with which the Lovejoy faction faced their enemies.[119] In communities that were supportive of abolition, such as Oberlin, Ohio, events even as provocative as the liberation of a fugitive slave—as occurred in the notorious Oberlin-Wellington rescue of 1858—could proceed peacefully. Violence grew out of communities where there was more contestation over the issue, whether due to racism, economics, politics, or religion.[120] In contrast, in Peoria, while community opposition was strong and the abolitionists maintained their efforts to organize, they did not take up arms in self-defense in 1843. In addition, Elijah Lovejoy insisted upon his right to publish his radical message right where he lived. Samuel H. Davis

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[118] *Western Citizen*, July 7, 1846.
[119] "But some resisted, and this resistance intensified the mob's grievances and escalated the violence." Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 111. Feldberg echoes this point, claiming the resistance that escalated the violence was what made the scene at Alton so deadly. Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America*, #49.
[120] Roland M. Baumann, *The 1858 Oberlin-Wellington Rescue: A Reappraisal* (Oberlin Ohio: Oberlin College, 2003), 27-28.

presented moderate and universal messages of press freedom.[121] Mary Brown Davis, for her part, largely confined her most radical messages to the Chicago *Western Citizen*, writing mainly conventional articles for her local paper. In general, the Peoria abolitionists and free press advocates were less obvious in their dissent from the status quo. This contrast should not, however, be taken too far. While Peorians did not violently resist, they did persist, and conflict continued at least until 1846.

Violence emerged in these communities as anti-abolitionists denied the legitimacy of abolitionist discussion or public debate. Conflict arose from this denial, as debate became pushed to the margins, and advocacy of abolition became an offense punishable by forced silence, violence, or death. The boundaries of permitted speech on slavery and race hinged upon ideas about social structure, economic stability, and partisan politics. The abolitionists linked their defense with larger issues, including the right of citizens to free expression and freedom of the press. The adversity abolitionists faced in the Old Northwest brought them support from their local and national compatriots, and served as confirmation of the importance of the region to the broader reform struggle. The anti-abolition faction, for their part, stifled "abolitionist provocations" with threats of addressing future such efforts with extreme violence. They linked the abolitionists' aberrant behavior with social disorder, anti-hierarchal acts, and partisan politics. Racial radicals continued their stalwart efforts for abolition and to protect their liberties despite these perilous clashes.

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[121] Most Peorians, including Samuel H. Davis, were well aware that Lovejoy's martyrdom created many new abolitionists. The "surest way to make abolitionists is to persecute them and mob them; and I have therefore thought it the wisest course to let them alone." Lovejoy's murder reminded both factions of the consequences of mob activity. Davis, *Free Discussion Suppressed in Peoria*, 2. This understanding fettered many northern anti-abolitionists. Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War*, 38.

III: "We concluded to shake the dust from our feet:" Flight from Danger to Freedom of Expression

A number of Old Northwesterners took to the itinerant life out of necessity, when local repression of their anti-slavery efforts drove them to seek a national platform for their agendas. Some activists embraced a nomadic existence to continue their reform work when local opposition was too strong. They chose to use non-local forums to get a hearing, much as did Samuel H. Davis when he sent his pamphlet east to find a publisher.[122]

The Cambridge, Ohio newspaperman Mathew R. Hull discovered partisan and social control agendas motivated his community's efforts to silence his freedom of the press. He became a traveler in September 1847 after a prolonged period of attacks on his newspaper office. Beginning in 1844, Hull and his co-editor Mr. Wolff presented a bold and outspoken agenda in their paper, the *Clarion of Freedom*. They argued against slavery, against pro-slavery ministers, for peace, and for temperance, all the while noting "the importance of educating the masses."[123] Ultimately, this mobbing drove Hull and his family from town, developments well chronicled in

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[122] Mr. Burgin was another westerner who traveled east for safety, for fundraising, and to obtain a platform on which to speak. After living in Illinois for twenty years, he fled the state in 1843 and gave lectures in Brooklyn, New York in October detailing his trials. A magistrate, he had refused to permit a kidnapper to use falsified indentures to gain custody of three "colored children." This man took them regardless, and Burgin arrested him. The man paid his bail and took the children away to the South. When he returned to Illinois for his court date, he brought a large cask of peach brandy, which he shared liberally with the sheriff and all comers near the courtroom. Some of the jurors were drunk when they took their places, and deemed the "kidnapper innocent." They fined Mr. Burgin, who fled to the East to avoid this cost. He did not intend to make this a permanent move, and he gave lectures to raise money to pay this debt and return to his family in Illinois. Eastern audiences provided the financial means for Burgin to overcome the injustice he faced in the Old Northwest. "SLAVES AND MISSIONS.--KIDNAPPING IN ILLINOIS," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* October 5, 1843.

[123] *Clarion of Freedom*. September 3, 1847.

his paper.[124] Hull became an itinerant for a time, and strategically spoke through his own newspaper, continued in his absence by Wolff. He fled his threatening environs but remained in contact with his hometown by correspondence from a safe distance, and ultimately chose to move the paper to New Concord, merely nine miles away.

Hull's problems appear to have had partisan and moral origins, as he offered a critique of positions and values he found aberrant. He had disparaged local and national Whig politicians, and argued that the "Cambridge Clique, an Association of such politicians," incited the attack on him as they had publicly spoken against the paper and its editor.[125]

Over the course of several weeks, an infuriated crowd had repeatedly attacked the office that also served as Hull's family home. Hull was ill and recovering in the building, but his helpless state did not stop his foes from egging and stoning the building and breaking the windows on July 23 and 25. The attacks continued, he claimed variously, seventeen or eighteen nights. Hull wrote that "[t]hey threatened to tear down our press—to blow up our building with powder, and to burn the house over our heads." He asked the mayor for protection, a curfew, or other aid, but he and the council took no action to help. The editor was convinced "that some of them would rejoice to see our blood and the blood of our wife and children rippling through the gutters of their streets."[126] Observers in Cambridge concurred that local law enforcement made no effort to secure Hull's property, nor his family's safety.[127]

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[124] M. R. Hull, "Editorial Correspondence," *Clarion of Freedom,* September 24, 1847. Hull was also active in the executive committee of the 1843 meeting of the Indiana Anti-Slavery Society: "The Anniversary," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* November 1, 1843.

[125] *Clarion of Freedom*, June 14, 1847, M. R. Hull, *Clarion of Freedom*, October 1, 1847. Hull incited further mob anger when he printed an admonition of local storekeeper Wyatt Hutchinson, whom Hull claimed sold whiskey that intoxicated various people, including a woman and a child. *Clarion of Freedom*, September 10, 1847.

[126] M. R. Hull, *Clarion of Freedom*, October 1, 1847.

[127] Isaac Oldham and Isaac Walker, *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847.

Wolff first took on a more outspoken role in the paper while Hull was ill, arguing in its pages that Cambridge's residents were suppressing Hull's freedom of the press. These men did not attack Hull for being "dangerous" or a "villain," but for "exposing the corruptions of our popular religion, for preaching Liberty, Temperance, and Peace, and speaking the plain truth!" Wolff claimed the Bible as the foundation for their doctrine, and argued that the mob would not silence their paper. Wolff was further outraged that Hull lay ill in the building at the time it was attacked, and even this did not stop the assault. In his view, this betrayed carelessness for human life.[128]

Wolff's outraged piece was but one in the series of local salvos across political lines that surrounded the mob actions. Some local residents voiced anger with Wolff's tone in the abovementioned article, in particular for his comparison of the town with "Vicksburgh" and other places notorious for civil unrest. Wolff mocked their opponents, claiming that their concern stemmed from the desire to keep the "good name" of Cambridge unscathed. "If they deprecate such acts," he wrote, "why do they not raise their voices against them, and thus manifest their innocence and opposition?" He demanded of the community that they call out the perpetrators.[129]

Hull left town briefly in early September, and the Whig party held a meeting about him in his absence, which much displeased him, as he saw it as counter to open discussion and freedom of the press. He argued that the Whigs outside of Cambridge disapproved of this mobbing, and would unite with the Liberty and Democratic parties to "put down the mob spirit of Cambridge."

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[128] J. W[olff], "Eggs-actly." *Clarion of Freedom,* July 30, 1847.

[129] J. W[olff], "Too Hard," *Clarion of Freedom*, August 13, 1847. Vicksburg, Mississippi had a notorious incident of vigilante violence in 1835. Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America*, 27, 38.

He was confident that the *Clarion* had widespread support, and wrote "[t]he whole country is roused in our behalf." Hull saw the agenda of the Whig meeting as stifling "our liberty of thought, and the liberty of the press" but argued in the strongest possible terms that this would fail. His foes, he wrote, "will bite the dust before we will."[130]

Hull did not dispute that he and Wolff disturbed the peace of the town, for he saw that as an essential part of the reform mission. Quoting from the biblical Matthew, he wrote, "[t]hank God we came not to Cambridge 'to send peace, but a *sword.'*" He elaborated that theirs was a sword of peace, temperance, abolition, and freedom, and compared his oppression with that of Jesus. Hull further argued that he only pointed out the sins of the deserving, not the entire town.[131]

Despite their pain and trials, Hull and Wolff bragged that the throwing of rocks and eggs only increased their subscription base, and printed extensive documentation from the surrounding community to demonstrate their numerous local allies. Supportive people held meetings in Cambridge and north, east, and south, at a distance of up to 177 miles. People at these meetings stood up for Hull's right to express his views and spoke against efforts to

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[130] *Clarion of Freedom*, September 10, 1847. The Whigs called up their meeting with the vague agenda "to confer upon matters relative to the interest of said town." This meeting condemned Hull and Wolff for their commentary upon the character of the town and its citizens. The men present claimed that this inflammatory work "arous[ed] a spirit of retaliation in the breasts of certain persons unknown to this meeting." Despite this justification of the mob, the Whigs then condemned it, and about faced once again with an implication that the attack must have stemmed from Hull and Wolff refusing to "conduct themselves in a manner at all tolerable." Some attendees called for the delay of resolutions until Hull was in town to defend himself, but a faction Hull identified as "Charley and his 'whisky boys' overruled them. M. R. Hull, "Cambridge Mob Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847.

[131] In this regard, he said that Cambridge was actually worse than Vicksburg, for his house was mobbed continuously for most of a month. Hull was not the first abolitionist mobbed in Cambridge, for Hull also claimed others included John Walker, Frederick Douglass, and a Mr. Selby, all when they tried to lecture there. M. R. Hull, "Cambridge Mob Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847.

suppress them, including the numerous violent assaults.[132] Hull received and published numerous letters of solidarity from the surrounding area of Ohio, and even from Pennsylvania, as well as mentions in other Ohio newspapers, including the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*.[133]

The violence continued, with the mob gathering on what he called their "last night" in a crowd in the street, which added blackened oil to the collection of missiles they threw in the windows, staining the interior of the house. They also proclaimed they would "whip every Abolitionist in town; so they went to work and knocked down two or three with clubs, while others escaped to places more secure than the public streets." Jonathan Davis, a local butcher, beat Wolff and Hull, and they "offered no resistance." While local authorities did arrest Davis, he did not serve time, and the men Hull named as the "Whig Clique" paid his court costs.[134]

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[132] These meetings were at Summerfield, Stafford, Adams, Knox, Monroe, Highland, and Liberty Townships, and New Concord, Ohio. *Clarion of Freedom*, September 10, 1847; *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847; C. Sullivan, *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847; Isaac Oldham and Isaac Walker, *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847; James Black and John Monroe, "Public Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, September 24, 1847; A. N. Milligan and John C. Walker, "Public Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, October 15, 1847; W. H. Berry and W. F. George, *Clarion of Freedom*, December 24, 1847. On September 28 another meeting in support of Hull met at Liberty Township. It defended the righteousness of the antislavery cause and condemned those who harmed Hull. Specifically, they vilified the mob, the men who paid Davis's fine, the town council, and the editor of another local newspaper, the *Guernsey Times*, Richard Hatton, for personally insulting and spitting on Hull. They praised Hull's nonviolence and good conduct, and thanked Concord for taking them in and giving the paper a new home. A. N. Milligan and John C. Walker, "Public Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, October 15, 1847. These meetings variously claimed Hull was under siege for twelve, seventeen, and eighteen nights. *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847; M. R. Hull, "Cambridge Mob Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847; M. R. Hull, *Clarion of Freedom*, October 1, 1847; "Liberty Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, October 15, 1847.

[133] Robert Hanna, *Clarion of Freedom*, September 17, 1847; *Clarion of Freedom*, October 22, 1847; Amicus, "Franklin College," *National Era,* October 28, 1847; Mobbing in Ohio," *Clarion of Freedom*, October 8, 1847. Not all newspaper coverage supported Hull. The Pittsburg *Gazette* claimed that Hull had brought the mob on himself by his slander and use of profane language, as well as physical violence, but they supplied no details of this violence. The *National Era* refuted this account on October 14, 1847, by serially demolishing these justifications for mob activity. If Hull used slander, which the *Era* doubted, his enemies could have taken him to court. If he was "violent and unjust" or even used foul language, this did not excuse attacking the paper's office, forcibly removing the press, persecuting Hull's family, or wounding him. The *Era* in particular was unconvinced that the men who "thus outraged the liberty of the press" would avoid "epithets." They were not particularly selective in choosing to resort to violence, so "men who deal in rotten eggs will not shrink from filthy words." In effect, the author argued that while Hull may have used some harsh language, the conduct of the mob proved that he likely had faced significant "provocation" in order to act in this fashion. "Liberty Of The Press In Ohio," *National Era,* October 14, 1847.

[134] M. R. Hull, *Clarion of Freedom*, October 1, 1847.

To Hull, this proved the true extent of local danger. When he discovered that even their allies could not help them, he took more drastic action:

> [F]inding that those who were our friends dare not speak for our rights for fear of being knocked down in the streets; and knowing, too, that those who dare speak and who were capable of stopping the mob at once, would not, and being virtually denied protection by the town council, we concluded to shake the dust from our feet and flee to another city.

He announced his intention to leave, and the Whigs convened a meeting both to continue to "denounce us, and in mercy to call off their dogs." There, they tried to get the Democrats to join their efforts, sensing their common interest in silencing the *Clarion*, but were unsuccessful.[135] Hull found little incentive to remain in town, and he wrote in graphic detail of the stress that the anti-abolitionist attack brought to his life. He and his family finally left Cambridge to find a peaceful place "where my weary, bruised and weak, and mangled frame can have an hour's rest." In a letter to Woolf, Hull wrote of his hope that they would find a new, safer town. Their enemies had threatened both Hull and Woolf "with assassination," and had assaulted their workmen.[136]

Hull's traveling continued as he participated in a Liberty meeting at Cambridge on October 7, where the members elected him the delegate for the national convention at Buffalo.[137] While he traveled east, Hull continued to use the *Clarion* as a platform for his abolition views and to promote his own freedom of the press. Hull went to this convention via Londonderry,

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[135] Hull departed, seeking somewhere to move, and upon his return the marshal served him with a state's warrant for having asked the mob to attack him but spare his family. This, the warrant claimed, was a speech "calculated to excite the good people of Cambridge." Hull singled out several town residents who had not participated in the persecution, praised his landlady Mrs. Needham, and encouraged the community to help her out as her property was much damaged. M. R. Hull, "Cambridge Mob," *Clarion of Freedom*, October 8, 1847.
[136] Not he alone, but also his "almost heart-broken wife" needed escape from "the dread furies which for months have raged around her, and wore her down to emaciation." His children, too, found in Cambridge "young mobocrats" who emulated the efforts of their elders and pelted them with assorted objects. Hull, "Editorial Correspondence."
[137] This meeting also condemned attacks on Hull, Wolff, and the paper. "Liberty Meeting," *Clarion of Freedom*, October 15, 1847.

Cadiz, Steubenville, and Cleveland, Ohio, all the while delivering lectures for temperance and abolition of the Liberty stripe. While journeying from Steubenville to Cleveland via Massillon, Hull's stagecoach stopped at a tavern where he encountered an officer of the law who was seeking a "villain who had been hired to whip Robert Folger, Esq.," a man known to be an abolitionist. Hull wrote that if this man could elude the officer, he would be well suited to work for the "Whig mobocrats" of Cambridge who also were "in the habit of hiring men to do their mobbing and fighting."[138] He thus implied that the mob that attacked him was composed of paid assailants, and thus perhaps did not represent the real virulence of local men's views—himself using the claims to localism that anti-abolitionists employed to denounce antislavery lecturers as "hirelings."[139] As he traveled from Cleveland to Buffalo, Hull also took a stand against segregation on the steamboat.[140]

Hull was still traveling as of February 1848, when he was in Utica, New York.[141] He then relocated the *Clarion of Freedom* to New Concord, Ohio. The *National Era* of Washington D. C. wrote that the mobbing and moving had not altered Hull's energy for the cause: "Its editor has abated nothing of his spirit." Further, his paper had proved a more prosperous endeavor than the editor had expected.[142] Hull's persistence thus paid dividends in both money and publicity, and in this way helped finance his extensive travels.

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[138] M. R. Hull, "Correspondence of the Editor," *Clarion of Freedom,* October 22, 1847.
[139] While at Cleveland, Hull met William Lloyd Garrison, who was pleased that "we were worthy to be mobbed." This implied that God had bestowed a special honor upon them, and that they were on the side of the holy in the struggle, as demonstrated by mobs' desire to attack them. M. R. Hull, "Correspondence of the Editor," *Clarion of Freedom,* October 22, 1847.
[140] M. R. Hull, "Correspondence of the Editor: Proceedings of the National Convention," *Clarion of Freedom,* November 5, 1847.
[141] *Ibid.*
[142] "Newspaper Changes, Etc.," *National Era,* December 2, 1847.

The paper's new home in New Concord proved more hospitable, but hardly idyllic. Upon their move, Hull and Wolff claimed their rights, "we are determined to yield no point of principle; but we are equally determined to be peaceable citizens, while we claim the constitutional liberty of the press, we are perfectly willing to abide the penalty, if we violate any law."[143] On December 24, 1847 the *Clarion* printed the minutes of a "respectable meeting" held at New Concord. The agenda they stated was to elevate the status of press freedom in accordance with the laws of the nation, and to indicate their support for these laws. They vowed to shut down mob violence upon its first appearance, arguing that mobs were:

> always contrary to human government and human happiness; that they lead directly to the worst forms of anarchy and barbarism; disregarding, alike, all human and divine regulations of society; substituting might for right; the will of the strong is made the role of conduct for the weak, and all are left equally unprotected in person and property.

They claimed the mob sentiment was weak there, and that local people would refuse to support it.[144] However, not all residents of New Concord agreed with the agenda of that meeting, for in August of that year a visit by antislavery lecturers Henry C. Wright and Charles Burleigh caused quite a stir.[145] Local sentiment on abolition changed sufficiently that Hull himself was able to lecture in the region by May of 1848.[146] Hull thus won a partial victory for freedom of the press,

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[143] "To the Patrons of the Clarion," *Clarion of Freedom*, October 15, 1847. Contemporary authors proclaimed that threats to their freedom loomed all around. Even in cases where mobs attacked meetings rather than presses, advocates for abolition made reference to these dangers. This was the case in Richmond, Indiana in October of 1843, when John B. Stitt, editor of the Wayne County *Record* claimed Frederick Douglass was "impudent" for speaking his mind at a local meeting, a man calling himself P. Q. R. rushed to Douglass's defense. He equated Stitt's actions to deny Douglass's free expression with those of "tyrants" seeking to "muzzle the press." P. Q. R., "To John B. Still, Esq," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* October 13, 1843. See Chapter 1.
[144] W. H. Berry and W. F. George, *Clarion of Freedom*, December 24, 1847.
[145] "It's All Over," *Clarion of Freedom*, August 11, 1848. Furthermore, in September, while Hull was away on a speaking tour, his opponents inflamed anti-Free Soil sentiment in Norwich and New Concord and tried to bar the Free Soil meeting from local facilities, fearing damage to the building. Hull saw this as lack of concern with the "violation of moral principle." With the aid of some sympathetic people, the Free Soil people met despite their opponents. M. R. Hull, "Mobocracy," *Clarion of Freedom*, September 29, 1848.
[146] "Agitation," *Clarion of Freedom*, May 19, 1848.

for although anti-abolitionists forced him out of Cambridge, he retained his voice by moving his family and paper to a safer place, and using the national press to publicize his efforts.

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The larger significance of these debates over abolition lies in their extremism, which reveals the heady stakes antebellum people had in freedom of expression. The Old Northwest was particularly explosive on the slavery question, an issue that studies of anti-abolitionist violence do not explain within their context.[147] While earlier accounts have illuminated the events at Alton in November 1837 and the factions involved, they omit attention to the ways liberty, politics, economics, and social norms all combined to make these focal communities distinctive. Perhaps the most important lesson these towns have to teach is that abolitionists could become the targets of fanatical violence if they chose to persist in converting people in such hostile environments as Alton, Peoria, and Cambridge.

In addition to demonstrating the silencing effect that partisan agendas could have upon local communities, such violent clashes also illustrate the impact of local-level events on national debates. These struggles over abolition became crucial in setting the parameters for national political discussion in later decades. In the late 1830s and 1840s the political culture of the Old Northwest differed significantly from both the rest of the North and the South; just one difference among many was the local impact of race-based laws. As a stronghold of the Republican Party, the Old Northwest ultimately came to dictate the terms of national abolition

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[147] Richards analyzes anti-abolitionist violence without delving into its larger political setting. In his argument, the events at Alton appear as an incident of fanaticism, like the other riots he studies in Cincinnati and Philadelphia. To him, Alton is not a locus of larger national political debates, but one city among many that represents a larger pattern. Richards, *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing"; Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, 110-01, 11.

debate and sectional politics by contributing a national leadership that was well aware of regional circumstances. By the end of the 1850s the contingent positions produced there found national expression through Abraham Lincoln, whose position on slavery became increasingly critical over the course of his life.[148] The evolution of Lincoln's own thinking on slavery reflected changing societal attitudes, but he remained significantly less interested in equality than were racial radicals. In the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, Indiana and Illinois-bred Lincoln argued that the "divergent attitudes" of the two sections of the country on slavery's morality provided their "essential point of conflict."[149] By 1860, a crucial point in American history, the anti-slavery faction had largely won the right to promulgate their ideas, and they had found a voice for a more moderate vision of their agenda in a major national party and in Lincoln, rooted in the Old Northwest's contentious political culture.

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[148] By 1860, debate over abolition had become an established force in national politics. Merton Lynn Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and Their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 270.
[149] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 215.

Chapter 6: Homegrown Firebrands: A Human Rights Movement against Slavery and Racism

Journalism, itinerant lecturing, and local anti-slavery organizations were not the only strategies racial radicals adopted. In the Old Northwest, they had an expansive definition of necessary public activism. They also formed and joined organizations in their region that opposed slavery and racial prejudice and aimed at realizing their vision of an ideal society. Embodying their quest to eradicate the ills they saw around them, the Ohio American Society resolved at their October 24, 1842 meeting that the ideology of antislavery required direct action. They claimed that their convictions were "useful only so far as they are clothed with measures which are adapted to give them life and energy."[1] With their action against oppression, they sought to realize their human rights vision. Local abolitionists' work in two related causes—the free produce movement and the anti-"Black Law" movement—reveals their practical commitment to changing their society. With these two forms of activism, Old Northwest radicals expressed overt dissent from their racist culture through their rhetoric and strategies in the face of intense obstacles. In the heartland of northern proslavery sentiment, their implementation of the movements to abstain from tainted goods and to claim equal rights for African Americans were direct attacks on the support structures of slavery and prejudice.

Whether their methods were distribution of ethical goods, petitions, or newspaper promotion, Old Northwestern activists broadcast their values across the region and nation with their reform work. They saw how they were complicit in the slave economy and how northerners supported prejudice by permitting the "Black Laws" to remain on the books. They

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[1] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* February 16, 1843.

constantly pushed for social change, despite the challenges that their isolated geographical position presented.

The abolition and free produce movements and resistance to racist legislation both arose in the context of a new development, that of the market economy.[2] Activists' choices of moral action were enmeshed in the economic developments of the market revolution and dependent upon the exchange of commodities that it enabled. The very abstention that free produce advocates chose relied upon the existence of a variety of consumer goods among which to select. The free produce movement relied on alternative commodities to replace items slaves produced, and people circulated these wares through national and international networks.

Much as slavery tainted the products that arose out of its system, activists claimed that biased legislation interfered with full justice in American society. By 1830, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan Territory had "Black Laws"—racially discriminatory laws of varying severity—in place. While these laws varied in scope, effectiveness of enforcement, and duration, they all violated racial radicals' egalitarian principles, and across the region they found ample need to fight them. In the process activists enmeshed themselves in the local struggle for legal equity across racial lines, and made connections with the black convention movement and the related work against fugitive slave laws.

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[2] Thomas Bender et al., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). In this volume David Brion Davis, Thomas Haskell, and John Ashworth debate one another about the respective importance of capitalism and class-consciousness in the development of antislavery sentiment.

I: The Free Produce Movement: Consuming Alternatives for Social Change

With the free produce movement, activists pushed for the dignity of labor, and presented a solution intended both to destabilize slavery and aid the people who lived and worked under the lash. The free produce movement exemplified the politicization of consumption, a relatively new development in the antebellum era. This solution had a history in both the consumer boycotts of the American Revolutionary era and the British sugar boycott to undermine slavery in the 1790s. The intent of the earlier American protests—in the earliest days of the market economy—was to punish the British government by refusing to permit the colonial market to function, but they were not a protest against the system of labor that produced the goods. By contrast, in the free produce movement, the consumer struggle was about working conditions and morals: its adherents placed direct responsibility for slavery on Northern shoulders with the development of a new assumption that purchasers should be concerned with the origins of their consumer goods.[3]

Unlike their boycotting predecessors, free produce participants displayed greater acceptance of the inevitability of a market economy and of their ability to shape it to their morals. Not only did they avoid slave goods, but they also produced and distributed a positive alternative: free labor wares. They thus sought to provide a superior, untainted alternative to the boycotted goods, rather than demanding consumers do without.[4] In this manner, they tried to assert control over what goods went into the market, and mold it to fit their conviction that all

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[3] Lawrence B. Glickman, "'Buy for the Sake of the Slave': Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4: 905.
[4] Glickman, "'Buy for the Sake of the Slave': Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism," 889-90, 92.

workers had a right to be paid for their labor. They politicized economic behavior by making purchases the basis of an argument about free labor and universal rights.

The free produce movement as an antislavery tactic originated with the Quakers in the early eighteenth century. From the outset, they claimed that people who purchased items that slaves had crafted both propped up the institution and were complicit in its sins.[5] From the earliest days of the movement, both women and men who fought against slavery made it their own. To the Quakers, the only ethical choice was to avoid slavery's products. Part of their concern arose from their religious mandate to avoid buying "prize goods," the products of piracy or war, an act forbidden in the tenets of the Quaker faith. Groundbreaking Quaker theologian Elias Hicks made the link between "prize goods" and slavery in his 1811 work, "Observations on the Slavery of the Africans and Their Descendants, and on the use of the Produce of their Labor," where he claimed that as slaves were stolen against their will, their capture necessarily occurred in a combat situation. The person who professed to own slaves obtained them as "prizes" of war, and thus this category of illicit property was "prize goods." Any goods that slaves produced while in this unlawful forced condition of servitude were also thus tainted, fell into that class, and should be avoided.[6] The movement soon found a base of popularity beyond the Quakers, for other people who opposed slavery took up the cause as early as 1826.[7]

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[5] Ruth Ketring Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, *Historical Papers of the Trinity College Historical Society. Series XXV* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), 5, Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 17.

[6] *Free Labor Advocate*, April 2, 1842; Elias Hicks, *Letters of Elias Hicks, Including Also a Few Short Essays Written on Several Occasions, Mostly Illustrative of his Doctrinal Views* (New York: Isaac T. Hopper, 1834), 11-12.

[7] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 13. In one such example, by 1840 John Rankin, a Presbyterian minister of Ripley, Ohio was advocating the cause in his town. For Rankin, this was but one component of his extensive local activism and direct action. Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 202.

While the national free produce struggle had its origins in the pre-Garrison abolition of the Quakers, it expanded with the growth of immediatist antislavery, and many societies founded in the mid-1830s added the cause to their abolitionist mission. They sourced cotton, rice, sugar, coffee, indigo and tobacco from places as disparate as Canada, Liberia, India, and Santo Domingo. Activists tried to centralize the movement by creating a national body, the American Free Produce Association, in 1839. This group began manufacturing free labor goods through wage labor in 1840, but it only produced very small amounts of cotton products until 1847, when the Free Produce Association of Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting took over the task.[8] Nationally, between 1826 and 1856, people active in the free produce movement organized 26 societies.[9]

For Old Northwesterners, the free produce movement provided a means of avoiding the region's ties with the southern economy. The first ventures toward formal free produce activism in the Old Northwest began in the 1820s with Charles Osborn's discussions of the movement in his paper in Ohio and Indiana. He advertised free produce items in his paper the *Philanthropist*, published in Mount Pleasant, Ohio from 1817-1822.[10] He soon relocated to Indiana, but the conversation continued in eastern Ohio in the late 1820s, and the people of Green Plain, Ohio

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[8] They likely sourced this cotton from free laborers in the United States. Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 26, 27, 29-30, 66, 77, 78, 95.
[9] In the time period of 1845-56, eleven of these societies were only open to Quakers, indicating in Nuermberger's view their dominance of the later movement. Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 59.
[10] George Washington Julian, *The Rank of Charles Osborn as an Anti-slavery Pioneer*, *Indiana Historical Society. Publications. vol. II, no. 6* (Indianapolis: The Bowen-Merrill Company, 1891), 256, Charles Osborn, *Journal of that Faithful Servant of Christ, Charles Osborn, Containing an Account of Many of His Travels and Labors in the Work of the Ministry, and his Trials and Exercises in the Service of the Lord, and In Defense of the Truth, as it is in Jesus.* (Cincinnati: Achilles Pugh, 1854), xiii.

founded the first western society in 1829.[11] Across the region, the movement blossomed from the early 1830s, and reached a burgeoning audience in that decade and through the mid 1840s. It even had supporters in some places—for example, Mount Pleasant, Ohio—as late as 1863.[12]

The free produce movement spread across the Old Northwest with the stalwart support of its adherents, with particular strength in Ohio and Indiana. One prominent western Quaker and advocate of the free produce cause whose arguments reached widely was Elizabeth Margaret Chandler. She promoted this reform in Philadelphia and after she moved west to Michigan, arguing in the press that when people purchased slave products, they demonstrated insensitivity to slaves' plight. When Chandler organized the first antislavery society in Lenawee County Michigan in 1832, one of its stated aims was eliminating consumption of slave goods.[13] The Quakers of Cass County in southern Michigan, among others of their faith in the West, also worked for the free produce movement as a component of their larger antislavery quest.[14]

Many Quakers in Indiana had outspoken views on slavery and racism that grew out of their southern origins, and they became enthusiastic participants in the movement. In 1840, a group of antislavery Friends from Springfield, Wayne County, Indiana committed themselves to action in the free produce cause, as did a faction within the Indiana Yearly Meeting.[15] At the same time, other people within that Meeting also manifested increasing hostility to antislavery organizing. They characterized abolition lecturers as divisive and barred them from their

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[11] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 19, Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 18.
[12] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 56.
[13] Merton Lynn Dillon, "Elizabeth Chandler and the Spread of Anti-Slavery Sentiment to Michigan," *Michigan History* 39, no. 4 (1955): 487.
[14] George K. Hesslink, *Black Neighbors: Negroes in a Northern Rural Community*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), 33.
[15] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* December 31, 1840, 118, Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 48.

meetinghouses in 1841.[16] In 1843, the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends broke off and founded their own organization that came to lead the free produce movement in the state and attempted to enforce a stringent boycott among its members.[17] Ohio's antislavery Quakers also took a very active role in the advancement of the free produce cause.[18] Over a decade later, the 1859 Ohio and Indiana Yearly Meetings continued to demand that Quakers abstain from slave products.[19]

The free produce movement gained momentum in Indiana with the January 1842 founding of the Wayne County Free Produce Association, the first organization focused exclusively on the cause in the state. They publicized their desire to obtain a supply of free labor goods, and welcomed both women and men to join in their effort.[20] The Wayne County Association resolved to refuse any future support to the institution of slavery and any such aid that they—along with thousands of Northerners and Westerners—supplied. They claimed, in an idea that later free produce groups also invoked, that lower prices would not persuade them to buy slave goods.[21] At their quarterly meeting in April of 1842, they extolled the dignity of free labor, denigrated the slave system, and suggested that they found a firm to distribute free

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[16] For more on this debate, see Chapter 2.
[17] Jacquelyn S. Nelson, *Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1991), 4-5, Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 33-34.
[18] Douglas A. Gamble, "Garrisonian Abolitionists in the West: Some Suggestions for Study," *Civil War History* 23, no. 1 (1977): 55.
[19] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 56.
[20] *Free Labor Advocate*, January 8, 1842.
[21] *Free Labor Advocate*, January 27, 1842.

produce in the region.[22] Their compatriots at a free labor convention at Elk Meeting House, Preble County, Ohio shared this desire to create distribution channels for alternative goods.[23]

This western interest in free produce caught the notice of itinerant visitors. Sidney Howard Gay wrote of his encounter with the Indiana free labor movement as the "One Hundred Conventions Tour" traveled through the state in 1843. In Newport, he remarked upon the controversies among local Friends over abolition, and wrote that the free produce issue even arose at his local convention. Gay noted that this cause was something "in which the Friends of that neighborhood take a deep interest."[24]

The movement also thrived outside of the Quaker realm; its supporters both created new organizations and found support in existing antislavery societies across the Old Northwest. It formed an important and common corollary activity to many antislavery organizations' broader mission. In Jefferson County, Indiana, the Neel's Creek Anti-Slavery Society began to meet in January 1838 as an auxiliary to the Indiana Society, and they included free produce on their

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[22] *Free Labor Advocate*, December 10, 1842. The people at the Wayne County meeting selected a delegate to send to an upcoming regional meeting in Ohio. *Free Labor Advocate*, April 16, 1842, April 30, 1842, "Free Produce Association," *Philanthropist,* June 22, 1842. Throughout the 1840s, local free produce organization continued in other areas of Indiana, with the expansion of its goals and the spread of the movement to Randolph and Marion Counties on the eastern border and center of the state, respectively. *Free Labor Advocate*, October 29, 1842. Marion County held its first free labor convention at the local Friends' meeting house that autumn. They, too, claimed money would not make them buy the products of slave labor, and made the by now usual proclamations that this abstinence was necessary to avoid complicity with sin. In a new twist on the concern with the source of the free goods, they argued that they would try to get domestic free goods over foreign—perhaps in an effort to avoid tariffs. They also claimed they would "recommend" the self-manufacture of clothing—an endorsement that could ultimately mean more work for women, some of whom had grown accustomed by this time to using manufactured cloth. While home manufactures were in decline in this period, rural women still engaged in household production of fabric in the mid-1840s. At least in Illinois, such production continued into that period, although much of it was introduced into the market through trade with general stores for other goods. *Free Labor Advocate*, November 5, 1842; January 21, 1843; John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 104-05, Lori D. Ginzberg, *Untidy Origins: A Story of Woman's Rights in Antebellum New York* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 73-74.

[23] The Ohioans established a firm to sell free labor goods in April 1842. *Free Labor Advocate*, April 16, 1842. Extant records do not prove that they succeeded in this goal.

[24] Sydney Howard Gay, *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 19, 1843.

wide-ranging agenda for change.[25] From 1841 on, two Indiana female antislavery societies in Henry and Economy County pledged their support to the movement and claimed its principles as their duty in their resolutions.[26] In Illinois in January of 1843, the Putnam County Female Society advocated boycott of slave labor goods.[27] At their large state meetings, too, activists publicly signified their concern with eradicating the use of slave products. In one such case, the 1841 meeting of the Indiana Society, the assembled members appointed a free produce committee.[28]

Free produce advocates publicized their movement by publishing articles in a variety of forums and distributing papers and tracts. At the 1840 Springfield, Indiana meeting, the members resolved to establish the periodicals the *Protectionist* and the *Free Labor Advocate* to promote their goals.[29] The *Advocate* became the major western organ of the movement from 1841-1847, reporting extensively on free produce events and progress, and carrying related advertisements.[30] The *Protectionist* [only published in 1841] and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* also covered western events to some degree.[31] These publications circulated in the West and across the miles to the East, spreading the free produce message and revealing its adherents' hard-fought commitment to social change.

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[25] "Minute Book of Neel's [Neils'] Creek Anti-Slavery Society," 1839-1845, Indiana State Library Manuscript Collection, Indianapolis, Indiana.
[26] *Free Labor Advocate*, February 16, 1842; "Records of the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society," 1841-1849, County Manuscripts Collection, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.
[27] Lydia S. Lewis, *Western Citizen,* April 6, 1843.
[28] *The Protectionist,* December 4, 1841, 363.
[29] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 31, 1840; Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 54-55.
[30] In 1848, they published advertisements for Levi Coffin's free produce store in Cincinnati. *Free Labor Advocate*, January 6, 1848.
[31] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 104-10.

Antislavery and anti-racist activists saw the free produce movement as essential to their larger quest to obtain full rights for African Americans. In 1840, the Wayne County Quakers intimately linked their antislavery fight with the act of "discontinuing use of articles produced by slave labor."[32] This connection was one that reformers in the Old Northwest repeatedly made from the 1830s through the 1850s. In January of 1843, the Putnam County Female Society used the reliable and typical argument that buying items that slaves produced only undermined the antislavery mission.[33] Five years later, the Indiana Society revealed the continued resonance of this free produce claim when they, too, argued that abolitionists who bought slave produce supported the system, and perpetuated it.[34] This aid to the slave system would only prolong the inequality African Americans faced.

Free produce activists across the Old Northwest developed an increasingly elaborate moral rationale for their choices. In Indiana, as most adherents were Friends, they focused on theological reasoning. The Wayne County Association, in its regular meetings, introduced religion into its arguments, calling upon the Golden Rule as justification for its members' continual avoidance of the "productions of slave labor" and as the ethical basis for their actions.[35] In a January 1842 meeting, Wayne County's neighbors in the Farmington, Indiana Quarterly Meeting of Friends agreed to produce and publish a message about the sins of slave labor goods. They argued that their members needed to free themselves from any involvement with slavery for the sake of its victims and of their own souls.[36] Seth Hinshaw, an antislavery Friend and the

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[32] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 118.
[33] Lewis, *Western Citizen,* April 6, 1843.
[34] *Free Labor Advocate*, January 6, 1848
[35] *Free Labor Advocate*, December 10, 1842.
[36] *Free Labor Advocate*, February 23, 1842.

owner of a free produce store in Greensboro, Indiana wrote to the *Free Labor Advocate* in 1842 to support the movement, and argued, as had Elias Hicks, on the grounds that purchase of slave goods was buying "prize goods."[37] In Hinshaw's view, opposition to slavery was meaningless without action.

Theological concerns also persuaded a group of people to take up the cause and hold a "Free Labor Anniversary" at Greensboro in Henry County, Indiana, in August of 1843. They passed resolutions that claimed remaining free of its commodities would help them make a more compelling denunciation of slavery, thus expressing their true Christianity by undermining the institution's profits. While they also noted their difficulties in finding a steady supply of free goods, they wrote that people must avoid buying slave products or else prove their reactionary beliefs. At this meeting, the business committee consisted of both women and men, who resolved to meet annually. They not only focused their attention on the consumers of slave goods, but also appointed a committee to prepare an address to slaves to inform them of the "rights" that God had granted them, regardless of the intentions of slaveholding men.[38] This group infused specific antislavery work and religion into their free produce activism.

The proponents of the free produce movement, even beyond the Friends, discussed slave produce—and slavery in general—as a form of theft, robbing slaves of their rightful ownership of their labor. The Henry County Anti-Slavery Society, at their meeting on February 25, 1843,

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[37] *Free Labor Advocate*, April 2, 1842. For more on debates among Indiana Friends, see chapter 2.
[38] "Free Labor Anniversary," *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* August 25, 1843, Edwin Fussell, "PROGRESS IN INDIANA," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* September 7, 1843. The results of this gesture are unknown. This direct overture to slaves was unusual in this movement, although it had some precedents among radical black abolitionists. Henry Highland Garnet's infamous August 1843 speech immediately preceded this action, and may have inspired it. Henry Highland Garnet, "Address to the Slaves of the United States," Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens: Held at Buffalo, on the 15th,16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August 1843 (New York: 1843), David Walker, *Appeal To the Coloured Citizens of the World*, ed. Sean Wilenz (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995 (1829)).

equated slave produce with "plunder of the common highway robber."[39] They cringed at the prospect of sitting idly by and permitting this injustice to continue.

Words were not the currency in which advocates of free produce traded; instead, they promoted principled choices and acts. They extended the common immediatist belief in moral suasion by attempting to convince people of the necessity of taking action. Universally, they agreed that they had to personally participate in the struggle to transform the immorality of their society, both locally and nationally. In one such example, activists scheduled a free labor convention for people from Ohio and Indiana for February 1842 in Salem, Indiana. Cajoling people to join them, the organizers argued that action was necessary to create change: "It is not sufficient for us to develop correct principles; we must endeavor to put them in practice. We must be willing to *do* as well as *say*, or we shall effect nothing."[40]

After they took up the cause, the western adherents tried to purchase and encourage the use of free labor goods, despite logistical and organizational obstacles. In 1840, the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends and the first district convention of Indiana abolitionists began to advocate free labor products and became interested in getting a supply of such goods.[41] Some free produce advocates sought to use a systematic method to determine and alter their consumption patterns. In central Indiana, the men of the Deer Creek Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends conducted investigations by surveying their fellow congregants to discover how much

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[39] *Free Labor Advocate*, March 18, 1843.
[40] *Free Labor Advocate*, January 8, 1842. Not all antislavery people saw the free produce movement as practical. In September of 1853, Abby Kelley Foster encountered a hostile audience member in Adrian, Michigan who quizzed her about her use of conventional cotton. She responded by denying that it was her responsibility to use free produce. She claimed that it was impossible for those who spent all of their life force and time fighting slavery to be guilty of complicity with slavery, and that she could not avoid slave grown products, as they dominated the market. Spectator and fellow antislavery itinerant Sallie Holley claimed that the heckler left humiliated, after Kelley pointed out that he was involved in the business of slave products. Sallie Holley, "Anti-Slavery at the West," *Liberator,* September 30, 1853.
[41] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 48.

free and slave produce they used. In August of 1848, they worked to reduce the amount of non-free goods they purchased by implementing boycotts and obtaining alternative goods.[42] They undertook this abstention effort with local Quaker women as well.[43]

Free produce societies in the West kept in close contact with their eastern compatriots for both practical and publicity reasons. The scarce availability of free labor goods meant that people often had to exploit all means to obtain them. Among the reason for these problems were the substantial difficulties in communicating with southern and international free cotton manufacturers, and the fact that slaves grew most cotton. Two Ohio free produce societies, those of Green Plain and Harrison County, both tried to purchase goods from a more established organization, the Ladies Free Produce Society of Philadelphia.[44] The Green Plain Association worked to obtain these scarce supplies as early as August of 1843, when they attempted to open a free labor store in Cincinnati.[45]

Among the concrete methods that free produce advocates implemented to create change through consumption were such free labor stores and other commercial lobbying efforts. Activists asked regular merchants to sell free labor goods, and called for boycotts of non-free items.[46] The movement inspired both short and long-lived businesses in Newport, Greensboro,

[42] "Deer Creek Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends [Men's Meeting]," 1843-1855, Society of Friends Collection, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
[43] Earlier that year, their compatriots in the Deer Creek women's meeting had worked to supply free labor goods to their community, which would have aided in this goal. "Deer Creek Monthly Meeting Of Anti-Slavery Women Friends," 1843-1856, Society of Friends Collection, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
[44] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 26, 60, 61, 20.
[45] *Free Labor Advocate*, August 27, 1842
[46] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 49.

Jonesboro, and Grant County, Indiana, and Cincinnati and Mount Pleasant, Ohio.[47] Sales of free labor goods could even occur outside of or in addition to traditional brick and mortar stores. Levi Coffin and Joel Parker, proprietors for a time of a store in Newport, also developed other means of distribution for free produce. They announced in the *Free Labor Advocate* in August of 1842 that they would sell free labor goods at the meeting on September 5 at New Garden.[48] Old Northwest activists founded the Western Free Produce Association in February, 1842, a centralized firm to facilitate the supply of free labor goods in the region.[49] The business depression of 1842 interfered with their efforts, and by the following August they still had few goods to sell, along with a shrinking market, little funds, and scant leadership.[50]

An extension of the free produce movement and its alternative consumption infrastructure that stands in partial contrast to its abstemious aesthetic was the antislavery fair. This new consumer forum often sold regular consumer goods along with free produce and antislavery articles. Organized across the nation beginning in the 1830s, such fairs funded a variety of reform enterprises. They provided both social and networking functions for their

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[47] *Ibid.,* 119. Jonathan Macy of Grant County founded a free labor store in 1842, as he announced in the *Free Labor Advocate* that September. *Free Labor Advocate*, September 3, 1842.

[48] *Free Labor Advocate*, August 27, 1842. One nearby woman, Emma Hough of Fountain City, wrote that her mother had supported the free produce movement with purchase of free labor articles. Emma Hough, Fountain City, to Oliver Huff, 8 August 1905, Huff-Nixon Papers, Friends Manuscript Collection, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.

[49] This meeting obtained coverage in a national paper—the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*—that printed their minutes. *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* April 7, 1842.

[50] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 49-50.

female organizers and participants. Female antislavery societies organized fairs through correspondence, and were a forum to unite women's efforts across distances.[51]

The material items that women bought and sold at antislavery fairs bridged the public and the private divide, and were deeply infused with antislavery ideology. These objects entered spaces that were closed to printed antislavery literature.[52] For example, articles bearing words and images critical of slavery—or themselves crafted of free labor materials—could smuggle the abolition message into the home in a less direct fashion than the pamphlet or tract. Antislavery fairs were not merely events organized to sell goods to the converted, then, for they also had evangelical functions that outlasted their duration by leaving material items in the home. More than a means for women to use the profits from their handiwork to benefit slaves, the antislavery fair was a tool for women to publicly express their values, and distribute goods to others that themselves aided in social transformation.

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[51] Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 120. Women across Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan sewed for the cause and inspired a flurry of antislavery fair activity in the late 1840s and 1850s. Fairs held in two Ohio towns, in New Lyme in 1847 and in Salem at the end of the decade, provoked public and private discussion. Rachel M[yers], Salem, Ohio, to Julia A. Myers, New Salem, Columbiana County, Ohio, c. 1848-1849, Manuscript Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, *Sixteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (1848)), 58. The Newport, Indiana Female Society also held a four day antislavery fair. Ardath Hagaman, "Women of the Old Northwest in the Antislavery Movement" (Unpublished Paper, University of Michigan Department of History Student Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1941), 47. Cincinnati hosted a fair in the spring of 1855, organized by a group of nine women who called themselves the Cincinnati Bazaar Committee. "The Cincinnati Bazaar," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 31, 1855. In August of 1849, Mendon, Michigan hosted an antislavery fair, and in an example of collaboration across states, the Ladies Sewing Circle of Adrian, Michigan sent goods to a fair at Salem in 1853. Emily C. Aldrich, Farmington, MI, to Lucian H. Jones, Grasslake, Jackson Co., MI, August 19, 1849, Lucian H. Jones Papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, "Michigan Anti-Slavery Society daybook, Vol. 1," Harriet deGarmo Fuller Collection, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[52] Andrea M. Atkin, "'When pincushions are periodicals': Women's Work, Race, and Material Objects in Female Abolitionism.," *American Transcendental Quarterly*, no. 2 (1997); Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 8, 38-39. Historian Lawrence B. Glickman argues that these fairs did not necessarily sell free produce items, but he omits discussion of their extensive sale of handmade items. He claims that their organizers were more concerned with raising money for antislavery organizations than with the "personal purity" that free labor supporters argued that their purchases provided. Glickman, "'Buy for the Sake of the Slave': Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism," 901.

Together with the antislavery fair, the free produce movement brought politics into the household, and consequently introduced public concerns into a realm ideologically cast as private, as did lectures delivered in private homes. Domestic ideology increasingly prescribed that decisions over household purchases were women's responsibility.[53] Consequently, women were often the intended audience of free produce appeals, and they were key participants in this non-resistant means of protesting against slavery by refusing to use the products of its labor system.[54]. They could render political the act of selecting goods for the home, and bring a new scrutiny and attention to a matter many people considered part of the private realm. The free produce movement blurred economic, moral, and political lines in the fight against slavery, helping to carve out a space for women in this battle.[55] Although domestic ideology described the home as a private space, people's use of free labor goods could encompass a degree of public display. Free cotton had perceptible differences in color and texture from slave-produced cotton and users of free sugar often set it aside in a conspicuously labeled sugar bowl. Both of these distinctions made a public statement in this struggle for change.[56]

Activists continued to try to set up distribution centers for free produce goods. This effort to transform the Old Northwest into a region well served by the free produce movement persisted through the later 1850s. In 1844, Levi Coffin converted his Newport business to an

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[53] See Chapter 3 for more on domestic ideology.
[54] Margaret Hope Bacon, "By Moral Force Alone: The Antislavery Women and Nonresistance," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 283.
[55] Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 18, 19-20. This movement differed from a concurrent development, the "pious materialism" wherein consumption of new luxury goods became a pathway to moral and religious advancement along with elevation of the standard of living. Lori Merish, "'The Hand of Refined Taste' in the Frontier Landscape: Caroline Kirkland's 'A New Home, Who'll Follow?' and the Feminization of American Consumerism," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 4: 489-90.
[56] Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 42.

entirely free produce enterprise. This was a risky proposition, for it could have meant community opprobrium and loss of revenue. Coffin did not remain in Newport much longer. In the autumn of 1846 many prominent Indiana and Ohio activists met at Salem, Indiana for a free labor convention. These movement adherents had been asking Coffin for several years to run a wholesale distribution center at Cincinnati, and he finally agreed to it as a five-year experiment. He and his wife Catherine moved to the city in April of 1847.[57] He struggled to keep the business afloat, and persisted until 1857, when he had to sell out. In eastern Ohio the struggle continued with the Friends who formed the Mount Pleasant Free Produce Company in 1848, and remained active in the cause until 1863.[58] This activist effort to help slaves by abstaining from slave produce gradually faltered until it ceased operations after the beginning of the Civil War.

The free produce movement was always limited in financial success, mainly reached Quakers, and had serious supply issues. Most of its efforts moved outward from Quaker and or antislavery organizations, and on the practical level, the free labor businesses they founded lacked longevity. Their proprietors had only fickle support on the local level. In national studies of the movement, historians argue that by the late 1840s, allies were dwindling, and that by the 1850s, few advocates could be found.[59] Ruth Ketring Nuermberger posits that the movement "failed" because it asked the consumer to make an excessive sacrifice; "Voluntary self-denial

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[57] Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Arno Press, 1968 (1876)), 270, 73-74.

[58] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 51, 52, 56. There are fewer extant records concerning the production of free labor goods, but some do exist. A man in Quincy, Illinois in 1841 worked to create a supply of free sugar from beets as an alternative to the slave produced product. John O. Wattles wrote from Randolph County, Indiana of an operation to produce corn molasses as a form of free sugar. To obtain supplies, Levi Coffin and his wholesale operation sent Nathan Thomas to the South to find and purchase free labor cotton. James Edward Davis, *Frontier Illinois*, *A History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 297, Oliver N. Huff, "Old Newport: A Paper Read By Dr. O. N. Huff. Before the Wayne County Historical Society," August 31, 1900, Manuscript Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana, John O. Wattles, *Free Labor Advocate and Anti-Slavery Chronicle,* October 15, 1842.

[59] Glickman, "'Buy for the Sake of the Slave': Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism.", Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*.

can be expected only of the conscientious few, never of the mass."[60] This burden was threefold; poorer quality goods, higher prices, and especially limited availability. From the perspective of consumers, the quality of the cotton in particular often left something to be desired, and free produce advocates faced complaints about both its attractiveness and its durability.[61]

The free produce movement, when evaluated from a distance, was not a fiscal success. In terms of number of lives affected, it is difficult to counter Nuermberger's assertion that the movement failed. However, applying the standard of the incremental good that such abstention did both for slaves and for the people who ended their complicity with slavery gives a different picture. This was direct action against slavery, and like many activist behaviors, the most useful question may not be what they accomplished but rather why they did it and how. Their work brought "consumer activism" into the modern era by treating the market as political, and claiming people had the potential to make it the agent of change.[62] The participants in the free produce movement implemented a new ideal of the purchaser as sovereign, the true engine of the economy, and their work affirmed that activists could use consumer movements to push forward an agenda of radical change. Anti-racist and antislavery activists in the Old Northwest saw the movement as an arrow in their activist quiver. They transformed the context and the nature of the discussion of the economy by claiming that purchases could create social change and aid progress toward an egalitarian society. With their quest to eradicate the "Black Laws," too, racial radicals moved toward realizing their egalitarian vision.

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[60] Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, 114.
[61] *Ibid.,* 59, 71.
[62] Glickman, "'Buy for the Sake of the Slave': Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism," 908.

II: Opposing the "Black Laws" Through Direct and Legislative Action

In February 1843, the New Garden, Indiana *Free Labor Advocate* announced the ruling of the Ohio Supreme Court that Ohio's Constitution permitted men who could be identified as "nearer white than mulattoes" to vote. While editor Benjamin Stanton recognized this as progress, he wrote mockingly of the "discriminatory" powers that enforcing this would require. He argued that Ohio's election judges would need a new appliance to carry out these machinations: "[w]ill it not be necessary for some genius to invent a colorometer, by which to determine the claims of applicants to the right of suffrage? But to be serious; when will enlightened men become ashamed of these absurd and odious distinctions?"[63] With this effort to quantify and bring order to the fuzzy divisions the Ohio Supreme Court drew among people, Stanton revealed the ridiculousness of legislation such as the "Black Laws" that aimed at fixing the arbitrary color line in a particular location.

In the *Advocate* in June of 1848, Stanton and his co-editor Henry Way revisited the idea of a "colorometer" to measure race to establish human rights. This description was more fully realized than that of 1844, and the imaginary machine seethed with internal tensions. They envisioned a conglomeration of "white superiority—black inferiority—slaveholding logic and southern intelligence," melded with slave immorality in the "furnace of misrepresentation." These factors vied for space in a medium composed of "southern arrogance, proslavery patriotism, the … black laws, southern chivalry, a northern doughface's integrity, and a political demagogue's moral honesty." The editors added other ingredients to the contraption, including

[63] *Free Labor Advocate*, February 4, 1843.

"Calhoun's nullification," mobocracy, and theology. This whole poisonous concoction was encased in the lofty documents of the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution. Susceptible to pressures from the South, subjectivity, and lies, this machine could read "skin, lips, hair, and heel."[64] In this satirical piece, Stanton and Way divulged the forces contributing to the strained racial environment of the Old Northwest. White abolitionists like themselves, their African American neighbors, and their foes—all lived in this veritable pressure cooker of tensions.

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The "Black Laws" set the tone for and grew out of the regional racial climate of the Old Northwest. Their presence and similarity across the four states demonstrate that this form of oppression pervaded the region, as did resistance to it. Much as many older states in the North introduced discriminatory provisions as they abolished slavery, the newer states of the Old Northwest brought them in with their statehood and constitutions, codifying discrimination in their founding documents and principles. The region innovated in the development of racist legislation, but inequity was a national trend.[65] The states in the Old Northwest influenced each other, and many of them drew upon the slave codes of the South as they crafted legislation to limit the local rights of African Americans.

In this hostile climate, "Black Law" resistance became a central component of the Old Northwest antislavery and anti-prejudice mission. The majority of people in these four states

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[64] *Free Labor Advocate*, June 30, 1848.

[65] Between 1800 and 1860, of all of the existing states, only Rhode Island expanded suffrage to include African Americans, and among all of the new states admitted in that period only Maine granted them the vote at statehood. Paul Finkelman, "Race, Slavery, and the Law in Antebellum Ohio," in *The History of Ohio Law*, ed. Michael Les Benedict and John F. Winkler (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), 753.

greeted the prospect and reality of African American immigration with a hearty rejection of equal rights. For activists—African American and white—the work against the "Black Laws" represented another manifestation of their commitment to racial transformation, and of their refusal to accept the bias infused throughout their political culture and social mores. They fought for this human rights vision with the pen, the press, petitions, lobbying, court cases, the black convention movement, and fugitive slave aid. The action racial radicals took against the "Black Laws" extended from the local to the statewide level, and even reached the awareness of people across the nation.

The "Black Laws" confirm that northern racism was extensive and that restrictions on African American rights were no mere southern sectional issue. The "Black Laws" across the North had their origins in efforts to minimize interracial interactions by either forcing African Americans to relocate or by making life so uncomfortable that any settlements would be small. Supporters of this legislation claimed that incorporating more African Americans into the Northern populace would diminish the alleged superiority of the white race by exposing it to an "inferior" race.[66]

Resistance to an expanded African American population in the Old Northwest found roots in the political and economic transformations of the nation in the antebellum period, when the "Black Laws" were codified in their state constitutions. Shifts in republican ideology, the concurrent expansion of the franchise, and the continual equation of white manhood with full citizenship all inspired and augmented opposition to African American immigration. The

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[66] Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 66.

debates in state constitutional conventions in the North and in the Northwest showed the stakes that many of their participants—and by extension their constituents—had in exclusion.[67]

The constitutional provisions that augmented the "Black Laws" in the Old Northwest attempted to designate the proper social place a person ought to occupy, and the participating delegates cited classical republicanism, with its invocation of the necessity of landholding, self-sufficiency, and white manhood for citizenship. Under that political system, "homogeneity" of the politicized population was a fundamental and important principle. The so-called egalitarian ideals of republicanism (only open to white men) were predicated on setting boundaries to full inclusion.[68] As delegates sought to bring about racial homogeneity in the polity through constitutional dictates, their efforts were a salve to the consciences of men disturbed by the social and economic shifts that the market revolution brought. They displaced onto others the fears the increasing instability and diminished autonomy in the new market economy inspired.[69] The arguments delegates advanced for excluding African Americans from the polity centered upon concern that their lack of independence would render them susceptible to influence from others.[70]

On the practical level, the "Black Laws" used exclusionary and discriminatory provisions to maintain African American subordination and keep their numbers in the Old Northwest at a

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[67] Michigan held constitutional conventions in 1835, 1850, and 1867; Illinois in 1847, 1862 and 1869-70; Indiana in 1850-51; and Ohio in 1850-51. Rowland Berthoff, "Conventional Mentality: Free Blacks, Women, and Business Corporations as Unequal Persons, 1820-1870," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 3 (1989): 754.

[68] Berthoff draws no distinctions between northern and northwestern states, and also sees delegates as a relatively neutral population not bound tightly to partisan distinctions or "special interests." Berthoff, "Conventional Mentality: Free Blacks, Women, and Business Corporations as Unequal Persons, 1820-1870," 756, 57, 53, 55, 59.

[69] *Ibid.*, 783.

[70] They claimed that African Americans would be prone to following the political intentions of former owners—and that their tendencies to "servility" rendered them insufficiently autonomous to make wise decisions in affairs of state. *Ibid.*, 761, 758-760. Many raised the frightening specter, particularly illogical in northwest states with tiny African American populations, that the degradation they ascribed to African Americans would somehow lead to their domination of all of society if they obtained equal rights. *Ibid.*, 770-71, 777.

low level. Across the region, the “Black Laws” maintained segregation and officially designated these states as communities for whites.[71] State legislatures in Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana erected formidable legal obstacles to immigration by free African Americans, and while Michigan lacked an exclusion law, it had its fair share of other discriminatory laws. Advocates of the “Black Laws” argued that unscrupulous owners would bring elderly former slaves to the region, who would be unable to work for their keep and burden the community.[72] One such “Black Law” outlawed transporting African Americans into Illinois with the aim of liberating them there. With these regulations, legislatures also tried to encourage the African American population to emigrate to Africa.[73] Adding to the matrix of discrimination, some wage workers feared labor competition from African Americans, who could only command reduced wages due to racist hiring policies.

The “Black Laws” found another origin in the fear that the African American population, without the restraint of such legislation, would migrate north across their weak borders in large numbers. Ohio shared state lines with Kentucky and Virginia [now West Virginia], while Illinois and Indiana bordered Missouri and Kentucky. The population of this region frequently had southern origins and beliefs, especially among those who settled on the riverfronts and along

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[71] Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 90, Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 66, 43.
[72] Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, 66.
[73] Sandra Anne Baumgartner, “ The Legal Status of the Negro in Illinois as Determined by State Legislation and State Supreme Court Decisions, 1818-1853” (Masters Thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1966), 21-22, 37, Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 1, 4, 32.

major roads.[74] Many engaged in economic exchange with the South and expressed hostility to African Americans, likely to preserve these trade relations.[75] Transport proved highly contentious, with Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio bordering the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and hosting the national road that extended as far as Vandalia, Illinois by 1839. From the perspective of slaveholders and their sympathizers, national concord depended on them being able to move through the North with ease—even with their slaves.[76] As slaveholders and slave hunters traversed these borders, they demanded local fealty to their conception of property rights. Fugitives from as far as Tennessee and North Carolina also passed through on their way north, and local people aided them.[77]

Antislavery observers in the Old Northwest and in the East saw the "Black Laws" as a direct effort to appease these neighboring slave states, and as demonstrating complicity with slavery, like that of people who purchased the products of slave labor. In 1840, the Will County, Illinois Anti-Slavery Society claimed that the extent to which the law obligated individuals and

[74] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 47. There is a growing historiography on the Old Northwest, including Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861*, *Midwestern History and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). While Michael Mangin agrees with Etcheson that the culture and beliefs of upland southerners impacted Midwestern structures and beliefs, he does not subscribe to what he calls "geographical determinism" regarding their culture [as had Barnhart and other early studies.] John D. Barnhart, "The Southern Influence in the Formation of Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 32 (1939), Michael Mangin, "Freemen in Theory: Race, Society and Politics in Ross County Ohio, 1796-1850" (Ph.D Dissertation, University of California at San Diego, 2002), 19-20.
[75] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 47.
[76] The Northwest Ordinance itself in Article IV guaranteed the right of unfettered water travel, and many southerners interpreted this to mean that they could travel with their slaves. Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 6, no. 4 (Winter, 1986): 348, 56, 57.
[77] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 47.

law officers to aid slave catchers showed “a servility unequalled by any of her sister states.”[78] A New York Whig paper, the Rochester *Democrat*, too, stated that these laws were proof of submission to the will of the slave states, and that they preyed upon people who lacked the means to defend themselves. Noting the notorious prejudice in Illinois, they made a strong argument against this inequality and in favor of universal citizenship.[79] The “Black Laws” certainly became notorious outside the region, but most practical resistance against them arose from within.

A: The Origins and Provisions of the “Black Laws”

The “Black Laws” grew out of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and began in the oldest of the four states, Ohio. Indiana and Illinois modeled their “Black Laws” on those of Ohio, as did Michigan to a lesser degree. The new states interpreted the Ordinance in a restrictive fashion as having only vague and contestable antislavery provisions.[80] It left the institution untouched in the South and it remained possible to keep slaves in much of the Old Northwest for many years due to lax enforcement provisions and the legal interpretation that it permitted retaining slaves who had that status at the time of its passage.[81] The “Black Laws” penalized those who aided fugitives or interfered with owners’ effort to repossess their human property. These laws also

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[78] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes* (Juliet: Published by the Will Co. Anti-Slavery Society, 1840), 8. In 1848, the *Western Citizen* wrote that the Illinois legislature passed the “Black Laws” only to please Missouri slaveholders by refusing to provide fugitives nearby hospitality and refuge. *Western Citizen*, in *Free Labor Advocate*, April 15, 1848.
[79] Rochester *Democrat* in *Free Labor Advocate*, June 16, 1848.
[80] Finkelman, “Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity,” 344, 57, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 7.
[81] Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy*, 7, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 59.

elaborated on the provisions of the federal fugitive slave law that forbade aid to runaways.[82] The staggering legal and social obstacles to racial equality aimed to render the region unwelcoming to people of African descent. As implemented from 1803 on, these laws kept African Americans out of the franchise, political representation, the militia, and hampered by bond laws, restrictions on marriage choice, court testimony, and fetters on their educational rights, immigration and their right to work.

Chief among the grievances of African Americans in the Old Northwest were the "Black Laws'" deprivation of their rights to vote, of political representation and of participation in civic defense. While African American people in Ohio had the right to vote in elections prior to statehood, they lost this right with the ratification of the state Constitution in 1803.[83] With Indiana's statehood in 1816, the new Constitution excluded African Americans from the vote, population count, and the militia.[84] When Illinois joined the Union in 1818, like Indiana, the number of white inhabitants defined its representation in the general assembly, and non-white people, "negroes, mulattoes, and Indians," could not participate in its militia.[85]

Michigan did not reach statehood until 1837, and implemented somewhat less punitive laws than the other states after debating even more permissive alternatives. In May of 1835, as Michigan prepared for this transition, delegates met in Detroit to frame a constitution. John

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[82] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 7. The 1793 Fugitive Slave Act had prohibited such aid and permitted a fine of $500 against any person who hid a fugitive. In an 1849 Indiana case, a man named Clark paid $1,500 in fines for hiding a family of slaves. Allen Sharp, "The U.S. Supreme Court on Circuit in Indiana," in *The History of Indiana Law*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 348.
[83] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 2, 3, 38, 49, 38.
[84] *Ibid*., 59.
[85] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 10-11.

Norvell, the Detroit postmaster and a Wayne County delegate, called for a ban on slavery in the state, which the convention unanimously adopted. Judge Ross Wilkins from Lenawee County pushed efforts for African American rights one large step further, asking that the convention grant universal male suffrage. He found much antipathy. Norvell asked whether Wilkins intended to permit all men, including "Indians and negroes," to vote. Wilkins replied with a claim that racial identity was ambiguous:

> the term white is not specific...There are men of every shade and complexion, white, sallow, brown, olive, yellow; how will you regulate the shade of him which shall entitle an individual to the privilege of a freeman?...[there were those] who were American born, who were neither Indian, negro, nor of any connexion in color with either of these races, and yet who could not be called white.

As had Benjamin Stanton with his colorometer, Wilkins displayed an early understanding of race as a constructed category, which he used to argue that qualified African American men deserved the franchise.[86] Despite these efforts, the "Black Laws" also took hold in Michigan.[87] As passed, the legislation reserved the vote for white men only, and in an 1850 referendum, Michigan citizens again rejected African American suffrage.[88] As of 1860, African American men had the right to vote in only five states in the North—and none in the Old Northwest.[89]

Beyond these restrictions on civil liberties, the "Black Laws" also prevented African Americans from testifying in court against whites and working legally without paying bond or proving their freedom. In 1807, the Ohio legislature—and later, Illinois—barred African

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[86] He was not alone in this desire, for Quaker Darius Comstock, also of Lenawee, the home of the strongest support for progressive racial views in Michigan at the time, agreed with these principles. The African American population was very small in the territorial era, with only 174 people recorded in the census of 1820. By 1840, this number had only grown to 707. For complete population statistics, see Appendix A. Arthur Raymond Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan, 1796-1840: A Study in Humanitarianism" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1941), 106, 08.
[87] They found support from Wayne County, home of steadfast opposition to African American rights. David M. Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, *Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 110, 13.
[88] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 59.
[89] Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, 91.

American testimony in court cases involving whites and forbade hiring them without proof of freedom.[90] Indiana's 1816 Constitution prohibited their testimony in court, and their lack of this right in all of these states opened them up to abuses from unscrupulous whites.

Panic over African Americans' immigration to the Old Northwest inspired specific efforts to control their population growth in the region. Ohio passed its first "Black Laws," aimed at immigration restriction, in 1804 and 1806, and affirmed them in 1835. They required proof of freedom upon entry and a $500 bond against becoming a public charge.[91] The "Black Laws" of Illinois restricted immigration to proven free men, and appointed "overseers of the poor" who could force poor African Americans to move elsewhere. People who could not prove their freedom were also susceptible to sale under the "Black Laws."[92] In Indiana too, they had to provide this proof to settle in the state after 1831.[93] The Indiana Constitutional Convention of 1850 passed a provision to outright ban African Americans from the state, which advocates of equality resisted, as they had previous measures.[94] In the 1851 referendum on immigration, eighty-three percent of Indiana [i.e. white, male] voters favored the continuation of their extant

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[90] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 2, 3, 38, 49, Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 10-11.

[91] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 2, 3, 38, 49, 100. The bond provision only required African Americans to have two people willing to certify that they would pay a bond of $500 to ensure that they would not become a community responsibility. This was not a demand for an immediate cash bond, for the money would theoretically only need to be paid if the person violated the law. Finkelman, "Race, Slavery, and the Law in Antebellum Ohio," 757.

[92] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 10-11.

[93] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 59. An 1831 addition to the Indiana "Black Laws" required African Americans to post bond upon entering the state, although Quakers and other sympathetic whites joined them in fighting this provision and later such additions. The Indiana Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the bond law on three separate occasions. Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, vol. 37, *Indiana Historical Collections*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957), 58, 59.

[94] Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, 68.

immigration restrictions.[95] Illinois also held a referendum on immigration in 1848, where seventy percent of voters favored continuing the restrictions, a ringing endorsement.[96]

While Michigan lacked a provision forbidding immigration, its certification and bond laws were themselves stringent, at least on paper. Prior to statehood, the Michigan legislature mandated that African Americans prove their freedom prior to settlement, register with the county clerk, and pay a $500 bond for good behavior and to ensure "that he would not become a public charge." The "Black Laws" had little support in early Michigan, and the required bond was particularly unpopular.[97] Across the region, immigration provisions were not scrupulously enforced, and the African American population, along with legalized discrimination, continued to grow over the antebellum period.[98] While well aware of the problems with the "Black Laws" in the Old Northwest, many African Americans still preferred to move to such places rather than remain in slavery or its vicinity.

While African Americans' numbers in the Old Northwest grew slowly, they had only dubious progress in the area of schooling. Segregated education and limitations on African American educational rights were the norm. As was the case across the North, the right to

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[95] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 59. Prior to 1860, notwithstanding some immigration from the South, the African American population of Indiana remained very small, especially in proportion to the white population. Many formed small free African American settlements, and in 1860 there were over twenty of these in the state. Xenia E. Cord, "Black Rural Settlements in Indiana before 1860," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays From Black History News & Notes*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993), 99, 100, 02, Earline Ray Ferguson, "In Pursuit of Full Enjoyment of Liberty and Happiness: Blacks in Antebellum Indianapolis, 1820-1860," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays From Black History News & Notes*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993), 132, Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, 44. For complete population statistics across the region see Appendix A.

[96] Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, 70, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 59.

[97] Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 59.

[98] Finkelman, "Race, Slavery, and the Law in Antebellum Ohio," 774. In the census of 1800, the African American population was 337; in 1810: 1,899, in 1820: 4,723; in 1830: 9,568, in 1850: over 25,000. Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 60, 70. See Appendix A for full statistics.

schooling required a hard fight.[99] Prior to 1829, there were no formal laws barring African Americans from Ohio's schools, but such exclusion accompanied the establishment of public schools by law in that year.[100] Under the new legislation, private schools could still educate African Americans, but public schools could not. In 1849 the Ohio legislature established a formally segregated school system that allowed mixed classrooms in areas with small African American populations.[101] African American children gained the right to an education, but not one of equal standing or location. Illinois law also excluded African Americans from schools, while they paid equal taxes to whites.[102] The first Michigan Constitution excluded African Americans from the schools, and public sentiment in Indiana did the same.[103] From the perspective of African Americans and their allies, the path to full equality of opportunity was substantially impeded by this segregation.

Many Old Northwesterners actually ignored the "Black Laws," but as a source of disfranchisement and indignation their presence on the books should not be minimized.[104] Prosecutions were infrequent and often originated in personal disputes.[105] While in most places, the "Black Laws" were not enforced, they had symbolic value as affirmation of white supremacy for many African American residents of the Old Northwest, and for their allies in the cause of racial justice. They also gave whites a universally applicable rationale to oppress African

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[99] Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, 113.
[100] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 15.
[101] *Ibid*., 55, 84.
[102] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 10-11.
[103] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 59.
[104] Some activist judges challenged aspects of the "Black Laws" in this era. Finkelman, "Race, Slavery, and the Law in Antebellum Ohio," 774, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 60, 70, 73.
[105] Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, 70.

Americans, commit mob violence, and otherwise badger them.[106] The "Black Laws" created a permissive attitude toward violence. When African Americans tried to fight for their rights, at times racists took advantage of their lack of legal status and attacked them, knowing prosecution was unlikely.[107] Still, many thousands of African Americans remained in the region, flouting registration laws and legal proscriptions.

In seeking to restrict rights on the basis of race, states that crafted "Black Laws" also had to create means to define racial distinctions in law. These were inconsistent and changed from state to state and over time. Indiana law grew more stringent, as the 1818 law defined people as African American when they had one black grandparent, and the 1853 law required only one black great-grandparent.[108] In the 1853 Illinois anti-immigration statute, the General Assembly used as its standard people with one African American grandparent.[109] Ohio law tried to determine racial identity based on perceptible color, and the legislature originated the term "visible admixture" to articulate this method. The Ohio Supreme Court attempted to define whiteness, and settled it in 1842 as a visual issue, not one of blood.[110] This was necessarily a subjective move, and the Ohio legal record demonstrates ambiguous treatment of people of

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[106] Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, 71-72.
[107] When activists called for repeal, anti-"Black Law" mobs acted against them. Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 110, 17. Some of the resistance to work against the "Black Laws" was urban in nature. Historian Leonard P. Curry discusses the battle against the "Black Laws" in the urban North in his study of the fifteen largest cities in the nation in 1850. The urban struggles he focuses upon relied upon a critical mass of African American people that drew the ire of racist whites. He writes of riots that they always involved white mobs invading the "nineteenth century equivalent of the black ghetto." The urban environment did not only offer opportunities for oppression, however, for these larger populations also enabled development of centralized corps of African American leaders. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream*, vii-viii, 110, 04-05, 240. The majority of the population of the Old Northwest was outside of the cities, however, and rural regions and smaller towns also had their fiery leaders and rank and file activists.
[108] James H. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," in *The History of Indiana Law*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 43.
[109] C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, 5 vols., vol. 4 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 224.
[110] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 131.

mixed racial ancestry. Across these states, people warped the vague definitions in unexpected directions, as when the courts defined mulattoes as white at times for the purposes of forbidding African Americans' testimony against them. As legal decisions defined race as a visible marker, the outcomes of their precedents were not always predictable.[111] In 1859, the Ohio legislature again affirmed the visible admixture rule.[112] These subjective standards of racial difference remained legally valid for decades.

In their worst guise, the "Black Laws" made an utter mockery of the term "free state" by permitting slavery and indentured servitude, as was legal in Illinois at least until 1841. Rather than observing the term limits mandated by the Northwest Ordinance, some unscrupulous individuals kept people in bonds after their terms had expired, in a status that closely resembled Southern slavery.[113]

Activists fought against this and another means that the Illinois "Black Laws" had to entrap African Americans in slavery: the provision that permitted the sale of people who could not prove their freedom. Abolitionist editor and "Black Law" opponent Zebina Eastman recalled one such slave sale in Chicago in 1852, which abolitionists thwarted. Edwin Heathcock, prosecuted under the "Black Laws" for being "illegally free" in Illinois, had first been brought to court for refusing to heed the orders of a white man who had not hired his labor—someone whom he had no obligation to obey. While the court scheduled him to be auctioned as a slave for lacking proof of freedom, the antislavery population of Chicago took action, publicizing the auction, and ultimately controlling it as the only bidders so that the sheriff could only command

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[111] *Ibid.*, 59, 85. This was a surprising development, as mulattos did not typically have more legal rights than did people defined as black.
[112] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 155.
[113] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 11, 1841.

a price of twenty-five cents in the sale. Heathcock's new owner let him go free on the spot. Thus the Chicago abolitionists outwitted the system.[114]

In situations with a less organized population, these sales had the potential to ensnare African Americans in long-term servitude. The Galesburg *Free Democrat* reprinted in January 1854 an account of a African American man whom the local sheriff sold at auction in Quincy, Illinois. The author voiced his outrage that slave sales could happen in Illinois, arguing that the winning bidder clearly intended to take the captive man to a slave state and permanently enslave him. This man offered to pay $600, which high sum indicated that he would likely seek some profit from the transaction, unlikely in the mere month of service to which he was entitled. Sheriffs, according to the extant law, were not obligated to press buyers for their future plans for their "purchase," which left African Americans open to the abuse of already unjust laws.[115]

To operate as effectively as they did, the "Black Laws" relied upon a variety of citizens to enforce their provisions. These individuals ranged from the overseers of the poor, public school teachers, and employers, to informants in the community who turned in African Americans who lacked the proof of freedom that entitled them to work.[116] Since ordinary people performed most of the work of upholding these laws, activists focused their energy on changing both public opinion and the laws at their source.

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[114] Paula Glasman, "Zebina Eastman, Chicago Abolitionist" (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1968), 54-55.
[115] "All About the Black Laws," Galesburg *Free Democrat*, January 12, 1854. Some communities and counties created their own local level "Black Laws," adding to the burden of those on the state level. In Peoria, Illinois on March 11, 1843, the Peoria County commissioners passed an ordinance ordering the sheriff to tell all African Americans in the county to "enter into bond with security," or they would expel them from the county after due notice. This may have been just a local effort to enforce the state laws. This highly restrictive attitude evidently relaxed over time. Earnest E. East, "History of Peoria," c. 1950-1965, Peoria Public Library Collection, Peoria, Illinois.
[116] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 53.

B: Organized Resistance to the "Black Laws"

The story of the "Black Laws" is not one of unremitting oppression, for racial progressives contested their enactment and enforcement from their earliest days. Through both individual and collective means, activists pushed against this legislation. With these measures, they revealed their larger human rights vision of a nation free of both slavery and discriminatory law. From the late 1830s, the movement took in people from across these four states and from the often-overlapping categories of white and African American abolitionists, Northern states' rights advocates, religious egalitarians, and African Americans who worked for their own liberation through the black convention movement.

African Americans, slave and free, refused to accommodate persistent efforts at their exclusion from the Old Northwest. As slaves decided to escape, they educated themselves about their environments and sought out plans for flight that met their necessities.[117] The very presence of African American communities in the Old Northwest was a form of resistance to efforts to drive them out and uproot their communities. In his study of the Underground Railroad, historian Keith P. Griffler argues that fugitives could vanish "into the Northern black population" only because of the hard battle that free African Americans fought to stay there. The free African American presence so physically close to slavery defied the "Black Laws," the fugitive slave laws, and the claim that African Americans had no non-servile place in America.[118]

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[117] John Michael Vlach, "Above Ground on the Underground Railroad: Places of Flight and Refuge," in *Passages to Freedom: the Underground Railroad in History and Memory*, ed. David W. Blight (Washington: Smithsonian Books in Association with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2004), 115.
[118] Keith P. Griffler, *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 6-7.

African American radicals and their white allies refused to be complicit with racism in the Old Northwest borderland.

As the existence of small but stalwart African American communities indicates, the "Black Laws" were seldom effective in suppressing their populations and movement. The laws' opponents mocked the difficulties of their enforcement. White itinerant lecturer Dr. Erasmus Hudson opined that the "Black Laws" simply did not work. He wrote from Delaware, Ohio in February 1842 that the "Kentuckians" were responsible for the convoluted shape of these laws. As he saw it, these southern interlopers had gotten the legislators drunk before they sat down to write the laws, and thus they made no sense, and were difficult to enforce. Hudson credited the extensive fugitive traffic in part to the ineffectiveness of these laws.[119] In 1843, the Ohio American Society echoed him, claiming that in most situations, Ohioans would not enforce the "Black Laws."[120]

To "Black Law" opponents, while lax enforcement aided their cause, it did not diminish their resolve for change. Many of them based their claims on a civil rights argument. The underlying principle of this view was that such discriminatory laws had no place on the books, as they made illegitimate distinctions among people. These laws were no instrument of order or justice, but rather a bludgeon to remind African Americans and their allies of their tenuous position in American society.

Racial radicals of both sexes and across racial lines took direct action against the "Black Laws" through the beginning of the Civil War. On the most basic level of activism, they used article VI of the Northwest Ordinance to prevent slavery from gaining a strong foothold in these

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[119] E. D. Hudson, "From Delaware, Ohio," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* February 17, 1842.
[120] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 16, 1843.

states. The article stated, “there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory.”[121] Unfortunately, the Ordinance made no provisions for enforcement of such a federal measure on the region.[122] Activists claimed that its framers intended the territory to be entirely free of slavery, yet they soon found that it could be outmaneuvered by indentures, and found slavery there regardless.[123]

The anti-”Black Law” movement had strong support within the Old Northwest antislavery struggle. In Michigan, the fight began with statehood, for by 1837, the state antislavery society was contributing to the anti-”Black Law” effort. They and other abolitionists in the state, including those in the Liberty Party after its foundation, fought for the African American vote.[124] The abolitionists created a committee to “memorialize” the Michigan legislature to ask for jury trial for all accused fugitive slaves, and to amend the Michigan Constitution to grant “the colored man” the vote.[125] They reprised these calls and their opposition to the fugitive slave provisions of the State Constitution in their 1838 annual meeting.[126] The outspoken opposition of Michigan abolitionists to the “Black Laws” continued through the 1850s.

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[121] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 9.
[122] Finkelman, “Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity,” 357.
[123] Finkelman, “Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity,” 369, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 15, 17, 75.
[124] Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 33.
[125] Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society, *Report of the Meeting of the Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society, June 28, 1837, Being the First Annual Meeting, Adjourned from June 1st, 1837* (Detroit: George L. Whitney, 1837), 20.
[126] Their minutes do not indicate that they approved it. In the Society’s 1838 constitution they added a provision calling for the “elevation of our colored brethren to the proper rank of MEN.” Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the Second Anniversary of the Michigan State Anti-Slavery Society, Held at Ann Arbor, June 7, 1838* (Detroit: Harsha and Bates, Printers, 1838), 5, 6, 8.

In Ohio, the "Black Laws" had a wide range of foes. There, the abolitionists saw working against them as a necessary part of their antislavery mission.[127] Among their ranks were antislavery organizations, which by 1840 used states' rights as a basis to claim that slaves became free when they entered Ohio.[128] These organizations included the Cuyahoga County Anti-Slavery Society in the Western Reserve that argued in 1838 that their legislators must do away with the "Black Laws."[129]

At times, anti-"Black Law" activists focused their efforts on specific provisions, such as school reform for the African American population. The Indiana Friends, most notably those from Eastern Indiana, were major opponents of the "Black Laws," and founded schools open to African Americans.[130] In Bloomington, Indiana in March of 1849, James Eastman wrote to Daniel Holt of his pleasure with the partial repeal of the "Black Laws" in Ohio that year, but he also deemed the creation of segregated school districts a clear step backward in opportunities for the African American population.[131] Beyond Eastman's personal outrage, the abolitionist effort

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[127] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 97.
[128] This argument had gained traction by the 1850s, when unless they were fugitives, African Americans that entered Ohio were presumed free. Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 92, 119.
[129] The Ohio Anti-Slavery Society worked against them throughout its existence from 1835 to 1846. Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930*, *Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 7, Mangin, "Freemen in Theory: Race, Society and Politics in Ross County Ohio, 1796-1850", 281.
[130] Nelson, *Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War*, 5.
[131] James Eastman, Bloomington, Fayette County, Ohio, to Daniel Holt, Centre Sandwich, Carrol Co, New Hampshire, 31 March 1849.

to resist these laws included an effort to obtain educational rights for African Americans by founding schools and teaching in them.[132]

The courts proved unwilling to enforce the "Black Laws" in some circumstances. When, in 1843, William Logan of Richland County, Ohio went on trial for providing food to a fugitive, the County Court dismissed the case. They did so on the grounds that this provision of the "Black Laws" was "unconstitutional."[133] Interestingly, the Court refused to make this judgment known openly—as the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* wrote—for they feared causing offense to Ohioans who favored stringent punishment for this act.[134] It was up to the abolitionists to bring such progressive decisions to light.

No shy violets themselves, activists took part in a battle for public opinion, using the printed word to publicize their efforts against the "Black Laws," both to register their disgust with them and to provide a rationale for their repeal. Activists in both Illinois and Indiana worked to advertise their campaign for "Black Law" repeal as a means to the end of demanding policy change. In 1840, the Will County [Illinois] Anti-Slavery Society published a pamphlet entitled *The Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free*. This title

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[132] Horatio C. Ford of Cleveland, too, wrote in 1848 of his disappointment that Ohio had kept in place the "Black Laws" despite another repeal effort that year. He wrote that these laws were so horrible that they "would be a disgrace to the dark ages." He thought their persistence in Ohio was a consequence of partisan issues. Horatio C. Ford, 8 February 1848, Horatio C. Ford Diaries, the White-Ford Family Papers, Manuscript Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio [Italics in original]. The obstacles Ohio's African American children encountered in their schooling inspired dismay in Ford, for while they could attend school under the revised laws, this was contingent on the absence of complaints from whites in their district. Ford claimed that this subjectivity to the whims of even one biased individual—regardless of his or her character—was even more unfair than the exclusionary decisions lawmakers made. Ford Diaries, 9 February 1848.

[133] The Ohio American Society also argued that their state Supreme Court had granted people the right to give aid to fugitives in need and to refuse to help slaveholders catch fugitives. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 16, 1843.

[134] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 1, 1843.

overtly equated the unjust laws of Illinois with those that governed slaves. In this pamphlet, the Illinois abolitionists excerpted and critiqued portions of the State Constitution, aiming to prove the need for reform to attain a just society.

The Will County Society published their pamphlet after resolving at one of their meetings that the "Revised Laws" and their many discriminatory provisions were not well known in Northern Illinois. They wished to bring such little-known public documents into the limelight. Abolitionists reproduced the legal code in lay terms with the goal of arousing disgust and the impulse to act among their fellow citizens. Such analysis, they argued, would infallibly elicit "astonishment" at the government of an allegedly free state permitting such approximations of slavery. They expected their readers to feel "disgust" at the obsequious acts of Northerners that rendered them mere "tools and panders of southern patriarchs." Stating a similar goal, the Indiana *Free Labor Advocate* printed the "Black Laws" of Indiana in their pages in 1848.[135] Activists' arguments of northern conformity to southern mores may have served as a means to draw their attention to the "Black Laws" through self-interest, before pushing forth their underlying agenda of racial justice.

Work against the "Black Laws" frequently involved abolitionists in critiques of proslavery southerners and their laws. In crafting their argument that the "Black Laws" had no place in their free state, the Will County Society illustrated how they violated Constitutional law and egalitarian ideas, and differed little from those of slave states. They argued that these laws bore many phrases in common with their southern counterparts, and in fact appeared to be "a transcript" of them. Apart from this resemblance, they also claimed the "Black Laws" imposed

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[135] *Free Labor Advocate*, March 25, 1848. Likewise, in 1843 the Ohio American Society claimed the "Black Laws" were a major contributing factor to prejudice, and demanded of anyone whom they would recognize as an abolitionist the willingness to work against them. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 16, 1843.

penalties that violated the Constitutional provision that the punishment should fit the crime. These laws set African Americans apart from the rest of the U. S. population, by treating them as criminals for acts that other truly free people could perform with impunity, including moving with liberty, and by imposing excessive punishments.[136] The Will County abolitionists further asserted that the laws did not meet the United States Constitutional standard wherein "citizens of each state" are "guarantee[d]…all the privileges and immunities of the citizens in the several states."[137] Specifically, Illinois's requirement that African Americans who were citizens of other states post bond upon their entry against becoming a public burden on society violated this universal right. They also found the "Black Laws" to violate numerous provisions of the Illinois State Constitution. These included "the right of trial by jury," and protection against "unreasonable" and unfounded arrests.[138]

Not content to merely point out the inconsistencies of these laws in relation to the treatment of other Americans and the Constitution, the Will County people also injected a note of sly wit into their critique of the "Black Laws." They summarized section 24, which enabled the government to levy a fine upon people who allowed "slaves or servants of color" to gather in groups "for the purposes of reveling" in buildings or spaces they owned. The authors claimed

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[136] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 10-11. The Ohio American Society argued in their October 1842 meeting that slavery was not a sectional institution confined to the South, for it infected the entire nation with its influence. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 16, 1843.

[137] U.S. Const, Art IV, § 2.

[138] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 6. The Indiana Friends echoed their claims in 1848, arguing that the "Black Laws'" discrimination contradicted the "spirit and principles" of the United States government's foundation, and violated the terms of the Northwest Ordinance and of the Constitution. They asserted that all people were entitled to their freedom, both under the terms of the Bill of Rights and of the Ohio Constitution. Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends, *Address to the Citizens of the State of Ohio Concerning What are Called the Black Laws, Issued in behalf of the Society of Friends of Indiana Yearly Meeting, by their Meeting for Sufferings, representing the said Yearly Meeting in its recess. [A large portion of the members reside in the state of Ohio.]* (Cincinnati: A. Pugh, 1848), 4-5, 9, 7.

that they could not tell if the lawmakers intended this measure to protect owners against slave uprisings, or slaves against immorality. If virtue or fear of riot was at issue, the abolitionists argued that a better course would have been to "have prohibited intercourse with the whites."[139] They insinuated that the blame for debauchery among the African American population lay with their oppressors.

In 1840, the Will County Society argued that the present law afforded African Americans in Illinois insufficient protection from abuse. Under the revised laws of 1833, certificates of freedom did not serve as infallible evidence against slaveholder claims, which had more weight in the court. According to these laws, African Americans could be sold, or the owner of their labor could assign them to work for someone else. They supposedly had the right to refuse employment they did not desire, but the pamphlet's authors argued that they would be unlikely to exercise this right, given the "arbitrary and irresponsible power" masters exerted over them.[140]

A wide range of Old Northwest citizens, including both African American and white abolitionists, felt and fought the effects of the "Black Laws." William T. Allan wrote in June of 1846 to the *Western Citizen* about his misadventures in attempting to travel across Illinois with one of his former slaves, an older man named Richmond. Allan's father had freed his slaves upon his death, and they decided to move to Illinois, where Allan and four of his five siblings lived. When the two men were in Peoria, Richmond was working in a stable when a man observed him and forced him to the magistrate's office, and subsequently, to the sheriff's. The man claimed Richmond was a runaway, and despite Allan's intimate knowledge of Richmond's true free status, the court refused to admit him as a witness, claiming he was a "party interested."

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[139] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 6.
[140] *Ibid.*, 4.

The judge put Richmond in jail and arrested Allan for aiding a runaway. Allan was, in accordance with the "Black Laws," forced to pay $500 for this act and, as of the time of his writing, was scheduled for a trial the following October. All of this for what Allan described as "the *crime* of riding in a buggy with an old friend!"[141]

While Allan had quickly obtained evidence proving the elderly man's freedom, including his father's will, the judge claimed this was insufficient. In his letter, Allan argued that these facts proved the injustice of the "Black Laws" in violating Richmond's rights—and his own. The Illinois government, in his view, at all levels slavishly followed the dictates of the slave states. He argued that Illinois was in fact a "mere appendage" to the states where slavery itself was legal. For him, this injustice and mistreatment exemplified the disgrace Illinois sustained on account of the "Black Laws."[142]

The overt court bias in such cases, and the testimony provision of the "Black Laws," imposed specific problems for African Americans. The Will County authors in 1840 decried the legal disabilities that stemmed from the refusal to permit the court testimony of any person with at least one African American grandparent.[143] The clause that confined the right to testify against whites to whites gave African Americans [and Native Americans, people seldom mentioned in these texts] little recourse to the legal system. Whether accused of fugitive status or directly attacked, these people lacked the right of testimony when they faced a white opponent in court.

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[141] William T. Allan, "Letter from William T. Allan," *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* August 13, 1846. [Italics in original].
[142] *Ibid*. [Italics in original].
[143] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 5.

The only exception to this grim reality for African Americans was the possibility of a cooperative white witness testifying for them.[144]

For their opponents, these laws flew in the face not only of earthly laws but also religious doctrine. The provision in the Illinois statute of 1833 that barred Illinoisans from providing aid to people in need was an effort to "nullify the law of God."[145] This law forbade concealing or caring for fugitives, the aid that fulfilled the basic principles of Christian charity.[146] In April 1839 Anne Thomas wrote from New Garden, Ohio to her cousin Nathan in Schoolcraft, Michigan. She was particularly disturbed by the clause in the "Black Law" that outlawed granting aid to runaway slaves, under penalty of a fine. This was, to her, a policy of exceptional cruelty.[147]

Religious institutions that opposed slavery for moral reasons, such as the Society of Friends, also took public stances on the laws' content as a key technique to facilitating their repeal. In 1840, the Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends denounced the practice of hiding the truth from the public concerning the wide-ranging evils of slavery, which encompassed the "Black Laws." They argued that, despite efforts to muzzle the press on the subject, it was their duty to

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[144] Ohio abolitionists also claimed that the testimony law allowed criminals to abuse African Americans. Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 5, Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 10.
[145] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 7.
[146] *Ibid.*, 9. The Will County Society set up a sarcastic rivalry with Ohio to determine which state had the worst "Black Laws." Judge William Jay had written a pamphlet claiming Ohio had the "pre-eminence in that atrocious policy, which crushes the colored man," but these abolitionists also argued that Illinois might take this "honor" from their fellow Old Northwestern state. William Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery* (Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1853), Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 11.
[147] Anne Thomas, New Garden, [Ohio], to Nathan M. Thomas, 2 April 1839, Nathan M. Thomas papers, Manuscript Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

spread the truth about slavery and the oppressions of these laws to "our fellow citizens."[148] The Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends (which had many members who lived in Ohio and Illinois) published an address in 1843 to the Ohio citizenry with the goal of eradicating their "Black Laws."[149] As did the Will County Society, they, too had secular, "moral and religious obligations" to fulfill their convictions of opposition to slavery. Their spiritual arguments centered upon how distinctions drawn upon lines of race displeased God and disobeyed the Golden Rule.[150] Along with their fellow anti-discrimination activists, they claimed that all people had entitlement to the same rights.[151]

Opponents of the "Black Laws" across the Old Northwest also worked through their publications to draw attention to efforts to regulate interracial marriage. They opposed these laws despite the fact that such unions were often already controversial, even in the colonial era. Legislatures outlawed "miscegenation," revealing a preoccupation with interracial sex that arose in both state and national contexts. Lawmakers barred these pairings as part of an effort to preserve white privilege, and out of concern with protecting social stratification.[152] In one

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[148] *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* November 19, 1840.
[149] Nelson, *Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War*, 5.
[150] Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends, *Address to the Citizens of the State of Ohio Concerning What are Called the Black Laws, Issued in behalf of the Society of Friends of Indiana Yearly Meeting, by their Meeting for Sufferings, representing the said Yearly Meeting in its recess. [A large portion of the members reside in the state of Ohio.]*, 4.
[151] *Ibid.,* 10, 15.
[152] Barbara C. Cruz and Michael Berson, "The American Melting Pot? Miscegenation Laws in the United States," *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no. 4 (2001): 80. These restrictions continued through the 1960s. While some areas in the North acted more quickly to permit interracial marriage, both the West and the South left most of their anti-miscegenation laws in place after the Civil War. The impetus for the final repeal was the 1967 Supreme Court ruling in *Loving* v. *Virginia* that they were unconstitutional. Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of "Race" in Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 83, no. 1 (1996), Peggy Pascoe, "Race, Gender, and Intercultural Relations: The Case of Interracial Marriage," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 12, no. 1 (1991): 6.

example, an 1829 Illinois law forbade interracial marriage outright.[153] Despite the shaky footing on which support for these controversial unions put them, the Will County Society decried how the Illinois "Black Laws" operated to facilitate white sexual license and deny African Americans legal recourse for sexual assault. While the Illinois legislature had rendered interracial marriage illegal, it placed "illicit intercourse" under minimal sanction. The abolitionists claimed that the result was white immorality and tyranny; "any pale faced scoundrel" had license under this law to invade the home of "a colored man" and attack "his family," without much fear of reprisal, as African Americans were not permitted to testify against whites. They constructed this crime as an offense against the man and his family unit, not one against the individual woman or girl who would be the likely victims of such a "scoundrel."[154] Thus while they touched upon the delicate subject of interracial sexual abuse, they did so in the service of preserving African American men's right to an intact family unit.[155] They drew upon the rhetoric of domesticity and the sanctity of the family to enhance their anti-discrimination claims.

Interracial relationships were the subject of frequent discussion in antislavery newspapers, despite the risks this entailed of playing into the hands of proslavery people who used this controversial issue to discredit abolitionists by claiming they advocated it. In 1841, the Indiana legislature repealed some segments of the law regulating black-white intermarriage,

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[153] Violators of this law faced significant penalties, including fines, whipping, or imprisonment. Baumgartner, " The Legal Status of the Negro in Illinois as Determined by State Legislation and State Supreme Court Decisions, 1818-1853", 32, Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy*, 36.

[154] Will Co. Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, *Slave Code of the State of Illinois, Being an Abstract of Those Laws Now in Force in This State, Which Affect the Rights of Colored People, as Such, Both Bond and Free. With Notes*, 8.

[155] Peggy Pascoe discusses the connections between the categories of race and gender in anti-intermarriage laws. In one example she provides from the colonial era, Maryland made gender-specific strictures on interracial marriage: in 1664, local law barred white women from marriage with "Negro slaves" but made no comment on or effort to control white men's practices. Pascoe, "Race, Gender, and Intercultural Relations: The Case of Interracial Marriage," 7.

which the *Philanthropist* used as an occasion to rail against laws regulating marriage choice.[156] They called them "a disgrace" and an "impertinent interference with individual liberty." While the authors argued that the government had no business interfering with marriage, they also implicitly denied that abolitionists favored such matches, and insinuated with disdain that legislators did: "If our legislature chose to pass resolutions binding *themselves* never to marry colored women, they are at liberty to do so—probably some such pledge may be needed to restrain an erratic choice. But, the *people* require no legislative enactment to regulate *their* taste."[157] This reference to "erratic choice" may have been an effort to distance themselves from association with intermarriage, an accusation abolitionists often faced from proslavery apologists.[158] This could have been a concession to their racist society, or another form of mockery of others' bias.

In the abolitionist press, writers linked their opposition to marriage restrictions to the larger problems that "Black Law" discrimination caused. In February 1842 the *Free Labor Advocate* of Newport, Indiana printed a piece denouncing the state legislature for forbidding interracial marriage. The editor of the *Advocate* denied that he promoted such marriages, but decried laws on this issue as beneath the "dignity" of the legislature. They were "tyrannical," and could only lead to increasing the "prejudice which is crushing to the earth the free people of

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[156] Indiana had a long history of regulating interracial relationships. In 1818 the legislature passed a law forbidding intermarriage. Some laws against such marriages remained on the books in Indiana until 1965. Lori B. Jacobi, "More Than a Church: The Educational Role of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Indiana, 1844-1861," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays From Black History News & Notes*, ed. Wilma L. Gibbs (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993), 5, Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," 43, Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, 125, 26-27.
[157] Their claim was that the legislators had no right to discuss such issues, as it had "little to do with their legitimate functions." *Philanthropist*, in *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 15, 1841.
[158] L.M. Harris, "From Abolitionist Amalgamators to 'Rulers of the Five Points': The Discourse of Interracial Sex and Reform in Antebellum New York City," in *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, ed. Martha Hodes (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 199-200.

color in the professedly free states." This law included draconian provisions to create a "board of inspections" to ascertain the race of people who wanted to marry.[159] The antislavery activists engaged with the controversy over racial categories and boundaries to push forward their fight for a more equal society.

Opponents of the "Black Laws" extensively used petitions to capture the attention of their legislatures and demand action. The Quakers were among the pioneers of this effort. The first known petition against the Ohio "Black Laws" was in 1829.[160] Petitions from African Americans obtained an additional layer of controversy in 1839 when the Ohio legislature debated whether recognizing them was an acknowledgment of African American citizenship.[161] In 1843, the Ohio American Society also petitioned for repeal.[162] Ultimately both the Ohio general assembly and state senate acknowledged the anti-"Black Law" petitions with their appointment of a committee to review them in the 1840s, although the African American population still waited decades for their repeal.[163]

Antislavery societies from across the region and throughout the decades submitted petitions to oppose the "Black Laws," using a variety of justifications. The Putnam County [Illinois] Female Society resolved to send one such petition to the Illinois Legislature in January of 1843, along with another against Texas annexation. They claimed as the duty of free states the removal of the local "Black Laws," all national discriminatory legislation, and provisions that

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[159] *Free Labor Advocate*, February 16, 1842.
[160] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 157, 98. This is the only instance of resistance to African American petitions that I have located.
[161] *Ibid.,* 100.
[162] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 16, 1843.
[163] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 103.

forced free state citizens to prop up slavery. Their own duty, as they saw it, was to make their views known to Congress and the Illinois legislature.[164]

The Indiana Friends also used their physical presence as a direct pressure technique against the "Black Laws." In 1850, Elijah Coffin wrote in his journal of Indiana Friends' efforts to use their Meeting for Sufferings to oppose the anti-immigration amendment to their Constitution by addressing their Constitutional Convention. At their meeting on the issue, Coffin wrote that the Friends "felt low" about the positive reception that this racist legislation had obtained at the Constitutional Convention. They assembled a committee and wrote a memorial to present at the convention.[165] While ineffective in this instance—the measure passed—this direct action indicates the capacity of Old Northwest reformers to rally in defense of their human rights principles in crisis situations. Anti-"Black Law" activists also pushed for justice with another lever—the black convention movement.

C: Interlinked Struggles: the "Black Laws," the Black Convention Movement, and the Fugitive Slave Law

Along with white lawyers, editors, and abolitionists, African Americans who fought the "Black Laws" interracially, alone, and through organizations proved their mettle in working for their own rights. Many, including a pioneering corps of college-educated men, sought

[164] Lewis, *Western Citizen,* April 6, 1843.
[165] Elijah Coffin, Charles Fisher Coffin, and Mary Coffin Johnson, *The Life of Elijah Coffin; With a Reminiscence, by his son Charles F. Coffin. Edited by his daughter, Mary C. Johnson. Printed for his family only* (Cincinnati?: E. Morgan & Sons, 1863), 78, 80.

involvement in a national movement for the advancement of their race.[166] The black convention movement had a wide-ranging and fascinating agenda, but chiefly of interest here are the ways it advanced human rights with its push to overturn the Old Northwest "Black Laws" and fugitive slave laws. It was a key method African Americans used to advance the conception of universal rights they shared with their allies. Racial radicals' local action against slavery and for universal human rights encompassed this form of African American organization.

Both the state and the national black convention movements were forums for expansive fights for African American equality. The first National Negro Convention met at Philadelphia in 1830, and they met again in 1834, before merging in 1835 with white activists to form the American Moral Reform Society, aimed at broader reforms.[167] African American leaders

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[166] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 82, 84, 85. Biracial schoolteacher Charles Langston bridged the gap between the work against the Ohio "Black Laws" and the black convention movement. At the black conventions he and his compatriots continually attacked the "Black Laws." Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, 67, 70. His younger brother John Mercer Langston became a famed lawyer and the first man of his race elected to American political office as the clerk of Brownhelm Township in April 1855. He was eligible to run because under Ohio law he could be construed as white, although he consistently self-identified as African American. John wrote to Frederick Douglass in 1855 that both white and African American "Anti-Slavery persons" were taking insufficient action on obtaining the vote to be able to protect African American interests. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, 281. He pushed for more action and contributed to this through his long political career.

[167] Carleton Mabee, *Black Freedom: The Nonviolent Abolitionists from 1830 Through the Civil War* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 59, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 144-45.

organized local and state meetings concurrently, including one early gathering in 1841, where the Ohio State Committee of Colored Men worked for repeal of the "Black Laws."[168]

The black national convention movement revived as a separate movement in Buffalo, New York in 1843. The men who planned the 1843 convention were largely easterners, and Ohio was the only state in the Old Northwest represented in the organization process, although the attendees included representatives from Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan. Leaders of the black convention movement in their home states participated in these national meetings.[169] The adherents met irregularly, and the next national meeting followed at Cleveland in 1848, where the main concern was repeal of the discriminatory laws that pervaded the Old Northwest.[170] After the national meeting, organization of state black conventions proceeded apace.[171]

At their 1843 national convention, the presenters argued that self-organization would be their sole route to freedom. Despite the interracial, egalitarian work of white activists, the African American participants in the convention movement also found separate action in their own behalf necessary. While they appreciated the good intentions white abolitionists had, and

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[168] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 125. Another early meeting was in January of 1842, a group of African American men in Detroit organized a meeting to obtain the franchise for the men of their state, and proposed a petition to their state legislature for that purpose. Katherine DuPre Lumpkin, "'The General Plan was Freedom': A Negro Secret Order on the Underground Railroad," *Phylon* 28, no. 1 (1967): 66. Despite an enthusiastic response from the state legislative committee that received the petitions, they did not achieve the franchise quickly. The government's stance on the issue wavered and they did not take decisive action on this right until 1870. *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 13, 1843; Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 34, 37. In Cleveland, the local African American population worked actively against the "Black Laws," including petitioning their state legislature and hiring several itinerant lecturers. John Malvin, *North into Freedom: The Autobiography of John Malvin, Free Negro, 1795-1880*, ed. Allan Peskin (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1988 (1879)), 17, 66. They worked with white allies. Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland from George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1969* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1972), 47.

[169] National Convention of Colored Citizens, *Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens: Held at Buffalo, on the 15th,16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August 1843*. (New York: Piercy and Reed, 1843), 8, 40.

[170] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 145.

[171] In one such case, the Michigan State Convention of 1843 gathered delegates from all over the state. *Minutes of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Michigan, Held in the City of Detroit on the 26th and 27th of October, 1843, for the Purpose of Considering Their Moral and Political Condition as Citizens of the State* (Detroit: Printed by William Harsha, 1843), 6.

did not directly criticize them, African American activists refused to wait and expect others to take care of their rights. They wrote that they must "seek" out the "rich boon of freedom and equal rights" for themselves.[172] From their perspective, the principled efforts of whites had created insufficient change. Interracial activism may not have been working quickly enough to alter the lives of these African American people. This self-determination, as the delegates to the 1843 Michigan State Convention saw it in gendered terms, could demonstrate that they merited full citizenship and freedom. They wrote that they should, by their "upright, correct, and manly stand in the defence of our Liberty" indicate to all "that we are deserving of our rights, and are determined to be free."[173]

The 1843 national convention had a wide-ranging agenda. One of their major goals was to attain the right to vote, as was the case in most of the black state conventions of the 1840s and 1850s. The attendees at these meetings also worked against colonization and to overturn the

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[172] National Convention of Colored Citizens, *Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens: Held at Buffalo, on the 15th,16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August 1843.*, 6-7. Horton and Horton argue that the black convention movement found its seeds in the increasing calls of African Americans for separate action on their own behalf. They claim that African American frustration with the slow progress of the interracial cause—and with the racism that some white abolitionists expressed—catalyzed this movement. This generalization may focus on the East, as they also argue that western abolitionists were integrated in the 1850s. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 246, 36, 57. Perhaps demonstrating that their work did not grow out of utter frustration or a desire to supersede abolitionist methods, the 1843 Michigan black convention passed a resolution expressing admiration for the abolitionists who persisted in the face of opposition to their action. While whites in Michigan had fought on their behalf for "fourteen years," they remained under attack. They had to augment the work of these "warm white friends" with their own uplift and educational efforts. They called upon both moral and intellectual improvements as the gateway to full rights and citizenship. *Minutes of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Michigan, Held in the City of Detroit on the 26th and 27th of October, 1843, for the Purpose of Considering Their Moral and Political Condition as Citizens of the State*, 13, 15.

[173] *Minutes of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Michigan, Held in the City of Detroit on the 26th and 27th of October, 1843, for the Purpose of Considering Their Moral and Political Condition as Citizens of the State*, 6.

social and economic barriers their fellow citizens had erected, including the "Black Laws."[174] The assembled men stated that they would fight the laws that impeded their mobility and settlement rights, and access to education. They called for egalitarian rule, "laws, just and equal for all the people."[175] The author of the minutes remained hopeful that the reform work of societies such as theirs could reveal the errors of this legislation and grant all a "better understanding of the great laws of humanity."[176]

The 1843 Convention in Michigan drew upon what they set up as universal principles of political structure and justice. They followed in the footsteps of the national convention by arguing against the Michigan Legislature's refusal to grant them citizenship rights, the franchise, and education, and denouncing their "taxation without representation." With the Declaration of Independence as their basis, they claimed the right of citizens to form, modify, or depose systems of government that do not enact the principles of their founding. To claim this right, all men should have the vote—in their terms, "a natural right belonging to man"—both due to his humanity and his ability to take responsibility for his actions.[177] They called for African American citizens in the state to petition their legislature continually until they obtained equal rights and the vote, and did so repeatedly from 1843 to 1859. In addition to conventions and

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[174] National Convention of Colored Citizens, *Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens: Held at Buffalo, on the 15th,16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August 1843.*, 3, C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1830-1846*, 5 vols., vol. 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 42, 403. Historian Emma Lou Thornbrough treats these as mutually exclusive, claiming that African Americans focused much of their energy on opposition to the "Black Laws," and only infrequently discussed the right to vote. Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, 121.
[175] National Convention of Colored Citizens, *Minutes of the National Convention of Colored Citizens: Held at Buffalo, on the 15th,16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of August 1843.*, 4-5.
[176] *Ibid.,* 35.
[177] Since they claimed these rights were universal, the provisions in the second clause of the Michigan Constitution reserving the right to vote to white men conflicted with the first clause, "which expressly declares that no man or set of men are entitled to exclusive or separate privileges." *Minutes of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Michigan, Held in the City of Detroit on the 26th and 27th of October, 1843, for the Purpose of Considering Their Moral and Political Condition as Citizens of the State*, 10-11.

petitions, these men also used referenda and the legal system to fight their deprivation of rights.[178]

The men at this meeting also had their own sly commentary on the flawed logic of racist whites. They wrote an address to publicize the cause among their fellow citizens of Michigan. They argued that their treatment ought to elicit the greatest level of compassion from the people responsible for it, those who made their progress nearly impossible.[179] These tyrants ascribed African Americans' low status to innate defects in their character and intellect. The convention minutes dismantled this argument by noting that the weight of injustice and exclusion lay so heavily upon their shoulders that any of their achievements that appeared to parallel those of whites in fact surpassed them by far:

> If then, amidst all of the[se] difficulties … we present an equal amount of intelligence with that class of our fellow citizens that have been so peculiarly favored; a very grave and dangerous question presents itself to the world, on the natural equality of man: and the best rule of logic, would place those who have oppressed us, in the scale of inferiority.[180]

They brought the obstacles preventing their advance into sharp focus with this critique, and mocked their antagonists in the process. These men, "the oppressed of this state," would continually work against these deprivations of their rights, with their private and public writings, and their verbal expressions, until they saw justice served.[181]

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[178] *Minutes of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Michigan, Held in the City of Detroit on the 26th and 27th of October, 1843, for the Purpose of Considering Their Moral and Political Condition as Citizens of the State*, 23. Katzman is imprecise in the numbers, but at minimum, they submitted petitions in the years 1843, 1844, 1846, 1847, 1855, and 1859. Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 33, 34.

[179] *Minutes of the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Michigan, Held in the City of Detroit on the 26th and 27th of October, 1843, for the Purpose of Considering Their Moral and Political Condition as Citizens of the State*, 20.

[180] *Ibid.,* 21.

[181] They also condemned colonization and emigration. *Ibid.,* 12, 23.

For all of the talk of equality and demands for parity of opportunity, this did not readily extend to women; the black conventions were a male-dominated space. In keeping with the ideology of domesticity prevalent at the time, state and national black conventions frequently resisted women's efforts to join their ranks, although women won this right on occasion.[182] African American women made their first formal request for inclusion in the 1848 Cleveland Convention. This move, which historian Shirley Yee links in timing to the Seneca Falls Convention of that year, met with debate, but the business committee ultimately opted to redefine voters as "persons," rather than men, granting women the right to vote in that meeting. Despite this victory, a year later, at the state convention at Cleveland, the men again excluded women from participation. They vowed to boycott if their participation was not allowed. Mrs. Jane P. Merritt argued that it was "wrong and shameful" for the men of the meeting to refuse women permission to speak after inviting them to attend. They won this right.[183] Despite these small triumphs, women had a long fight for equal rights in the movement for African American civil liberties. Much as it did in the larger antislavery and racial liberation movements, conflict arose from prioritizing race over gender equality. As was the case in the broader antebellum reform struggle, men used the language of natural rights, human rights, and the Declaration of Independence to deny the rights of women through gendered language.

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[182] At the October 1853 meeting of the first Illinois black convention, while it was a male-only meeting, the attendees asked for equal opportunities, and included women in their reform strategy. They argued that "woman" was the "God-given helpmeet of man; and as mother, wife, and sister, she is the natural guardian of virtue and good manners." Philip Sheldon Foner and George E. Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840-1865, Vol. 2* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 62.

[183] Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America*, 105-06, Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 144-45.

One person who moved with fewer obstacles into a position of anti-racist leadership was the exceptional Illinois activist, John Jones, a major player in the black convention movement and that for the repeal of the Illinois "Black Laws." He began his public life in 1847, two years after he and his wife Mary Jane had moved to Chicago.[184] They rented a one-room apartment in what was the African American area of Chicago in 1845: between State Street, Clark Street, and the Chicago River. John opened a tailoring shop on Clark Street, one of the pioneering African American owned businesses in that city.[185] In these early years, Jones met two white abolitionist allies, Charles V. Dyer, a doctor, and Lemanuel Covell Paine Freer, a well-known lawyer. They maintained friendships for the rest of his life, and Freer aided Jones in his correspondence and subsequently taught him to read and write.

John Jones began his formal fight against the "Black Laws" in 1847 with the debate related to that year's Constitutional Convention. Numerous delegates there promulgated the notion that an influx of African American residents into Illinois would imperil white labor. In response, Jones wrote a series of articles in the *Western Citizen* that argued for African American rights and legal equality. Jones argued that the "Black Laws" bore primary responsibility for the

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[184] He was born free of mixed race ancestry in North Carolina in 1816, and his mother feared his father might sell him into slavery, so she apprenticed him to a series of tailors. He learned this trade as a young man in Tennessee, where he also met his future wife, Mary Jane Richardson, whose father was a free blacksmith. The Richardsons moved to Alton, Illinois in the early 1840s, and Jones followed in 1843, when he completed his apprenticeship. John and Mary married in 1844, and relocated to Chicago the following year. As they traveled through Illinois, local authorities used the "Black Laws" to detain them, claiming they might be fugitives. With the good word of their stagecoach driver, the Joneses were freed, and continued along their way. Charles A. Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," *Illinois Historical Journal* 80 (1987): 177-78.

[185] Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 178-79. The Jones's were not the only African American family to immigrate to Illinois and find material and social success in the antebellum period. Frank McWhorter and his family came to Illinois and founded a new town, New Philadelphia, in Pike County in 1835. This town, along with other small pockets of African American population in western Illinois, represented an effort by African Americans to claim a rightful place in Illinois. They also took up community building efforts to ameliorate the worst of the problems the "Black Laws" caused African Americans in their state. The town experienced growth during the Civil War both from the South and the West [Missouri]. Juliet E. K. Walker, *Free Frank: A Black Pioneer on the Antebellum Frontier* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 112, 16-17, 64.

poverty of African Americans in Illinois, restricting all aspects of their lives, from economic to civil to personal.[186]

Despite Jones's eloquent logic, the Illinois legislature passed the anti-immigration provision, Article XIV of the 1848 Constitution. A popular vote confirmed it by "a wide majority." Jones wrote to the *Western Citizen* in July of 1848 about this measure, claiming that it deprived American citizens of their rights: "I view it with regret and alarm, because it attempts to prohibit natural-born citizens of the United States from settling in this state on account of the color of their skin."[187]

Jones' political reputation grew with his increasingly outspoken protests against discrimination. In August of 1848, African American Chicagoans met and chose Jones and the Reverend Abraham T. Hall to be the delegates at the Colored National Convention in Cleveland that September. The fifty to seventy delegates who met there on September 6 were a more western bunch than those at the 1843 meeting. They elected Frederick Douglass president and Jones vice president. The participants discussed how they could work to improve the living conditions and status of African Americans.[188] Jones's solution was that they needed to shun menial labor and to take up "honorable occupations" such as "mechanical trades, business, farming, and the learned professions." Upon his return to Chicago in September, Jones united

[186] He knew this from personal experience. In accordance with these laws, both John and Mary Jane had been detained, and had also obtained certificates of freedom from the clerk in Madison County prior to their move to Chicago. Among the evidentiary points of his argument against the "Black Laws" were the definition of free citizens omitting the word "white," the ideas of the nineteenth century Enlightenment, the principles of republican government, and the patriotic efforts of African Americans in the Revolutionary War. Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 179, 80. Jones was in good company with his opposition to the laws, including many concerned people within the Illinois abolitionist movement. In January of 1848, the Reverend Levi Spencer wrote of his fears that the Illinois legislature would add to the "Black Laws," which they did later that year. He argued that this legislation proved the extent of political and moral corruption prevalent in Illinois, and that it could only be driven by "cruel prejudice." Spencer Diaries, 29 January 1848.
[187] Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 180.
[188] *Ibid.,* 180.

with other local African American activists in a correspondence committee aimed at political organization, including petitioning the legislature for the repeal of the "Black Laws."[189]

With the passage of the federal Fugitive Slave Law in September 1850, African American people across the Old Northwest felt compelled to take action. In Chicago, Jones regarded the act as both unconstitutional and discriminatory, and wrote to the *Western Citizen* that December that it was "inconsistent with the view that all men are created equal." He saw it as purely illegal pandering to Southern interests. On September 30, 1850, over 300 African American Chicagoans met at the African Methodist Church on Wells Street to determine their course of action. They argued that the Fugitive Slave Law was unconstitutional and unchristian.[190] They planned strong resistance, including protecting African Americans from capture into slavery. They claimed they would take direct action against the law regardless of the consequences: "[w]e are determined to defend ourselves at all hazards, even if it should be to the shedding of human blood."[191] To enforce this conviction, they created a vigilance committee, a separate African American police force to prevent slave catchers from success in the city. With this act, they joined in the long tradition of African American self-defense to protect their political rights.[192] They obtained the support of the Chicago Common Council, which publicly countenanced their resolutions.

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[189] Chicago's African American population in 1850 was 300 of 29,000 residents, while in 1860 they represented 1,000 of 109,000. Lerone Bennett, *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000), 190.
[190] *Ibid.,* 181, 183. This was the first name of the Chicago City Council.
[191] *Ibid.,* 182.
[192] Howard Holman Bell, "Expressions of Negro Militancy in the North, 1840-1860," *Journal of Negro History* 45, no. 1 (1960), Steven Hahn, *A Nation under our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*, Mabee, *Black Freedom: The Nonviolent Abolitionists from 1830 Through the Civil War.*

As Jones and his Chicago allies recognized, fugitive slave laws placed all African Americans in the North in danger of kidnapping, and rendered the activism against them inextricable from work against the "Black Laws" and the black convention movement in the Old Northwest.[193] Even though the Fugitive Slave Law was legally a federal concern, it and the "Black Laws" were catalyzed by the same fears of extensive African American immigration, if the northern states proved hospitable to them. This shared history of oppression extended back before slave catching found its most notorious iteration in the region in 1850.

In the increasingly perilous environment of the antebellum Old Northwest, racial radicals implemented every strategy in their repertoire to protect African American rights, including the passage of personal liberty laws. New Jersey passed the first personal liberty law in 1826, inaugurating the practice of subjecting fugitive removal to a judicial review process. Abolitionist and state sovereignty arguments both helped increase hostility to fugitive slave capture after the 1830s.[194] Ohio had short-lived laws in 1819 and 1831 intended to protect African Americans from kidnapping, and many state residents refused to comply with both federal and state "Black" and fugitive slave laws. Ohio also had a state fugitive slave law—which, interestingly, also mandated proof of legitimate ownership prior to removing accused fugitives from the state—from 1839 to 1842, although slave catcher aggression made it unpopular.[195] Ohio African Americans tried for years to obtain another personal liberty act, and finally obtained an enforceable one in 1857 when the Republicans gained control of the assembly. When the

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[193] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 149.
[194] *Ibid.,* 92-93, 183.
[195] In 1849, Ohio added another fugitive slave law as a component of the "Black Laws." It was ineffective as an anti-immigration provision. In 1856, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in *Anderson v. Poindexter* that slaves were automatically free when they entered the state with the permission of their owner. Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 92, 159, 242, 45.

Democrats regained power in 1858 they repealed it and tried to pass a statute mandating enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law.[196] Michigan, too, had early personal liberty laws that set up the legal process for fugitive recovery, including provisions that slave catchers had to take African Americans and mulattoes before a judge and accuse them of being slaves before they could be detained.[197]

The national Fugitive Slave Law and the "Black Laws" could come into conflict, with libratory consequences, on occasion. In the 1849 case of the *Illinois Supreme Court v. Thornton*, the effort to regulate fugitives through the "Black Laws" revealed that jurisdictional squabbling could actually benefit captured fugitives. In that incident, the Sangamon County constable captured Missouri fugitive Hempstead Thornton, despite his protestations of illegal restraint. In this case, the "Black Laws"' overreaching their bounds served to his advantage. One portion of the revised statutes of Illinois of 1845 aimed at aiding in the capture of fugitives within Illinois. Under this law, all African Americans who entered the state without free papers were automatically presumed to be fugitives, and were subject to arrest and jailing. The county sheriff had to "advertise" the captives' presence in a newspaper for six weeks. If still unclaimed, the sheriff could sell the labor of these people for twelve months if no stated "owner" came forward.

The Supreme Court decision changed this practice, arguing that the Illinois legal system had no right to interfere in an area of federal jurisdiction. The logic followed that since fugitive regulation was an area of United States Congress purview, "the arrest of the prisoner was without

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[196] *Ibid.,* 245.
[197] The African American population was very small in the territorial era, with only 174 people recorded in the census of 1820. By 1840, this number had only grown to 707. For complete population statistics, see Appendix A. Kooker, "The Anti-Slavery Movement in Michigan", 55-57, 26, 47-48, 58.

authority of law, and he must be discharged from custody."[198] In this instance, while the Illinois Supreme Court claimed to uphold federal fugitive slave legislation, it simultaneously undermined proslavery claims by removing one of the tools for the recapture of fugitives.[199]

The work for full African American citizenship continued in the Old Northwest in the early 1850s. John Jones circulated another petition to state legislators for repeal of the "Black Laws" in December of 1850, and he and Mary took action against the Fugitive Slave Law by hosting fugitives and forwarding them to Canada.[200] Elsewhere, in Indiana, the black state convention met in 1851 to resist the new discriminatory constitution of that year.[201] In July of 1853, after a few quiet years, the black national convention movement revived with a meeting at Rochester, New York. Jones and Frederick Douglass both participated as vice-presidents, and 140 delegates from nine states met there.[202] This convention aimed at "justice" for African Americans and presented a comprehensive agenda, including work against the colonization movement.

In October 1853, the national convention technique of a broad, rights-based strategy came to the local level in Illinois, as the first Black State Convention met in Chicago. The main focus of this meeting was the repeal of the "Black Laws," although the participants also discussed equal educational opportunities, support of temperance, African American agricultural

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[198] *Decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois in relation to arrest of slaves. Ex parte Thornton. The process by virtue of which the prisoner was arrested, and is now detained, was issued under the provisions of the fifth section of the seventy-fourth chapter of the Revised Statues.*

[199] Elmer Gertz, "The Black Laws of Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 61, no. 3 (1963): 469.

[200] Abolitionists, both white and African American, met at their home, and they also hosted Frederick Douglass and John Brown; the latter man's plans for violent revolt struck them as farfetched. Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 183, Dorothy Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the 19th Century*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 147-49.

[201] They met again in 1857 to submit petitions to the legislature to lift the limits on their testimony. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," 43.

[202] Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 183.

interests, and colonization. There, the members elected Jones president and later chair of the colonization committee. In the delegates' view, the "Black Laws" were against the state and national Constitutions, unjust, unequal and even "repugnant to the principles of humanity." These laws impeded both the "moral and the mental development" of Illinois's African Americans, and they were determined to push against them.[203]

Despite the efforts of such conventions, African Americans in the Old Northwest remained without equal rights and opportunities. Their solidarity suffered blows from disagreements about emigration, financial woes, and the loss of members to Canada. However, the convention movement altered many people's views on colonization, and their articulate presence belied the ideology of African American inferiority.[204] The convention movement also helped to develop both local and national leaders of the race.

In the Old Northwest in the 1850s, African Americans encountered both increased oppression and occasional signs that their activism had paid off. On February 12, 1853 the Illinois Legislature enacted another anti-immigration article that forbade bringing people of African American or mulatto ancestry into the state. African Americans who settled there were subject to a fine, and local sheriffs could sell individuals who could not pay these fees to cover court costs. At various points in the 1850s, African Americans made efforts to repeal these unjust laws. They met with failure, but activists steadily organized against them, as well as for

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[203] Jones denounced colonization schemes and denied that they solved the issues the "Black Laws" raised. Foner and Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840-1865, Vol. 2*, 59, 61. Delegates followed Jones's lead, supporting his resolutions that African Americans indeed belonged in America, and deeming Martin R. Delany's call for a National Emigration Convention counter to their interests. They argued that colonization efforts led to proslavery sentiment and depressed the morale of the African American population.
[204] Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 184.

entitlement to public education, the vote, and legal rights.[205] They had some small victories to tide them over, including in Michigan, where after 1855 they won the right to vote in most school district elections.[206]

The black convention movement and other public activist measures raised the profile of the debate over race and rights and "Black Laws" in national African American leadership circles. The convention participants' contemporaries derided the Old Northwest for its "Black Laws." The dire reputation of Illinois on racial issues reached the ears of famed African American activist James McCune Smith of New York City by 1855. In a speech that he delivered at the First Colored Presbyterian Church in that city, he claimed that Illinois had "hitherto [been] covered with deeper infamy in caste than any other state." Nevertheless, he saw indications that efforts for equality there had been showing results.[207] The local fighters knew that the battle was not yet won, and carried on with their organizing efforts.

With the 1856 Black Illinois State Convention at Alton, Jones and his allies in the state continued to demand equal rights.[208] At that meeting, they took more decisive action against the "Black Laws." They set up a state repeal association to remove them, and aimed to recruit more members among African Americans in Illinois. Their chief complaint about the laws' injustice remained their denial of the right to vote.[209]

Overall, African American citizenship was far from assured in the late 1850s. Notoriously, the Supreme Court decision of *Dred Scott* v. *Sanford* in 1857 struck a crushing

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[205] *Ibid.,* 188, 185.
[206] Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 35-36.
[207] Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, 292.
[208] Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 185.
[209] Foner and Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840-1865, Vol. 2*, 53-54.

blow to the push for African American rights all across the North. The courts and legislatures also remained unsympathetic to pleas for equity.[210] In 1858, the Indiana General Assembly proposed resolutions affirming that African Americans were "inferior" and that they had no right to "freedom and equality." While the resolutions failed, their very plausibility reveals the tone of Indiana race relations.[211] That same year, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that discriminatory policies were legal. In this decision, they affirmed that African Americans could be "excluded from ordinary social and familiar intercourse with white persons." This led to a radicalization in the approaches of many African Americans, including increased aid to fugitives and willingness to consider emigration to Canada.[212] In this tense environment, they found aid even in unlikely places, such as in the usually-cautious political parties.

The anti-"Black Law" effort was not confined to African American activists and immediate antislavery organizers. This endeavor impacted and was influenced by politics in the Old Northwest, and its participants at times collaborated with people in both third party and mainstream factions. As early as 1843, Liberty Party candidates placed repeal on their platforms. Dr. Demming, a Liberty Party candidate in an 1843 election from Jefferson County, Indiana, advocated the cleansing of the Indiana "Statute book" of its "Black Laws."[213] In 1846, Asahel Lewis, the Whig candidate for the Ohio senate from the Western Reserve district, also made repeal of the "Black Laws" a priority. Democrats tried to portray this as radical abolitionism to undermine him, but Lewis ultimately won the closely contested election.[214]

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[210] Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, 61-63, 265.
[211] Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*, 132-33.
[212] Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 40.
[213] *Free Labor Advocate*, December 21, 1842.
[214] Robert Meredith Watson, "The Anatomy of a Crusade: a Western Reserve Township and the War Against the Slaveholders, 1831-1865" (Memphis State University, 1978), 320.

The partial repeal of Ohio's "Black Laws" in 1849 was also an outcome of politics and political antislavery efforts. It stemmed from a deal between the Democrats and the Free Soil Party in which the Free Soil legislators from the Western Reserve were instrumental.[215] In this repeal the legislators abolished the registration requirement and the bond payment, testimony, and job restrictions, but African Americans remained disfranchised, subject to the poor relief law, and had a new degree of legalized discrimination in the schools.[216] Even the progress that this repeal exemplified was thus highly qualified.

Politicians' willingness to denounce slavery escalated with the success of the Republican Party, but did not always entail support for the antislavery movement or egalitarianism in the North. In 1859 and 1860, the Republicans—a northern sectional party—refused to take a strong stance against the pervasive racism of the "Black Laws."[217] In fact, the expansion of the antislavery agenda to include the Republican Party bore its own costs for the movement's larger

[215] The Whigs had refused to take any strong action against the "Black Laws." The Liberty Party was more assertive, and in the 1840s they succeeded in getting the Ohio legislature to review the "Black Laws," but failed to get a repeal. Even though the Free Soil Party had a more moderate attitude of containment of slavery rather than its immediate abolition, they nonetheless fought for repeal of these restrictive laws. Middleton argues that the Free Soilers were able to bring about repeal as they were more willing to compromise than their forebears had been. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930*, 7, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 128, 43, 44, 46, 57.

[216] Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 114-15, 57. Antislavery politician and former "One Hundred Conventions" lecturer James Monroe of Oberlin labored against slavery and the "Black Laws" from within the Free Soil and Republican Parties. While in the state legislature from 1855 to 1862, he aimed to persuade his fellow legislators that African Americans deserved equal rights. He pushed to have the word white removed from the Ohio Constitution, but despite his lobbying it never went up for a vote, as other Republicans convinced him it would never pass, and would divide the party. He put party interests first, over his convictions of the need for change in discriminatory law. Monroe was instrumental in the passage of the short-lived Ohio personal liberty law of 1857. One of Monroe's constituents, L. N. Griswold, wrote to him in February 1857 to express his pleasure that Monroe had take up the "Black Law" repeal cause. In Griswold's eyes, Monroe had made Lorain County proud. Clayton Sumner Ellsworth, "Oberlin and the Anti-Slavery Movement up to the Civil War" (Ph. D., Cornell University, 1930), 136, L. D. Griswold, Elyria, 2 February 1857, James Monroe Papers, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, Catherine M. Rokicky, *James Monroe: Oberlin's Christian Statesman and Reformer, 1821-1898* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2002), 41-42.

[217] Merton Lynn Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority*, *Minorities in American History* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975), 237, 40.

goals. Over time, the dominance of that strain of antislavery led to a less firm abolitionist and anti-racist stance, and one that largely abandoned the earlier potential for egalitarian principles in the Old Northwest. Racial prejudice still exerted significant sway over many northerners, and many politicians offered their constituents the gradualist statement that the end of slavery would not affect the stratified structure of their local society.[218]

While abolitionists, antiracists, and African Americans all fought racial distinctions, support for them remained extensive in Ohio, where in 1859 the Supreme Court strengthened the "Black Laws." They invalidated previous legislation that gave the vote to biracial people, and election judges were still required to reject voters with a "visible admixture" of African American ancestry. The battle against these laws continued, with African American activist John Mercer Langston and the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society leading the way with speeches and petition campaigns that also called for the passage of "personal liberty laws" and the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law and the "Black Laws."[219]

African Americans also defied and tested the "Black Laws" by voting, as did William J. Whipper in the April 4, 1859 election in Charleston Township, Ohio. Whipper wrote to Salem, Ohio abolitionist Benjamin S. Jones that he thought himself entitled to the franchise, "notwithstanding my dark complexion," so he attempted to vote. He fought his subsequent rejection and inspired a fiery local debate. He argued that he met the citizenship, residency, and age requirements for voting, and that the statute did not explicitly exclude him, for he quoted it

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[218] *Ibid.,* 258-59.
[219] William F. Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek, *John Mercer Langston and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1829-65*, *Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 366, C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1859-1865*, 5 vols., vol. 5 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 15.

as saying "that all white male citizens over the age of twenty-one *may* vote, but does not say that colored ones may not."[220] He won the argument, and did vote, but one local man, Dr. Heath, sued the election judge, Mr. Loomis, for allowing and aiding this "illegal vote." Two local townships refused to try Loomis, but Paris Township agreed to do so.

The court arraigned Loomis for $300, and told Whipper to keep quiet and stay out of the battle. He wrote to Jones that these threats did not sway him, as he saw the law on his side. Whipper was unwilling to bow in the face of "established custom" on this issue, which he saw as clearly in the wrong. Defiantly, he wrote, "so come on with your forces, for being quiet is no part of my mission." He was glad to see the bias of men like Heath brought to the attention of people he regarded as "true Christians," who would find his conduct appalling. Loomis was acquitted the next month in the county court, thus vindicating Whipper.[221] The dramatic beginning of the Civil War two years later helped African Americans move further along their trajectory of slow progress.

D: The Potential for Radical Change: The Civil War and Racism

The coming of the Civil War brought a new optimism to people like Whipper, the fighters for human rights. Many Northern African Americans had become disheartened by the stagnation of their rights in the 1850s and the intensification of violence over slavery and discrimination. They had come to view the achievement of full citizenship as a remote possibility. For the small, beleaguered northern African American population, the Civil War

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[220] William J. Whipper, the son of abolitionist William Whipper, was born in 1834 in Pennsylvania. He moved to Charleston, Ohio when he was young. He worked actively against slavery and the "Black Laws," and moved to Detroit during the Civil War. He later became a prominent Republican lawyer and politician in South Carolina. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1859-1865*, 15, 18.
[221] Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1859-1865*, 17.

presented new possibilities for overcoming the "Black Laws." Many became more sanguine about the potential for change, and moved away from their consideration of emigration and colonization as solutions to intractable American racism (as they had done in the 1850s), but they still faced extensive obstacles to their full citizenship.[222]

In 1860, Illinois African American abolitionist H. Ford Douglas offered his own strong critique of the progress of racial equality, the Republican Party and political abolitionism in general. At the September 1860 meeting of the Western Anti-Slavery Society, Douglas made a fiery and memorable speech, which demonstrated his immediatism and opposition to the Constitution. He denounced the government, the major political parties, and even politicians who considered themselves antislavery, for he regarded all as tainted by the institution. He scolded his mostly white audience for upholding these institutions. In his view, the United States truly needed to teach all to "recognize the white man, the black man, the red man, *all* men, to all the rights of manhood." Thus he, as an African American, was not asking for "any special favor" but that he receive his "manhood … before the law," and to have all the "Black Laws" repealed. His demand was for equal rights, but his phrasing of it as "manhood" conflated citizenship and gender.[223] In this civil rights battle, the language that identified whiteness, manhood, and citizenship with republicanism elevated the stakes of the struggle.

The beginning of the Civil War did not render the "Black Laws" obsolete. In 1861, the prevalent belief among most white Americans was of their own superiority and of African

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[222] Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 8, 9, 10-11, Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 156.

[223] Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1859-1865*, 88-91. Douglas was born into slavery in Virginia, but escaped in 1846 and settled in Cleveland. He resided in Chicago beginning in 1856, experimented with Canadian and Panamanian colonization, and began lecturing for the Massachusetts Society in 1860. Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers: The United States, 1847-1858*, 78-79.

American inferiority. The war was not intended as a stab against white domination, particularly in the Old Northwest, which, the South aside, was the region with the deepest investment in racial hierarchy.[224] Once the reality of the war entered the consciousness of many Northerners, those who feared an African American influx called for strengthened exclusionary provisions. In Michigan, many whites voiced fears that emancipation would result in the flooding of the state by African Americans. They even petitioned to have the personal liberty laws then in place repealed, although this petition failed.[225]

The stalwart fighters for African American equality in the Old Northwest and across the nation were not content to allow this battle to be stalled by the shifting priorities that the entry into an actual war brought them. "A western abolitionist" wrote to the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1861 calling for continual attention to the western "Black Law." He argued that the American Society should continue to work on this issue, to aim for legal changes. Presciently, he saw that the war might be insufficient to bring about "Legislation of a just character." He declared bluntly, "It will not answer to trust these reforms to this war."[226] While the free produce movement became obsolete with the cessation of inter-sectional trade during the war and the subsequent abolition of slavery, activists continued to find their motivations in the larger human rights struggle, and to work toward African American legal equity.

[224] James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality; Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 31, V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1.
[225] Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 44.
[226] McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality; Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 225.

Epilogue

"The universe possesses no power that can elevate error into the dignity of right."[1]
The Illinois State Convention of Colored Men, Galesburg, October, 1866.

The Civil War inaugurated a new phase in the struggle for racial equality. Racial radicals could not merely look back on their past greatness, glory, and success in implementing activist values against an oppositional culture, for much work remained. The end of slavery wrought transformations that in turn altered radical arguments, fundamentally reconfiguring them and placing into question the justification that the institution of bondage had provided for racial stratification. While thorny problems of race and rights remained, and worsened in some areas, the terms of debate had changed.

After the smoke had settled, racial radicals in the Old Northwest found that their major battle for African American equality remained. During the war, African Americans had kept up their own pressure on their states and the nation to grant them equal rights, but had seen minimal results.[2] Post-emancipation arguments for African American subordination could no longer rest on claims of natural African American servility, and the problem of racial prejudice thus grew more complex and required new oppositional strategies.[3] While the overt obstacle of legal servitude had been shunted aside, white supremacy remained entrenched in the developing

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[1] "Proceedings of the Illinois State Convention of Colored Men, Assembled at Galesburg, October 16th, 17th, and 18th. Containing the State and National Addresses Promulgated by It, With a List of the Delegates Composing It, October 1866. Published by Order of the Convention.," in *Proceedings of the Black National and State Conventions, 1865-1900*, ed. Philip Sheldon Foner and George E. Walker (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986; reprint, Chicago, 1867), 269.

[2] In early 1861 Michigan African Americans held a state convention to argue for parity of rights and for suffrage. David M. Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, *Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 44.

[3] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Revised ed. (New York: Verso, 1999 (1991)), 174-75.

postwar national culture—albeit in ways that varied with region. Everywhere, continued efforts to maintain racial prejudice constrained the space in which activists had to operate.

During the war, Old Northwest citizens and legislatures struck repeated blows to the cause of equal treatment, encompassing exclusion, marriage laws, the franchise, and schooling. They faced new obstacles, as in Ohio, where the General Assembly passed new "Black Laws." They were inundated in late 1861 and early 1862 with petitions from 30,000 to 40,000 of their constituents asking for an exclusionary amendment.[4] While residents tried to limit it, the local African American population increased regardless.[5] All four of these states implemented or retained laws barring interracial marriage.[6] African American men remained excluded from most militias and the vote across the region. Indiana regulations kept African American children out of the public schools, while Illinois provided them with no guarantee of education at all. Ohio and Michigan, for their part, had segregated schools in most places.[7]

The Old Northwest remained the scene of substantial conflicts throughout 1862 and 1863, with continual anti-African American incidents—ranging from disturbing rumors to outright attacks—especially in Indiana and Illinois, but also in Michigan and Ohio. In areas of Illinois and Indiana the anti-immigration laws saw more stringent enforcement than before the war, as did the Fugitive Slave Law. Indiana during and after the war remained a dangerous place

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[4] V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 17-18.

[5] The legislature affirmed its opposition to interracial relationships with a new anti-miscegenation law in 1861. This was the first statute of its kind in Ohio. It criminalized both interracial sex and marriage and kept in place the visual standard to determine racial boundaries. The General Assembly revisited the issue in 1877, reinforced it, and kept the fine. Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 247, 51.

[6] For more on this issue, see Chapter 6.

[7] The Ohio Assembly debated the entitlement of people of mixed race descent to the vote during the war. Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War*, 172, 82.

to advocate racial egalitarianism, but the effort continued in both political and activist circles. There, the legislature abolished none of the "Black Laws" during the war, despite the fact that the Republicans dominated the body and activists persisted in their repeal effort, and in 1864, the Democrats asked for even greater enforcement of the exclusion law.[8] At Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois border and river crossings, and even at a distance from the state lines, local authorities appointed guards to stop fugitive traffic from the South.[9] Despite lacking direct southern borders, Michigan also had its share of anti-African American violence, including a devastating riot in Detroit in 1863.[10]

On the partisan level, the war only augmented disagreements. On the national political scene, Republicans' extreme moderation on African American rights made for a conservative agenda regarding social and political conditions. Some party men remained strong supporters of colonization in April of 1862. In the election of that year, it became clear that while arguments that slavery was immoral could elicit support for the war, and even persuade Congress and the President to accept abolition as a general rule, these claims had failed to alter many Old Northwest people's views on "emancipation or equality for negroes."[11] White supremacy also served as the bond holding together the various factions of the Democratic Party in the Reconstruction era.[12]

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[8] Some Indiana African Americans chose to leave for Canada. *Ibid.,* 17-18, 170; James H. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," in *The History of Indiana Law*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 48, Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 156.
[9] Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War*, 88-89.
[10] Thomas Buckner et. al., *The Late Detroit Riot* (Detroit: 1863), Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 44.
[11] Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War*, 25, 67.
[12] Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 8, 9, 10-11, 13, 14.

Over the course of the 1860s, racial radicals found limited and shifting support for African American suffrage and political equality in mainstream politics. In electoral terms, racially egalitarian lobbying by progressive newspapers, churches, and black state conventions drove the Radicals in the Republican Party toward advocacy of African American civil rights.[13] While the Republican politicians of the Old Northwest had done little to advance the cause of equality since the beginning of the war, some gave their votes to congressional efforts aimed at ameliorating discrimination against African Americans. By the fall of 1863, Congressional Republicans began to work in earnest to improve the nation's race issues. For most Republicans in the Old Northwest, this was a change in policy, for they had not previously been committed to measures that would drastically alter the racial structure at home, other than some acceptance of abolition.[14] While this was a moderate shift in direction, it was only after the ascent of the Radical Republicans in 1867 that the Republican Party took an egalitarian stance on African American rights.[15]

As the Civil War continued, increasing numbers of African Americans both joined the war effort and arrived in the North. The War Department recruited across the North for the 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry. They hired African American leaders—including Martin Delany, John Jones, and John Mercer Langston—as agents for that regiment and those of Rhode Island and Connecticut. The Union Army drew upon the militia experiences of men from black

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[13] *Ibid.,* 135, 204.
[14] Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War*, 161. Historian Kenneth L. Kusmer claims that Radical Republicanism in the Western Reserve was the exception and differed from other regions in the North. There, politicians were less receptive to nativism and more racially egalitarian. Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930*, *Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 9.
[15] Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 278-79.

self-defense organizations founded in response to the Fugitive Slave Law. Throughout the Old Northwest and the North from the spring of 1863 until the end of the war, governors asked the federal government to allow the induction of African American soldiers.[16] The Union Army sent many slaves formerly owned by Confederate supporters to the Old Northwest, including large numbers to Illinois via Cairo. In 1864 the Chicago *Tribune* reported that people in most counties in the state were ignoring the 1853 statute forbidding immigration. The government gave minimal effort to enforcing many provisions of the "Black Laws," but John Jones and activists in other states saw that discrimination against them persisted, and continued to present arguments for the laws' harmful nature.[17]

On November 4, 1864 John Jones published a pamphlet, "The Black Laws of Illinois and a Few Reasons Why They Should Be Repealed." Addressing his fellow Illinoisans and their legislators, his wide-ranging argument encompassed "moral, economic, legal, and constitutional principles." Among his points was that African Americans could claim United States citizenship on the basis of their Revolutionary and now Civil War military experience. In his view, whites could also use "self-interest" as a motive to repeal the "Black Laws" as they interfered with interracial business transactions, and they needed African Americans to be able to testify to protect their property in court cases. Both the Chicago *Tribune* and the Chicago *Evening Journal* joined him in denouncing the "Black Laws" that November. Jones continued his work against the "Black Laws" with petitioning efforts and his work with correspondence committees and

[16] The issue of Old Northwest African Americans' participation in the war was complicated by the presence of recently arrived former slaves who joined up and by Old Northwest soldiers' enlistment in units associated with other states, which right they gained before 1863. In 1863 and 1864, African American men entered the Union Army regiments in Illinois and Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, *The Black Military Experience*, vol. 2, *Freedom, A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 75-76.

[17] Charles A. Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," *Illinois Historical Journal* 80 (1987): 185.

repeal associations.[18] His activism, and that of other like-minded people, continued the pressure that created incremental change in the Old Northwest racial milieu.

In wartime, African Americans won some small victories in the Old Northwest. These included the integration of streetcars in Cincinnati and Cleveland.[19] In 1865, Ohio and Illinois repealed some of their "Black Laws." The federal government sent the Thirteenth Amendment to the states for ratifying February 1, 1865, and Illinois was the first to do so in combination with the partial "Black Law repeal." Springfield African Americans commemorated the occasion by firing a sixty-two-gun salute, one for each legislator who had voted for the bill. They chose John Jones to light the cannon fuse, the symbolic end of the "Black Laws."[20] This was only a qualified victory, however, for discrimination remained across the Old Northwest.

In the war's immediate aftermath, racial radicals possessed new legal tools to advance their arguments. Old Northwest activists put Reconstruction-era legislation to their own uses; they applied the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to invalidate laws that had formerly limited African Americans' rights of mobility and legal status. In many

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[18] Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 185, 86, 87, John Jones, *The Black Laws of Illinois, And a Few Reasons Why They Should Be Repealed* (Chicago: Tribune Book and Job Office, 1864).
[19] Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877*, 12, David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality; Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 83.
[20] In January of 1865, Richard Yates, the outgoing Illinois governor, strongly encouraged his legislators to remove the "Black Laws" in response to ongoing pressure. Inspired by Yates and large numbers of petitions from their constituents that flooded in from all parts of the state, they laid the groundwork for repeal. Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 187, 88.

Northern communities, African Americans rallied for suffrage in public meetings, challenging widespread opposition to their full rights.[21]

In Illinois, the third State Convention of Colored Men met at Galesburg in October of 1866 to fight the remaining "Black Laws." The meeting convened in Edward Beecher's church, claiming equal citizenship on the basis of their labor and birthright. African Americans in Illinois still faced significant restrictions, as they remained excluded from juries, disfranchised, kept out of political offices and out of the "free public schools." These men intended to address those grievances.[22] Following the repeal of the "Black Laws," the African American population of Illinois increased rapidly, allowing some progressive change. By 1870, it had reached more than 28,000.[23] African Americans first voted in Illinois in 1870, after the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. Segregation remained in Illinois public schools, but changes in opportunities included the gain of the right to serve in political positions in 1869.[24]

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[21] The states ratified the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, and the Fifteenth in 1870. Eric Foner argues that, ultimately, despite the efforts of the Radical Republicans and some small victories, "racial Reconstruction proved less far-reaching" for African Americans in the North than in the South. Most African Americans retained a precarious economic status and lived in inferior housing. Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage, 1865-1870," *Journal of Negro History* 39, no. 1 (1954): 15, Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877*, 205, 101-02, William Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, Johns Hopkins University. Studies in Historical and Political Science, ser. 83, no. 1* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 25-27, "Proceedings of the Illinois State Convention of Colored Men, Assembled at Galesburg, October 16th, 17th, and 18th. Containing the State and National Addresses Promulgated by It, With a List of the Delegates Composing It, October 1866. Published by Order of the Convention.," 246, 48, 49, 52-53, 54.
[22] "Proceedings of the Illinois State Convention of Colored Men, Assembled at Galesburg, October 16th, 17th, and 18th. Containing the State and National Addresses Promulgated by It, With a List of the Delegates Composing It, October 1866. Published by Order of the Convention.."
[23] Gliozzo, "John Jones: A Study of a Black Chicagoan," 188. See appendix A for population statistics.
[24] By 1869, John Jones had become an established member of Chicago public life, and had gained the political clout to become an appointee. He served as the first man of his race in two public offices in Illinois: he became a notary public in 1869 with the Governor's appointment, and in 1871 was elected to the Cook County Board of Commissioners on the Republican ticket. He followed the egalitarian demands of his early public career with a new orientation within party structures. For Jones, party platforms meant that he rejected radical solutions to racial and class problems. *Ibid.,* 188. Other activists retained the desire for more militant transformation. Charles Branham, "Black Chicago: Accommodationist Politics Before the Great Migration," in *The Ethnic Frontier: Essays in the History of Group Survival in Chicago and the Midwest*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'Alroy Jones (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 188, 257.

Just east and south, the Indiana State Convention of Colored People convened for their own rights in 1865 at Indianapolis. The convention attendees acknowledged the problems with their current condition, and asserted that they would work tenaciously for their rights. They demanded the abolition of the "Black Laws" that still remained in force after the war, including limited access to schooling and testimony in court.[25] They obtained the franchise in 1870, but some vestiges of discrimination remained on the books until 1881.[26] Ohio's African Americans also contended for their full rights against substantial odds. While the federal Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment finally enfranchised Ohio's African American men, white Ohioans fought this in 1867. Ultimately, the federal law overruled them, but the Ohio "Black Laws" in their entirety were not repealed until 1886.[27]

Progress on racial issues proceeded slowly in Michigan. The State Colored Convention and other African American activists fought an extended battle against segregated schools, and after the Civil War the Detroit School Board finally recognized their complaints. The vote remained elusive for Michigan's African Americans after the war. While Republicans in both Ohio and Michigan called for universal manhood suffrage in 1867, they had a hard battle to fight.[28] In 1866, William Dean, a biracial man from Nankin Township near Detroit, successfully

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[25] "State Convention of the Colored People of Indiana, Indianapolis, October 24, 1865," in *Proceedings of the Black National and State Conventions, 1865-1900,*, ed. Philip Sheldon Foner and George E. Walker (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986; reprint, 1865), 186.
[26] In 1866 the Indiana Supreme Court invalidated but did not remove the exclusion clause of the 1851 Indiana constitution. In 1869, the Indiana General Assembly required black school founding in communities with "sufficient numbers" of African American children. In 1877, the Indiana Supreme Court integrated schools in cases where school districts would not create a black school. Neither circumstance was ideal for the children attempting to obtain an education. Indiana Democrats came to dominance in the 1870s, ahead of most northern states. They pushed for white supremacy with weakening resistance from Republicans during Jim Crow. Madison, "Race, Law, and the Burdens of Indiana History," 47, 48-49.
[27] Ohio's senators had opposed the national civil rights provisions, as they had wanted to keep them out of the North. Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland from George Peake to Carl B. Stokes, 1796-1969* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1972), 85-86, Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio*, 254.
[28] Montgomery, *Beyond Equality; Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872*, 83.

registered to vote on the basis of partial white descent. This precedent did not definitively settle the issue, however, for local officials still drew the color line arbitrarily, and excluded people without white ancestors.[29] In November of 1870, a strong push from within the African American community brought all men in Michigan the vote by an amendment to their State Constitution. Although this was after the Fifteenth Amendment, which in theory guaranteed that right nationally, it was still a close contest, and the small margin of victory demonstrates the extensive racial bias at the time.[30]

Even with the Union victory in the Civil War and these qualified local triumphs, the recognition of African American equality in the North was hardly a foregone conclusion. The war brought immense economic prosperity to the region, and the entire nation saw its effects and those of its ensuing Reconstruction. It intensified African American demands for improved status, but did not easily deliver results, for even small steps to improve their status elicited "ugly counterattacks" from white supremacists.

Racial radicals possessed some limited leverage in the 1860s and 1870s to push for societal change. This opportunity impacted the movement toward racial equality not only in a split between those who deemed emancipation and voting rights satisfactory measures of a changed racial order and those who found these wanting, but also in the partial implementation of a national expectation of voting rights for all men. Racial radicals constructed their political

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[29] While school segregation in Michigan was outlawed in 1867, teacher and journalist Mary Ann Shadd Cary found it continued beyond that point when she attempted to teach in Detroit. Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century*, 165, 67. In 1867 the Michigan Constitutional convention proposed African American suffrage. This issue elicited very strong debate, but the convention ultimately rejected it. In 1868 the state voters also refused to approve a new Constitution that granted African American men the vote. Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 24, 33, 35-36, 37, James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality; Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 420.
[30] Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century*, 37-38.

and social reforms along lines of principle and moral right, and tailored them to their particular moment and location.

The claims and actions of the unparalleled agitators of the Old Northwest were unique to the particular context of their battlefield for belief. Whether they were itinerant lecturers, local organizers, news editors, or participants in the black convention movement, racial radicals challenged the restrictions of their racist environment and gave their all to the struggle to reform their region. While they could not escape proslavery influences, they developed ingenious forms of activism adapted to their local circumstances and trials.

Getting to know Old Northwest radicals and their activist culture reveals that this young region was an inextricable and vital component of the national movement to improve African Americans' lives. In contrast to reformers elsewhere, organizers in the Old Northwest had more direct encounters with anti-abolitionists, set distinctive factional boundaries, and women partook of the most dangerous aspects of their work. This region of open spaces and wide rivers, like no other, was essential to the antislavery and anti-prejudice efforts of a stalwart cohort of reformers.

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Appendix A: Old Northwest Population Statistics, 1800-1870

Illinois 1810-1870

Status	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870
Aggregate population	12,282	55,211	157,445	476,183	851,470	1,711,951	2,539,891
Free Blacks	613	457	1,637	3,598	5,436	7,628	28,762
Slaves	168	917	747	331	0	0	0

Indiana 1800-1870

Status	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870
Aggregate population	5,641	24,520	147,178	343,031	685,866	988,416	1,350,428	1,680,637
Free Blacks	163	393	1,230	3,629	7,165	11,262	11,428	24,560
Slaves	135	237	190	3	3	0	0	0

Michigan 1810-1870

Status	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870
Aggregate population	4,762	8,896	31,629	212,267	397,654	749,113	1,184,059
Free Blacks	120	174	261	717	2,583	6,799	11,849
Slaves	24	0	32	0	0	0	0

Ohio 1800-1870

Status	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870
Aggregate population	45,365	230,760	581,434	937,903	1,519,467	1,980,329	2,339,511	2,665,260
Free Blacks	337	1,899	7,723	9,568	17,342	25,279	36,673	63,213
Slaves	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	0

Source: Data from United States Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the Ninth Census of the United States*, (Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census: Washington, D.C., 1870), and Clayton E. Cramer, *Black Demographic Data, 1790-1860: A Sourcebook,* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 110-113.

Appendix B: Old Northwest Regional Map

Map by Dana E. Weiner and Chieko Maone.