

# The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793 and the Christiana Riot of 1851: A Juxtaposition of Two Illuminating Events on Race Relations in Pennsylvania

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*The SHEAR/Mellon Undergraduate Fellowship Program, founded in 2005, is dedicated to providing talented, motivated undergraduate scholars the opportunity to pursue original primary source research in some of the finest archival collections relevant to early American history. This fellowship coupled with the Mars Hill History Department, cultivated a true passion for Early American History.*

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In September 1793, a solicitation appeared in the local Philadelphian newspapers calling on African Americans to come forward and assist the “distressed, perishing, and neglected” whites suffering from the yellow fever outbreak in Philadelphia in 1793. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, two black abolitionists, led the first wave of black “benevolent” workers into the streets of Philadelphia, providing services wherever needed. Allen recalled in his autobiography, “The Lord was pleased to strengthen us, and remove all fear from us, and disposed our hearts to be as useful as possible.”<sup>1</sup> In offering their services to sick whites, African Americans like Allen and Jones were motivated partially by their belief that they would be seen as “respectable” and accepted as equals in society.

Sixty years later, black activists in Philadelphia, frustrated by persistently rigid racial barriers and enactment of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, chose a radically different method for attaining racial equality. Blacks now aggressively asserted their rights and freedoms by any means necessary. William Parker, a famous black militant in the 1850s, recalled this new violent approach, stating, “My right at the fireplace were won by my child-fists; my rights as a freeman were, under God, secured by my own right arm.”<sup>2</sup> Violent confrontations between blacks and proslavery whites mushroomed in Pennsylvania in the mid-nineteenth century, the most notorious of which was the Christiana Riot of 1851.

Separated by less than sixty years, the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793 and the Christiana Riot of 1851 effectively chart the major changes in African Americans’ approach to attaining racial equality in Pennsylvania during the Early

Republic and Antebellum periods. At the time of Yellow Fever Epidemic, blacks attempted to be of assistance by aiding the sick as a benevolent act. Afterward, however, numerous white Philadelphians accused them of criminal activity and condemned them as members of a degraded “inferior” race. Black leaders, in turn, responded by defending themselves as upright, respectable people. In this way, they hoped to reassure whites that their racial fears were baseless, that blacks were truly not a threat to them, and that all respectable people, black and white, should be equal. By contrast, during the Christiana Riot of 1851, black activists showed no interest at all in attempting to persuade or reassure whites with arguments about respectability. Instead, they condemned the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law (the legislation that had precipitated the Christiana Riot), demanded violent resistance if necessary, and scorned white supremacists as degraded bigots.

Within sixty years, African Americans went from defending their benevolent actions to aggressively asserting their rights. Many whites, by contrast, maintained a uniform hatred of dark-skinned people. This paper will shed light on the context and evolution of racial attitudes and ideologies—white and black—over a period of sixty years in Pennsylvania’s history of race relations through two case studies: the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793 and the Christiana Riot of 1851.

## **Blacks’ Pursuit of Racial Equality in the Late Eighteenth Century**

### *Notions of “Respectability” and the “Black Founding Generation”*

In the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, American society in the North was divided along rigid class and racial lines.<sup>3</sup> In the minds of northern black activists, breaking down these barriers required “free black” communities to uplift themselves to respectable standards, thus proving to white society that blacks were moral equals. Notions of respectability at the time included civic values such as piety, thrift, sobriety, benevolence, refinement, chastity, and education. Some of the first African Americans to apply this civic respectability approach as a way to attain racial equality were elites in northern cities such as Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup> These elites, known by historians today as the “Black Founding Generation”—a term coined in 2007 by Richard S. Newman and Roy E. Finckbine—comprised two groups. One represented a relatively broad group of black leaders who uplifted their surrounding communities by establishing schools, churches, and benevolent organizations, and helping ex-slaves in their transition to freedom. The other comprised a core group of black leaders dedicated toward achieving racial equality through civic respectability. This group included black leaders such as Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and James Forten.<sup>5</sup>

Allen was born into slavery and purchased his freedom from his master with the help of a Methodist minister in 1777. He subsequently joined the Methodist church, becoming a preacher in 1784. Ten years later Allen founded the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), which was the first black independent Christian denomination in the United States.<sup>6</sup> In April 1816, Allen became the first black bishop of the AME church, which, by then, had churches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.<sup>7</sup> Allen was also a skilled worker and owned his own chimney-sweeping business in Philadelphia. The money earned from this business allowed Allen to purchase the land rights for the AME church. Throughout his lifetime, Allen sought respectability through evangelism and civic actions. As a major leader of the black benevolent movements during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793, he encouraged African Americans to help the ailing white citizens in Philadelphia.<sup>8</sup>

Jones, like Allen, was a devout Methodist and ex-slave. Unlike Allen, though, Jones was married prior to purchasing his manumission. In 1778, Jones first purchased his wife’s freedom, and seven years later, saved enough money to buy his own manumission from his master. Jones then became the first black minister in the Methodist Church, preaching at the racially segregated St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, Jones allied himself with Allen in creating the Free African Society (FAS) in 1787. The FAS assisted freed slaves by providing education, economic relief, and religious guidance, and by creating benevolent societies, finding jobs, and assisting free blacks with other needs.<sup>10</sup>

James Forten, unlike Jones and Allen, was born a free African American in Philadelphia, in 1766. Forten, called by some historians as the “black Benjamin Franklin,” attended the Quaker’s African School, where he learned the importance of education. He became a highly regarded “gentleman” and entrepreneur, working as a carpenter, dentist, and sail-maker. He was also a devoted patriot, having fought in the Revolutionary War. By 1813, Forten had established himself as one of the richest businessmen in Philadelphia. He gained an extensive clientele of ships’ captains and owners

and later developed a ship-selling business known across the nation. Forten also tinkered with real estate, selling and buying property across Philadelphia. During his lifetime, Forten was a formidable presence in both the white and black Philadelphian communities.<sup>11</sup>

During the late eighteenth century, leading respectable blacks like Allen, Jones, and Forten, initiated several projects to promote racial uplift in hopes of gaining racial equality for all African Americans. One of these initiatives included black charities during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793. In particular, Allen and Jones tapped the FAS to organize and promote black uplift during the plague.

### *Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793*

Outbreaks of yellow fever occurred with regularity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States. The worst of these occurrences, however, took place in Philadelphia in the summer of 1793. At the time of the outbreak, Philadelphia served as the temporary capital of the United States and was the largest and most economically vibrant city in America. The 1793 epidemic killed more than 5,000 people in the city and left more than 200 children orphaned. One Philadelphian observer documented the symptoms as follows:

“The first stages of the fever, were, in the greatest number of cases, after a chilly fit of some duration, a quick, tense pulse—hot skin—pain in the head, back, and limbs—flushed countenance—inflamed eyes, moist tongue—oppression and sense of soreness at the stomach, especially upon pressure—frequent sick qualms, and retchings to vomit, without discharging any thing, except the contents last taken into the stomach...”<sup>12</sup>

Decomposing and rotting bodies were left piled on the streets, as many rich white citizens fled to the countryside in fear of contracting the disease. With no effective antidote, the middle and lower white classes remained in their homes hoping to avoid contracting the fever.<sup>13</sup>

At the center of efforts to control the epidemic was Philadelphian doctor Benjamin Rush, a famous patriot (a signatory to the Declaration of Independence), humanitarian, teacher, outspoken abolitionist, and an authoritative figure in the medical community. Rush applied various treatments to purge the disease from the ailing, including radical bloodletting, mercury-induced vomiting, and toxic powders. Rush also erroneously believed that African Americans were immune to the yellow fever, and that the only successful way to combat this disease was with their help. He therefore contacted Bishop Richard Allen, asking if the black community would serve as caregivers and nurses for the sick. Rush wrote:

“It has pleased God to visit the city with a malignant & contagious fever, which infects white people of all ranks, but passes by persons of your color. I have therefore taken the liberty of suggesting to you whether this important exemption which God has granted to you from a dangerous & fatal disorder does not lay you under an obligation to offer you services to attend the sick who are afflicted with this malady. Such an act in your society will be very grateful to the citizens, and I hope pleasing in the light of that god who will see every act of kindness done to creatures whom he calls his brethren, as if done himself.”<sup>14</sup>

Many scholars have debated why Rush believed African Americans were immune to the disease. In *Bring Out Your Dead*, John H. Powell argues that Rush’s beliefs stemmed from the fact that he only treated and witnessed whites dying from the plague.<sup>15</sup> At that time in Philadelphia, the majority of free blacks kept to the outskirts of the city, only traveling into the city center for work. This was typical of African American communities in the North—most were segregated from white society, with neighborhoods established mainly on the fringes of city limits.<sup>16</sup> Thus, when the fever struck the center of Philadelphia, whites were the first to contract the disease, while blacks, settled as they were outside of the city limits, suffered less.

Rush’s call for assistance provided an ideal situation for African Americans. Blacks believed assisting the ailing whites would help, if not guarantee, their attaining racial equality in Philadelphia. As Richard Newman has noted, Allen and Jones quickly learned the correct bleeding and purging techniques from Rush, and soon instructed other black

benevolent workers. The FAS supplied nurses, corpse-carriers, black doctors, physical laborers, and transportation for the sick to Bush Hill, one area that provided medical assistance to the plague victims. It is estimated that the FAS provided 2,000 black workers during the plague. The FAS did not at first charge for services, but the extent of work and time soon forced black helpers to ask for some compensation. In fact, the FAS was in debt by the end of the plague, and almost forced to disband. Most importantly, Philadelphian black society encountered significant human losses during the plague. In *Bring Out Your Dead*, Powell estimates that proportionally as many whites as blacks died during the plague.<sup>17</sup>

#### *White Reactions to Black Benevolence During the Yellow Fever*

Mathew Carey's *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia*, published in November 1793, provides the only remaining full documentation of the plague. In his pamphlet, Carey criticized Rush for his approach to combat the plague, arguing that Rush's theory on black immunity to the fever was completely wrong. He stated, "[Dr. Rush's theory] prevailed for a considerable time in Philadelphia; but it was erroneous. [Blacks] did not escape the disorder; however, the number of them that were seized with it, was not great."<sup>18</sup> More importantly, Carey condemned African Americans in his pamphlet, claiming they were delinquents of society:

"The great demand for nurses afforded an opportunity for imposition, which was eagerly seized by some of the vilest of the blacks. They extorted two, three, four, and even five dollars a night for attendance, which would have been well paid by a single dollar. Some of them were even detected in plundering the houses of the sick."<sup>19</sup>

Suffice it to say that portraying the black benevolent workers as the "vilest" of blacks was not what the FAS had expected from white citizens. Carey's unwarranted accusations shocked African Americans, many of whom became defensive about their respectability and "Good Samaritanism" during the plague. Although Carey complimented Allen and Jones for their acts of kindness during the outbreak, he nonetheless omitted any other black benevolent workers' names.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Carey portrayed the rest of the black workers as delinquents and criminals of Philadelphian society. Moreover, his accusations were based on generalizations, not specific evidence. For example, when he stated, "Some of [the blacks] were even detected in plundering the houses of the sick," Carey did not provide names, dates, or locations of specific plundering instances.<sup>21</sup>

Yet public opinion latched on to Carey's pejorative depictions. As a result, blacks, instead of gaining respectability from their charitable actions, came to be perceived as violent criminals, delinquents, and unpatriotic Americans. Andrew Brown's *Federal Gazette*, a popular white newspaper in Philadelphia, exemplified these feelings. A news item regarding the indictment of Nehemiah Wallace—a free African American—for the murder of his daughter, was reported as follows:

"Nehemiah Wallace, colored man, was arraigned on a charge of causing the death of his daughter, Elizabeth Wallace, a girl thirteen years of age, by severely beating her, her left fore-arm having been lacerated so much as to produce mortification of the flesh, and subsequent death; two small incised wounds were observed on head, and the left was cut off. Physician Dr. Cole, who made a post mortem examination of the body, was of opinion that the wounds on the arm were produced by blows of a stick or chain, which latter was said to have been the instrument of punishment."<sup>22</sup>

The last line of the article stated, "The wound that caused her death, might have been the consequence of such a fall, and there being no direct evidence of the beating, the jury acquitted the prisoner."<sup>23</sup> Most of the article, then, presented Wallace as a murderer, only to divulge his innocence at the very end. This kind of biased news reporting allowed whites to justify their hostility towards African Americans, and ignore the importance of the black benevolent actions during the plague. Following the publication of this article, a white vigilante group captured and lynched Wallace in downtown Philadelphia.

Richard Newman's *Freedom's Prophet* argues that this increase in white racism stemmed from the role reversal that occurred between whites and blacks during the plague, when white citizens became dependent on blacks. According

to Newman, prior to the plague, white Philadelphians claimed superiority over blacks, and believed “negroes” were dependent on whites for survival. Following the Yellow Fever Epidemic, however, segregation based on racial inferiority could not be justified because blacks showed they were more than capable of taking care of themselves and others during the epidemic.<sup>24</sup>

Having no justification to consider themselves as a superior race, white racial fear gripped Philadelphian society. This sentiment was exposed in an article from the *Federal Gazette*, which reported on two white farmers who entered Philadelphia to sell their goods. Struck by a noticeable increase of African Americans in the city, the farmers’ conversed as follows:

*William:* Well, George, did you learn any news?

*George:* The best of news, and that from the Negroes, for they only come to market now! They told me 14,200 [whites] have already died—29,000 have gone out of town—so that only 1425 [whites] remain!

*William:* Why George, your account is indeed a *black one!*<sup>25</sup>

The locution alone in this article is revealing. Describing the account as a “black one” has a dual meaning. First, it represented the perceived “increase” of African Americans in the city. As noted, many whites fled or died during the fever, leaving Philadelphia with a vastly depleted white population, and, to the human eye, a seemingly larger black population. But, in hindsight, there was not an actual increase in black citizens, merely a significantly lower ratio of whites to blacks. A second interpretation of “black” in this article was its traditional correlation with evil, death, and wickedness.

#### *Black Reactions to White Racism following the 1793 Plague*

Following the backlash of white racism and condemnations against African Americans in the aftermath of the Yellow Fever Epidemic, the “Black Founding Generation” took on a new role in American society by challenging popular black stereotypes on a national stage. Allen, Jones, and Forten became the preeminent voices for African Americans, relentlessly demanding universal emancipation and racial equality through publications and addresses. The first of these publications was Allen and Jones’ *1794 Protest: A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia, in the Year 1793 and a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown Upon Them in Some Late Publications*, which made both men icons in American society.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, Allen and Jones acquired a white publisher, William H. Woodward. Although African Americans published writings before this period, this was the first time any had produced a work through a white publisher.<sup>27</sup>

Allen and Jones’ *1794 Protest* was a blatant refutation of Matthew Carey’s condemnations of blacks during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793. The two authors could have picked from an array of accusations, or published a general refutation pamphlet disclaiming all the criminal accusations; instead, they specifically singled out Carey. Allen and Jones began by explaining their service during the epidemic:

“In consequence of a partial representation of the conduct of the people who were employed to nurse the sick in the calamitous state of the city of Philadelphia, we were solicited by a number of those who felt themselves injured thereby, and by the advice of several respectable citizens, to step forward and declare facts as they really were; and seeing that from our situation, on account of the charge we took upon us, we had it more fully and generally in our power to know and observe the conduct and behavior of those that were so employed.”<sup>28</sup>

The two black leaders declared they had the best knowledge of the actions conducted by African Americans during the plague, because they had worked directly with most of them. Outraged that Carey did not recognize other African Americans who sacrificed their lives to help the ailing, Allen and Jones replied with indignation, stating:

“It is unpleasant for us to make these remarks, but injustice to our colour demands it. Mr. Carey pays William Gray and us a compliment; he says our service and other of our colour, have been very great, & c. By naming us, he leaves those others in the hazardous state of being classed with those who are called the ‘vilest.’”<sup>29</sup>

This above passage illustrates a curious change in strategy among “black gentlemen.” Allen and Jones were no longer concerned with how respectable they were *individually*; instead, they cared for how the black community as a whole was viewed by white society.

Allen and Jones also refuted Carey’s criminal accusations by providing concrete evidence of other blacks who had placed their lives in danger to help the ailing. For instance, they recalled an elderly black woman who:

“Nursed [a white man] with great diligence and attention. When recovered, he asked what he must give her for her service—she replied, ‘a dinner, master, on a cold winter’s day.’ And thus she went from place to place, rendering every service in her power, without an eye to reward.”<sup>30</sup>

In another case, they noted, “Casesar Cranchal, a man of colour, offered his services to attend the sick, and said, ‘I will not take your money—I will not sell my life for money.’”<sup>31</sup> Allen and Jones provided twelve more examples of similar nature, all of them refuting Carey’s accusations. They also reported on white hostility towards black civic actions during the plague. For example, Allen and Jones commented that one night they were moving dead bodies to the graveyard, when a white man approached them with a gun, and threatened to kill them.

Following the publication of the *1794 Protest*, Allen published three more appeals for racial justice, the most famous of which was the eulogy for President George Washington. Many whites were surprised by Allen’s *Eulogy* because Washington had owned slaves. Allen’s language and tone expressed a strong sense of admiration for the first president, whom he described as a god-like father figure of the United States. Allen called Washington a “sympathizing friend and tender father,” and urged whites and blacks to honor Washington by peacefully coming together and ending racial injustices, saying: “may a double portion of his [emancipatory] spirit rest on all the officers of government in the United States, and all that say my Father...which is the whole of the American people.”<sup>32</sup> Essentially Allen challenged American society to build on Washington’s example of manumitting his slaves and treating African Americans as equals.

Richard Newman’s “We Participate in Common: Richard Allen’s Eulogy of Washington and the Challenge of Interracial Appeals” illuminates the importance of Allen’s speech. Newman argues that Allen’s eulogy was unforeseen, for two major reasons. First, African Americans generally harbored mixed feelings towards Washington because he had helped to perpetuate and validate the institution of slavery in a nation premised on the ideologies of equality, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Second, Allen’s eulogy was one of the first publications by an African American that did not privilege emancipation as the principal theme. In publicly praising Washington—a highly recognizable representative of a class of men who held slaves—Allen’s *Eulogy* was a testament to the “civic” approach used by elite African Americans in their attempts to gain racial equality. His *Eulogy* quickly circulated across the Philadelphian community, and spread to other northern states.

### **The Years of Questioning: Early Nineteenth Century**

As opposed to Allen and Jones, Forten did not publicly defend the actions of African Americans during the plague. In 1813, however, a blatantly discriminatory state law—Pennsylvania threatened to close its borders to all African Americans—compelled him to break his silence, and he published *Letters from a Man Colour on a Late Bill Before the Senate of Pennsylvania*. Forten’s pamphlet attacked the very essence of American society, questioning the validity of the claims stated in the Declaration of Independence. Forten challenged white society about their hypocrisy and racism, saying what blacks demanded was the very rights whites themselves had fought for during the Revolutionary War.<sup>33</sup> “Can anything,” said Forten, “be conceived more degrading to humanity!...Can anything be done more to the principles of Civil Liberty! A free man arriving from another state and unaware of the law could find himself arrested and detained until his owner appeared.”<sup>34</sup> Forten concluded that the state law hampered blacks’ fight for racial equality.

Seventeen years later, David Walker published his *Appeal*, which riveted and emboldened black militant activists across the nation. Walker’s violent call to action expressed the frustrations many blacks felt in the attempt to gain civil

rights—frustrations exacerbated by white responses to events such as the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793. In his *Appeal*, Walker indicated the beginnings of a militant transformation, which called for African Americans to defend their rights *by any means necessary*:

“O, my God!—in sorrow I must say it, that my colour, all over the world, have a mean, servile spirit. They yield in a moment to the whites, let them be right or wrong—the reason they are able to keep their feet on our throats. Oh! My coloured brethren, all over the world, when shall we arise from this death-like apathy?—And be men!! You will notice, if ever we become men, (I mean *respectable* men, such as other people are,) we must exert ourselves to the full.”<sup>35</sup>

Walker argued that white society would never allow blacks to become equals, for even “free blacks” were segregated and treated as second-class citizens. Respectability, as such, became a slippery term to define in the 1830s and 1840s. For Walker, respectability entailed blacks standing up and fighting for their civil rights, through violence if necessary. He stated:

“I do declare it, that one good black man can put to death six white men; and I give it as a fact, let twelve black men get well armed for battle, and they will kill and put to flight fifty whites.... [It is] kill or be killed. Now, I ask you, had you not rather be killed than to be a slave to a tyrant, who takes the life of your mother, wife, and dear little children?”<sup>36</sup>

Significantly, Walker’s “kill or be killed” attitude represented a new militant approach appearing among black activists during the 1830s and 1840s. Still, Walker’s militancy was not supported by all African Americans and abolitionists at the time. As Stewart’s “The Emergence of Racial Modernity” has noted, Walker’s *Appeal*, along with the campaigns for racial uplift, often fragmented black communities in the North when their only chance to successfully challenge racial inequality was through black solidarity.<sup>37</sup>

### **Blacks’ Pursuit of Racial Equality in the Mid-Nineteenth Century**

From late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, the “Black Founding Generation” tried to uplift black society through civic actions and education as a means to achieving racial equality. These uplift projects helped create well-organized and strong “free black” communities, but they failed to break down racial barriers; northern blacks continued to face racial and class divisions. As a result, black activists increasingly lost confidence in this passive method and began to embrace a more militant approach, especially following the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act.<sup>38</sup>

The new Fugitive Slave Act came out of the Compromise of 1850. Prior to the compromise, southerners had complained that the North denied them their legal rights to recapture their runaway slaves. Both the Constitution and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 supported slave owners’ demands for recapturing their property. Northern states, however, refused to treat blacks as chattel, and created their own liberty ordinance laws—codes intended first to guarantee state sovereignty, and second, to protect human’s rights. These ordinances restricted the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, providing some protection for free and fugitive African Americans.<sup>39</sup>

The Compromise of 1850 revamped the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, securing the rights that southern slave masters believed were previously denied. In fact, the new law made recovering slaves a federal matter. States were not permitted to interfere in the process of recapturing a fugitive slave; indeed, they were required to provide assistance wherever necessary. While the Act of 1793 required slave owners to acquire a certificate of ownership, which came from the state where the fugitive slave was currently living, the 1850 law allowed masters to gain their certificate from their home state. Once the certificate of ownership was attained, a special federal commissioner issued a warrant for the arrest of the runaway slave(s). Throughout this legal process, African Americans were not allowed to testify or defend themselves. Their only option was to appeal to the southern court from which the judgment originated. The 1850 Act also required all citizens to aid the federal government in re-capturing fugitive slaves. To ensure the cooperation and enforcement of this law in northern states, the federal government paid everyone involved in recapturing the fugitive slave.<sup>40</sup>

Free blacks and white abolitionists were outraged by the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Many tried to protest and petition against it, but none were successful. As one abolitionist recalled years later:

“Every peaceful valley, as well as populous town, was infested with prowling kidnappers on the watch for their prey...Quiet homes and peaceful communities were constantly threatened with midnight incursions of manhunters, with their treacheries, stratagems, their ruffian outrages and bloody violence, and menacing the defenseless people color with a “reign of terror.”<sup>41</sup>

Despite the law’s many legal stipulations, it drastically favored southern slave owners and ultimately re-enslaved thousands of blacks—free and fugitive—while depriving African Americans the right to defend their freedom.<sup>42</sup> Thomas P. Slaughter’s *Bloody Dawn* argues that African Americans, no matter status, age, or gender, were legally susceptible to southern slave-catchers, and forced northern abolitionists to help and support the group they despised the most—pro-slavery southerners.<sup>43</sup>

### *Black Resistance to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act*

African Americans did not willfully accept re-enslavement. In the aftermath of the Fugitive Slave Law’s enactment, free blacks abandoned the ideology of civic respectability and fully embraced Walker’s method of demanding their civil rights and protecting their basic rights by any means necessary. In doing so, black men affirmed their manhood by exhibiting the independence and strength required to protect their homes, family, friends, and other blacks from white racial tyranny.<sup>44</sup>

One example of this more militant approach is depicted in the memoirs of William Parker, titled *The Freedman’s Story*. Parker, a fugitive slave, was a leading black activist in the Christiana Riot of 1851. Parker recalled how he fled his plantation in Maryland to find freedom in the North, only to encounter a group of slave-catchers who tried to apprehend him. Parker, however, broke one of the catcher’s arms and scared the others away. As Parker noted, “I stepped back and struck [the slave catcher] a heavy blow on the arm. It fell as if broken; I think it was. Then he turned and ran, and I after him...The other two took to their heels at the first alarm—thus illustrating the valor of chivalry!”<sup>45</sup> Parker eventually made his way into Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the location of the Christiana Riot.

While in Pennsylvania, Parker attended several of the Frederick Douglass’ and William Lloyd Garrison’s anti-slavery meetings. Parker, like many blacks, was not fully convinced by the non-violent Garrisonian approach for gaining racial equality and universal emancipation, and thus turned to David Walker’s more militant approach. Parker subsequently gathered a group of strong young black men to protect their “free black” Lancaster community and violently resist the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. As Parker recalled, “Whether the kidnappers were clothed with legal authority or not, I did not care to inquire, as I never had faith in nor respect for the Fugitive-Slave Law.”<sup>46</sup> In the fall of 1851, Parker and other black activists put teeth into these words.

### *Christiana Riot of 1851*

The Christiana Riot occurred in September 1851 in the town of Christiana, Pennsylvania in Lancaster County. The riot involved violent confrontations between militant black activists, slave-catchers, and white abolitionists from Pennsylvania and Maryland.<sup>47</sup> Edward Gorsuch, one of the largest and most successful slave owners in Maryland (he owned more than 100 slaves), played a central role in the riot. In November 1849, four of Gorsuch’s slaves—Noah Buley, Nelson Ford, and George and Joshua Hammond—had escaped from his plantation and found sanctuary in Pennsylvania.<sup>48</sup> Although losing four slaves was not a big economic loss for his farm, Gorsuch believed the loss tainted his honor. For the next two years, Gorsuch exploited every resource and connection he had to re-capture the four fugitives.

In 1851, just a year after the passage of the new Fugitive Slave Law, Gorsuch received a promising letter from hired informant, which read:

“I have the required information of four [slaves who are] within two miles of each other [in Lancaster County, PA]. Now, the best way is for you to come as a hunter, disguised, about two days ahead of your son and let him come by the way of Philadelphia and get the deputy



marshal.... Tell him the situation and he can get force of the right kind. It will take about twelve so that they can divide and take them all within half an hour. Now, if you can come on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> of September come on & I will meet you at the gap when you get there.... Now, if you cannot come at the time spoken of, write very soon and let me know when you can. I wish you to come as soon as you possibly can.”

Very respectfully thy friend  
William M.P[adgett]<sup>49</sup>

In September 1851, Gorsuch traveled to Philadelphia and acquired four legal permits to re-capture his fugitive slaves. He also hired Henry H. Kline, a deputy marshal, and two other policemen. The party broke into four groups and traveled to Lancaster, Pennsylvania.<sup>50</sup> From the beginning, the mission was full of problems. Kline’s cart broke down and put him a day behind the other groups. The two other officers did not even make it to Lancaster.<sup>51</sup> Finally, on the morning of September 11, 1851, Gorsuch and his posse arrived at the house identified as harboring his slaves—the home of militant black activist William Parker. Accompanying Parker was his wife Eliza; hiding upstairs was two of Gorsuch’s slaves, Nelson Ford and Joshua Hammond. Gorsuch and Kline entered the two-story house to negotiate with the fugitives and present their warrants (one historian claims that Gorsuch was such an ignorant master that he believed his slaves were willing to return without resistance).<sup>52</sup> When Kline told Parker not to interfere with federal matters, Parker responded by saying, “If you take another step I will break your neck.”<sup>53</sup> Kline read the warrants aloud again, and then followed Gorsuch upstairs to confront the two runaways, at which point one of the fugitives threw a “fishgig” at them, forcing Kline and Gorsuch to retreat downstairs.<sup>54</sup> Parker’s wife then blew an emergency horn, which alerted neighbors who were prepared for such an incident.

For more than an hour the two groups exchanged gunfire, resulting in a standoff in which nobody sustained major injuries. Shortly after, the slave-catchers noticed neighbors—white and black—coming through the cornfields armed with weapons. Some carried pistols, hunting rifles, long knives, corn shears, shovels, and rocks they had picked up en route to Parker’s house.<sup>55</sup> Castner Hanway, a local white miller, arrived at Parker’s house and issued an ultimatum to Kline, telling him to leave the premises, or blood would be shed. Kline later recalled in court that he told Hanway, “Any person aiding or abetting a fugitive slave, and resisting an officer, the punishment was \$1,000 damages for the slave....and imprisonment for five years.”<sup>56</sup> At this point, Kline called for the party to retreat and regroup away from the mob. Gorsuch either had not heard him or did not want to retreat, and headed back toward Parker’s house. There he was met by another of his other fugitive slaves, Noah Buley, who also had been hiding in the vicinity.

The principal catalyst for the ensuing riot involved the confrontation between Gorsuch and Buley. Gorsuch told Buley to return with him to Maryland—an order that Buley duly ignored. Instead, Buley knocked his former master him to the ground, clubbed him several times, and then shot and killed him (followed by twenty or thirty more shots from other black militants). In the end, Gorsuch was the only person killed in the riot. One of his sons was badly wounded (doctors pulled out seventy pieces of metal from his right side), while another member of Gorsuch’s party was shot multiple times, including two bullets in his spine.

The following day, Parker and the three fugitive slaves headed for Canada. A warrant went out for the arrest of Parker, with \$1,000 reward. Warrants for the other three fugitives included a reward of \$2,000 for each person, an extremely high figure for fugitive slaves and criminals during this period. One reason for the high reward was the tension and white fear the riot had provoked in both Pennsylvania and Maryland. The blood spilled during the riot was from whites not blacks, which was unusual for a race riot in the nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

### *White Reactions to the Christiana Riot*

Word of the riot spread like wildfire throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland. Sensationalized reports in newspapers enflamed white citizens, resulting in a mob of more than fifty armed whites who assembled in Lancaster County within forty-eight hours of the riot. The mobs randomly punished blacks, innocent or not. They vented their anger by destroying anything connected to black society, such as black-owned buildings, farms, churches, schools, and other establishments. In *Bloody Dawn*, Slaughter explains that blacks were so fearful of whites following the riot that several turned themselves into authorities, confessing they were fugitive slaves. For example, Cassandra Harris, an

elderly black woman who lived near Parker's house turned herself in, hoping to avoid the vengeful white mob.<sup>58</sup> Even some white observers became alarmed by the white mob violence. David R. Forbes, a local chronicler of the event, said in the *Pennsylvanian* that "There never went unhung a gang of more depraved wretches and desperate scoundrels than some of the men employed as 'officers of the law' to revenge this country and ransack private house in the man-hunt which followed affray."<sup>59</sup>

Five days after the riot, the abolitionist-minded governor of Pennsylvania, William Freame Johnston, under pressure from white racists, issued warrants for the arrest of more than a dozen blacks as well as five whites who supported the rioters. Many Marylanders were dissatisfied with the "late" reaction by the governor, including one of Gorsuch's sons ("G.S.") who wrote a letter chastising Johnston for his slow reactions. Referring to himself as "a victim of abolitionist enthusiasm and high-handed rebellion," Gorsuch stated:

"I have read some letters which you wrote to some gentlemen of Philadelphia, who were urging you to action. I marked the strong contrast between your words and actions...why did you not issue your proclamation as soon as you reached Philadelphia? If it ought to have been at all, were there not ~~more~~ stronger reasons to have it done on the first day, when the murderers were at hand, than on the fifth, when most have escaped? You cannot plead ignorance of the riot, For it was well known to you. You will not pretend to say that it was more necessary when several prominent actors in that tragedy were arrested and the whole neighborhood scoured by vigorous young gentlemen from Maryland."<sup>60</sup>

It is true that many of the rioters escaped from Lancaster and avoided incarceration.

Governor Johnston's public views of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act provide some explanation for his dilatory response. In a public address prior to the act's passage, Johnston had dismissed the law's premise, arguing:

"While the [sectional] compromise of the Constitution should be maintained in good faith towards our Southern brethren, it is our duty to see that they are preserved with equal fidelity to ourselves. No encroachment, however sanctioned by use, should be acknowledged as precedent for further wrongs against the interest, prosperity, and happiness of the non-slave-holding States of the Union."<sup>61</sup>

Johnston's lack of support and enforcement of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act led many pro-slavery supporters to blame him for the death of Gorsuch. They believed he had allowed blacks to become violent and dangerous, which made retrieval of fugitives difficult and dangerous for the slave-catchers. The *Pennsylvanian* newspaper supported such beliefs, opining on September 13, 1851 that:

"[Johnston's] language operates upon the slaves like an appeal to violence. It is the voice of command calling upon those who are at home to cut the throats of their master, and upon those who escaped in to other states to shoot down in cold blood every officer that comes to arrest every owner that comes to reclaim them. We do not overrate the influence of Governor Johnston, when we charge him, and upon such as him...the dreadful responsibility for the guilty deed."<sup>62</sup>

Similar, then, to reports following the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793, blacks in 1851 were stereotyped by whites as delinquents, criminals, and unpatriotic Americans.

Outraged whites demanded that the rioters be tried for treason, giving two major reasons. First, conviction of treason was considered the worst crime in America, punishable by death. The stigma attached with high treason brought humiliation and condemnation to the person's family, relatives, friends, and community. The *Pennsylvanian* defined treason as "the highest crime known to our laws."<sup>63</sup> A conviction of treason charges thus would support stereotypes of blacks created by white racists' southerners.

Second, the North's "resistance" to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law further spurred high public demands for treason charges to ensure the rights of slave owners. One Maryland newspaper reported, "It will not be enough that these [rioters] be convicted of murder and punished for murder and outrage...It is treason—and as traitors these bloody men must die."<sup>64</sup>

Convicting the rioters for treason would ensure the rights defined by the Compromise of 1850 under the fugitive slave act. Because the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act was not enforced by northern states, the outcome of the subsequent Christiana Treason Trials would define to what extent the North enforced the new law. In sum, southerners demanded their constitutional rights, and believed the rioters were guilty of treason.

### *Black Reactions to the Impending Treason Trials*

The arrest and indictments of the rioters infuriated the black community. Soon many blacks and anti-slavery newspapers publicly defended the rioters' violent actions. Frederick Douglass led the defense for the rioters, printing dozens of refutation articles in his newspaper, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. An outraged Douglass decried the false portrayal of the rioters and other blacks as criminals and unpatriotic citizen, saying:

“The colored men who are alleged to have taken part in the conflict at Christiana, are to be tried, we are informed for high treason! This is to cap the climax of American absurdity, to say nothing of American infamy. Our government has virtually made every colored man in the land an outlaw, one who may be hunted by any villain who may think proper to do so, and if the hunted man, finding himself stripped of all legal protection, shall lift his arms in his own defense, why, forsooth, he is arrested, arraigned, and tried for high treason, and found guilty, he must suffer death!”<sup>65</sup>

Douglass claimed that blacks did not have a choice but to defend their rights, which were taken away by the government. Since blacks did not have legal protection, they had to protect themselves by any means, which sometimes meant the use of violence. Douglass later publicly commended the rioters for taking the initiative to protect themselves against the unlawful and harmful slave-catchers, exclaiming:

“I want to say to you, that I rejoice in the result. I cordially approve the conduct of the negroes, and hope that the blood shed, may be a good investment for freedom. I hold that the right of Revolution belongs to every man, to black, as well as white, that these men had as perfect a right to fight for their liberty as our revolutionary fathers did for theirs.”<sup>66</sup>

Drawing up upon the Revolutionary War, Douglass correlated the current situation between blacks and white racists to that of the colonists and the British prior to the Revolution. Douglass argued blacks needed to follow the revolutionary model, and take up arms to fight social and racial injustices.

Other abolitionist newspapers such as *The National Era* and *The Provincial Freeman* also defended the violent actions of the Christiana rioters. *The Pennsylvanian Freeman* also highlighted this dramatic shift, writing:

“The recent affray at Christiana is only a new phase of the Hydra that was begotten of the spirit of Compromise. The farmers of this law counted upon the utter degradation of the negro race—their want of manliness and heroism—to render feasible its execution... They anticipated no resistance from a race cowed down by centuries of oppression, and trained to servility. In this, however, they were mistaken. They are beginning to discover that men, however abject, how have tasted liberty, soon learn to prize it, and are ready to defend it.”<sup>67</sup>

Overall, black reactions to post-riot indictments show how they were ready to defend themselves against anyone who threatened their rights, safety, and freedom. The impending trials intensified the hostility between pro-slavery and anti-slavery supporters.

### *The Christiana Treason Trials*

Twenty-four African Americans and three whites were charged for their involvement in the Christiana Riot. They were tried in court for treason, a crime punishable by death. (Ironically, the principal African Americans involved in the riot—Parker, Buley, Ford, and Hammonds—had escaped to Canada).<sup>68</sup> The twenty-four blacks pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The court trials were covered daily in the various newspapers. Many abolitionist newspapers speculated that the convictions of the alleged criminals were not plausible. In fact, Robert Brent, the prosecuting attorney, complained to Governor Louis E. Lowe of Maryland that the jury did not seem favorable of convicting the rioters, saying:

In striking the jury, we had great difficulty, because from most satisfactory information in our power, we believed that a large majority of the appearing jurors were unfavorable to a conviction, and which belief was strengthened by the fact, that out of eighty-three jurors appearing for challenge, the prisoners accepted fifty-nine.”<sup>69</sup>

The jury selection was an issue for the prosecution because many Pennsylvanians, sensitive to state sovereignty or “provincial nationalism,” rejected the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Especially among abolitionists, there was a sense that the Compromise of 1850 gave too much power to the South. As a result, the prosecution was hard-pressed to find jury members willing to convict the alleged criminals.

The rioters were charged with 117 treason indictments, which the prosecution decided to try on an individual basis. Because some of the evidence was spotty in areas, another prosecution attorney John W. Ashmead thought the jury would have a better chance of conviction with individual trials. As Ashmead noted in a memo:

“A jury would be terrified at the idea of returning a verdict of guilty which would involve so great a sacrifice of human life and also because the evidence would be uncertain and indistinct as to some, and in this way might so involve the whole transaction in doubt as to lead to the acquittal of all. Separate indictments would enable us to select the strongest cases for trial first, and present the causes to the jury in our own way.”<sup>70</sup>

As it turned out, jury selection proved to be only one of the prosecution’s problems; they soon encountered issues with witness credibility.

Problems first arose when the prosecution decided to try Castner Hanway, a local white bystander who the prosecution tried to portray as a Quaker abolitionist and instigator of the riot. Federal Marshal Kline was the most important witness for the prosecution’s case against Hanway. Kline told the jury that Hanway had spoken to a group of black rioters, although he did not hear the exact words. The defense claimed that Hanway had the right to inquire about the events taking place early in the morning. More importantly, the defense caught Kline committing perjury, noting that he placed numerous individuals at the riot who were never there.<sup>71</sup> Kline’s perjury gave the defense a strong bargaining chip. In return for not prosecuting Kline, all the treason charges against all of the defendants were dropped.

In the aftermath of the Christiana Riot and Treason Trials of 1851, African Americans and white abolitionists universally accepted militancy as a means of protecting African Americans’ rights and liberties. Frederick Douglass proudly proclaimed that justice had been served, and that the legal victory was a major boost for the black communities and the Abolitionist Movement. Despite this apparent victory, however, white southerners ultimately took justice into their own hands. Several months following the Hanway trial, a white man named Joseph Miller was killed and hanged from a tree in Lancaster County. Miller was killed because he was investigating the disappearance of a young black woman in Lancaster. His murder was considered by many white southerners as retribution for the Christiana Riot and the murder of Edward Gorsuch.

The Christiana Treason Trials were unique in many ways. First, there were no legal convictions of any blacks involved in the riot, which was uncommon for black court trials in the antebellum period. Second, the trials were covered extensively by newspapers across the United States, which was also unusual for court cases involving African Americans. Finally, the non-convictions of all the rioters encouraged other black militants around the United States to aggressively assert manhood and protect their freedoms. The Christiana Riot of 1851 was the first major violent confrontation between blacks and proslavery southerners since the enactment of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. It surprised many white southerners that blacks used violence to defend their rights and resist this law. The Christiana rioters’ violent resistance to

the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law opened the doors for further violent confrontations between white southerners and anti-slavery supporters, leading up to John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859.

## **Conclusion**

African Americans did not accept enslavement and segregation without a fight. As this paper has shown, blacks in the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries applied vastly different methods for achieving racial equality. During the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793, African Americans responded to the plague as a means of improving their status in white society. By contrast, sixty years later, frustrated by persistent racial barriers, black activists turned to violence. The Yellow Fever Epidemic and the Christiana Riots effectively chart the major changes in African Americans' approach to racial equality and respectability over a half century. Although historians have written separately about both events, very little has been written about how these two racial crises directly affected African Americans and their struggle for racial equality. Juxtaposing both events, however, is necessary for contextualizing the Abolitionist Movement and the history of race relations in the United States. Seen together, they provide a strong understanding of the trials and tribulations African Americans faced in their transition into freedom and fight for racial equality and desegregation in the United States.

In the end, neither benevolent actions nor violent approaches secured for free African Americans their full rights as American citizens. White and black activists in the North (typically abolitionists) simply could not overcome the deeply rooted feelings of white racists in American society. If anything, their attempts to achieve racial equality for African Americans often fomented stronger violent discrimination towards African Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historian Thomas Slaughter best articulates the feelings of racist whites towards free African Americans following the Christiana Riot, saying, "The attitudes of whites toward African Americans had only gotten worse since the 1850s. Seeds of racial hatred and violence sown during the eighteenth century, fertilized with nineteenth-century blood, were ripe for the twentieth-century harvest that our nation has reaped."<sup>72</sup> Although the hostility over the Fugitive Slave Law and outbreak of the Civil War significantly decreased public support in Pennsylvania for both illegal and legal recapturing of fugitive slaves, African Americans still faced a strong uphill battle for equality in American society. Indeed, the dawn of the Jim Crow era lay just ahead.

## Endnotes

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\* I want to thank Kathy Newfont, Lucia Carter, John Gripenrog, Phyllis Smith, James Stewart, Richard Newman, Stacy Robertson, Robb Haberman, Will Mackintosh, the SHEAR/Mellon Fellows, and anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions and comments.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Allen, *Richard Allen, 1760-1831: The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen. To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Containing a Narrative of the Yellow Fever in the Year of Our Lord 1793: With an Address to the People of Colour in the United States* (Philadelphia: Martin & Boden, Printers, 1833), 29.

<sup>2</sup> William Parker, "The Freedman's Story" [ca. 1866], MS 152, Documenting the American South Collection, UNC-CH Library, Chapel Hill.

<sup>3</sup> James and Lois Horton explain in *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks* that free African Americans in Northern states were subjected to sub-human standards. Many Northern laws created economic and political sanctions, which prevented blacks from achieving racial equality. Some restrictions included the denial of the franchise, holding political office, living in white neighborhoods, interracial marriage, serving in the state militia, and providing legal testimony. Furthermore, some Northern states such as Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin barred African Americans from taking up legal residence. In Pennsylvania, Horton notes that African Americans were pushed out of mainstream society and forced to live on the fringes of cities; they typically traveled into "white" cities only to buy supplies and trade with merchants. Although *legally free*, African Americans still faced severe discrimination, which subjected them to second-class treatment.

<sup>4</sup> Jim Stewart's "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North," argues white and black respectable citizens applied and promoted civic values to ensure equal rights for all races. Jim Stewart, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North, 1790-1840" (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998): 189-192.

<sup>5</sup> Richard S. Newman and Roy E. Finkenbine, "Black Founding Fathers in the New Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, Volume LXIV, Number 1 (January 2007): 84-93. Prior to 1990, historical scholarship on African Americans focused primarily on the Colonial and Antebellum periods. Notable African Americans in the early Republic were seen simply as a prelude to the "more important" events and people in the Antebellum period. Starting in the early 1990s, however, a new prominence was placed on white and black activists' promotion of racial equality and universal emancipation of slaves throughout the United States. As a result, historians shed light on the importance of the so called "Black Founding Generation's" influence on American politics. In the mid-1990s, the announcement a major publishing venture, The Black Antislavery Writing Projects, 1720-1829, emphasized the importance of the Black Founding Generation's influence on early American history. This historical project, started by Finkenbine and John Salliant at the University of Detroit-Mercy, now holds more than 2,200 written works by African Americans from the pre-1830s period.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Newman's groundbreaking research on Bishop Richard Allen and the AME Church illuminates the trials and tribulations of Allen and Jones as they both worked to establish the first owned African American Methodist Church. Allen was successful in creating "Mother Bethel Church," the first African American owned church in 1787. Richard Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 158-166.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 88.

<sup>11</sup> Julie Winch, "Making and Meaning of James Forten's Letters from a Man of Colour," *William and Mary Quarterly* (January 2007):130-133.

<sup>12</sup> Mathew Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia: With Statement of the Proceedings That Took Place on the Subject in Different Parts of the United States* (Philadelphia: Printed By Author, 1793), 22.

<sup>13</sup> John H Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793*(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 1-5. Historical research on this outbreak is very limited, mostly because of the lack of primary sources from the period. The strongest account of the plague is John Harvey Powell's 1949 book, *Bring Out Your Dead*. He retraced the steps and actions of Dr. Benjamin Rush—one of the most notable doctors in Philadelphia—and Matthew Carey, an elite white Philadelphian who remained in the city during the plague.

<sup>14</sup> Rush to Bishop Richard Allen, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Part IV (Vol. 38): 1793. I want to thank Dr. Richard Newman and Clint Roderick—SHEAR/Mellon Fellow—for providing me with this very important source.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead*, 95. The outbreak marked the beginning of the end for Rush's medical career, mostly because of failure to find a cure, which led to harsh criticisms from surrounding doctors. In addition, during the fever, he lost his sister and three apprentices who lived in his own house. These deaths left him emotionally and mentally unstable for the rest of his life.

<sup>16</sup> James O. 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), 108.

<sup>17</sup> Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead*, 97-99.

<sup>18</sup> Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia*, 78.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 78. Italics mine.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* Carey stated in his pamphlet, "The services of Jones, Allen, and Gray have been very great, and demand public gratitude."

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Federal Gazette*, September 19, 1793. I want to thank Casey Near—a SHEAR/Mellon fellow—for this important source and her informative suggestions for this section.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 95-100.

<sup>25</sup> *Federal Gazette*, October 2, 1793.

<sup>26</sup> In January 1794, Woodward printed 250 to 500 copies of the pamphlet. Jones and Allen copyrighted the material, and distributed the pamphlet across Philadelphia gaining local and national attention from whites and blacks.

<sup>27</sup> Woodward was a young publisher known for printing controversial material, such as his praise for the French Revolution. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 102.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, *1794 Protest: A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793 and A Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown Upon Them in Some Late Publications* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, At Franklin Head, 1794), 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette and the Universal Daily Advertiser*, December 31, 1799.

<sup>33</sup> Winch, "The Making and Meaning of James Forten," 120-122; 129-138.

<sup>34</sup> James Forten, *Letter From A Man of Colour* (Philadelphia: Published by Author, 1813), 3-4.

<sup>35</sup> David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal To the Coloured Citizens of the World, But in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (Maryland: Published by Author, 1829), 82.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity," 190-191.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 189-200.

<sup>39</sup> Jeannine DeLombard, *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 35-40.

<sup>40</sup> 1850 Fugitive Slave Act stated that "All good citizens are hereby commanded to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required, as aforesaid, for that purpose; and said warrants shall run, and be executed by said officers, any where in the State within which they are issued."

<sup>41</sup> David R. Forbes, *A True Story of the Christiana Riot* (PA: The Sun Printing House, 1989), 11.

<sup>42</sup> Francis Adams and Barry Sanders, *Alienable Rights: The Exclusion of African Americans in a White's Man's Land* (NY: Perennial Publications, 2003), 160-162.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4-5.

<sup>44</sup> Stewart, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity," 190.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 159.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 162.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas P. Slaughter's *Bloody Dawn* provides the strongest contextualization of the Christiana Riot of 1851.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> William M. Padgett to Edward Gorsuch October 3, 1851.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Gorsuch's party also included his son Dickerson, his nephew Joshua Gorsuch, Dr. Pearce, a close family friend, Nathan Nelson, and Nicolas Hutchings. The party planned to meet in a tavern on the outskirts of Lancaster County, but this never happened.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-62. A black activist had informed William Parker about Gorsuch's plot, while following the slave-catchers throughout their journey.

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<sup>52</sup> Slaughter explains that in the Early Republic and Antebellum periods, most American slave owners believed African Americans enjoyed slavery, and escaped only under the influence of delinquent blacks.

<sup>53</sup> John Pearsol, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy, In the Court of Lancaster, State of Penna, Sept. 11, 1851, as Reported Verbatim ET Literatim, On the Hearing and Exmainotion, as the Same Was Presented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, September 25<sup>th</sup>* (PA: Published by Author, 1851),3.

<sup>54</sup> The fishgig was a five pronged six-foot metal poll used for fishing purposes.

<sup>55</sup> Pearsol, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn*, 70-76.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 80-85.

<sup>59</sup> *Pennsylvanian*, September 16, 1851.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from G.S. Gorsuch to Governor Johnston.

<sup>61</sup> William Freame Johnston, Annual Meeting to the Assembly—1849, PA 4<sup>th</sup> ser., VII (Harrisburg, 1902), 336.

<sup>62</sup> *Pennsylvanian*, September 13, 1851.

<sup>63</sup> *Pennsylvanian*, September 30, 1851.

<sup>64</sup> *Planter's Advocate*, October 1, 1851.

<sup>65</sup> *Frederick Douglass Paper*, September 25, 1851.

<sup>66</sup> *Frederic Douglass Paper*, October 2, 1851.

<sup>67</sup> *Pennsylvanian Freeman*, September 18, 1851.

<sup>68</sup> Parker, "The Freedman's Story," 1-4. Following his escape, Parker moved to Toronto and waited thirteen months for his family to rejoin him in Canada. The family eventually settled in Buxton, Ontario, where Parker was elected—by both white and black voters—to serve as a representative on the Raleigh Township Council in Buxton. Moreover, Parker attended school in Buxton and learned to read and write. He later became a correspondent for Frederick Douglass' *North Star*, through which he encouraged freedom, education, and moral improvements for blacks across North America. Parker only briefly returned to Pennsylvania on the twentieth anniversary of the Christiana Riot, where he retold the stories of the past with the few remaining survivors of the revolt.

<sup>69</sup> Robert J. Brent, *Report of Attorney General Brent, to His Excellency, Gov. Lowe, in Relation to the Christiana Treason Trials, in the Circuit Court of the United States, Held at Philadelphia* (Annapolis: Published by Thomas E. Martin, 1852), 1.

<sup>70</sup> Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, November 1-December 31, 1851, microfilm publications, M. 179, roll 128.

<sup>71</sup> Robbins, James J., "Report on the Trial of Castner Hanway for Treason," Philadelphia, 1852, Negro University Press West Port Connecticut, 109.

<sup>72</sup> Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn*, 184.