

# Hail Columbia, Happy Land!

by Robert Ingraham

A CONTRIBUTION  
TO AN ONGOING DISCUSSION  
Part I of Two Parts

Oct. 13—The argument in this paper is straightforward: The United States of America was created, amidst great sacrifice and suffering, to free the inhabitants of the American colonies from oligarchical rule—to create a new nation, conceived in a notion of liberty that flows from the divine creative potential which exists within every human being. That mission is what defines the American Revolution: to end the oligarchical oppression of humanity, and it is a mission which was intended, ultimately for all of mankind. That Revolution proclaimed the overthrow of human slavery in all of its forms, a liberation of the new citizenry for the purpose of securing “the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

Certain individuals are irreplaceable. Their deaths are often turning points in history, because no one else can provide the vision and the leadership to continue what they began. Such was the case when Franklin Roosevelt was replaced by the “small man” Harry S. Truman. A great change in the direction and morality of America took place, as if overnight. A far greater catastrophe struck America with the murder of Alexander Hamilton in 1804. By the early Nineteenth Century, the nation began to lose its way. Hamilton’s vision was buried by Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. Smaller, less courageous individuals took command of the nation’s destiny. In the course of this, the political parties abandoned the intention to rid America of human slavery, or worse, these parties and their leaders took on the role of the oppressor.

After the assassination of Alexander Hamilton and the gradual passing of the Revolutionary War genera-



*Dr. Martin Luther King delivers his “I Have a Dream” speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, at the Aug. 28, 1963 March on Washington.*

tion, the fight to defend this mission—to defend the Soul of America—was taken up and led by what one might call—for want of a better term—the Black Abolitionists. These leaders fought relentlessly, under increasingly horrendous conditions, to preserve the intention of 1776, to keep the ongoing work of that Revolution alive. Within their ranks were truly heroic Americans. In the course of this paper, we shall meet some of them—Peter Williams Jr., Samuel Cornish, Richard Allen, Charles Bennett Ray, James McCune Smith, and better-known individuals such as Frederick Douglass. We shall also meet the extraordinary William Brown and James Hewlett.

## The American Controversy

On several past occasions, Lyndon LaRouche stated that, during the 1960s, Martin Luther King was the person most qualified to be President of the United States. Some among us were perplexed or even dismiss-

sive of such an assertion. A typical response was: Yes, but. Yes, Martin Luther King was a martyr and a great Civil Rights leader—but President? What were his qualifications on foreign policy, national security concerns, economic policy, banking policy, science policy, military affairs? Yet, LaRouche was firm in his assessment.

What you, the readers, are being asked to do, here, is to rethink what you think you know about American history. In a paper authored by Lyndon LaRouche, and recently reprinted in *EIR*,<sup>1</sup> LaRouche investigates, in depth, the question of overcoming axiomatic beliefs which fail to represent a truthful view of universal principles. He discusses the question of “measurement” from a non-Euclidean view, and he states that, “To be considered validated, the new physical principle must correspond to some measurable difference in the characteristic action ‘connecting any two points’ within the reality corresponding to the choice of mathematical-physics manifold being tested.” He continues, “This leads to Riemann’s notion of unique events, as those experimental events which force us to reconsider whatever has passed, until now, for a notion of necessary and sufficient reason, that hypothesis heretofore considered as established. . . . Implicitly, every event is, potentially, a unique experimental event. In some circumstance, any event must implicitly overthrow the presumptions of someone’s hypothesis.”

What is the “measurement” from the Washington Administration to the Lincoln Administration? What is the Idea, the “thought object,” which connects them? And that connects both of them to Martin Luther King? What are the hypotheses which were overthrown in each instance? It is my view that the decisive moment for the Lincoln Presidency was the decision by Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. With that action, that intervention, Abraham Lincoln overthrew sixty years of betrayal of the principles of the Revolution. He re-awakened and gave a “new birth of Freedom” to the American revolutionary cause. It was a truthful action; it flowed from the same intention as that of Hamilton, Washington, Jay and Morris.

Hamilton devised the economic means whereby that intention might be fulfilled and perpetuated. The

scientific, intellectual and material progress embodied in Hamilton’s brilliant economic initiatives gave Constitutional substance and momentum to expanding the continuous work of the revolution. Nevertheless, those who would reduce Hamilton’s intention—his life work—to a three-point economic prescription are committing a grave fraud, and mistaking the footprint for the creator who treads the path.

Look to Martin Luther King. The mission which he chose, and the “Civil Rights” movement he led—as he conceived that movement’s purpose—was rooted in the actions of 1776, 1787 and 1862. In the final years of his life, King embodied the intention of the American Revolution in the most profound sense, in a way that no one else did—and his initiatives were a continuation of that revolution, conceived at the highest level.

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## I. America’s Anti-Slavery Revolution

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Everyone has heard the words, but read them again, as if for the first time! If possible, imagine that you are reading them through the mind of an American in 1776 and 1787:

**1776:** We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

**1787:** We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

This is the proclamation of an anti-oligarchical, anti-Hobbesian world-view. It is a declaration of human freedom that proclaimed the death of the oligarchical outlook. It is meant for all Americans, and implicitly, it defines America’s mission in the world at large. It is,

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1. [Leibniz from Riemann’s Standpoint](#),” by Lyndon LaRouche, *EIR* August 18, 2017.

among other things, a clear anti-colonial and anti-imperial call-to-arms, a declaration to defend and uplift *all* of the people. Such is America's true identity, its *raison d'être*.

### America's Reason for Existence

The illegitimacy of the enslavement or subjugation of human beings was settled 2,400 years ago in Plato's dialogue *Meno*, where he demonstrates, through the physical re-creation of the Pythagorean Theorem, the spark of creative reason which exists within every human being. There are no lesser races, classes, or nationalities. Each human being possesses a potential for discovery, invention, creation, and *agapē*. That is the universal human identity.

It was the European oligarchies who brought slavery into the New World, and it was the British Empire which, during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, forced slavery on the unwilling American colonists. American slavery, together with the other forms of oppression cited in the Declaration of Independence, were entirely the creation of the British monarchy and its official arms. The American Revolution was precisely a victory over that oligarchical domination—and the greatest victory over human slavery in history.<sup>2</sup>

It would be an egregious, fatal error to create a dichotomy between the issues of Hamiltonian economics and the fight to eradicate slavery. Hamilton recognized no such division. Neither did Jay, Morris or Washington. It is all of one piece; it is woven together like the thirteen stripes of the American flag. During the period when he was leading the fight for the convening of a Constitutional Convention, and later when he was defining and enacting his system of Public Credit, Hamilton was also a founder of the New York Manumission



*Alexander Hamilton*

Society and a founder and sponsor of the African Free School. More to the point, the content and intent of Hamilton's economic policies are all grounded in the notion of human advancement, upward human progress, based on the creative potential which exists, and must be encouraged, within every human being, without exception.

Hamilton's closest friend and ally, Gouverneur Morris, was, if anything, a more vocal and fierce opponent of the Slave Power than Hamilton himself. As early as 1777, Morris had drafted provisions for the first New York State Constitution which would have emancipated all of the slaves in New York State. At the Philadelphia Constitu-

tional Convention in 1787, Gouverneur Morris waged an heroic fight to stop the adoption of the three-fifths clause, a demand by the South to ensure their political domination over the new nation. For twenty-nine days, from July 11 to Aug. 8, Morris repeatedly raised the issue and battled for its rejection. Two weeks later, between Aug. 21 and Aug. 28, during the debate over the slave trade, it was Morris who demanded an immediate ban on the trafficking.

During the course of these battles, in a speech to the convention on Aug. 8, Morris stated:

The admission of slaves into the representation when fairly explained comes to this: that the inhabitant of Georgia and South Carolina who goes to the coast of Africa and, in defiance of the most sacred laws of humanity, tears away his fellow creatures from their dearest connections and damns them to the most cruel bondages, shall have more votes in a government instituted for the protection of the rights of mankind, than the citizen of Pennsylvania or New Jersey who views with laudable horror so nefarious a practice....

2. "[Race is Not the Issue](#)," by Robert Ingraham, *EIR*, Volume 44, Number 34, August 25, 2017.



*Gouverneur Morris*

Domestic slavery is the most prominent feature in the aristocratic countenance of the proposed Constitution. The vassalage of the poor has ever been the favorite offspring of aristocracy...

Slavery is a nefarious institution, the curse of heaven on the states where it prevails.

Morris refused to agree to any of the compromises pertaining to slavery at the Convention. He was simply outvoted.

Much like Hamilton, for Morris, the determination to eradicate slavery was interwoven with his economic initiatives. Morris was the first person, in 1777, to propose the construction of a canal from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. In 1800, Morris drafted detailed plans for a canal to Lake Erie, which he submitted to the New York Surveyor General. In 1810, at Morris's request, the New York legislature appointed a seven-person "Commission to Explore a Route for a Canal to Lake Erie," which became known as the Erie Canal Commission. Gouverneur Morris was selected as Chairman, with Stephen Van Rensselaer and DeWitt Clinton as Vice-Chairmen.

Similarly, the Jay family. John Jay was the first President of the New York Manumission Society, and it was Jay, then serving as New York State Governor, who forced through legislation in 1799 to emancipate New



*John Jay*

York's slaves. Later, Jay's son, Peter Augustus, would lead the fight at the 1821 New York State Constitutional Convention for the full enfranchisement of blacks in New York. Peter Jay also served as both the President of the Erie Canal Commission and as President of the New York Manumission Society. Another of Jay's sons, William, became a founding member of the Liberty Party in 1840.

### **The Fight for Emancipation**

In April of 1775, the same month as the battles of Lexington and Concord, the first abolition organization in the American colonies was founded, "The Society for the Relief of Africans unlawfully held in bondage." Created by the prominent Quaker Anthony Benezet,<sup>3</sup> in Philadelphia, it became dormant during the War, but was refounded in 1784 as the "Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage." The Society was reorganized for a second time in 1787 and brought in Benjamin Franklin as its President.

In 1785, the **New York Manumission Society** was founded with John Jay as the first President. In addition to those already mentioned, Cadwallader D. Colden, the grandson of the Cadwallader Colden who was an ally of Benjamin Franklin and enemy of Isaac Newton, was a leading member. He became the Society's President in 1815 and was a champion in support of the African Free School.<sup>4</sup>

3. Quakers were a majority in many of the early abolition societies. The exception was New York, where many Quakers were involved but the leadership was centered on John Jay, Stephen Van Rensselaer, and Alexander Hamilton. The instigator of the Quaker abolition movement was John Woolman (1720-1772), a Quaker preacher, and an early abolitionist in the colonial era.

4. Like Gouverneur Morris, Colden was a "canal builder." He was an active booster of the Erie Canal, and later he played a leading role in the building of the Morris Canal in New Jersey.

On Nov. 1, 1787, the **African Free School** opened, with 60 students, in New York City.

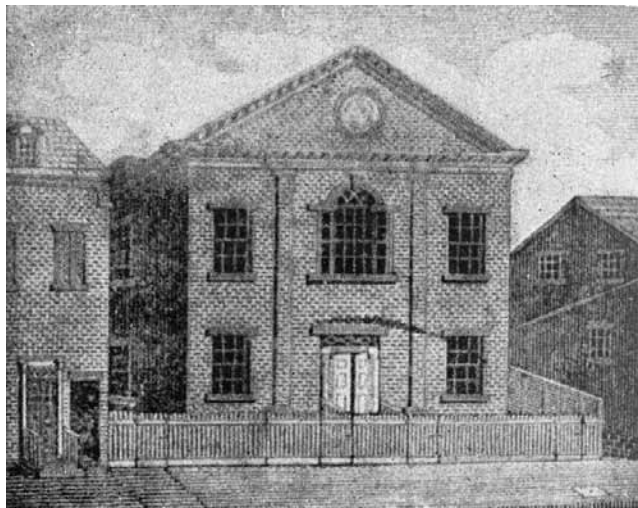
Also in 1787, the **Free African Society** was founded in Philadelphia, by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, both former slaves. Another leading member was James Forten. This was the first organization dedicated to full emancipation and equal rights. This effort also led directly to the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.

In March of 1793, the New York Manumission Society issued a call for a national convention of all the anti-slavery societies. It met in Philadelphia in January 1794 as the “American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race,” and it would continue to meet annually for many years, providing national direction in the fight for freedom and full citizenship. At the 1795 convention, delegates stated that the “clouds of prejudice” could be overcome through the “voice of reason and the impulse of humanity.” They named education as their “noblest and most arduous task,” and stated that the education of the freed slave would “confound the enemies of truth.”

In 1799, as a result of the efforts of John Jay, New York adopted a gradual emancipation law. This was followed, in January 1800, with a series of celebratory parades in New York City.

## Upward Progress

In 1791, Alexander Hamilton authored his *Report on Manufactures* and simultaneously unveiled the formation of the Society for Establishing Useful Manufac-



*New York African Free School, after an 1830 engraving from a drawing by Patrick H Reason.*



*Free African Society of Philadelphia.*

tures. Through these actions, and most emphatically as put forward in the argument of his *Report*, Hamilton declares the role and the responsibility of the national government to foster the most rapid development of manufacturing, science, inventions, and useful human creativity. This was to be the defining nature of the new Republic. This upward progress would be accomplished through a system of Public Credit and national banking, as

well as through direct government action, such as the use of economic bounties. This was a true declaration of independence from the oligarchical domination of the monarchies of the old world.

All of this was grounded in a notion of human freedom, not the freedom of John Locke’s “beasts of nature,” nor the unleashed rage of the *sans-culottes*, but a freedom which unleashed humanity from the shackles of oligarchical rule

and made possible the emergence of the true human creative potential. Just as Cusa, Leonardo, and Leibniz recognized the power of inventions, technology and science as the key to the improvement of the human condition, so Hamilton viewed his economic initiatives as both indispensable to the physical and political survival of the new nation, as well as to the fostering of a new type of society, grounded in the principle of what Cotton Mather would term “the Good.”

This is what it meant to be an American Citizen: Freedom to develop, freedom to progress, freedom to invent, freedom for one’s children and grandchildren to progress even further. Hamilton envisioned an America dedicated to human self-perfection. This is not an exaggeration or a “reading into Hamilton.” It is all there, in

his letters, his writings, and most importantly in his life's work.

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## II. The Revolution Defended

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On Jan. 1, 1808, New York City was gripped with the excitement of citywide celebrations. There were parades, parties, church services and speeches all over the city. Most of these were led by leaders of the free black community, but many included large numbers of white citizens in an integrated display of patriotism. The reason for such joy? January 1st marked the day for the official national outlawing of the African slave trade.

Rev. Peter Williams Jr. spoke at the AME Zion Church, delivering an "Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade," and his speech was reprinted and distributed by the New York Manumission Society.

One year later, again on Jan. 1, 1809, the end of the slave trade was greeted once more. There were more parades, with black men riding on horseback, in uniform with sabers, and others holding banners, which asked "Am I not a Man and a Brother?" Again there were speeches: Williams spoke again, but there were also orations at several locations. William Hamilton, the President and cofounder of the African Society for Mutual Relief, spoke at the Universalist Church; Henry Sipkins, another founder of the same Society, spoke at the African Church; and Joseph Sidney, perhaps the most senior among them, spoke at a fourth location, delivering the following "Oration Commemorative of the Abolition of the Slave Trade":

Since the Slave Trade is by law forever abolished, may we not my countrymen, without incurring the imputation of rashness, look forward to the period when slavery, in this land of freedom, will be unheard of and unknown? Yes! this is what we most ardently desire, what we fondly anticipate, and what, I think, we may with certainty expect to realize.... Alas! what is man, and of what is he formed! How contradictory in his professions! how strangely inconsistent in his actions!

No people in the world make louder pretensions to "*liberty, equality, and the rights of man*" than the people of the South! And yet, strange as it may appear, there is no spot in the

United States, where oppression reigns with such unlimited sway! It is here we may see human nature sunk to the lowest state of degradation....

My countrymen, you cannot be unacquainted with the fact that there has existed, for some time past, in our country, two great political parties. At the head of the Federal Republican Party was the immortal WASHINGTON, father of his country. Hamilton, Jay, Adams, Pinckney, King, and Pickering, together with most of our old revolutionary officers and soldiers, were among the illustrious characters, who attached themselves, through principle and patriotism to this party.... The single object of this party was to preserve the liberty, promote the happiness, to increase the prosperity, and to extend the respectability of the United States....

Such was the state of our affairs, when the *Anti-federal* or *Democratic party*, consisting of a set of ambitious, designing, and office-seeking men, first adventured from its native cave of filth and darkness into open day.... and from that moment commenced a persecution against *federal men and federal measures*; which persecution, for cool and malignant cruelty, can never be exceeded. To destroy the reputation of distinguished federalists, calumnies the most vile, were daily circulated through the country. Even the virtues of Washington did not prove a shield sufficiently broad, to protect him against the envenomed shafts of malice. The father of his country was branded as a *traitor*!....

Mr. Jefferson became the *President of the United States*. And from that inauspicious day ... the tide of American prosperity soon ceased to flow, and all our goodly prospects vanished.

Can you, my countrymen, for a moment hesitate in choosing between your enemies and your friends? Will you flock to the *Slavery-hole* of Democracy?—Or will you patriotically rally round the *standard of liberty*?—a standard which was erected by the *immortal Washington*; and which has been consecrated by the blood of the *martyred Hamilton*."

These men and women, black and white, who participated in the joyous events of 1808 and 1809, fully

expected that the American Revolution would continue to its completion, that all would be free and able to participate in the building of the future nation. True human freedom—to create, to be productive, to build a better future—this is what these individuals wanted, and this is what they anticipated.

Those expectations, however, were betrayed in the years which followed, and promises were broken. Persecution, ostracism, hatred and violence became the new reality. But new leaders stepped forward, and a new banner was raised. We present below a partial list of some of the heroes of this era. It is a long list, but I know of no other way to introduce these personalities to the reader. A careful reading of the short biography attached to each name will give some sense of the magnitude of leadership exhibited at that time. Study what they said, what they did, what they wrote. Consider their fight in the context of what Americans died for at Bunker Hill, Brooklyn Heights and Valley Forge.

## The Honor Roll

**Richard Allen:** Born a slave, Richard Allen bought his freedom in 1780. He was ordained as a Methodist minister and moved to Philadelphia in 1786. In 1787 Allen and Absalom Jones founded the Free African Society, a mutual aid society, out of which emerged the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. From 1787 until his death in 1831, Allen was one of the most prominent and effective black leaders in the nation.

On Sunday, December 29, 1799, Allen delivered a eulogy of George Washington to the congregation of the Bethel AME Church. A sketch of Allen's address was published two days later in the *Philadelphia Gazette*. It reads, in part:

At this time it may not be improper to speak a little on the late mournful event—an event in which we participate in common with the feelings of a grateful people—an event which causes “the land to mourn” in a season of festivity. Our father and friend is taken from us—he whom the nations honoured is ‘seen of men no more.’



*Richard Allen*

We, my friends, have particular cause to bemoan our loss. To us he has been the sympathizing friend and tender father. He has watched over us, and viewed our degraded and afflicted state with compassion and pity—his heart was not insensible to our sufferings. He whose wisdom the nations revered thought we had a right to liberty. Unbiased by the popular opinion of the state in which is the memorable Mount Vernon—he dared to do his duty, and wipe off the only stain with which man could ever reproach him.

And it is now said by an authority on which I rely, that he who ventured his life in battles, whose ‘head was covered’ in that day, and whose shield the ‘Lord of hosts’ was, did not fight for that liberty which he desired to withhold from others—the bread of oppression was not sweet to his taste, and he ‘let the oppressed go free’—he ‘undid every burden’—he provided lands and comfortable accommodations for them when he kept this ‘acceptable fast to the Lord’—that those who had been slaves might rejoice in the day of their deliverance.

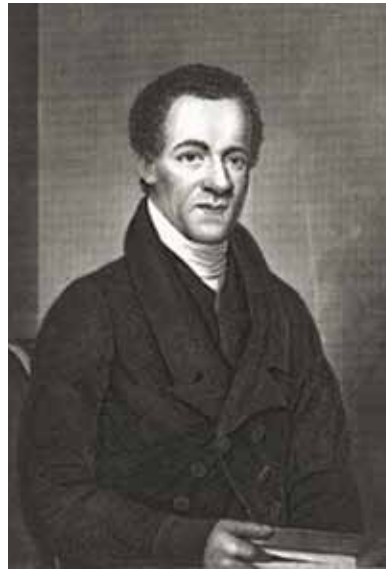
If he who broke the yoke of British burdens ‘from off the neck of the people’ of this land, and was hailed his country’s deliverer, by what name shall we call him who secretly and almost unknown emancipated his ‘bondmen and bondwomen’—became to them a father, and gave them an inheritance!...

The name of Washington will live when the sculptured marble and statue of bronze shall be crumbled into dust—for it is the decree of the eternal God that “the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, but the memorial of the wicked shall rot.

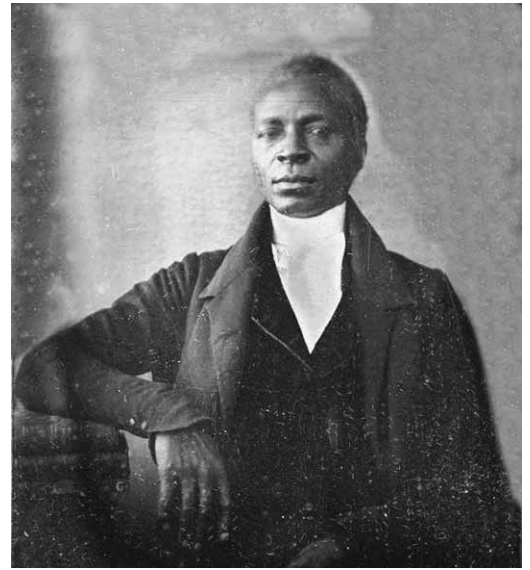
On Jan. 15, 1817, one month after the founding of the American Colonization Society for the repatriation of free blacks to Africa, Allen convened an emergency meeting to respond to its proposals. Three thousand people attended the emergency meeting, and they adopted a resolution, authored by Allen, which stated:



*Philip Alexander Bell*



*Samuel Cornish*



*James Forten*

We view with deep abhorrence, the unmerited stigma attempted to be cast upon the reputation of the free people of color by the promoters of this measure, ‘that they are a dangerous and useless part of the community’ when in the state of disenfranchisement in which they live, in the hour of dangers they ceased to remember their wrongs and rallied around the standard of their country.

In 1830, Allen organized the first national Coloured Peoples Convention, which was held at his Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church. This action began a series of conventions, held yearly, which took place all over the nation, and from these conventions the fight for full emancipation was initiated.

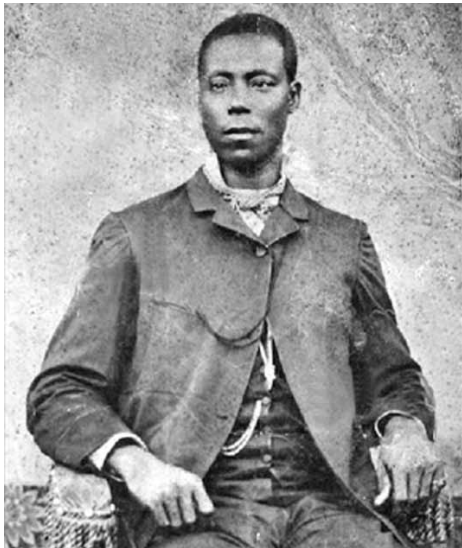
**Philip Alexander Bell:** Born in New York City, Bell started the New York City newspaper, *The Weekly Advocate* edited by Samuel Cornish, later renamed the *Colored American* and co-owned by Charles Bennett Ray. In 1860, he moved to San Francisco, where he became co-editor of the African-American newspaper *The Pacific Appeal*, and later founder and editor of *The San Francisco Elevator* during the Reconstruction Era.

**Samuel Cornish:** Cornish was a free black man born in Delaware in 1795. He was a Presbyterian minister, and he organized the first congregation of black Presbyterians in New York. Cornish edited *Freedom’s Journal*, the first black owned-and-operated newspaper

in the United States. The paper was circulated throughout 11 states, as well as Canada, Europe, and Haiti. In 1829, he founded another paper, *The Rights of All*, and later he edited a third paper, *The Colored American*, from 1837 to 1839. Cornish used the editorial pages of all three papers to battle the American Colonization Society. In 1833 he was a founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, but in 1840 he split with William Lloyd Garrison and joined the newly formed American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Cornish also worked intensively on behalf of the New York African Free School.

**James Forten:** An abolitionist and businessman in Philadelphia. In 1801, he was among the signers of a petition to the U.S. Congress calling for the abolition of the slave trade and the modification of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. In 1813, he wrote a pamphlet called “Letters From a Man of Colour.” Beginning in 1817, he opposed the American Colonization Society. He insisted that black Americans be given full citizenship in their country of birth. Forten worked with Bishop Richard Allen and Absalom Jones to organize a meeting on colonization at Bethel AME Church. At the meeting, Forten called for a vote, asking who favored colonization. Not one person said yes. When he asked who was against it, the crowd roared “No!” All the participants claimed the United States as their own country.

**Thomas L. Jennings:** A tradesman and abolitionist in New York City. He operated and owned a tailoring and dry-cleaning business, and, on March 3, 1821,



*Thomas Jennings*



*Absalom Jones*



*Charles Bennett Ray*

he was the first black American to be granted a patent. In 1854, he helped arrange the legal defense for his daughter, Elizabeth Jennings, when she challenged a private streetcar company's segregation of seating and was arrested. She won her case the next year. Jennings organized the Legal Rights Association in 1855 in New York, which raised challenges to discrimination and organized legal defense for court cases. He founded and was a trustee of the Abyssinian Baptist Church.

**Absalom Jones:** In 1792, while at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Absalom Jones and other black members were told that they could not join the rest of the congregation in sitting and kneeling on the first floor, and instead had to be segregated in the balcony. Jones led a walk-out by the church's black members. Jones and Richard Allen founded the Free African Society (FAS) to help newly freed slaves in Philadelphia. Jones was among the first group of black Americans to petition the U.S. Congress, calling for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

**Charles Bennett Ray:** The owner and editor of the weekly newspaper, *The Colored American*, and a notable journalist and clergyman. Born a free man in Falmouth, Massachusetts in 1832, Ray enrolled as the first black student at Wesleyan University. Ray became a prominent promoter of the Underground Railroad. He was also co-founder and director of the New York Vigilance Committee, assisting runaway slaves. Ray was also active in the Society for the Promotion of Educa-

tion Among Colored Children. In 1840 he became a founder of the Liberty Party, the only abolitionist political party.

One of Ray's daughters was Henrietta Cordelia Ray, a poet and teacher.<sup>5</sup> In 1891 Cordelia graduated from the University of the City of New York with a master's in pedagogy. She also studied French, German, Greek, and Latin at the Saveneur School of Languages. Her ode "Lincoln" was read at the unveiling of the Emancipation Memorial in Washington, D.C. in April 1876. Ray's *Sonnets* was a short book of twelve sonnets on Milton, Shakespeare, Raphael, Toussaint L'Ouverture, and Beethoven, among other subjects, printed in 1893.

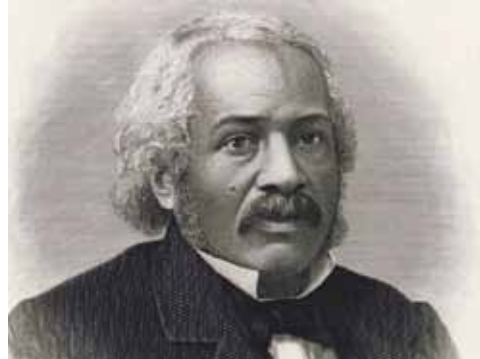
Another of Charles Ray's daughters was Charlotte E. Ray, the first black American female lawyer in the United States. Ray graduated from Howard University School of Law in 1872. She was also the first woman admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia.

**David Ruggles:** A prominent leader in the Committee of Vigilance, and the Underground Railroad, in Manhattan. He was a printer during the 1830s and also wrote numerous articles. He claimed to have led more

5. Black Americans had a tradition in poetry going back to pre-Revolution times. Jupiter Hammon, a slave, was a poet who in 1761 became the first black American writer to be published. Phillis Wheatley, another slave, wrote her first poem at the age of fourteen, and the publication of her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) brought her considerable fame. Reportedly, she was strongly influenced by her studies of the works of John Milton, Homer, Horace and Virgil. George Washington personally praised her work.



David Ruggles



James McCune Smith



James Varick

than 600 fugitive slaves to freedom in the North, including Frederick Douglass, who became a friend and fellow activist. Ruggles is also credited with opening the first black bookstore in the United States.

**Joseph Sidney:** An early leader in New York. The black champion of Washington and Hamilton. On January 2, 1809, he delivered the “Oration Commemorative of the Abolition of the Slave Trade” in New York City.

**James McCune Smith:** Smith was born free, but under New York state law he was forced to serve an involuntary apprenticeship until 1827. He graduated from the African Free School, where he was tutored by the Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., and in 1824 he was chosen to deliver a speech to General Lafayette during Lafayette’s visit to New York. Smith became the first black American to receive a medical degree. Unable to attend college in the United States, Smith entered Glasgow University in Scotland. Smith worked with Frederick Douglass to establish the National Council of the Colored People, and he authored the introduction to Frederick Douglass’s *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Douglass termed McCune Smith the “foremost black influence” in his life.

Smith was one of the Committee of Thirteen, who in 1850 organized in New York City to resist the newly passed Fugitive Slave Law by aiding fugitive slaves through the Underground Railroad. He was strongly opposed to colonization, and he fought for the right of American blacks to live in the United States and to claim the full rights of citizenship. In 1839 he followed Samuel Cornish as editor of *The Colored American*.

In 1859 he published an article using scientific find-

ings and analysis to refute Thomas Jefferson’s theories of race, as expressed in Jefferson’s 1785 *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

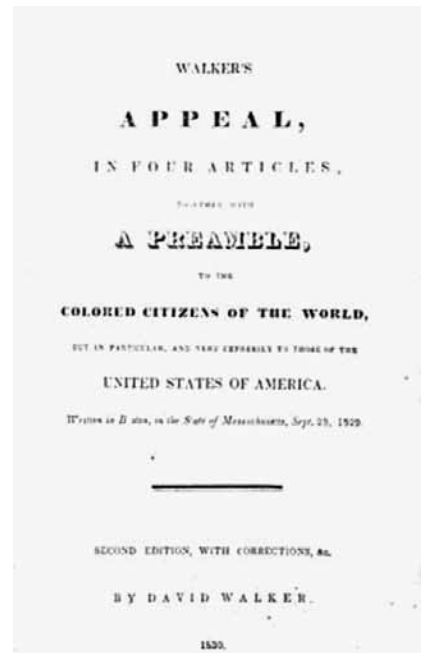
Smith became fluent in Greek, Latin, and French, and proficient in German, Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew. In 1843 he wrote an appeal to black Americans, wherein he says:

For we are destined to write the literature of this republic, which is still, in letters, a mere province of Great Britain. We have already, even from the depths of slavery, furnished the only music which the country has yet produced. We are also destined to write the poetry of the nation; for as real poetry gushes forth from minds imbued with a lofty perception of the truth, so our faculties, enlarged in the intellectual struggle for liberty, will necessarily become fired with glimpses at the glorious and the true, and will weave their inspiration into song.

**James Varick:** Another early leader. The son of a slave mother and white father. In 1766 he joined the John Street Methodist Church in New York City. In 1799, he and a few others decided to erect a building and form a separate church. They dedicated the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in October 1800. In 1821, he was a prominent member of a group that petitioned the state constitutional convention for the right to vote. He supported the establishment of *Freedom’s Journal* in 1827. On July 4, 1827, the thanksgiving service for the final abolition of slavery in New York State



David Walker



was held in his AME Zion Church.

**David Walker:** The author of the radical 1829 “Appeal To the Coloured Citizens of the World,” which called on blacks to resist slavery and racial oppression, by violence if necessary. Walker was active in the AME Church and very devoted to Philadelphia’s bishop, Richard Allen. He was also active in the African Lodge of Prince Hall Masonry, a contributor of articles to *Freedom’s Journal*, and an outspoken foe of colonization.

In his 1829 “Appeal,” Walker takes special aim at Thomas Jefferson and Jefferson’s infamous lines on black inferiority in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Walker states that Jefferson’s verdict on blacks “has in truth injured us more, and has been as great a barrier to our emancipation as any thing that has ever been advanced against us.” Walker asks, “How could Mr. Jefferson but say, ‘I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind?’... [H]ow could Mr. Jefferson but have given the world these remarks respecting us, when we are so submissive to them, and so much servile deceit prevails among ourselves—when we so meanly submit to their murderous lashes, to which neither the Indians nor any other people under Heaven would submit?”

**Peter Williams Jr.:** The son of Peter Williams, a

black Revolutionary War veteran. Williams attended the African Free School and later tutored there. An ordained Episcopal priest, in 1808 he organized St. Philip’s African Church in Lower Manhattan. In 1827 he was a co-founder of *Freedom’s Journal*. In 1833 he founded the Phoenix Society, a mutual aid society for African Americans; that year he was also elected to the executive board of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Williams became, perhaps along with Richard Allen, the most prominent black enemy of the American Colonization Society. On July 4, 1830 he delivered a speech in New York City, which reads in part:

On this day the fathers of this nation declared, ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’

These truly noble sentiments have secured to their author a deathless fame. The sages and patriots of the Revolution subscribed them with enthusiasm and ‘pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honour’ in their support. The result has been the freedom and happiness of millions, by whom the annual returns of this day are celebrated with the loudest and most lively expressions of joy.

But although this anniversary affords occasion of rejoicing to the mass of the people of the United States, there is a class, a numerous class, consisting of nearly three millions, who participate but little in its joys, and are deprived of their unalienable rights by the very men who so loudly rejoice in the declaration that ‘all men are born free and equal.’

The festivities of this day serve but to impress upon the minds of reflecting men of colour a deeper sense of the cruelty, the injustice, and oppression, of which they have been the victims. While others rejoice in their deliverance from a foreign yoke, they mourn that a yoke a thousandfold more grievous is fastened upon them. Alas, they are slaves in the midst of freedom; they are slaves to those who boast that freedom is the unalienable right of all; and the clanking of their fetters, and the voice of their

wrongs, make a horrid discord in the songs of freedom which re-sound through the land. . . .

The work of emancipation has within a few years been rapidly advancing in a number of States. The State we live in, since the 4th of July, 1827, has been able to boast that she has no slaves, and other States where there still are slaves appear disposed to follow her example.

But, alas! the freedom to which we have attained is defective. Freedom and equality have been “put asunder.” The rights of men are decided by the colour of their skin; and there is as much difference made between the rights of a free white man and a free coloured man as there is between a free coloured man and a slave.

Though delivered from the fetters of slavery, we are oppressed by an unreasonable, unrighteous, and cruel prejudice, which aims at nothing less than the forcing away of all the free coloured people of the United States to the distant shores of Africa. . . . There are those who are most active and most influential in its cause, who hesitate not to say that they wish to rid the country of the free coloured population, and there is sufficient reason to believe, that with many, this is the principal motive for supporting that society; and that whether Africa is civilized or not, and whether the Slave Trade be suppressed or not, they would wish to see the free coloured people removed from this country to Africa. . . .

Much has also been said by Colonizationists about improving the character and condition of the people of colour of this country by sending them to Africa. This is more inconsistent still. We are to be improved by being sent far from civilized society. This is a novel mode of improvement. What is there in the burning sun, the arid plains, and barbarous customs of Africa, that is so peculiarly favorable to our improvement? What hinders our improving here, where schools and colleges abound, where the gospel



*Peter Williams, Jr.*

is preached at every corner, and where all the arts and sciences are verging fast to perfection? Nothing, nothing but prejudice. It requires no large expenditures, no hazardous enterprises to raise the people of colour in the United States to as highly improved a state as any class of the community. All that is necessary is that those who profess to be anxious for it should lay aside their prejudices and act towards them as they do by others.

We are natives of this country, we ask only to be treated as well as foreigners. Not a few of our fathers suffered and bled to purchase its independence; we ask only to be treated as well as those who fought

against it. We have toiled to cultivate it, and to raise it to its present prosperous condition; we ask only to share equal privileges with those who come from distant lands, to enjoy the fruits of our labour. Let these moderate requests be granted, and we need not go to Africa nor anywhere else to be improved and happy. We cannot but doubt the purity of the motives of those persons who deny us these requests, and would send us to Africa to gain what they might give us at home.

The African Colonization Society is a numerous and influential body. Would they lay aside their own prejudices, much of the burden would be at once removed; and their example (especially if they were as anxious to have justice done us here as to send us to Africa) would have such an influence upon the community at large as would soon cause prejudice to hide its deformed head.

But, alas! the course which they have pursued has an opposite tendency. By the scandalous misrepresentations which they are continually giving of our character and conduct we have sustained much injury, and have reason to apprehend much more.

Without any charge of crime we have been denied all access to places to which we formerly had the most free intercourse; the coloured citizens of other places, on leaving their homes,

have been denied the privilege of returning; and others have been absolutely driven out. . . .

It is very certain that very few free people of colour wish to go to that land. The Colonization Society know this, and yet they do certainly calculate that in time they will have us all removed there.

How can this be effected but by making our situation worse here, and closing every other door against us?



*Theodore S. Wright*

**Theodore S. Wright:** The second pastor (after Samuel Cornish) and leader of the First Colored Presbyterian Church. Wright graduated from the African Free School. With the aid of New York Governor DeWitt Clinton and Arthur Tappan of the New York Manumission Society, Wright was enrolled in the Princeton Theological Seminary, and in 1829 he was the first black American to graduate from there. In 1833 he became a founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and served on its executive committee. In 1840 he, together with Samuel Cornish and others, broke with Garrison and founded the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. For years Wright acted as a conductor for the Underground Railroad in New York City and used his house at 235 W. Broadway as a station. He also served on New York's Committee of Vigilance, which was created to help fugitive slaves—and free blacks—from being kidnapped and transported to the South.

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### III. African Free School

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The African Free School was created in 1786, only three years after the Treaty of Paris that secured American independence. It was a project of the New York Manumission Society, and among its primary sponsors were John Jay, Stephen Van Rensselaer, and Alexander Hamilton. It opened its doors on November 1, 1787 with an enrollment of sixty students, both boys and girls, all of whom were free blacks. By 1789 the school began to

admit slave children (with the permission of the owners). Over the years, six additional branch schools were opened, and by 1834, 1,400 students were enrolled. It is not possible to know the total number of children who attended classes over that forty-five year period, but it must have been several thousand, and given that the black population of New York City in 1840 was 16,000, it is clear that a sizable percentage of black children were educated in these schools.

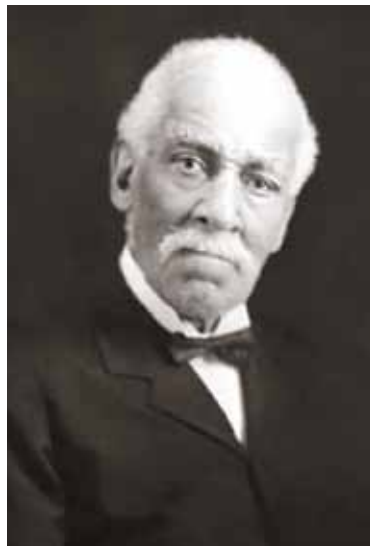
In 1799, in an unprecedented act, John Teasman, a former slave, was hired to run the school, which he did for the next ten years. The curriculum included reading, writing, arithmetic and geography. Later, more advanced instruction in subjects such as astronomy became available.

It was no coincidence that the establishment of the Free School was one of the first actions of the Manumission Society. Education was viewed as the key to upward progress, personal improvement and good citizenship. In Philadelphia, Richard Allen, James Forten, Absalom Jones and other leaders of both the Free African Society and the AME Church placed education for black children at the top of their list of priorities. In both New York and Philadelphia there was also an emphasis on moral improvement, seen as essential for becoming a contributor to the new nation. The overwhelming majority of Free School students were slave children, former slaves, or the sons and daughters of former slaves. The idea was to give them the skills and the self-worth to propel themselves upward.

The African Free School pre-dated the establishment of public education in New York by nineteen years. In February, 1805, under the direction of DeWitt Clinton, a group of New Yorkers established “The Society for Establishing a Free School in the City of New York for the Education of such Poor Children as do not Belong to, or are not Provided for, by any Religious Society.” On April 9 of the same year, the New York State legislature incorporated the New York Free School Society, which opened its first school on May 19, 1806. DeWitt Clinton served as the president of the



*Charles Reason*



*George Downing*



*Samuel Ward*

Society from 1805 to 1828.

Hundreds of students graduated from the African Free School. Among them were:

**Peter Williams, Jr., James McCune Smith and Theodore S. Wright**—all described in the preceding list.

**Ira Aldridge:** The internationally renowned Shakespearean actor, who became the most famous black actor of the Nineteenth Century, enjoying success in the United States, but primarily in Europe.

**Charles Reason:** A mathematician and linguist, and his brother, **Patrick Reason**, an engraver. Charles became the first black university professor at a predominantly white college. In 1847, together with Charles Bennett Ray, he founded the New York-based Society for the Promotion of Education among Colored Children.

**Samuel Ringgold Ward:** Born into slavery, he fled with his parents from Maryland's eastern shore in 1820. He joined the Liberty Party in 1840 and in 1848 placed second in balloting for that party's nomination as their candidate for U.S. Vice President. Frederick Douglass said of him, "As an orator and thinker [Ward] was vastly superior to any of us," and that "the splendors of his intellect went directly to the glory of race."

**William Hamilton:** President and cofounder of the New York Society for Mutual Relief and a founding member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church in New York City. A fierce defender of

racial equality.

**George T. Downing:** a major leader of the Underground Railroad. He met Lafayette when the patriot toured the United States during Downing's boyhood. In June 1850, Downing, together with Frederick Douglass and others, formed the American League of Colored Laborers as a union to organize former slaves working in New York City. He was also a member of the Committee of Thirteen which fought against the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850. In 1851 he participated in a committee which greeted the arrival of Louis Kossuth to New York.

Also:

**Henry Sipkins, Isaac Fortune, Alexander Cromwell, Thomas Miller, Robert Sidney, Daniel Berry, Nicholas Smith, Henry Highland Garnet, and William Green:** All important leaders and intellectuals in the Nineteenth Century.

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#### IV. William Brown's Theater

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On the evening of Sept. 17, 1821, in New York City, a newly formed drama company staged its first public performance. The work performed that evening was Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and the performance was given by an all black cast. The majority of those in attendance, as well as the performers themselves, were either slaves, former slaves, or the sons and daughters



*Ira Aldridge as Aaron the Moor in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus.*

of former slaves. But there were also many whites in the audience. All were welcome. The house was full, and as the actor playing Richard walked out onto the stage, the audience erupted into wild cheering.

The creator of this intervention was a man named William Alexander Brown, and for the next twenty-four months, he would wage—together with his lead actor James Hewlett and the entire cast and crew—a determined effort to bring Shakespeare, along with other dramas, to an American audience and presented by an American cast.

At that time, New York was the most cosmopolitan and multi-racial of all the states. There were significant numbers of people with Dutch, English, French, African, Caribbean, Irish, and Spanish heritage who called New York City home. Yet, there was only one established theater, the Park Theater, and this theater catered primarily to the elite. From 1808 to 1840, the Park Theater was run by Stephen Price and his associate, the British actor Edmund Simpson. Price spent much of his time in London, and he was determined to transform the Park into an American clone of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, i.e., the officially recognized “major” theater, which would be given dominion over the definitive interpretation of plays, including Shakespeare.

Price and Simpson instituted a “star system” and brought in many leading British players to impress the New York audiences, including Charles Matthews, Clara Fisher, Edmund Kean, James Wallack, and George Frederick Cooke.<sup>6</sup>

In 1821, Brown turned over the chess board and broke up this fixed arrangement.

## The Two Year Battle

Little is known of Brown’s life. He was a free black man, probably originally from the West Indies, and in 1821 he was described as a retired ship’s steward, which was a respectable middle-class occupation. In August 1821, in the backyard to his house at 38 Thomas Street (in present-day Tribeca), Brown opened a “Pleasure Garden,” for “ladies and gentlemen of colour.” At that time, pleasure gardens were all the rage among white New Yorkers. They seem to have been organized around the selling of the new novelty known as ice cream, but they included vocal and instrumental music, poetry, and other pleasant diversions, with tables, benches, and refreshments. Blacks were excluded from the white-owned gardens, so William Brown created the first that would cater to people of all races.

Within less than a month, Brown went further and transformed the second story of his dwelling into a theater, and it was there, on Sept. 17, that he premiered *Richard III*. The actor to first play the lead role was Charles Beers (a.k.a. Charles Taft), but he was replaced after the first performance by James Hewlett, who remained as Brown’s lead performer for the entirety of the Theater’s existence.

This performance took place at a time when slavery was still legal in New York, and was simultaneous with the decision by the New York State Constitutional Convention—at the prodding of Mordecai M. Noah, the publisher of the *National Advocate*, and the slave-owning Martin Van Buren—to reject the proposal of Peter Jay to grant voting rights to free blacks. During the convention, Noah published an article de-

6. The Park Theater had a much more distinguished origin. Originally sponsored by many of Alexander Hamilton’s friends, it was also managed, from 1798 to 1805, by William Dunlap, an ally of Hamilton’s and an activist with the New York Manumission Society. Dunlap’s play, “A Trip to Niagara,” also contains a direct reference to William Brown’s Theater, when he has a black gentleman named Job Jerryson tell a fellow servant, “If you would like to see our theater, I can give you an order. I am one of the managers. We rehearse every club night—the Shakespeare Club.”

nouncing Brown's production of *Richard III* as an example of the desecration of European culture that would arise if blacks were granted full political rights, i.e., that Brown's performance of Shakespeare was politically subversive. Between 1821 and 1823, Noah would emerge as the fiercest critic of Brown's theater, labeling it derisively the "African Grove" and presenting disgusting caricatures of its performers, Hewlett in particular.

Only two months after the premier performance of *Richard III*, during which there were repeated attacks from Noah and others in the media, Brown was forced to close both pleasure garden and theater, supposedly due to complaints from neighbors about "noise." The next month he opened a second theater, this at the corner of Mercer and Bleecker Streets. The Shakespeare performances continued, including presentations of *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*. There were also other offerings, including a ballet, written by Hewlett, named *Pantomime Asama*, featuring two Indian lead characters, with Hewlett and a black chambermaid named S. Welsh dancing the roles. Hewlett also sang traditional English and Scottish songs. Media attacks on the theater escalated, and in early January, a riot by white youths—who sources at the time claimed to be in the employ of Stephen Price and M. M. Noah—destroyed the theater.

Brown's next action was truly audacious. The Park Theater announced that in January of 1822 it would present a performance of *Richard III*, with Junius Brutus Booth being brought in from London as the star. New York's cultural mavens were all abuzz. In response, Brown rented a hall in the fashionable Hampton Hotel, right next door to the Park Theater, and put on a performance of *Richard III*, starring James Hewlett, on the very night of Booth's premier! One week later, the police raided the Hampton Hotel, in the middle of a performance, and arrested Brown and the entire cast, dragging the actors from the stage. No laws were broken, no charges were filed, and no one was prosecuted, but Brown and the entire cast were told they would not be released unless they signed a sworn document, wherein they "promised to never act Shakespeare again."

The theater remained closed for two weeks, and when it reopened, Brown presented a new drama, written by himself, titled *The Drama of King Shotaway*. This play, now lost, was the first full-length play by a black American performed in the United States. The



Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University

*Drawing of African-American actor James Hewlett dressed as Richard the Third.*

subject of *Shotaway* is the real life 1795 Black Carib revolt against the British Empire on the island of Saint Vincent. It is a play about revolution and freedom, a story of British lies, imperial ambition, and murderous oppression.

Brown's company continued at the Hampton Hotel (*sans* Shakespeare), but in July 1822, Brown opened a brand-new spacious theater at 1215 Mercer Street (at Houston Street). He dubbed this the American Theater and appealed for both whites and blacks to attend. Shortly into the season, Brown decided to revive Shakespeare productions, and announced an offering of *Othello*, with Hewlett in the starring role. The first performance, on Aug. 10 was stopped midway by violent white youths. Twelve days later, on Aug. 22, a full scale riot broke out at the theater. Hewlett, the fifteen year-old Ira Aldridge,<sup>7</sup> and others were beaten, and the theater was destroyed, large parts of it being burned to the ground. Evidence was presented to the New York au-

7. Ira Aldridge had made his stage debut in 1821, in William Brown's production of August von Kotzebue's *Pizarro*. Aldridge played the role of Rollo, who led the Indians in opposing the Spanish military forces.

thorities that the hooligans involved were all employees of a nearby circus and had been paid by Noah to carry out both of the attacks. But no arrests were made, despite eyewitnesses. Four months later, on Dec. 2, Hewlett was assaulted again, this time when he attempted to enter the Park Theater.

After a period of dormancy, in June 1823, Brown reopened the refurbished theater, now under the name, the Theater in Mercer Street. No Shakespeare productions were staged in this final reincarnation of the theater, and Hewlett left to pursue a solo career. Brown presented light-weight material such as *Tom & Jerry* or *Life in London* and *Obi: or Three-Finger'd Jack*—both well known farces—but even here he injected new material which was not present in the original. In the production of *Tom and Jerry*, otherwise a frivolous English musical comedy, Brown changed the location from London to Charleston, South Carolina and interjected an original scene, written by himself, titled “Life in Limbo—Life in Love, Vango Range in Charleston, on the Slave Market”—set in an Eighteenth Century slave market run by the British monarchy’s Royal Africa Company! This scene was the first depiction of a slave market to appear on an American stage, and in the culminating scene, the entire cast appears on stage as African slaves, in shackles. Similarly, Brown changed the plot of *Obi: or Three-Finger'd Jack*, the light musical, to relocate the scene to a slave insurrection against the British in Jamaica. This play was produced concurrently with news of Denmark Vesey’s 1822 slave revolt in South Carolina.

During this period, many among the black leadership in New York came to the defense of the theater, including James McCune Smith, who frequently praised both the theater and Hewlett’s performances, and Samuel Cornish who repeatedly attacked Noah in *Freedom’s Journal*.

## The Denouement

In July 1823, William Brown announced his retirement as a theater producer, and from that date he mounted no further productions. Three months later, Noah announced the opening of two blackface minstrel shows. One playbill proclaimed: “*Grand Concert of De Bob-link Society*: De times hab changed, But we hab not.” Incredibly, the minstrel show included an extravagant final burlesque which reproduced the 1822 riot that destroyed Brown’s American Theater, but this time portrayed as side-splitting comedy! This travesty had

already been anticipated one year earlier, when the Park Theater’s Stephen Price hired the British “Shakespearean” actor Charles Matthews to tour in a production of “African burlesques,” imitating and demeaning black speech patterns, including a mocking of Hewlett’s *Richard III* performance. By 1829, the Park Theater was presenting the white entertainer George Washington Dixon, in blackface, singing “Coal Black Rose,” and in 1832 it provided a venue for T. D. Daddy Rice’s production of *Jump Jim Crow*.

After Brown’s retirement, Hewlett briefly took over the Mercer Theater and kept it going. He wrote an open letter to Charles Matthews, condemning his attacks on the Theater, his caricatures of blacks, and his attacks on Americans in general. Three times in the letter Hewlett asserts “Shakespeare is our bard!”

On Jan. 1, 1824, a charity ball honoring the Greek fight for independence was held “for Ladies and Gentlemen of Colour” at the Mercer Street Theater. The invitation states: “This appeal, it is hoped, will be felt of peculiar force on that day, which cannot fail most powerfully to recall to the descendants of Africans, the blessings of freedom, and prompt them to unite with their white brethren in resisting the arm of despotism whenever it may be reared.” Later in January, Hewlett appeared at the theater in a benefit for the Greek cause.<sup>8</sup>

## Shakespeare’s Proud Representative

From the end of 1824, all record of the Mercer Theater and Brown’s troupe vanishes. During this time, Hewlett embarked on a solo career, which would last for twenty years. Little is known of Hewlett’s background. Some reports list him as a native of the West Indies; others name his place of birth as Brooklyn. Like all of the other black actors, he could not support himself through acting, and he worked as a clothier and on board ships.

Beginning in 1824, Hewlett began touring. In December 1825, he performed at the Military Garden in Brooklyn, and then again at the same venue the next February. In March 1826, he performed at the Grove Hotel on Spruce Street, and by November he was performing in Albany. The following year he performed at the Military Hall on Duane Street. In May 1827, he gave

8. It is also during this period that James Fenimore Cooper created the beginnings of a truly original American school of writing, with the publication of *Pioneers* in 1823 and *Last of the Mohicans* in 1826.

two appearances in York, Pennsylvania, where he occupied a temporary stage in the courthouse, and that same year he also appeared in Alexandria, Virginia. By 1831 he was probably the best known actor in New York.

To appreciate what Hewlett was doing, consider that in January 1826, he transformed a Philadelphia schoolroom on South Fourth Street, into a one-man Shakespeare festival, and for four nights performed scenes from *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Coriolanus*. He also began to include more singing in his performances, and beginning in 1826, this increasingly included selections from operas, many of which he learned from the performances of the Garcia family and its opera company, which had arrived in New York in 1826. Hewlett was probably the first American to perform opera on an American stage, and there are unconfirmed reports that he was the first American to perform Verdi arias.

It was during this period of touring that all of the printed programs and playbills for Hewlett performances began to announce him as **Shakespeare's Proud Representative in America**.

All of this was done under extremely adverse conditions. In one of his early solo appearances, on November 30, 1825, the performance was disrupted by an "unruly white mob." Attacks on him by Charles Matthews, and in the newspapers, continued. In late 1824 he traveled to London, but he found his access to the English stage blocked by the British theater establishment. He returned to New York, but no white acting troupe would accept him.

In 1828, Hewlett pulled Brown's acting troupe back together and staged *Julius Caesar* at the Mercer Street Theater, but this was the last of the major dramatic efforts. By 1831-1833, most of his appearances were advertised as concerts, with Hewlett singing songs and arias, accompanied by pianoforte.

In 1837, Hewlett was arrested for theft and imprisoned for two years. Upon his release in 1839, with blackface minstrels dominating the New York stage, and no prospects of employment, he left New York for the Caribbean. For the next several years he performed in Trinidad and other locations. It is not known when Hewlett died, but it was likely sometime in the late 1840s, and according to contemporaries, he had returned to Brooklyn shortly before his passing.

If one looks at the efforts of both Hewlett and Brown, and considers the transformative effect of their combined work—in a *Hamiltonian* sense—this is pre-

cisely what Lyndon LaRouche has defined as *cognitive energy*.<sup>9</sup> The intervention they made, in giving access to the greatest of human culture to a people who were just escaping from conditions of slavery, effected a profound increase in human productivity. It defined the very essence of freedom.

END OF PART I

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9. LaRouche, op. cit.