

Fugitive Slaves, Vigilance Committees, and the Abolitionists' Revolution, 1835-1859

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Introduction

In 1853 John Henry Hill escaped from slavery in Virginia. He forged passes, and with the help of antislavery sailors, stole himself by steamboat to Philadelphia. There, abolitionists of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee (PVC) listened to his story and sent him via the vigilance committees of New York, Albany, and Rochester to liberation in Canada. As a freeman, Hill taught himself writing and elocution, worked with vigilance committees to facilitate the escape of other runaways, and in so doing, transformed his hidden hatred of slavery into collective forms of revolutionary agitation. Runaways, like Hill, learned from abolitionists, but they also taught them. Hill vehemently urged vigilance committees to support or foment slave insurrections, for he believed “fire and sword” the only way that the USA could be “turned upside down.”¹ Abolitionists of the vigilance committees learned from such advice. They began to resist slavery violently, and planned John Brown’s Raid at Harper’s Ferry (1859), the catalyst of the American Civil War.

Vigilance committees were urban antislavery organizations committed to protecting black neighborhoods from cops and slave catchers, and to helping runaway slaves along the Underground Railroad.² The committees built up elaborate fugitive aid networks that included prominent abolitionists, poets, sailors, slaves, feminists, and a wide array of other radicals. More importantly, they provided the setting in which activists of all stripes first came into contact with thousands of fugitive slaves, learning from their experiences within the “prison house” of plantation capitalism. Being secretive organizations, historians have long overlooked the role of vigilance committees in the fight against slavery.³ This paper will argue that vigilance committees were the vanguard of American abolitionism; they pushed the movement into self-consciously revolutionary directions (antislavery is, *in itself*, neither revolutionary nor anti-capitalist).⁴ The committees revolutionized abolitionism in three ways. First, by learning from runaways and making them a part of the movement, the committees transformed the movement into one rooted in the experience and resistance of slaves. Second, the vigilance committees were crucibles of learning, debating, writing, and theorizing. They formulated revolutionary ideas, many of which influenced the Revolutionary Left of the succeeding century. They pushed feminism and anti-racism to new extremes; their critiques of Church power were more devastating than Diderot’s. More significantly, they formulated an anti-imperialist politics in which the USA served as archetype of all empires to be thrown down. Finally, committee

¹ William Still, *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters Sec. Narrating the Hardships, Hair-breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in their Efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others or Witnessed by the Author; Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers of the Road* (Philadelphia, 1872), 134-144.

² The most significant vigilance committees were organized in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Albany, Syracuse, and Detroit.

³ See recently, Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Norton, 2015).

⁴ Very few treatments of the antislavery struggle think of it as revolutionary. The only two exceptions are, Herbert Aptheker, *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979); Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (Yale University Press, 2016).

members meditated on revolutions, their history, their consequences, and they tried to act out revolutions of their own.

The “Mass-Vanguard” Dialectic

Activists in the vigilance committees first wrestled with the political question that has confronted all revolutionary movements since: How should activists relate to the masses they seek to represent? Some participants will always be more active in the struggle than others, thus making the issue of “leadership” not a dogmatic debate but a necessary one. Summing up the historical insights of revolutionary movements, from Abolitionism to Vietnamese Liberation, James and Grace Lee Boggs concluded: “A revolutionary movement, a revolutionary organization, a revolutionary leadership cannot develop unless people are ready to *learn* from experience and *teach* from experience.”⁵ From Mao to Fanon to Freire, most revolutionaries have understood the “mass-vanguard” relationship as a pedagogical one, in which the enslaved, the colonized, the proletarianized take the lead.⁶ Because vigilance committees interacted with thousands of fugitive slaves, they helped to make this sort of “pedagogy of the oppressed” possible within antislavery. They forced middle class reformers to work with proletarian activists, both enslaved and free, and recrafted the movement into one in which slaves took the lead in teaching the tactics, theories, and ideals of the movement. The role of the activist was merely to keep organized and keep pace with the fast-running fugitive. As Wendell Phillips of the Boston Vigilance Committee (BVC) best articulated this principle, “Revolution begins with the populace, never with the leaders. The leaders argue, they resolve, they organize; but it is the populace that, like the edge of the cloud, shows the lightning first.”⁷

Abolitionists organized vigilance committees in the mid-1830s to facilitate the swiftly-increasing flood of fugitives fleeing to the free states. Established independently of the mainstream antislavery societies, the committees housed, clothed, and advised fugitives, and either sent them on to Canada, or helped them find employment in the North. In other cases, they functioned as “committees of public safety,” where public safety meant the (sometimes armed) defense of free black neighborhoods from police, slave catchers, and illegal kidnapping (this practice of self-defense later influenced the Black Panthers).⁸ To carry out this difficult practical work, the committees relied upon a vast network of agents and allies, some working secretly, some publicly. Prominent abolitionists, like William Lloyd Garrison and Lucretia Mott worked for the committees. Intellectuals, like Alcott, Thoreau, and the black feminist poet F.E.W. Harper helped runaways and labored as public advocates for the committees.⁹ Female antislavery societies raised all the funds for the committees. Black workers hid and housed fugitives. Sailors helped runaways stow away on ships. The committees even employed “agents” in the slave states, most of whom were working women, to forge passes, and help runaways get to free

⁵ Grace Lee and James Boggs, *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 37.

⁶ Mao Tsetung, *Five Essays on Philosophy* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977); Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Penguin, 1996); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

⁷ Wendell Phillips, “Crispus Attucks” in *Speeches Lectures and Letters by Wendell Phillips Second Series* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1891).

⁸ Russel Shoatz, *Maroon The Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russel Maroon Shoatz* (Oakland California PM Press, 2013), 150-155.

⁹ Frances, Ellen Watkins Harper, *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1990); A. Bronson Alcott, *The Journals of A. Bronson Alcott* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1938).

cities.¹⁰ Not only did this diverse assemblage of people make the work of the committees more effective, but the cooperation required also opened up a novel space for debate and learning from varied strands of experience and radicalism.

The most formative mutual learning came when committee members interviewed runaway slaves to obtain information needed to aid other slaves, to understand slaves' work conditions, and to hear their justifications for resistance (some committees kept detailed records of hundreds of such interviews). From fugitives, abolitionists learned of the "brutal system of terrorism," as one runaway put it, which perpetuated American capitalism, and made resistance to it nearly impossible.¹¹ Abolitionists learned of the vast proportions of the internal slave trade that fueled the westward expansion of the plantation system (almost all fugitives had family sold off, or had themselves been sold multiple times). Abolitionists learned of intensified exploitation, especially in urban settings. Most runaways worked for their owners, but were also "hired-out" to other employers, wages being paid to their masters. Women often hired themselves out, worked in fields, in master's household, and cared for enslaved children, who were then sold South for additional profit. Explaining to abolitionists the causes for this intensified exploitation, one fugitive remarked, "when prices rise on the English market...the poor slaves immediately feel the effects, for they are driven harder."¹² All this, in addition to hundreds of brutal narrations of whipping, sexual violence, the systematic repression of meetings, rebellions, and other resistance added a material dimension to abolitionists moral critique of slavery.¹³ As antislavery activists began to note in their numerous slave narratives, lectures, and treatises on American political economy, slavery was not merely morally wrong. It was the very foundation of America's imperial expansion and would not dissolve without revolutionary action.

Describing the workings of the Underground Railroad, C.L.R. James wrote "the slaves...sent a never-ending stream of representatives North to free negroes and through them to the Abolition Movement, supplying it with revolutionary personnel," and revolutionary creativity as well.¹⁴ The vigilance committees did most to facilitate this process. They employed runaways as agents, spies and propagandists for the committees and as lecturers for the Antislavery societies. Fugitives working for the committees wrote novels, plays, polemics and composed or collected songs.¹⁵ Vigilance committee workers incorporated the language of the spirituals into their antislavery hymns, and put together the first anthologies of slave spirituals.¹⁶ Most

¹⁰ Robert Purvis to Wilbur Siebert, 23 December 1895, Siebert Papers, Ohio Historical Society; 'Hitherto Unknown Details of the Inner Working of the Local Committee of Vigilance,' Siebert Papers, Ohio Historical Society; Francis Jackson, *Account book of Francis Jackson, Treasurer, The Vigilance Committee of Boston* (Boston: The Library of the Bostonian Society, 1924).

¹¹ Frances Frederic, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America* (London: Wertheim Macintosh and Hunt, 1863), 3.

¹² John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life and Sufferings and Escape of John Brown* (London: 1855), 171.

¹³ William Still, *The Underground Railroad*; Sidney Howard Gay, "Record of Fugitives," Sydney Howard Gay Papers, Columbia University.

¹⁴ C.L.R. James, "Stalinism and Negro History" *Fourth International* November 1949; C.L.R. James, "The Atlantic Slave Trade," in *The Future in the Present* (London, Allison and Busby, 1977), 256.

¹⁵ See especially the brilliant numerous writing of William Wells Brown, very much the James Baldwin of the 19th Century.

¹⁶ William Wells Brown, *The Anti-Slavery Harp: A Collection of Songs for Anti-Slavery Meetings* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1848); Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Simpson and Co, 1867). Surprisingly, the significance of the influence of spirituals on antislavery songs and vice versa to the history of music has been entirely unexplored. The process of "secularizing" the spirituals is seen as a post-civil war

importantly, more than a dozen fugitives helped by the committees (Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, William and Ellen Craft, to name a few) wrote narratives of their experiences that VC workers hailed as more revolutionary than anything that came out of the revolts of '48.¹⁷ Such testimony was powerful propaganda. More meaningfully, these runaways helped spark some of the most creative individual literary expressions in the era that had produced the high-bourgeois individualism of Emerson and Thoreau. Perplexed by this paradox, the incarcerated communist George Jackson much later exclaimed, "I don't recognize uniqueness, not as its applied to individualism, because it is too tightly tied into decadent capitalist culture.... But then how can I explain the runaway slave in terms that do not imply uniqueness.?"¹⁸

Fugitives and committee members gradually transformed the tactics of the rest of the movement. In the 1830s, aiding fugitives was considered a subsidiary branch of the antislavery cause, whose main purpose was to reveal to the white conscience the sin of slavery. But since slaveholders and their many white compradors (of all classes) repressed such propaganda with violence, abolitionists looked increasingly toward runaways and vigilance committees for guidance. By the 1840s and 50s, vigilance committees integrated with the major antislavery societies, who now committed increasing funds and propaganda to helping fugitives.¹⁹ Instead of addressing slaveholders and northern abolitionists, pleading them to repent, abolitionists began writing addresses to slaves, pleading them to resist—to run away, to sabotage production, to foment insurrection. In the 1830s, abolitionists withdrew from agitating in the South, knowing that public propagandizing there would get them lynched. By the 1840s, abolitionists, usually working with vigilance committees, began venturing back into the South, this time to secretly help slaves to flee. Some, like Harriet Tubman, secretly led dozens of runaways to the committees.²⁰ Others were captured and suffered harsh imprisonment and penal labor alongside fugitive slaves.²¹ As the black abolitionist William Powell, of the New York Vigilance Committee (NYVC), believed, in a society where the vast majority of whites supported slavery, the only way for abolitionists to avoid sectarian isolation and find new strategies and a mass base was to follow the fugitive: "When abolition doctors disagree about prescribing medicine to cure the *infectious disease* of slavery, who shall we look to for a decision? My answer is—to the *patient*."²²

Revolutionary Ideas

Abolitionists likened the vigilance committees to "schools" in which diverse people debated, developed radical antislavery practices, and enriched the ideals of the fights against

phenomenon. See Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999); James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (New York: Orbis), 2003.

¹⁷ J. Miller McKim to Sidney Howard Gay, 14 November 1849, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

¹⁸ George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (New York: Bantam, 1970).

¹⁹ Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 82; Pennsylvania Antislavery Society Records, Vol. 1, 61, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; *In Memoriam: Testimonials to the Life and Character of the Late Francis Jackson* (Boston: R.F. Wallcut, 1861); Lewis Tappan, *The Life of Arthur Tappan* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), 181-182; *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Antislavery Society* (Boston: Dow and Jackson, 47-49).

²⁰ Still, *Underground Railroad*; Gay, "Record of Fugitives"; James A. McGowan, ed., *Station Master on the Underground Railroad: The Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett* (Moylan Pennsylvania: The Whimsie Press, 1977).

²¹ Daniel Drayton, *Personal Memoirs of Daniel Drayton* (New York: American and Foreign Antislavery Society, 1853); J.C. Lovejoy, *Memoir of Rev. Charles T. Torrey, Who Died in the Penitentiary of Maryland Where He Was Confined For Showing Mercy to the Poor* (Boston: John P. Jewet, 1847); Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

²² *Liberator*, 19 July 1839.

racism, sexism, religious dogma, and bourgeois conformity.²³ First and foremost, committee members creatively intensified the antiracism that already existed within the movement.²⁴ When white committee members made statements that hinted at racial prejudice, black committee members criticized them fiercely and publicly. Committee members spearheaded efforts to desegregate northern schools and passenger cars. Others attempted to promote black solidarity through all-black political conventions and reform societies. A few went so far as to endorse “the formation of a great league of the colored people of the North and South American Continents and of the West Indies, for the general abolition of slavery”—an early intimation of Pan-Africanism.²⁵ Black abolitionists Robert Purvis (PVC) and William Cooper Nell (BVC) both advocated abolishing the very idea of race.²⁶ Abolitionist anti-racism event contributed to radical re-imaginings of the history of human civilizations. Though enlightenment and romantic historiography, as Martin Bernal has shown, erased the African contribution to the great classical and modern civilizations, abolitionist romantics sought to rediscover that contribution.²⁷ Fugitives William Wells Brown and J.W.C. Pennington, who helped the vigilance committees, wrote histories from an Afro-centric perspective. Learning from them, white committee members, even the classically educated ones, argued that “Egyptians were a colony from Ethiopia,” or that Africa was “the mother of religion and learning.”²⁸

In all revolutionary movements, the questions of women’s oppression and women’s emancipation inevitably arise and find their most advanced expression.²⁹ Activists involved in the vigilance committees, participating in an age of revolutionary upheavals, crafted some of the most advanced forms of feminism of the early nineteenth century. Utopian socialists on both sides of the Atlantic dreamed widely on what women’s emancipation might be, yet had little actual analysis of the oppression of women under capitalism. Marx, Engels, and the radical wings of the early labor movement (pre-1860s) catalogued women’s oppression in the sphere of production, but as yet had no analysis of social reproduction, nor any sense that women could be

²³ William Cooper Nell to Amy Kirby Post, 5 December 1850, in Dorothy Porter and Constance Uzelac, eds., *William Cooper Nell: Nineteenth Century African American Abolitionist, Historian, Integrationist, Selected Writing, 1832-1874* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2002), 180.

²⁴ The Anti-racism of abolitionists is well known, though its depth has often been underestimated. John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

²⁵ *Pennsylvania Freeman* 23 October 1851.

²⁶ Robert Purvis, *Speeches and Letters of Robert Purvis, Published by Request of the Afro-American League* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 26; Isaiah Wears, “A Tribute to Robert Purvis” (1898), Letters and Papers of James Still, Isaiah Wears, and William Still, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁷ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Volume 1: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (Rutgers University Press, 1987).

²⁸ James W.C. Pennington, *A Textbook of the Origins and History of the Colored People* (Hartford: L. Skinner, 1841); William Wells Brown, *The Rising Son* (A.G. Brown, 1874); Lydia Maria Child, *The History of Women in Various Ages and Nations, Volume 1: Comprising the Women of Asia and Africa* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Company, 1835), 217; James Russel Lowell, “Sympathy with Ireland,” in *The Antislavery Papers of James Russel Lowell Volume 1* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1902), 101.

²⁹ The best analyses of this important theme, though nowadays neglected, are still Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986), and Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance, and Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); the most significant works on abolitionist feminism are Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From The Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women’s Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994); Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolition: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

agents in their own emancipation.³⁰ Women in the vigilance committees took things a step further. Women participated in all aspects of committee work and used the committees as forums to debate the roles of women within the movement. In particular, the vigilance committees became forums in which black working-class women, enslaved and free, could act, debate, and express their viewpoints.³¹ Enslaved women came to the committees and catalogued with sociological precision the oppressions of women under slavery. Not only did they speak of brutal beatings and of rape; they described how women engaged in productive labor on plantations, bore children (a form of commodity production under slavery), and reproduced the slave labor force as well as the master's household.³² From such information, abolitionists like Harriet Jacobs and Lydia Maria Child developed early critiques of the importance of social reproduction to capitalism, while also detailing the immense emotional and physical burdens faced by women as slaves, housewives, or as factory workers.³³ For women in the committees, their own uplift required more than just a voice within the public sphere or voting rights within a state founded upon slavery and genocide. The feminists working in the committees made broader demands for equal pay for equal work, the absolute right of women to decide on maternity, and some even called for the abolition of marriage, or speculated upon the possibilities of a socialism based upon matriarchy.³⁴ Thus, it should be no surprise that radical, mainly Afro-American feminists of the 1960s and 70s looked not to the "first wave," but to the much earlier abolitionist feminism for inspiration. They rightfully detached them from "bourgeois feminism," and associated them with women's struggles in China and Vietnam.³⁵

Most scholarship on abolitionism assumes that the movement was an outgrowth of the evangelical revivals that today serve as the foundation for far-right ideology.³⁶ In fact, many abolitionists, especially those in the vigilance committees, dissociated themselves from evangelical Christianity, and like many revolutionaries preceding and proceeding them, they denounced churches, alongside the state, as the bulwarks of social oppression and ideological delusion. As Fugitive and VC worker John S. Jacobs said of church and state, "one will tell a lie, and the other will swear to it."³⁷ At an antislavery meeting, one Quaker woman put it more explicitly: "the sectarian organizations called churches are combinations of thieves, robbers,

³⁰ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

³¹ Nathaniel P. Rogers, *Collection from the Miscellaneous Writings of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey, 1849), 138.

³² See especially, Still, *The Underground Railroad*.

³³ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Edited by Lydia Maria Child (Boston: 1861); Lydia Maria Child, *The Patriarchal Institution, As Described by Members of its own Family* (New York: American Antislavery Society, 1860).

³⁴ HC Wright, *The Unwelcome Child; or, the Crime of an Undesigned or Undesired Maternity* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1860), 5; Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends, 1853-1873 (1853 Meeting), Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College; John Murray Spear, *Twenty Years on the Wing* (Boston: William White, 1873), 19-21; John Murray Spear, *Messages from a Superior State* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1853).

³⁵ See, for example, Angela Davis, *Women, Race, And Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Tony Cade Bambara, ed. *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: New American Library, 1970); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

³⁶ Louis Filler, *The Antislavery Crusade, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper, 1960); Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870* (Cambridge University Press, 1982).

³⁷ John S. Jacobs, "A True Tale of Slavery," in *The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation* No. 476 (1861): 140-141.

adulterers, pirates, and murderers, and as such form the bulwarks of American slavery.”³⁸ At its most abstract, such iconoclasm derived from abolitionist fascination with Sufism, the radical Quakerism of the English Revolution, and German Biblical criticism. More concretely, it derived from experiences of expulsion from proslavery churches and in the hardy religious skepticism of fugitive slaves. Runaways helped by the committees spoke harshly of the religious piety of their masters, many of them ministers and deacons, and of the persistent preaching of “servants, obey thy masters.”³⁹ Still, some black abolitionists opted to stay in the all-black AME churches, knowing their usefulness to the anti-slavery cause. Yet they critiqued the churches from within for quietism, for which they faced threats of expulsion by AME Bishops.⁴⁰ Other abolitionists fled Churches wholesale, likening themselves to fugitives fleeing from ecclesiastical plantations. They rejected the Sabbath, revelation, miracles, and a few turned either to spiritualism or to outright atheism.⁴¹ Interestingly, when the famed early-20th century Harlem street lecturer, atheist, socialist, Pan-Africanist Hubert Harrison urged his listeners to leave the churches and fight for their own liberation, he used abolitionist anti-clericalism as his model and point of reference.⁴²

Naturally, the radicalism of VC members spilled out into myriad other realms of radicalism, and, in a way, made possible the concept of “social movement” that is used today. Some activists worked for the abolition of prisons, police, and alcoholism. Members of the New York State Vigilance Committee involved themselves in projects of land reform.⁴³ A few worked in the labor movement.⁴⁴ Some contributed to the vibrant climate of utopian thinking, with long-winded speculations on what emancipated societies should look like. Others experimented in utopian living at Fourierist Phalanxes and other socialist communities.⁴⁵ Occasionally, vigilance committees sent fugitives to these utopian communities, for they were safe places of refuge.⁴⁶ Other VC workers participated in the more individualist wing of the Transcendentalist movement. Demands for reparations also emanated from the vigilance committees. Fugitives helped by the committees first expressed the desire for reparations, and one even formulated a plan of land distribution and repayment for “what has been done to us for 200 years.”⁴⁷ The socialist William H. Channing (BVC) also came up with a reparations plan. His plan called for land redistribution, monetary repayment, and the planned industrialization of the entire South.⁴⁸ Importantly, abolitionists crafted novel ways for thinking about these various reforms and

³⁸ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “The Eccentricities of Reformer,” in *Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1899), 377.

³⁹ See, especially, Still, *Underground Railroad*.

⁴⁰ Daniel A. Payne, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: AME Sunday School Union, 1891).

⁴¹ Henry M. Parkhurst, *Proceedings of the Anti-Sabbath Convention* (Boston: 1848); Lucy N. Coleman, *Reminiscences* (Buffalo New York: HL Greens, 1891).

⁴² Hubert Harrison, “Christianity Still Enslaves the Minds of Those Whose Bodies it Has Long Held Bound,” in Jeffrey Perry, ed. *A Hubert Harrison Reader* (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 44.

⁴³ Charles B. Ray to Gerrit Smith 31 March 1848; Circular of Gerrit Smith, 4 January 1850. Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

⁴⁴ William Henry Johnson, *Autobiography of William Henry Johnson* (Albany: The Argus Company, 1900)

⁴⁵ J.M. Spear, “Purposes of the Spirit Association for the Year 1861,” Sheldon Papers, University of Pittsburgh; Clara Endicott Sears, ed., *Bronson Alcott’s Fruitlands* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915).

⁴⁶ Francis Jackson, *Account book of Francis Jackson, Treasurer, The Vigilance Committee of Boston* (Boston: The Library of the Bostonian Society, 1924).

⁴⁷ Lewis G. Clark to Harriet and Lewis Hayden, 3 January 1880. Charles Chapman Papers, Moorland-Springarn Research Center, Howard University.

⁴⁸ Octavius Frothingham, *Memoir of William Henry Channing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1886), 261.

speculations. They used the term *movements*, or *social movements*, to describe these phenomena of social advance. In part, abolitionists got the term “social movement” from Fourier, who used it to describe the course of human development based upon the laws of “passionate attraction.” Reactionary sociologists, from Lorenz von Stein to Werner Sombart, however, institutionalized the term to solely mean the struggle of the European rabble for socialism.⁴⁹ Abolitionists meant something slightly different; for them, all thinking and fighting for human uplift, enlightenment, or emancipation were considered “social movements,” or as part of the general “social movement” toward human freedom.⁵⁰ This was abolitionists’ modest contribution to social theory.

Radical abolitionists were not fully anti-capitalist. They sought to abolish one form of labor coercion within capitalism, and do away with other forms of oppression. Their critique of capital was either immature or muddled. Nevertheless, they had a thoroughgoing critique of a phenomenon that later radicals (anarchists mainly) minimalized or ignored: *imperialism*. Abolitionists began with American imperialism, and built up a sophisticated global analysis. Put briefly, cotton plantations provided the basis for US economic expansion. The slave system required a behemoth state to protect slaveholders’ interests, quell rebellions and running away, and to expand westward through dispossession, war, and genocide. It required “large capitalists and monopolists of the north” to finance slaveholders. It required driving down reproduction costs of slaves to a minimum while increasing productivity to a maximum. It required buying off white proletarians and petit bourgeois with the psychological *and* material benefits of white supremacy.⁵¹ Marx studied abolitionist analyses of this sort when developing his theory of “primitive accumulation.”⁵² The feminist, former slave Anna Julia Cooper, also drawing from abolitionist critiques, described the era of slavery as “the accumulative period” of early US capitalism.⁵³ Like Marx, abolitionists pushed these analyses further, showing the similarities between the “colossal slave empire” of the USA and the practices of European colonialism. The US had its wars of conquest, it had its “nabobs”—as abolitionists called those who went South to get rich quick—it had its missionaries preaching the religion of obedience.⁵⁴ In fact, the analogy between US slavery and European colonialism disturbed slaveholding ideologues so much that they proffered a patriotic vision of “benevolent” slavery and “non-colonial” republicanism as an alternative to the excesses of European colonialism.⁵⁵ The Southerner Woodrow Wilson would

⁴⁹ Lorenz von Stein, *The History of the Social Movement in France, 1789-1850* Translated by Kaethe Mengelberg (Bedminster Press, 1964); Werner Sombart, *Socialism and The Social Movement in the Nineteenth Century* Translated by Anson P. Atterbury (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1902).

⁵⁰ See, for example, John Humphrey Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1870).

⁵¹ See, for instance, Jonathan Walker, *A Brief View of American Chattelized Humanity and its Supports* (Boston: Dow and Jackson, 1847); Richard Hildreth, *Despotism in America: An Inquiry Into the Nature, Results, and Legal Basis of the Slaveholding System in the United States* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854); these abolitionist analyses have recently been affirmed by historians. See Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Harvard University press, 2016).

⁵² J.E. Cairnes, *The Slave Power* (New York, Carleton, 1862); William Howitt, *Christianity and Colonization: A Popular History of the Treatment of the Natives by Europeans in All their Colonies* (London: Longman, 1838).

⁵³ Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South* (Xenia Ohio: Aldine Printing House: 1892).

⁵⁴ Theodore S. Wright, *The Colonization Scheme Considered* (New York: Aaron Guest, 1840); *William Cooper Nell: Nineteenth Century African American Abolitionist, Historian, Integrationist, Selected Writing, 1832-1874* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2002).

⁵⁵ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South* (Richmond Virginia: A. Morris, 1854).

later take this fabricated vision of America as an anticolonial power to the arena of world politics.

Because abolitionists were so often complicit in imperial projects, little has been said of the anti-imperialist sympathies of radical abolitionists drawn to the vigilance committees. Runaways implicitly resisted American expansion by withdrawing their labor power, and explicitly in their denunciations of US Constitution and polity.⁵⁶ Thomas Smallwood, an ex-slave who transported dozens of runaways from Washington to the vigilance committees, denounced US imperialism in stark terms: “The United States is the most hypocritical, guileful, and arrogant nation on the face of the earth.... They send out emissaries among the people of other nations and emit their poisonous principles.” Smallwood prayed that slaves, indigenous Americans, and abolitionists would bring “the final emancipation” through “a terrible and bloody breaking up of their present system.”⁵⁷ VC members advocated the dissolution of the USA. They fiercely opposed the Mexican War, “one of the most unjust wars in the history of imperialist expansion.”⁵⁸ They opposed imperialist plots to annex Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Central America. In fact, when the US minister to Nicaragua (who had backed armed efforts to overthrow the Nicaraguan government and set up a slave state), visited Philadelphia, the PVC helped the slaves accompanying the minister to escape!⁵⁹ VC workers supported Irish Independence, the Taiping Rebellion, the 1857 Revolt in India, the Mayan uprising in Yucatan, as well as Haiti’s persistent post-revolutionary efforts to defend itself from imperialist interventions.⁶⁰ Thus, when it came to imperialism, radical abolitionists took the right positions and asked the right questions. As one antislavery singer presciently pondered:

*The conquerors foot is on their necks,
The White man holds the scepter!
Who shall stay the course of empire?*⁶¹

Anticolonial rebels, some of whom drew inspiration from abolitionists, would later answer the question.

Armed Struggle and Revolution

Radical abolitionists were, no doubt, dreamers first, practical revolutionaries second. They meditated wildly upon plans for armed struggle and revolution. Still, theory and imagination had strong roots in militant practice. In this vigilance committees and fugitives led

⁵⁶ For Instance, Israel Campbell, *An Autobiography. Bond and Free; or, Yearnings for Freedom* (Philadelphia: 1861).

⁵⁷ Thomas Smallwood, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood, (Colored Man): Giving an Account of His Birth—The Period He was Held in Slavery—and Removal to Canada, Etc., Together with An Account of the Underground Railroad* (Toronto: James Stephens, 1851), 46-50.

⁵⁸ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 124.

⁵⁹ Anon, *Narrative of Facts in the Case of Passmore Williamson* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1855).

⁶⁰ Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison: The Story of His Life as Told By His Children* Volume 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889), 408; Lowell, “Sympathy with Ireland,” Sydney Howard Gay, “Miscellaneous Notes and Drafts,” Sydney Howard Gay Papers, New York Public Library; Elizur Wright, *The Lessons of St. Domingo: How To Make the War Short and the Peace Righteous* (Boston: Williams and Company, 1861) *Liberator* 16 October 1857; *National Antislavery Standard* 9 January 1858; Though much has been written on abolitionism and imperialism, the history of abolitionism and anti-imperialism has been too long ignored. One of the few books to break the silence on this crucial topic is Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause*, 371-380.

⁶¹ Bela Marsh, ed. *Lays of Liberty; or, Verses for the Times* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1854), 12.

the way, first in their usual practices and then in more elaborate acts of armed struggle. In the wake of the more draconian Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, armed confrontations between slave catchers and runaways intensified. Slaves frequently escaped armed with revolvers, rifles, and knives, and sometimes fought off slave patrols along the way. Vigilance committees sometimes patrolled the streets armed, on the look-out for slave catchers.⁶² In 1851, a band of fugitives and PVC workers confronted a gang of slave catchers in an open battle (for which they were tried for treason).⁶³ In a series of spectacular rescues in Syracuse, Boston, and Philadelphia, VC workers stormed courthouses and prisons, stealing off captured fugitives.⁶⁴ Proudly describing one such courthouse rescue, a black, working-class militant with the PVC exclaimed, “all of a sudden knives were drawn and pistols—it looked like Nat Turner’s insurrection.”⁶⁵ These sorts of actions pushed other abolitionists to action, and had an influence on later movements. One 19th-century writer coined the term “direct action” to describe slave rescues and other armed actions of abolitionists.⁶⁶ The Wobblies greatly admired the direct actionism of the Underground Railroad.⁶⁷ As African liberation movements turned towards armed struggle, Kwame Nkrumah urged African revolutionaries to take inspiration from “how Harriet Tubman led armed bands of runaway slaves out of the South.”⁶⁸

By the late 1850s, the vigilance committees had been working the Underground Railroad for 20 years, yet the slave power only seemed to intensify in spite and might. Seeing fugitive aid as at best ameliorative, and at worst a vent removing the most revolutionary slaves from the scene of struggle, VC members began to ponder strategies of armed warfare.⁶⁹ In some cases, abolitionists indulged in daring hopes and phantasies. One abolitionist dreamt that Africans would cross the Atlantic and invade the USA.⁷⁰ Even the ultra-pacifist Bronson Alcott (BVC) took to arms, an act that amused his comrades: “As for Mr. Alcott, I doubt if he knew the breech of the weapon from the barrel. With his Buddhistic reverence for life he had never trampled upon an insect.”⁷¹ Others were more serious. Abolitionists, learning directly from slaves who had lived as maroons in Florida and the Dismal Swamp, studied the attempts by maroons to create

⁶² One BVC splinter group dedicated itself solely to these tactics. “Boston Anti-Man Hunting League Records,” Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁶³ William Parker, “The Freedman’s Story,” in *The Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics* Vol. 17 (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866); W.V. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851* (Lancaster Pennsylvania: New Era, 1911).

⁶⁴ Charles Emery Stevens, *Anthony Burns: A History* (Boston: John Jewett, 1856); Jermain Loguen, *The Rev. J.W. Loguen as A Slave and as a Freeman* (Syracuse, New York: JGK. Truair and Co. 1859), 399-424; Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁶⁵ Wilbur Siebert, “Interview with Rev. Thomas Clement Oliver of Windsor Ontario Canada West 31 July 1895,” Siebert Papers, Ohio Historical Society.

⁶⁶ Voltairine De Cleyre, ‘Direct Action’ in *The Selected Works of Voltairine De Cleyre: Poems, Essays, Sketches, and Stories, 1885-1911* (Chicago: AK Press, 2016), 228.

⁶⁷ Franklin Rosemont, “In the Abolitionist Tradition: The Wobblies Against Whiteness” in *Joe Hill: The IWW and the Making of a Revolutionary Working-Class Counterculture* (Charles H. Kerr, 2003), 252-257.

⁶⁸ Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 425.

⁶⁹ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *The New Revolution: What Commitment Requires* (Boston, 1857); *Frederick Douglass’s Paper*, 6 April 1855

⁷⁰ H.C. Wright, *No Rights, No Duties; or, Slaveholders, as Such, have no Rights; Slaves, as Such, Have No Duties* (Boston, 1860), 6.

⁷¹ Frederick Willis, *Alcott Memoirs* (Boston: Richard Badger, 1915), 76.

liberated zones all across the Americas.⁷² Some began to study “the guerilla system of warfare.” S.G. Howe (BVC), a “Greek revolutionist” who had fought alongside Byron, advised his comrades in these studies.⁷³ John Henry Hill, and many others, looked to “insurrectionary movements among the slaves” as the method of emancipation. One abolitionist took a clandestine trip South to talk with hundreds of slaves and gauge their readiness for insurrectionary action.⁷⁴ Curiously, most VC workers began their activist careers as pacifists, only to compromise those principles by the 1850s. This was because abolitionists, as Jose Marti best explained it “would hear of no peace except on perfect, immediate, and extreme terms.”⁷⁵ When peace was not possible, they simply took the more imperfect, though no less extreme, path.

VC members elaborated theories of revolution premised upon qualitative social change and class struggle. J.M. Spear (BVC) believed that a revolutionary “party,” with aid from “the wretched of the aforesaid earth” would seize political power, abolish state and slavery, and set up a utopian order.⁷⁶ Moderate abolitionists were enamored by the ’48 Revolutions, seeing in them the awakening of universal liberalism.⁷⁷ Intellectuals working for the vigilance committees saw a different kind of upheaval, driven by class struggle, and leading (at some point) to workers’ power. James Russel Lowell (BVC) asserted that “The Revolution of 1848 had been achieved by the working class.” Richard Hildreth (BVC) deduced that the revolutions would usher in “an *Age of the People*—of the Working Classes.”⁷⁸ Fortunately, these activists, as well as other VC workers, understood the particularities of contradiction, and correctly applied the theory of class struggle to the American context. Hildreth believed that labor movements would bring about working-class power, but unlike the early US labor movement, he believed the most important labor movements would be those on behalf of unskilled workers and slaves. Lowell’s analysis was more sociologically incisive: “The condition, not only of the American slave, but of the colored man in America, is such as preserves in their sharpest completeness the dividing lines of both race and class. The causes which are now producing anarchy in Europe may be expected to combine in bringing yet more shocking results here.”⁷⁹ Hence, a workers’ revolution in the USA could only be a slaves’ revolution. This is why the Haitian Revolution provided such deep inspiration to VC members. It appealed to their anti-imperialist sensibilities. It was simultaneously class struggle and abolitionism. It was a heroic struggle pushed forward by

⁷² Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Travelers and Outlaws* (Boston, 1889); Edmund Jackson, “The Virginia Maroons” in *Liberty Bell. By Friends of Freedom* (Boston: Massachusetts Antislavery Fair, 1852), 143-151; William Cooper Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (Boston: Robert F. Walcutt), 227-229.

⁷³ Alexander Milton Ross, *Recollections and Experiences of an Abolitionist From 1855-1865* (Toronto: Roswell and Hutchinson, 1875), 22; James Redpath, *The Roving Editor; or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (A.B. Burdick, 1859), 306; Frank Preston Stearns, *The Life and Public Services of George Preston Stearns* (Boston: J.B. Lippincott, 1907), 164.

⁷⁴ Still, *The Underground Railroad*, 134-136.

⁷⁵ Jose Marti, “Wendell Phillips,” in Phillip Foner, ed., *Inside the Monster: Writings on the United States and American Imperialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 62.

⁷⁶ John Murray Spear, *The Educator* (Boston: Office of Practical Spiritualists, 1857), 394-397.

⁷⁷ W. Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform* (Louisiana State University Press, 2013); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (Alfred Knopf, 2014).

⁷⁸ Richard Hildreth, *Theory of Politics: An Inquiry Into the Foundations of Governments And the Courses and progress of Political Revolutions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854), 269.

⁷⁹ Lowell, “Proslavery Logic,” in *Antislavery Papers*, 199.

runaway slaves, maroons, and a leadership with incredible fortitude.⁸⁰ By the late 1850s this was the type of revolution VC activists hoped for, but could never fully achieve.

Because of VC workers' practical experience and exuberant forays into revolutionary thinking, John Brown turned to them when planning his raid on Harper's Ferry. The PVC offered knowledge of southern routes and agents to be relied upon along the way.⁸¹ BVC members helped Brown raise funds and formulate plans. Mary Ann Shadd Cary (a PVC associate working in Canada) organized meetings to help Brown raise funds and recruit fighters. Harriet Tubman volunteered to go South and recruit slaves.⁸² Even amongst these VC comrades, Brown kept his precise plans a secret. He had studied Gabriel's and Vesey's slave revolts, and knew that they had been foiled through lack of secrecy. Nevertheless, VC members discussed various strategies with Brown. Some believed he should destabilize slave property by extending the Underground Railway. Others thought he should establish a maroon community.⁸³ One BVC member urged that "vigilance committees" should be established on plantations to sabotage production, train slaves in military tactics, and bide time until conditions ripened for revolution.⁸⁴ Another fiery young PVC worker, believing that Brown was planning a large-scale invasion of the South, organized an all-black militia as a reserve force.⁸⁵ Brown mixed some of these plans with his own secretive notions. As Frederick Douglass most accurately understood it, Brown had a multi-pronged strategy. His small guerilla movement, based in the mountains, would fight slaveholders, recruit slaves, and help slaves unable to fight in escaping northward. The revolutionary chaos would strengthen the existing antislavery agitation and compel either emancipation by decree, popular support for the slave rebels, or civil war (the latter happened).⁸⁶ The plan was quixotic at best, though no less adventurist than the remarkably similar July 26th Movement which morphed into the Cuban Revolution. And like the July 26th Movement, Brown's little movement achieved its extraordinary aims in unexpected ways, ways that had important (though diverging) implications for the history of global imperialism.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ William Wells Brown, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and Its Patriots* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1855); James McCune Smith, *A Lecture on the Haytien Revolution With a Sketch of the Character of Toussaint L'Ouverture* (New York: Daniel Fanshaw, 1841); Wendell Phillips, "Toussaint L'Ouverture" in *Speeches, Lectures, and Addresses: First Series* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee, and Shephard, 1891), 468-495; Joshua Coffin, *An Account of Some of the Principle Slave Insurrections, And Others, which Have Occurred or Been Attempted In the United States and Elsewhere, During the Last Two Centuries*, (New York: The American Antislavery Society, 1860).

⁸¹ W.E.B. Dubois, *John Brown* (New York: International Publishers, 1962), 248; Richard T. Hinton, *John Brown and His Men: With Some Account of the Routes They Traveled to reach Harper's Ferry* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1894), 170; Jeffrey Rossbach, *Ambivalent Conspirators: John Brown, the Secret Six and a Theory of Slave Violence* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

⁸² Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Indiana University Press, 1998), 130; Sarah H. Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W.J. Moses, 1869).

⁸³ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (Boston: Mary Thacher Higginson, 1921), 87.

⁸⁴ Lysander Spooner "To the Non-slaveholders of the South" Draft MS, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

⁸⁵ William Henry Johnson, *Autobiography of William Henry Johnson* (Albany: The Argus Company, 1900), 31.

⁸⁶ Frederick Douglass, "John Brown Speech," Frederick Douglass Collection, Schomburg Center.

⁸⁷ i.e. the July 26th Movement achieved its immediate aim of Cuban freedom, and in the process, gave invigorated momentum to global anti-imperialist movements. John Brown's Raid sparked a Civil War that ended slavery, but intensified global imperialism. The end of servile labor in the American South intensified the use of servile labor in the global south, and spurred the westward-roaming imperialism of white American settlers and capitalists. See, W.E.B. Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (The Free Press, 1992); T. Thomas Fortune, *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South* (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1880).

Conclusion

In many respects, the vigilance committees fundamentally shaped the trajectories of American emancipation. I have merely attempted here to prove that the committees infused the US Antislavery movement with revolutionary people, revolutionary consciousness, and pushed the movement to revolutionary actions. The committees had a wider impact as well. By resisting, and making unpopular, the fugitive slave laws, the committees exacerbated the tensions between southern slaveholders and northerners of all classes.⁸⁸ Abolitionist analyses of the slaveholding aristocracy's expansionist tendencies mobilized white opinion *en masse* against slaveholders' land-grabbing. But not in the way desired—white workers and petit bourgeois wanted expropriated indigenous lands *for themselves*.⁸⁹ John Brown's Raid finally pushed slaveholders to secession, breaking forever the iron alliance between slaveholders and northern capitalists. VC workers knew this to be a moment of revolutionary import. They had studied the Haitian Revolution and knew full well that slave revolts against counterrevolutionary planters, forced the Jacobins to decree universal emancipation. They knew as well that slave resistance—this time in the form of mass desertion—would force the US government to decree emancipation.⁹⁰ Former VC workers envisioned rightly and acted accordingly. They helped organized the first regiments of black soldiers. They led regiments of slaves who had deserted plantations during the war.⁹¹ They used knowledge learned while working the Underground Railroad in their new roles as Union spies and saboteurs.⁹² During the all-too-brief “radical” Reconstruction, many of these activists worked vigorously as teachers and politicians to consolidate black political power in South.⁹³ By working with the Federal Government (still an imperialist project), these abolitionists seemingly toned down their radical dreams for the attainment of practical ends. In this, though, they were little different from millions of revolutionaries the world over who courageously, though not always happily, worked with their own liberal and colonial overlords to defeat global fascism. Having himself been “reared and nurtured upon the abolitionist tradition,” Paul Robeson constantly made these exact analogies between anti-slavery, anti-fascism, and then anti-colonialism in his numerous public speeches. His father had been a runaway slave, perhaps helped by Harriet Tubman, his maternal grandfather helped the PVC, and he took the next steps forward.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Richard Blackett, *Making Freedom: The Underground Railroad and the Politics of Slavery* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860*.

⁸⁹ For a classic, provoking analysis of the implications, see J. Sakai, *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat from Mayflower to Modern* (Oakland California: PM Press, 2014).

⁹⁰ Elizur Wright, *The Lessons of St. Domingo: How To Make the War Short and the Peace Righteous* (Boston: Williams and Company, 1861).

⁹¹ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in A Black Regiment* (Boston: Fields and Osgood, 1870); Susie King Taylor, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp With 330 United States Colored Troops* (Boston, 1902).

⁹² Bradford, *Scenes in the life of Harriet Tubman*.

⁹³ W.E.B. Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (The Free Press, 1992).

⁹⁴ Paul Robeson, *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974* (New York: Brunner, 1978), 149, 263; Paul Robeson, “Remarks of Paul Robeson at the Second Annual Convention of the Progressive Party, Chicago, 25 February, 1950,” Paul Robeson Collection, Schomburg Center. Robeson himself admitted that Tubman may have helped his father escape.