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Shawn C. Comminey  
*Southern University and A&M College*

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# National Black Conventions and the Quest for African American Freedom and Progress, 1847-1867

## **Cover Page Footnote**

Shawn C. Comminey is an Associate Professor of History and Associate Chairman of the History Program at Southern University and A & M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

## **National Black Conventions and the Quest for African American Freedom and Progress, 1847-1867**

At an 1843 national black convention in Buffalo, New York, black abolitionist minister, Henry Highland Garnet, gave a fiery, passionate speech calling for slaves to take action against their oppressors. "Brethren, arise, arise!" exclaimed Garnet. "Strike for your lives and liberties...Rather, die freemen than live to be slaves."<sup>1</sup> Garnett's tone was indicative of the frustration felt by many free blacks toward the mid-nineteenth century. Manifested in this frustration was a range of dramatic attitudinal changes during the mid-nineteenth century quest for progress. In the 1840s and 1850s, differences over approaches to eradicate slavery spawned discontent, causing several black abolitionists to work more independently of their white colleagues. Fear and anger surrounding the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 and aspirations of full citizenship prompted a number of blacks to migrate to Canada. Some developed more militant attitudes, participating in John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, and other activities to express growing dissatisfaction. Moreover, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott decision, and uncertainty regarding the Republican party's stance on slavery were indicators of a bleak future.<sup>2</sup> Not until the advent of the Civil War would African American optimism for slavery's end and a better life in the United States be invigorated.

Through times of uncertainty, difficulty and hope, national black conventions were a vital part of a continuous, strengthening, black political consciousness and the foundation for future black protest in America. They represented conscientious self-help efforts focusing on pertinent issues plaguing African American leaders of the period in their quest for African American freedom and progress. It has been suggested that there were perhaps three factors attributing to the establishment of Negro conventions. These include "an increasing prejudice against Northern blacks, a growing demand for self-expression, which had been denied since a half century following the American Revolution, and the existence of specific problems which influenced blacks alone, or were intensified in regard to them."<sup>3</sup> Collectively, these factors

generated sincere efforts by black leaders to join forces and take the initiative to better their own conditions. Undeniably, these factors were evident during a period which witnessed a deeper polarization of the nation over the issue of slavery and particularly its extension in new territories, the failure of the abolitionist movement, a series of events linked to the slavery issue culminating in the American Civil War, as well as the free black struggle to solidify their position in the United States. This article aims to provide insight into national black conventions held between 1847 and 1864. It will provide a brief background of the black convention movement and examine the main issues conventions during the period aimed to address, which included the abolition of slavery, improving the status of free blacks, and migration to Canada or elsewhere, respectively.

The impetus behind the national black convention movement was growing concern over the status of blacks in the United States, with Hezekiah Grice initiating the movement. Grice was a young black abolitionist who had actively participated in antislavery activities with white abolitionists Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison, in Baltimore, Maryland during the 1820s, and whose sentiments came to a head after the Cincinnati Riot in 1829, which resulted in anti-black violence. By the 1830s, Grice became doubtful of the position of African Americans in the United States, and he reached out to black leaders of his day and proposed a convention to address issues regarding African Americans. As a result of his efforts, the first convention convened in September 1830 at Philadelphia's Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Delegates from Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and New York attended the first convention and aimed to "devise measures for the improvement of their conditions."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the precedence was set for a series of annual national black conventions between 1830 and 1835.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1840s, African American leaders revived the convention effort, with delegates assembling infrequently in cities such as Philadelphia, New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse (New York), and Cleveland (Ohio) into the Civil War years. Little progress, in terms

of African American freedom and progress had been made since 1835, and black leaders felt the need to revive the meetings. Many blacks remained enslaved, and free African Americans did not enjoy equality. Between 1847 and 1864, at least five national conventions took place. Individual black leaders periodically issued calls for conventions to discuss the plight of African Americans. Convention calls were generally advertised in abolitionist or black newspapers, such as *The Liberator* and *The North Star*, which were widely read by a majority of black leaders. National delegates were elected at public meetings or at local and state conventions. Delegates arrived anxious and eager to address important black issues of the day.

Although an array of blacks concerns were discussed at great length at these gatherings, the abolition of slavery, improving the status of free blacks, and migration to Canada and elsewhere received considerable attention. Freedom had already been established for northern blacks during the American Revolutionary era. Revolutionary ideology, which included the premise that man had a natural right to be free, led to the gradual abolition of slavery in several Northern states between 1777 and 1804. In the South, however, hundreds of other African Americans remained enslaved. Free black conventioners pooled their collective efforts and resources to agitate for the emancipation of their brothers and sisters still held in bondage. There were already free blacks who actively participated in the abolitionist movement, in many cases working alongside white abolitionists; speaking, writing, and strategizing for slavery's end. Moral suasion, or targeting the ethical and moral mindset of slaveholders and non-slaveholders, was their modus operandi. Over time, however, a number of black abolitionists grew weary with moral suasion's ineffectiveness. At the 1847 National Negro Convention, held in Troy, New York, the moral suasionist tone of a committee's report received staunch criticism from delegates who eschewed the tactic as a viable means of precipitating change. The committee was chaired

by prominent African American leader and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, who solidly supported moral suasion, and appointed to express the convention's sentiments on issues regarding freedom and slavery.<sup>6</sup> Among opponents of moral suasion was leading and controversial black abolitionist Presbyterian minister, Henry Highland Garnet, who was radical in his views regarding African American advancement. While Garnet and Douglass agreed on the necessity of African American rights and freedom, the two did not always agree on the particular manner in which that goal should be accomplished. Garnet, advocating immediate resolution, disagreed with total reliance on moral suasion as a means to secure emancipation for slaves and supported political action instead. Douglass insisted on a peaceful, steady, calculated approach, appealing to the individual consciences of those requiring convincing. Refutation of the committee's report by Garnet and other delegates led to its cancellation. The report was nevertheless "reconsidered," "placed in a new committee which included both Douglass and Garnet," and reappeared, maintaining its moral suasionist appeal although there was no mention of the term.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, Douglass swayed most of his peers to support less agitating means to better achieve African American progress. Douglass personally promoted the use of education and what would now be considered propaganda in the quest and did much to suppress militant notions and any emphasis on political action at that time.<sup>8</sup>

The prospect of having the abolition of slavery recognized as a national political issue did not simply fade away and remained alive and well in the hearts and minds of some African American leaders. Of further concern was slavery's expansion in the territories acquired by the United States after the Mexican War (1846-1848). African Americans favoring political action to eradicate slavery and prevent its extension weighed their options in regards to political party endorsement at the 1848 Cleveland Convention. At the 1840 convention, the majority chose to

support the Liberty Party. Regarded as the first anti-slavery political party, it was organized through the efforts of wealthy New York businessmen, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and former slaveholder, James G. Birney, all of whom were abolitionist supporters. It banked on Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, end the domestic slave trade, and cease admitting new slave states to the Union. The party also sought the repeal of northern local and state laws discriminating against free blacks.<sup>9</sup> During the 1840s, the Liberty Party appeared appealing to some African Americans, including key black abolitionists, such as Henry Highland Garnett, Samuel R. Ward, and Charles B. Ray, and garnered their support. Some blacks endorsed the party because, of all the antislavery organizations, it was actively and aggressively involved in the fight against slavery and assisted runaways escaping to freedom.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, African Americans and other supporters of slavery regarded the Liberty Party as an attempt to have slavery addressed through laws mandated by the national government. They remained hopeful it would act with them in mind. During the 1848 Cleveland Convention, however, western blacks supported the Free Soil Party (1848), because of the broader implications of its stance in reference to abolitionism. Rallying around the slogan, "Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men," the party basically emerged due to the lack of anticipated Liberty Party progress, and opposed slavery's extension as a way to eradicate slavery. Party affiliates alleged the government could not end slavery where it already existed but could restrict it in new territories. Although many Free-Soilers were not abolitionists and did not view blacks favorably, the party represented a significant step toward the abolition of slavery and its expansion.<sup>11</sup> In endorsing either political party, African Americans conventioners were willing to support any action that would yield positive results. Moreover, they seriously did not want to risk losing momentum. African Americans eventually made a consensus to support only those persons or

parties loyal to their cause.<sup>12</sup>

Like enslaved African Americans, free blacks encountered racism and discrimination, especially in efforts for recognition of their rights and to advance themselves. Hence, conventions devoted considerable attention to the needs of free African Americans. Better employment opportunities ranked among the concerns of free blacks and were considered at the 1848 Cleveland Convention. Northern free blacks were frequently denied employment opportunities. Free blacks in the north and south were victims of discriminatory laws, individuals, and customs that kept them on the economic and social margins and lessened their chances of enjoying a comfortable life. They were excluded from or segregated within major social institutions, including schools, churches, theaters, and streetcars. Free blacks were subjected to racial slurs and stereotypes on city streets, in minstrel shows, and in the press. Several states prohibited them from voting, serving on juries, testifying in court cases involving whites, and becoming residents.<sup>13</sup> Adding to their worries was competition posed by immigrants who began arriving in America by the 1840s. Subsequently, a number of free blacks were forced to accept menial jobs. By 1848, there was much talk concerning black "involvement in menial occupations," and the consensus among some black leaders was that "the common man was developing a sense of inferiority about his work." Therefore, free blacks deserved better. A number of African American leaders thought blacks should be considered for more dignified occupations than the menial and manual positions many held. Militant black leader and physician, Martin R. Delany, strongly condemned African American involvement in menial occupations. Dr. Delany was a proud African American man and simply wished to cultivate within other blacks similar racial pride as well as a more positive attitude, which he saw as essential for success and achieving more. He "would rather his wife and family stricken with



some loathsome disease rather than gain their livelihood by entering menial occupations."

Although a number of individuals attending the convention wished more consideration be given to employing free blacks for skilled and professional jobs, several concluded that all work was honorable.<sup>14</sup>

Concern over the rights of free blacks to pursue worthwhile careers led to the establishment of a National Council, comprised of members from representative states and sub-committees, for supervision and coordination of organized African American endeavors at the 1853 Rochester Convention. The council would specifically focus on matters relative to potentially advantageous African American business ventures and promotion. Free blacks seemed open to various employment and business oriented options for overall improvement of their condition in the United States.<sup>15</sup>

Many free blacks expressed concern over the United States Constitution, in terms of guaranteeing their rights. Debate ensued over proslavery and antislavery interpretations of the Constitution. Wealthy African American abolitionist, Robert Purvis, who for years had dedicated his time and resources to the abolition of slavery, and a leading, early, fervent African American abolitionist lecturer, Charles Lenox Remond, who had become more radical in his views by the late 1850s, led arguments for the former. Frederick Douglass and black physician, intellectual, and activist, James McCune Smith, defended the latter.<sup>16</sup> In Smith, Douglass could not have aligned himself with a more eloquent and worthy ally in presenting a strong case supporting the Constitution as an antislavery document. Smith had analyzed a wide range of issues, including the abolition of slavery and the Constitution. Writing in 1841, he revealed the document, "despite its proslavery clauses, was based on the 'general principles' of the Declaration of Independence, which declares 'all men to have certain inalienable rights.'"<sup>17</sup>

More than a decade later, Smith's sentiments undoubtedly had not change. Following an address given by Smith, it was agreed that the Constitution was, indeed, an antislavery document.

Therefore, it granted and ensured African American rights and privileges as well as those of white Americans. Furthermore, the Constitution stated that "all men were created equal," and under such justification slavery was an anomaly. In light of these facts, blacks concluded the Constitution was an antislavery document at the 1855 convention.<sup>18</sup> African Americans gained new optimism, and the convention movement reached a new height in the closing months of the Civil War. The valor displayed by black Union army troops while fighting prejudice on the home front as well as the enemy on the battlefield, instilled a deep sense of patriotic pride in the hearts of African Americans. That pride motivated them to enter the 1864 convention with heightened aspirations to achieve positive gains.

In 1864, approximately 150 delegates representing eighteen states, including seven southern states, attended the National Convention of Colored Men in Syracuse, New York. This convention marked the first at which there was such broad geographic representation. Several prominent men and women associated with the black liberation movement of the mid-nineteenth century were in attendance.<sup>19</sup> Among those were Frederick Douglass; African American abolitionist lecturer, novelist, playwright, and historian, William Wells Brown; Henry Highland Garnet; black abolitionist and attorney, John Mercer Langston; African American teacher and American Missionary Association agent, Edmonia Highgate, and black abolitionist poet and author, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.<sup>20</sup> Although few in numbers but not in significance, black women occasionally participated at conventions, often in unofficial capacities and played a key role in supporting black men in endeavors for racial improvement. As African American historian, Erica L. Bell's notes, black women "infused the events with the emerging middle-class

values of virtue required for mainstream political legitimacy in the decades before the Civil War.”<sup>21</sup> After the events of the turbulent 1850s, ultimately leading to the Civil War, African American leaders seemed optimistic of a more positive resolution for enslaved and free blacks.

Addressing delegates with grandeur and eloquence, Henry Highland Garnet vehemently emphasized the relative importance of holding conventions. He admonished delegates to remain mindful of the much anticipated goals of complete emancipation, enfranchisement, and social elevation. Garnet conveyed that the 1864 convention would promote education, temperance, and more importantly, be regarded as a special tribute to black soldiers.<sup>22</sup> He, as well as other black leaders, understood the full gravity of their participation and effort in turning the tide of the war.

Convention delegates elected eminent blacker leader Frederick Douglass chairman, and he graciously accepted the responsibilities. Actively involved in, and exerting a profound influence on the black convention movement for several years, he had made undying commitments to the cause of African American progress. This case was no exception. Douglass extended a heartfelt thanks and asked the cooperation and support of others in a unified effort to advance the African American race.<sup>23</sup> In one of his best oratories, he informed conventioners of the arduous task before them. Douglass reminded their reason for convening was "to promote the freedom, progress, elevation, and perfect enfranchisement, of the entire [African American race] of the United States; to show that though slaves we are not contended slaves, but . . . we are resolved to . . . claim our rights as men among men."<sup>24</sup> Other convention speakers included black abolitionist minister and activist for equality, J. Sella Martin, Edmonia Highgate, black abolitionist minister and conventioneer, Johnathon Gibbs, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and several more.<sup>25</sup>

Black leaders pointed to the deeds of black soldiers who served heroically during the

Civil War, and used them for motivation and inspiration needed. Louisiana troops were cited for their valor and courage. Their effort at Port Hudson, Louisiana, was one of several instances drawing attention to the army's and country's attitude toward African American's abilities to fight. A committee comprised of Henry H. Garnet and New York African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church leader and Underground Railroad organizer, Enoch Moore, was appointed to borrow the flag of the First Louisiana Native Guards, a black military unit, to suspend across the convention platform. During the flag presentation, Garnet acknowledged Captain James H. Ingraham, a Louisiana delegate and war veteran, who led the attack of black troops at the Battle of Port Hudson in 1863. Ingraham's detailed account of his heroic feats in battle was well received by the convention audience. Ingraham, black soldiers who fought alongside him, and the battle flag they carried were recognized. In addition, special commemoration was given to Captain Andre Callioux, another Louisiana Native Guard member, hero and casualty at Port Hudson.<sup>26</sup>

Two significant outcomes of the 1864 convention were the formation of a National Equal Rights League and the adoption of a Declaration of Wrongs and Rights. The National Equal Rights League was organized to "encourage sound morality, education, temperance, frugality, industry, and to promote everything that pertains to a well-ordered and dignified life." Furthermore, the League's aim was to obtain "recognition of the rights of [blacks] of the nation as American citizens." African Americans had played a significant part in the country's development and had gone too long without receiving the proper respect and recognition. Delegates were determined that the "nation will ultimately concede our just claims, accord us rights and grant us full measure of citizenship." They also demanded respect for black soldiers and insisted that Congress discontinue "insidious distinctions, based upon color, as to pay, labor, and promotion." They commended black troops for their gallantry in battle and asserted their actions "vindicate our manhood, command our respect, and claim the attention and admiration of the civilized world." In addition, resolutions were passed against the restoration of slavery, express concern and support for Southern freedmen, urging blacks to settle public lands, and

endorsing efforts of associations, black schools, publications, and for other reasons.<sup>27</sup>

A Declaration of Wrongs and Rights was adopted which recapitulated African American resentment toward their conditions and privileges allegedly entitled to them. The declaration, written by black physician, spiritualist, and abolitionist, P. B. Randolph of New York, vigorously denounced white racism, slavery, and colonization. It also called for the abolition of slavery, rights accorded as citizens, freedom of speech, and an equal share of public land, "whether acquired by purchase, treaty, confiscation, or military conquest."<sup>28</sup>

No matter what options were pursued and measures implement, many free blacks often felt their efforts were in vain. "White America" was aware of African Americans' anger, frustrations, viewpoints, as expressed in both white and black newspapers, as well as black conventions through the years in their respective cities, to advance African Americans' cause. Those who supported blacks in any regard, however, could do little to make amends. By 1850, passage of the troubling and controversial Fugitive Slave Act and discontentment with American's refusal to recognize blacks as parts of society escalated among some African Americans into a rising tide of militancy. They no longer simply desired to express themselves verbally and contemplated physical activity. An alternative to violence was locating to other places outside the country, as emigrationists persistently argued their cases throughout the decade. Had it not been for conservative, settled African American leaders, emigrationists would have probably enjoyed greater success. The more settled group was comprised of teachers, ministers, lawyers, businessman, and others made their livelihoods from black clientele and depended on a black labor force for support. Conservative leaders could afford to participate in state and national conventions and repudiate any emigration proposals deemed disadvantageous to all African Americans. Consequently, they proposed a compact African American organization to handle the affairs of blacks nationwide within the framework of the United States Government.<sup>29</sup>

This proposal by conservative African American leaders counteracted emigration and its proponents and encompassed the underpinnings of Black Nationalism in America. This concept

encompassed racial pride, racial solidarity, self-help, as well as emigration. The plan included organizing a state-within-a-state, containing a national school, arbitrary courts with appeal, and centralized business administration and control of publicity, components very similar to those proposed to be undertaken by the 1848 National Council.<sup>30</sup> Black nationalism developed from increasing militancy of African American leaders on various issues, including plans to form a new nation by blacks, and counter proposals to create a self-sufficient organization while remaining in the United States. These ideas were espoused and clearly articulated by a number of free blacks during the 1850s.

The menace of emigration continued to baffle conservative African American leaders. Leading proponents of black emigration, such as Martin R. Delany, Henry Bibb, James Theodore Holly, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and Henry Highland Garnet were convinced “the grass was greener on the other side”. Delany initially opposed emigration and colonization, and believed African Americans should not be tempted to abandon the United States for regions outside its boundaries, including the towns of Chatham and Windsor in Ontario, Canada, where some blacks had already arrived via the Underground Railroad through the years and settled. Delany's philosophy changed, however, when he formulated plans in 1852 for a black empire in the Caribbean.<sup>31</sup> He firmly expressed his position in his work, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States Politically Considered* (1852).

In the early 1850s, Bibb and Holly adopted nationalist-emigrationist views which led them to Canada. Ward, a fugitive slave, migrated to Canada to escape the Fugitive Slave Law (1850). Garnet, also a one-time critic of colonization, urged emigration for African Americans who had any intentions of improving their situations in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Emigrationism, according to these individuals and a few others, was strongly viewed as "a politically viable tactic at a time when the hopes and aspirations of African Americans were thwarted by increasing oppression. The 1850s was such a period."<sup>33</sup>

African American leaders assembled at the 1853 and 1855 conventions with issues of the

decade in mind, particularly emigration, regardless of the proposed destination. Conservative leaders, never underestimating emigration, realized they would experience the pressure of its appeal and sought measures to combat it. By 1853, African Americans were divided into two camps because of emigration. One camp, led by Frederick Douglass, supported a strong black nation in the United States controlled by blacks, operating its own institutions. The other camp, led by Martin R. Delany, continuously contrived intricate schemes for emigration to Africa and other areas to establish black nations. After some discussion, Douglass convinced delegates to oppose emigration at the 1853 convention. This act prompted Delany to call a separate emigrationist convention the following year which barred admission of anti-emigrationists.<sup>34</sup> The National Council was established to handle African American affairs representing conservative black endeavors to persuade African Americans that emigration was not the only solution. Their aim was to demonstrate that African Americans could, through unity, function as a separate society in America, independent of white society.<sup>35</sup> The National Council, however, experienced a rough start. Inability of committees to fully implement proposed programs and internal strife contributed to the councils' difficulties and impeded its progress.<sup>36</sup> In addition, an 1855 effort to elect African American female emigrationist, teacher and activist, Mary Ann Shadd Cary a corresponding convention member was met with disapprobation. Cary immigrated to Canada in 1850 and expressed emigrationist sentiments. Some delegates thought Shadd's presence, because of her move to initially promote Canadian emigration, would thwart plans for a unified movement in the United States. Among those were black delegates, Peter A. Bell, Isaiah C. Wears, Charles S. Hodges, Lewis H. Nelson, and John C. Bowers. Frederick Douglass, as well as other black delegates, William J. Walker, and Samuel T. Gary, suggested Shadd would not pose a threat as a correspondent because their concerns included the progress of all blacks. Votes were taken and Shadd was approved as a correspondent from Canada.<sup>37</sup> Conservative leaders and emigrationists both had similar goals in mind, but each group desired to achieve these goals in different geographical areas.<sup>38</sup> However, "if judgment in the early 1850s upon African American interest in areas beyond the bounds of the United States were to be based upon

the number of prominent leaders on foreign soil, compared to those at home, the decision would have rested heavily on the side of emigration."<sup>39</sup> Emigration resurfaced at the 1864 convention as a result of Henry Highland Garnet's defense of the African Civilization Society. The Society, both Christian missionary and emigrationist in nature, had been founded by Garnet in 1858 to encourage black emigration to Africa and accelerate the economic, political, and moral development of the various native African people.<sup>40</sup> The convention endorsed several societies, such as the National Freedmen's Relief and the American Missionary Association which had greatly benefited the plight of African Americans. However, the African Civilization Society was not among those endorsed. While the Society, at that time, was primarily involved in administering aid to freedmen, many remained concerned about its strong emigrationist sentiments and were reluctant to endorse it. By that time, most delegates were firmly committed to remaining in the United States. Garnet, who aggressively sought an endorsement for the Society, was angered. African American lawyer and professor, George B. Vashon of Pennsylvania, a noteworthy contributor to black emigration and education, made a proposition to keep harmony among delegates. Delegates concurred and made an effort to end the convention on a good note by endorsing the society.<sup>41</sup>

From 1847 until 1864, National Black Conventions were open forums where African Americans vehemently and courageously expressed grievances concerning problems faced during years preceding and during the Civil War. Three major issues—the eradication of slavery, improving the status of free blacks to enable them to establish a firm base in America and secure civil rights, and emigration, indicative of serious attempts to acquire freedoms elsewhere - plagued blacks at that time. Underlying these issues was the fact that, in light of disfranchisement and discrimination, there emerged a Black Nationalism which represented an alternative to already pursued avenues.

No matter in which context the black convention movement has been viewed, it remains noteworthy in African American history. Historians have generally viewed the black convention movement as positive, conscientious attempt to promote abolitionism and achieve freedom and



racial equality, and have acknowledged the zeal and initiative exerted by African American leaders to congregate, express themselves and attempt to devise strategies for change, while recognizing African Americans' limitations.<sup>42</sup> Other historians, nevertheless, have insinuated the convention movement was marred with controversy, that bickering and disunity among the black leadership thwarted their effort, and have downplayed the convention movement's purpose and importance.<sup>43</sup> Black leaders certainly faced their share of problems. On the floors of different venues where black conventions were held, however, they simply jockeyed hard for recognition and painstakingly attempted to illustrate their respective strategies and philosophies, in terms of black progress, was best for all. While black conventions featured occasional internal strife and hostility, their feuding and disagreement, nevertheless, was no different than those of the Founding Fathers and other gentlemen assembled at the 1787 Constitutional Convention to structure the nation's government; no different than the controversy between early twentieth century African American leaders Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois over racial advancement. Personal animosity among black leaders during the period, in no way, diminishes their devotion to principle and purpose as well as the desire and fortitude in uniting to influence black progress.

The black convention movement was an integral part of an enduring and strengthening black political consciousness over the decades which provided the basis for future black protest. Black leaders from different backgrounds and experiences were keenly aware of the circumstances surrounding them, their implications, and possible future outcomes. That awareness fostered racial pride, initiative, and solidarity as African Americans firmly rooted themselves within the social fabric of America and pressed on. Nonetheless, the convention movement effort 1847 until 1864 was a significant step in the quest for freedom and progress.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Henry Highland Garnet, "An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America," Buffalo, New York, 1843, <http://www.digitalcommons.unl.edu/.../viewcontent...>, (accessed May 27, 2014); Henry Highland Garnet's, "Call to Rebellion," <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2937.html>, (accessed May 27, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, et al., *The African American Odyssey* (Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall 2003), 180, 195-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings, 1864 Convention*, 25-8; Philip S. Foner, *History of Black Americans, From the Compromise of 1850 to the Era of the Civil War*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press 1983), 437-8.

<sup>4</sup> "Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Color, Philadelphia, 1830," in *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864*, edited Howard H. Bell, (New York: Arno Press 1969), 9; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1961), 235; John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans 5th ed.*, (New York: Knopf 1980), 175; "The First Colored Convention," *Anglo-American Magazine*, I (October, 1859), 305-10 in Bell, ed.; Darlene Clark Hine, et al., *African Americans: A Concise History*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall 2014), 181; "The Early Negro Convention Movement—Project Gutenberg," <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31328/31328...31328-h.htm>(accessed July 7, 2015); "National Negro Convention Movement—Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia," <http://www.philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/.../national-negro-convention-movement/>, (accessed July 7, 2015); George F. Bragg, *Men of Maryland*, (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press 1914), 59-60.

<sup>5</sup> Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 175; Hine, et al., *African Americans: A Concise History*, 181. See also Bella Gross, "The First National Convention," *Journal of Negro History*, 31 (October 1946): 435-43; John W. Cromwell, *The Early Negro Convention Movement*, (Washington, 1940). Delegates to Negro national conventions self-consciously built a movement of annual conventions.

<sup>6</sup> Howard H. Bell, "A Survey of the Negro Convention Movement, 1830-1861," (Ph.D.Diss., Northwestern University, 1953), 85-6; idem, "National Negro Conventions of the Middle 1840s: Moral Suasion vs. Political Action," *Journal of Negro History*, 42 (1957): 254; *The Liberator*, 23 July 1847, 19, 10 September 1847; *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People and Their Friends, 6, 7, 8 and 9 October 1847* (Troy, New York), 3 in Howard H. Bell, ed., *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864*, (New York, 1969), (hereafter cited as *Proceedings, 1847 Convention*).

<sup>7</sup> *Proceedings, 1847 Convention*, 5; Bell, "National Negro Conventions," *Journal of Negro History*, 42 (1957): 255.

<sup>8</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 85; idem, "National Negro Conventions," *Journal of Negro History*, 42 (1957): 255; *Proceedings, 1847 Convention*, 13-5; Deborah Gray White et.al, *Freedom on My Mind: A History of African Americans*, (Boston: St. Martins 2013) 277.

<sup>9</sup> "Liberty Party-Digital History," [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtld=3&psid=375.html](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtld=3&psid=375.html), (accessed June 11, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Hine, et al., *African Americans: A Concise History*, 183.

- <sup>11</sup> Bell, "A Survey Negro Convention Movement" 103-4; *Report of the Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, 6 September 1848*, (Rochester, New York), 10-2 in Bell, ed. (hereafter cited as *Proceeding*, 1848 Convention); Hine, et al., *African Americans*, 196; "Free Soil Party-Ohio History Central," [http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Free\\_Soil\\_Party.html](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Free_Soil_Party.html), (accessed June 11, 2015).
- <sup>12</sup> Roy E. Finkenbine, *Sources of the African American Past: Primary Sources in American History 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, (New York: Pearson 2004), 30.
- <sup>13</sup> Bell, Survey Negro Convention Movement," 110.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. 100
- <sup>15</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement" 166-8; *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, 6, 7, 8 July 1853* (Rochester, New York), 6-7, 18-9, 25-6 in *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions; New York Tribune, 7 July 1853*, 4. *New York Daily Times*, 7 July 1853, 1.
- <sup>16</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 174-5.
- <sup>17</sup> John Stauffer, ed., *The Works of James McCune Smith, Black Intellectual and Abolitionist*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2006), xxiv; 182.
- <sup>18</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 179-80; *The Liberator*, 7 December 1855, 196.
- <sup>19</sup> *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, 16, 17, 18 October 1855*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 10-13, 25-26 in Bell, ed. (hereafter cited as *Proceedings, 1855 Convention*); *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 18 October 1855, 1.
- <sup>20</sup> Maxwell Whiteman, "Introduction to the Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored Men, Held in the City of Syracuse, New York, 1804" in *American History Series*, Vol. 5, (Wilmington, Delaware).
- <sup>21</sup> Erica L. Ball, "Citizenship: Virtue and Politics in Antebellum Black Conventions," Colored Conventions in the Nineteenth Century and the Digital Age Symposium, Delaware Historical Society and the University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, April 24, 2015, <http://www.coloredconventions.org/symposiumabstracts>, (accessed July 7, 2015).
- <sup>22</sup> *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored Men, 4, 5, 6, 7 October 1864 with the Bill of Wrongs and Wrights and the Address to the American People*, (Syracuse, New York), 4-6 in *Proceedings, 1864 Convention*.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 4.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 7, 8.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 9, See also "Address of the Colored National Convention to the People of the United States, 1864," 44-62 in *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions. Proceedings, 1864 Convention*, 15, 22, 25; "A Tale of the Underground Railroad in Little Falls, New York." <http://www.upstateearth.blogspot.com/2013/.../greater-love-tale-of-underground.htm>, (accessed June 11, 2015).
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 12-13; 21-24.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid. 33-36; Foner, 435.
- <sup>29</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 110; *The Liberator*, 20 October 1848, 166.
- <sup>30</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 112.
- <sup>31</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 167-168; *Proceedings, 1853 Convention*, 18-9.
- <sup>32</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 134. See also Martin R. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, and Destiny of Colored People in the United States, Politically Considered*, (Philadelphia, 1852); Hollis Lynch, "Pan-Negro Nationalism in the New World, Before 1862," *Boston University Papers on Africa*, 2 (1966): 147-149.

- <sup>33</sup> Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863*, (Urbana: University of Chicago Press: 1975), 94, 113; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1961), 257.
- <sup>34</sup> Foner, 187.
- <sup>35</sup> Lynch, 165; Miller, 134-54.
- <sup>36</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 137; *New York Tribune*, 9 July 1853, 5.
- <sup>37</sup> *Proceeding, 1855 Convention*, 30-33; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 17 October 1855, 1.
- <sup>38</sup> Miller, 134; 137.
- <sup>39</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement," 168-9
- <sup>40</sup> *Proceedings, 1864 Convention*, 41-3; Foner, 435; "The African Civilization Society (1858-1869)," <http://www.blackpast.org/gah/african-civilization-society-1858-1869#sthash.nlPhSGJa.dpuf>, (accessed June 11, 2015).
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Bell, "Survey Negro Convention Movement;" Hine, et al., *African Americans: A Concise History*, 181; White et.al, *Freedom on My Mind*, 277-8.
- <sup>43</sup> Jane H. Pease and John H. Pease, "Negro Conventions and the Problem of Black Leadership," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (September, 1971).